

# Prehistory and History



## Agua Alta Canyon

This canyon, which lies between Toro Canyon and Pinyon Alta Flat, is in an area important for Cahuilla hunting and gathering. Recorded archaeological sites in the area contain roasting pits for agave.

## Andreas Canyon Trail

This trail led up Andreas Canyon from its mouth up the south side of San Jacinto Mountain. It was used for hunting, gathering, and ritual travel.

## Archaeological Site of Clark Lake Dune Village

This village site lies at the end of the trail from Rabbit Peak. It is about two acres in area, the largest in the region. The oldest occupation is an old dune surface at the north end of the site. This had been exposed by erosion. The village is near a mesquite and agave gathering place and was probably a winter camp. Artifacts and cremations have been recorded in this area.

## Ataki, Hidden Spring Village

According to Juan Siva (Bean field notes ca. 1960), this is the site of Ataki, the original home of the Wantcinakiktum and Palpunivikiktum clans of the Wildcat moiety (Strong 1929:41). The site is on a mesa above a hidden spring. It is possible that both early and late occupations are found here. Some house pits were distinguishable in the 1930s. (Anonymous, ca. 1938).

## Bear Creek Trail

A major trail ran along Bear Creek from the La Quinta area to Little Pinyon Flat in the Santa Rosa Mountains.

## Big Falls

Waterfalls, and in particular Big Falls, are documented to have been very important culturally to the Cahuilla, often having been the locale of legendary events. This waterfall in Palm Canyon is famous to local desert travellers.

## Bottle Gourd, Rock Shelter

A bottle gourd containing seeds was found in a rock shelter here (Bean and Saubel 1972).

## Cactus Spring Area

The Cactus Spring area is one of the most sacred areas for the Cahuilla who lived in the desert, and one of the last ones untouched by modern developments. It contains the site Wehghett, the "Place of Ponderosa Pines," an important village, and a lower village called Tevutt, "The Place of the Pinyon Trees." The area is mapped as Little Pinyon Flat. Both sites contain many bedrock mortar grinding places, smooth rock floors where people used to dance, as well as pictographs and petroglyphs. Four important trails go from here to the west, northeast, southeast, and southwest. Some of the trails are worn two feet deep in places.

Cahuilla elders and others recently mounted a campaign to have this area included to the Santa Rosa Mountains State Wilderness in Anza Borrego State Park and urged that letters be written to Congressmen and Senators in support of such action (Johnson 1979; Modesto and Modesto 1979; Bean field notes 1979).

## Clark Lake Petroglyphs

This petroglyph site lies at the base of the Santa Rosa Mountains, just east of the mouth of Rockhouse Canyon. The petroglyphs, which are interpreted as a early Cahuilla type, are pecked into the reddish-brown patina of the boulders, which spread out for 100 feet along a trail.

## Cottonwood Springs Village Ruins

The remains of several rockhouses were found here. These are probably the village of Kewel or Kiwil, occupied in the late 19th century by families of the saucpakiktum lineage (Bean 1979).

## Coyote Creek

There are numerous archaeological sites in this canyon, including 22 trail shrines associated with a canyon trail.

## Deep Canyon

This canyon is important in the Cahuilla sacred literature as the home of Yellow Body (Patencio 1943:37), an occupied area of a village at some time in the past. Numerous archaeological sites have been recorded in this canyon.

## Fish Traps

Along what was the falling shoreline of ancient Lake Cahuilla is a series of fish traps made of rocks that were built by ancestors of the Cahuilla 400-500 hundred years ago. When the Colorado River changed its course, the huge freshwater lake began to dry up. This process took 50 to 60 years according to modern estimates. When the lake became too saline to support the growth of the fish they died by the thousands. The Cahuilla built the fish traps to catch the fish as the waters receded, which extend for some distance along the shoreline. They are very important to the Cahuilla people as historical features (Wilke 1976:178180; James 1918:240). They are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

## Martinez Canyon Rockhouse

This rare structure is located within the Santa Rosa Mountains Wilderness Area. Martinez Canyon Rockhouse, also known as Jack Miller Cabin, is a two-room vernacular style dwelling built sometime in the 1930's. This homestead/miners camp is constructed of cement with a facade of local river rock. In 1999, the Martinez Canyon Rockhouse was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

## Rock Tanks

These are natural rock tanks at about 2000 feet elevation in the Santa Rosa Mountains. During heavy rains the tanks would hold water which was important to the Native people as well as the bighorn sheep.