

EASTERN STATES ROCK ART RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

30TH Member of the International Federation of Rock Art Organizations

2024 Summer-Fall ESRARA NEWSLETTER (August-September 2024)

Report and Photos from the --

2024 BIENNIAL CONFERENCE IN WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA (August 1, 2, 3)

by Carol Diaz-Granados, Nancy Bryant, and Denise Smith

August 1st, 2nd and 3rd, the Eastern States Rock Art Research Association, both members and guests, met in western Pennsylvania for the 2024 biennial conference. This meeting felt extra special because ESRARA has never met in PA before. Kenneth Burkett, our on-site host, chose the small but charming town of Foxburg due to its close proximity to rock art sites.

ESRARA members started arriving Thursday afternoon, Aug. 1st, and were greeted by the cheery and helpful staff of our conference hotel, the Foxburg Inn. The lobby buzzed with remarks from early arrivals and "charming" was heard repeated many times. The Foxburg Inn's rooms offered guests picturesque views of the Allegheny River. There were also the forested hills beyond, reflecting dazzling shades of green, and houses tucked in here and there (our banquet venue can be seen to the left in the photo).



Looking down onto the deck below, our amazing meeting hosts, Ken Burkett and his wife, Cheryl, could be seen unloading containers of food and drink for the reception later that evening. Ken is a Field Associate with the Carnegie Museum and retired Executive Director of the Jefferson County History Center. Cheryl is a practicing nurse and an accomplished master gardener. They are an awesome pair and did a fantastic job of hosting the conference. Everything was first class! Many thanks go to Ken and Cheryl!!

Day 1 -- Thursday evening was the Opening Reception on the lovely deck of the Foxburg Inn overlooking the Allegheny River as the sun slowly set. The foods and drinks were grand, and everyone seemed to enjoy the tasty offerings, the ambiance, and the camaraderie.

How welcomed everyone felt as they mingled, chatted, ate delicious food and helped themselves to the open beverage and drinks bar. As the sun set, the party continued . . .



Day 2 – Friday was our tour day and we got to see three different western Pennsylvania rock art sites in Venango and Clarion counties. Attendees gathered after a short morning rain and loaded into multiple vehicles to caravan to the day's field trip locations. Two petroglyph sites were visited in the morning. The first was Rainbow Rock – a large, free-standing overhang with petroglyphs – and loads of graffiti on the back wall. Rainbow Rock was impressive! There were serpents carved onto the back wall and a large variety of contemporary graffiti in various colors (possibly the reason for “rainbow?”). Many ESRARA members were in attendance to see this site -- along with Senator Hutchinson.



Our next stop was Traister Boulder in an open field. The boulder displayed hands & bird tracks.



We stopped at noon to eat a delicious picnic lunch under a reserved park pavilion.



Refreshed, the caravan of cars continued on to our third site, Parkers Landing on the Allegheny River, to view the many flat boulders covered with petroglyphs along the river's edge.

PARKERS LANDING PETROGLYPHS *(by Ken Burkett)*

In Pennsylvania, only a very few special places still exist where evidence of prehistoric activities can be found as part of the undisturbed natural landscape. The Parkers Landing Petroglyphs along the Allegheny River in Clarion County is one of the rarest, and perhaps the most significant of these sites. For many generations native peoples visited this riverbank to inscribe into the low-lying boulders, images of humans, fish, birds, animals and their tracks, and mythological figures as well as abstract forms. Parkers Landing was the first archaeological site

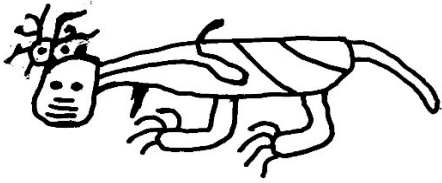
(36CL1) to be recorded in Clarion County and was surveyed in 1962 by Dr. James Swauger* with the Carnegie Museum and later published in his book, *Rock Art of the Upper Ohio Valley*. In 1996 local archaeologists Ken Burkett and Ed Kaufman resurveyed the site for Carnegie, and added a significant amount of new information which was published in 2005 in the *Pennsylvania Archaeological Journal*.

*Dr. James Swauger, along with Dr. Fred Coy, and Dr. Charlie Faulkner, were the original founders of the Eastern States Rock Art Research Association in 1992.



There were several low-lying boulders along the banks of the river and as we walked along, the petroglyphs became more plentiful and impressive. Then we got to the main grouping. That group was absolutely loaded with carvings including the antlered puma which was our

conference logo. Our hosts included a patch of the Parkers Landing puma with our nametags, courtesy of Walter and Britt of Falls Creek Outfitters! (They also gave ESRARA a package of patches of Missouri’s “Big Bird” petroglyph that will go out to attendees with dues notices early next year!)



It was a very hot and humid day but experiencing the petroglyphs were well worth it!

That evening, after dinner, attendees gathered on the hotel’s deck to relax from a day of hiking to petroglyph sites, and visited in the balmy evening breezes.



Day 3 – Saturday was a full day from morning to evening! It began with our ESRARA meeting, at which our president, Dr. Denise Smith, welcomed everyone and gave announcements. She

also welcomed new board members Kenneth Burkett (PA), Paul Nevin (PA) and Members-at-Large Herman Bender (WI) and Peter Anick (MA).



Dr. Smith presented our PA host, Ken Burkett, with an award plaque for the awesome task of organizing the conference on site and arranging all the details! Ken's wife, Cheryl, was presented with a live succulent garden centerpiece and a card for all her hard work, too.





Next, our host, Ken, welcomed everyone and introduced Pennsylvania Senator, Scott Hutchinson, who welcomed the attendees to his state and gave a short talk. He even joined us on the rock art trip to the first site!



To close the business meeting, Dr. Smith announced the great news that we already have a venue offer for our next conference in 2026! We will be convening in Ohio to see the Leo petroglyphs and visit some of the world class mound sites there!

Research Papers presented

The rest of the morning and afternoon was filled with paper presentations. Just a sampling here (but check the last few pages of this newsletter for the titles and abstracts).



For the first time, one of the papers was given on Zoom from Wisconsin! Herman Bender registered for the conference but then found he was unable to attend. Our host, Ken, made arrangements that enabled Herman to give his presentation on Zoom! All presentation titles and their abstracts are listed on the final pages of this newsletter.

The Banquet and Auction

The beautiful Allegheny Grill, overlooking the river, was our banquet venue. There were 41 people in attendance.





Following our meal, Ken Burkett gave the keynote address on the *Western Pennsylvania Petroglyph Project* which he carried out with Brian Fritz, using a Keystone Preservation Grant.





The delicious meal was followed with cake for dessert. The baker decorated the full-sized sheet cake to represent water (the blue icing), dirt (the chocolate icing), and rocks (crushed Oreo cookies!). The Parkers Landing Puma sat in the center.

The Live Auction!

Following dessert, we geared up for the Live Auction, always hilarious with our auctioneer, Jim Duncan, at the helm.



Nancy Bryant and Noah Yawn assisted. We had a table filled with an eclectic assortment of donated items including books, T-shirts, bags of wild rice, bottles of liquor, beautiful jewelry, impressive artwork, coffee mugs, a khaki jacket, CDs, and much more!



Our thanks go to Jim Duncan for calling the auction, to Nancy Bryant and Noah Yawn who assisted him, and to all the attendees who brought and/or purchased items to bring in over \$500 for ESRARA!

We thank everyone for attending and contributing in various ways to our Pennsylvania conference. We hope you all had a grand time!

SEE YOU IN OHIO in 2026!

THE ESRARA BOARD

Dr. Denise Smith, President, Nancy Bryant, Vice President, Dr. Carol Diaz-Granados, Secretary/Treasurer, Kenneth Burkett, Board Member, Paul Nevin, Board Member

And our Members-at-Large: Herman Bender (Wisconsin) and Peter Anick (Massachusetts)

(photos courtesy of Philip Newell, Nancy Bryant, and Carol Diaz-Granados)



TITLES AND ABSTRACTS FOLLOW

PAPER PRESENTATIONS
AUGUST 3RD, Saturday, 2024 WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

1. It Sure *Looks* Like a Petroglyph, Pennsylvania

Paul Nevin, Pennsylvania

It's likely that every rock art researcher has had numerous requests to investigate "possible petroglyphs". A site in northern Maryland was reported in 2023 where numerous rocks had what appeared to be carved grooves, but no obvious recognizable designs were apparent. Nor did the site's location fit the mold for other rock art sites in the region. This paper presents the investigation to prove or disprove the legitimacy of the site.

2. On the Rocks at Parkers Landing

Kenneth Burkett, PA, Carnegie Museum Field Associate

In Northwestern Pennsylvania, only a very few special places still exist where evidence of prehistoric activities can be found as part of the undisturbed natural landscape. The Parkers Landing Petroglyphs (36CL1) is one of the rarest, and perhaps the most significant of these sites. For many generations native people visited this riverbank site on the Allegheny River to inscribe images of humans, fish, birds, animals and their tracks as well as mythological figures and other abstract forms into the rocks. This paper will present an updated overview of this important site, discuss its seasonal use, and relationship to other rock art sites within the Upper Ohio Valley.

3. Deep Time & Ice Age Memories Expressed in the Placement of Select Manitou Stone and Sacred Boulders

Herman Bender, Wisconsin (on Zoom)

During the 1999 International Rock Art Congress (IRAC) held in Wisconsin, Mr. Ralph Redfox, a traditional Cheyenne elder and healer, recounted an

ancient Cheyenne oral tradition that upright stones like one visited on a field trip were placed on the north end of the hill as 'guardians against the ice returning [from the north]'. The Cheyenne believe that as a hill slopes up toward the north, it gets colder. The story has been interpreted as suggesting a late Pleistocene or early Archaic period origin (10,000 – 8000 BC) for it and placement of the upright stones. There is additional evidence which may support the idea of an early to mid-Archaic origin. During an inventory of the sacred rocks and boulders in southern Alberta, Canada, two-thirds of them (many carved, grooved and cupuled) were discovered to occupy a prominence with a northward focus. Furthermore, the date or age of utilization firmly placed all in the early to mid-Archaic. According to ancient tradition, the Cheyenne primary direction of focus is north. It is considered by both the Algonquin and Siouan-speaking Woodland and Plains tribes, both of whom migrated west to the Great Plains from the upper Great Lakes area, to be the most ancient and primary direction.

4. Historic rock inscriptions of the timber rafting era on the Clarion River, northwestern Pennsylvania

Chuck Williams, Pennsylvania

The Clarion River was a premiere timber rafting river in northwestern Pennsylvania, providing forest products to downstream markets for nearly a century. Despite its historical importance, the archaeological record of the rafting industry of the Clarion River is sparse. I present results of an on-going survey of historic rock inscriptions along the Clarion River, putative artifacts of the timber rafting era. To date, two inscribed river gages were found on large rocks upstream of eddies where timber rafts may have moored. Additional inscriptions include letters set among iron rungs and rings - their significance yet unknown.

5. The Dedicated Rocks of Brookville, Pennsylvania

Brian Fritz, Pennsylvania

Hidden along the forested slopes surrounding the town of Brookville, Pennsylvania are numerous rock carvings known to the residents as the Scripture Rocks. Carved into large sandstone boulders are passages of Biblical verse in letters ranging from three inches to thirty inches in size. The rock art was carved by Douglas Monroe Stahlman who lived among the rocks as a hermit from 1907 to 1915. In 2009, the Jefferson County Historical Society and the North Fork Chapter of the Society for Pennsylvania Archaeology launched a six-year effort to locate, map, and document more than 160 of Stahlman's rocks.

6. Paper title: More Hands on Deck: New England's Growing Collection of Carved Handprints

Peter Anick, Massachusetts

One of the recurring themes of southeastern New England rock art is the carved handprint. Found on bedrock, slabs, and boulders, some hands are incised in outline form while others are fully pecked. Using contextual and stylistic clues, Anick (2018) proposed a set of heuristics for differentiating between figures that are likely to be Native American in origin vs. of more recent vintage. Since then, three new instances of carved hands have come to light. We compare these to previously known examples and evaluate them with respect to the proposed diagnostic scheme.

7. Missouri Rock Art – The Best of the Best

Carol Diaz-Granados, PhD, Missouri

Missouri has over 150 rock art sites. In spite of this fact, there are only three state-controlled sites open to the public: Washington State Park, Thousand Hills State Park, and the Rocky Hollow Site. Many of the

surviving petroglyph sites are basic single symbols: an avian, a hand, a footprint, etc. However, others are quite complex and impressive – some even have amazing details not seen elsewhere in the eastern United States. This presentation is a short overview of some of the “best” rock art sites in Missouri, including “The Big Five” and Picture Cave.

8. Using Rock Art Imagery to Reveal Historic and Ancient Oral Traditions

Jim Duncan, Missouri

Recent analysis of vignettes (pictograph groupings), realistically rendered, in Picture Cave, have been found to be an ancient (A.D. 950-1050) depiction of a cycle narration of the Genesis story of an elite Dhegihan Sioux group. This group is probably responsible for building the large mound group on the west bank of the Mississippi River (on the St. Louis riverfront), just south of the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. That large mound group, similar in size to Cahokia Mounds, was taken down, leveled in 1869, and the dirt used for fill to lay the railroads that were stretching from coast to coast. The pictograph groupings, because of their great detail, can be compared to the genesis stories partially recorded in early American Indian literature.

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