

In-Situ

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Eva Jensen, NAA President President's Corner

Normally I would start with an account of our adventures at the board meeting but Greg's story in this issue (page 3) provides the all important non-business details from the get-together in July at Great Basin National Park. I think it may be an effort to sway votes for the Dutch oven duel, although I had to remind Greg that Alice brought the cake for the birthday party! So for the current business...

Annual Meeting 2010

Laurie Perry and Sue Edwards are working on arrangements and program for the annual

meeting next spring. The events will be held in Las Vegas at Desert Research Institute near the UNLV campus on **March 26th - 28th**.

Archaeology Month 2010

There has been a decline in participation in archaeology month activities over the past few years. We are considering a change of focus toward more education and electronic media spread out across the year rather than

just one month of activities. Please let me know if you have ideas or would like to help with planning. There

may just be a presidential committee appointment in it for you! We are also looking into a facelift and update for the web site as part of these efforts.

By-Laws

Review

The by-laws review committee is working on revisions

that will be presented to the board in October and published in the winter newsletter for membership review. We are considering revisions that will bring us in line with business in the electronic age and facilitate a happier (less stressed) board of directors and president. :)

Publications

Nevada Archaeologist journal for 2008 was

(President's Note, Continued on page 2)



Eva Jensen Park Archaeologist and NAA President discusses the rock art. Photograph by Greg Seymour.

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printed and distributed to current members. Please contact George Phillips through the web site if you did not receive your copy. Extra copies are available for purchase, as are as older back issues. Check the web site www.nvarch.org for a list and order form. The next issue should be out this winter and to put us back on track for yearly publication.

Proceedings of the Three Corners Conference 2007 and the previous 2005 edition are printed and available for purchase with information on the web site. The proceeds from sales are put back in our account to go toward publishing the next installment from the third biennial conference being held this year (3Cx3=09. I made that up.)

Next Board Meeting

The next board meeting and field trip will be held **October 3rd**. We will meet at the county court house/government building in Goldfield at 10:00 a.m. for a field trip of historic Goldfield. The board meeting will be in Tonopah at the Convention Center in the center of town beginning at 2:00 p.m. NAA members are always welcome to attend field trips and board meetings. We encourage chapter members to join us to report on their activities or send notes to share with the board.

Fiscal Notes

The treasurer tells me the NAA is in good shape financially. That all being said, I did request \$20 million in stimulus money from a fellow named Brumby at the McGill Club who assured me he is in charge. I'll let you know how that turns out. ☺

Laurie Perry, NAA Secretary

Minutes from the NAA General Membership Meeting

Lovelock, NV, April 4, 2009

- A. The meeting was called to order by President Eva Jensen at 4:00 p.m.
- B. **President's Report** Eva reported there have been four quarterly Board Meetings this past year. The Board met in Austin in July of 2008, in Eureka in October, 2008, in Goodsprings in January 2009, and here in Lovelock on April 3, 2009. She felt our annual meeting was successful. The materials for the annual Archaeology Month are finished, and members were asked to pick up posters and brochures for distribution in their areas. The Bureau of Reclamation, Forest Service, BLM, Jeff Wedding and Diane Winslow all helped with the brochures and posters. Eva discussed the need to revise the organization's by-laws to update them for our electronic age and the internet. The status of the journals was discussed. The current journal is about to be issued. Eva thanked the current Board. Three members are leaving the board: Susan Slaughter, who was the In-Situ editor; Mark Giambastianni, who has been the Program Chair for the past several years; and Gregory Haynes, who was the Secretary. Three Board positions need to be filled.
- C. **Treasurer's Report** George Phillips reported that the accounts are balanced. At the beginning of the year, the balance was \$18,226. Deposits were \$6,925, and withdrawals were \$1446. The ending balance was \$23,726. If anyone was interested, he has a list of all checks paid out.
- D. **Secretary's Report** There was none.

Greg Seymour, NAA Board Member

The NAA Board Outing to the Great Basin National Park

Every quarter the NAA Board of Directors conducts its Board meeting somewhere in Nevada. These meetings and accompanying tours are open to any member. This summer it was held at the Great Basin National Park. At the board meeting, business is discussed, as well as updates of various sister organizations around the state.

Other activities are available for those who attend the meeting. These include a tour of some interesting cultural resource in the area, and if camping, Dutch oven cooking or barbequing, and accompanying festivities. This year many Board Members arrived Friday night and stayed at the Border Inn in Baker Nevada or camped in the park on the banks of the babbling Baker Creek. Early Saturday morning (ok, not too early-9:00) we all met to be led on a tour of the Upper and Lower Pictograph Caves near Baker Creek which had been excavated at least as early as 1924 by "University of Nevada professors" and reported on by E.P. Harrington in 1933, Lange in 1952, and the Western Archaeological and Conservation Center in 2000. It also has some very good examples of Fremont rock art which were recorded by the Nevada Rock Art Foundation in the last couple of years.

Next, Eva Jensen, NAA President and Cultural Resource Manager for the Park, Karla Jageman, Park Archaeologist, and Nicole Lohman, Archaeology Technician, led us to Pole Canyon where we crossed the creek on a bridge which was mostly buried in the lush foliage of pines, cottonwoods, water birch, and wild roses. On the ridge above, we looked at the remains of a historic dugout. Continuing along the trail, we encountered a rock masonry and steel combination safe cemented into a boulder outcrop in the canyon. With many looks of puzzlement, we all asked each other "who put it there and what had been put in it." I, and others among the group with their Indiana Jones hats on, imagined gold bars or perhaps a big golden nugget from the mines up in the hills had been locked away from armed, masked gunmen on horseback. Unfortunately, the lock is no longer functional



Board members and archaeologists wandering around at the dugout site.

and the empty safe awaits the next vivid imagination.

After returning to the cars, everyone piled in and continued to the site of the Osceola Ditch. The ditch, situated on the east side of the Snake Range, was constructed to bring water to the placer mine on the west side and completed in 1890. It consisted of an 18 mile ditch, 2.2 mile wooden flume, and 633 foot tunnel through rock on a ridge north of Strawberry Creek. From this vantage point, the view of Snake Valley and western Utah is spectacular.

After the tour was completed, we met at the Park's Visitor's Center to conduct the board meeting. During the meeting, it rained cats and dogs. For those of us from the south, that was a treat! Fortunately it stopped by the end of the meeting, because the dinner had to be finished. Earlier in the afternoon at our camp site up in the park, I had started a Basque dinner in the Dutch ovens. It consisted of a game hen stew. It was supposed to be chucker, but we didn't have any handy, so we had to improvise. Also included were various vegetables, exotic spices, all marinated in a wine sauce until the ingredients were cooked and "falling off the bone."

It was also the birthday of our President, Eva Jensen. Alice Baldrice had baked a spiced cake to help celebrate. As with all of these outings, "a good time was had by all."

Remember, all NAA members are welcome to join us at any of the "meetings." We saw some interesting cultural sites in a beautiful setting, enjoyed the company of great people, oh, and yes, we held a board meeting! 🍷

Comstock Celebrates 150 Years with Series of “Conversations”

To enhance your appreciation of the Comstock Era, please join us for a series of evening “conversations” with noted local experts. All programs are at 7:00 p.m. on the University of Nevada, Reno campus in the Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center. Complimentary parking available in the Brian Whalen Garage. All events are free.

Bonanza! How Virginia City has Touched the World for 150 Years

October 7, 2009 – 7:00pm – Knowledge Center, Faculty & Graduate Reading Room

Ron James, Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer discusses how Virginia City became an international crossroads for the world, a place where cutting-edge mining and industrial technologies were invented and a magnet for the greatest literary and artistic talents of the day.

Mark Twain’s Comstock: The Archaeology of Early Virginia City and Behind the Scenes at Piper’s Opera House

October 14, 2009 – 7:00pm – Knowledge Center, Faculty & Graduate Reading Room

Don Hardesty, UNR Professor of Anthropology, presents recent archaeological research in Virginia City that sheds light on saloons, opera houses, and ethnic groups on the “Barbary Coast” and beyond, dating to the early years of the Comstock. Patty Cafferata, attorney and author of *More than a Song and a Dance: The Heyday of Piper’s Opera House*, describes three generations of Piper’s Opera house buildings, the productions, and the private lives of the owners.

(Comstock, Continued on page 5)

RUSH TO WASHOE: THE RISE OF THE COMSTOCK



THEY CAME TO THE COMSTOCK
to get rich! Some did, most didn't, and many died trying. When they found gold and silver in 1859, Nevada's landscape was forever changed. In only twenty years, the deepest and most productive silver mines in the world were carved into the earth, and millions of dollars in ore were taken out. Virginia City quickly became an international crossroads for the world. The Comstock became a magnet for the greatest literary and artistic talents of the day and absorbed immigrants from dozens of countries. Please join us for a celebration of early Comstock history.



On this 150th anniversary of the discovery of the Comstock Lode, two exhibits in the Knowledge Center portray life in the Virginia City area through writings, business records, photographs, and other materials. The exhibits showcase rare items from Special Collections that have never been on display, as well as exceptional artifacts from Virginia City archaeological digs.

OCTOBER 2009 - FEBRUARY 2010
Special Collections exhibit area, third floor, 9 am - 5 pm M-F
Wintemore Gallery, first floor

Special artifacts on loan from the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office and the W.M. Black Museum
10 Images courtesy of Howard Goldbaum

Information: 775-682-5665 | Admission: Free
Visit: www.knowledgecenter.unr.edu



University of Nevada, Reno

George Phillips, CSSP

Clark County Cultural Site Stewardship Program

There's bad news and there's good news.

Stewards of the Cultural Site Stewardship Program (CSSP) of Clark County reached a milestone in the first week of September by reporting the 300th significant cultural site impact for the county since the program inception in 2004. But there's good news, too. Due to aggressive federal agency responses to the monitoring reports, figures this year will show a decline of impacts by approximately 15% over the same period last year. These responses include signed road designations, limited barriers for off-road vehicles in sensitive cultural areas, and rapid law enforcement follow-up.

Thanks to archaeology crews from the BLM, new cultural surveys and mapping in monitored areas throughout Clark County are paying dividends by updating records and prioritizing new sites. All five regions in Clark County are receiving their attention. Additionally, the National Park Service is using a few CSSP stewards to GPS known sites along the Colorado River over the next several months. Select stewards are really enthusiastic to participate in some of the most scenic historic and prehistoric areas of Nevada.

To greet the fall season, CSSP will conduct a cultural stewardship class at UNLV during Public Lands Day on **September 26th** to recruit twenty



Newest Clark County Steward participant .

participants to monitor more remote regions of the 7 million plus acre county. CSSP currently has 315 active stewards and 430 participants on its roster. There are a large number of applicants, and we're fortunate to choose stewards among the best. ♀

(Comstock, Continued from page 4)

The Comstock's Literary Mother Lode

October 21, 2009 – 7:00pm – Knowledge Center, Faculty & Graduate Reading Room

Cheryll Glotfelty, UNR Associate Professor of English, will reveal the riches of Comstock literature and tell some tales about the characters who penned it, writers such as Dan De Quille, Sam Davis and Alf Doten who are known collectively as "The Sagebrush School."

The Psychoscope: A Sensational Drama in Five Acts by R.M. Daggett and J.T. Goodman (1871)

October 28, 2009 – 7:00pm – Knowledge Center, Wells

Fargo Auditorium

Written and first performed in Virginia City in 1872, *The Psychoscope* is notable for its futuristic science fiction elements, including its namesake invention which anticipates the development of the lie detector. Considered one of the earliest examples of realism in American theater, *The Psychoscope's* frank depiction of a brothel assured its failure to find a wider audience. David Fenimore has adapted this play by Mark Twain's two close friends, Rolland Mallory Daggett and Joseph Thompson Goodman, for an enjoyable hour of reader's theater. Produced by David Fenimore and Ann Medaille. ♀

Mini-Reports

Steve Stearns, Nevada Department of Transportation

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION: PREHISTORIC STRUCTURES AND THEIR POSITIONS ON THE LANDSCAPE IN LINCOLN COUNTY, NEVADA



Figure 1, Artist's interpretation of site 26LN2978 on the Pahranaagat Valley Landscape c. AD 500, by Steve Stearns.

Introduction

Based mostly on Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) archaeological surveys in Pahranaagat Valley and in the Meadow Valley Wash, we have begun to identify several kinds of prehistoric structures assigned to the Fremont/Anasazi and Paiute/Shoshone groups (c. AD 500 to AD1800). These include rock ringed features with and without depressions; house pits; and rock ringed/stacked stone features found in the bottoms of shallow drainages. Their position on the landscape vary but are mostly constricted to landforms near or on the valley floor. All have common identifying elements that many archaeologists have overlooked (in fact four structures identified

below were missed during the original site recording). We cannot know the validity of earlier surveys, but we are now beginning to re-examine some of these sites tied to various landscape features and have discovered several containing shallow circular depressions that have proven to be structures. This is especially true for those sites containing pottery (some containing three ceramic traditions: Shoshone, Virgin Anasazi and Fremont). Here I briefly discuss these structures and their locations. Most of the material presented here was introduced in the 2008 Nevada Archaeological Association poster session held in Minden, NV (Stearns and Bunch 2008).

The Cultural Landscape

At the beginning of the Saratoga Springs period there was a change in the rainfall pattern in this area (Wigand 1997, Wigand & Rhode 2002). Around AD 500, rainfall was summer dominated and heavy rainfalls produced flash floods that carried with them large debris flows that dammed portions of Pahrnatag Valley creating small ponds or shallow lakes in several areas. In historic times, as well as into the late Prehistoric Period, the Meadow Valley Wash violently flooded its banks, and on several occasions, undermined the San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad paralleling the wash and re-depositing silts in many places along its banks. These forces limited areas that could be settled because of inundation (Pahrnatag Valley) or in the case of Meadow Valley Wash, could only be used intermittently due to periodic flooding. Because of this, we feel there were geographical limitations placed on many habitation sites.

Distribution of Structures

In Pahrnatag Valley a pattern is beginning to emerge based on several cultural resource surveys where formative period (Fremont/Anasazi) and Southern Paiute structures have been found. The cultural affiliation is deter-



Figure 2, (Site 26LN2963) Structure 1 in Meadow Valley Wash—The circular depression in front of the bush is outlined by several cobbles and one boulder. The Site is situated on a bench.



Figure 3, (Site 26LN2963) Structure 1 showing its associated features. A hearth feature was found in the area of the probe containing a Class 6 mammal bone fragment.

mined by ceramics (Snake Valley Gray, Moapa Gray, North Creek Gray and Southern Paiute Brown

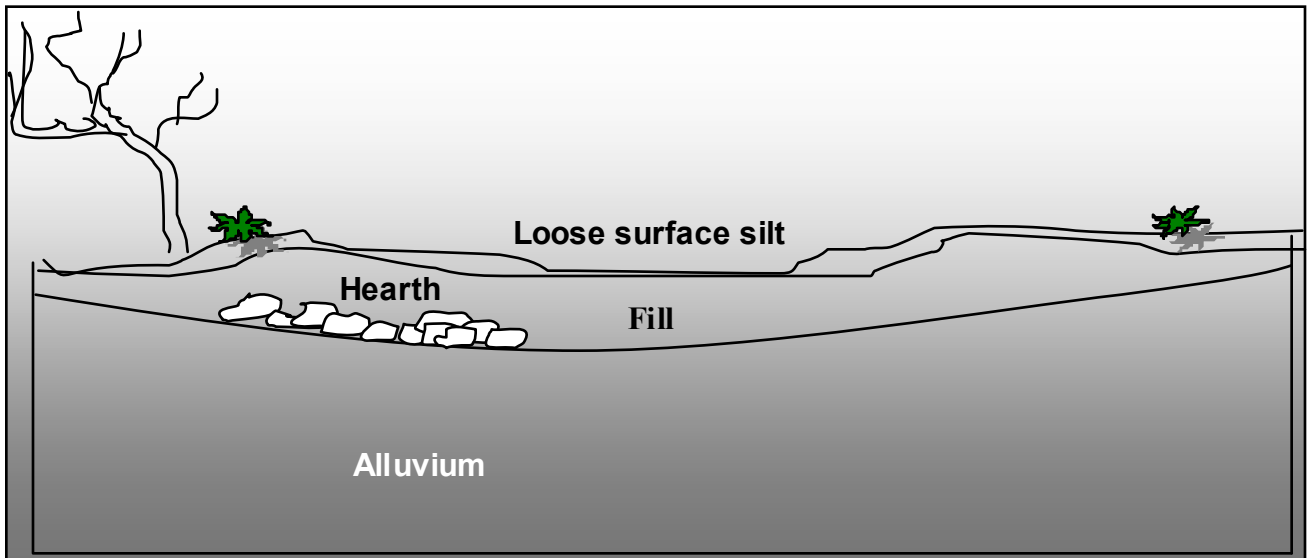


Figure 4, (Site 26LN2963) Structure 1 profile. Pit is c. 3 meters and hearth is c. 40cm in diameter.

ware.) We find Fremont/Anasazi sites along the base of alluvial fans situated on small ridges (Frenchy Lake area) or on knobs at the toe slope of

with them. The Anasazi connection is based on a few ceramics found at three sites—two in Pahrana-gat Valley and the Meadow Valley Wash site. Southern Paiute sites containing structures are more wide-spread in this area and we have recorded structures near the valley floor, along terraces, atop a basalt mesa, in drainages, and along the edges of drainages in the mountainous pinyon juniper woodlands. Petroglyphs are found nearby on three sites.



Figure 5, (Site 26Ln4886) Cleared area partly encircled with cobbles and two small boulders—this does not contain a depression. The site lies on a small terrace.

alluvial fans (Ash Spring area). Here there appear to be small clusters of pit houses (or their remnants as in the case of Frenchy Lake) associated

The Structures

Although sometimes difficult to see, we find that these features contain common elements that identify them including the following:

- Subtle shallow circular or oval depression c. 2 to 7 meters in diameter.
- Depressions are usually less than 15cm in depth.¹
- Wholly or partly encircled by cobbles or boulders—sometimes patterning is very subtle and can be difficult to see (see Figure 2).

¹Site 26Ln4981 contained eight oval structures c. 60 cm in depth.

- Two sites contained stacked stone structures several courses high.²
- All contain ceramics. Many have ceramics found near their edges and occasionally on the surface of these features.
- Groundstone artifacts are common.
- Small rock lined hearths are sometimes found.³
- Prepared clay floor structures on “Fremont village” site (26LN2978).
- Thermoluminescence dates on ceramics range from AD 500 to AD 1600.



Top (Figure 6) and Bottom (Figure 7): Pit House 2 revealing prepared clay floor and post holes.

Conclusion

Ethnographic information describing habitation sites do not adequately address the kinds of sites or their predictability (C. Fowler 2008) and their absence in the archaeological record shows the difficulty in identifying these structures. Our archeological data show the correlation of habitation sites containing structures and their

²Two sites, 26Ln3677 and 26Ln809, may represent specialized hunting or a ritual site, respectively. Both contain Paiute pottery and petroglyphs.

³These may be more numerous than indicated because documentation is based solely on shovel probes.



Figure 8 (Site 26LN809) Jim Bunch examines a stacked stone structure that is several courses high. It lies atop a small “mesa” on the valley floor.

position on the landscape. These site features and their artifact associations can be summarized as follows:

- Sites are topographically geographically restricted. Most are found on the edges of certain landforms including fans (toe slopes, terraces, benches and drainage edges). Surprisingly, some sites are associated with large shallow drainages.
- Large lithic scatters positioned on these topographic features should be carefully examined (this is the primary reason for a re-examination on the area that we located some of these structures).
- Most of these habitation sites contain ceramics and most sites containing ceramics also have rock ringed structures.
- Projectile points and bifacial lithic tools are rare but groundstone artifacts are not.

Steve Stearns has been a Nevada Department of Transportation archaeologist for 30 years and cannot retire because his children are leaching off of him. Due to Mr. Stearn's extremely advanced age, he is now working on a black belt in cane fighting.

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Left: Figure 9 (Site 26LN4981) Steve Stearns and Jim Bunch take GPS readings at a "Pit house." The site is near the valley floor at the toe of an alluvial fan. It may have been inundated c. AD 500.



Right: Figure 10 (Site 26LN3677) Stacked stone associated with circular feature. It lies in the bottom of a small drainage atop a bench and contains a single big horn sheep petroglyph.

Sean McMurry, University of Reno, Nevada, Ph.D. Candidate

2009 UNR FIELD SCHOOL AT SULPHUR, NEVADA



Roy Garrison (left), Natalie Noes, Garrett Barmore, and Tyler Cirac excavate at the 2009 UNR field school in Sulphur, NV. Photograph by Sean McMurry.

Who doesn't love the smell of sulfur in the morning? The University of Nevada Reno (UNR) field school students investigating Sulphur, Nevada certainly did. The crew at Sulphur endured viscous rain, biting cold, blistering heat, and an occasional dust devil during their five-week field school adventure, but also uncovered fascinating archaeological remains and intriguing stories that made it a very successful field season.

Euro-Americans noticed Native Americans using rich deposits of sulfur during the 19th century and established the town of Sulphur in Humboldt County in 1875. The population was sparse until the Western Pacific Railroad completed a line through the area in 1911. Eventually, the town boasted a bar, a depot, a cattle loading area, a gas station, a general store, a school, and several permanent dwellings. The sulfur ore present at Sulphur was usually pure and was in demand as a pes-

ticide, particularly for grape vineyards in California. The town of Sulphur also served as a gathering point for local miners (who were extracting both sulfur and placer gold), cattlemen, railroad workers, power line workers, and their families. By the 1970's the town was largely abandoned, although sporadic occupation of the standing structures by recreational miners and visitors still occurred into the 1990s. Today, although no standing buildings remain, the carpet of artifacts that covers the surface reminds today's generations of this town's engrossing history.

During the field school, students surveyed the area in and around the townsite of Sulphur and excavated five 1x1m test units and one 25cmx25cm shovel test probe. The site was extremely complex, consisting of more than 160 acres and 113 features. Unfortunately, vandals have destroyed or damaged many of the features,

and reconstructing the site's layout is quite a challenge. Aiding archaeologists in their interpretations was a veritable treasure trove of historical resources, including photographs and newspaper articles, found at UNR and at Winnemucca's Humboldt County Museum. Interviews with former Sulphur residents have also provided important insight into the site's history.

Despite disturbances to the site, many remaining artifacts offer tantalizing glimpses into the everyday lives of Sulphur's residents. Numerous shards from glass cosmetic containers, including cold cream jars and hair tonic bottles, testify that residents were concerned with their appearance, and could possibly help archaeologists understand the town's gender roles. Remains of 20th-century advertising (including labels on cans, bottles, and cardboard boxes) reflect not just what people were consuming, but also the cultural context surrounding advertised items. The site also contains a large number of automobile

original remains, which, coupled with the railroad's history, provide detailed evidence about transportation patterns. In all, the archaeological remains indicate that at one time Sulphur was a well-established, vibrant community that prospered in Nevada's demanding desert.

Currently it is unclear whether a UNR field school will return to Sulphur in the future, but analysis of the rich data collected during the 2009 field season continues. Furthermore, historical and oral history research will also continue. Finally, a doctoral dissertation focused on the area's foodways and gender relations will explore all available resources to help preserve a significant part of Nevada's past with the ultimate goal of producing as

complete a picture as possible of what daily life was like in Sulphur during the early 20th century before these resources disappear altogether. ✎



Top: Pond's Cold Cream jar base found at Sulphur.

Bottom: (Left to right) Natalie Noel, Tyler Cirac, and Nicholas Pay look on as Garrett Barmore reads from historic newspapers at the Humboldt County Museum in Winnemucca, NV. Photographs by Sean McMurry.

Sean McMurry is a dissertation away from achieving her Anthropology Ph.D. at the University of Reno, Nevada.

**Mella Rothwell Harmon, Kautz Environmental
Consultants, Inc**

A LIGHTHOUSE FOR AIRPLANES: AIRWAY BEACON 31A, CLARK COUNTY, NEVADA

It was 110 in the shade—and there was no shade—the June afternoon archaeologist Richard Breitling and I arrived in the beautiful middle of nowhere to document Airway Beacon 31A. BN31A is located in Clark County, about 3.5 air miles east of Glendale on the western ridge of Mormon Mesa. The tower, built in 1928, sits on the highest point of a small knoll atop a rock outcrop. The tower is visible among modern telecommunications towers from U.S. Highway 15. The approach to the beacon is by way of a dirt maintenance road accessed from the westbound lane of Highway 15. The road loops around the north and west sides of the hill and the beacon tower is reached from the road by a set of iron steps (Figure 1).

Airway Beacon 31A is an elevated-tank type, the standard fifty-one feet in height, and attached directly to the bedrock with drift bolts. Historically, there would have been a small block equipment shack nearby with the beacon number painted on the roof, but it has long since been replaced by modern buildings. The typical airway beacon tower of the period sat on top of a concrete directional arrow, but BN 31A's arrow lies among the sagebrush about 210 meters to the east (Figure 2). The arrow, which is in excellent condition, consists of four concrete pads, cast in place, resting on the surface of the ground and stepping down the slope and pointing east (Figure 3). The arrow would have been painted yellow, but no evidence of the paint remains.

BN 31A is associated with the early years of American air mail service. In May 1918, the first air mail route in the United States was established between New York and Washington D. C. (Holmes 1981:83-92; Leary 1985:30-47; Schamel 2006a). The opening of the transcontinental route coincided with the introduction of aviation to Nevada



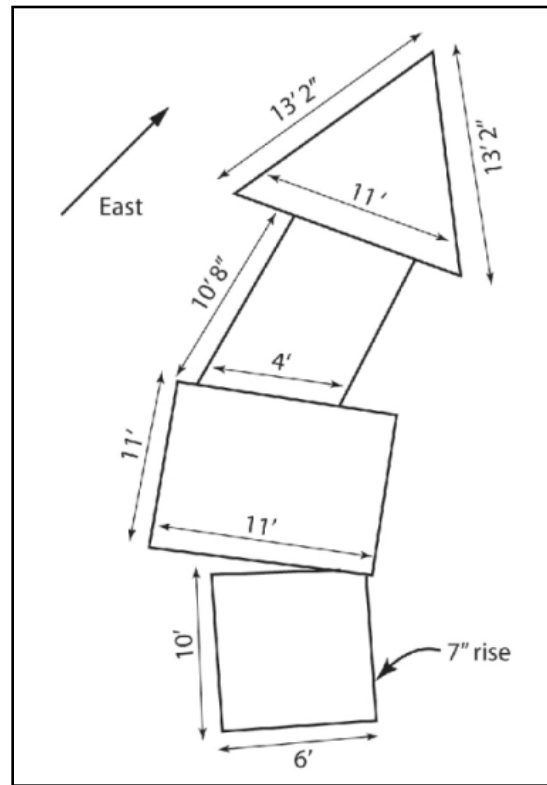
Figure 1, Airway Beacon 31A, near Moapa, Clark County, with iron stairs and modern block building, facing southeast Nevada, facing southeast. Photograph by Richard Breitling.

(Earl 1979), and by the summer of 1920, the air mail route was laid out across northern Nevada. Air mail service began on September 8, 1920, with sporadic stops at fields in Lovelock, Winnemucca, and Battle Mountain.

Initially, air mail pilots were hampered by a lack of aircraft instrumentation, aerial charts and maps, and navigational aids (Holmes 1981; Komons 1978; Leary 1985; Schamel 2006b; Valentine 1996). Pilots were forced to fly at low altitudes, using landmarks on the ground and bonfires to guide their way—and only during daylight hours and in good weather. As a consequence, early airmail routes followed major railroad corridors. Pilots often leapfrogged across the country with the mail

flown by day, and carried by train at night. The U. S. Postal Service soon concluded that this was highly inefficient, and that ground-based navigational aids needed to be put in place (Holmes 1981; Komons 1978; Leary 1985; Valentine 1996). Using technology adapted from the U. S. military, an airway, with lighted beacons, flashing markers, and flood-lit runways, was established along the transcontinental route to allow night flying (Holmes 1981:1240127;

the airway route. A green light signified the presence of an adjacent airfield, while a red light indicated no airfield. These lights flashed Morse Code corresponding to the number of the beacon. To aid daytime navigation, each tower was placed on, or near, an arrow-shaped concrete slab, painted yellow and pointing to the next higher numbered beacon. The beacon number and other information were painted on the roof of the building that housed the generator and the radio equipment



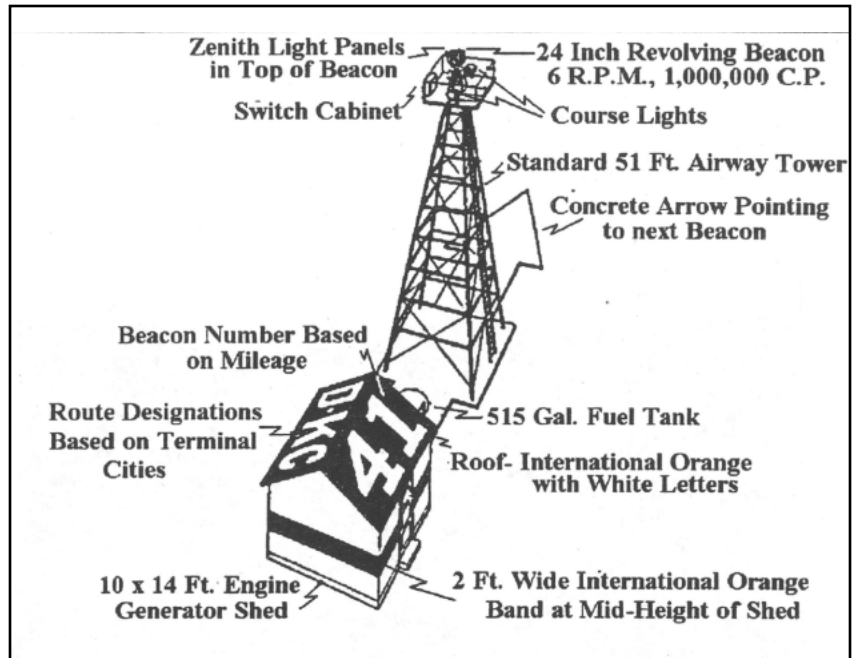
Left: Figure 2, The concrete directional arrow below Airway Beacon 31A, facing west. Photograph by Richard Breitling.
Right: Figure 3, Drawing of the construction of the directional arrow at Airway Beacon 31A. Drawing by Sandra Clark.

Komons 1978:125-145; Leary 1985:171-185; Schamel 2006b; Valentine 1996:80).

Beacons were placed every 10 to 15 miles along the route (Heister 1978; Jackson 1970; Komons 1978:135-137; Valentine 1996:81-82; Young et al. 1931). At the top of a fifty-one foot steel tower was a 24-inch, 110-volt, 1,000-watt, 1-million-candlepower rotating two-lamp search light, whose flash could be seen up to forty miles (Figure 5). Also present were two color-coded 100,000+ candlepower course lights, oriented to

(Figure 6).

Passage of the Air Commerce Act on May 20, 1926 placed much of U. S. aviation under the authority of the Department of Commerce (Holmes 1981; Komons 1978; Leary 1985; Schamel 2006a; Valentine 1996), and ultimately authority was transferred to the Bureau of Lighthouses, whose Airways Division was responsible for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the beacons. By January 29, 1929, the Transcontinental Air Mail Route had beacons in place across the United



Left: Figure 4, The beacon and beacon platform, Airway Beacon 31A. Photograph by Richard Breitling.

Right: Figure 5, Drawing of a typical airway beacon.



Air beacon and landing field along the Arrowhead Trail

Figure 6, The airfield and beacon tower located along the Arrowhead Trail. Photograph from *Nevada Highways and Parks*, January/February 1946. Photograph courtesy of the Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas.


States (Holmes 1981; Komons 1978; Leary 1985; Schamel 2006b). During June 1938, the Civil Aeronautics Act was passed, creating the Civil Aeronautics Authority, which took over the Airway Radio System (later known as the Airways Communication System) (Holmes 1981; Komons 1978; Leary 1985; Schamel 2006a; Valentine 1996). In 1940, the Civil Aeronautics Authority became the Civil Aeronautics Administration and Civil Aeronautics Board (Schamel 2006a; Valentine 1996:80-81), and by 1941, the number of operating lighted beacons in the United States reached its maximum number of 2,274 (Valentine 1996:86).

The first hint of air mail service to Las Vegas came several years before passenger service was established. The news of future air mail came in 1920 from barnstorming flyer Randall Henderson, who had stopped in Las Vegas at the behest of his California business colleague Jake Beckley. Landing at a landing strip built by railroad employee and World War I aviator Bob Hausler, Henderson offered flights in his Curtiss *Jenny* biplane. He also told the local newspaper that a mail route to Los Angeles would soon be established and Las Vegas would likely be designated a landing station (Moehring and Green 2005:72). Las Vegas immediately saw the opportunities and Hausler took the lead in establishing connections with California officials to ensure that Las Vegas was being seriously considered for the air mail route.

In April 1926, Robert Griffith, the son of pioneer merchant E. W. Griffith, brokered a deal with Western Air Express for air mail service between Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and Salt Lake City from Anderson Field, just outside of the Las Vegas city limits. The route was known as CAM-4, for Civil Air Mail Route Number 4. In May, Western Air Express began passenger service, charging forty-five dollars one way from Las Vegas to Los Angeles and

eighty dollars for a round-trip (Moehring and Green 2005, 72-73).

Airway Beacon 31A, and others like it, served this early air system, allowing for night flights over a vastly empty and dark Nevada. The Los Angeles-Salt Lake City route consisted of 670 lighted miles, with two beacons in Lincoln County and ten in Clark County, located roughly ten miles apart. At some point prior to 1942, the route was redirected to pass farther north over Arden, Mesquite Lake, and Silver Lake. The new Amber Airway No. 2 required the construction of additional beacons. BN31B was built on Mormon Mesa northwest of BN31A (Walsh *et al.* 2006:48-49). There was a small landing field associated with these beacons on a mesa at the 100-mile mark on the south side of the highway. This landing strip did not see much business, so when the beacons were decommissioned, the airport and the caretakers cottages were removed (Figure 6) (*Southwest Aviation Report* 2001, 3).

In 1947, new technology began to replace that used on the original beacons. VHF Omnidirectional Radio Range and radar stations could be located farther apart and pilots were no longer restricted to the narrow, lighted airways. By the 1960s, most of the beacons had been taken out of operation (U. S. Centennial of Flight Commission 2003). Nevertheless, the lighted airways played a significant role in history of aviation in the United States by making it possible for airmail, and later freight and passengers, to travel in a safe and timely manner through the dark of night and in adverse weather conditions. Beacon BN31A, although it is facing demolition, was an important element in this national effort to improve air safety. 

Mella Rothwell Harmon has been with Kautz Environmental Consultants, Inc. since April 2009. Prior to that, Mella was the curator of history at the Nevada Historical Society, and she spent seven years as an architectural historian at the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office where she managed the National Register of Historic Places program.

Acknowledgements: David Valentine is Nevada's airway beacon expert, but I want to assure you that Dave was consulted for our work at BN 31A. The staff of the Nevada State Museum in Las Vegas and Mark Hall-Patton, administrator of the Howard Cannon Aviation Museum in Las Vegas also provided valuable information.

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1946 Photo of Airway beacon along the Arrowhead Highway. *Nevada Highways and Parks*, 4(1), January/February 1946.

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Sarah Heffner and Steven Holm, University of Nevada, Reno Ph.D. Candidates

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE 2009 UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO EXCAVATIONS AT VIRGINIA CITY, NEVADA

For a hectic five weeks, July 13th to August 13th, students from all over the nation attended the 2009 University of Nevada, Reno's field school. In total there were twelve students, seven staff, over twenty volunteers, and hundreds of visitors. Two sites were revisited from excavations last year: the Barbary Coast and Maguire's Opera House. The Barbary Coast was one of the more salacious areas in Virginia City and Maguire's Opera House was once the grandest and finest opera house in early Virginia City.

Thomas Maguire's Opera House

Maguire's Opera House (26ST383) was built in 1863 and stood until the Great fire of 1875. It stood a massive 50' wide by 120' deep, stretching from "D" street to "E" street. Attached to the front of the building were two saloons to feed and water patrons and those just passing through. The opening of the opera house was such a big event that Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) made his way up from San Francisco to attend. The opera house was purchased by John Piper in 1867, who later built his own opera house two blocks up the hill (to the west) where it stands today.

The 2009 excavations at Maguire's Opera House focused on determining if the foundations

remained, what the depositional processes were, what the patrons ate and drank, if there was any evidence of "red light" activities, and if there evidence of pre-opera house occupation. Six 1x1m test units were opened as well as a 4x1m and a 5x1m backhoe cut trench. Two 1x1m units were placed contiguously in a back alley to explore the material culture of eating and drinking associated with the opera house. One 1x1m was placed on

the hypothesized location of where the northern wall's intersection with the bearing wall between the saloons and opera house. This unit displayed a complex stratigraphy. Two 1x1m units were placed in the location of the stage, which measured 35'x50'. A large number of beads, buttons, and sequins came out of these two units. One 1x1m unit was placed in the middle of the building to explore

a rock alignment that may have served as support for the immense building; this unit was abandoned as the rock alignment was deemed to have been of modern construction.

Thousands of artifacts were recovered and are now in the process of being cleaned, cataloged, and prepared for analysis and storage. The assem-



One of the few representations of Maguire's Opera House is shown in this detail of an 1875 bird's eye view of Virginia City, drawn by Augustus Koch, Lith. Britton, Rey & Co. Maguire's is the gambrel roofed, three-story building marked with the number "18". Image courtesy of the Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

blage is varied and diverse including shoes and boots, bullets, buttons, beads and sequins, wine or champagne bottles, to individual cuts of meat. Architectural features were also unearthed. Identifying the foundation of the building was especially vexing as the composition was unknown when the project began. Maguire's was constructed early in Virginia City boom town when foundations of boards and beams on dirt were as common as rock and beam or brick pier construction. Foundational elements were exposed in the trenches and indicate that the building rested on dirt with an occasional larger rock employed.

One of the difficult and unanswered questions of this field season remains *the mystery of the plaster*. Throughout the western section of the site there is a consistent layer of plaster above the charcoal and ash layer created by the great fire of 1875, however, a layer of sediment separates the plaster from the building remains. What makes this mystery deeper is that there is no wood connected to the plaster, nor artifacts. Was it a cap for the opera house rubble or just part of a dumping ground or did this form when buildings were razed? Analysis carries on and mysteries of Virginia City and Maguire's Opera House continue.

The Barbary Coast

The Barbary Coast (26ST382) was a collection of cribs, businesses, and tough saloons located on South C Street. After the great fire of 1875 burned most of the red-light district on "D" Street, some of the prostitutes relocated to the Barbary Coast. When the Fourth Ward School opened on "C" Street in 1877, community members became concerned about children having to pass by the notorious Barbary Coast and forced the disreputable businesses to relocate to the original red-light district on "D" Street. The Barbary Coast was rebuilt and turned into a more respectable area of town.

Research goals for the summer 2009

excavations of the Barbary Coast addressed trying to locate the remains of the more "respectable" businesses that operated in this area during the 1880s and 1890s and finding evidence of an African American barber shop that operated in the area for several years. A 40x5 meter grid was staked out prior to excavation and five 1x1 meter units were laid out within the grid. An 1890 Sanborn Fire Insurance map for the area was consulted throughout the excavation and was helpful in determining the



Top: Exposing a brick wall at the Barbary Coast site.

Bottom: Cache of bottles exposed in alleyway excavations at the Maguire's Opera House site.

location of building walls and foundations.

Archaeologists were able to locate the foundations for a grocery store, a butcher shop, and a saloon and liquor store, as shown on the 1890 Sanborn map. The foundations were composed of cut stone and mortar which were then covered with bricks and plaster thereby forming the building walls. The majority of non-architectural materials recovered were found off to the side of the walls – hinting at the existence of a narrow alleyway between each building – which is not shown on the Sanborn Map. Archaeologists also revealed the remains of a wooden floor composed of roughly hewn wooden planks several inches wide. There is debate as to whether these are associated with a stable that is pictured in a photo of the area from 1935, or if the wood is from an earlier structure.

The summer excavations helped gain a better understanding of the businesses that operated in this rough part of town and their layout in relation to the 1890 Sanborn map. While the location of building foundations does not exactly match the dimensions on the Sanborn Map, they are very close and there appears to have been a



Field school student, Jason Olds, flips rocks and pebbles from his screen at the Maguire's Opera House site.

narrow alleyway between each building. Construction techniques in Virginia City were explored and uncovered some fascinating pieces of local history. While unable to find evidence of the African American barber shop, archaeologists have a reasonably good idea of where it would have been located and plan on returning to this location next summer. ☺

Sarah Heffner is a third year Ph.D. student in Anthropology at the University of Nevada, Reno. She expects to graduate with her Ph.D. in the fall of 2010. Her interests are in Historical Archaeology, especially western mining and colonial-era sites. Sarah is most recently from Virginia. Her field work includes numerous digs in Virginia, Idaho, and Nevada, including George Washington's Ferry Farm in Virginia; a tavern, a city dump, and most recently, Virginia City.

Steven Holm is a second year Ph.D. student at the University of Nevada, Reno, and studying historic archaeology and in particular, the settlement of the West. He graduated with a BA in 2002 from Western Washington University and with a MA in 2008 from the University of Idaho. He has worked all over the Western United States including Washington, California, Utah, Idaho, and Nevada. This was the second year of excavations at Maguire's Opera House and his first year of supervising the excavations.

Reports from Chapters and Affiliates



ELKO COUNTY CHAPTER:

Archaeology Fair

By Donna Murphy, Secretary/Treasurer


Attendance for the monthly meetings

has slowed down a bit but members are still active whenever they get the chance. We have one new member this quarter and wish to welcome Ellen Wright to the group. Ellen is very enthused and interested in the activities we do.

Most of our core members turned out to collect, haul,

sort, price, hang and bag all the donations for our annual fundraising Yard Sale! It was a great success and even though it involved quite a bit of work and a very long day, we had a lot of fun. Proceeds will be going to various projects such as the Great Basin College scholarship fund and a kiosk at the Peace Park.

A number of Elko County Chapter members volunteered for the test excavation at the

Bullion Road Site on the outskirts of Elko. It is a prehistoric campsite with apparent isolated activity areas, including areas with hearths, brown-ware pottery, lithic reduction activities and some tools. The city of Elko is seeking to acquire the parcel of land as part of their sewer plant expansion. The testing was a cooperative effort between the city and BLM. 



COLLEGE OF SOUTHERN NEVADA:


CSN in Good Shape, New Archaeology Program

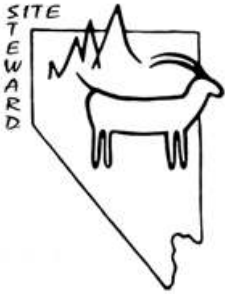
By Dr. Kevin Rafferty, Chairman, Dept. of Human Behavior

Fortunately the College of Southern Nevada (CSN) and other educational institutions have come out of the legislative session *fairly* intact. Budget cuts were not as draconian as first feared, and savings were realized at CSN by deferring maintenance, cutting operating funds, and other efficiency measures. At CSN the Department of Human Behavior, which is my baby, actually came out of the legisla-

tive session in somewhat better shape than we went in. Enrollments for Spring of 2009 were up 40% in terms of both total student numbers, full-time equivalency and average class size. Summer classes also saw significant enrollment increases. Fall 2009 numbers are up approximately 6-8% as of this writing but we expect the actual increase to perhaps be a little larger. It was the efforts of the

Nevada Archaeological Association and Archaeo-Nevada Society membership and other like-minded individuals that made this possible. So thank you for helping to keep higher education alive in this state.

The department is also plunging full speed ahead into developing an AAS degree in archaeology. We hope to have more information on this by the next newsletter. 



NEVADA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM:

Call for Archaeological Advisors

By Sali A. Underwood

Do you wander around the state hiking and camping and of course keeping an eye out for archaeological or paleontological sites? Do you wish you had more desert or alpine archaeological experience? Then I have a great opportunity for you!

The Nevada Archaeological Site Stewardship Program needs archaeological advisors. The site stewardship program has volunteers that are trained in the monitoring of archaeological and paleontological sites conditions, and the program needs help getting stewards out to their assigned sites.

Stewards visit their sites four times a year and send in a report documenting any changes they have observed. Part of the training aspect of the program is a field orientation or initial site visit. This is when the steward is introduced to the site access, features and agency concerns. Ideally these visits are made by

the Public Land agency archaeological representative, the stewards, and sometimes the regional coordinator. Site visits are scheduled after the completion of mandatory classroom training.

As we all know, agency archaeologists are not always able to pry themselves away from their desks no matter how much they want to participate in field activities. To be able to get stewards to the point of reporting on site conditions someone needs to introduce the volunteers to their assigned sites. This is where a volunteer (yes, volunteer) archaeological advisor comes into play within the program.

So how do you become an archaeological advisor? I am glad you asked! First you need to be an archaeologist that meets the Secretary of the Interiors Standards and Guidelines for professional archaeologists (http://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/arch_stnds_9.htm). You also need to attend one of

the Basic Site stewardship training classes and then there needs to be a meeting between the volunteer archaeologist and the agency archaeologist. It is best to have a vita that you can give the agency person and be prepared to talk about your experience and why you want to be an archaeological advisor. It is up to the agency archaeologist and their manager to decide if you are a good fit for the program.

This opportunity gives you the opportunity give back to the archaeological community, gain experience, and get some much needed field time and satisfaction knowing that you are helping to protect archaeological sites within the state of Nevada. If you are interested in becoming an archaeological advisor for the Nevada Archaeological Site Stewardship Program please contact me at sunderwood@nevadaculture.org or (702) 486-5011. I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your time. 🌵



NEVADA ROCK ART FOUNDATION:

Clark County & Lincoln County Recordation

Mark Boatwright (Las Vegas BLM) is looking for Nevada Rock Art Foundation volunteers to help him with recording work at selected sites in Clark County. If you are interested in volunteering email info@nvrockart.org

with your contact details; you will be contacted with more information later when Mark Boatwright has finalized his fieldwork schedule.

We are also in the planning phase of the Lincoln County Rock Art Inventory Project. We

expect to start making the site inspections to record baseline information about site condition and characteristics in the late spring and during the Fall. More information will be forthcoming once the fieldwork schedule has been finalized. 🌵



ARCHAEO-NEVADA SOCIETY:

LECTURE SERIES & SANDSTONE QUARRY PROJECT

By Dr. Kevin Rafferty, President

After being dormant all summer, the Archaeo-Nevada Society is beginning its slate of 2009-2010 meetings, lectures, and field trips. On September 10th, Dr. Kevin Rafferty of the College of Southern Nevada (CSN) and Archaeo-Nevada Society President, presented a talk about the recent CSN Valley of Fire survey field school. A field trip to Valley of Fire was held the following Saturday, September 12th. Upcoming lectures for October through December are:

- **October 8th:** Jeffrey Wedding of the Harry Reid Center

will speak about railroads in southern Nevada, particularly the Union Pacific RR.

- **November 12th:** Diane Winslow of the Harry Reid Center will speak about Sydney Wheeler, assistant to Mark Harrington at Lost City and the first state archaeologist for Nevada.

December 10th: The December speaker will be Dr. Frederick Conquest of the College of Southern Nevada (CSN), with a topic yet to be determined.

All Fall meetings will be held the second Thursday of each month, at the West Charleston

campus of CSN in Room K-228. The guest speaker is treated to dinner at the Denny's (Yes, nothing but the best) across the street from the West Charleston campus. It begins between 5:15-5:30 P.M. and all are welcome.

The society is currently in negotiation and planning with the Red Rock Canyon archaeologist, Mark Boatwright, to undertake a small recording project in the Sandstone Quarry area of the Red Rock Canyon National Recreation Area. More details will be forthcoming as plans get formalized. ☺

LINCOLN COUNTY CHAPTER:

Picnic at Kershaw-Ryan State Park

By Barbara Secretary/Treasurer

While the Lincoln County Chapter has been idle this summer, Site Stewards have been active, checking their sites, and getting through the "dog days" of summer. We had an enjoyable picnic in June, at Kershaw-Ryan State Park, though we had to dodge rain showers just as the burgers were ready to come off the grill!

Unexpected news in August was that BLM Archeologist Lynn Wulf resigned her post. We shall miss her, though she has not moved



President Liz Russell dodges the camera, while chef Keith Stever is monitored by Maryanna Stever and their daughter.

away from Caliente as of yet. Perhaps she will join us on our anticipated field trip September 12! ☺



Nevada Archaeological Association

www.nvarch.org

Membership Application

Join the NAA! - just fill out this form and return to:

Nevada Archaeological Society
PO Box 73145
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☐ New Member ☐ Renewal

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Last Name First Name

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Additional Member Names:

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- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Am-Arc of Nevada | <input type="checkbox"/> Nevada Rock Art Foundation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeol Nevada Society | <input type="checkbox"/> Site Steward |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Churchill County Chapter | <input type="checkbox"/> None (Member at Large) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elko Chapter | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lincoln County Chapter | |
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CODE OF ETHICS

The purpose of the Nevada Archaeological Association (NAA) is to preserve Nevada's antiquities, encourage the study of archaeology, and to educate the public to the aims of archaeological research. Members and chapters of the NAA shall:

1. Uphold the purpose and intent of the NAA.
2. Adhere to all antiquities laws.
3. Seek the advice, consent, and assistance of professionals in archaeology and/or history in dealing with artifacts, sites, and other materials relating to antiquities.
4. Assist professionals and educators in accomplishing the objectives of the NAA.
5. Be a personal envoy of the NAA and responsible for conducting themselves in a manner so as to protect the integrity of the artifacts, sites, or other material.

Signature

Date

The Nevada Archaeological Association

P.O. Box 73145
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Submit !!! To the NAA Newsletter

Submit your mini-reports (max. 5 pages plus references), articles (1/2-2 pages), chapter reports, pictures, and upcoming events to:

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UPCOMING EVENTS

NAA Board Meeting

The next board meeting and field trip will be held **October 3rd**. See page 2 for details. All NAA members are invited to attend field trips and board meetings.

3RD BIENNIAL THREE CORNERS CONFERENCE

Conference organizers: Eva Jensen, NAA President & Mark Slaughter

The Third Biennial Three Corners Conference will be held **October 17, 2009** at Wright Hall on the campus of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). For more information please email threecornersconference@yahoo.com.

COMSTOCK CONVERSATIONS

See article on page 9 for listing of four lectures on the history of the Comstock in **October**.

ARCHAEO-NEVADA SOCIETY LECTURE SERIES

See article on page 23 for listing of lectures in **October, November and December**.