Gregory G. White: Loveliest of Places: A Study of the Pre-Mansion Historical Resources of Bidwell Mansion State Historic Park

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reciprocity has never been shown to explain food sharing unequivocally, despite extensive efforts to do so (e.g., Jaeggi and Gurven 2013). It seems more probable that smaller group sizes emerged as an adaptive response to individuals taking lower profitability food items, which are generally more abundant and more evenly distributed across the landscape.

Third, Bettinger may be correct that individuals living with closely-related kin might not suffer too much from free-riding relatives due to gains in inclusive fitness; however, a global analysis of hunter-gatherer co-residence patterns has recently shown that forager bands actually have a low degree of relatedness (Hill et al. 2011). If this was true in California, then individuals would still experience significant costs due to needy neighbors. The degree of in-group relatedness could become biased toward kin if either women or men gained more influence in selecting camp mates (Dyble et al. 2015), which may have happened as women’s labor became more important, leading to a divergent division of labor and a need for increasing alloparental support (Coddington et al. 2011). But even if this were the case, there is a simpler solution: hunter-gatherer bands should be able to tolerate theft from a small proportion of scroungers (Blair Jones 1984), producing similar outcomes as those proposed by Bettinger.

Finally, an empirical point: the particulars of this story require that human populations increase to a prehistoric maximum quite late in the record. However, archaeological proxies of human populations are known to systematically underestimate older dates (Surovell et al. 2009). Adjusting these estimates for such taphonomic losses reveals higher Mid-Holocene population levels than are typically expected in California (Chaput and Gajewski 2016). While Bettinger dismisses this, it may actually help his argument by providing a demographic driver for explaining the observed and expected population increase.

In this installation of California State Parks’ Publications in Cultural Heritage series, Gregory G. White addresses a challenge faced by heritage managers world-wide: the author broaches the issue of managing and interpreting for the public a heritage site with multiple historical components and a diverse community of historical actors. White recommends a more holistic management and interpretive plan for the Bidwell Mansion, a Gold-Rush-era ranch site located in Chico California. Currently the management program of this California State Historic Park narrowly focuses on one early California couple, John and Annie Bidwell, and the Victorian style mansion they had built at Rancho de Arroyo Chico between 1864 and 1868. Despite the current focus, Rancho de Arroyo Chico has a history more nuanced than just one of socially prominent Americans and their Gold Rush fortunes. Specifically, White recommends expanding the interpretive program to include a focus on both the “Original” ranch (1849–1886), and the importance of the native laborers and communities at the ranch.

REVIEWS

1.

Jaeggi, A. V. and M. Gurven

2.

Dyble, M., G. D. Salathé, N. Chaudhury, A. Page, D. Smith, J. Thompson, L. Vinicius, R. Mace, and A. B. Migliano

3.

Hill, Kim R., Robert S. Walker, Miran Božičević, James Edger, Thomas Headland, Barry Hewlett, A. Magdalena Hurtado, Frank Marlowe, Polly Wiessner, and Brian Wood

4.

Jaeggi, A. V. and M. Gurven

REFERENCES

Blair Jones, N.


Chaput, M. A. and K. Gajewski


Coddington, B. R., R. B. Bird, and D. W. Bird


Dyble, M., G. D. Salathé, N. Chaudhury, A. Page, D. Smith, J. Thompson, L. Vinicius, R. Mace, and A. B. Migliano


Hawk, K.


Hill, Kim R., Robert S. Walker, Miran Božičević, James Edger, Thomas Headland, Barry Hewlett, A. Magdalena Hurtado, Frank Marlowe, Polly Wiessner, and Brian Wood


Jaeggi, A. V. and M. Gurven

within the State Historic Park. White summarizes the field methods involved in each excavation in detail, describing grid systems, number and size of units excavated, and screening methods. White also attempts a descriptive summary of the artifact assemblages recovered from each excavation. The author is restricted by the level of effort put into the previous studies and the scope of his monograph. Consequently, the presentation of artifactual data is very general, variable, and only relevant to the proposed research themes concerning chronology in very limited ways.

The author concludes (in part four) that none of the architectural or structural features identified through the archival research were uncovered during the three previous archaeological excavations, the site has been disturbed by cut and fill events and modern landscaping, and that most of the artifacts recovered from the archaeological investigations are representative of the period of Rancho Expansion and Development (1852–1868). Despite this, the author argues that previous archaeological investigations recovered artifacts within the site’s A-horizon midden that could potentially provide a greater understanding of Rancho de Arroyo Chico prior to the construction of the mansion (1864–1868).

The strength of this work lies in the author’s ability to highlight the complicated history of this important heritage site, and to urge State Parks to move their interpretive program in a more inclusive direction, one that incorporates the indigenous experience.

As constructive criticism of this important study, I offer the following comments. First, research themes are very limited and are confined to the chronology of Rancho de Arroyo Chico. While such themes are foundational to future work, they restrict the potential of the archaeological evidence. Although the author sets up a historical narrative that could lead to more complex research themes concerning how Maidu peoples working at Rancho de Arroyo Chico were connected to broader economic, social, political, and religious indigenous landscapes, or the theme of “sites of refuge” (e.g., Mechoopda), these themes were never articulated, much less addressed through archaeological evidence. This limitation is likely due, as the author states, to the fact that such tasks were outside of the project scope. However, the author misses the opportunity to emphasize research themes that have multiple implications for future growth of scholarship in the field of colonial and frontier research throughout North America. Second, while White makes an important and well-supported argument that the Bidwell Mansion State Historical Park should expand their interpretive program, he doesn’t provide suggestions for how this might be accomplished. Again, this is likely beyond the scope of the project, but its absence is still apparent. To start with, as existing inclusive interpretive programs throughout California will attest (e.g., the Kashaya Pomo Interpretative Trail at Fort Ross State Historic Park), consultation with appropriate stakeholders—descendent communities—is an essential component. While the archaeological data certainly provide evidence of land use prior to the period of expansion and development, and should be exhibited as part of the Park’s interpretive programs, the archaeology should not take precedence over other sources of information, such as oral histories. The effective management of this complex landscape and its resources must, above all, be directed by a collaborative, negotiated management plan.

Prehistory of Nevada’s Northern Tier: Archaeological Investigations along the Ruby Pipeline

William Hildebrandt, Kelley McGuire, Jerome King, Allika Ruby, and D. Craig Young, with contributions by David Rhode, Jeffrey Rosenthal, Pat Barker, Kaelly Colligan, William Bloomer, Albert Garner, Nathan Stevens, Andrew Ugan, Kimberly Carpenter, Laura Brink, Sharon Waselchuk, Richard Hughes, Tom Origer, Sharlyn Street, and Wendy Pierce.


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Archaeological survey reports of linear corridors sometimes leave the reader’s attention as scattered as the lichens under discussion. This impressive report offers a highly instructive alternative and one hopes it will find many imitators. The Ruby Pipeline project included a 100% survey of a 360-mile corridor running across northern Utah and Nevada from Opal, Wyoming to Malin, Oregon. From east to west, the surveyors hiked four ecological regions: Thousand Springs Valley, the Upper Humboldt Plains, the Upper Lahontan Basin, and the High Rock Country. They recorded 586 prehistoric sites and focused their attention on 399 single-component areas within the project corridor.

The monograph includes 17 chapters by five authors and thirteen contributors. Hildebrandt’s brief introduction sets the stage. In the comprehensive second chapter, D. Craig Young and David Rhode describe the geomorphology, the modern climate and vegetation, animal and plant foods, and the paleoenvironmental record from 14,500–150 cal B.P. Rhode’s review of the economic plants is especially helpful for the nutritional comparisons of the several species of geophytes encountered across the corridor.

Chapter 3 by Kelley McGuire and William Hildebrandt arranges the cultural context in seven temporal units: Paleolithic, Paleoarchaic, post-Mazama, Early, Middle, and Late Archaic, and Terminal Prehistoric. Paleoindian includes both pre-Clovis and Clovis, with the latter dated to between 13,400 and 12,800 cal B.P. Various large stemmed points distinguish the Paleoarchaic (12,800–7,800 cal B.P.) from the mid-Holocene post-Mazama (7,000–5,700 cal B.P.) and Early Archaic (5,700–3,800 cal B.P.) periods, when the regional population doubled. Perhaps the most notable Paleoarchaic discovery was a 4 m. in diameter, 10 cm. thick, circular compacted fill zone dated to 11,380 B.P., described as the “oldest radiocarbon date on a living surface ever recorded in the Great Basin.” The Middle (5,800–1,300 cal B.P.) and Late (1,500–600 cal B.P.) Archaic periods are better represented in the two western regions. The last 600 years mark the Terminal Prehistoric period when ancestral Northern Paiute and Western Shoshone arrived along the western and eastern sections of the corridor, respectively.

Field and analytical methods are discussed in Chapter 4 and chronological controls in Chapter 5, both by Jerome King. Chronological controls included radiocarbon dates, obsidian hydration, and time-sensitive artifacts including projectile points, ceramics, and beads.

The next four chapters summarize the findings for each of the four ecological regions: Allika Ruby for the High Rock Country, Kelly McGuire for the Upper Lahontan and Upper Humboldt basins and Albert Garner for Thousand Springs Valley. The High Rock Country had the longest record of human occupation along the corridor and exhibits some of the greatest internal diversity. The lower shoreline and deltaic landforms of the Upper Lahontan basin witnessed increased evidence of wetland adaptations in the Middle and Late Archaic periods. Evidence of earlier periods is lacking for both the Upper Humboldt Plains and Thousand Springs Valley regions, neither of which seems to have attracted a resident population until the Terminal Prehistoric period.

Chapter 10 by William Hildebrandt and Allika Ruby appraises the colonization of northern Nevada in terms of habitat variability, 69 radiocarbon dates, land-use indicators such as projectile points and ground stone, and component variability. Ideal free distribution models grounded in these data sets identify the game- and root-rich High Rock Country as the earliest of the four regions to support higher population densities.

Chapter 11 by William Hildebrandt, Kaelly Colligan, and William Bloomer examines flaked stone production