A great rock bearing the outline of the old circular calendar was once located in Hieroglyphic Canyon on the west slope of Superstition Mountain near Apache Junction. The rock, which weighs just over four tons at 8,860 pounds, was moved to Mesa on January 12, 1934. The rock required ten men to move it from its original site in Hieroglyphic Canyon to its present location on the Mormon Temple grounds in Mesa.

In 1934, Mr. J.W. Lesuer told reporters from the Mesa Journal-Tribune that the rock was a gift to the Temple by the Pima at Sacaton. According to the Pima elders, the rock was found near the “throne of Hatsheshit” or the tryzting stone of the maidens of the Pima tribe, ages ago, they tossed pebbles against the stone seat where their lovers sat.

Mr. Lesuer was a strong advocate for the special preservation of Hieroglyphic Canyon more than sixty years ago. He never found any strong support for his advocacy, therefore many of the pictographs of Hieroglyphic Canyon were hauled off by vandals.

According to a Mesa Journal-Tribune article dated January 12, 1934, the O.S. Stapley Company of Mesa provided a truck to move the stone from its original site to its present location. Members of the 3rd Gospel Doctrine class of Mesa Second Ward, of which J.W. Lesuer was the teacher, provided the necessary power to move the stone from the canyon to a point where it could be loaded on to a truck. The moving of this four-ton rock was no easy task and was accomplished by using pulleys and leverage bars. After several trips to the site, the stone was eventually loaded and transported to Mesa.

One side of the stone is completely covered with petroglyphs. An interesting feature of this petroglyph stone is the series of circles that correspond in number and in sub-divisions with the Mayan calendar stone. There are twenty-six perpendicular lines to the concentric circles forming some fifty-two boxes. When we think about it, there are fifty-two weeks in a year. There are several other interesting things involving these stones. The Mayan Calendar is a rectangular block some 13 feet and 1 inch square, weighing some 35 tons, entwined into the walls of the Cathedral of Mexico City. The calendar covers a period from the year 613 B.C. for 2,147 years without the loss of a single day. It is one of the most accurate calendar feasts in the world.

The stone work on the Hieroglyphic Canyon stone appears to have been made to resemble the Mayan stone, in all of the circles and sub-divisions. The smaller calendars appear with rays of the sun shining on them. The stone, according to professionals who have examined it, says it is of enormous historical significance.

In 1934, Mr. J.W. Lesuer told reporters from the Mesa Journal-Tribune that the rock was a gift to the Temple by the Pima at Sacaton. According to the Pima elders, the rock was found near the “throne of Hatsheshit” or the tryzting stone of the maidens of the Pima tribe, ages ago, they tossed pebbles against the stone seat where their lovers sat.

The importance of this stone from Hieroglyphic Canyon has earned it a permanent site on the grounds of the Mormon Temple grounds in Mesa. The stone needed to be protected because, even as early as 1934, vandalism had marred the stone by using it as a shooting target.

Ironically, the present status of the wilderness area stands out as a museum of ancient art. It is a museum that has survived the ages with little or no protection from the elements and vandals. Ironically, the present status of the wilderness area provides little or no protection for this site today. The only protection for these artifacts are those of us who will report vandalism that damages these fine pictographs. Let us hope our new ranches have enough respect for this area that it will be there for future generations to enjoy.

Hieroglyphic Canyon Calendar Stone

by Tom Kollenborn (c) 2000
Native Americans often used celestial bodies in a variety of calendar applications.

*Sten Linnander studying the calendar on the Mormon Temple grounds in Mesa.*