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Re-evaluation of the Main Ridge Site and Adjacent Areas: Final Report, October 1, 2006 - February 14, 2008

Margaret N. Rees
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, peg.rees@unlv.edu

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FINAL REPORT

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
October 1, 2006-February 14, 2008

Cooperative Agreement Number H8R07010001
Task Agreement Number J8R07050006
Re-evaluation of the Main Ridge Site and Adjacent Areas

Executive Summary

- Completed an *Annotated Bibliography and Finder's Guide* detailing the documentation that was found associated with the 1924-1941 work at Lost City.

- Completed maps and condition assessments for all existing Houses at the Main Ridge locality.

- Conducted test excavations at the Main Ridge locality, and analyzed chipped stone, ceramic, macrobotanical, and pollen remains recovered from those excavations.

- Completed a report on the results of the field excavations, titled *Main Ridge 2006 Research Project: Condition Assessments, Test Excavations, and Data Analyses for the UNLV Fall 2006 Field School.*

- Completed skeletal analyses for 37 sets of human remains from the Lost City sites, and dental analyses for 53 sets of teeth from various Lost City human remains. These analyses were reported upon in two reports submitted to the NPS GTR: *Skeletal Analysis of the Lost City Remains,* and *Dental Health and Population Affinity among the Lowland Virgin Anasazi: Cursory Descriptions and Preliminary Results.*

- Eight presentations to professional audiences have been made or are scheduled; seven outreach activities have been made or are scheduled; three papers have been submitted or are being prepared for submission to academic publications; one thesis is in progress; and an additional academic study is underway.

Archival Research

The archival component of this project consisted of locating and documenting all materials possible from the 1924-1941 fieldwork at the sites collectively known as "Lost City." As a part of this effort, 23 institutions were contacted for information, 17 of which

were found to possess information. We were able to document the existence of more than 3600 accessioned items, 91 sets of human remains, 3048 photographs, 100 various reports and publications, 45 newspaper articles, and 267 pieces of correspondence. In an unexpected discovery, we also found a short black-and-white newsreel dating to 1925 that showed aspects of the excavation and portions of a theatrical re-enactment of Native American lifeways.

The results of the archival research were compiled into a report titled "Annotated Bibliography and Finder's Guide." Wherever possible, photographs of artifacts have been acquired and are included in this Finder's Guide, as are copies of most of the written documentation, historic photographs, and the filmstrip. These photographs and other records are included in digital format in the appendix accompanying the report.

Despite the project's success there remain, inevitably, some loose ends. Most importantly, we were unable to gain permission to access the Nevada State Historical Society, an institution believed to contain significant Lost City collections.

Mapping and Condition Assessments

Field research, which included the mapping and condition assessments, was carried out by members of the UNLV Department of Anthropology & Ethnic Studies in the fall of 2006. The work was carried out under the auspices of a field school, and student participants received academic credit for their participation. A major goal of this work was to determine, for each House recorded by Mark Harrington in 1924-25, whether the archaeological remains were destroyed, intact, or intact but eroding. Accordingly, a substantial effort was spent walking over the Main Ridge vicinity to locate the House remains. When remains were encountered, they were fully mapped and their conditions assessed. When remains could not be relocated, they were recorded as destroyed. All maps and condition assessments were compared to Harrington's original field notes and to Margaret Lyneis' maps and condition assessments completed in the 1980s to evaluate the degree to which damage was ongoing.

The rugged nature of the landscape precluded using other techniques, so Main Ridge architectural remains were mapped using a Global Positioning System (GPS). All of the House locations shown on the original plan map for Main Ridge were revisited and examined for architectural or artifactual remains. Particular efforts were made to relocate those Houses that had been underwater or otherwise not visited during the 1982 field investigations. Once architectural remains were located, they were compared against the maps drawn by Lyneis in the 1980s, and any changes in their condition were noted, and, when appropriate, drawn.

At the time of Harrington's 1924-1925 field research, the Main Ridge locality consisted of 47 separate House entities. During Lyneis' 1980 and 1987 visits to the site she reported that of these, 29 were at least partially intact, 12 had been destroyed, and 4 were submerged under water. She did not visit the remaining two Houses.

During our fieldwork, not surprisingly, we failed to relocate any of the twelve Houses reported as destroyed by Lyneis. However, we were dismayed to learn that of the 29 Houses found to be at least partially intact by Lyneis, eleven had since been destroyed as had three of the four submerged sites. Of the two sites not relocated by Lyneis, one was found to be partially intact and one was not relocated. Thus today, of the 47 original House areas recorded by Harrington, 26 are destroyed, 20 are at least partially intact, and the condition of the remaining one structure is unknown. Clearly, although the dropping of the lake may have slowed the erosion processes, the gullies and underground piping created when the lake was high remain and erode further with each rain. Unfortunately, it is likely that the damage will continue and that many of the remaining Houses will be destroyed in the decades to come.

Test Excavations

Excavations at Main Ridge were conducted to evaluate the research potential of the remaining archaeological deposits. This work consisted of digging 13 shovel tests and 20 test units. Shovel tests were generally placed in areas where there was believed to be a slight probability of subsurface cultural materials; the goal of these tests was to quickly evaluate whether any such remains existed, and, thus, whether any large excavation units in that area might be warranted. Excavation units differ from shovel tests; excavation units were placed in areas where there was believed to be a higher probability of encountering subsurface materials.

Shovel tests were placed within the vicinity of eight visible Houses, as well as in three other areas where Houses once stood. Shovel tests within existing Houses were placed in areas of possible outdoor work spaces; the purpose of these tests was to determine whether any midden deposits or intact cultural fill existed below the modern-day ground surface. In most cases, these shovel tests contained only sterile sediments. Notable exceptions were the shovel tests placed within House 27 and House 35; both of these Houses- but especially House 27- may contain intact (albeit probably limited) subsurface deposits. The remaining three shovel tests were placed in areas where Houses were known to once exist but for which there now remain no evidence. All three of these Houses (Houses 5, 15, and 17) likely were destroyed when they were submerged by the lake; the shovel tests were excavated to determine if any cultural deposits still remained despite the lack of surface architecture. No cultural deposits were encountered in any of these areas.

Of the test excavation units, eighteen were placed within House 20 and the remaining two within House 26. These units are distinguished from shovel tests by their larger sizes and by the fact that the sediments were screened.

We decided to begin our test excavations at House 20 because compared to most other Houses the rooms here appeared less disturbed. Additionally, it was a relatively large House, which increased the probability that occupation was sufficiently intense to have resulted in midden deposits. After initiating the work at House 20 we moved upslope to

House 26. This House was selected because it was near enough to House 20 to allow the Project Director to oversee work in both areas, and because the density of artifacts at this House was relatively high.

The results of the test excavations indicate that some intact, subsurface cultural deposits do remain at Main Ridge. The recovery of intact deposits allowed us to recover information that otherwise would be unavailable. Artifacts recovered include 3125 chipped stone items, 925 sherds larger than 2.5 cm diameter, 1157 pieces of animal bone, 15 ground stone items, 4 polishing stones, 2 pieces of shell, and several mineral specimens including hematite, limonite, and chrysacola.

Following completion of the field work, the chipped stone, ceramic, and animal bone remains were analyzed. Additionally, pollen and flotation samples were analyzed and two macrobotanical samples were radiocarbon dated. Interpretation of these data is presented in the report submitted to the GTR (titled *Main Ridge 2006 Research Project: Condition Assessments, Test Excavations and Data Analyses for the UNLV Fall 2006 Field School*). The most important points, however, can be summarized as follows:

- The presence of stratified midden deposits at House 20 support the interpretation that not all structures at Main Ridge were contemporaneous. This evidence of superpositioning has important implications for the nature of the community, as well as for population estimates of the settlement;

- The evidence suggests cotton was not cultivated, at least not by the residents of House 20;

- The residents of House 20 relied primarily on local, riverine resources.

The data learned from these excavations show that the archaeological remains at Main Ridge — though extremely impaired by erosion and by previous excavation work — still have the potential to inform on interesting and as yet unanswered questions for the lower Moapa Valley.

Analyses of Human Remains

All human remains associated with the Lost City project — at least those that could be relocated and for which we were allowed access to study — were analyzed by UNLV Physical Anthropologists Debra Martin and Jennifer Thompson and by James Watson of Indiana University - Purdue University, Indianapolis. A total of 37 sets of human remains were analyzed by Drs. Martin and Thompson, and 53 sets of teeth by Dr. Watson. (Dr. Watson's study included a larger number of teeth because he included remains recovered from the Moapa Valley after the 1924-1941 period of interest).

These remains were analyzed with two goals in mind: (a) to aid in the National Park Service's efforts to comply with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), and (b) to provide information about the Virgin Anasazi occupation of

the Moapa Valley. Regarding the latter goal, three research questions were examined. These were: (a) to what degree were the Virgin Anasazi dependent on agriculture? (b) What was the general health and physical condition of the people? (c) To what other populations do the Virgin Anasazi appear similar to, in terms of genetic relatedness?

Although preliminary, the results of the studies indicate that the people at Lost City differ significantly from other Anasazi populations, at least in terms of physical and dental health. They also appear to show some genetic differences, though future research is needed to further evaluate this proposition.

Professional and other Miscellaneous Activity

- The following activities were conducted for **public outreach**:
    - A brown bag lecture about the Lost City Project was presented by Dr. Karen Harry in the Fall 2005 to the UNLV Anthropology Department faculty and students; and
    - Dr. Karen Harry gave a public presentation on the project to members of the public as a part of Nevada's Archaeology Week celebration. This presentation was given May 9, 2007 at the Nevada State Museum and Historical Society, Las Vegas.
- The following activities were conducted for outreach to relevant **land-managing agencies:**
    - Dr. Karen Harry gave a presentation on the project to the staff of the NPS Lake Mead National Recreation Area on January 23, 2007;
    - Dr. Karen Harry gave a presentation on the project to the staff of the Bureau of Land Management on March 13, 2007;
    - Dr. Karen Harry led a field tour to the Main Ridge site for the NPS Lake Mead National Recreation Area staff on April 13, 2007; and
    - Dr. Karen Harry gave a presentation on February 13, 2008 about the project to NPS archaeologists during the Regional Archaeology Meetings of the National Park Service, held in Boulder City.

- The following **professional activities** were conducted:

    - A paper was presented at the 1st Biennial Three Corners Conference held in Las Vegas on October 15, 2005. This paper, authored by Dr. Karen G. Harry and UNLV Anthropology major Andreas Charest, was titled "Understanding the Contexts of Long-Distance Ceramic Exchange: Upcoming Research in the Virgin Anasazi Area;"

    - A paper was presented at the 30th Great Basin Anthropological Conference, held in Las Vegas in October 2006, presenting the preliminary results of the human remains analyses. This paper, titled "Demographic Composition and Health at Pueblo Grande de Nevada," was authored by Jennifer Thompson, Karen G. Harry, and Debra L. Martin, all of the University of Nevada Las Vegas Anthropology Department;

    - A paper was presented at the 72nd Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology meetings in Austin, Texas, in April 2007. This paper was authored by Dr. Greg Haynes, Ms. Leilani Espinda, and Dr. Karen Harry and was titled "Current Research at the Edge of the Anasazi World: The Lost City Complex of Southeastern Nevada;"

    - A paper was presented at the 2nd Biennial Three Corners Conference, held in Las Vegas in October 2007. This paper, titled "Red-Headed Giants, Silk-Clad Skeletons, and Drunken Archaeologists: A Voyeur's Look Back at the Early Fieldwork of Nevada's "Lost City," was authored by Karen G. Harry of the UNLV Anthropology Department.

    - Dr. Karen Harry and students Nancy Grey and Sharlyn Anderson attended a pottery conference on November 9 and 10, 2007. This conference, held in Flagstaff, Arizona, was sponsored by the Museum of Northern Arizona; Dr. Harry, Ms. Grey, and Ms. Anderson were invited attendees. The purpose of the pottery conference was to revise the Virgin Anasazi sequence; data obtained from the Lost City project area being used to develop these revisions.

    - Ms. Sharlyn Anderson, UNLV graduate student, presented a poster at the UNLV Graduate & Professional and Student Association Forum on March 29, 2008.

- **Ongoing and upcoming activities**

  Although the task agreement for this project expired February 14, 2008, our public outreach and academic efforts continue. With the completion of these projects (which means that the basic data collection is completed), we are now

poised to focus our efforts toward disseminating the information to the academic community. Accordingly, the following activities are either ongoing or upcoming:

- Dr. Karen Harry (UNLV) and Mr. Steve Daron (NPS) are scheduled to present a paper entitled "Depression Era Archaeology along the Colorado River: The Role and Legacy of the CCC" at the 9th Biennial Conference on Nevada History to be held on May 20-21, 2008 in Reno, Nevada. The theme of the conference is *Alphabet Soup: The New Deal in Nevada.*

- In tandem with the above conference, Dr. Karen Harry (UNLV) and Mr. Steve Daron (NPS) are preparing a manuscript with the same name ("Depression Era Archaeology along the Colorado River: The Role and Legacy of the CCC") for submission to the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*.

- Dr. Karen Harry has submitted a paper for inclusion in *Proceedings of the Second Biennial Three Corners Conference* entitled "Seven-Foot Giants, Silk-Clad Skeletons, and Drunken Archaeologists: A Voyeur's Look Back at the Early Fieldwork of Nevada's 'Lost City.'"

- Ms. Sharlyn Anderson (UNLV graduate student), Dr. Karen Harry (UNLV), and Ms. Nancy Grey (UNLV student) will present a paper at the upcoming Nevada Archaeological Association Meetings entitled "Vessel Function as a Tool to Understanding Ceramic Trade During the Mid-PII Period in the Moapa Valley." These meetings will be held April 11-13, 2008 in Minden, Nevada.

- Dr. Karen Harry is scheduled to give a presentation on the Lost City project on May 17, 2008 at the Lost City Museum. This presentation will be given as a part of an invitation-only event to dignitaries and friends of the museum, which in turn is being hosted as a part of a grand opening of the museum's new exhibit.

- UNLV graduate student Sharlyn Anderson is working on her master's thesis to be titled "Green Gold: An Evaluation of Technological and Socioeconomic Functions of Olivine Temper in Pueblo II Virgin Anasazi Ceramics from Lost City."

- Dr. Karen Harry is preparing a manuscript on the Lost City fieldwork for submission to the journal *Kiva.*

- Dr. Karen Harry, Dr. Brett McClauren (Department of Geography and Geosciences, Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania), and UNLV student Nancy Gray are undertaking a sourcing study of Tusayan White Wares from the Main Ridge site. To date, we have conducted firing

experiments on ceramics and Dr. McClauren has conducted petrographic point-count analysis of the temper within the sherds. Preliminary results obtained from these studies are being used to further refine our methodology to determine where the production sources of these ceramics were.

Submitted by:

[redacted]__ April 7, 2008

Margaret N. Rees, Project Administrator Date