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Photos Available Upon Request

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Beehive Archive

Welcome to the Beehive Archive—your weekly bite-sized look at some of the most pivotal—and peculiar—events in Utah history. With all of the history and none of the dust, the Beehive Archive is a fun way to catch up on Utah's past. Beehive Archive is a production of the Utah Humanities Council, provided to local papers as a weekly feature article focusing on Utah history topics drawn from our award-winning radio series, which can be heard each week on [KCPW](#) and [Utah Public Radio](#).

Prehistoric "Snowbirds": Fremont Indians' Life on the Move

Birds do it... So do humans. In fact, humans in Utah have been heading south for winter for more than 1500 years.

Along the lower Bear River, where it stretches into the Great Salt Lake, are the remains of five prehistoric campsites. Archaeological excavations reveal that the Fremont Indians who lived there timed their annual travels through the area to take advantage of the weather and the local amenities. It's a pattern we still follow centuries later, as "snowbirds" flee northern winters for warmer climates in the south.

Although the Fremont were not *quite* jet-setters, they kept several homes and visited them according to the season. Early each spring and again in the late autumn, the Fremont reopened their camps along the lower reaches of the Bear River. These were the best times to be on the Great Salt Lake, with ducks and geese arriving to use the river marshes as a way-station along their migratory path. Bison were also plentiful on the river during these months.

The five Fremont river camps stand a couple miles apart from each other, and were used seasonally for many generations. The earliest camp has been carbon dated to 540 A.D. and shows evidence of pit-houses, corrals and fences, as well as garbage pits that contain old pottery, tools, and the jumbled remnants of *many* dinners.

Another camp shows that its owners returned year after year to make repairs to their pit-houses. This site yielded pottery and tools, but also corn-grinding equipment that likely stayed with the camp, even as its owners moved around. Clay figurines and shells found at this site indicate long-reaching trade routes.

One hundred shallow storage pits at yet another camp show that the Fremont prudently stored food as part of their migratory lifestyle. Meat from a bounteous fall hunt would be dried and stored with corn for use the following spring.

Always on the move, the Fremont linked their lives to the seasons. They weren't so different from today's northern Utahns, whose mobile homes mingle with I-15 traffic early each winter on the way to sunny Arizona.

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