



Valley of Fire

by Angus Quinlan and Darla Garey-Sage

During April 2016, NRAF staff and volunteers conducted fieldwork at Valley of Fire State in April, Nevada's oldest and most heavily visited State Park. NRAF's recordation project focused on rock art sites that had not been intensively documented to contemporary standards. The project was made possible by a challenge grant from the NARA Foundation that was matched by generous gifts from NRAF donors and members.



Valley of Fire is famous for its majestic red sandstone landscape

Archaeological investigations in the Park from the 1960s by the Nevada State Museum to the present by Dr. Kevin Rafferty of the College of Southern Nevada have established the area's culture history. Valley of Fire was rarely used by people prior to the Archaic (ca. 7000-2000 years ago) and regular settlement use began around 5500 years ago during the Middle Archaic. Rock art and small-scale campsites and rockshelters regularly co-occur. Hunting and seed

collecting were major activities as groups of hunter-foragers exploited the area seasonally.

Ca. 2000-1500 years ago, horticultural economies with permanent villages developed in the Southwest and the eastern Great Basin. Valley of Fire appears to have been used by Western Puebloan peoples supplementing their economy with wild resources. During this

period, hunting wild game was the focus, with seed collection reduced in importance compared to previous periods.

By around 800 years ago, horticultural ways of life in the southern and eastern Great Basin were replaced by a return to hunter-forager economies. Valley of Fire was now used mostly for

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FIND OUT THE LATEST RESEARCH IN GREAT BASIN ANTHROPOLOGY

by Darla Garey-Sage and Janice Hoke

Members of NRAF will have a unique window on the latest research and findings in our region at the upcoming Great Basin Anthropological Conference in Reno in October 2016. Dates for the conference are Oct. 6-9. Online registration for the event at the Silver Legacy Resort in Reno is open at the [GBAA website](#). The conference, held every two years in the Great Basin, brings together professionals, university researchers, federal and state agency representatives, private sector practitioners as well as avocationalists –lovers of archeology and anthropology. Attendees come from a wide variety of interests as well as geographical locations, including many from outside the Great Basin.

"Everyone who works in the Great Basin will be attending," said Pat Barker, past president of the NRAF board and current president of the Great Basin Anthropological Association, which

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VOLUNTEER PROFILE: WENDY ANTIBUS AND JUSTIN PARRISH by Janice Hoke

How did a surgical nurse from New York and a maintenance mechanic from Georgia get involved together with rock art documentation and stewardship in Nevada?



NRAF volunteers Justin Parrish and Wendy Antibus enjoying the attractions at the National Auto Museum, Reno

Wendy Antibus and Justin Parrish of Reno found each other while working at Lake Tahoe ski resorts, she as a ski patroller and he as a full-time lift mechanic. Both had moved West because they were drawn to adventure and wide-open spaces.

The passion for rock art followed naturally. Wendy studied archeology at Oberlin College, recorded rock art sites in Oregon and did archaeological field work in Italy. Justin studied history at Georgia Tech, and a visit to Mesa Verde National Park

spurred his interest in rock art. Both are intrigued by the Nevada landscape and its prehistoric legacy.

Justin is fascinated by "the amazing people who lived here, who had time and the intellect to create their artwork with meanings we don't understand. It makes us think."

"It's exciting," Wendy said, "to visit the same landscape where people lived without modern technology and left their mark on it. They had a great knowledge of the landscape, where to find food, water and medicine."

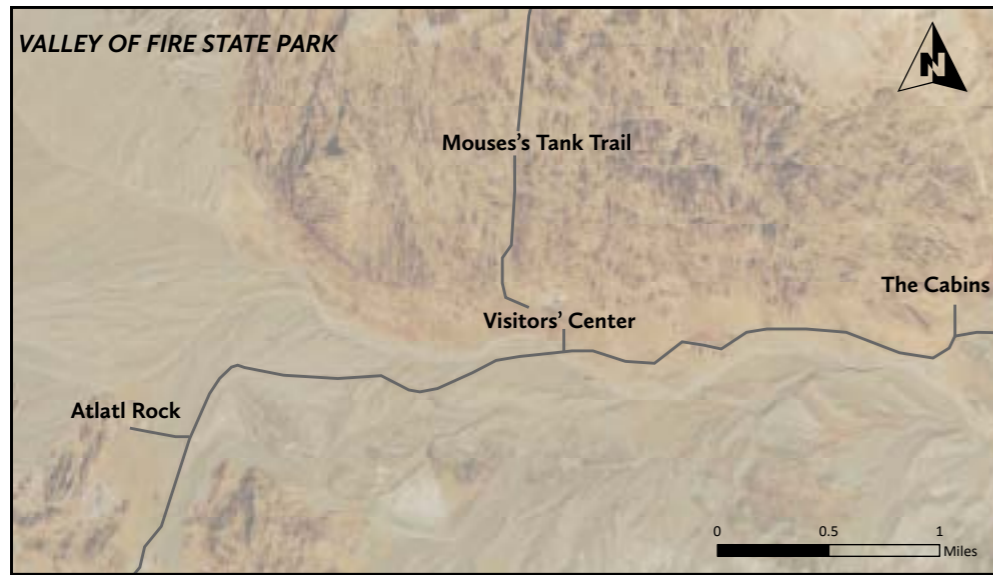
Besides her work on ski patrol at Homewood, Mt. Rose and Tahoe Donner ski resorts, Wendy works part-time at Carson Tahoe Hospital. Justin works as a plant maintenance mechanic at Tahoe-Truckee Sanitation Agency. Soon after they met, they traveled on vacation to Hovenweep National Monument, Four Corners, and Mesa Verde and visited Hickison Summit on their way back home.

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Valley of Fire

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short-term hunting or plant gathering by small, specialized work groups ranging from base camps outside Valley of Fire.

The main focus of NRAF's project was on sites in the Mouse's Tank area, a particularly popular attraction for visitors to the State Park. Rock art in this area forms dense concentrations and, along Mouse's Tank trail, is spatially extensive, extending 500 m along a narrow canyon. Smaller sites



Panel with densely arranged rock art motifs

in the vicinity of the Cabins and Atlatl rock were also recorded. A total of 12 sites and 130 rock art panels was documented during the project.

The project's goal was to collect exhaustive information that would allow the archaeological characteristics of the project sites to be fully described. NRAF volunteers assisted the project by collecting rock art attribute data. Freehand drawings of select panels were also done for the purposes of public interpretation. Detailed site photography, the collection of geospatial data, and field observations resulted in a final archive that allows the site records for the project sites to be updated to current standards.

Fieldwork was conducted to minimize its effects on the experience of the numerous visitors at the Park. Rock art and archaeological features identified during the project were not physically marked by pin flags. Instead, illustrated site maps were prepared to relocate rock art panels and other features.

Valley of Fire's rock art represents a mixture of styles and cultural influences that are most visible through anthropomorphic imagery. These include Basin and Range tradition stick-figures and more elaborate figures that reflect Western Puebloan and Fremont influences. Several anthropomorphs are depicted with headgear or 'horns,' a trait of both Fremont and Puebloan types. Other anthropomorphic forms include hand and foot prints, some of which are arranged in pairs.

One of the most distinctive anthropomorphs at Valley of Fire is found along Mouse's Tank trail. It comprises a hooded or masked figure with headgear or 'horns', and, its most schematized has a body that resembles a cross with triangular forms. This figure is highly ambiguous as its features are suggestive of both human and animal qualities.



Rare anthropomorph type that blends human and animal attributes (Mouse's Tank Trail)



Anthropomorphs joined at the hands and other imagery

Another distinctive treatment is the repeated theme of four anthropomorphs joined at the hands. This is found at several places along Mouse's Tank Trail. This has been interpreted as depicting social cohesion either by participation in ceremonial practice or by symbolically asserting co-operative activities.

Throughout Valley of Fire, abstract imagery that cannot easily be attributed to specific archaeological cultures predominates. These are usually very formal in appearance and exhibit a preference for rectilinear forms, circles, and spirals.

A range of zoomorphs is represented at Valley of Fire, including



Basin and Range tradition curvilinear and rectilinear imagery

bighorn sheep, tortoises, canids, and lizards. Bighorn sheep are the most common animal depicted, either portrayed singly or in small groups.

Discernible differences in petroglyph patination and superimposition show that rock art at Valley of Fire was made over a long period. It is likely that the main periods of prehistoric use of the area identified by previous archaeological research were each accompanied by the production of symbolic culture.



Curvilinear designs and anthropomorphs

Acknowledgments—We thank Jim Hammonds, Valley of Fire State Park for the opportunity to do research at the Park. Dr. Kevin Rafferty provided advice on the project sites. The project would not have been possible without the support of the NARA Foundation and NRAF donors. Last, we thank Clay Elting, Gordon Hamilton, Melanie Hecht, Anne Higgins, Janice Hoke, Elaine Holmes, Cary Ingbar, Dianne Jennings, Anne McConnell, and Doug Rorer for their hard work in the field. ■





GBAC 2016's theme "Featured Landscapes" explores the role of landscape studies in explaining prehistoric cultural patterns

organizes the conference. "It has a national appeal...This is a friendly conference and everyone is welcome." The conference schedule includes multiple daily sessions of papers on Thursday and Friday; nightly open bar socials; a Friday evening banquet and awards ceremony, followed by dancing to live classic rock music by The Hammerstones; and Saturday field trips.

As rock art enthusiasts know, location is all-important in studying the cultures and people of the Great Basin. The theme of this year's GBAC is "Featured Landscapes," reflecting the broad view of interpretation said Pat Barker that "individual sites can best be interpreted when they are seen as part of a much larger territory." Field trips to some of these featured landscapes are currently being arranged, and NRAF has been asked to lead a rock art field trip.

NRAF is organizing a rock art symposium at the conference, and Executive Director Angus Quinlan is an invited speaker at the Plenary Session (opening session on Thursday morning). NRAF is also hosting a vendor table, so interested artists should contact the office (info@nvrockart.org). This will

be a much larger vendor audience than typical, so it is a nice opportunity for both artists and the Foundation.

Other details will be announced as they become available; members are encouraged to visit the GBAC website (www.greatbasinanthropologicalassociation.org/gbac) or the [NRAF website](http://www.nraf.org) for conference updates and registration information.

"I encourage members to come to the conference and learn about the important work being done in our region," said Darla Garey-Sage, NRAF deputy director. "It will give all of us a broader understanding of our contributions in the study of rock art to the science and knowledge of Great Basin anthropology."

In an effort to re-invigorate NRAF's annual meetings, the Board of Directors decided, on a trial basis, to move to a biennial schedule. Members are encouraged to attend the GBAC meetings in the off-year. Over the past few years NRAF has made changes to the annual meeting format to revive interest. Meeting annually is not cost-effective at current attendance rates. We hope moving to a biennial schedule will make attendance more affordable by reducing travel costs as well as stoking interest from scheduling the meeting less frequently. ■

Wendy and Justin

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Searching for more rock art in Nevada, Justin found Nevada Rock Art Foundation's website and the couple joined NRAF just in time to participate in the years-long documentation of Lagomarsino Canyon. They have also worked with NRAF to document rock art sites at Black Mountain near Yerington, Crow's Nest in Dry Lakes and Lahontan Reservoir. They have done survey work and helped with graffiti removal in the Grimes Point area. When the couple married in 2011, they suggested donations to NRAF as a gift idea.



Justin and Wendy helping to mitigate environmental vandalism

For two years, they have served as site stewards for two clusters of rock art in the Dry Lakes area, walking up hills from Spanish Springs. On their routes, they have discovered and noted GPS positions for several more rock art panels.

"We try to go different ways every time and to keep our eyes open," Justin said.

The future holds many opportunities for NRAF, they believe, building on work the Foundation's leaders have accomplished.

"I really like the outreach to school kids at the Nevada State Museum and

the Children's Discovery Museum [Las Vegas]," Justin said. "The only way adults in Nevada will respect rock art and think it's valuable is the kids have to be raised to believe that." NRAF has developed brochures, online resources and teachers' handbook for Lincoln County funded by grants from the BLM.

Wendy values the research-based projects and publications that appeal to scholars and universities. "That will draw in PhD candidates and younger folks."

Recruitment of new members and partners will be important in the next five to 10 years, they agree.

Collaboration with groups that share similar interests and goals, such as Friends of the Nevada Wilderness, will help, especially to deter dumping and vandalism of sites, Wendy said.

While Wendy and Justin are strongly drawn to explore the landscape of Nevada and its treasures, they also value the friendships they have found through NRAF. "We stumbled on a really good social organization," Justin said. ■

10th Rockin' Out Art Show

The 10th Annual Rockin' Out Art show will be hosted by the Artists Co-op Gallery of Reno, celebrating its 50th year in business in 2016.

Mark your calendar now for the opening reception, July 3rd, from 11 am to 4 pm. The show runs the entire month of July.

In 2015, The Artists Co-op received the Friends of the Foundation award in recognition of 9 years of fundraising, contributing more than \$20,000 to NRAF, as well as showcasing the mission and profile of NRAF to the public. ■





N E V A D A
ROCK ART
F O U N D A T I O N

*Working for the Conservation of
Nevada's Rock Art Heritage*

Code of Ethics

The Nevada Rock Art Foundation subscribes to the following code of ethics and its members, as a condition of membership, agree to abide by the standards of conduct stated herein.

1. NRAF respects the cultural and spiritual significance of rock art sites and shall not engage in any activity that adversely affects site integrity. NRAF members will be respectful at rock art sites—many are regarded as sacred by indigenous peoples and as such will be treated as a valued part of our shared cultural heritage.

2. NRAF members will strictly adhere to all local, state, and national antiquities laws. All research or educational activities taking place at rock art sites shall be subject to appropriate regulations and property access requirements.

3. All rock art recording shall be nondestructive with regard to the rock art itself and any associated archaeological remains that may be present.

4. No artifacts shall be collected unless the work is done as part of a legally constituted program of archaeological survey or excavation and with express permission of the landholder.

5. No excavation shall be conducted unless the work is done as part of a legally constituted excavation project and with the express permission of the landholder. Removal of soil shall not be undertaken at any time for the sole purpose of exposing subsurface rock art.

The Nevada Rock Art Foundation's principal objectives are to document rock art sites at risk and to work to conserve and ensure the integrity and future protection of all Nevada rock art sites.

The Foundation respects the cultural heritage and traditions of all indigenous people in all its activities.

**The Past
Deserves a Future**

GREAT BASIN GLYPH NOTES

Published electronically semi-annually

Editor: Darla Garey-Sage
editor@nvrockart.org

Designer: Eric Roberts

Designed with
Adobe Creative Cloud

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