

VESTIGES



June
2009
Volume 29
Number 6

Monthly newsletter of URARA, the Utah Rock Art Research Association

Table of Contents

President's Message.....	1	Think About It!	3
Symposium 2009	1	Story About Rock Art Reflections	4
Field Trip.....	2	URARA Contacts	5
Public Rock Art Lecture	2	Calendar 2009.....	6
Saving Rock Art in the Swell	3	New Members - October 2008 - April 2009	6
American Rock Art Research Association Award.....	3		

President's Message

Greetings,

Our membership should be pleased regarding the 2009 ARARA Conservation and Preservation Award noted in this issue. URARA has been very proactive in supporting the Nine Mile Canyon coalition. Several of our members have been very involved in the protection of this rock art. Speaking for our membership, I express appreciation for those who have participated in supporting the coalition. This includes our silent partnership with the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance in legal actions to mitigate the damage to the rock art sites from the oil explorations and drilling activity. The work we are doing is truly a group effort.

In this issue you will find a report about rock art presentations from three world class authorities that took place last April in Atlanta, Georgia. The author of the report, Paul Carroll from Vernal, responded to our open invitation in April *Vestiges Brief* for someone to report on these presentations.

As we recall, Paul was our field trip leader on one of the trips at our Vernal symposium. Having grown up there, he knew the area very well. To cope with the rain, Paul lead us on an alternative route (down and back up a precipitous couloir) to reach one of the beautiful sites above the river. It was a pleasantly unforgettable experience. At the time he was president of the local archaeology group and subsequently joined URARA. We were grateful for his knowledgeable leadership at Vernal and it is nice to have him "on belay" with us again.

For the board members and all others who may be interested, I plan to have a meeting around the last weekend in June while we are in Salt Lake City. Please advise me of any agenda topics which should be addressed.

I hope all is well for everyone as we rapidly move into the summer.

Happy Trails,
Steve Robinson
2009 URARA President

Symposium 2009

We still need trip leaders for the October symposium in Cedar City. If you are willing to lead a trip, please contact Jeff Allen at 435-986-0977 or allenjeffrey@beyondbb.com.

Field Trip

June 20-21, 2009 Vernal, Utah

Leader, Beth Ebling, baebling@yahoo.com, 801-703-1262.

Beth Ebling will be leading a field trip to the McConkie ranch in Vernal, Utah over the summer solstice, June 20 & 21. We will be meeting in Vernal at 9:00 am, Saturday, June 20 (location TBD, suggestions welcome). Some people will be camping on BLM land (location suggestions welcome). Others will be staying in hotels in Vernal.

Saturday night we will have a group potluck at the campsite. Be prepared to bring food to share! If you have a preference on what you will bring, contact Beth, otherwise she will make assignments

There are many other great glyph sites in the area that we can visit as well. We will disband early Sunday afternoon.

Contact Beth ASAP but no later than June 8th, if you are planning on joining this field trip.

Public Rock Art Lecture

As noted in the April *Vestiges Brief*, a "public rock art lecture" was scheduled in Atlanta, Georgia, coinciding with the Society for American Archaeology annual meeting last April. Since the lecture included David Whitley, Jean Clottes, and David Lewis-Williams, we invited URARA members who might attend the conference and lecture to prepare a report. We were very happy to receive a positive response from Paul Carroll from Vernal, who provided the following excellent summary.

Notes on April 25th lectures in Atlanta, Georgia.

By Paul Carroll

Dr. David S. Whitley spoke about 'Shamanism and the Origins of Creativity', which ties into his latest book. His question is why rock art shows up so suddenly around 35,000 BP, yet it seems to be in perfect form. The art seems to be religious, rather than diet oriented. A survey of shamans from around the world indicates that they have a bit of insanity. In effect, rock art was done by people who were bi-polar. A recent paper seemed to indicate that there were genetic mutations in the brain around 40,000 BP that affected the brain, and that may be tied to the development of art.

Dr. David Lewis-Williams, from South Africa, spoke on 'Decoding the Past: Bushman Rock Art'. He showed slides of some fine rock art that was produced by the San, or Bushmen, in the Drakensberg mountains. It is his theory that some of the rock art ties directly into the beliefs of the San. Wilhelm Blake had recorded around 12,000 pages of San stories in the 1870s and Dr. Lewis-Williams has interpreted some panels using those stories. He believes certain aspects refer to shamans, trances, and the spirit world.

Dr. Jean Clottes spoke about rock art in the Cosquer cave, which is located in Southern France. The cave is entered by diving about 115 feet into the Mediterranean. About 4/5ths of the cave is presently flooded. The older rock art is from around 27,000 BP and mostly consists of hand stencils. The "newer" rock art is from around 19,000 BP and is mostly animal images. Again, these are not dietary oriented. Scraping of the ceiling seems to indicate its use in medicine.

Saving Rock Art in the Swell

By Greg Aitkenhead, *Outdoor Utah*

This article with photos by Greg Aitkenhead in the current issue of *Outdoor Utah* published by the Utah Office of Tourism, pp 30-32, begins by stating, "In Utah's San Rafael Swell, petroglyphs and pictographs grace massive sandstone walls, dark protected alcoves, and sunlit boulders." It is a balanced discussion of the issues with which we are all familiar in the context of the need for the care and protection of this Utah treasure. He quotes Troy Scotter as a Utah Rock Art Research Association past president. He cites the extensive Barrier Canyon style pictograph documentation project undertaken by David Sucec and Craig Law. The article also points out the role of the BLM and Castle Valley Archaeological Society in protecting this cultural resource. This very supportive article concludes by stating "In the end, protecting these amazing works of art involves taking them to heart, becoming enraptured by them, visiting with respect and understanding, and above all, spreading the word of their worth". This article does an excellent job in doing just that.

American Rock Art Research Association Award

By Steve Robinson

ARARA announced at the annual conference on May 24 in Bakersfield, California, that the Nine Mile Canyon Coalition, along with the Colorado Plateau Archaeological Alliance and the National Trust for Historic Preservation have jointly been awarded the "Conservation and Preservation Award" in recognition of the unique partnership forged by these three organizations as "they worked together to protect Nine Mile Canyon's irreplaceable artifacts from the threat posed by oil and gas development." URARA congratulates these organizations for receiving this well deserved prestigious award.

Think About It!



"An important implication of the geographical distribution of different rock art figures, at least those near territorial borders, is that they must contain information that outsiders would recognize as symbols belonging to another group. If archaeologists can identify rock art boundaries, then the distribution of motifs becomes an extremely powerful tool. Once a type or style of rock art is reliably associated with an archaeological culture, as I have demonstrated by identifying Purgatoire Pecked I and II styles with the Apishapa phase, the motifs can be used to define the territorial extent of the culture.

This last fact has important implications. For example, archaeologists can use the distribution of rock art panels with small human figures associated with large herds of quadrupeds to help them locate Apishapa habitation sites that should occur in the same area. Archaeologists in the American Southwest have followed this strategy for many years as they searched for sites. Earl Morris and Emil Haury, for example, targeted Basketmaker rock art sites in the Four Corners region with the expectation that the Basketmaker archaeological sites they wanted to excavate would be nearby. Although the association between rock art sites and habitation sites is not perfect, this does not negate the fact that a particular rock painting style is an expression of Basketmaker material culture. In many circumstances, if archaeologists can link a rock art style to the archeological record of the makers of that style, they have discovered a reliable ethnic identifier."

[Note: This Think About It! is from the closing chapter of *Thunder & Herds, Rock Art of the High Plains* entitled, "Through the Glass Darkly." The author, Lawrence L. Loendorf, is one of the featured speakers for Symposium 2009. The quotation is from a section titled, "A Social Geography."]

Thunder and Herds: Rock Art of the High Plains, Lawrence L. Loendorf, Left Coast Press, Inc., Walnut Creek, California, 2008, pp 225-226.

Story About Rock Art Reflections

"Singing Flutes in a Sacred Space"

By Kat Johnson, pictures by Boma Johnson

My husband and I know a special site in the red rock country of southeast Nevada. Maybe you know it too? It's "Kirk's Grotto" in the Gold Butte area. You've heard the saying, "The Back of Beyond"? Well, it's beyond even *that!* What makes it so special to us, is not just the gorgeous slickrock scenery and the petroglyphs, but also the sacred nature of the place.

We took some friends with us, who had heard of this place, but had never been there. Most of us play the Native American flute, and that was the "game plan" - to play together in this unusual place. We only saw one other vehicle on the long ride. We could have been enjoying the peace and quiet, but we did not. We were excited about what we were to do and see, the CD player blaring, the cat throwing up in the back seat, Diet Coke spilling in the front seat, jabbering about everything and nothing.

One last thrilling ride down a steep hill, and we arrive. It's quiet! But although this small slot canyon is quiet now, about 800-900 years ago it was a very busy place. Judging by the rock art on the canyon walls, the evidence of old camps and artifacts, this was once a active ceremonial place, probably used to teach the young initiates and ask for help from the spirits.

We set up our temporary camp, folding chairs, Diet Coke, the sleeping cat and our flutes, in a sort of anteroom to the little canyon. The walls curve inward in places, almost forming a cave, but sunlight streams through from the top, lighting the rocks with sunbeams in magical ways. Sounds bounce around- -sometimes loud, sometimes soft, and sometimes a faint breeze from nowhere whisks the sounds away. As we walk slowly to the end of the



Missy the cat, guardian of the flutes

canyon, the Ancient Ones are with us, more and more so, and our eager chatter fades. As we reach the end, the rocks are tumbled up in a sort of ramp, and the highest concentration of rock art occurs. There is only the voice of our elder now, explaining the sacred meanings, and our soft questions.



Mike Bruhn, Joan Mangels, Kathy Bruhn, John Mangels, Kat Johnson



Mike Bruhn, Joan Mangels, Kat Johnson

What do the petroglyphs say? Many things, but one recurrent theme is present: a plea for help, a prayer; "Our corn won't grow, we need rain". A petroglyph shows a rainbow upside down, rain



Rainbow with upside down rain



Prayer to ancestor spirits, "our corn won't grow"

not falling- -a last desperate plea to the ancestors to make things right again. Just outside the grotto, another petroglyph shows a beautiful row of corn, but it is upside down, under the ground, the cycle of life interrupted. Pushing above the ground are withered, stunted remains of what should have been corn. But these prayers carved so carefully in stone were not answered. We know that around 1150AD, a terrible drought struck this area, and the cluster of pueblos just across the river emptied. The people had to move on, and they must have felt very sad to leave their home. The sadness remains in that place.

Were we being disrespectful of the ancestor spirits, playing our flutes in such a place? Some of us have native blood, some do not. It does not matter. We played well, more cooperatively, intuitively knowing how to play together-- something that is often difficult for us. We played for the Ancestors, and for ourselves. It was good.

URARA Contacts

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Nina Bowen nina_bowen@comcast.net 801-292-5012.

URARA has an extensive library of rock art publications, a collection of articles, and Clifford Rayl's photo collection, which are available for use by members. URARA also has educational materials which members are encouraged to use.

Calendar 2009

- June 19-21 Summer solstice trip field trip, Vernal, Utah. Contact leader: Beth Ebling, baebling@yahoo.com, 801-703-1262.
- Aug 8-9 Summer Picnic, Vernal Area, Troy Scotter, contact person, troysscatter@comcast.net.
- Oct 9-12 Utah Rock Art Research Association's 29th Annual Symposium, Cedar City, Utah. Robert Reed, chair, 801-566-0741, bobreedclyartist@hotmail.com.

New Members - October 2008 - April 2009

Listed below are the names of the new URARA members, updating the report in the October 2008 *Vestiges*. Since then, through April of this year, there have been 33 new members from Utah and 17 from other states as shown. Welcome all! This brings our actual membership by individual to 363. Approximately 45% live in Utah with a comparable percentage distributed among the other 5 western states. The remaining 10% are distributed among 13 different states and one each in the District of Columbia, Canada, and France.

UTAH

John Aldrich, Salt Lake City
 Douglas & Terry Arthur, Orem
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 Ardan Croft, Escalante
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 Kaye Whitefeather Robinson, St George
 Hannah Russell, Moab
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 Tracy von Harten & Noal Crowther,
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 Glenn Omundson, El Paso, TX

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 David & Sherry Speth, Sheboygun Falls, WI
 Lynn Tanno, Carbondale, CO
 Terry & Gloria Thompson, Scottsdale, AZ
 Sandra & Charles Zahn, San Diego, CA