

Rock Art of Washington County – One Piece of the Global Perspective

By

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David presented a number of rock art images from the Washington County Utah area. Many of the images are similar to those found in the Great Basin, which is not unusual since Washington County is at the eastern edge of the Great Basin. Many other images are similar to those found in the traditional “Anasazi” areas of the southwest. This shows the cultural diversity that was present in the southwest area of Utah in prehistoric times.

David, through the course of his talk, made a number of generic observations:

The variation in rock art from one end of the Great Basin to the other (California to Utah) is no greater than could be found from site to site that are only miles apart.

It is important to study rock art symbols in context. That is in relation to other symbols on the rock or at the site and also in relation to the land around the site.

Rock Art is documentation of how the native peoples related to the land where they lived.

Rock Art can be an aid in tracking the history of the native peoples. In the case of Washington County Utah, it shows the cultural diversity of the area. This is more important than documenting rock art within a specific boundary.

David felt that there is too much emphasis on interpretation in rock art research. He pointed out that he learned from the study of rock art and the native people of Australia that the stories related to the rock art can and will change depending on the age and the maturity of the persons hearing the stories (i.e. children to adult to elder). He also said that there are men sites, women sites and sites for all of the people. This is learned by working closely with the native people.

David felt that the real questions that archaeologists and anthropologists are trying to answer are 1) how did we become us and 2) how did we survive?

David Lee is an independent rock art researcher, focusing in the function of and context of Native American rock art in the Great Basin and the Mojave Desert. He is a founding member of Western Rock Art Research, a non-profit organization dedicated to the study and management of rock art. He can be contacted at www.westernrockartresearch.com.