



# E.S.R.A.R.A. NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Eastern States Rock Art Research Assn.  
30th member of IFRAO - International Federation of Rock Art Organizations

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JANUARY 1998

## *President's Message*

I suppose that almost everyone interested in rock art is aware and probably participates in the Rock Art Discussion and information groups on the Internet. Perhaps the one that is most comprehensive and widely used is the one found at **ROCK-ART@ASUVM.INRE.ASU.EDU**. I understand that there are almost 500 world wide members. During the past several months general topics such as hand prints, graffiti, and recording techniques (both digital, with state of the art equipment, and the standard film cameras) have been thoroughly debated. An interested person can join the discussion at any time asking questions or adding his "two cents worth." If, by chance, you do not belong to a group, and would like to, this group can be joined simply by and I quote:

"To Join the List

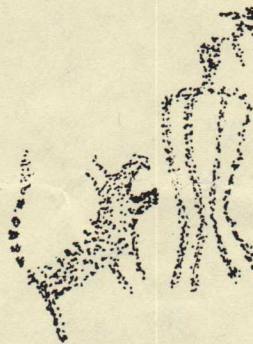
Write to

**LISTSERV@ASUVM.INRE.ASU.EDU** (or  
**LISTSERV@ASUACAD.BITN**) the text of  
your message (not the subject line)  
write:**SUBSCRIBE ROCK-ART.**"

Many of the rock art groups around the world have very nice web pages. It would be nice if the Eastern States Rock Art Research had a page. Does anyone know the pros and cons of procuring a page?

Jean Allan and Carol Diaz-Granados co-chaired an excellent symposium at the Southeastern Archaeological Conference at Baton Rouge, November 8 (It is interesting to note that the French named Baton Rouge for a red cypress post that marked a boundary between Houma and Bayou Goula Indian tribes). After the symposium

we had a get-to-gather of the **ESRARA** folks which lasted about an hour (we certainly have great people in our association!). The main topic of discussion was our participation in the 1999 International Rock Art Congress at Ripon College, Ripon, Wisconsin. Carol, in her position as Corresponding Secretary for **ESRARA** has the details and by now everyone should have received the information from her.



*Petroglyph from Machias Bay, Maine*

## Indian Rock, A Ramapo Pictograph

by  
Nancy L. Gibbs and Edward J. Lenik

High in the Ramapo Mountains above Tuxedo, New York, in Harriman State Park is a rock shelter named after the notorious Tory bandit Claudius Smith. Claudius Smith's Den and nearby Horsestable Rock, where Claudius stabled the rustled livestock, are prime hikers' destinations today. Claudius Smith's Den is also an endangered Native American archaeological site.

On a recent visit, Edward J. Lenik, the Honorary Curator of Archaeology for the Trailside Museum at Bear Mountain/Harriman State Parks was led to a new attraction, the Indian Rock Pictograph. Hikers lounging in the Den directed Lenik to a large boulder on which was a painting depicting hunters with clubs chasing a giant rabbit. It was, they said, real ancient Indian art, proof that Indians had lived here.

Lenik was very familiar with Indian Rock. He had seen it painted. He had watched LUGGAGE OF THE GODS.

*Movie Review:* LUGGAGE OF THE GODS  
*Theme:* "There were no buildings, no cities, no whipped cream...we were a Lost Tribe. We were it."  
*Musical Theme:* Build me up, Buttercup.  
*Cast:* Yuk Mark  
Stolzenburg  
Hubba Gwen  
Ellison  
Tull Gabriel  
Barre  
*Writer/Director:* David Kendall  
*Produced by:* General Pictures, Inc.,  
1984.  
*Distributed by:* Academy Entertainment  
*Setting:* Claudius Smith's Den at  
Harriman State Park  
*Glossery of Terms:* Vecca = Rabbit  
Ugow = Airplane  
Bagzoa = Go, Leave.

Deep in the Ramapo Mountains, a lost tribe, apparently a mixed group of Cro-Magnon and Neanderthal types, ekes out a precarious

existence. Life for this band of troglodytes centers on the procurement of food. They search for it, hunt for it, dance and beg for it. This movie witnesses how contact with civilization turns them into a cargo cult.

Made in 1984, LUGGAGE OF THE GODS was positioned to ride the coattails of the successful movie, THE GODS MUST BE CRAZY, in which a South African Bushman is bopped on the head by a Coke bottle.

Our hapless hero, Yuk, cerebral, yet well-muscled, has a similar experience. He is an artist, an inventor, a thinker and a dreamer. He is altogether a drag on this hunting and gathering economy.

The exciting opening scene recounts a successful rabbit hunt by the tribe's two strong hunters, the alpha males. Armed only with clubs and stones, they subdue and kill a rabbit, a Vecca. Proudly, they bear their prey back to the tribe and present it for the approval of the chief. The rabbit is roasted and feasting and dancing follow. Yuk earns his roast morsel by painting a pictograph of The Great Vecca Hunt on a prominent standing stone near the tribe's cave. . . . (You will have to rent the video to see how luggage gets involved).

Here is the well documented origin of the Indian Rock Pictograph! This rare footage depicts the birth of a legend that will require constant debunking. Indian Rock is a large boulder with a vertical side or face. It stands about 200 feet southwest of Claudius Smith's Den near the junction of several trails.

No one in the present park administration recalls how the film crew got permission to use this site. In fact, no one was aware that a movie had been filmed here. Indian Rock is the most visible and enigmatic relict of the filming, although much disturbance is depicted. The movie shows rock-ringed fireplaces, artfully arranged domestic interiors, wood gathering, a huge bonfire and intensive dancing. The women of the tribe are shown digging up and gathering what are, presumably, roots and tubers and collecting other plants. Foot traffic was, of course, intense. From a perspective of archaeological resource preservation, the landscape surrounding the rockshelter was seriously impacted by the actors, directors, support staff, equipment and the filming process.

Claudius Smith's Den rockshelter, sometimes referred to as a cave, is fifty feet long, eighteen feet deep, and about twelve feet high at its overhang or dripline. It was excavated in 1907 by Max Schrabisch, who published the results of his investigation in 1909 in Volume III Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History. Chert flakes and fragments were found. This suggests that the site was used by Indians as a temporary shelter where they made or refurbished stone tools.

Unfortunately, this shelter has been pothunted over a long period of time by relic collectors and treasure-seekers in search of the "booty" Claudius Smith was rumored to have buried here. The Den is well-known to present day hikers and campers and continues to be intensively utilized. This is a popular spot for rock climbing, campfires, picnics and lounging about.

Much of the impact of the film was an exacerbation of the impact of normal activities hikers and campers have carried out here for years, but Indian Rock adds a new twist. Its creation and the growth of the legend rewrite history. Indian Rock is revered by visitors who unknowingly damage and misuse the true Indian sites, the rockshelters.

We publish this report knowing that as years go by the rock paintings at Claudius Smith's Den will acquire a patina of legend to match the patina of age. We document here the true story of the Indian Rock and say "Bagzoa!" to those who would turn this bit of 20th Century cinematic graffiti into a prehistoric masterpiece..



## New Rock Art Survey Founded in Virginia

The Virginia Rockart Survey was formed in October 1997. It is sponsored by the Archaeological Society of Virginia (ASV). Wm Jack Hranicky was appointed director. It replaces the ASV Rockart Committee.

The ASV Rockart Committee has been in existence for over 15 years. It started with one known site and one lost site. Since then they have found the lost site and by the end of 1997, expect to have identified 20 rockart sites in Virginia. This work has been performed extensively by amateur archaeologists with assistance from the professional archaeological community. They have worked with public agencies to inform them about rockart sites, had museum displays on rockart, issued rockart press releases, and performed numerous other activities to find sites. As a result, citizens have told them of sites on their property, which were investigated. Many were not rockart sites, but some were which added to the total site inventory. And, some of the recently-found sites are direct results of Digital Elevation Modeling (DEM) efforts that were based on known sites.

The committee has been the principal contact for rockart sites in the Commonwealth for several years. Members have presented papers on Virginia rockart at national archaeological conferences and maintained a database on all rockart sites. As rockart is now accepted as a valuable cultural resource, the Survey plans to make Virginia rockart data available to the professional archaeological community as well as to organizations and the general public who request this information. Early in 1998, the Survey plans to have a glyph catalog, bibliography, and site inventory list available. For more information, contact the Survey at:

Virginia Rockart Survey  
Director: Wm Jack Hranicky  
Comm: 703-256-1304; 1@archaeology.org  
PO Box 11256, Alexandria, Virginia 22312

**DON'T FORGET TO SEND IN YOUR \$10.00 DUES TO:**

**ILO M. JONES**

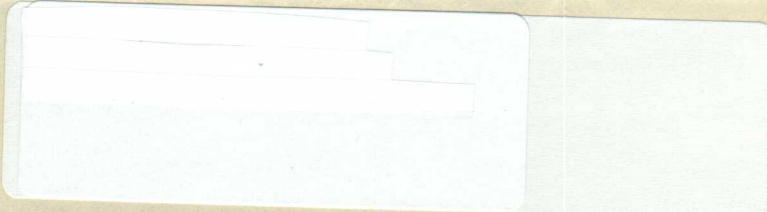
**ESRARA, Treasurer**

**Post Office Box 4335**

**Helena, MT 59604**

New members, send in your dues now and receive the upcoming Winter newsletter plus all newsletters in 1998. ESRARA members, send your dues by January 15, 1998. If we don't receive your dues by then, we regret that we will have to drop your name from the ESRARA membership list after the winter issue. Although we are delighted with the fantastic response -- printing and postage costs for over a 100 members makes it impossible to send newsletters without yearly dues payment. THE ESRARA NEWSLETTER IS ENTERING ITS THIRD YEAR!

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**In This Issue:**

Report from Gibbs & Lenik on a Ramapo  
fake pictograph.

New Rock Art Survey in Virginia

President's Message