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Return to Chetlessenten: The Antiquity and Architecture of an Athapaskan Village on the Southern Northwest Coast

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Radiocarbon dates for the historic village of Chetlessenten (the Pistol River site) suggest that the numerous features and artifacts excavated by Heflin (1966) from this Oregon coast site date primarily between about A.D. 1600 and A.D. 1856. In this paper, we summarize the historical importance of this well-known site, describe poorly documented investigations of the site by University of Oregon archaeologists between 1960 and 1961, report on architectural details for a semisubterranean wood plankhouse that may have been typical of precontact dwellings at Chetlessenten, and discuss the evidence for the antiquity of the site.

DESPITE more than 120 years of research, the archaeology of the southern Northwest Coast remains relatively poorly known (Lyman 1991a: 1; Matson and Coupland 1995). Certainly less archaeological research has been done in this region than in adjacent coastal areas (Jones 1991; Moss and Erlandson 1995a), but for the Oregon coast a major part of the problem lies in the incomplete reporting of site excavations and the "absence of well established cultural chronologies" (Lyman and Ross 1988; Lyman 1991a: 29). In fact, a number of extensively excavated and highly significant Oregon coast sites have never been radiocarbon dated, which limits the resolution of intersite comparisons and the identification of the relatively rapid cultural and environmental changes that are typical of many Pacific Coast areas during the Late Holocene.

One of the more extensively excavated sites on the Oregon coast is the Tututni[1] Athapaskan village of Chetlessenten, commonly referred to as the Pistol River site (Heflin 1966). Located at the former mouth of the Pistol River on the southern Oregon coast (Fig. 1), Chetlessenten was the primary village of the Chetleshin people, although historical documents also refer to them as the Chetleshantunne, the Chetlessingtons, the Pistol River Indians (or Pistol Rivers), and other variants. Burned to the ground by whites in 1856 during the Rogue River Wars, exploration of the remnants of Chetlessenten by antiquarians began little more than a decade later (see Chase 1873; Schumacher 1874, 1877a; Olney 1887).

In 1960 and 1961, the site was investigated by University of Oregon archaeologists, although the results of this excavation were never formally reported. Most of what is known about the archaeology of Chetlessenten, therefore, is due to the determination and perseverance of Eugene Heflin, a member of the Oregon Archaeological Society. When the construction of U. S. Highway 101 threatened the site in the early 1960s, Heflin worked with local residents and University of Oregon archaeologists—often in direct competition with hordes of relic hunters—to salvage portions of this important site. Today, Heflin's (1966) monograph remains one of the few published site reports from the southern Oregon coast (see also Heflin 1981).

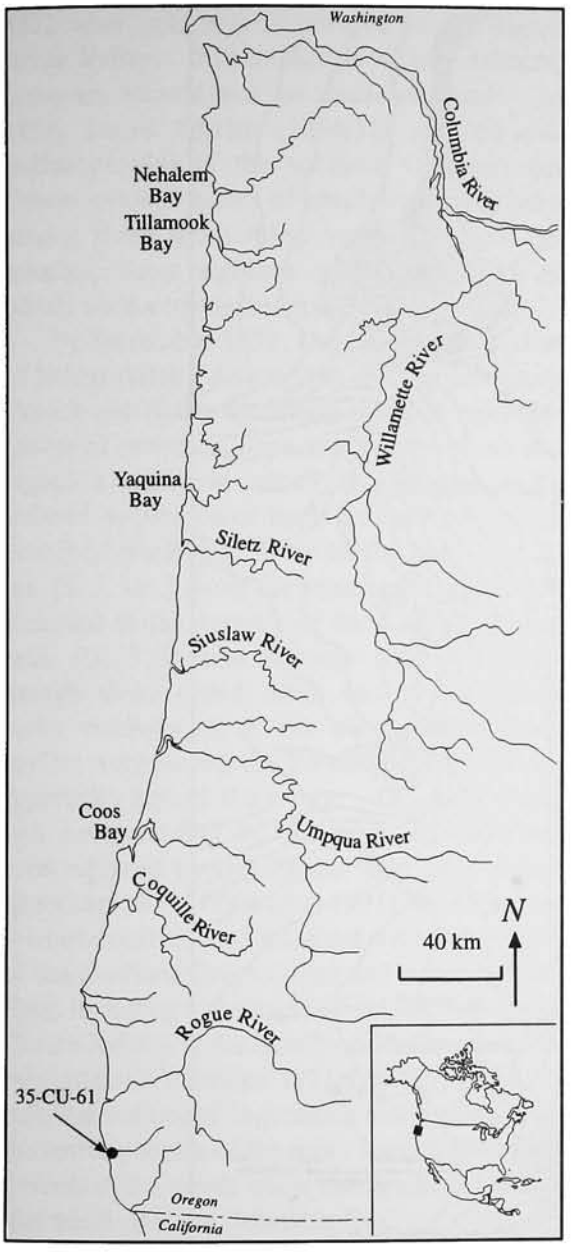

Fig. 1. The Oregon Coast and the location of Chetlessenten (35-CU-61).

Heflin (1966) summarized the historical context of Chetlessenten and described what was known about the structure, age, and contents of the site. Almost 30 years later, however, there remained no radiocarbon dates for the early occupation levels of the site, few details about the architecture of the many excavated houses, and no detailed analysis of the burials or other features documented. In this article, we discuss the results of a radiocarbon dating program instituted to develop a detailed occupational chronology for the site and describe the structure of a semisubterranean housepit excavated by a University of Oregon team in 1961.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Chetlessenten, also known as archaeological site 35-CU-61, is located north of the current mouth of the Pistol River in Curry County on the southern Oregon coast. Situated between Cape Sebastian on the north and Crook Point on the south, the site is located on the low bluffs just behind a prominent rocky stack known as Eagle or Henry Rock. Until the early 1960s, the Pistol River emptied into the sea directly in front of Chetlessenten (Fig. 2). Over the past three decades, however, the river mouth migrated nearly two km. to the south. Today, two creeks flow onto the beach in front of Chetlessenten, a larger stream marking the southern boundary of the site and a small creek that divides the site into northern and southern areas. In the general site vicinity, a broad sand beach is broken by numerous sea stacks, dune fields, and more distant rocky shorelines, offshore islets, and reefs. Inland lie the lowlands of the Pistol River Valley and the coastal foothills that rise into the thickly forested Klamath Mountains. Thus, the site provides access to a wide range of marine, estuarine, riverine, and terrestrial resources.

Early European or American accounts of the Pistol River area are sparse. In 1788 and 1792, respectively, an American, Robert Gray, and an Englishman, George Vancouver, described contacts with native peoples, both at Port Orford about 50 km. north of the Pistol River (Beckham 1971:18; Peterson and Powers 1977:6). Likewise, early fur trappers, such as Jedediah Smith,

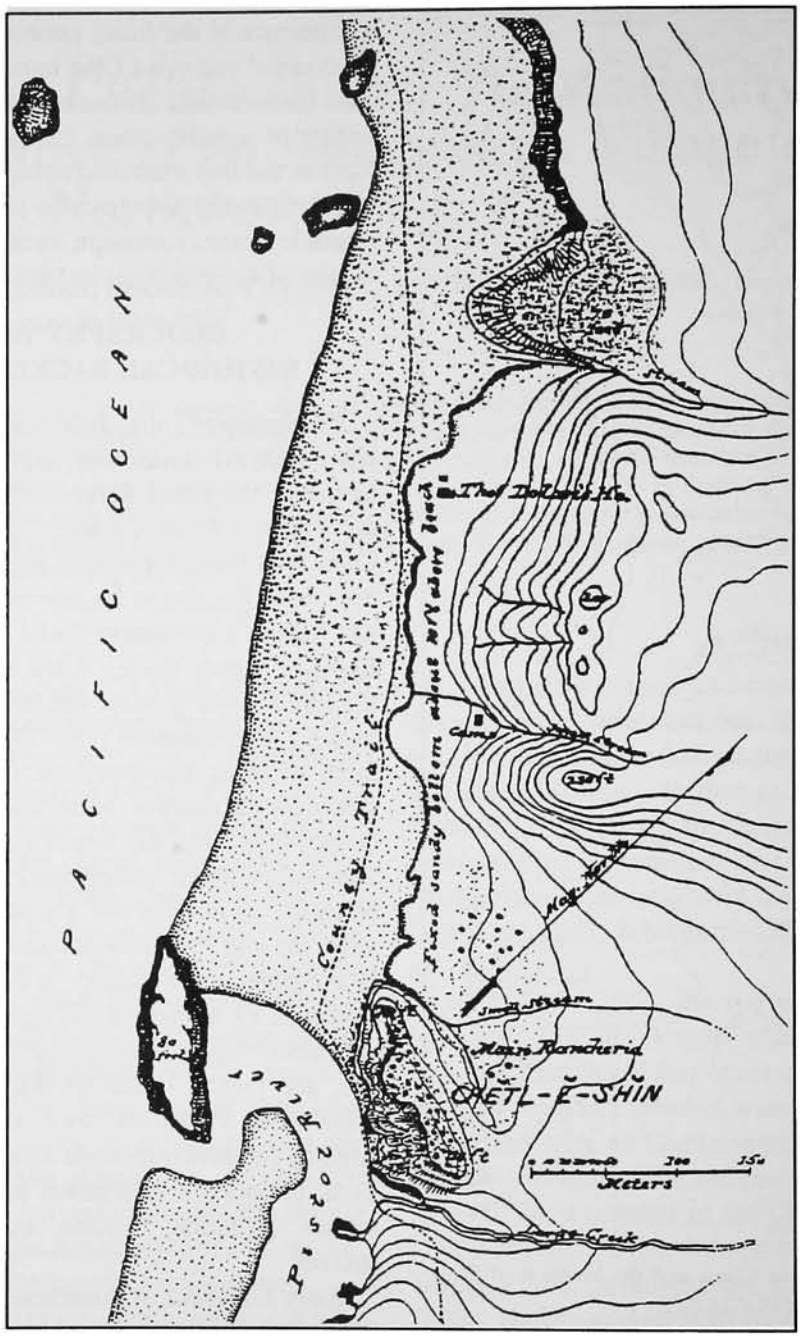

Fig. 2. Schumacher's (1877a) map of Chetlessenten and the Pistol River mouth.

left no specific accounts of the Chetleshin after visiting the area in the 1820s and 1830s (Sullivan 1934; Peterson and Powers 1977:10). Contacts between the Chetleshin and such newcomers probably were limited until numerous American miners and settlers converged on the area in

1852 after gold was discovered in the Rogue River Valley. The impact of earlier contacts, however, should not be underestimated. In 1854, Josiah Parrish (1854:31) reported that Indian peoples of the southern Oregon coast "show evident marks of smallpox having been among them about thirty years ago; also the measles, about eighteen years since, both of which were very destructive."

By September 1851, Oregon Superintendent of Indian Affairs Anson Dart and Indian Agents Parrish and Henry Spaulding met with representatives of several Athapaskan Tututni bands and signed a treaty in which the Tututnis relinquished possession of lands extending from the mouth of the Rogue River on the north, for 20 mi. (32.2 km.) along the coast to the south, and eastward to the summit of the Klamath Mountains (U. S. Senate Records 1893:4-7). Although these ceded lands encompassed their entire territory, it is not clear if Chetleshin leaders were among the Ya-su-chah Indians who reportedly signed the treaty. The 1851 treaty was never ratified by Congress and Dart was soon replaced by Joel Palmer as superintendent (Beckham 1971; O'Donnell 1991). By 1854, numerous conflicts had occurred between Indians of the southern Oregon coast and American settlers, including a massacre of at least two dozen Chetco Indians at the mouth of the Chetco River by vigilantes (Beckham 1971:136-137). As a result, Palmer began negotiating new treaties with the native peoples of the area. Parrish (1854:30) described the south coast Athapaskans, noting that south of Cape Sebastian live

> the Chet-less-en-tuns. Their village is north but near the mouth of a stream bearing their name, but better known to the whites as Pistol River. The Chet-less-en-tuns claim but about 8 miles of the coast; but as the country east of them is uninhabited, like others similarly situated, their lands are supposed to extend to the summit of the mountains.

Parrish (1854:29) noted that Chetlessenten was occupied by 51 people in 1854, including 16 men, 15 women, 11 boys, and 9 girls, led by the headman En-e-tus. When Palmer negotiated with the Tututnis at Port Orford in 1855, however, the representatives of the Chetleshin were recorded as Cosh-nul-see, Mos-quot, No-on-me-hos-quah, and Tac-qua (Tichenor 1883; U. S. Senate Records 1893:13-15). Like the 1851 treaty, the 1855 treaty was never ratified by Congress.

By 1856, the Chetleshin were embroiled in the hostilities known as the Rogue River Wars. In February of that year, Athapaskan warriors burned at least 60 homes of settlers along the southern Oregon coast and killed local Indian agent Ben Wright (Beckham 1971:175; O'Donnell 1991:257). By late February, the surviving whites were besieged at "Fort Miner" just north of the Rogue River. In March, a group of white volunteers, led by George Abbott, rode north from Crescent City intent on rescuing the settlers. On reaching Pistol River, Abbott's party found Chetlessenten abandoned and burned the empty plankhouses (Dodge 1898:85-86). However, Abbott's vigilantes were trapped in the dunes south of the river mouth for four days by a group of about 50 Pistol River and Rogue River Indians, until rescued by army regulars led by Colonel Robert Buchanan (Dodge 1898:86; Beckham 1971:179). Their Athapaskan opponents melted into the remote interior and joined with other "hostile" bands.

About three months later, after a series of skirmishes, and as Buchanan's forces prepared to attack once again, many of the Athapaskan forces surrendered to the U. S. Army. On July 9, 1856, the surviving Chetleshins were marched to the newly established Coast Reservation (Chandler 1856:57). According to Chase (1991: 202), however, the Chetleshin chief, his son, and four others escaped to the Smith River area in northern California, where they sought refuge among the Tolowa. Here they reportedly were killed by their hosts after white vigilantes threatened to burn the Tolowa villages. Two

years later, Abbott (1858:3-4) reported that only 27 Chetleshins were living near the Siletz reservation.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The first archaeological explorations along the southern Oregon coast began little more than a decade after Chetlessenten was burned to the ground. According to Lyman (1991b:157), Alexander Chase conducted archaeological work in the area in 1868 and 1872-1873 while working for the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey. Chase collected archaeological materials from at least five sites in Chetleshin territory, but the extent of his excavations at Chetlessenten are unknown.

In the early 1870s, in work jointly sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution and the United States Indian Bureau, Paul Schumacher (1874, 1877a, 1877b) also conducted archaeological research at Chetleshin sites. His 1874 report only briefly mentions Chetlessenten, but a later report described "about 50 depressions of former houses" (Schumacher 1877a:31) and provided the first detailed map of the site (Fig. 2). In describing his 1875 explorations of the village, Schumacher (1877a:31-32) stated that

> After considerable work was done in searching for a cemetery, but without the desired result, we again resorted to the house-sites, and especially to those filled up by human hands, which was proven to be a fact by finding human skeletons interred at the bottom of the excavation. . . Doubled up, the skeletons were resting near the wall of the excavation, and faced the fireplace. . . . On the floor on which the skeletons rested was found a layer of ashes of several inches in thickness. But the fire had not affected the skeletons, as in no instance was any such damage observed, and even the remains of matting, furs, and other similar perishable material were not injured by it. It seems, therefore, evident that the hut was demolished by fire, after the owner had expired, and was buried in the ruins, covered with rubbish and earth surrounding his house.

As we will show, Schumacher's early description of houses and burials at Chetlessenten bears striking similarities to features discovered at the site some 86 years later.

Sometime in the 1880s, O. W. Olney (1887) also dug at Chetlessenten. Olney reported the presence of housepits, shell midden deposits as much as 20 ft. (ca. 9 m.) deep, and several distinct strata with increasingly elaborate tools and increasing numbers of fish and mammal remains towards the top of the shell mound. The specifics of Olney's report are liberally mixed with flights of fancy (or fantasy), however, and should be regarded with some skepticism. Because of the notoriety of the site, it seems likely that a number of additional excavations by amateur antiquarians took place in the late 1800s or early 1900s, but remain undocumented and unreported.

In 1958, as plans were being made to widen and straighten the Coast Highway (now U. S. Highway 101), someone plotted Chetlessenten and several other archaeological sites on a blueprint map of the proposed highway realignment route. According to archaeologist David Cole (personal communication 1997), then with the University of Oregon State Museum of Anthropology, no highway funds for archaeology were available for this project. Nonetheless, Cole visited the site in 1960 at the request of Wilfred Wasson, a local Pistol River resident and graduate student in anthropology at the University of Oregon. Notes and collections now housed at the University of Oregon's Museum of Natural History suggest that Cole officially recorded Chetlessenten as 35-CU-61 in December 1960, recommending that further work be done at the site.

With a team of University of Oregon volunteers, Cole returned to the site in June of 1961, working primarily in the northern site area for six days. Working with local volunteers, they set up a metric grid system, excavated three contiguous 2 by 2-m. test units in 20-cm. arbitrary levels, and exposed the remnants of an entire house structure and several burials located about

20 to 25 m. to the southwest. Among the field crew were Frank Leonhardy, R. W. Miskimins, F. Lynn Richmond, Wayne Slusser, Doug Vincent, and Wilfred Wasson. Wasson, a member of the Coquille and Coos Indian tribes, played a key role in the University of Oregon excavations, with volunteer help from his brother, George Wasson, and local residents Ron and Bill Crook. Prompted by a call from Ron Crook, Wilfred Wasson participated in nine more days of excavation at the site in September 1961, when several more burials were uncovered just north and east of the excavated housepit. No detailed account of these investigations has been published (see Cole et al. 1961), but their work was referred to briefly by Heflin (1966).

Heflin's (1966:154-155) salvage excavations at Chetlessenten began in September 1961, with help from the Crooks, the Wassons, and several members of the Oregon Archaeological Society. Heflin's excavations, focused primarily in the southern site area, continued until April 1962, when much of the site was graded away during highway construction. According to Heflin's (1966:158) site map, Chetlessenten encompassed an area of at least 175 m. north-to-south and 110 m. east-to-west (Fig. 3). Shell midden deposits were up to three meters deep in the southern site area and up to two meters deep in the northern area (Heflin 1966:159). Of the 42 housepits mapped at 35-CU-61, Heflin listed 18 as having been wholly or partly excavated. In the process, Heflin recovered a remarkably diverse collection of stone, bone, shell, and other artifacts of aboriginal manufacture, as well as a variety of artifacts made from glass, metal, and ceramics of European or Asian origin. Based on his observations and discussions with David Cole, Heflin (1966:176) estimated that the initial occupation of Chetlessenten began about A.D. 1640. Unfortunately, the location of Heflin's collection is currently unknown and the materials may well be unavailable for further scholarly study.

In various places, Heflin described Chetlessenten as having been destroyed, although he clearly recognized that remnants of the site survived the highway construction of the early 1960s. The site was revisited in the 1970s by Richard Ross (1976a) and in the 1980s by Rick Minor (1986:103). Both suggested that remnants of the site might still exist despite finding little surface evidence of the site. Since 1992, the authors have been involved in a program of archaeological survey and site evaluations for state lands located on the Oregon coast (Erlandson and Moss 1993; Moss and Erlandson 1994, 1995b). During that work, which included nominating Chetlessenten and 88 other Oregon coast sites to the National Register of Historic Places (Moss and Erlandson 1996),[2] we revisited the remnants of Chetlessenten several times, studied museum collections at the University of Oregon, and conducted background research on the historical events that led to the abandonment of the village. Our primary objective was to determine the extent and integrity of 35-CU-61 in order to document the significance of the site for nomination to the National Register. A key step in accomplishing that goal was obtaining materials suitable for radiocarbon dating and establishing the antiquity of the site occupation.

TUTUTNI AND CHETLESSENTEN ARCHITECTURE

In the 1850s, Parrish (1854:31) described Tututni houses as

> constructed by excavating a hole in the ground, 12 or 16 feet square, and 4 or 5 feet deep, inside of which puncheons or split stuff are set up-right, 6 or 8 feet high; upon the top of these boards or thatch are placed for the roof. In the gable end a round hole is made, sufficiently large for the entrance of one person; the descent is made by passing down a pole, upon which rude notches are cut, which serve for steps.

Of the 42 housepits he mapped at 35-CU-61, Heflin (1966:158) noted that 15 in the southern site area and three in the northern area had been

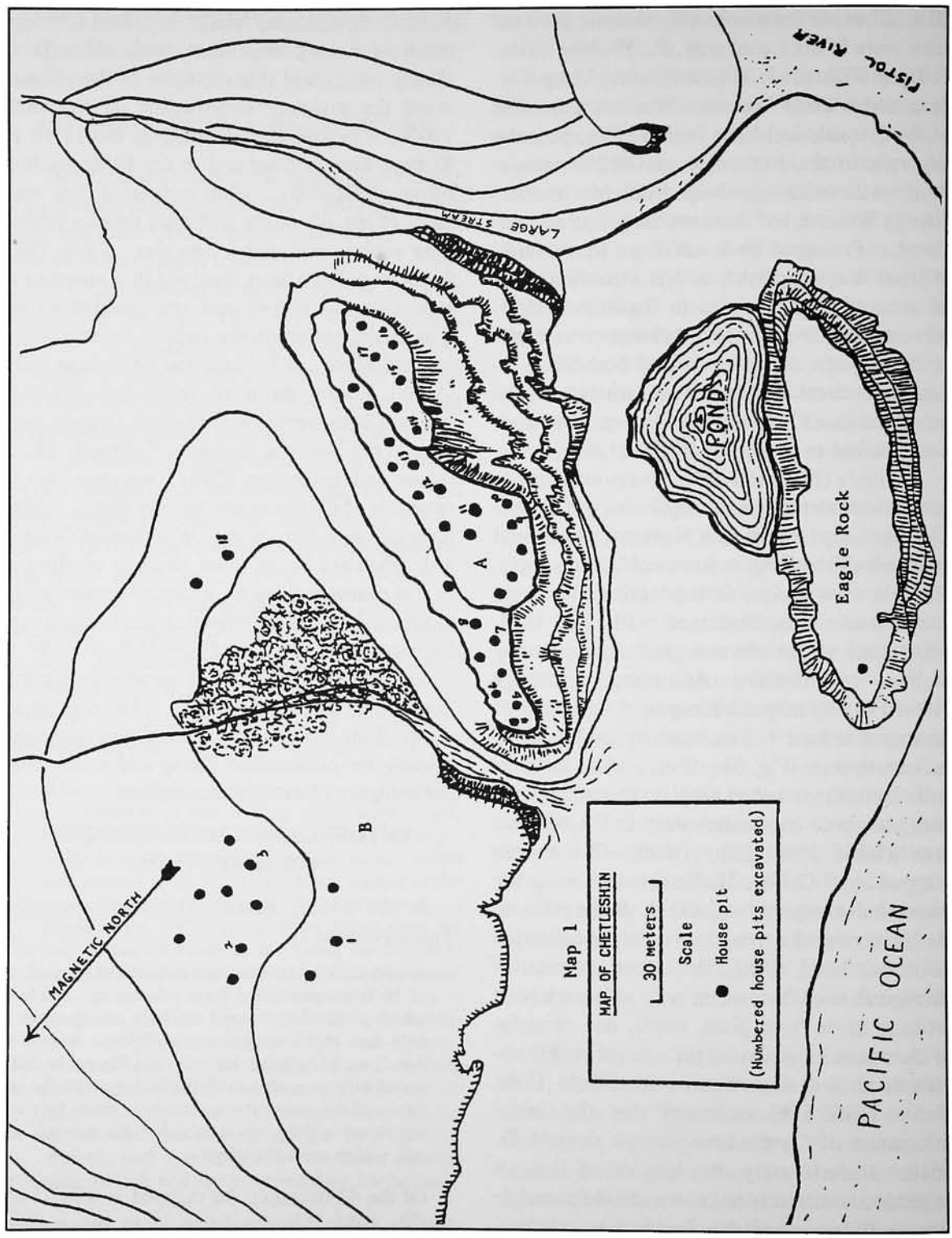

Fig. 3. Heflin's map of Chetlessenten (adapted from Heflin 1966).

wholly or partly excavated (Fig. 3). Despite the large number of housepits excavated, Heflin (1966:163-164) provided only general descriptions of the architecture of Chetlessenten dwellings. One of the structures excavated in the northern site area was described as the remnants of a badly disturbed sweathouse, with a clay-lined subterranean entrance tunnel about 60 cm. wide, 60 cm. deep, and 4.6 m. long. Schumacher (1877a:Plate 4) also depicted a semisubterranean structure at Chetlessenten that contained an underground entrance tunnel. Heflin (1966:163-164) also described a rectangular housepit excavated in the northern site area that was 3.5 m. (11.5 ft.) wide and 7.3 m. (24 ft.) long and contained

> charred pieces of corner posts, charred horizontal base boards, and stubs of vertical wall boards. . . . A post near the center of the south wall was somewhat puzzling, but may have been a support for a single ridgepole although it seems probable that most houses had two ridgepoles. . . . In this house we found fragments of a badly charred basket hat, a brass uniform button, a brass bracelet, a stone maul, a corroded iron key, pieces of amber-colored bottle, and an arrowhead chipped from a piece of the same colored glass. What appeared to be a cache of trapezoid copper pieces was located at a depth of 3 feet near the northeast end of what must have been the anteroom. Some square nails, a 4 inch piece of rolled iron, two 11 inch iron bars, a 7 inch copper bar, and a 9 inch rusted iron knife were also found.

The abundance of iron, brass, copper, and glass artifacts in this house strongly suggest that it was occupied into the 1850s, when Euroamerican trade goods became more widely available to the Tututni.

Heflin (1966) also excavated a number of houses in the southern site area. For these, he provided a general description, apparently based on both archaeological and ethnographic data:

> Other houses, partially or fully excavated on the south section appeared to be older. They averaged about 12.5 by 15 feet in size, had vertical wall boards and corner posts of cedar, white or bluish clay floors, and an excavated area which ranged from 2 to 4 feet in depth. . . . Dwellings were rectangular pit houses judged to have been about 8 feet high, with vertical planking on the walls and with probably gabled roofs of bark, cedar planks, or grass thatch. Living quarters were in an excavated area or pit which ranged in depth from one to 5 feet, sometimes extending to the outer walls, but often separated from the rest by a surrounding ledge of dirt and a vestibule in front. Floors were of hard-packed clay, gravel, or beach sand. A stone encircled fireplace was near the center of the rear of the pit [Heflin 1966:165].

In 1961, University of Oregon archaeologists and local volunteers excavated an entire housepit in the northern site area. This appears to correspond to Heflin's (1966:158) Housepit 1 (see Fig. 3). Detailed drawings by Frank Leonhardy show that the interior floor space of this structure was roughly square and about 4 m. wide by 4.5 m. long (Fig. 4). Like the other houses described by Heflin, this structure seems to have been built of vertical wall planks bracketed by horizontal baseboards, with an elongated firepit in the center of the floor. Three disturbed areas were noted within the confines of the structure, two pits probably excavated by antiquarians or looters and a third irregular depression containing numerous horse bones, a tin can, and other debris. In the northeast portion of the housepit, "several hundred" blue and white glass beads were recovered (Cole et al. 1961).

Also found in and around this structure was a number of human burials. According to Cole et al. (1961), intact burials were found in three corners of the dwelling, along with a fourth burial and a human skull along the southeast wall. Scattered human bones found in a disturbed area near the northwest corner of the house suggest that one or more burials may have been removed by earlier excavators. At least seven more burials were found to the north or northeast, all within two to eight meters of the house itself. Most of these interments were buried flexed on

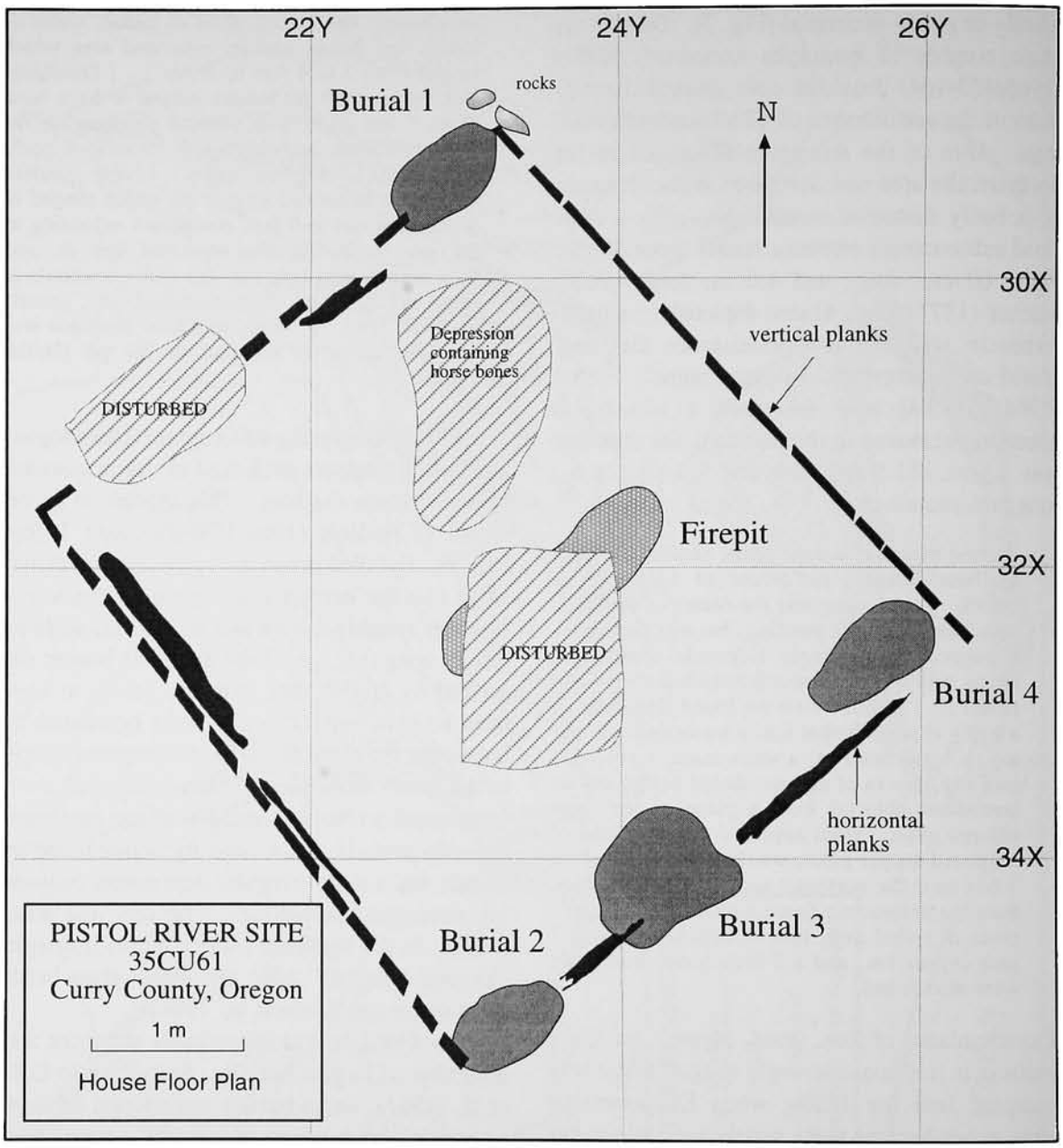

Fig. 4. Plan view of House 1 at Chetlessenten (adapted from the notes of F. Leonhardy).

their back or sides, generally with heads pointing towards the north or northwest. Several of the burials located in or around this house appear to have been associated with historical trade goods (glass beads, metal buttons, and a Chinese coin; see Heflin 1966:172-173), indicating that at least some of these people died and were buried during the postcontact period. Others had *Dentalium* beads around the mouth or nose, similar to Tolowa practices described by Drucker (1937:255).

Significantly, all four intact burials inside the

house were interred in shallow pits dug through the clay floor, with portions of each interment projecting above the floor (Cole et al. 1961). Although none of the human bones showed evidence of burning, the excavators noted that charred house timbers were found directly overlying some of the human remains. This pattern is very similar to Schumacher's (1877a:32) description (see above) of Chetlessenten interments buried on the floor of an abandoned (and partly refilled) housepit, with the burned remnants of the house itself lying over the burials.

Such associations are also reminiscent of a Chetco burial practice recorded by Chase in the 1860s or 1870s. After an elderly Chetco man, one of the last living in their ancestral lands, had died of consumption the previous night,

> [w]e went over the next morning, but found that he had been already buried. Over the grave were placed large puncheon's or rough hewn planks, on these heavy flat stones were laid & his baskets, a stone pestle, & other belongings disposed on top. . . . His dwelling house & sweat house were both in flames. This practice of immediately burning the house or hut after a death has occurred therein evidently has its rise in some rude idea of sanitary measures. Mr. Simpson, then Indian Agent at the Siletz Reserve, informed me in 1868 that he had the greatest difficulty in preventing the really substantial log houses erected under his supervision by the Indians from being burnt whenever a death occurred in them [Chase 1991:197].

For the Tolowa, Drucker (1937:255) noted that the deceased normally were buried in a cemetery "close among the houses" and that the house, sweathouse, and other personal belongings of the dead were burned if there were no close male relatives to inherit the property.

Comparing such ethnographic accounts, the archaeological data available from 35-CU-61 (Schumacher 1877a; Cole et al. 1961), and historical accounts of smallpox and measles epidemics along the southern Oregon coast in the 1820s or 1830s (Parrish 1854:31), suggest a possible explanation for the archaeological associations observed in and around House 1 at Chetlessenten. The seven or more individuals buried outside the house may have been part of a formal cemetery located in the northern site area, possibly dating to the early postcontact period given the relative dearth of historic artifacts (one glass bead). The six individuals identified inside House 1 (including an adult male, three adult females, and two children) may have died at about the same time, then were buried together in the bottom of the housepit, after which the house remnants were burned to the ground. Once again, the dearth of historic artifacts suggests that they may have died during the early postcontact period, when Euroamerican trade goods were highly valued and relatively difficult to obtain. If these inferences are correct, it is conceivable that the Chetleshin people buried in House 1 were part of an extended family group who died during one of the epidemics that decimated the Tututnis in the 1820s or 1830s.

RADIOCARBON DATES AND CALENDAR AGES

In the last few years, we have obtained five radiocarbon dates for 35-CU-61 (Table 1). Four of the dates from Chetlessenten come from the northern site area and one from the southern site area. Since historical accounts suggest that the site was occupied until A.D. 1856, the primary goal of our dating program was to establish the radiocarbon age of House 1 and the antiquity of the precontact occupation of Chetlessenten.

Our dating program began with the selection of samples of charred timbers excavated by Cole et al. (1961) from House 1. Two charcoal samples (weighing 11.0 and 8.8 g.) were submitted to Beta Analytic, where they were cleaned and pretreated with a sequence of acid/alkali/acid washes to remove carbonate and secondary organic acids. Analysis of these two samples by liquid scintillation counting produced conventional radiocarbon dates that were statistically

Table 1
RADIOCARBON DATES[a] FROM CHETLESSENTEN (35-CU-61)

Lab No.	Uncorrected Age	Estimated Calendar Age Range (A.D.)	Material Dated	Sample Provenience
Beta-74744	260 ± 60	1530 to 1950[b] (1650)	charred wood	House 1, burned timber
Beta-74743	280 ± 50	1530 to 1660 (1650)	charred wood	House 1, burned timber
Beta-83224	440 ± 70	1550 to 1700 (1660)	*Tresus* clam shell	Unit 50-52X/42-44Y, 20-40 cm.
Beta-83223	490 ± 60	1640 to 1810 (1680)	California mussel shell	Unit 50-52X/44-46Y, 60-80 cm.
Beta-91368	530 ± 70	1500 to 1680 (1620)	California mussel shell	SW area, Hwy 101 cut: 120 cm.

[a] Calendar ages derived from the CALIB 3.0.3 program (Stuiver and Reimer 1993), with dates presented as a range at one standard deviation, with midpoint in parentheses. Estimated values include an average of +420 ± 10 years for $^{13}C/^{12}C$ ratios on marine or estuarine shell, and an estimated correction for the regional oceanic reservoir effect (delta-R) of -240 ± 50 years (Moss and Erlandson 1995b).

[b] Calendar date has multiple intercepts on the calibration curve.

very similar: 260 ± 60 (Beta-74744) and 280 ± 50 (Beta-74743) RCYBP. After calibration to calendar years, the two dates each produced midpoints of A.D. 1650.

Although the calibration of Beta-74744 produced multiple intercepts on Stuiver and Reimer's (1993) curve, the consistency of the two dates suggests that the A.D. 1650 date accurately reflects the age of the wood sample. Because these samples come from planks of cedar or other long-lived conifers, however, the dates are maximum ages that measure the growth of the wood and not necessarily the construction of the house (see Schiffer 1986). Thus, there is nothing inherently inconsistent with a precontact radiocarbon age for a house structure that could have been built during the early contact period. At present, however, the radiocarbon dates and other available data suggest only that House 1 was built sometime after A.D. 1650 and sometime before A.D. 1850.

In 1961, the University of Oregon team also excavated three test units in a shell midden deposit about 25 m. north and east of House 1. Here, excavators described encountering five major strata in archaeological deposits about 1.5 m. deep. Stratum I was described as a dark brown midden soil containing small pebbles, broken rocks, moderate amounts of marine shell, numerous animal bones, a variety of Native American artifacts, and some historical trade goods. Stratum II was generally sandier, orangish-brown or grayish-brown in color, with several burned features, localized accumulations of dense shell refuse, and lesser amounts of animal bone. Stratum III was described as a sandy brown soil containing relatively few artifacts and generally lesser quantities of shell and bone. Stratum IV was a dark brown soil containing numerous animal bones and abundant charcoal, but relatively few shells or artifacts. Finally, Stratum V was described as a reddish-brown or dark brown soil containing small pebbles but no artifacts, shell, or bone outside of rodent burrows.

From museum collections, we obtained two large shell fragments recovered in 1961 from Stratum II. Analysis of the first, a 15.0 g. fragment of California mussel (*Mytilus californianus*) from the 60 to 80-cm. level in Unit 50-52X/44-46Y, produced an uncorrected date of 490 ± 60 RCYBP (Beta-83223). The second, a 30.9 g. fragment of gaper clam (*Tresus nuttallii*) from the 20 to 40-cm. level of Unit 50-52X/42-44Y, was dated to 440 ± 70 RCYBP (Beta-83224). Calibrating these marine shell dates, including estimated corrections of -240 ± 50 years for the local reservoir effect (Erlandson and Moss 1993;

Moss and Erlandson 1995b), produced calendrical midpoints corresponding to A.D. 1680 and A.D. 1660, respectively. These dates, which are very similar to the charcoal dates from House 1, suggest that most of the midden in the northern area of Chetlessenten was deposited after about A.D. 1600.

A final sample from 35-CU-61 comes from the remnants of the southern site area. Despite extensive damage associated with highway construction, portions of the southern site area still exist. Dense shell midden deposits are exposed at the top of the highway cut on the east side of U. S. Highway 101. Near the southern end of the site, we identified dense and stratified shell midden deposits about 120 cm. thick, formed in a dark brown soil resting almost directly on what appeared to be an indurated orangish-brown eolianite. From the lowest 10 cm. of this midden deposit, a single 11.3 g. fragment of California mussel shell was collected and submitted for radiocarbon dating. Analysis of this shell fragment produced an uncorrected date of 530 $\pm$ 70 RCYBP (Beta-91368). After calibration, this date suggests that the southern site area may first have been occupied at about A.D. 1620, which is consistent with the four dates for the northern site area.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Radiocarbon dates, general descriptions of the artifacts recovered, and historical accounts provide a remarkably consistent picture of the chronology of site occupation at Chetlessenten. All five radiocarbon dates from the site cluster very closely between about A.D. 1600 and A.D. 1700, although the two dates from the house timbers may well be affected by the "old wood problem." Stratigraphic relationships and the distribution of European, Asian, or American trade goods suggest that the site was occupied more or less continuously until A.D. 1856, although further analysis of the historical artifacts might enhance the resolution of this general chronology. The artifacts recovered from the site by Cole et al. (1961) and Heflin (1966) also consist of materials that appear to date predominantly, if not exclusively, to the late precontact and early postcontact periods. The presence of archaeological materials stratigraphically below the radiocarbon dated Stratum II shell midden in the northern site area suggests that earlier occupations of the site may also have occurred. However, these strata produced small, triangular projectile points similar to those from Strata I and II, suggesting that they probably also date within the past 1,000 to 1,500 years. Resolving the antiquity of these lower deposits should be a focus of any future research at the site.

In this article, we have offered the first chronometric framework for the precontact archaeological materials recovered from 35-CU-61, provided a detailed description of a Chetleshin dwelling, and discussed some of the events that may have led to the association of human burials in and around this structure. Ultimately, our analyses illustrate the need for more detailed studies of the Chetlessenten assemblage, the collection of additional materials (including fine-screened midden samples) from the site, and detailed comparative analysis of this important collection and other assemblages from the southern Northwest Coast. Fortunately, 30 years after the publication of Heflin's (1966) report, there is renewed interest in archaeological, anthropological, and historical studies of the Chetleshin people. Under the auspices of the University of Oregon's Coastal Prehistory Program, Rick Minor and Ruth Greenspan are analyzing the artifacts and faunal remains from Cole et al.'s (1961) excavations at Chetlessenten, Guy Tasa is studying the human skeletal remains from the site, and Moss and Wasson (1997) have explored the history of the site and its implications for relationships between contemporary archaeologists, Native Americans, and local residents.

In coastal areas north and south of Oregon, relatively rapid and highly significant cultural

and environmental changes took place during the Late Holocene. On the Oregon coast, where the vast majority of archaeological sites date within the last 2,000 years (Lyman 1991a:3; Moss and Erlandson 1995b:116), there have been only limited attempts to search for fine-scale changes in settlement, subsistence, technology, and cultural complexity (e.g., Ross 1990; Lyman 1991a). This is due in part to the lack of radiocarbon dates for several important Oregon Coast assemblages excavated over the years (e.g., Leatherman and Krieger 1940; Berreman 1944; Cressman 1953; Ross 1976b, 1977). We hope our work at Chetlessenten will stimulate others to conduct more detailed studies of museum collections from Oregon coast sites, to help refine the cultural chronologies of the southern Northwest Coast, and to reconstruct a more comprehensive picture of Late Holocene and postcontact cultural changes in the region.

NOTES

1. No scholarly consensus has been reached about the proper spelling, pronunciation, or usage of the terms Tututni, Chetleshin, or Chetlessenten. We followed Miller and Seaburg (1990) in using Tututni to refer to several Athapaskan peoples of southwest Oregon who spoke related dialects, and Chetleshin to refer to the people who lived in several villages near the mouth of the Pistol River.

2. On September 10, 1997, Chetlessenten (35-CU-61) was one of 89 Oregon coast sites officially placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

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