



SCAN



The Santa Cruz Archaeological Society Newsletter—Spring 2021

Highlights from the Virtual Society for California Archaeology Meeting -March, 2021 Reported by Mary Gerbic

It was only a year ago, when reports of a new virus was starting to make the news in the United States. In February, we heard reports of its spread from China to South Korea, Italy, Iran and the United States, but life went on. On Leap Day, I had noted that sixty people were sick with this virus in the US and three were in Santa Clara County. Californians voted in a Primary Election, and on March 7, 2020, the first “COVID” case was announced in Santa Cruz County. Then came the lockdowns in northern Italy and then, the official pronouncement: pandemic. The Society for California Archaeology (SCA) meeting in Riverside was not the only event cancelled, and Californians were under “stay at home” orders. Many of us became proficient at Zoom meetings for work and keeping up with family and friends, which is our state of affairs today. Although we feel hope because there are now COVID vaccines, it is also a time for remembering those in our lives who were lost in the pandemic, and the suffering and hardship this disease has caused. One wonders how many of the changes we have made this year will be permanent.

This year, the SCA held a virtual meeting. It was shorter in duration, but I attended, and was pleased with how well the sessions ran. I did not miss squeezing past someone to find a seat in a darkened room with the air conditioning blasting down on my head, and every time the door opens to admit someone, the roar of everyone talking outside came in too. The PowerPoint slides were readable. There was no need to jump up and run to another session where a friend was presenting, and to navigate a hotel maze that would make a lab rat weep, getting to the talk just in time to stand against the wall.

However, I missed the chance encounters with friends and colleagues, catching up with former coworkers and classmates. I missed the presence of others and the vitality of live conference. I believe there is great value in the spontaneity of a crowd of like-minded people coming together to share what they love.

I appreciate that the SCA recorded most of the talks and posted them on the conference website. This year, I will be able to hear conflicting talks. I hope that in the future, the SCA board decides to make presentations available online after the conference is over. There were half as many tracks this time as at the live conferences in the past, but I still missed some real-time presentations that I wanted to hear. No matter, I can go back and watch them later.

Despite fewer tracks, the variety of topics at this meeting was very good. The seminar topics included ongoing work at two California missions: Santa Clara and La Purisima. There were sessions about the aftermath of fires and what we can learn about how to protect collections and sites against future fires, natural disasters and climate change. Also covered: landscape analysis and the use of geophysical tools, Nate Harrison: how a former enslaved person became a pioneer, rock art, the Chinese diaspora, and ways in which archaeologists, Native Americans and natural resource specialists can collaborate and educate each other. The talks discussed locations from northern California to Baja California. Our keynote speaker, Chip Colwell discussed how we need many voices in archaeology, not just the voices of some.

The meeting felt introspective. The main underlying topics were trust and communication. Many presenters touched on the need to reconsider how we do archaeology and how we can make archaeology more relevant

to the public. If the public is to care about cultural heritage, it needs to know what it is and why it is important to us today. Beyond the population in general, there are specific groups of people – stakeholders – in a community or region, who have maintained their cultural identity and heritage but are sometimes struggling to do so in the face of progress, planning departments, developers and yes, archaeologists. Stakeholders, both the descendants of immigrant populations and Native Americans, want a voice in the interpretation of their heritage by historians and archaeologists. Both stakeholders and the public, if invited, will become involved with specific projects and on-going work. Most of the presenters spoke to the need to be respectful and inclusive when their work affects descendant communities. They said that collaboration yielded a richer and more informed interpretation. Two speakers talked about how the archaeological community is changing and becoming more diverse. One can already see a change in archaeological research and CRM work, as well as in the research questions chosen.

Here are a few highlights:

Many Voices Needed in Archaeology

Chip Colwell was not the only person to speak of the need for other voices in archaeology and how much we miss when we do not include everyone who has a stake in the issue. Archaeology is a field still dominated by white people. Some people find themselves “the only” <insert your ethnicity or gender here> archaeologist in the group. Without hearing someone in this position speak truthfully about these experiences, the rest of us cannot imagine what it is like to be an outsider in your own profession. The problem is not just that we need more diversity and collaboration; we also need to learn how to listen to each other and be respectful as archaeologists and people.

Mistrust, suspicion of “authorities” and bad experiences in the past is a common theme in current events. It is also present in archaeology. Valenin Lopez spoke during the Plenary about how reluctant he and the Amah Mutsun were to collaborate with academics from UC Berkeley on a project focused on the coast north of Santa Cruz. Why would they ever want to do something like that? They took a chance because one of their tribal members, Rob Cuthrell, asked Lopez to listen to what Kent Lightfoot, Professor of Anthropology at UC Berkeley, had to say about noninvasive survey techniques. That was in 2007.

This year, Lopez and collaborators Kent Lightfoot, Mark Hylkema and Roberta Jewett lead a seminar called “Introduction to the Archaeological Investigation of Landscape and Seascape Stewardship Practices on the Santa Cruz Coast”. Over the last thirteen or so years, Amah Mutsun tribal members and archaeologists have uncovered scientific evidence supporting the Amah Mutsun’s traditional knowledge of stewardship of the land and coastal areas. A variety of recent research supporting the existence of past traditional land practices was presented in this seminar. The amount of information conveyed was more than this short article can cover. SCAS members have heard from some of this work in the recent past, such as preliminary research on the presence of specific rodent species in the archaeological context, as well as seed, pollen and phytoliths analysis. Both of these types of studies support the idea that cultural burning was taking place on the Santa Cruz Coast in pre-contact times. Two presenters are working on the question of how Native Americans also stewarded ocean resources. Looking at sites containing shellfish remains, combined with understanding (in this case, mussels) of the growth patterns of mussels and seasonality of harvests through careful isotope analysis, they were able to present preliminary data showing how and when Native Americans harvested mussels. They also uncovered gaps in our basic knowledge about mussel growth.

The Amah Mutsun Tribe, although not federally recognized or owning any land, has formed the Amah Mutsun Land Trust, established in 2014, receiving their non-profit status in 2016. They are dedicated to educating the members of their tribe and the public. With Memorandums of Understanding in place, they are stewards of BLM and State Park land on Santa Cruz’s north coast. Lopez said that all stewards are now certified wildland fire fighters and participate in cultural burns and prescribed burns. Most people are afraid of fire, he said, but since the CZU fire in August, agencies and others are showing interest in learning about traditional burning practices.

Technology and Archaeology

During the Plenary session, Dominique Rissolo, of The Cultural Heritage Engineering Initiative (CHEI) at the University of San Diego, spoke about the uses of digital archaeology. A “cloud” of 3D photogrammetry can create a scaffold to which we can link other studies and other data such as (oral) histories, photographs, past surveys and videos. Virtual Reality (VR) is not just for entertainment. We can derive a lot of information from digitally visualizing structures, such as Mayan Temples or Renaissance architecture. We might be able to reconstruct what the building looked like in the past. It is less costly to do this than to reconstruct the actual structure. The speed of model development is a great advantage, and the ability to link the model with other information is a plus for researchers. However, like the virtual vs. in-person conference, something is missing. When we gather our survey points in a day or two instead of living with a place for a few months conducting traditional survey, we find it difficult to establish a thoughtful relationship with a place. Another problem comes when the model becomes more important than the physical object it represents. There is a danger of giving the model too much authority, and not taking the time to know the place and hear what the local people have to say. Because the equipment is often expensive and requires specialized training without funding, it is difficult for non-professionals to participate or undertake this work.

Dr. Rissolo is a proponent of digital archaeology but he is emphatic about the need for “analog” technology as well – sketch maps, photos, and other standard recording techniques. He reminded us that we have maps, drawings and even photographs well over a hundred years old, and that we can still access the originals or their digital copies. Will we be able to say the same for our new digital data? How will we ensure the data is not lost or made inaccessible? There is a danger in the rush to digitalization that we forget that digital is relatively new technology. It exists within a rapidly changing technological and business environment, where long term storage of digital items and equity of access is a problem. Curators are having serious conversations about this. Think about your own experiences with computer technology. Do you have prized images, stories and music on media or in a “cloud” that is now inaccessible with your new computing devices?

Presenters in the “Santa Cruz Coast” seminar also spoke of the advantages of using Geophysical surveys to allow the collaborators to “see” below the surface and avoid disturbing burials, and to target areas of archaeological interest. Peter Nelson, speaking about ground penetrating radar (GPR), showed how it could highlight transitions in the subsurface between disturbed soils and natural materials, and it can be as simple as picking up a difference in moisture retention in the soil: something that may not be visible to the human eye. In his slides of Sand Hill Bluff, the profile of layers of sand were visible. They were also able to relocate old excavation sites, which helps reestablish provenience of a collection of artifacts.

The fire said, “Hold my beer.”

I wish I could attribute this statement to a specific individual, but I believe what that person was trying to convey is the fact that we may not have seen the worst fire season possible. California has been experiencing an expanded fire season and larger fires since 2007-2008 when it seemed the entire state would burn down. Both years saw more than 1.5 million acres burned, the worst until 2017 and 2018. As reported in the New York Post, LA Times and other news sources, more than four million acres have burned across the state in 2020, making it a record year, surpassing all others, and more than 2017 and 2018 combined. According to CALFIRE’s fire records, the ten largest fires have occurred since 2000. The five top fires (SF Chronicle 09/11/2020, and see Wikipedia) occurred in 2020. Topping the list: August Complex of 2020 at over 1 million acres, Mendocino Complex 2018 (not even close at 459,123 acres), and the next four largest fires also started in 2020: SCU Lightning Complex, Creek, LNU Lightning Complex and the North Complex. I am not reporting these statistics to scare anyone, but to acknowledge that our state is under siege. As archaeologists, we need to consider how fire affects land management, artifacts, cultural and heritage sites.

There were two symposiums on archaeology and natural disasters at the SCA this year. The first symposium covered fire, sea level rise, climate change, human-caused disasters, and how archaeologists and biologists can work together. The second symposium was devoted to the archaeology of the Woolsey Fire of November 2018 in Ventura County. Although relatively small at 96,949 acres, Woolsey is among the top ten destructive

fires in California according to CAL FIRE (https://www.fire.ca.gov/media/t1rdhizr/top20_destruction.pdf, see also <http://projects.caprдио.org/california-fire-history/#6.58/41.165/-125.305>). Lisa Bright of DOT said when introducing “Archaeology and Natural Disasters” that it is very important for archaeologists and other agency members and CRM firms to share their experiences and advice as we will all be facing, at some point, a disaster. This symposium was an opportunity for archaeologists to share their experiences and what practices worked for them.

What constitutes an emergency for an agency? What happens then, and afterwards? For an agency dealing with cultural resources, guidelines are found in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA, as amended). An emergency is a “clear and imminent danger of loss of life, or property”. The Governor of a State, a tribal government, or the President of the United States can make a formal declaration of a disaster or emergency, and this declaration sets into motion actions by agencies that can cross jurisdiction boundaries. At a high level, an Incident Commander is appointed and the Incident Command System is set up to coordinate the activities of cities, agencies, tribes and other entities during and after the emergency. Archaeologists concentrate on protecting resources during the emergency. Archaeologists and resource advisers involved with Incident Command direct fire personnel to sites where certain treatment may protect above ground resources ahead of an approaching fire. It is important to work with fire personnel to ensure that staging areas and dozer lines are not cutting through sites where the ground disturbance could cause significant damage. This is an ideal. Some fires move so fast that there is little time to implement a plan, and safety comes first. For the Department of Transportation, the number one priority is to keep the roads open for escape routes and for emergency personnel. Other agencies have priorities as well. This is, of course, a gross simplification, but the take-away is to understand that agencies and their archaeologists are part of a command structure created on an as-needed basis to deal with major events such as fires and floods.

In the symposium “After the Smoke Clears: Post-Fire Collaborative Archaeology and Recovery in the Santa Monica Mountains”, we learned that four state parks and a national recreational area were damaged when in November 2018, the Woolsey Fire, driven by fierce Santa Ana winds, burned to the ocean. Collaboration between State Parks, UCLA, CSU Channel Islands, and the Barbareño/Ventureño Band of Mission Indians, the Fernandeno Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, CalRecycle contractors, and Caltrans District 7 is ongoing, as cleanups, road repairs, surveys, and assessments continued for six months after the fire. Historic buildings, including old ranches, were destroyed in the fast moving fire. For example, the Sepulveda Adobe lost all combustible materials and it is possible the standing walls will remain.

Andrew Kinkella showed us Albert Knight’s PowerPoint on the Woolsey Fire and its effects on pictographic rock art in the Santa Monica Mountains. Rock art in the Burro Flats area was slightly affected, more so in some areas. Burro Cave, which we heard about when Knight spoke for us in September 2020, was undamaged. Kinkella pointed out other pictograph rock art on a black background: signs of soot on the rock face pre-dating the rock art. Another site survived because the landowner (who lost his house) had the foresight to clear vegetation in front of the boulders. Several boulders showed spalling and soot from previous fire events.

Some members of SCAS may remember that in January 2020, archaeologist Austin Ringelstein spoke to SCAS about finding the cabin of Alice Ballard, member of one of the African American families who homesteaded in the Santa Monica Mountains in the late 1800s-early 1900s. Ringelstein said that Alice moved out of the Santa Monica Mountains around 1903. This was possibly because of a large fire that burned most of Malibu, during which she probably lost her home. After the Woolsey fire, Ringelstein was able to revisit the site of Ballard’s homestead and find artifacts dating to her period of occupation. The post-fire conditions rendered the site more visible.

When a fire burns away vegetation, the visibility of sites can be enhanced. This is an advantage when trying to locate sites. Fire is not the only destructive agent. Fire lines and their repair, tree fall, restoration of utilities and roads, erosion and its mitigation are all issues as well as certain unwanted visitation by the public. Incidence of looting and vandalism goes up after sites become more visible.

Andrew Kinkella, speaking about fire and the archaeological record, told us of an experience he had while he

was a graduate student at CSUN, taking a GIS class. His project was to look at fire data in the Malibu area from 1880s to present. He said he “got tired” looking at the data, and decided to turn on all the layers at once (each layer presumably covering a specific fire) and the entire Santa Monica Mountains turned black, shocking him. His take-away: fires will keep coming and it is just common sense to plan for natural disasters. Also, as archaeologists, think about “fire altered rock” and the charcoal you find, or scorching on the side of large boulders. Is it cultural or is the aftermath of a wildfire? Is that shallow layer of soot in your unit a feature, or is it the result of a large fire in the recent past? Kinkella also had advice for field schools conducted in remote places: always have a plan for evacuation. Try to have a second route out of an area.

There were many more very interesting and thought provoking presentations at the Virtual SCA Meeting of 2021, but I am not able to report on all of it. I hope we can convince some of these presenters to speak for us at our future meetings. 🌿

Buena Vista Adobe—1996

On December 10, 2020, R. Paul Hampson spoke to SCAS about the Rancho Llano de Buena Vista Adobe, east of Salinas and Spreckels, at the foot of the Sierra de Salinas.

Among the owners of the rancho over time (not an exhaustive list) included Mission San Carlos, Hiram Corey, and the Soberanes and Castro families, up to the early 1810s. In 1823 the rancho was granted to Jose Mariano Estrada by Governor Arguello. In 1824, David Spence of Scotland came to Monterey. In 1829, Spence married Estrada’s daughter Maria Adeladia Altagracia Estrada. In the American era the land grant was patented to David Spence. After that, the rancho may have been a dairy farm and a store. In 1890 Claus Spreckels built his sugar beet processing factory and company town, Spreckels, along the Salinas River below the adobe.



Members of SCAS and Cabrillo college students were volunteer crew at the excavation of the site under the direction of Rob Edwards and Charr Simpson Smith, in January and February 1996, prior to its "redevelopment" as Buena Vista Middle School, surrounded by single-family housing. The River fire of August 2020 burned up to the western edge of the Buena Vista housing development. Recently, Rob Edwards came across some photos of the excavation, and some of the photos include SCAS members.

Photos of SCA volunteers at the excavation of the Buena Vista Adobe courtesy Rob Edwards.

(Previous page) Robin Hirahara, Jeanne Geotz and Rob Edwards.

(Below) Jerry Dudley and Kevin Hildreth, both past presidents of SCAS.



Google Earth image of the River Fire of 2020, taken 08/26/2020.



(Above and Below) Buena Vista overview with SCAS volunteers at work. In upper picture, Mary Ellen Irons is on the left. In the lower photo, center, the site of the Spreckels sugar beet factory is visible on the skyline.





Our Past Professional Advisor (Rob Edwards) leaning on a screen.



Two SCAS volunteers screening, Robin Hirahara and Rob Edwards excavating.

George Smith (1933-2020)

George Smith has died. He was a friend, a colleague, a student and a very good person. George was an early member of the Santa Cruz Archaeological Society and a member of the first “*Raiders of the Lost Adobe*” excavators. George was a model teacher (Soquel High for 27 years) who developed a way of teaching local history through architecture which got students out of the classroom and made history real. He also had a career as a summer interpretive ranger for several National Parks.

After retiring in 1989, he (with wife Shirley) taught in South America and visited five continents. Although his health has not been good in the past year, he and Shirley were regulars at the Cabrillo College Farmer’s Market. He was a long time Democrat, an American Federation of Teachers Organizer and former State Assembly candidate, he exercised the right to vote in the last presidential election about one week prior to contracting COVID -19. He was 87 (1933-2020).

An Obit was published in the Santa Cruz Sentinel December 22, 2020. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to the Genealogical Society of Santa Cruz County in George’s memory. Condolences and remembrances can be sent to the family at smithgeorge600@gmail.com.

— Rob Edwards 12-22-2020



1981 Lost Adobe Participants. *George Smith is on the far right.* In alpha order; David Beiling, Rene Belling, Anne Biet, Marianne Biskup, Cecily Clemons, Rob Edwards, Kate Harper, Caryl Kane, Gary Martindale, Lucille McKenzie, Cathy Puccinelli, Jay Richards, Charr Smith, George Smith, and Robert Wylde.

2021 Speaker Lineup

Until further notice, SCAS General Meetings will be held online. When you RSVP for a meeting, instructions for joining the meeting will be sent to your email address 30 minutes prior to the start of the meeting.

For more information, and directions for how to RSVP for meetings, visit the SCAS website:

<http://www.santacruzarchociety.org/calendar>

RESERVATION ONLY & SPACE LIMITED, WITH PREFERENCE TO CURRENT SCAS MEMBERS.

- ◆ May 13 – Justin Wisely, Pacific Legacy, Inc.
- ◆ June 10 – Kristina Gill, University of Oregon
- ◆ September 9 – Chelsea Blackmore, Albion Environmental, Inc.

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