

Conservation of rock art sites is a topic of interest to both researchers and managers. In recent years there has been much written about the best way to conserve sites, and different methods have been tried. From our perspective every conservation project should begin with recording the site. As recording methods evolve to take advantage of advancements in technology, there is also potential for more accurate and more detailed recording. The advent of new approaches, however, does not signal the end for old methods, and the best way to record any site or project must still depend on the reason for the recording and on available time and money. A review of rock art research in Wyoming indicates an ever increasing number of sites being recorded, and, therefore, at least on a basic level, conserved.



When army Col. Garrick Mallery published his ambitious work on the *Picture-Writing of the American Indians* in an 1893 Bureau of American Ethnology Report, he presented the first comprehensive overview of North American rock art. For Wyoming he relied mainly on the then 20-year old writings of Captain William A. Jones, who visited rock art in the Wind River area. Surprisingly, the Dinwoody site



was not mentioned by these writers, although early attention to that rock art style resulted in more intensive interest in Wyoming rock art than in surrounding states. In a 1969 book on Dinwoody David Gebhard recounts the written history of the site and speculates that Jones probably saw the petroglyphs on his 1873 trip, during which time he visited and discussed other nearby sites. However, it seems unlikely that he was actually there since he did not write about the impressive Dinwoody type site.

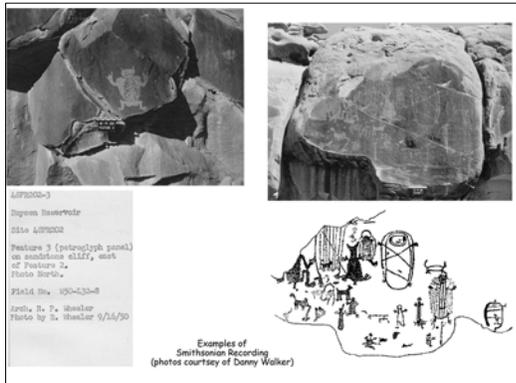


Dinwoody received about 50 years of written attention before it was first archeologically recorded in the late 1930s by a WPA crew under the direction of Ted Sowers. Since its first introduction to Americans and Europeans alike, the site's influence has been wide-spread, and rock art researchers and enthusiasts from almost anywhere in the world know where Wyoming is because of the Dinwoody rock art style. The style was first formally defined in 1979 by the German Klaus Wellmann in his survey of North American rock art, and since that time the Dinwoody Style has been the subject of intensive study based on detailed recordings of several sites in the region. Information on the who, when, and why of the style is addressed at length by Julie Francis and Larry Loendorf in their book on the rock art of the Wind River and Bighorn Basin published in 2002, which attests to the on-going interest in the site and its research potential. However, it is presently not possible to obtain any recording information on the type site from the state files in Laramie, as we will discuss later.



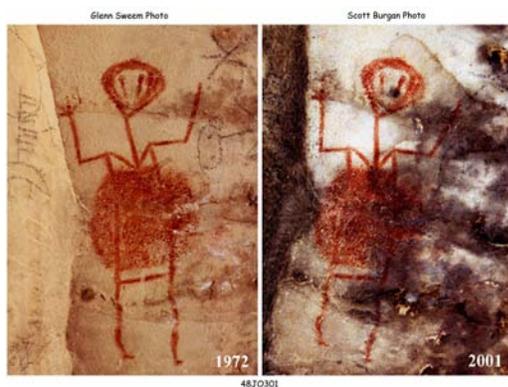
When E. B. Renaud, working out of Colorado, wrote on the pictographs and petroglyphs of the high western plains in the 1930s, he included sites from Wyoming, South Dakota, Colorado, Oklahoma, and New Mexico but devoted much of his attention to the Castle Gardens site. Castle Gardens is a good example of a site with a long recording history that

has been preserved in the state site records. These provide information not only on the site as viewed from the perspective of different recorders through time but also on how the site has changed physically due to impacts from nature and people. The better the records on file the better the comparative information available. Castle Gardens has been a valuable resource for a wide range of studies that include paint color distribution, figure types, conservation methods, rock art theft, fencing alternatives, and public display.



In the late 1940s and early 50s Smithsonian River Basin Survey projects discussed rock art sites and greatly increased information on the kinds and distribution of pictographs and petroglyphs along planned reservoirs. Several rock art sites were recorded to varying degrees in Wyoming during that work, such as along the Wind River prior to construction of Boysen Reservoir. In 1990 Danny

Walker embarked on a project to relocate the Boysen rock art sites and evaluate their potential for future studies. He included both the Smithsonian sites and some found during later surveys in the 1970s. This kind of condition assessment should be done for all rock art sites periodically because it is only through examining and documenting the impacts of modern projects on sites with base-line recording data that we can learn how to address future conservation issues.



In some cases contributions to the rock art data base are made in a manner that is incidental rather than planned. This happens when rock art is photographed as an aside during other archeological work. Some of those sites now have been vandalized or weathered making early photos especially valuable. However, people taking the photos often did not place records of their visits in the state files,

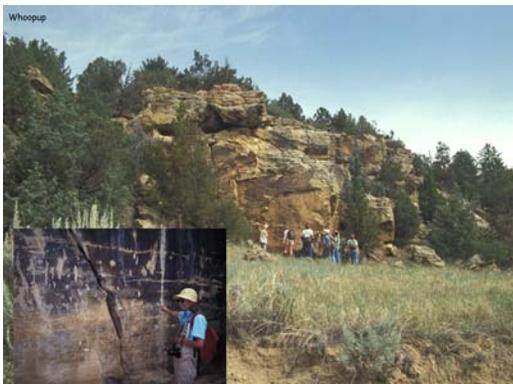
and it has been just by chance that some of those photos have come to light. Such experiences underscore the importance of filing all information on all visits to a site because what is a casual observance by one person may be what is ultimately most important to another researcher.



Wyoming rock art has had no more prolific recorder than Jim Stewart. The Wyoming SHPO records and *The Wyoming Archaeologist* confirm his dedication in preserving and conserving rock art by recording. A check of the SHPO data base indicates that he has filed information on 194 pictographs and petroglyphs. Jim, like many of us who file off-survey site information not associated with a paid project,

does not worry about submitting information on the currently used site form but instead concentrates on getting location and contextual data in the records. It is much more important to site preservation to put basic information into the state files than to be concerned about what form is being used. If the information is there, there is a potential for conservation that cannot even begin if the site is unknown to the archeological community.

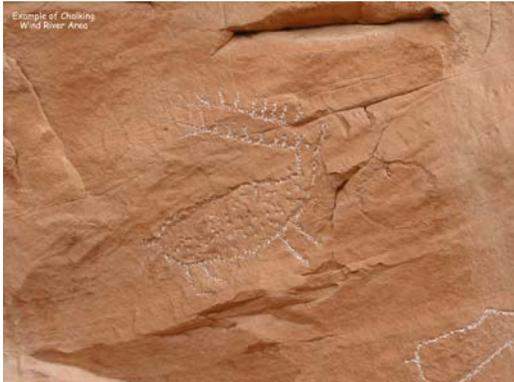
Masters theses written on rock art have added to the data base and provided recordings that have acted as the basis for continued research. Bill Buckles' thesis on Medicine Creek Cave, Joanne Mack's thesis that included rock art in the Bighorn Basin, and John Jameson's thesis on the Middle Fork of the Powder all represent recordings that have been used by others as jumping off points for additional rock art studies.



Government archaeologists have contributed significantly to recording and preserving rock art through not only personal recording but by providing opportunities for researchers. For example, Mike Bies continues to support rock art through numerous contracts and his annual recording at the Nature Conservancy on the west side of the Big Horn Mountains. In southwestern

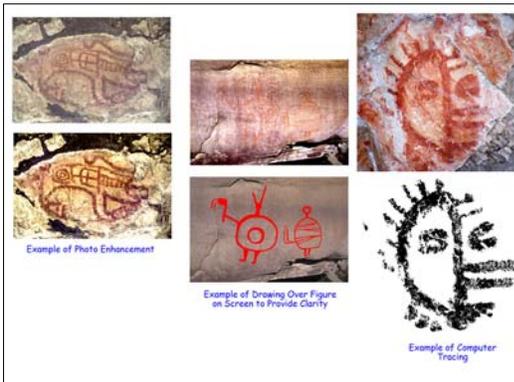
Wyoming the BLM has supported rock art projects, such as the LaBarge recording conducted recently by Jim Keyser with volunteers from the Oregon Archaeological Society, and Alice Tratebas has devoted years to research and management of the Whoopup rock art complex in

northeastern Wyoming. Her Paleoindian studies there have brought the site to the international attention of a world-wide audience.



Books dealing exclusively with Wyoming rock art are not as numerous as one might expect, especially considering national attention on the Dinwoody Style. Gebhard's small book dealing exclusively with Dinwoody Style sites was written to accompany an art exhibit and was not widely distributed, but it contains many site photos. In the 1980s, Mary Helen Hendry published her more general book on

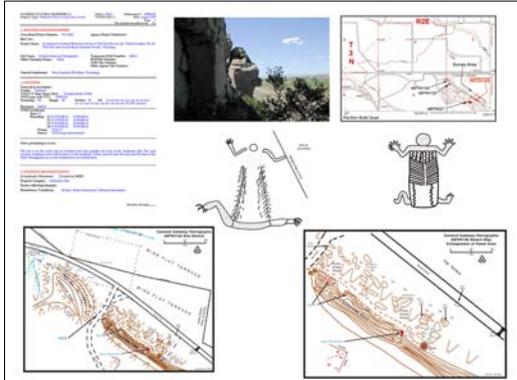
Wyoming rock art, whose strength is again in the photos, although not the quality of Gebhard's. Both books show heavy chalking of petroglyphs, a destructive technique common in those early years of recording, but now known to be detrimental to direct dating. Additionally, the lack of site identification by number in these early books hinders their use by later researchers. Julie Francis' overview of Wyoming rock art in the 1991 edition of George Frison's *Prehistoric Hunters of the High Plains* was written on the brink of an unprecedented expansion in rock art interest, visitation, recording, and study, and many of the topics she touches on in "New Directions for Rock Art Research" are taken to the next step in her book with Larry Loendorf ten years later.



Rock art recording accelerated world wide in the 1990s. This was due primarily to increased awareness of the sites, their interpretive potential, and their inescapable increased deterioration from such threats as acid rain, economic development, more intensive recreation, expanding visitation, and constant vandalism. The intensification of rock art recording is also due to advances in dating and

recording methods. The integrated use of computers and photography has made possible clearer and more accurate recordings, and the use of GIS as well as drawing, data organization, and analysis applications on ever more powerful computers are providing incentives for such studies. Wyoming has been part of this change from the beginning, and the results of computer aids and their continual refinements can be traced through rock art articles, reports, and site forms.

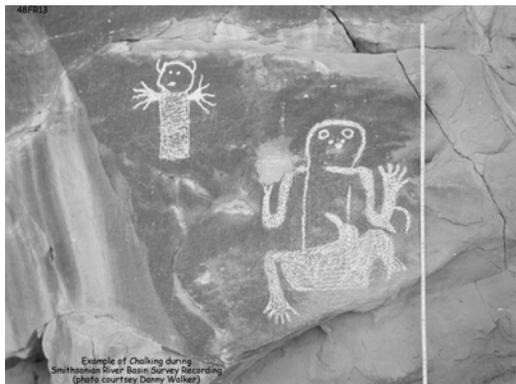
In an effort to quantify how many people have devoted time to recording rock art in the state, we itemized the number of rock art sites presently in the SHPO data base and the organizations associated with those sites. Of the 394 sites listed, 47 organizations did the recording, with, as noted earlier, the bulk of these



done by Jim Stewart. We cannot tell how many people the remaining 200 sites represent without checking each individual site form, but the other 46 organizations indicate the strong interest that exists in rock art recording. Unfortunately, these numbers do not tell the whole story because the entire township-range block that includes the Wind River Indian

Reservation is not reflected here due to black-out of these data. This includes about 3600 square miles of some of the most prolific rock art in the state, an area where rock art attention has focused in the past because of the Dinwoody type site, and general style distribution. No information is available on that area, either to extract for present research, or to be added to by present observers for future studies and cultural interpretations.

A review of rock art literature shows that recording methods have been the subject of much thought and debate. How-to articles have been written on recording, different groups across the country have produced recording manuals, and some states have developed, or recently improved upon, rock art site form supplements. Although there is no one-way to record rock art correctly or one accepted approach to recording, experience shows several wrong ways to record. In 1992, A. J. Bock and Georgia Lee of California published a summary article on the don'ts of rock art recording, which still reflects current understanding. Some previous practices were considered acceptable or even advantageous not that many years ago but now have been shown to be detrimental to rock art. First and foremost, physical enhancement should not be



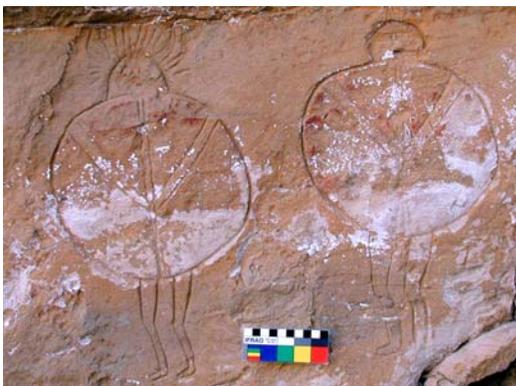
Example of Chalking during Smithsonian River Basin Survey Recording (photo courtesy Dorey Walker)

undertaken because it not only destroys the figures for future dating, but in many cases it destroys the art itself. For instance, chalking, whether to fill in petroglyphs or outline pictographs, and painting around figures so they will stand out better in photographs should never be done. Paintings should not be brightened by dousing them with water (even distilled water) or other substances that have been

used, such as pop (like Coca Cola), kerosene, gasoline, or cow manure. Liquid substances can cause figures to run, they definitely hasten fading, they destroy integrity for dating, and all substances are generally disrespectful to the rock art.



The practices of making a rubbing, tracing, or stippling of a petroglyph or pictograph through a clear plastic are controversial. Although all are still being done by a few hold-outs because of the perceived accuracy of portrayal, most active researchers understand these are not ways to conserve rock art but instead hasten its demise. Justification for this kind of direct recording depends heavily on the kind of rock involved, and common sense is imperative. Rubbing or stippling a petroglyph on granite usually has negligible impact compared to rubbing or tracing on soft sandstone. Likewise, tracing or stippling paintings on a fragile wall is not recommended. Computer technology has made rubbing, tracing, or stippling for accuracy a thing of the past and mostly unnecessary, because photographs taken with scales and from several angles can be processed different ways and traced on a computer to produce an accurate and noninvasive representation. Such computer processing and presentation are becoming more complex and impressive all the time, and all without touching the rock art.



Most people who use to make molds of rock art have stopped and only create new replicas from molds they did prior to understanding the methods' impact.

Turning from the don'ts of recording to the do's, in addition to manuals and many articles, several field

Molds were previously used, and several older articles describe in detail how to make a mold. However, it is now known that molding contaminates figures for dating, and a botched molding job can be detrimental.



schools and volunteer programs are presented every year on recording methods. There is considerable controversy and misunderstanding over what constitutes complete, or even adequate, recording, and it does not take long to see the subject has as many opinions as practitioners. In an effort to resolve the problem several researchers have sought to standardize recording in an attempt to develop more comparable data bases. However, because of the variability inherent in rock art, we believe that only certain aspects of basic recording should be standardized. The ability to reach beyond minimal standards and encourage development and testing of new recording methods will result in advances that cannot be gained through controlled standardization.



The important point is that any recording, to whatever level, helps conserve the site and its information. However, the most important kind of documentation is photography. If there is only minimal time to record a rock art site, that time will be best spent photographing. Of course, it is then important to file with the SHPO record's office regarding the date the site was visited, what was done, how many and what pictures were taken, where they are stored, where the site is located (ideally GPS coordinates), and any other observations. Photographs and drawings should be filed, if possible. Minimally information should be filled out on a standard site form, but

time is not always available. If you have information on a site, but not enough for a form, or no time, find someone to help you finish. We and others are always happy to help with the forms, the filings, and even record additional information on the site for the forms. As we have stressed many times, there is no substitute for complete files that provide a history on who has been to a site, when, and what they did. This record shows where to find photographs of the



site through the years, it helps verify the previous presence of panels now lost to vandalism — be it the addition of chalk or paint or removal of a section of wall — or loses to natural deterioration. Files provide information and input of ideas from past visitors that are invaluable to current researchers.

Thus, we believe the best way to conserve rock art sites is the placement of site information on all

kinds and levels of recording and all site visits into a permanent central repository, which for Wyoming is the SHPO records office. This preserves the information for not only rock art researchers concerned with such things as the distribution of motifs and regional variations, and for agencies concerned with site management, but also for people who are interested in rock art because it is part of their history, whether because their blood or cultural ancestors had a part in the production of the paintings or because their regional ancestors, that is, the people who made the history of the place in which they now reside, produced the rock art.



We understand this view is not held by all people, and the present policy of a few tribes is that rock art should not be looked for, photographed, or otherwise recorded. In some cases, such as the Wind River Reservation, records are not available to researchers, even if the sites are recorded. This results in several problems. Since site numbers cannot be obtained by most of us for sites within the

township and ranges where the reservation resides regardless of surface ownership, there is no way to know how many rock art sites are known in that area, their distribution, or how they are changing over time. This would not be a problem if people were not visiting, recording, and publishing on these sites, but they are. No coordination results in duplication of efforts and little management control. The lack of information, either coming out of or going into the system means that at best future generations will not have access to complete information, and at worst, the information and the sites will be destroyed.

With the increased pressures these sites are experiencing from modern expansion, it is not possible for them to remain as they have during hundreds of years of low impact. Conserving rock art through recording assures that future generations will have some opportunity to see and experience that aspect of the people who came before us and expand that information through continued study with new methods and technologies.

