



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

*Quarterly of the Eastern States Rock Art Research Association*  
30th member of IFRAO - International Federation of Rock Art Organizations

**Volume 8, Number 3**

**Autumn 2003**

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE . . .**

Greetings to all old and new members! I do not know what the weather is like where you are but down here in Carbondale in southern Illinois, it has been absolutely beautiful. We are now in November and it is still in the 70s every day. The leaves are falling, the vegetation is dying, and the time is fast approaching when it actually becomes *possible* to look for and record rock art sites in our area.

I have several rock art sites that I monitor on an annual basis that I try to visit during this time of the year. One of these is the Clarida Hollow site, which contains a unique set of red paintings that I believe may have been created by the Mascouten, an Algonquin-speaking group related to the Kickapoo, around A.D. 1700. There simply is nothing like these paintings elsewhere in the state. Among the designs at this site are large cosmic circles that contain staked out bison hides and water creatures; skinned and partially butchered bison carcasses; and a large anthropomorphic being with bison-like attributes including a tufted tail and short, bovine-like forelegs.

The site, which is located in a massive rock shelter, has been owned by Leslie and Juanita Parsons, since the 1940s. Leslie and Juanita represent the best kind of land owners. Not only did they act as stewards for the site, protecting the shelter and its paintings from thoughtless damage such as graffiti and the carving of initials, they also allowed people interested in the site (such as me) to repeatedly visit it and photograph and map the  
*(Continued on page 3)*

## ARKANSAS ARCHEOLOGICAL SURVEY WINS NEH AWARD TO STUDY ROCK ART ACROSS THE STATE

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. — The Arkansas Archeological Survey—a unit of the University of Arkansas System—has been awarded a \$175,000 grant from the Collaborative Research Program of the National Endowment for the Humanities to support a three-year study of prehistoric and protohistoric rock art in Arkansas. The project, titled “Rock Art and the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex,” will be the first comprehensive attempt by Arkansas archeologists to place rock art within a regional framework.

Dr. George Sabo III is project director, assisted by Jerry Hilliard, Michelle Berg Vogel, and several other Arkansas Archeological Survey staff members. Dr. Jon Russ and Sarah Spades of Arkansas State University and Dr. Marvin Rowe and Karen Steelman of Texas A&M University are project collaborators who will conduct geochemistry studies to determine the ages of selected rock art images.

Our approach considers rock art sites as components of a “cultural landscape” that also includes other site types such as ceremonial mound centers, villages, camps, and natural landscape features used by or considered important to local human groups. By detailed study of the art motifs themselves, combined with landscape data, we hope to identify different types of rock art sites and to explore their functions within the cultural system that created them. As an interpretive  
*(Continued on page 4)*



**Public Service Award— Leslie and Juanita  
Parsons**

Illinois Archaeological Survey Meetings

November 1, 2003

Carbondale, Illinois

(Text by Mark Wagner)

We are giving this award today to Leslie and Juanita Parsons who, as I think some of you know, are the owners of the Clarida Hollow site (also known as the Parsons site) which is one of the best-preserved Native American rock art sites in Illinois. The site contains numerous red paintings on the ceiling including a large circles that contains bison hides and water creatures; depictions of what appear to be skinned bison carcasses; and many other images. The paintings at this site are unlike prehistoric Mississippian paintings in the same area and appear to have been created by Indians from outside of southern Illinois at some point in the eighteenth century.

This site is truly a unique treasure and Leslie and Juanita, who have owned it since the 1940s represent the best kind of land owners. Based on photographs taken over 50 years ago, the paintings at the site are still in the same condition as when Leslie and Juanita first acquired the property in the 1940s. This is something that, sadly, cannot be said of many other Illinois rock art sites. Over the years Leslie and Juanita have permitted numerous archaeologists, including me on more than one occasion, to visit the site and take photographs and to give tours of the site to students and others interested in the rock art of Illinois. One of the highlights of visiting this site, for me at least, also has been the chance to visit with Leslie and Juanita, who never failed to invite us into their house to visit with them.

When Mary McCorvie and I heard that the IAS meetings were going to be held

in Carbondale this year, we thought that this would be a wonderful opportunity to thank Leslie and Juanita for their many kindnesses over the years in allowing us and others to visit the site. Unfortunately, Leslie passed away this summer two weeks after his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and Juanita did not feel up to coming to Carbondale today. She wanted me to tell you, however, that she greatly appreciates the award and that you are all invited to come see the paintings any time you want and to visit with her afterwards.

***PRESERVATION NEWS . . .***

ESRARA members, Carol Diaz-Granados, and Faith Rockenstein, attended a meeting on October 25 regarding the Missouri Parks. It was held at Washington State Park and dealt with the condition of Missouri parks and what, if anything, was being done to protect the cultural resources - particularly the parks' rock art.

Half the roof (built in the 60s) that shelters the Washington State Park petroglyphs blew off in a severe wind storm this past May (almost six months ago). The storm also destroyed hundreds of mature trees. Carol noted that there had been no repairs made to the shelter roof, nor was there any clean-up from the storm debris.

Carol distributed packets to the park and state representatives that included an outlined plan for management of petroglyph sites in Missouri State Parks, the ARARA Management Plan (Leigh Marymor), the Arkansas Management Guidelines (Ben Swadley), and the brochure for public visitation to rock art sites (Jane Kolber). She also read a statement summarizing the problem with state-managed rock art sites, why they should be preserved, what needs to be done, and offered to assist in any way to protect what is left of these endangered sites. Carol noted that she has done this before and has written several letters over the past ten years (and spoken directly) to the state park director, but with little response or acknowledgment of the serious preservation problem.



*(Continued from page 1)*

### **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE . . .**

drawings. Clarida Hollow was one of the sites that we visited during the 2001 ESRARA conference held in southern Illinois and those who visited the site, I am certain, remember its paintings as one of the highlights of the rock art tour.

Leslie had been in declining health the last few years. When I first started visiting the site back in the 1980s, Leslie (who was then in his late 70s) would always climb down the bluff with us and visit the site. We would talk about the paintings, he would ask us what we thought they meant, and tell us what he knew about the history of the site. In the last five years or so, however, Leslie began suffering from emphysema. One day when I took Chuck Swedlund out to photograph the site Leslie told us that he could no longer walk to his barn without stopping to rest and catch his breath, let alone climb down the bluff. But, unfailingly hospitable in the way that country people of his generation are, Leslie told us to "pull up some buckets, boys, and visit for a while." Chuck and I spent the next hour or so sitting on upended paint buckets in Leslie's farmyard, passing the time of day with Leslie and talking about life in general before we went down to see the paintings. In the last few years Leslie was on oxygen and spent most of his time in his house. Whenever we visited the site, however, Leslie and Juanita always invited us into their house to visit with them and Leslie would ask about the paintings.

Leslie died this past summer, two weeks after his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. He is buried in a small country cemetery, only a few miles from the Clarida Hollow site. The state professional organization (the Illinois Archaeological Survey) had planned to give Leslie and Juanita a Public Service award for their good stewardship in regard to the Clarida Hollow site at our annual meeting in Carbondale this fall (please see the short article regarding this on page 2). Juanita did not feel up to coming to the meetings and I promised her that I would bring the award by their house the next time I visited the site. Despite Juanita's being unable to attend, we presented the award to her and Leslie at the meetings, anyway. I was unable to get through the presentation without becoming emotional and being unable to continue, something that has never happened to me before.

I have been thinking a lot about the Parsons and the idea of stewardship the last few days. At one time I thought that the best way to protect a rock art site was for it to pass into state and federal ownership, but I am not sure that is right anymore. I do not think that anyone could have cared for or managed the Clarida Hollow site more than the Parsons have for the last 50 years. And, I am happy to say, their niece and her family are now building a house on the property so that the connection of this family with this site will continue into the future. I also think that there is a lesson in this story for rock art researchers, both professional and amateur. That is, we do not own these sites and the images they contain. They existed before us and will, hopefully, exist after we are gone. We need to be good stewards, like the Parsons, and insure that our activities in regard to them, whether in recording or just visiting the locations where they are contained, impact them to the least possible degree. Only in this way will we insure that these sites, which are a legacy left to us by the earliest Americans, will continue on for future generations to visit and experience.

Best Regards,  
*Mark Wagner*



*(Continued from page 1)*

### **ARKANSAS ARCHEOLOGICAL SURVEY WINS NEH AWARD . . .**

context for much of the art, we look to the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex (SECC), a late prehistoric religious manifestation widespread throughout the Southeast.

Rock art consists of paintings and carvings—called, respectively, pictographs and petroglyphs—on natural rock surfaces such as cliff faces and the walls of caves. It is found throughout the world as an ancient and enduring form of imaginative or expressive activity by human beings. Many people today have heard of the famous Paleolithic cave paintings of the Dordogne region in France, but fewer are aware that American Indian rock art is widespread across this continent, and fewer still may realize that Arkansas possesses one of the richest concentrations of rock art in the southeastern United States. In 2000 the Arkansas Archeological Survey began a project to update and systematize the information on rock art in its site files. Helped by a grant from the Arkansas Humanities Council, a computer database for rock art and an educational “Rock Art in Arkansas” website were created. The new NEH-funded project will build on these achievements and expand the geographic scope of the Survey’s rock art research.

Detailed mapping of rock art sites, using state-of-the-art computerized mapping technology, will provide data for a study of environmental context, to see if different site types can be identified according to geographic and “cultural landscape” criteria such as accessibility, proximity to other resources, orientation to the cardinal directions, “viewscapes,” and other factors. This phase of the project is designed to demonstrate that different kinds of rock art were produced in different behavioral contexts and for different purposes, some practical (such as trail and boundary marking), some cultural (such as storytelling), and some sacred (such as mortuary rites, vision quest rites, and shamanic rituals celebrating the community’s connections to the spirit world).

One reason why Arkansas rock art has received little systematic attention by archeologists in the past is the difficulty in dating it and thereby placing it within a cultural framework. That began to change in 1995, when Survey archeologist Jerry Hilliard led excavations at The Narrows in Crawford County, where tools used to create the painted petroglyphs at the site were unearthed in a datable context. This allowed Hilliard to assign the art to a cultural phase of the late prehistoric Mississippi period.

Part of the new NEH award will be used by the Arkansas State and Texas A&M University participants to carry out direct dating through geochemical analysis of the pigments used to create pictographs. These techniques have been applied successfully at rock art sites throughout North and South America, and recently at a site in Missouri where an 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. date was obtained for a pictograph representing a “horned serpent” motif that is common in the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex. Direct dating of images is extremely important in building an index of temporal reference points within the whole body of rock art images, but it is not possible to date all rock art in this way. Not only are the techniques expensive; they can only be used in conditions where organic compounds are preserved in the pigment.

Another way to provide cultural context for rock art is by relating the images to other embellished artifacts from known cultural phases that can be independently dated by radiocarbon and other techniques. In Arkansas, the similarity of certain rock art images to Southeastern Ceremonial Complex iconography has long been noted, but little has been done to explore the connection. The Southeastern Ceremonial Complex was a system of American Indian religious beliefs and institutions found throughout the region during the Mississippi period, roughly A.D. 1000 to 1500. Elaborate depictions of supernatural themes including composite beings (bird-men, snake-men, winged serpents), circle-and-cross motifs, and various sky world motifs such as sunburst and bird figures, were produced on decorated pottery, stone tablets, engraved shell, and embossed copper as part of this system. Participating cultures also built ceremonial flat-topped earthen mounds surmounted with special-purpose buildings that served as the focal points for



community rituals. This project will be the first time rock art has been recognized as a significant component of SECC manifestations and interpreted as a part of that Complex.

A world-class collection of SECC-related artifacts from the famous Spiro site in eastern Oklahoma is housed at the University of Arkansas Museum and constitutes an essential source of comparative information for the successful completion of this project. Most of these artifacts were acquired by the Museum during the 1930s—which underscores the fact that proper curation with professional handling and record-keeping ensure the long-term viability of Museum collections as research tools. Fortunately, these collections are housed in a facility that will remain accessible to Survey researchers.

A final note of urgency is the fact that many rock art sites have badly deteriorated over the past several decades due to vandalism, air pollution, and other causes. For this reason, one phase of the project will be to continue updating the site files, especially with several forms of high-quality graphic documentation to preserve a record of the art for future research and enjoyment.

The Arkansas Archeological Survey has ten research stations around the state, seven of them at various university campuses, two at archeological state parks, and one at Blytheville. The Survey's Coordinating Office is at the UA agricultural campus in Fayetteville. Dr. George Sabo heads the Survey's UAF research station. The Survey already maintains a website about Arkansas rock art (<http://rockart@uark.edu>), and a short book on rock art is currently being prepared for publication in the Survey's Popular Series. Results of the NEH-funded project will be distributed via several traditional and new media publications targeted for general audience and classroom use as well as the academic community.

**CONTACTS:** George Sabo, archeologist for Arkansas Archeological Survey  
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An image of two elements from 3CW35, "The Narrows" site. The elements are numbered 28 (the large human form with headdress, holding what may be a mace) and number 30 is above and to the left of this figure (a human form truncated at the waste - it is just the head, body and torso). These elements are petroglyphs, pecked into the rock surface.



## Petroform Excavations In Wisconsin

by Jack Steinbring

University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh

Ripon College

October, 2003

Excavations of petroforms are largely unprecedented in North America. This places an exceptional degree of responsibility on field practitioners because specific procedures for such work have not yet been developed. The Peachy Site in East-Central Wisconsin was chosen in 2002 as the locus for testing and experimentation since it offered several pristine features as well as one that had experienced radical alteration. One of the owners had attempted to satisfy his curiosity by using a large front-end loader to scrape up the boulder mosaic and to push its remains forward to a point of being blocked by trees. The destruction of this feature favored a less sensitive field effort to establish profiles, and make recoveries related to the timing, function and meaning of the original petroform.

In 2002, three one-meter units were excavated at a point beyond the trees (opposite the terminus of intervention). These units confirmed previous test units in undamaged areas that showed the boulders to have been placed at a position 12.0 cm above the lacustrine clays laid down by a glacial lake ca 10,000 B. P. In addition to a definitive profile, an "activity floor," and at least one postmold 10.0 cm in diameter were revealed. Small specs of charcoal were encountered on the activity plane. This "floor" was only 1.5 cm in thickness and was quite compacted – much like a lodge floor but not as deep. It was essentially outside the periphery of the feature, as was the post mold.

In his dismantling of the feature in 1983, the owner discovered bones in the debris of his scooping. These bones would have been beneath the placed boulders, and apparently near the center of the feature. An examination of the bones in 2003 suggests that they were from at least 2 dogs, and that the animals had been butchered. Evidence of cutting was present at the joints. Another distinct finding was that no cranial/dental or caudal parts were present. The cut marks are not from metal tools. A few of the bone fragments appear to have been burned. In summation of these recoveries, it is tentatively concluded that dogs were butchered specifically for rituals related to the construction and use of the petroform, and that the head and tails "went with the hide."

However, since these bones were not archaeologically recovered, no scientific credibility could be accorded them. The 2003 test excavations were in part aimed at confirming the presence of such bones at the boulder placement plane. To date, four small pieces of bone were recovered at this plane in 2003. There are unidentifiable mammal bone, and one is a cross section of long bone from a very large bird. All these pieces exhibit a deep brownish red patina – exactly like those recovered by the owner. These 2003 bone recoveries were found as much as 2.5 m apart in a 9.0 m<sup>2</sup> block excavation. All were recovered from a position no more than 5.0 cm above the lacustrine clays. This would appear to be too deep, and the provenience is suggested only with caution.

Further excavations of this feature are scheduled for 2004. The least damaged parts of the feature remain to be test excavated. At present, the data point to an Early to Middle Archaic ceremonial placement of medium to large glacial erratics in a generally elliptical form with possible astronomical properties. Animal sacrifice, possibly dog feasting (not rare in aboriginal North America) and ritual dancing (activity floor) seem a reasonable theory to test. The post mold does not appear to be part of a pattern, and may reflect a single pole for ritual symbols like an "offering tree." Much remains to be done at this site, but the experience gained in the excavations of this extremely disturbed feature offer considerable promise.



Work on the undisturbed part of the site (three undisturbed boulder mosaics) went on in 2003 also. This consisted of the use of a 60' "cherry picker" being used for exact perpendicular photo-mapping. This was highly successful.

The work contributing to this brief preliminary statement was undertaken by volunteers from the Mid-America Geographic Foundation, the Rock River Archaeological Society, the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, Ripon College, and the City of Ripon Preservation Commission.



Glen Oechsner (l) and Dwight Weiser of the Mid-America Geographic Foundation excavating Feature 4 at The Peachy Petroform Site in East Central Wisconsin. This feature was severely damaged by a front-end loader. Excavations in 2003 were initiated to discover undamaged remnants. Photo by J. Steinbring, Oct. 2003.

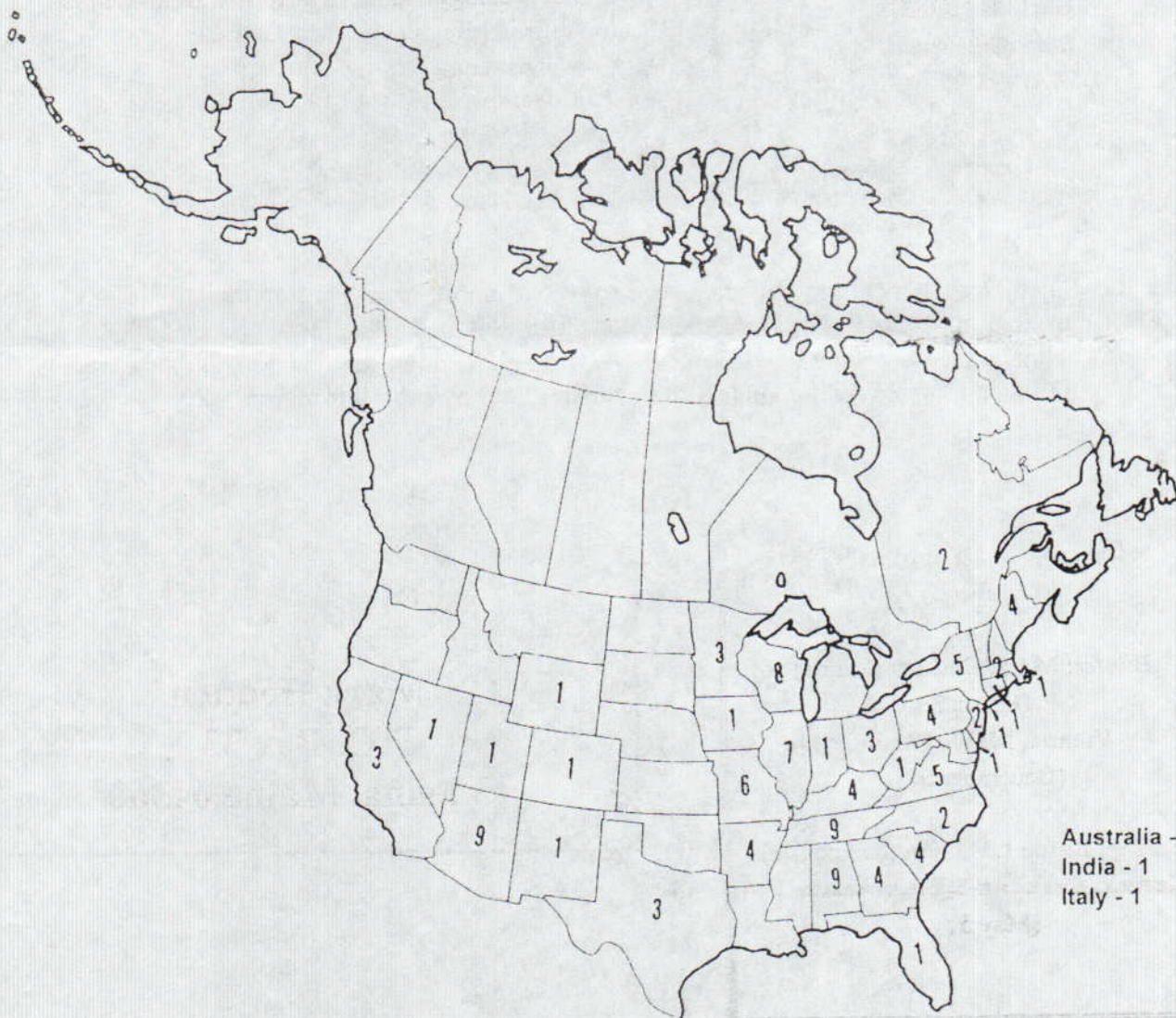


Sectional view of displaced boulders in the northeast quadrant of Feature 4, Peachy Site, Wisconsin. Photo by J. Steinbring, Oct. 2003.



## MEMBERSHIP DISTRIBUTION

We are happy to report that ESRARA's numbers are growing in "leaps and bounds." Check to see how many members are in your state! Committees have been formed, and a report on that will be out in an upcoming issue. Don't forget to check out our new website at: [esrara.org](http://esrara.org).





## **ESRARA**

### **Board of Directors**

**Mark Wagner, *President***

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**Carol Diaz-Granados, *Ex Officio***

**Check out our Website!**

**ESRARA.ORG**

**Marc Silverman,**

***ESRARA Webmaster***

### **EDITORIAL COMMITTEE**

#### **and News Deadlines**

***Summer:* Nancy Bryant**

**(central Missouri)**

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**(July 5)**

***Fall:***

***Fall:* Carol Diaz-Granados**

**(eastern Missouri)**

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**(October 5)**

***Winter:* Mark Hedden (Maine)**

**P.O. Box 33**

**Vienna, Maine 04360**

**(December 5)**

***Spring:* Kevin Callahan (Minnesota)**

**Kevin.L.Callahan-1@tc.umn.edu**

**(May 5)**

### **MEETING CALENDAR...**

**November 2003 - SEAC** (Southeastern Archaeology Conference). November 12-15, Hilton University Place, Charlotte, NC  
[www.southeasternarchaeology.org](http://www.southeasternarchaeology.org)

**January 2004 - SHA** - (Society for Historical Archaeology), January 7-11, Hyatt Regency Hotel at Union Station, just west of Downtown St. Louis, Missouri.

[www.sha.org](http://www.sha.org)

**April 2004 - SAA** - (Society for American Archaeology), March 31-April 4, Delta-Centre-Ville in Montreal Quebec, Canada.

[www.saa.org](http://www.saa.org)

**November 2004 - SEAC**, (Southeastern Archaeology Conference) Westport Hotel, St. Louis, Missouri.

**Spring 2005 - ESRARA**, Wisconsin

### **PLEASE SEND RESEARCH REPORTS, NEWS, AND NOTES FOR WINTER NEWSLETTER**

**(by December 5)**

*to*

**Mark Hedden**

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**In this issue:**

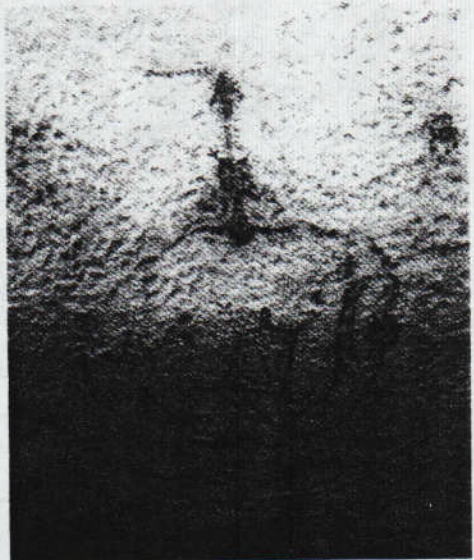
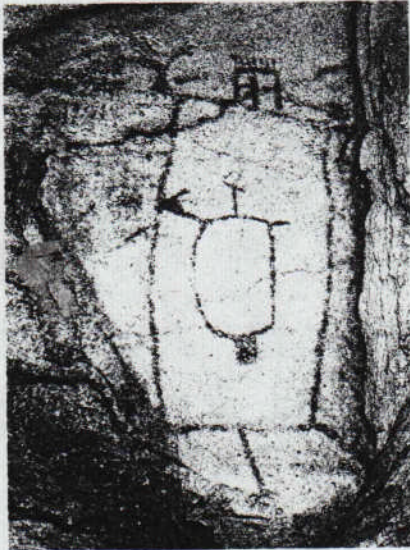
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**ESRARA Newsletter**  
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*Clarida Hollow site in Illinois  
 Photos by Chuck Swedlund*



*ESRARA tour to Clarida Hollow in 2001  
 Photo by Mark Wagner*

