VII. ANCIENT INDIAN CAMP IN NEVADA DESCRIBED *

R.J. Penrose

Thirty miles south of Hawthorne as the crow flies, but nearer forty by the road, in the Excelsior mountains, close to the California line, are some of the remnants of Nevada's old-time Indian civilization. To reach the place take the Marietta road out of Hawthorne and follow it into Whiskey flat, leave the main road a short distance beyond Whiskey springs and swing off to the right on the old Mono valley trail, continue until the valley narrows. The ruins lie to the left in a large canyon, which can be reached by walking. An old Indian sign of two rocks, one placed on top the other, point the direction. In about one-half mile are found the first ruins, consisting of three round piles of malapai rocks, about fifteen to twenty feet in diameter.

These rocks appear to have been at one time constructed into some sort of habitation, probably similar to the present Navajo "hogan." Some of the rocks are inscribed with Indian "writings." Numerous arrowheads made of various types of flints lie scattered about. Many have been found of transparent volcanic glass, sufficiently clear, on looking through, to dis- [printer's lapse]

Beyond the third pile is to be found the remains of a stone wall, almost a mile in length continuing up along the side of the canyon. How high or how wide it was built originally cannot now be determined. Its eastern end terminates at the top of a precipice approximately forty feet high. Indian inscriptions on many of the stones remove the supposition that it was built by white men. Numerous bones lying at the foot of the cliff lead one to believe that it was a favorite camping spot. Here are the greatest number of Indian inscriptions, as the face of the cliff is flat and more suited to the work. The characteristic snake-like lines, what appears to be representations of man and many straight lines criss-crossed to resemble a checker-board, and inclosed within a circle, appear to be the dominant features of the writing.

The surrounding mountains are well wooded, bunch grass grows in abundance on the hillsides and sagebrush on the flats. Undoubtedly this district was well stocked with wild game during the reign of the ancient Indian. An occasional deer is still to be seen, along with the sign of a mountain lion. The ever present jackrabbit still gallops over the level spots in fair numbers. One is led to wonder why the stone wall was built. Perhaps it was used for animal drives or perhaps its construction served to keep the squaws out of mischief while the brave were on the hunt.

*This article appeared in The Reno Gazette sometime in the 1930s. It refers to site NV-Mi-5.