

Rock Art on the Sunny Side of the Sierra Presented by Frank Adams

Those who were in attendance at our January meeting were entertained and informed about rock art and archeological sites throughout the Great Basin region of Nevada.

The presenter, Frank Adams, is a retired law enforcement administrator living in Mesquite, Nevada. He was born, raised, and educated in southern Nevada. Frank and his wife Patti became interested in Native American culture after visiting Albuquerque, New Mexico. While there, they visited Acoma Pueblo, Canyon De Frijole, and Petroglyph National Monument. Since that time they have added many more ancient sites to their travel list.

Frank joined the Nevada Rock Art Foundation and was trained in site documentation protocol. He has assisted in documenting three large rock art sites. He was trained as a site steward for the White River and Mt Irish Archaeology Districts in Lincoln County, Nevada. He has attended a semester-long class at the University of Nevada Reno on Nevada prehistoric archaeology. In addition, he has attended eight classes presented by Boma and Kat Johnson on ancient Puebloan culture.

On the west side of the Great Basin is the Lahontan Basin, and on the east side is the Bonneville Basin. 14,000 years ago, there was a huge lake covering these basins. In about 14,500 CBP, the Red Rock Pass Blowout happened, causing a natural barrier to explode. This created dry areas in places where the lake had been.

Humans arrived in this area 14,000 to 9000 years ago. 500 years ago the Paiutes who were hunter/gatherers moved out of California to Nevada, Idaho, and Utah. One of their shelters was Lovelock Cave in north central Nevada which was excavated in 1912. Other ancient people had inhabited the cave before them, as the excavation uncovered bags of 2000-year-old duck decoys, crescent arrowhead blades, baskets, and woven mats.

Near the Hawthorne Ammunition Dump which was active during WWII, there's a site called Whiskey Flats covered with petroglyphs and pictographs. Scratches over the top of the glyphs are there to either take power away or give the glyphs more power.

Other places to explore are Lagomasino Canyon, covered in abstract petroglyphs about 10,000-years-old; Hidden Cave, a storage cave located above the beaches of Lake Lahaton, carved out from the lake 21,000 years ago. Hidden Cave was discovered in the 1920's and excavated in the 40's, 50's, and 70's. Recently vandals were caught and cleanup was done.

Another interesting cave is Spirit Cave where a skeleton was found in the 1940's. In the 1990's the Smithsonian tested the skeleton and the DNA told the scientists that the

skeleton was about 9400-years-old. The man was underwater at one time and wrapped tightly in a woven basket. He had endured battle, but what killed him was a tooth abscess. He died when he was about 45-years-old.

Other places that Adams explored are the Court of Antiquity, Desert Creek, the Salt Caves, Donner Lake, Hickson Summit, Toquima Cave, and Petroglyph Butte. The last three sites are in a direct north/south direction from each other. Some sites have pictographs and others have abstract petroglyphs. None of these places indicate that farming was part of their culture.

Last of all he talked about China Lake Naval Weapons Testing Range where Petroglyph Canyon is located about fifty feet down. These glyphs are 1000-2000-years-old. There is a tree of life, sheep, bow and arrow, and anthropomorphs. Some evidence from the canyon indicates that the Clovis started on the East coast.

Exploring the Great Basin area sounds exciting and worthwhile.