

**NRAAF**

**BLM**

# Rock Art

## Shooting Gallery







## Shooting Gallery Introduction

Shooting Gallery, situated on the east flank of Badger Mountain, is an archaeological district rich in prehistoric rock art, hunting sites, and campsites. The intermixing of settlement archaeology and art offers a unique glimpse into the cultural lives of the Native American peoples who visited this rugged landscape for thousands of years prior to the coming of Euro-American settlers.

Over some 200 acres of tuff (volcanic ash) outcrops is a landscape that records the mundane and ceremonial lives of ancient hunter-gatherers. Whether ancient peoples were drawn to Shooting Gallery for economic or cultural reasons, the archaeology found here sheds light on the various social and practical meanings that landscapes have for cultures.

Hunter-gatherers made short-duration visits repeated over millennia to Shooting Gallery, leaving behind rock art and the remains of daily life. Making a living in this area required deep knowledge of the environment's plant and animal resources. This included knowing when was the best time to relocate campsites to take advantage of seasonally available resources.

The Shooting Gallery area was used as far back as 6,000 years ago but was most intensively visited during the past 3,000 years. Small groups of related households visited the area to hunt, gather wild plants, and to make and use rock art. During the winter, family households congregated with other households in large lowland villages.

Evidence of these visits is dotted around Shooting Gallery's rugged landscape. Ancient projectile points, small stone chips or flakes, pottery sherds, and grinding slicks may be encountered in the area. Dart points and, later, arrow points were used to hunt animals, either by groups of hunters or by a solitary hunter. The stone flakes were left over from making or maintaining stone tools that were used for hunting, butchering, preparing hides, and a range of cutting activities. Pottery was used for storing dry foodstuffs and cooking. Grinding tools (either as heavy stone







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slabs or on bedrock) were used for processing hard seeds and plants by grinding or pounding.

These artifacts provide archaeologists with important clues about how prehistoric peoples made a living, the chronology



of these activities, and their cultures. The significance of these artifacts derives from where they are found. If they are removed without proper study, they no longer communicate important archaeological information. Remember to leave in place whatever you may encounter so that future generations can also experience the thrill of discovery. This ensures that the area's cultural heritage will continue to tell its story to visitors and archaeologists.

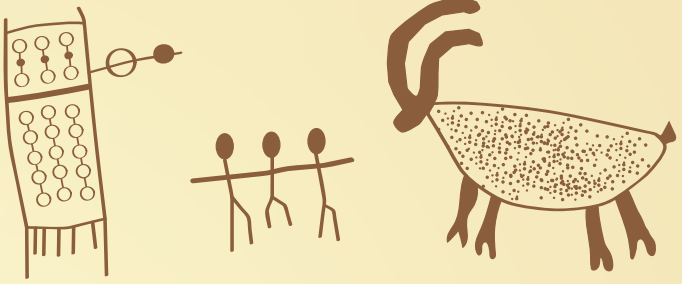
Two styles of rock art can be found at Shooting Gallery. The most common is Basin and Range tradition abstract and representational designs. This style may be as much as 10,000 years old and continued to be made by Native American cultures into the nineteenth century. Composed of a wide range of curvilinear and rectilinear abstract designs, this style also includes stick-figure anthropomorphs and naturalistic depictions of a range of animal species. The most common animal portrayed is the bighorn sheep figures and Shooting Gallery



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contains one of the largest concentrations of bighorn sheep figures in southeastern Nevada. Hundreds of portrayals of this animal can be seen singly or in groups on Shooting Gallery's tuff outcrops.



The Pahranaagat Anthropomorph Style is found in small numbers at Shooting Gallery and is unique to Lincoln County. It comprises two schematic ways of depicting people with either decorated rectangular bodies (often without heads) or as solid-pecked oval or rectangular bodies with heads that have a short line protruding from their top. Both the decorated rectangular type (or pattern-body anthropomorph [PBA]) and solid-body type are found in the Shooting Gallery area. This style may be as old as 6,000 years in age but appears to have been mostly made from around 3,000-800 years ago.

The largest rock art concentrations (Shooting Gallery I-III) are clustered on the northwest side of the canyon. Much smaller rock art sites are found farther south along the slopes of the canyon. These concentrations blend together and can be found by looking for prominent outcrops in the landscape. There is no developed trail in the area so the modern visitor discovers these sites in much the same way as the ancient artists. §





## Daily Life and Rock Art

The intermixing of rock art and campsites provides important clues on past landscape use. Without the ancient artists to tell us, the exact meanings that rock art had in the past are unknowable. Yet, rock art shows that prehistoric hunter-



gatherers viewed their landscapes in economic and cultural terms.

Cultures recognize certain places as particularly important for reasons ranging from associations with historical events to mythologies and religious beliefs. Shooting Gallery attests to repeated visits over millennia by Native American cultures to harvest plants, hunt animals, and make rock art. The rock art here was not made as a leisure activity, as most prehistoric campsites and work areas do not have rock art. The rock art here does not portray everyday life, as important resources, such as plants and small mammals, are not represented.

It is likely that rock art communicated important cultural beliefs and ideas by using visual imagery (symbolism). The same image may have meant different things to different individuals based on their age, gender, and life experience. Shooting Gallery's rock art shows this landscape was culturally as well as economically important to Native American cultures. §





# Shooting Gallery I



Shooting Gallery I is one of the largest rock art sites in the district. Located on slopes at the north end of the canyon, the site contains over 100 petroglyph boulders in four discrete areas. The centerpiece is a large open area where rockshelters, grinding



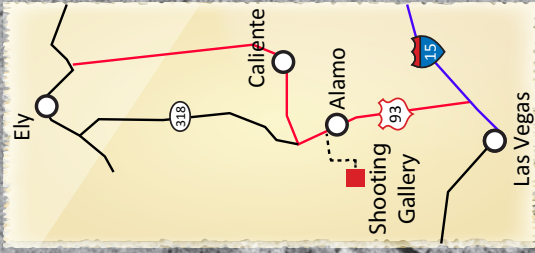
slicks, and scatters of stone flakes show that this spot was also used as a campsite.

Basin and Range tradition rock art abounds at Shooting Gallery I. Many rock surfaces are embellished by densely arranged and large rock art motifs.

Abstract designs include dot-rows, concentric circles, rectangles, rakes, and complex curvilinear meanders. People are mostly depicted as stick-figure anthropomorphs. Bighorn sheep are the most recognizable and commonly depicted animal at this spot. A small number of Pahrnagat-style PBAs can also be found at this site.

Shooting Gallery I appears to have been used most intensively from 3,000 to 500 years ago. The range of economic activities performed here is characteristic of short stays by small groups of family households. The daily routines of camp life took place against a rich backdrop of symbolic culture that reminded people of the place's cultural significance. §









Scattered petroglyph boulders

Shooting Gallery is located about 105 miles north of Las Vegas, 160 miles south of Ely, and 8 miles west of Alamo. The site is reached by a rugged dirt road with steep switchbacks that is only accessible by vehicles with four wheel drive and high clearance.

Shooting Gallery is on public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management, Caliente Field Office. Help protect the environment by traveling on existing roads only.



From Alamo, drive north on South Richardville Road for a short distance and then turn on to Canyon Road. Drive west on Canyon Road, after 5.5 miles the road enters a narrow canyon and a steep switchback. After the switchback drive for another 3 miles, and after navigating another switchback turn west onto a short dirt road that leads to a parking area and visitors' log.





## Shooting Gallery II

Shooting Gallery II is also a large rock art site intermixed with evidence of small-scale seasonal camping. The latter is evidenced by grinding slicks, small stone flakes, and a few pottery sherds that show food preparation, cooking, and tool



maintenance took place here. The site is 200 m to the west, and above, the main rock art concentration at Shooting Gallery I and can be identified by three prominent tuff outcrops that it is spread over. Three discrete activity areas can be found that contain some 150 rock art panels.

Shooting Gallery II comprises Basin and Range tradition abstract designs, bighorn sheep figures, and stick-figure anthropomorphs. This site is another campsite where the routines of daily life were carried out with a rich symbolic backdrop of densely packed rock art imagery. Some of the rock art panels here are among the largest and most densely packed of the Shooting Gallery area.

An unusual deer-like figure that has several long lines radiating from its head is perhaps the best-known motif at the site. A small number of depictions of birds, which are very rare in Great Basin rock art, can also be found at the site.

Pictographs (made using natural pigment, most commonly red ochre) are rarer than petroglyphs. They survive best in locations that offer some protection from the elements. At Shooting





## Shooting Gallery II



Gallery II, red abstract designs can be found in a shelter formed by very large tuff boulders at the southern end of the site. Nearby, Shooting Gallery III is the only other place in the canyon that has a small number of pictographs.



A small number of dog or coyote-like figures completes the range of animals portrayed at Shooting Gallery II. Some of these appear to be pursuing bighorn sheep, a theme that is found occasionally at other sites in the general area. This could suggest that prehistoric hunter-gatherers used dogs in hunting or they could portray a mythic theme.

Shooting Gallery II is most notable for the very large number of bighorn sheep figures (over 100) that are arranged singly and in groups forming scenes. The abundance of bighorn sheep designs makes them visually prominent at the site. This is one of the largest concentrations of this motif type in southeastern Nevada.

Sites commonly have fewer than 10 bighorn sheep figures and only sites in the Mount Irish area can rival Shooting Gallery II for its volume of bighorn sheep figures. This suggests that there was something special about this place that made it particularly appropriate for making bighorn sheep figures on its tuff boulders. The site provides further evidence that rock art, as well as specific designs, was not made randomly in the landscape. §





## Shooting Gallery III

Shooting Gallery III is 60 m south of Shooting Gallery II and 50 m west of Shooting Gallery I. It is in a gully partly blocked by very large tuff boulders and dense woody vegetation. The site is at two discrete elevations, one low at the mouth of



the gully and the other high above and hard to reach. The site contains some 60 rock art panels and evidence of small-scale use for resource processing (marked by grinding slicks and a small rockshelter). The upper part of the site also has several tinajas (natural tanks) that hold water for short periods. It is likely the site was mainly used as a workstation for the nearby campsites.

Circle chains, concentric circles, dots, spirals, wavy lines, zigzags, and rectangles can be found throughout the site. On the west side of the gully, a set of concentric circles is in-filled by red pigment, a rare treatment. This combination of petroglyph and pictograph would have needed to be re-touched periodically, as pigment naturally erodes when exposed to the elements. Some petroglyphs appear to have been re-pecked, possibly to refresh them. This indicates that some rock art was regularly maintained by the peoples visiting the area.

At least 50 images of bighorn sheep can be found at Shooting Gallery III. These include some very large examples at the upper





## Shooting Gallery III



level of the site that were placed to look out over the canyon. Other animals depicted include deer and dogs or coyotes.

Bighorn sheep are the most commonly portrayed animal species probably because of their cultural and symbolic



significance. Small mammals and plants were also important to the prehistoric diet, yet these are not portrayed in rock art. This suggests that prehistoric artists were not depicting everyday life, but instead were communicating important cultural beliefs and ideas through visual imagery.

Pahranagat Style anthropomorphs here include a particularly finely made PBA that holds an atlatl. Atlatls are hunting weapons used from 8,000 to 1,500 years ago to hurl darts. Depictions of PBAs holding atlatls give archaeologists evidence that the Pahranagat Anthropomorph Style originated before 1,500 years ago and may have lasted until 700 years ago, based on the age of associated artifacts at sites where this style is found.

The Pahranagat Style may be related to a period of social reorganization accompanying the adoption of horticulture and permanent villages in the eastern Great Basin and the Southwest. Although Pahranagat Valley bordered these cultural developments, Fremont and Puebloan ceramics in the area show that some trade and perhaps cultural influence took place. §





## Preserving the Past

The Shooting Gallery sites are on public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, Caliente Field Office. The Caliente Field Office's mission is, in partnership with the public, to provide stewardship of the lands and resources entrusted to it for present and future generations.



Despite their antiquity, the Shooting Gallery sites are a fragile part of Nevada's cultural heritage. Natural erosional processes, such as weathering from rain and wind, are slowly wearing away these ancient markings. Other threats include intentional defacement, like graffiti or other vandalism, that cannot be removed or even camouflaged easily and are expensive to treat.

Federal and state laws protect archaeological sites from vandalism and theft, and many sites are monitored by concerned local citizens volunteering in the State of Nevada's site stewardship program. Because the past deserves a future, visitors at archaeological sites can help by following a few simple guidelines.

- Take only pictures, leave only footprints
- Be a steward—volunteer to monitor the condition of archaeological sites

For more information on how you can help preserve Nevada's past, visit these websites

[www.blm.gov/nv](http://www.blm.gov/nv)  
[www.shpo.nv.gov/stewards](http://www.shpo.nv.gov/stewards)  
[www.nvrockart.org](http://www.nvrockart.org)











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