

ARTI-FACTS

The Newsletter of the Award-Winning Idyllwild Area Historical Society

Preserving the History of Idyllwild and Surrounding Communities
in the San Jacinto Mountains

SPRING 2024

Art in the Park, or a Sign of Their Times?

By Edward Warner

Idyllwild is a special place. Walking out of our post office if we think to look up, we see magnificent geological formations to the east. During the wet months we hear the creek running strong as it winds down through the rocks it eroded over millennia. The dense forest of tall trees whispers in the wind if we take the time to listen. We embrace art, music, and nature.

Less than a mile as the raven flies from the center of Idyllwild on the face of a giant granite boulder is a “painting.” What is left of the paint is a faded red pigment. The boulder is on a campsite road nestled between pine, cedar, and oak trees within Idyllwild Regional Park.

Looking through the protective fence you sense the image is old. Take the time to read the marker and learn the image is called a pictograph, attributed to the Cahuilla civilization who were seasonal visitors to this area. The marker suggests it was painted about 600 years ago, likely by a female as part of a coming-of-age ritual. The marker also states *“Living in harmony with the land and its blessings, the Cahuilla did not separate religion from daily life. These sacred paintings are symbolic of that relationship.”* As one looks closer some questions come to mind. Was this art, or ritual, or a sign? What is the pigment? When and why did the Cahuilla come here?

Ancient rock art can be found all over our planet, in caves meant to be private, and out in the open, a sign to tell others of the presence of those who created it. Red pigment is the common color along with black, yellow, and blue. The red pigment was typically “Red Ochre” or Hematite (Fe₂O₃), an iron



Actual photo of our Pictograph
PHOTO BY PATRICK TILLET

oxide found near or below the earth’s surface. The word Hematite comes from the Greek word for blood and often represented the “blood” of mother earth or that of other spiritual entities.

The hard mineral was ground into powder, or found as pliable clay, or a liquid residue from underground springs. It was then mixed with binding agents including fat, sap, or egg whites, and applied to rock with fingers or plant brushes. Diamond Creek Red Ochre from the Grand Canyon area was the most vivid and highly prized for use in ceremonies. The Hualapai traded it to the Halchidhoma (and later the Mohave) who in turn carried it over trails into California through the (Banning) pass and on to the coastal civilizations. It was traded for foodstuffs, baskets, pottery, textiles, and for prized shell beads.

Rock art of the Cahuilla consists of pictographs and petroglyphs, some with zigzags, chevrons, lines, diamond chains, and dot patterns. Archaeologists call this style San Luis Rey, one of three styles they

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Arti-Facts

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Happy New Year to all!

I want to thank all of you, our members, for your continued support of our wonderful organization. Your participation allows us to fulfil our mission to preserve history, maintain artifacts, and promote public awareness of our local history. Also, I want to include our dedicated and hard-working board members who volunteer many hours to implement this mission. We are proud to welcome two new board members this past year, Chris Perreault of Idyllwild, and Laura Zarecky, of Garner Valley! Welcome to our team!



Some of the community outreach in 2023 included hosting Idyllwild Arts students who are part of the school's Art in Society program. They worked on our Ground's Beautification project over several visits during the semester. We also hosted ICC Summer program students and local home school students with hands on activities in the museum and archives. We encourage other groups in the community and historic groups visiting Idyllwild to contact us for tours of the facility this coming year!

Docents are the life blood of our museum! They engage our guests with their individual Idyllwild stories. JOIN the Cabin Club! It's fun and a great way to meet and interact with visitors while sharing our history. If you would like to find out more about being a part of this team, visit our website and use the "Contact Us" pull down menu.

Our Historical Society had a very successful 2023 year highlighted by our amazing Home Tour!

For the first time we sold tickets online and the response exceeded our expectations. A very big thank you to the homeowners for sharing their beautiful homes with us, and a "shout out" to our entire board, docents, volunteers, friends and family for putting it all together. Keep your eyes open and stay tuned, we are beginning to plan for this year's events.

Again, thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to seeing you at the museum and our upcoming events for 2024! ✍️

Charlotte Groty
IAHS President

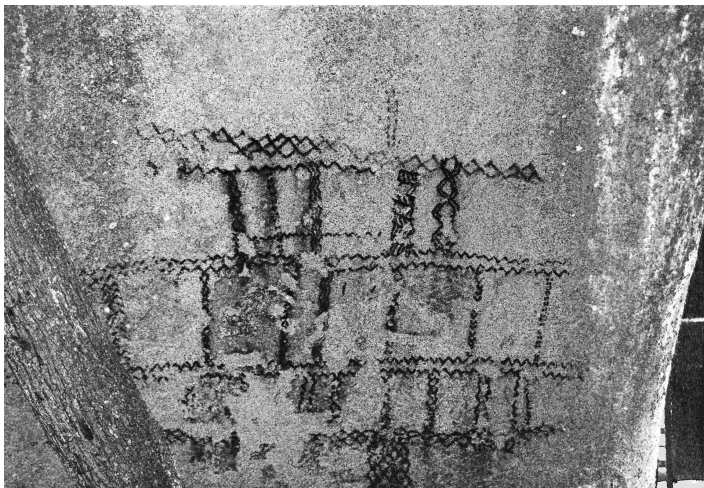
ART

(cont. from page 1)

use to categorize rock art in Southern California. This style is also found in the Luiseño, Cupeño, and Kumeyaay territories. The Cahuilla migration stories refer to rock art as a sign, a message that its location is a special place, that others were here before or that this was a location of a territory, a trail, a grove, or a water source. Clearly, they understood the permanence of these works so what else do we know about these people?

The Cahuilla were part of a larger Indigenous population who for millennia inhabited what is now Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties. These groups shared this region and Tatic languages but were mostly insular but for trade with other groups. They shared similar ritual legacies like the Bird Songs, a way of telling their origin stories to younger generations. They believed clans and families owned the land they subsided on.

In the 1920's anthropologists arbitrarily separated the Cahuilla by geographic area (Pass, Desert and Mountain) however Cahuilla people for centuries had a specific societal system. Each person belongs to one of two moieties, Wildcat (Tukut) and Coyote (Isil). Those moieties defined marriage where one's mate was always from the opposite moiety. They were further divided into named patrilineal clans, each with territory, and common ancestry. Today, there is excellent research on the Wanakik, Kauisik and Panik clans by the Agua Caliente. Villages were comprised of family groups within a clan and our valley was surrounded by lower elevation regions



Pictograph with DStretch Image Enhancement
PHOTO BY PATRICK TILLET

that were historic locations of these Cahuilla villages.

The Cahuilla had advanced trail systems connecting villages, food gathering and hunting sites, trade routes and ritual sites. There were no horses in this area until the 1780's so travel at the time of our painting was on foot. The trail system was also the communication system between groups and clans. Many of these ancient trails were worn down 2-3 feet into the earth, from centuries of use. There were direct trails from Coachella and Banning Pass desert floors up the steep canyons to Long Valley and Round Valley, then down to our valley, which was just outside the western edge of Panik clan territory. Similar trails led here from the Moreno Valley, San Jacinto, Anza, Santa Rosa and Borrego Springs regions all within a few days' walk.

Numerous times over millennia the Colorado river diverted west and formed the vast Lake Cahuilla covering the Coachella Valley. Waterline markings show it reached a span of 110 miles long, 32 miles wide, and over 300 feet deep, extending from today's Palm Springs south past the Mexican border. The lake created a cooler and wetter climate and archaeological evidence shows several indigenous groups including the Cahuilla claimed land along the shoreline, subsisting on its fish, game, and plant life. Sophisticated fish traps can be seen today along the ancient waterline in the hills above the desert.

Around the time attributed to our pictograph, The Colorado River's path diverted back 100 miles to the east. Lake Cahuilla began to evaporate, its shoreline receded, and its bounty of food sources disappeared. As the climate warmed and dried, the lake again became the desert floor we know today. This led to a migration away from the lake and a change in diet for the adaptable Cahuilla people. The Cahuilla Bird Songs recount this migration. Told in one song cycle sometimes lasting for days, it recalls how the Cahuilla moved away from the shoreline and returned at least three times before settling more permanently in their villages west of the receding lake.

Even with the loss of food sources from the shrinking lake, acorns and mountain game were always important to the Cahuilla but more so during the last 500 years. Throughout the San Jacintos and certainly the Strawberry Valley along with abundant game are found a significant concentration of acorn bearing oak trees, especially the prized black oak.

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THE COMPANY WE KEEP

IAHS FOUNDERS' CIRCLE-LIFE MEMBERS

We are forever in gratitude to those who stepped up with significant contributions that enabled the Society to create our wonderful Museum.

| | | | |
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RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Please make your tax-deductible membership check to IAHS and mail to PO box 3320, Idyllwild, Ca, 92549
You can now also can renew membership online!

www.idyllwildhistory.org/membership-application-2/ and pay with a credit/debit card.
Please list your name(s) as you want it to read in our newsletter.

ART

(cont. from page 1)

The acorn harvest varied due to climate and yearly conditions, occurring around October and November. The groves were monitored carefully to be sure the harvest would be at the optimal time. Once ready, a large contingent of a village would arrive by trail to spend three to four weeks camped in the oak groves harvesting this crucial resource.

The men and older boys typically climbed the oak trees and shook them to knock the acorns to the ground. Once acorns were available for processing leaving some on the trees for the animals and for seed, they would go into the hills around the groves and hunt game to augment the food supply for the year. In the meantime, the woman, girls and boys would begin the arduous work of processing some of the acorns for food while camped in the grove, leaving the remainder to be packed down to the villages. Acorn shells were broken on a flat rock striking each one with another rock. They were dried in the sun before the woman used mortar and pestle to crush the acorn meat. Steps from our rock painting are several bedrock mortars used for grinding acorns.

Fresh acorns are bitter due to tannic acid, so the meal was washed or leached in water. Near our painting site are Lilly and Strawberry Creek. Baskets of meal would be lowered into the water and washed easily at this site. The last step was sifting the washed and dried meal using different sifting baskets to separate coarse meal from fine meal.

This process was likely a time of bonding, singing, and teaching between the older women and the girls while they performed this repetitive task. Was it during an acorn harvest here in our valley where a girl's coming of age ritual occurred that might have been the impetus of our rock painting?

The coming-of-age ritual for a Cahuilla girl was important for her family and the village. It involved food and valuable items being shared with others in the clan and was preceded with mentoring by the older women in the traditional ways focused on the girl's future role and her duties therein. The ceremonies included her being placed under leaves, or blankets in a leaf lined pit in the ground that had been warmed by hot rocks each of three consecutive nights. She



Bedrock Mortar Site, Idyllwild

IMAGE FROM: WAYMARKING, GEOBWONG

may have been given teas and other strong herbs to bring about visions. Later she was given a container of colored pigment, red ocher in our case, and painted images on a ceremonial rock of her visions.

For the Cahuilla, large rock formations were places of power and could represent the earthly manifestation of spiritual beings and entries into mother earth. The symbols painted on our rock in the county park appear to be chains, diamonds, and zigzags. These patterns are believed to represent rattlesnakes, which were the "spirit helpers" associated with females in the Cahuilla ritual.

Our rock painting has lasted through centuries of ice, snow, rain, fires, and the heat of the sun, but how much longer will it last? With some understanding of its origin is it not our duty to preserve the "Art in the Park" or will it be a fading "Sign of Their Times"? 🐉

Feedback regarding this article is welcome, send to edward54625@gmail.com

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THE 2023 IAHS HOME TOUR WAS REMARKABLE!

The Annual IAHS Home Tour, our primary fundraiser, allows us to maintain our facilities, exhibits, and promote public awareness of our local history to visitors and residents. It is also a showcase for the homeowners who put countless resources into renovating and restoring these historic homes and proudly show them to the community at large. We feature new homes every year so this is a rare chance for visitors to get a peek inside some of

these treasures. The 2023 home tour exceeded all expectations both in the homes we featured as well as in the number of guests that enjoyed the day with us! It would not have been possible without the 6 gracious homeowners and the incredible team of volunteers below, family and friends that worked tirelessly for months to put this together and those who worked with us on the day of this special event! Thank you everyone!

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Grace and Dan Reed
 Jeff Burke and Lorraine Triolo
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 Alex Cameron

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 Chris Siems
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 John Drake
 Joyce Miller

PHOTOGRAPHERS

John Drake
 Tom Pierce

HOME TOUR COMMITTEE

Nancy Killingsworth
 (Homes)
 Charlotte Groty
 Marlene Pierce
 Jayne Hamil
 Rebecca Frazier

Art Alliance of Idyllwild Art Walk and Wine Tasting stops at the History Museum again!



The IAHS hosted **Baily Winery** in our garden this year to support the important fundraising efforts of the Art Alliance of Idyllwild. This yearly event is a favorite of many locals and visitors alike. Several artists successfully offered their works in our garden, and we were all serenaded by a harpist. The folks from Baily keep the glasses filled with their wares and IAHS board members Chris Perreault and Charlotte Groty served hors-d'oeuvres to our guests. Ed and Brenda Warner were the designated security guards having the unenviable task of making sure every wine glass was empty as it left the facility. A good time was had by all. 🍷

IGC Throws a Rock Party at the History Garden!

In a show of great teamwork and partnership, the **Idyllwild Garden Club** continued to upgrade and improve the IAHS Historical Garden. **The IGC would like to thank Keith Smith of Harold K Smith Materials for the donation of the rock!** On the morning of October 10th, we assembled a team of 13 volunteers with wheelbarrows, buckets, rakes, and shovels who quickly spread the pile throughout the garden pathways.



Team members “Working between a rock and a hard place” as the pile quickly disappears.

Volunteers from the IGC were Sally Schafer, Ruth Eddings, Don Roy, Hanns Lee, Keith Teeuwen, Laurel Owens, Paul Sokoloff, Wayne Cox. From the IAHS were Dan and Nancy Lauderback, Steve and Chris Perreault and Ed Warner. Thank you to all



Nancy Lauderback breaking out her Rolling Stones T-shirt!



for the fast efficient work in this regard and giving us your time on a crisp fall morning to beautify our shared garden! 🍂

Don Roy showing us that moss will not grow on a “rolling” stone.

Museum Hours

10 am to 3 pm

**Friday, Saturday and Sunday
and Monday Holidays**

Also daily between Christmas and New Years

**History Gardens Open Tuesday Thru
Sunday 9 am to 4 pm**

Follow us on Facebook

www.facebook.com/IdyllwildAreaHistoricalSociety

Visit our website

www.idyllwildhistory.org

For special hours and other business, call
(951) 659-2717 or email info@idyllwildhistory.org

Admission Free

54470 North Circle Drive

Donations Welcome

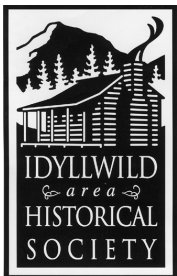
Upcoming Events

Historical Society Yard Sale, See our website for date.

**FREE Ice Cream Social, Saturday August 31st, 2024, IAHS Museum Garden,
Noon to 2:00 pm. Hand scooped Ice Cream Sundaes and Root Beer Floats.**

IAHS Home Tour Saturday, September 14th, 2024

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