



PHOEBE A. HEARST

MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

HIDDEN CAVE, NEVADA (NV-CH-16)

Hidden Cave about 12 miles east of Fallon, Nevada, east on US 50) is now part of the Bureau of Land Management's Grimes Point Archaeological Area. Any discussion of interpretations of Hidden Cave within the greater context of Great Basin prehistory must acknowledge the report of the excavations by David Hurst Thomas of the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) from 1979 to 1980 (Thomas 1985a). The report is, as much of Thomas's work, the most thorough examination of the history of archaeological research in the Carson Desert, and an excellent processual treatment of the archaeology. Additionally, Thomas has outlined the research at Hidden Cave on the web at:

http://anthro.amnh.org/anthropology/research/north_archeo/hidden.htm

The cave proper, with an original tiny entrance was never a habitation site, but a "cache cave" used to store materials in a relatively dry place for people living in the Carson Desert. The cave was originally investigated by a local named Dick Wisenhut in the 1920s, and archaeologists have worked there in the 1940s, 1950s, and Thomas in the late 1970s (Thomas 1985b). The cave was re-discovered by guano miners in the 1930s and much of the upper levels of the archaeological deposit was removed at that time. In the 1950s Grosscup, Roust and others excavated the guano miners tailings outside the cave and analyzed the projectile points assuming they were from the upper levels of the deposit, some of which are imaged here and in the Hearst Museum collection, and re-analyzed by Pendleton, and the source provenance of the obsidian points determined by Hughes during the AMNH excavations (see Roust and Clewlow 1968; and Hughes 1985; Pendleton 1985). The projectile point types and obsidian source provenance noted here are from Pendleton (1985) and Hughes (1985).

Earlier the cave was reported to Robert Heizer, but he apparently decided that it contained "nothing of value and importance" and a survey of the region in 1937 essentially ignored the Grimes Point area where Hidden Cave is located (Thomas 1985b:49). The first actual archaeological fieldwork at the site began in May 1940 when S.M. and Georgia Wheeler enlarged the entrance to make the work more feasible. They worked in the area and Hidden Cave until the fall and that collection is at the Nevada State Museum. During this season and during the Nevada State Fair, Hidden Cave was open to the public, and over 700 people visited the site (Thomas 1985b:51). Vandalism continued at the site throughout the 1940s and 1950s until mining claims instigated by Wheeler "protected" the site, an interesting turn-around of the effect of mining on archaeological resources. Over 1500 artifacts were ultimately removed by Wheeler's work.

In the 1950s, archaeologists from the University of California, Berkeley began work in the Carson Desert region, and excavated Hidden Cave in 1951, the artifacts of this excavation are curated at the Hearst Museum. Grosscup provides an oral account of that work that is rendered in Thomas's 1985 work (1985b:55), and some analyses are detailed in a number of other works (Ambro 1966; Grosscup 1956; Roust 1967; Roust and Clewlow 1968). Most unfortunate, the original unpublished report of these investigations (Grosscup and Roust 1956, ARF Manuscript 171) has been missing from the University collections for over a decade before the collection was placed under museum security. Thomas refers to this report in his discussions (Thomas 1985b:56).

Since the University of California investigations at Hidden Cave, a number of others have continued work there, most importantly Thomas and the American Museum of Natural History (Thomas 1985a). It is beyond the scope of this discussion to outline Thomas's work at Hidden Cave, except to say that the work was typically a thorough investigation that offered a "complete picture of the paleoenvironmental record of Hidden Cave and the Carson Sink" (1985a:57). It certainly accomplished this as well as refined the cultural chronology, site function, and further clarified the knowledge of the Carson Desert prehistory for decades yet to come.

Museum Collection and Accession

Accessioned in 1951 as Accession # 1261 by Grosscup, the collection contains 663 catalog records. The number of artifacts associated with those records is unknown since beads are often recorded in one lot as one catalog number. The original site record dated April 1951 by Grosscup notes that "basketry, matting, bone awls, horn and shell pendants, points, cordage, shell beads, atlatl (butt. frag.), foreshafts, sandals, etc." were recovered from the excavation. The cave is described by Grosscup as formerly called McReilley Cave, NAS Site 1-1B, and Cave #14 as a "large dry cave with a small entrance. Floor slopes upward sharply in back. 155' long, 120' wide. [and] Still contains undug deposit (1952)."

References

Ambro, Richard D.

1966 Two Fish Nets from Hidden Cave, Churchill County, Nevada. *University of California Archaeological Survey Report* 66:101-135. Berkeley.

Grosscup, G.L.

1956 The Archaeology of the Carson Sink Area. *University of California Archaeological Survey Report* 33:58-64. Berkeley.

Grosscup, G.L. and N.L. Roust

1956 Brief Report on Hidden Cave, Nevada Site 26-Ch-16. Archaeological Manuscript 171, Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley. (Missing as of at least 2/5/87).

Heizer, Robert F.

1967 Analysis of Human Coprolites From a Dry Nevada Cave. *University of California Archaeological Survey Reports* 70:1-20. Berkeley

Heizer, Robert F., and Lewis K. Napton

1970 *Archaeology and the Prehistoric Great Basin Lacustrine Subsistence Regime as Seen from Lovelock Cave, Nevada*. Contributions of the University of California Archaeological Research Facility 10. Berkeley.

Hughes, Richard E.

1985 Obsidian Source Use at Hidden Cave. In *The Archaeology of Hidden Cave, Nevada*. *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* 61(Part 1), pp. 332-353. New York.

Pendleton, Lorann S.A.

1985 Material Culture: Artifacts of Stone. In *The Archaeology of Hidden Cave, Nevada*. *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* 61(Part 1), pp. 183-218. New York.

Roust, Norman L.

1967 Preliminary Examination of Prehistoric Human Coprolites from Four Western Nevada Caves. *University of California Archaeological Survey Report* 70:49-88. Berkeley.

Roust, Norman L., and C.W. Clewlow, Jr.

1968 Projectile Points from Hidden Cave (NV-Ch-16) Churchill County, Nevada. *Papers on Great Basin Prehistory*. Contributions of the University of California Archaeological Research Facility 71:103-115.

Thomas, David H. (ed.)

1985a *The Archaeology of Hidden Cave, Nevada*. *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* 61(Part 1). New York.

1985b Previous Research at Hidden Cave. In *The Archaeology of Hidden Cave, Nevada*. *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* 61(Part 1), edited by D.H. Thomas, pp. 47-56. New York.