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Davis and Smith: *Newberry Cave*

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*Newberry Cave.* C. Alan Davis and Gerald A. Smith. Redlands: San Bernardino County Museum Association, 1981, 113 pp., 35 figures, \$8.00 (paper).

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Newberry Cave is located in the Mojave Desert some 32 km. southeast of Barstow, California. The site is a tubelike cave extending some 25 m. into an andesite rock outcrop. Newberry Cave came to the attention of the junior author in the 1930s. Continued vandalism led him, by 1953, to formulate a program of excavation, carried out between 1953 and 1956. Volunteer crews undertook the task under the auspices of the San Bernardino County Museum Association. There was apparently some attempt at horizontal control of the excavations; no system of vertical control was established. Depths of some few specimens were determined, but these are not tied to a datum point, a map, or a profile drawing. "No recognizable stratigraphic levels were noted. Due to the irregular consistency of the deposits, no attempt was made to excavate in *natural or arbitrary* levels. The vertical provenience of most of the specimens is therefore unknown" (pp. 11-12, emphasis added). What came from the excavation, then, is a "floating" artifact and ecofact assemblage without any meaningful contextual relationships.

Ecofacts include faunal remains, carefully identified as to species, part, and count. Bones include expectable species for the surrounding biome. Shasta Ground Sloth bones from Room 1 were radiocarbon dated at  $11,600 \pm 500$  radiocarbon years. The authors conclude that no faunal remains were associated with cultural activities in the site.

Artifacts include chipped stone, principally Elko and Gypsum series projectile points, one Eastgate point, blanks, flakes, and debitage. Other stone items include pigment and palette stones, and two quartz crystals, one with pitch adhering to it. The bulk of the assemblage consists of wooden items: fragments of dart-shafts (foreshafts, mainshafts,nock ends, etc.) and split-twig figurines. The latter are described in detail, especially the techniques used in their construction. This section is the most valuable portion of the report. Construction techniques of the Newberry specimens are compared with those from other sites in the West, and a tri-modal classification is presented. Other artifacts (textiles, cordage, historic items, etc.) are briefly described, as are pictographs found on the cave walls.

Eight radiocarbon determinations were obtained from split-twig figurine and dart shaft fragments. Excluding an earlier determination on a "composite" sample of split-twig fragments, the dates range from a minimum of ca. 1215 B.C. to a maximum of 2480 B.C., slightly extending the time range of dated figurines from other sites in the Desert West.

The authors conclude the report with a discussion of why Newberry Cave was used principally as a place for "magico-religious" hunting rituals, rather than as an occupation site. Given the artifactual remains--the figurines, dart shafts, crystals, pictographs, and the lack of hearths or other "domestic" leavings, the hypothesis is as plausible as any other.

In sum, the report puts on record an artifact assemblage from what might have been an important archaeological site in the Mojave Desert region. Given the lack of excavation control, Newberry Cave's scientific importance will never be fully understood.