

# Archaeological site on coast holds ocean of clues

SAN LUIS OBISPO, Calif. (AP) - Rubbish dug a generation ago from an oceanside archaeological site first occupied around 8,000 B.C. is being re-examined for clues that could bolster the theory some of the first Americans to stream into the New World hugged the Pacific coast, reaping the bounty of the land and the sea.

This month, anthropologist Terry Jones and his colleagues began poring over the estimated 10,000 to 15,000 broken bones and shells, salvaged in excavations hastily carried out 36 years ago to make way for construction of a nuclear power plant on the Central California coast.

Now, more exhaustive analysis could support the controversial idea that some pioneering Paleo-Indians moved into North America along the West Coast, skipping inland routes that traditionally have been considered the most likely avenues into the continent from Asia.

"If you have, very early, people pursuing a life that's different from that of the big game hunters, that could suggest a different people and a different entry route," said Jones, 49, of

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.

At the time the site was originally excavated, archaeologists focused on the rich assortment of skeletons, stone tools, fish hooks, whistles and other artifacts pulled from the layers upon layers - stacked more than 12 feet deep - of detritus. They carried out only a basic analysis of the accompanying bits and pieces of long-dead otters, seals, deer, fish and other creatures and then placed them in storage.

"The bones have been lying in bags since 1968, waiting for someone to look at them," Jones said.

That garbage now may prove to be gold.

Scientists believe the collection of bone and shell is unparalleled in both its size and its sweep, since it traces - apparently without interruption - a staggering 10,000 years or more of persistent occupation of the site, which sits perched on a bluff 60 feet above a half-moon cove.

"It was certainly one of the major villages along the entire Central Coast," said Roberta

Greenwood, the Los Angeles archaeologist who led the original dig.

Sorting, identifying and cataloging the remains should give scientists a fuller picture of how the village's inhabitants lived through the ages, including the range and number of species they hunted and fished, Jones said.

On a recent afternoon, Judith Porcasi, 64, and Angela Barrios, 25, sat side-by-side sifting through crinkled, brown bags of remains, separating the spoils into neat piles: bird, mammal, shellfish, fish and artifact.

"You've got a piece of bunny in with the fish. You can't do that," Porcasi gently scolded Barrios at one point.

Eventually, statistical analysis of the jumbled remains will allow "patterns to emerge," Porcasi said.

The dig site lies about 12 miles southwest of modern-day San Luis Obispo. It is partly occupied by Pacific Gas & Electric Co.'s hulking Diablo Canyon Power Plant. Only a small percentage of the site was excavated; the bulk likely remains intact, Greenwood said.

Although little heralded, Diablo Canyon may be the oldest mainland coastal site anywhere in North America - something further carbon dating planned by Jones could confirm.

The dating work done at the time of the original excavations was met with skepticism, since it came up with ages far older than anything else from the region known at the time.

"It was a huge surprise. 'Bombshell' might be appropriate," Greenwood said.

If the ages hold up through testing planned for the summer, they could bolster claims made by some scientists that separate, coastal-dwelling populations of humans were among the early colonizers of the New World, moving in pulses independent of the big-game-hunters thought to have traveled by inland routes at the dwindling of the last Ice Age.

"That's what the smart money is on, on the coastal migration. It's just that it's a whole lot easier to compete on the coast than it is on the tundra. You get a good mammoth, yeah, it will last you a long time, if you have facilities to take care of it - but most didn't. But if you came down the coast, you've always got groceries," said Dennis Stanford, of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History.

The remains dug from six locations strung along a short stretch of coast represent the

dozens and dozens of species that nourished the native Americans who occupied Diablo Canyon from as early as 8420 B.C. until the first European explorers reached the region in A.D. 1769.

The refuse heap, or midden, preserved evidence of more than 70 species of mollusk alone - a number likely unmatched by the offerings of any present-day seafood market. Mussels were an apparent favorite.

Jones is especially interested in sea otters, which were hunted for food and their pelts. Tracing the history of their exploitation as a species should dispel notions that Europeans stumbled on a pristine environment in the 18th century, Jones said.

"We should think of it as an environment harvested for 10,000 years. It's naive to think that harvesting didn't have some kind of effect," Jones said.

Preliminary analysis published by Greenwood in 1972 suggested no drastic shifts in the diet of the site's inhabitants over thousands of years, nor much change in the artifacts they produced.

That consistency suggests the people were established exploiters of the resources available to them on the coast and not necessarily Ice Age big-game-hunters who suddenly developed a taste for seafood, Jones said.

"They seem to have a coastal adaptation from Day One," he

said. Even older remains, dating as far back as perhaps 11,000 B.C., have been found on the Channel Islands off the Southern California coast.

That suggests the people who called the region home were navigating the open ocean nearly contemporaneously with the Clovis people, who hunted large mammals farther inland.

"Once you had that figured out, oceans, rivers and big lakes became highways rather than barriers. The water is actually going to facilitate the spread of cultures and ideas. That's what we're looking at. People dissed it for years. I am not at all surprised you have a huge 10,000-year-old midden there on the California coast," Stanford said.

Archaeologists have yet to find any coastal evidence that predates what's been discovered at Clovis sites farther inland - nor might they with any ease.

The rise in sea level that inundated the Bering land bridge that connected Asia with the Americas presumably flooded any coastal sites that might have been occupied before about 12,000 B.C.

"Finding the hard evidence, the field evidence, the concrete evidence - like finding a site that's older than anything inland - is eluding us," said Gary Haynes, a University of Nevada, Reno, anthropologist and theory skeptic. "When that evidence comes in, I will be glad to say the coast was first."

## Victim's body exhumed in U.S. and returned to Canadian home

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) - The family of a slain American Indian activist exhumed her remains from an Oglala cemetery recently so they can be reburied on her home reservation in Nova Scotia, Canada.

Denise Maloney of Toronto, Anna Mae Pictou Aquash's older daughter, also issued a statement saying the family plans to give prosecutors an audio tape transcript implicating American Indian Movement leaders in the 1975 death.

Maloney, executive director of Indigenous Women for Justice, wrote her mother "began her journey home this morning ... to the warmth and security of her family and people - to be near their hearts, for inside their hearts is where her spirit has always been."

Aquash was killed on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation nearly three decades ago be-

cause AIM leaders suspected her of being a government spy, according to witnesses at the trial of Arlo Looking Cloud, one of two men charged with the murder. He was convicted in February and is to be sentenced Friday to life in prison.

Looking Cloud's new lawyer, Terry Gilbert, said recently he may request that DNA samples be taken from Aquash's remains to determine if she was raped. "If it's somebody that has no connection so far to this case, that could be a revelation and call into question the credibility of the entire investigation," he said.

John Graham has pleaded not guilty and plans to fight extradition from Canada.

"Piece by piece, the 28-year lie is being dismantled and those who conspired and ordered the murder of Anna Mae are being exposed," Maloney wrote.

At Looking Cloud's trial, former AIM chairman John Trudell testified he believes Graham, Looking Cloud and AIM member Theda Clarke were ordered to kill Aquash.

Maloney said the family will turn over a transcript of a tape of AIM co-founder Vernon Bellecourt in which he allegedly acknowledges investigating Aquash because of evidence she was an informant. On the tape, he also allegedly says Graham, Looking Cloud and Clarke kidnapped Aquash, drove her to places where she was held, questioned about being an informant and then killed, Maloney said.

Bellecourt denied it. "To this day I don't know who shot Anna Mae Aquash," he said.

Clarke has not been charged, and lives in a nursing home.

Prosecutors have refused to say if anyone else will be indicted.

Aquash was among the Indians who occupied Wounded Knee in 1973 - a standoff that became a symbol of 1970s Indian conflicts.

## Activists cast vote to increase turnout

WASHINGTON (AP) - American Indian leaders are working to get 1 million new Indian voters to the polls in November, a significant increase from a historically neglected minority that by chance and geography could decide which party controls the Senate.

"In about half of the competitive Senate races, Native Americans are going to be highly courted," said David Magleby, dean of social sciences at Brigham Young University. "I think that Republicans and Democrats alike believe this is going to be a major priority."

In Senate races in Alaska, Oklahoma, South Dakota and Colorado, American Indian voters, though small in numbers, could determine the winner.

Republicans have recognized the risk in not courting the Indian vote, and are making unprecedented efforts to make inroads in what has historically been an overwhelmingly Democratic constituency.

"The days are past where one party took you for granted so they didn't court your votes, and the other party didn't know you existed," Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell, R-Colo., the Senate's

only Indian member, told a recent gathering of Indian leaders.

There are 4.3 million American Indians nationwide, nearly 3 million over the age of 18, according to the Census Bureau. Nationally, Indians make up just 1.4 percent of the voting-age population. But this year the highest concentrations are in states with tight races.

"It has to do not with their total population. It has to do with where they're distributed," said Magleby. "If the Democrats think they can get to 50 in the Senate, then all of the sudden the Native American vote in Alaska and South Dakota could determine who controls the Senate."

The National Congress of American Indians, the nation's largest Indian organization, is orchestrating the nonpartisan voter registration efforts, coordinating with Indian organizations on reservations and minority advocates in areas with high native concentrations.

Volunteers are knocking on doors and setting up booths at fairs and reservation gatherings, said Jacqueline Johnson, NCAI executive director.

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