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Author

Reed, Allen C

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LOST AND FOUND

The three brief items that comprise this installment of Lost and Found each describes a rare and rather unusual type of archaeological site that seems so far to have been relatively neglected in the literature. The first article, from the Los Angeles Times, is an early account of a site in Nevada's Arrow Canyon Wilderness Area, in an area that is also characterized by considerable biodiversity and a great deal of rock art. The second, reprinted from Arizona Highways, discusses a site in central Arizona that is situated in a somewhat different context from the others. The third, which is reprinted from the Pacific Coast Archaeological Society Quarterly, describes a site in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park that is currently being restudied by Joan Schneider. Two other, similar sites are reputed to be located in Death Valley and Baja California, respectively (P. Wilke, personal communication 2007). Please note that a number of photographs that originally accompanied the last two articles could not be adequately reproduced here and have been deleted; interested readers are urged to consult the original articles, which are readily available in most libraries.

ARROWS FROM THE LONG AGO

Anonymous

[Los Angeles Times, October 5, 1904]

Unique fissure full of Indian relics to be made attractive. Thousands of arrow shot by bands of Indians for possibly centuries protrude from a fissure several hundred feet long in the rocky walls of Arrow Cañon, about twenty miles from the crossing of the Salt Lake Railroad over the Moapa River. It is the intention of the company to make this cañon with its historic relics one of the scenic attractions on the completion of the railroad.

At a point where the perpendicular wall of the cañon juts out about 200 feet above the cañon bed, the thin, snake-like fissure runs in the rock. Successive generations of Indians have gone to the place at regular intervals and shot their gaily-befathered arrows upward, forming a fringed scarf unique in its oddity. The arrows are so thick that little room is left for more, and owing to the position of the fissure at a height of 200 feet

and under the shelving wall, the relics, protected from the weather, have stuck where they were driven in uncounted years ago.

Already relic hunters are visiting the place and despoiling it of its treasures by shooting the arrows out with revolvers and rifles. In the sands of the bed of the cañon many arrow heads of various sizes and shapes are found buried. It is believed the Indians visited this spot in connection with some rite. Crude, strange figures have been cut by them in the face of the rock wall.

* * *

ARROW FEVER

Allen C. Reed

[Arizona Highways 28(3):11-13, March 1952]

...Herman Womack, of Prescott, field director of the Yavapai Amateur Archaeological Society, another veteran collector [of arrowheads], has devoted the majority of his spare time during the past twenty-four years to this hobby both in building a private collection and in contributing to museums.

It all began when he found an arrowhead in his backyard in Prescott. This launched an ever-widening search until he had covered most of the entire state of Arizona. One of the most interesting experiences in connection with Womack's hobby came about several years ago when a friend, while hunting deer near Fossil Creek, discovered a dry smoke-blackened cave with arrows protruding from the many crevices in the rocky interior. He brought out those he could reach and later took Womack back with him to help build a makeshift ladder in an effort to reach those high in the ceiling of the cave. On this trip Womack obtained some feathered reed shafts, most of which were tipped with hard wood. Still more were left behind out of reach high in a narrow slot in the cave's ceiling. Sixteen years passed before he was to return in an attempt to investigate them. On his return trip he was accompanied by Albert Owsley, of Prescott, the writer. Though this was an unusual type of Indian artifact trip, at the same time it proved exciting.

From Prescott we traveled [to]...Fossil Springs. There we left the car and hiked about four miles up Fossil Creek Canyon to where Calf Pen Canyon branches off to the right. We paused many times to admire the beauty of our surroundings and to drink of the cool water. A mile and a half up Calf Pen Canyon Womack, with the aid of powerful binoculars and a good memory, searched out the general location of the cave at the base of the cliffs above the talus slope.

We filled our canteens and started the long climb, over rocks, through cactus and thorny brush, up the steep slope to the base of the cliffs. The hidden location of the cave and great boulders at its mouth make it impossible to see the actual opening from below until the searcher stands directly in front of it. Being so close to the cliff columns made finding the cave quite difficult, but after a ten-minute hunt, Womack rounded a corner of rock and found himself standing before the same cave he had last visited sixteen years before. We anxiously entered and to our surprise found the ladder in place just as Womack had left it.

Upon close examination the ladder was found to be badly in need of repair; it was bowed and split in several places. In anticipation of this we had packed along a few splices, some wire and nails. These were brought into the cave and the ladder was reinforced as much as possible. While we steadied the wobbly ladder Womack took a flashlight and carefully climbed up to the ceiling of the cave, where he squeezed his way into the crevice. From the top of the 15-foot ladder he was barely able to make out a group of arrow shafts protruding from the crevice about 15 feet overhead, beyond his reach.

A cross-section of the cliff through the cave would appear like this sketch [see figure]. Though we discovered a wooden pole long enough to reach the arrows from the top of the ladder, we hesitated to use it because of much rock loosely lodged directly overhead. The crevice at the lower end offered barely enough room for one to squeeze in and no room to dodge anything from above. With the pole and the aid of a dimming flashlight we tried to work loose an arrow to photograph. In doing so we touched one of the hair-trigger rocks which came crashing down, showering dust and smashing the light from the prober's hand as it plunged to the cave floor through the one space in the crevice that his body did not block....



For many years after his first visit, Herman Womack had tried to track down the legend of the cave and the reason for the arrows in the rocks. One explanation came from an old Apache who had lived all his life around Fossil Creek. He told of a legend about a ceremonial cave of the early Apaches where they took their young men and allowed them to choose one arrow from their quiver and shoot it into the crevices. If it stayed this was a sign that the Indian youth had reached manhood and would be a great hunter. It was said that the Apache ancestors who guard the cave would hurl great rocks upon anyone who disturbed these arrows. We must admit that we didn't see an ancestor throw the rock but the near miss of the crashing boulder that filled the crevice with choking dust and plunged it into darkness was convincing enough that the rest of the arrows might well remain where they were. And as far as we know they are there yet.

* * *

A GAME OF SKILL?

Robert S. Begole

[*Pacific Coast Archaeological Society Quarterly*
21(4):60–62, October 1985]

In the late 1970s Paul Johnson, the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park Naturalist, discovered a broken, two-piece arrow shaft on a small ledge at the base of a steep canyon wall. Subsequently, it was accessioned and catalogued in the Park's artifact collection. However, a perplexing question remained, "How did the arrow arrive on this low ledge?" Could it have been from one of the numerous flash floods sweeping through the canyon every few years?

The mystery may have been solved with the discovery of two barely discernable small cracks higher on the canyon wall. One was twenty-three feet and the other thirty-nine feet above the canyon floor. Into these cracks had been shot more than forty arrows. With some ingenuity and considerable aplomb a difficult task was performed in retrieving seven more broken arrow shafts for examination and addition to the Park's artifact

collection. The arrows were of two types: (a) a one-piece shaft of plain wormwood (*Artemisia ludoviciana*) with the sharpened points fire hardened, but due to the elements as well as time, no arrow-feathering remained on the shafts; (b) a two-piece shaft consisting of a six- to eight-inch fire hardened foreshaft of wormwood or mesquite (*Prosopis juliflora*) inserted into the mainshaft of Carrizo cane (*Phragmites communis*) and glued with mesquite gum. In the area of cane and wooden point juncture the cane was reinforced with sinew. Indications of scorching could be recognized in the Carrizo cane showing that the cane had been straightened with an arrow shaft straightener.

Some years ago, on an elevated terrace across the canyon, I had recorded a small habitation area consisting of a dozen or more dwelling sites. These sites appeared to encompass four different ages. With early morning cross lighting, three or more San Dieguito I swept circles can be seen as well as several faint San Dieguito II rock circles. Easily noticeable are several small (78" OD) Amargosan I type rock slab outlined circles. Near one of these circles lies a boulder and cobble ground figure depicting a snake. It was constructed with a 12.5" x 15.5" boulder as the head, a cobble body and a 19.5" cobble and pebble circle representing the tail rattles. The overall length of the figure was 110" and surprisingly was found to lie in a true north-south direction. Perhaps this orientation carried an important meaning.

The last period of habitation lies along the west side of the terrace opposite the canyon wall containing the arrow shafts. The Southern Diegueño, the last people to inhabit the area, probably stopped here only temporarily as evidenced by the small amount of pottery sherds and pieces of chipping waste. In all probability, it was these Diegueños and guests who were responsible for the arrows shot into the cracks of the canyon wall. Several cracks show evidence of a roosting place for small bats. Perhaps originally one of these cracks containing bats was used for target practice, then later another crack sans bats was utilized as a target in a game of skill. Judging from the expenditure of arrows, surely it must have been quite a riotous time for the locals and guests as they vied with one another to lodge an arrow into a predesignated small crack.

