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The Pilling Figurines



**UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY EASTERN
PREHISTORIC MUSEUM**

155 East Main Street
Price, Utah

435-637-5060 or 800-817-9949

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These figurines were discovered in March, 1950, by Clarence Pilling of Price, Utah in a small side canyon of Range Creek. They have since been called in archeological circles, the "Pilling Figurines." The rock overhang where they were found is also known as Pilling's Cave and shelters an irregular area about 100 feet long with a maximum width of 12 feet, and contained, besides the eleven figurines on a natural shelf at the back, a ruined oval room about 10x6 which appears to have had a stone foundation and wooden superstructure, some of the poles of which showed evidence of stone tools. On the cave wall behind the room is a pictograph in white paint 31/2 inches high of a trapezoid-shaped figure. Other artifacts noted were a trough metate (grinding stone) and a single piece of grey pottery.

• All of the figurines are made of unbaked clay and are decorated appliqué typical of the Fremont culture. The late Noel Morss of the Peabody Museum of Harvard University, who had written concerning the Pilling Figurines ("Clay Figurines of the American Southwest"), believed that they were all made by the same person and in pairs. He said: "It is remarkable that such delicate objects should have remained undisturbed and largely undamaged by humans, animals, or the elements, in such a location for the several centuries which have undoubtedly elapsed since their manufacture." The figurines, while still soft, were laid on the bottoms of baskets or trays as the imprints can be seen on the back of several of the specimens, and apparently they were intended to be viewed from the front only because the back usually does not contain decorations or ornaments.

They range in size from four to six inches, and still show evidence of red, buff and black paint.

- Morss further said: "The sexes are clearly distinguished in both anatomy and dress. The females have breasts and wide hips and wear aprons. The men wear breechclouts, except for one which has a sort of kilt. The women dress their hair in heavy bobs, bound with cord, hanging down over the shoulders... the necklace and belt employ pear shaped pendants, pierced near the upper end, or disc-shaped objects with a hole for attachment near the edge, rather than in the center. Above and below the eyes, which are formed by transverse slits, are usually present painted stripes."
- Morss had numbered and paired the figurines according to sex, color variation in painting, etc. There is one female (#1) whose mate may have been lost or destroyed.

Morss, Noel.

"Clay Figurines of the American Southwest,"
Harvard University Papers, Vol. 49, No. 1,
Peabody Museum, Cambridge, Mass., 1954.

- The Pilling Figurines are considered in archeological literature to excel, both in beauty and technical construction, any other like find of comparative age in the American Southwest. They have been sought by many outstanding museums of this country, and the College of Eastern Utah Prehistoric Museum at Price, Utah, is indeed grateful to Mr. Clarence Pilling and the BLM for exhibition of the figurines.
- A tree ring sample from the site dated to approximately 1000 years ago, or AD 995 – 1000.

