

Scotts Valley's Ancient Site Revisited, Forty Years Later

by Rob Edwards

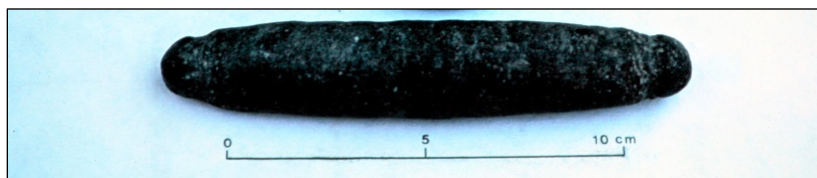
Summary

The oldest indigenous settlement, with the longest documented history in Central California, is located in Scotts Valley. It was discovered and recorded in 1978. The site was ignored and partially destroyed in the construction of Scotts Valley City Hall (Duval 2021). It was subsequently tested, found to be very old and recommendations for mitigation were made in 1980. That report was not only ignored but disbelieved by the Mayor and City Council. The site was bulldozed by the Mayor in an attempt to destroy it. The Santa Cruz Archaeological Society then met with the City Council to get the site dealt with under CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act). The Council refused. This was the basis for a legal suit by the Society (later joined by the Society for California Archaeology) against the City of Scotts Valley in 1981. That suit was settled out of court in 1982 and led to the largest volunteer archaeological excavation (or “Dig”) ever in Northern California in 1983 (Richards, 1983).

Below, the “Dig” site looking north.



Archaeological findings from this site (CA-SCr-177) are dated as old as 7-12,000 years ago (Harris, 1983), based on 32 carbon dates, 72 obsidian hydration measurements, dated stratigraphic profile, and diagnostic artifacts (Cartier, 2014) such as the crescents (**see right**), an atlatl weight (**below**), and large leaf style projectile points (**next page**) (Flynn, 1983). All the methods of chronological analysis are consistent and support the site's antiquity.





History

It was first recorded in 1978 by Jan Whitlow (Smith, 1993) and later tested in 1980 by a consulting firm, Archaeological Research Management (A.R.M.). A report was delivered to the Scotts Valley City Council in 1980 indicating great significance and possible dates of 4,000 to 7,000 years ago. (Cartier, 1980). The Council disregarded (actually ridiculed it) the report as they wanted to build a new city hall parking lot on the site (Duval, 2021). The Mayor, Friend Stone directed and participated in the attempted destruction of the site. (Mauter, 1982). After appeals by the Santa Cruz Archaeological Society to the City to mitigate the damage were ignored by the City Council, the Society sued the City, (Nov. 1981) to have the Ancient Settlement considered and mitigated under CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act).



Jan Whitlow 1976

In an out-of-court settlement (McNicholas, 1982) in November 1982, the City of Scotts Valley agreed to change their planning procedures to consider all cultural resources more fully in the future (Bradford, 1983), and to fund (via the Society) efforts to mitigate the damage by documenting and expanding the archaeological sample in the damaged areas to see if the age and significance of the site as stated in the 1980 report could be supported (Anon., 1983a).

Excavations

The Santa Cruz Archaeological Society organized the Memorial Day weekend excavation in 1983 (Anon. 1983b). This event would turn out to be the largest volunteer excavation team ever assembled for such an occasion. Many archaeologists and students from over ten Universities and four Community Colleges and avocational societies members from all over Northern California participated.



Over 230 people contributed over 500 people days to the excavation effort. There were no Native monitors required as there was no shell or bone of any kind due to acidic soil. There were



visits from Patrick Orozco, Chair of the Pajaro Valley Ohlone Indian Council, Rosemary Cambra, Chair of the Muwekma Tribe of San Jose, and Willie Pink, of the California Native American Heritage Commission.

Five very competent, hardworking people, organized the logistics and kept everything running amazingly well. These included: Dr. Diane Gifford Gonzalez, SCAS Professional Advisor, Charr Smith (Past- SCAS President at the time of excavation),



**Charr
Smith
&
Diane**



Gifford-Gonzalez

Charlene Duval, (Past-President of Scotts Valley Historical Society (SVHS)), and Jennice Singer, a member of both SCAS and SVHS, (Smith, *ibid*).

Left: Charlene Duval, Jennice Singer, Charr Smith, and Kate Harper

SCAS Co-ordinators met with many professional



archaeologists including Gary Breschini, Rob Edwards, David Frederickson, Bert Gerow, Diane Gifford-Gonzalez, William Hildebrand, Tom Jackson, Terry Jones, Alan Leventhal, Jim West, and Robert Cartier (**left**), who was the Excavation Director of A.R.M. of San Jose (Smith, *ibid*) to set up the mitigation procedures.

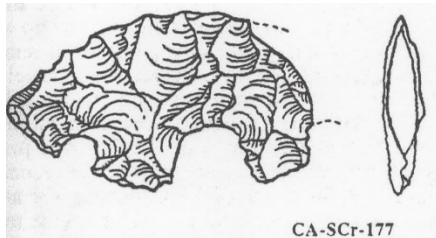


(Dave Frederickson, Terry Jones)

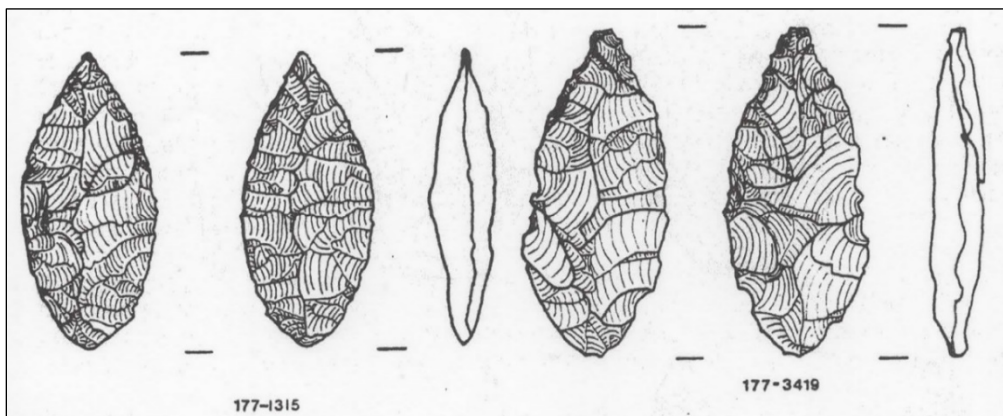
The excavation was so large that it was broken into several areas supervised by experienced professionals, including, Dave Frederickson, Gerrit Fenaga, Bill Hildebrand, Terry Jones, and Alan Leventhal.

The volunteer excavation produced artifacts and other data that supported the previous research; including a crescent (**below**), (Cartier, 1983),

The Crescent found in 1983



leaf-shaped bifaces (**below**) that supported an estimated date of 7-10,000 YBP, and a metate rock feature, one of the oldest dated examples of ground-stone in California (Cartier, 2014).



Leaf-shaped bifaces

The information generated by this 1983 “salvage” effort to evaluate the importance of the site led the City of Scotts Valley to be required to provide funds for a large excavation in 1987 when the Scotts Valley City Hall parking lot plans were redesigned. While better funded, the 1987 excavation also utilized volunteers. A great deal more specific and controlled excavated data was produced, analyzed, and included in the 1993 monograph.

Summary of analysis and post-excavation research

Many scholars were involved in the analysis of the over 13,000 stone artifacts and ecofacts from both the 1983 and 1987 excavations under the coordination of Dr. Robert Cartier. The final monograph was published by the Santa Cruz Archaeological Society and A.R.M. (Cartier, 1993). There was a display at City Hall created by A.R.M. Artifacts that were discovered in both excavations were later curated at UC Santa Cruz (Gifford-Gonzalez, 2017).

The monograph reported on the extensive analyses done that related both to the findings in time (back 12,000 years) and space (to previous archaeological findings in Western North America). A series of chapters, written by various scholars, includes careful examination of the history of what produced the excavation, how the volunteer excavation was carried out, and the analysis of the various data generated from both the 1983 and 1987 excavations.

It was concluded that; based on the thirty-seven carbon dates, the seventy-two obsidian hydration readings, the well-dated stratigraphic profile, and the diagnostic style of the artifacts that all data supported the 7 to 12,000-year-old antiquity of CA-SCR-177.

Cartier notes in his concluding comments:

- “the exceptional character of the Scotts Valley site lies in its well-documented antiquity, its long duration of occupation....and the relative integrity of its site structure”(Cartier, 1993, p.271).
- “There are few archaeological sites known of this antiquity with this degree of dating” (ibid, p. 93).
- While its occupation seems to have been episodic, it “contains one of the longest records of human occupation yet known (*as of 1993*) for western North America (ibid p.241).

Archaeologist Gerrit Fenenga, in his chapter in the monograph, adds, “The Scotts Valley Site is clearly of great significance locally, regionally, statewide and in North America” (Fenenga, 1993).

The political structure in Scotts Valley initially discounted the value and potential significance of this ancient site. By the time the work was done, there was a new mayor. Hopefully, the excavation and analysis has provided an answer to the “why” of the excavation when the new Mayor Ray Rezloff, spoke to the volunteers over pizza and beer at the end of the “Dig” and said,

“I’m not sure why what you all have done is important, but your work has convinced me that it must be important, and I thank you all for your efforts” (Edwards, 1993).

References

- Anon. a, *Call for Mass exposure at CA-SCr-177*, SCAN Vol. 12, 3, 1983
- Anon. b, *Scotts Valley Memorial Day Weekend Dig*, SCAN, Vol. 12, #3, 1983
- Anon. c, *Scotts Valley Settlement Agreement* SCAN, Vol. 12 # 1, P. 19, January 1983.
- Bradford, Marcia, *Cultural Ordinance Goes to Planning*, The Valley Times, P. 3, June 24, 1983
- Cartier, Robert, Presentation of Descriptive and Scientific Data for CA-SCR-33 and CA-SCR-177. Report on File, California Northwest Information Center, 1980
- Cartier, Robert, *The Scotts Valley Crescent, A Report*, SCAN, Vol. 12, #3, P. 8 +9. 1983
- Cartier, Robert (Editor) “*The Scotts Valley Site: CA-SCR-177*” Santa Cruz Archaeological Society Monograph, 1993
- Cartier, Robert, Chapter 6, p. 93 in Cartier, Robert (Editor) “The Scotts Valley Site: CA-SCR-177” Santa Cruz Archaeological Society Monograph, 1993
- Cartier, Robert, The Chronology and Enigmatic Nature of the Scotts Valley Site, MS. Archaeological Resource Management. 2014
- Duval, Charlene, (Communication by email) 2021
- Edwards, Rob, *Report of the Public Education Activities for the Santa Cruz Archaeological Society Memorial Dig, May 28-30, 1983* in Cartier, Robert (Editor) “The Scotts Valley Site: CA-SCR-177” Santa Cruz Archaeological Society Monograph, 1993
- Fenenga, Gerrit L., *The Eccentric Crescent*, Chapter 7, in Cartier, Robert (Editor) “The Scotts Valley Site: CA-SCR-177” Santa Cruz Archaeological Society Monograph, 1993
- Flynn, John, ‘*Oldest Tool*’ found in Scotts Valley, S.F. Examiner, May 31, 1983, p. A- 26.
- Gifford-Gonzalez, Dr, Diane, “*CA-SCR-177 Presentation*, to Santa Cruz Archaeological Society, October 2017
- Harris, Tom, *Artifact, 8,000 years old is unearthed*, San Jose Mercury, P 2B, May 31, 1983
- Mauter, Larry, *Settlement reached in City Hall dispute* Scotts Valley Banner, P. 1, Vol VIII, No. 40 November 24, 1982
- Mc Nicholas, John, *Scotts Valley, Archaeological Groups Settle*, Santa Cruz Sentinel, P. A2, Nov 18, 1982
- Richards, Joan and John McNicholas, *Prehistoric artifacts found at Scotts Valley City Hall Site*, Santa Cruz Sentinel, P. 1, May 31, 1983
- C. Smith and Rob Edwards, *Archaeology of Concern, by Committee and with Consensus*, Chapter 2 in Cartier, Robert (Editor) “The Scotts Valley Site: CA-SCR-177” Santa Cruz Archaeological Society Monograph, 1993