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Schneider: *The Archaeology of the Afton Canyon Site*

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the Great Basin, and the data will provide an invaluable comparative base for future research into the biological history of human occupation in the Great Basin.

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1987 Stillwater Human Skeletal Remains. In: Final Report on Excavations in the Stillwater Marsh Archaeological District, D. R. Tuohy, A. J. Dansie, and M. B. Haldeman, eds., pp. 1-78. Carson City: Nevada State Museum Archaeological Services.



#### *The Archaeology of the Afton Canyon Site.*

Joan S. Schneider. San Bernardino County Museum Association *Quarterly* 36(1), 1989, 161 pp., 61 figs., 26 tables, 8 appendices, \$10.00 (paper).

Reviewed by:

#### **DANIEL O. LARSON**

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This volume reports on the excavation of the Afton Canyon site (CA-SBR-85), located on the Mojave River, approximately forty miles east of Barstow, California. It is a revised version of the author's Master's thesis completed in 1987 at the University of California, Riverside. The author and her 76 volunteers are to be commended for their many efforts to preserve and

protect this significant archaeological property. Over 1,400 hours of labor were contributed by these individuals and the archaeological community is indebted to them.

In the Introduction, Schneider's stated purpose is to examine "a desert prehistoric site where aboriginal people had year-round access to water and associated riparian resources, and thus were capable of a less ephemeral lifestyle than typical desert hunter-gatherer populations" (p. 4). She speculates that semipermanent settlements may have been occupied along this portion of the Mojave River. The author also is interested in the potential interaction among "sedentary or semi-sedentary groups" and "those passing through" this region. With this brief introduction, the author sets the reader's curiosity into motion.

The volume is divided into eight chapters. The first two are the introduction and environmental setting, respectively. Chapter 3 presents a brief ethnographic overview and a discussion of previous archaeological research. This is followed in Chapter 4 by a detailed description of the site, an explanation of field procedures, discussions of stratigraphy, modern disturbances, features, and analytical tasks. Chapter 5 presents the analytical results associated with studies of chipped and ground stone artifacts, vertebrate faunal remains, ceramics, and plant remains. Chapters 6 and 7 discuss obsidian use and source locations, and the chronological placement of the Afton Canyon site based on radiocarbon dates, projectile points, ceramics, and shell beads. Finally, the summary and conclusions are stated in Chapter 8.

The report provides clear and concise statements about the archaeological methods and procedures used to excavate the site. Results of feature excavations, flotation studies of plant and animal remains, lithic reduction sequences, and use of local lithic source materials are especially interesting. The quality of the photographs, feature drawings, artifact line drawings, charts,

and tables are of medium quality, and they are well-integrated into the text. The sections on materials analyses follow a rather traditional format, but in spite of this regimented approach, each section provides important data concerning regional archaeological research interests.

Schneider's report is accompanied by eight appendices, including special studies by Jenkins (ceramics), Sutton and Yohe (vertebrate faunal remains), King (beads), and Bouey (obsidian). Each study is well-written and presents interesting data.

In the conclusions, the author suggests that the site was occupied mainly during the Saratoga Springs Period (A.D. 500-1200) and was used primarily to exploit local lithic resources and secondarily for hunting bighorn sheep. Although the author presents other conclusions (e.g., trade, ethnic boundaries, and other issues), they must be considered speculative at this time.

"The Archaeology of the Afton Canyon Site," is a fine contribution to Mojave Desert prehistory. The author accomplished her intentions and completed the project objectives with limited resources.



*Archaeology of James Creek Shelter*, Robert G. Elston and Elizabeth E. Budy, eds. University of Utah *Anthropological Papers* No. 115. 1990, xiv + 321 pp., 110 figs., 85 tables, 7 appendices, \$22.50 (paper).

Reviewed by:

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The James Creek Shelter report edited by Robert G. Elston and Elizabeth E. Budy is a Cultural Resource Management (CRM) compli-

ance document prepared on behalf of a mining company prior to development of an open pit gold mine. James Creek Shelter is a stream-cut feature located on a tributary of Maggie Creek, a major stream feeding the Humboldt River in northeastern Nevada. Prehistoric occupation of the site occurred between about 3,000 and 240 B.P. When initially recorded, the floor of the shelter was devoid of artifacts; a single flake was observed on the apron of the shelter and a biface fragment was noted downstream in the drainage. The site could easily have been dismissed at this point due to the lack of obvious surface indications of prehistoric use. Possible carbon staining on one wall, location above a waterway, and a geomorphic content for the shelter indicating rapid deposition and burial of surficial cultural materials were critical factors in justifying site testing. This assessment was correct, as demonstrated by about three meters of fill containing 21 hearths, 13 occupation surfaces, 239 projectile points, 50 bone artifacts, five pieces of basketry, nearly 4,000 identifiable mammal bones, and miscellaneous artifacts.

The research design for the James Creek Shelter investigation incorporates a number of current research themes in Great Basin archaeology. These included inquiries into the following research domains: culture history, geoarchaeology, paleoenvironments, and settlement/subsistence. Much of the strength for this report is related to the late Keith L. Katzer's and Elizabeth E. Budy's handling of geoarchaeological studies. These data are particularly germane in understanding and interpreting site chronology, paleoenvironments, local paleo-hydrology, and site taphonomy.

There are some notable results from the faunal and floral studies conducted by Donald K. Grayson (mammalian fauna), Robert S. Thompson (plant macrofossils), and David B. Madsen (palynology). The James Creek Shelter site yielded some 47 bones identified as, or attributed to, *Bison bison*. This represents the largest,