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A Historic Aboriginal Structure and Its Associations, Panamint Mountains, California

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EXTANT aboriginal wooden structures in the Desert West are infrequent and highly valuable in understanding the organization and behavior of the individual or social group that produced them (cf. Longacre and Ayres 1968). An outstanding example of such a structure was discovered in 1977 in the southern Panamint Mountains of Inyo County, California (Fig. 1).

Generally, standing aboriginal structures relate to late prehistoric and historic times; the Panamint Mountains example is no exception. Of course, there are many southern California Native American groups and individuals who retain knowledge of the construction techniques or have recently built such structures. Many early ethnographers observed aboriginal structures either still in use or recently abandoned within California and the Great Basin (cf. Nelson 1891:372; Dutcher 1893:377-378; Harrington 1932; Steward 1933:265, 1938:54-55, 1941:233; Fowler and Fowler 1971), so there are many good descriptions or illustrations of a variety of structure types.

The importance of recent archaeological features such as this exists in their potential for confirming ethnographic descriptions or deter-

mining variation from these descriptions. More importantly, they help in elucidating settlement/subsistence practices and interpreting, from associated cultural remains, behavioral patterns in and around these structures (cf. Clewlow and Rusco 1972; Bettinger 1975; and Clewlow, Wells, and Ambro 1978). Recent ethnoarchaeological observations of contemporary hunters and gatherers can also be compared and contrasted to this archaeological evidence in the interpretive process (cf. Yellen 1977).

The tremendous increase in archaeological inventory within the last few decades, both as a result of academic pursuits and the proliferation of cultural resource management programs, has led to the discovery of standing aboriginal structures in many remote regions (cf. Wallace and Taylor 1955; Hunt 1960; Tuohy 1969; Glennan 1971; Ambro and Wallof 1972; Sanchez 1973; Bettinger 1975; Fenenga 1975; Wallace and Wallace 1978:28-29; Wallof 1978; Polk 1979; R. Brooks, personal communication 1980 [southern Nevada]; P. Welch, personal communication 1980 [central Nevada]). Bettinger (1975: 203) has commented on the increased likelihood of finding preserved structures with a more extensive survey of the mountainous flanks of nearby Owens Valley. Such would seem to be

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Fig. 1. Front view of historic aboriginal structure in the Panamint Mountains, 1979.

the case in the upper Panamint Mountains as well.

THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

The site is situated in a small basin at the upper end of a branch of Pleasant Canyon in the Panamint Mountains at an elevation of 2000 m. The Panamint Mountains are one of a number of north-south trending ranges within the Great Basin. This basin is slightly dissected into a series of moderately inclined low ridges and shallow troughs composed of Later Precambrian sedimentary and metamorphic rocks exposed here and there under a colluvial cover. The structure is nestled within one of these troughs.

The basin is dominated by piñon pine (*Pinus monophylla*), juniper (*Juniperus osteo-*

sperma), sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), Anderson thornbush (*Lycium andersonii*), with lesser quantities of mountain joint fir (*Ephedra viridis*), and rarer hedgehog cactus (*Opuntia erinacea*). The only associated annual identified is birdsbeak (*Cordylanthus* sp.).

No fresh water sources (other than snow pack) are evident in the basin; the nearest known permanent water is just over 1 km. distant.

THE STRUCTURE

The conical structure is constructed in an ovate to circular plan from 80 piñon and juniper logs inclined onto two forked juniper center posts and two parallel juniper

crossbeams (Fig. 2). One crossbeam is situated between the center posts and the other is adjoining for secondary reinforcement. Baling wire has been used to lash the center posts and crossbeams together as well as the secondary crossbeam and several logs forming the wall. The southwest facing, inward inclined doorway, containing a small vestibule, is buttressed with neatly stacked boulders. The structure measures 4 m. in diameter and reaches a height of 2.05 m.¹ The center posts are 16 and 23 cm.

in diameter and the outer logs range in diameter from 10 to 40 cm. They have exposed lengths of 2.5 to 2.75 m. on the northwest and southwest sides and 2.1 m. on the northeast and southeast sides. The rectangular doorway, slightly tapered toward the top, measures 1.4 m. in height and 73 cm. in maximum width. A small (6 cm. diameter) wooden threshold is found at the base of the inner entrance. The vestibule is 1.4 m. in length.

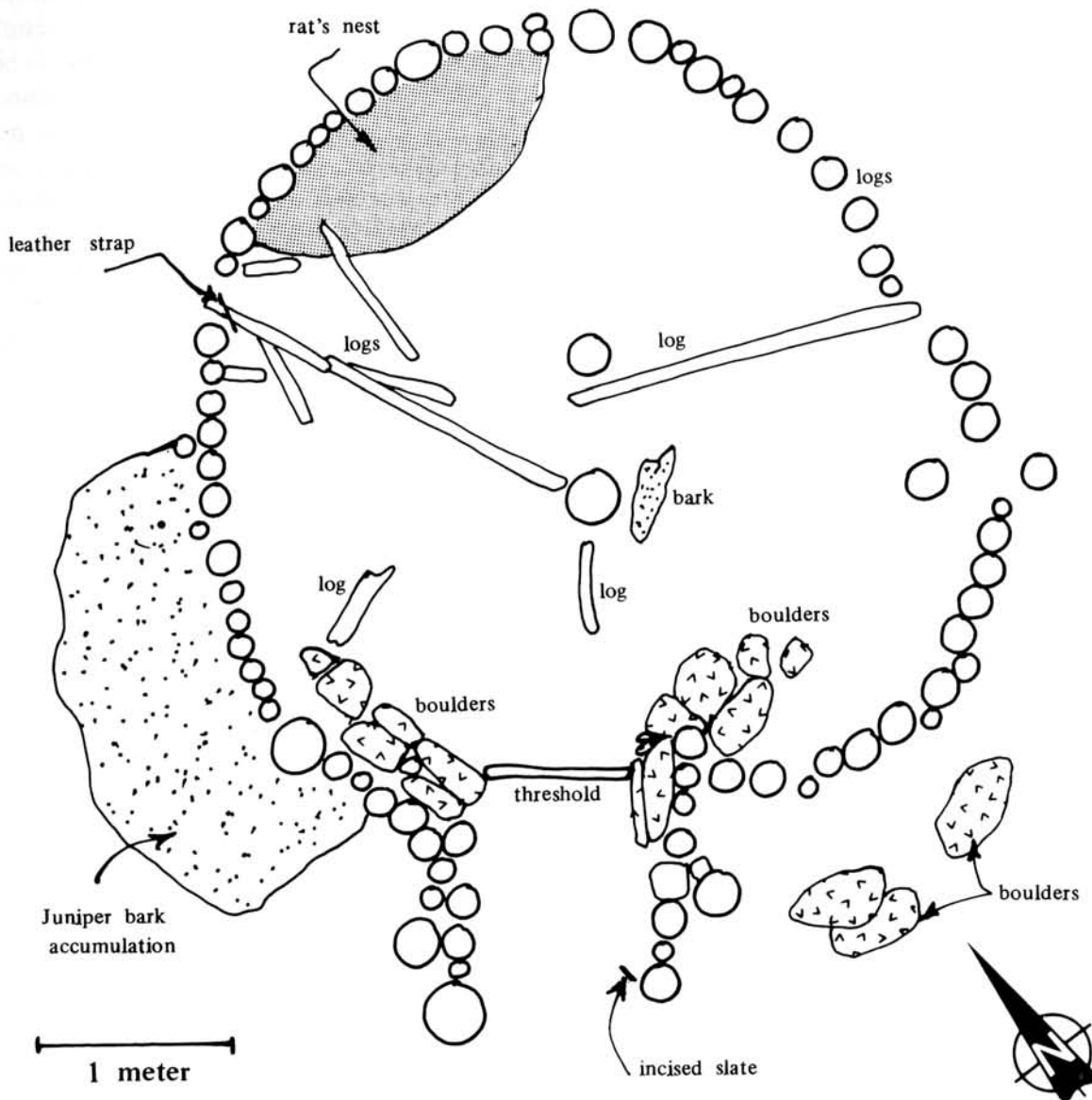


Fig. 2. Panamint Mountains historic aboriginal structure plan view.

Without excavation it is difficult to determine whether a pit was dug prior to construction since sheetwash materials have covered the floor and base of the logs to an unknown depth.

The structure itself is in very good condition. Bark on the logs forming the outer walls has scaled off and several of the smaller logs have collapsed into the interior. Several small cobbles were found between the wall logs and are perhaps the remnants of chinking. It also is possible that brush and some earth covering have been weathered away.

Aside from the baling wire, other indications of historic period construction include the metal axe marks evident on all the logs. Old juniper and piñon stumps and living trees with limbs removed were found within about 125 m. of the structure.

ETHNOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTIONS

Aboriginal groups in the Great Basin generally had three basic types of dwellings with regional and even local variation. These included gabled, conical, and domed types (Steward 1941:233; Stewart 1942:256-259). Driver's study (1937:113) of southern Sierra Nevada and contiguous area groups resulted in a division of structures into (1) a sweat house; (2) a dwelling with a single ridgepole, either a double lean-to with gabled ends, or with ends rounded and slanting (hip-roofed); (3) a conical or domed dwelling, thatched or mat-covered; and (4) a conical dwelling of poles, bark, and conifer boughs.

The descriptions and illustration of Panamint Shoshone dwellings (Driver 1937:66; Nelson 1891:372; Dutcher 1893:377; Steward 1941:233, 282-286; Kroeber 1925:591, Plate 56) do not exactly match the structure under discussion. Neither does Steward's (1933:263) description of Owens Valley Paiute houses. However, there is enough similarity in the descriptions that there can be little doubt this structure is of Paiute-Shoshone derivation.

The Owens Valley Paiute mountain home, used in the fall and winter, is described as consisting of two center posts, a ridgepole, side beams all the way around, somewhat tent-shaped (gabled) with a smokehole, door to the east, and pine bough roofing (Steward 1933:263). The sweat house and winter valley houses are similar, only they are larger and covered with mats or bundles of grass or rye and sometimes earth. The doorway is rectangular as is the case here. Steward (1941:233) mentions similar gabled houses of nearby Lida, Death Valley, and Ash Meadows people, and illustrates an example from the White Mountains of California. The most common winter dwelling is described as a conical pole lodge, sometimes partially subterranean and sometimes covered with earth, mats, or thatch (Steward 1941:233). Steward (1941:284) notes that several nearby Nevada consultants reported vestibule or chamber doorways in their houses. It is perhaps significant to note Steward's (1941:233) comment that the construction of sweat houses depends on local conditions and historical contacts. This was no doubt true of other structures as well.

Driver's cultural element check list provides some detail on certain structural features (1937:66). His Panamint consultants noted that all dwellings are circular, although sweat houses also could be elliptical in plan. Only sweat houses were described as having a single ridge pole and two center posts. Several consultants noted that sweat houses could be conical or domed with a single center post. All dwellings could be subterranean to a depth of several feet. Only sweat houses were indicated by Panamint consultants as having a rectangular entrance when viewed from the outside, and the other dwelling forms were noted as containing entrances converging toward the top. Kroeber (1925:591, Plate 56) notes earth-covered Panamint Shoshone sweat houses were used regularly and were large enough to stand up in, and "The soil was heaped over a

layer of 'arrowweed,' *Pluchea sericea*." His photograph of one such structure somewhat resembles this Panamint Mountains example.

Because of the gradation in house types (cf. Driver 1937:114), it is difficult to match the present example with idealized types described in the ethnographic literature. While it seems fairly certain that this is a Paiute-Shoshone and possibly Panamint-Shoshone structure based on ethnographic descriptions and photographs of sweat houses or winter dwellings of the domed or gabled type, problem directed interviews with Native Americans were warranted. Using slides and drawings, a number of consultants were asked for their interpretations of the structure's function and construction (notwithstanding the information provided by associated features and artifacts).

Two elderly Shoshone women, both residing in Lone Pine, California, commented on the structure (Ritter 1980a, b). One woman, while raised in Lone Pine, was born in Ash Meadows, Nevada, which also was the birthplace of her mother. Her father was from Saline Valley, California. The other woman was originally from Keeler, California, and claimed her people were from the nearby Coso Mountains. Each indicated the structure was a house where people lived, that it was not a sweat house. One said sweat houses were not built in the mountains. The other woman called the structure a *toni* and indicated it had probably been covered with juniper bark, and grasses and bushes to keep the elements out. She remarked that sometimes they were dug out. She also indicated that on occasions people lived in structures like this all the time; at other times they would have a second home at lower elevations where they would go part of the year.

A Panamint-Shoshone man who currently resides in Ridgecrest, California, but was raised at Darwin, California, and Indian Ranch in Panamint Valley, viewed photos of the structure and indicated it was a place where

a family of five to six would live (Moore 1980a). He recognized the structure as one that was old and indicated that two or three similar structures were located in nearby Hall Canyon, but these had been destroyed by fire. He remarked that people lived in these structures during the summer up to the 1940's.

Another elderly consultant, an Owens Valley Paiute-Shoshone, who was born and raised in the Darwin area and now resides in Lone Pine, suggested the structure could have been a sweat lodge formerly covered with earth (Moore 1980b).

The final consultant, a Paiute from Owens Valley now living in Big Pine, California, thought the structure was either built as a "camp" or "sweat" and wanted to know if there were piles of brush and cut material nearby (Laidlaw 1979). This would suggest to him that the structure was covered during the summer/fall and uncovered for the winter so snow wouldn't accumulate on the roof and collapse it. He suggested such structures were renovated each spring with new thatch and that they were not used in the winter. According to this consultant the associated historic artifacts suggest the structure was abandoned and subsequently used by Anglo grubstakers.

ASSOCIATED FEATURES

Equally important to the structure from an anthropological perspective are the associated features and artifacts and their patterning (Fig. 3).

A small erosion check dam *ca.* 10 m. easterly and upslope from the structure is constructed of a combination of cobbles and metal axe cut logs laid horizontally across the gully with smaller limbs extending vertically from the dam. The dam, no longer functional, is 3.5 m. long and at present stands about 0.5 m. above the ground surface.

The crown top of a piñon tree was found five meters east of the dam. Coils of wire were located under this tree.

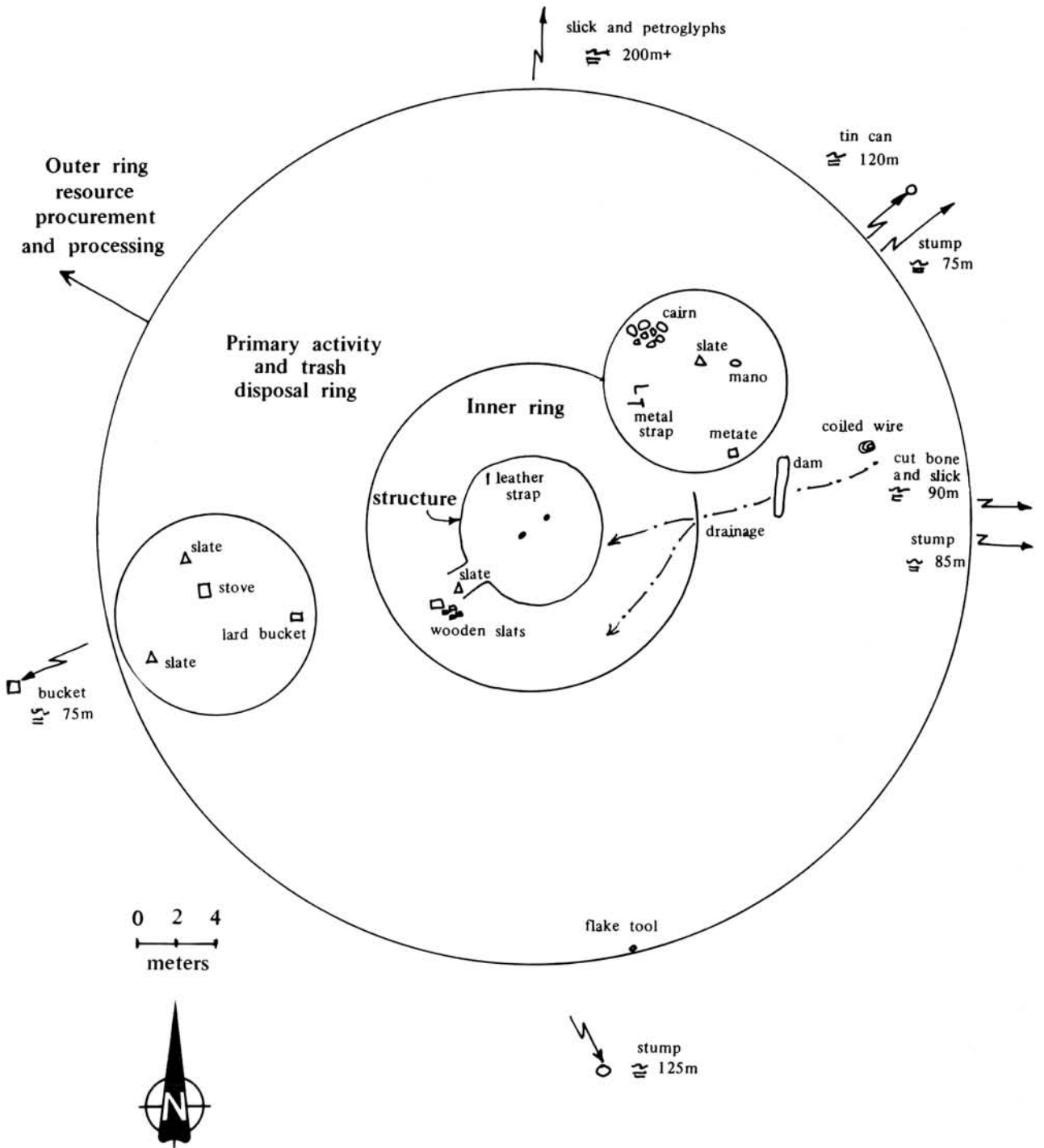


Fig. 3. Distribution of cultural materials at Panamint Mountains historic aboriginal structure.

A cairn approximately 2 m. in diameter and 50 cm. in height was found just to the northeast of the structure. One of the Shoshone woman consultants said this could be a burial location since they buried people everywhere (Ritter 1980*b*).

A bedrock grinding surface was located approximately 60 m. east (uphill) from the structure. The large flat boulder exhibits only light traces of milling. In a similar manner a bedrock grinding slick (32 x 26 cm.) and a series of abstract (rectilinear and curvilinear) petroglyphs were located several hundred meters north of the structure. The exact extent and number of glyphs was not determined, however 25 or more elements are present. These features all or in part may predate the structure.

ASSOCIATED ARTIFACTS

The recorded artifacts represent an informative cross-section of historic and aboriginal items reflecting the contact period.

Perhaps some of the most unusual artifacts to be found in association with the structure were four pieces of incised green slate (Fig. 4). The largest and most elaborately decorated piece (69 mm. long, 66 mm. wide, 4.8 mm. thick), actually broken into three sections, has faint patinated designs on both faces (Fig. 4*a*). These three pieces were found close together northeast of the structure (Fig. 3). One face is clearly dominant, with a "half-circle" or "half-oval" design composed of three separate decorative bands. The backside includes three spaced, parallel zig-zag lines.

The second example (101 mm. long, 39 mm. wide, 3.5 mm. thick) was found within the doorway of the structure and has the freshest appearing designs. Both sides exhibit decoration. The principal side includes a widely spaced cross-hatched design with several short zig-zag lines (Fig. 4*b*). The longest edge has been ground.

The third slate (66 mm. long, 21.5 mm. wide, 5.5 mm. thick) has designs on one face only (Fig. 4*c*). The design includes cross-hatched lines near one end and on the opposite end a "base line" on which a dendritic figure has been placed.

The last and smallest example (38 mm. long, 24.5 mm. wide, 4.3 mm. thick) includes two crossed lines (Fig. 4*d*).

Incising appears to have been done with a stone flake or similar sharp instrument. The lines are not entirely uniform in width or execution. Some incisions show a double groove when viewed under 10X magnification.

Slates such as these have been widely reported in the Great Basin and from many other parts of the world, and within the general area they are not uncommon (e.g., Rogers 1939:63-64; Lathrap and Meighan 1951; Wallace and Taylor 1955; Perkins 1967; Tuohy 1967; Schuster 1968; Aikens 1970; McKee and Thomas 1972; Santini 1974; C. Hunt 1974; and Thomas 1978). They have been variously interpreted as prized amulets with anthropomorphic designs or symbols related to clothes or personal ornaments (Schuster 1968); good luck charms (McKee and Thomas 1972); trail maps (Coxon 1964); a "vital aspect of the makers' hunting and gathering practices supplemented by a religious-mythological influence" (Santini 1974:14); or "a mnemonic system possibly related to such repetitive occurrences as predictions and attainment of seasonally available food resources, or important social events" (Thomas 1978).

Chronologically, incised slates have been shown to date back as far as 6000 B.C. in the New World (Schuster 1968:4). Within the Great Basin, Thomas (1978) reports incised slates from Gatecliff Shelter up to 6000 years old. Santini (1974:6) suggests in southern Nevada they may date in the general time frame of A.D. 600 to the 1800's. A. Hunt (1960) and C. Hunt (1975) place them in the Death

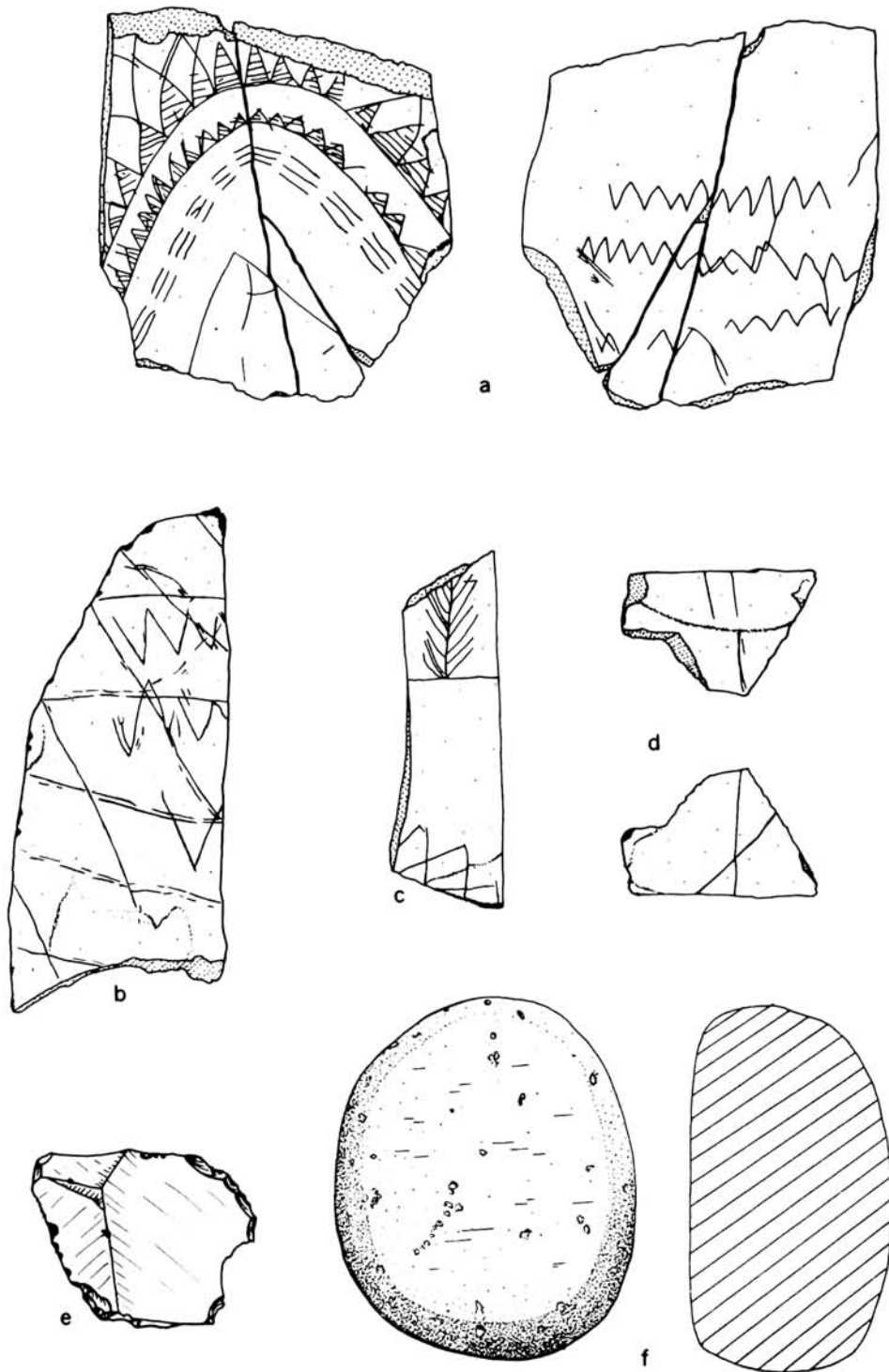


Fig. 4. Aboriginal artifacts in association with structure. *a*: incised green slate (length 69.0 mm.); *b*: incised green slate (length 101.0 mm.); *c*: incised green slate (length 66.0 mm.); *d*: incised green slate (length 38.0 mm.); *e*: utilized chalcedony flake (length 21.0 mm.); *f*: andesite mano (length 101.0 mm.).

Valley III and IV periods, dating from about A.D. 500 to historic times.

There seems little doubt, judging from historic associations, that these slates date from about the turn of the century, although they could be heirlooms from earlier times. One slate, in fact, is considerably more patinated than the others. Clearly, their manufacture represents the tail end of a long tradition. Their function is another problem.

The fact that these times in other contexts (Gatecliff Shelter) were not strictly segregated from daily life and do not appear to Thomas (1978) to be inviolate religious objects adds a certain credence to their apparent association with domestic artifacts, a piñon zone, and a sympathetic gathering magic interpretation. In this regard, Santini's (1974) and Thomas' (1978) interpretations seem most plausible. In and of themselves, these incised slates would thus not necessarily support a sweat-house function for this structure.

Just behind the structure were found a mano and metate in close association (Fig. 3). The lightly used slab metate is unifacial and is composed of granitic material. It measures 320 mm. in length, 270 mm. in width, and 80 mm. in thickness. The mano is andesite and also is unifacial with moderate wear (Fig. 4f). The specimen is 101 mm. long, 86.5 mm. wide, and 57 mm. thick.

The function of the mano and metate in grinding seed products and in mashing small game is well known. Coville (1892:353) notes that among the Panamint the mano and metate were used for grinding harder seeds while the wooden mortar was used for pine nuts. Steward's (1933:239, 242; 1941:235, 280) Owens Valley Paiute and Nevada Shoshone consultants, however, almost exclusively report that pine nuts were processed with the mano and metate. It would seem that both pine nuts and other seeds could have been processed with these tools at this site.

A single utilized chalcedony flake was dis-

covered near the structure (Fig. 3). The specimen (21 mm. long, 17 mm. wide, 9 mm. thick) exhibits unifacial nibbling on approximately one-half its periphery (Fig. 4e). Such tools could have been used in a number of light cutting and scraping activities.

Near the entrance of the structure were recovered three moderately weathered partial wooden slats or boards, saw cut. These may have served as portions of a door to the structure (The respective measurements are as follows: lengths 21", 16" and 4", widths 3", 3½" and 1½", and thicknesses ¼", 1/8" and 1/8".)

Also near the entrance was a saw cut wooden plank (14" by 7¾" by ½") with a metal strip attached around the perimeter with wire nails (Fig. 5a). The strip, which does not exactly fit the wooden plank (perhaps in part because of wood deterioration) was folded into lengths of 15" and widths of 10". The strip is 5/8" wide and 1/32" thick. Two 4d nails were found within the top of the boards and eight 6d nails were hammered at intervals through the metal strip into the boards. This item could represent the reinforced side, bottom, or top of a box. What is perhaps significant about this find is the presence of wire nails, which indicate by association that this structure postdates about 1890 (cf. Nelson 1968) in at least its later stages of use.

A rusting iron strip (length 21¼", width 1", thickness 1/16") was recovered behind the structure (Figs. 3; 5b). One end of the strap is crimped and apparently soldered around a short outward curving rod (2¼" long, 5/16" diameter). The function of this artifact is uncertain. At one time the attached rod may have been hooked onto a more solid holding device with the strap used to support a gasoline tank, such as on early car models, or some other item.

A single No. 2 can, partially split and with all of the top and part of the side cut away was found uphill from the structure (Figs. 3, 5d). The end, top, and side exhibit soldered seams.

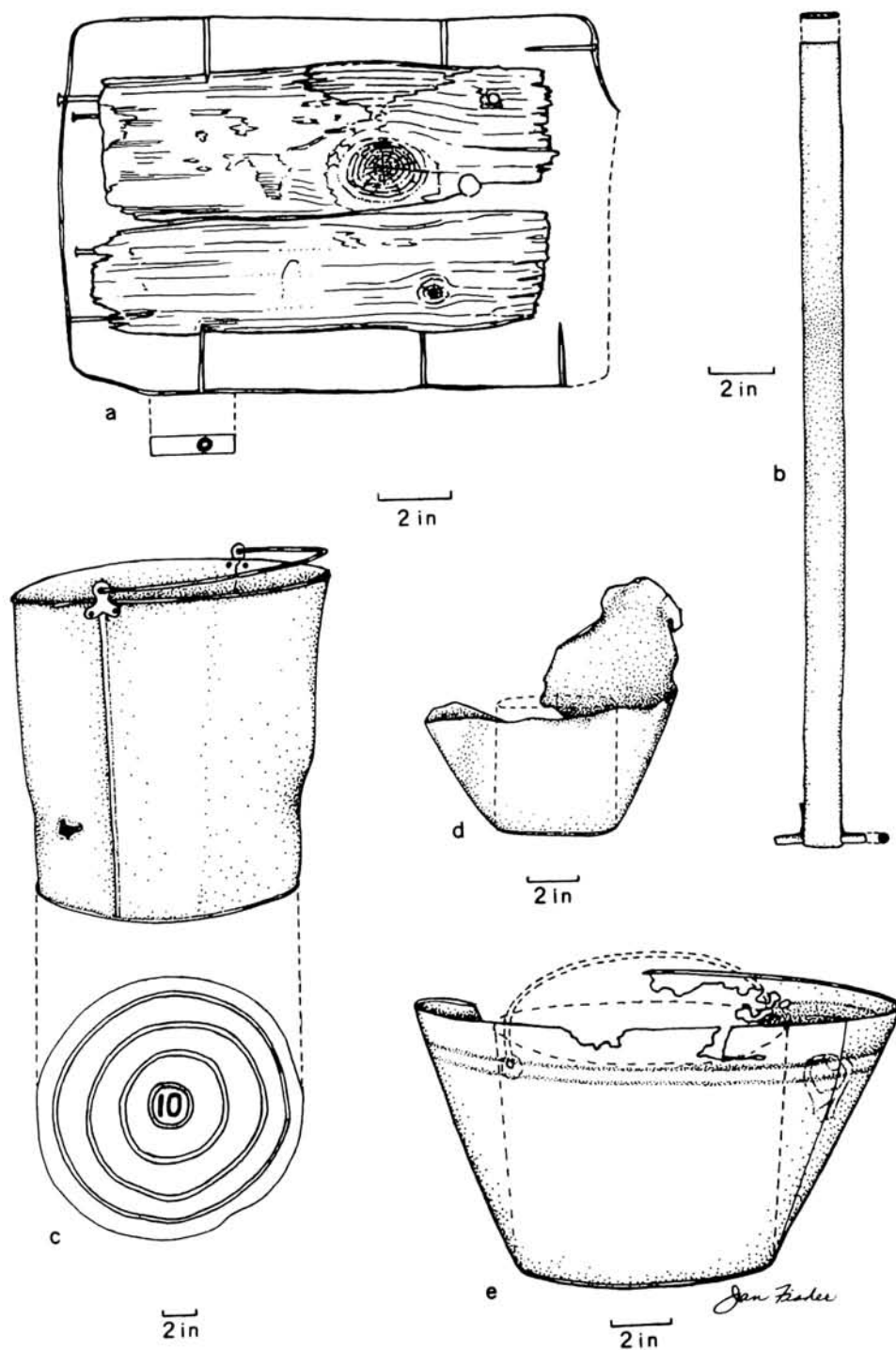


Fig. 5. Historic artifacts in association with structure. *a*: plank and metal strip; *b*: metal strap and rod; *c*: galvanized metal bucket; *d*: soldered tin can, #2; *e*: metal "lard bucket."

Tin cans also are useful in dating sites. Hunt (1959:9) notes that by World War I tin cans generally had crimped ends and no soldering. Jacobs (1914:36) indicates that by 1911 general canners in California were using the sanitary can method instead of soldered tins. Methods of solder seaming date from the early 1800's (Fontana *et al.* 1962:68).

Not too far from the entrance of the structure (Fig. 3) was found a rusting "lard bucket" with only solder traces of handle placement. The pail (Fig. 5e) is crushed at the top. The side seam and bottom are soldered. The pail is $6\frac{7}{8}$ " in height with a diameter of 7". A narrow groove runs around the inner perimeter near the top, which is lipped to the inside. The soldering and general manufacture suggest a similar date to the tin can. Such pails could have been used in a variety of domestic activities.

At some distance downslope from the structure (Fig. 3) a 10 quart galvanized metal bucket was found (Fig. 5c). The bottom is corrugated with the number 10 stamped in the center. The side seams are soldered and the handle holders have been riveted and soldered on at the seams. The base has been soldered on and the lip exhibits soldering. The bucket is 9" in height with a base diameter of $8\frac{1}{2}$ " and a mouth diameter of $10\frac{1}{2}$ ". The bucket is lipped to the outside. This container has been battered and an old entry-exit bullet hole is present. It is interesting to note that a photograph in Wheat (1967) shows Paiute women collecting piñon pine cones in a similar bucket, and turn-of-the-century Owens Valley Paiute camp photographs illustrate similar buckets and "lard" pails (Forbes Collection, Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History). The soldering on this Panamint example suggests a turn-of-the-century date for this item.

Downslope from the structure (Fig. 3) was found a modified rectangular 5 gallon tin commonly used for storage of kerosene, gasoline,

oil and water, among others (Fig. 6a). One of the female Shoshone consultants (Ritter 1980a) indicated that as a youth her family used these for storage of cooking oil. The tin, however, has been modified to the extent that fluids can no longer be kept in it. The top has been removed and two large irregular rectangular holes have been cut at the base on opposite sides (heights $8\frac{1}{2}$ " and 8", widths $4\frac{1}{2}$ " and $4\frac{3}{4}$ "). A third smaller rectangular hole (height 6", width $3\frac{1}{4}$ ") has been cut near the base of another side, although a metal flap has been left which can be wedged back into the opening to seal this side. Side seams and lid and base seams all exhibit solder. All cutting of the metal is jagged, suggesting use of a metal knife or bladed can-opener.

Everyone shown the item, including two Shoshone consultants (Ritter 1980a, b), thought the artifact probably represented an oven, with the metal flap used to control the draft. The can could have been inverted over coals with the base then serving as a griddle or stove top. Such tins are made to this day, although the soldering again suggests a turn-of-the-century date.

Strands of $\frac{1}{16}$ " diameter wire were found at three separate locations. The first location was in the interior of the structure. A length of wire has been strung between the center posts with another strand of wire hanging down in the middle as if to suspend a pot or other item over a fire. A second occurrence near the rear of the structure (Figs. 3, 6b) includes two separate strands twisted together (length 23") at one end of which is a bent wire nail (2-3d). About five meters east of the check dam a piñon log was found under which were three coils of seven strands of wire twisted together. These may have been stored here. Their ultimate use, for apparent utilitarian needs, is unknown.

The only artifact of leather, a strap, was recovered in a woodrat's den within the structure (Figs. 3, 6c). The strap measures $9\frac{3}{4}$ " in

length, $\frac{3}{4}$ " in width and $\frac{3}{32}$ " thick. Nine holes have been punched into the strap with rivet or snap marks on the two end holes. At one end, where the strap is torn, there is evidence that it was sewn onto another item. A wire nail (2 or 3d) through the strap (and a matching hole for a second nail) are indications of further attachment support. Similar straps are notable on leather and iron bound trunks illustrated in the *Sears, Roebuck & Co. 1908 Catalogue* No. 117 (Schroeder 1971). However, the rivet or snap

marks suggest a secondary function. Wagons at the Eastern California Museum in Independence exhibit similar leather straps folded in half with a bolt snap added. These straps were attached to the sides of the wagons for hanging various items. A similar function within the structure does not seem unreasonable. This strap also may have been used as a door hinge as observed on Owens Valley Paiute house photographs from the turn of the century (Forbes Collection, Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History).

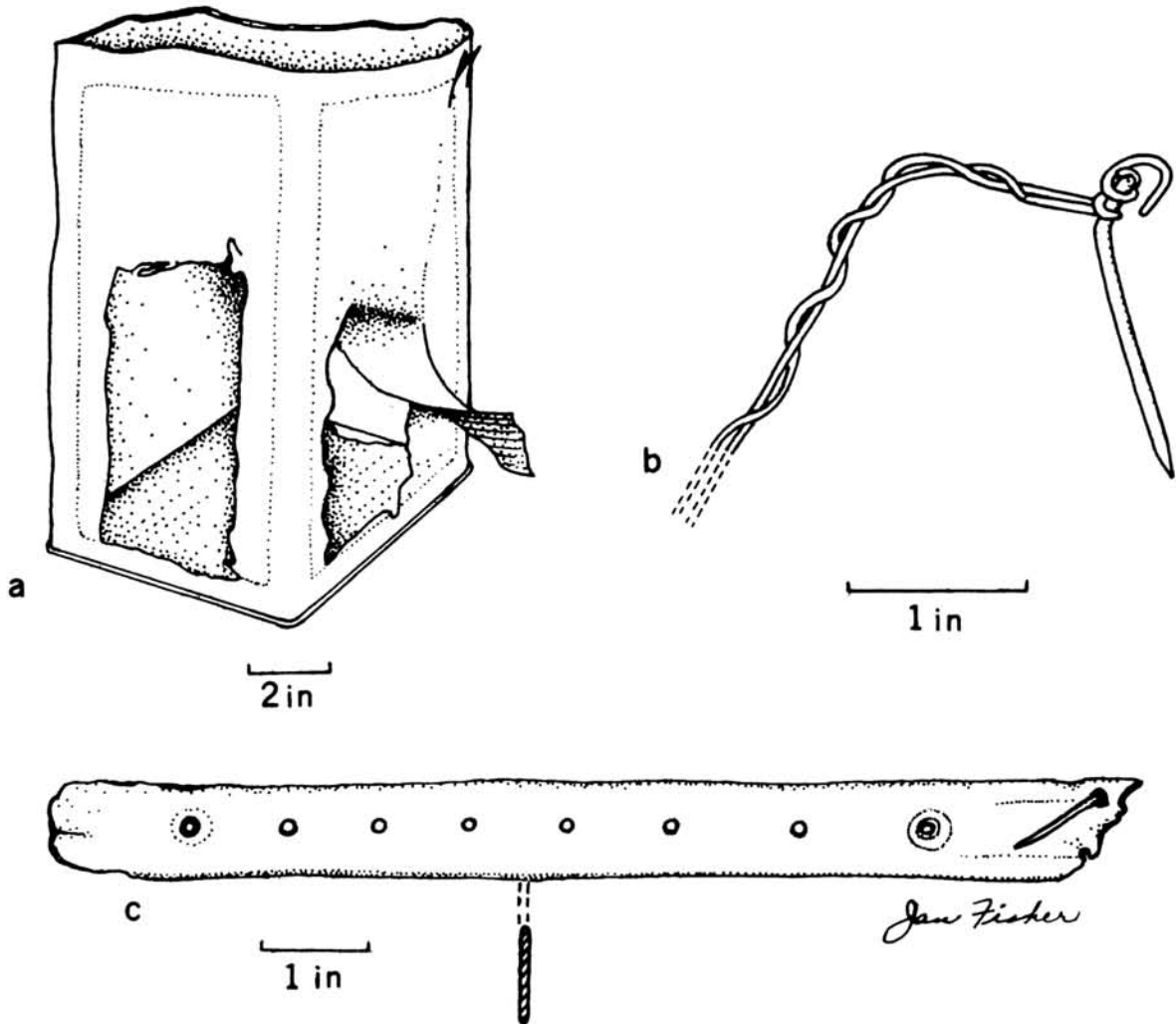


Fig. 6. Historic artifacts in association with structure. *a*: five gallon tin stove; *b*: twisted wire with wire nail; *c*: punched leather strap.

Two saw cut large animal bones were found in the general vicinity of the structure (Fig. 3). Only one was identified, a cow (*Bos taurus*) tibia, probably the remains of a hind shank roast or soup bone, not one of the better cuts of meat.

INTRASITE PATTERNING

The distribution of the cultural remains offers some noteworthy insights regarding site function and behavioral activities, with implications to archaeological interpretation elsewhere based on the patterning of materials left behind.

The cultural remnants can be examined in terms of zones, or concentric and secondary rings of activity with the structure serving as the central node (Fig. 3). This ring model has been adapted from Yellen (1977:125-132). He (1977:82) noted among the !Kung of South Africa that "at camps occupied for only a brief period of time, the range of subsistence activities represented are likely to be 'typical' for a camp located at that specific area during that particular season," a possible parallel here. Furthermore, his caution that "... it is unfounded to assume that activities are spatially segregated or arranged by type within a single camp (since) most tasks may be carried out in more than one place and in more than one social context" must be considered (Yellen 1977:134). However, this caution applies more to multiple family camps than to nuclear family camps as appears evident here. Thus, an important assumption in this study is that the remains at this site represent a short-term occupation by a single family or individual.

A central ring of about 8 m. in diameter includes the structure, possible door remnants, an incised slate and a leather strap (Fig. 3). In essence this may delineate the central living-sleeping area with most trash and specialized features or activity remnants deposited or carried out at a distance from the structure. Yellen (1977:100) notes that "In terms of !Kung

activity patterning, the area inside the hut is rarely used and is generally devoid of debris," an interesting comparison.

Between about 8 m. and 45 m. diameter is an apparent zone of trash deposit and specialized activities. Behind the structure is a smaller zone or ring (10 m. diameter) or "debris cluster" of milling tools, incised slate, miscellaneous metal items, and a cairn (Fig. 3). Almost certainly plant food milling was a specialized activity occurring here and the incised slate and cairn could be of magico-religious derivation. In front of the structure is another "debris cluster" or internal zone or ring (10 m. diameter) consisting of a possible cooking area, including the possible stove, "lard pail," and two small incised slates (Fig. 3). These slates may have washed downslope by sheetflooding.

From the 45 m. diameter ring outward to at least 125 m. and beyond from the structure is an apparent area of resource procurement (e.g., limbs, poles, firewood, piñon seeds, etc.), processing (e.g., milling, etc.), and secondary trash disposal (Fig. 3).

Obviously, these are not hard and fast measurements applicable in all archaeological situations, and they are largely subjective in this case since movement of materials by natural forces, terrain limitations, major external cultural influences, obscured remains, and casual discard probably have come into effect, or could come into effect. Still, the distinctions at this site in a general sense seem behaviorally relevant.

What is apparent, then, is an area within and immediately around the structure where few remains are evident because of the nature of the presumed activity (e.g., sleeping) and/or the nature of trash deposition; an area a bit further from the structure where food preparation and processing activities and perhaps ritual events occurred; and an area even further away where resource procurement and some food processing and trash disposal took place.

In archaeological situations where the remains are less obvious, that is subsurface, or where no perishables have survived, overlapping occupation or activities may confuse the picture in terms of subsequent interpretation. Yellen (1977:134) has already brought this factor to the attention of the archaeological community based on an African example. In a protohistoric context within the desert of California we have a somewhat different example. Within a small camp of limited duration even the most simplified of activities can be rather far reaching spatially and at the same time rather well segregated and presumably identifiable (also see Longacre and Ayres 1968).

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this location appears to be an aboriginal campsite dating from the turn of the century, possibly related to piñon procurement. The general area is relatively rich in archaeological remains and has probably been used for thousands of years, and Native American groups were reported in the general vicinity in historic times (Hubbard *et al.* 1965:36; Starry 1980; Moore 1980*b*). Within about 500 m. of this site, however, is a mine (the Thomas Benjamin) last operated in 1908 (Pat Rader, personal communication, 1979). Mining activity in the vicinity was also quite evident in the general Pleasant Canyon area in the late 1890's and early 1900's (Hubbard *et al.* 1965:37-42; Inyo County court records for 1890-1908, Independence), through the activities of the Pleasant Canyon Mining Company and others.

It is possible the camp inhabitants were associated with mining operations, subsisting in their approximate aboriginal manner with the addition of Anglo goods and foods. The substantial nature of the structure suggests it may have been used even during the colder months of the year. Steward (1933:242) notes that "When (piñon) crops were good, most Owens Valley people wintered in the moun-

tains, living in 'mountain houses' scattered through the timber." The structure's use as a sweathouse, while perhaps given some support by the presence of incised slates and the cairn, seems unlikely considering the preponderance of conflicting data. The location and the various utilitarian objects, many of which were traditionally ascribed to women's activities, coupled with the fact that women did not usually participate in "sweats" seems supportive of a non-sweathouse function (Driver 1937:67). However, secondary use as a sweat-house or use as such during certain periods by Panamint Shoshone or Owens Valley Paiute groups cannot be totally ruled out.

The lessons learned from this study seem, perhaps, rather prosaic, but should not be ignored. The period of acculturation is important in our understanding of culture change. The mixture of aboriginal and historic elements within a campsite setting suggest perhaps that intracamp patterning in single and—following Yellen—multiple family foraging situations in arid lands may be similar considering those factors previously listed. At this site we have a few more clues regarding the designs of human behavior.

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NOTE

1. Metric measurements are used for aboriginal items while the English system has been maintained for European manufactured items since this was the system utilized in their fabrication.

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