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Archaeological Data Recovery Associated with the Mt. Hope Project, Eureka County, Nevada

Cultural Resource Series

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evidence of deer hunting was recorded in Garden Creek Pass valley by Simpson (1876:70), who described brush fences located at the mouth of Tyrone Creek Canyon.

HISTORY

The following discussion of the historic period is thematic, dealing with major events affecting development in the project area.

Exploration

The historic period in the central Great Basin began with fur trapping expeditions crossing the region during the 1820s and 1830s (Cline 1963). An American party of trappers led by Jedediah Smith in 1827 is credited with being the first Euro-Americans to cross Nevada. Their route was considerably south of the study area (Brooks 1977:182-184; Cline 1963:158). Later trapping parties under Peter Ogden, John Works, and Walker-Leonard passed north of the study area along the Humboldt River.

During the 1840s and 1850s, emigrants bound for California followed the northern Humboldt River Route or Hasting's Cutoff. At the same time, several military expeditions journeyed through the Great Basin reconnoitering the far West. Possibly the first to have entered the study area was Captain John C. Fremont's third expedition in 1845. Fremont and his party traveled southwest across Diamond Valley, through the Mt. Hope area, and into Kobeh Valley (Thomas 1982c:9, 1983:124; Welch 1981:Figure 2), although Simpson (1876:65) indicates that Fremont's route passed further to the southwest. In 1854, Lieutenant E. G. Beckwith led a Pacific Railroad survey through the region north of the study area (Beckwith 1855).

In May 1859, a military expedition under Captain James H. Simpson (1876:66-70) sought a feasible road route between Salt Lake City, Utah, and Genoa, Nevada. The route selected passed directly through the study area. Simpson crossed the Diamond Range into Diamond Valley by way of the steep Overland Pass. He then proceeded southwest through Diamond Valley and over the Sulphur Spring Range near Garden Pass at the base of Mt. Hope, which Simpson named Cooper's Peak. From Simpson's description of Mt. Hope and distances between known points (Simpson 1876:71), the party appears to have passed through the project area along Tyrone Creek.

After the Civil War, several other military surveys explored the region, including geological surveys led by Clarence King and George M. Wheeler (Bartlett 1962). King's work was north of the project area, but a Wheeler party passed through the area in 1871, collecting information on the Mineral Hill, Diamond, and Eureka mining districts (Wheeler 1872:15, 35-37).

Transportation and Communication

The first mail service through Nevada was Woodward and Chorpenning's "Jackass Mail" which began operating in 1851 (Angel 1881; Welch 1981:6-7). In 1858, Chorpenning used a new route which ran through the northern end of Diamond Valley and into Pine Valley before rejoining the Humboldt route near

Beowawe (Welch 1981:7). Later, Chorpensing moved his line, following Simpson's 1859 route which passed through the project area (Welch 1981:7). This change required the construction of stage stations, at approximately 13 mile intervals, along the route west of Jacob's Well in White Pine County (BLM 1975:II-147). He was able to complete only some of the stations before the mail contract was taken over by the Pony Express, which used not only the central route but also Chorpensing's stations (Goodwin 1969:135).

Russell, Majors, and Waddell's Pony Express trail passed from northeast to southwest along the base of Mt. Hope, connecting the Robert's Creek and Diamond Springs Stations (Mason 1976:34-40). The short-lived service was discontinued in October 1861, but several months earlier, the Butterfield Overland Mail and Stage Company transferred to the Central Route and used it until completion of the transcontinental railroad (Conkling and Conkling 1947). Survey activities along the assumed Pony Express and Overland Stage route failed to identify artifacts or sites associated with the period between 1859 and 1869.

Following completion of the Central Pacific Railroad along the Humboldt River in 1869, freight and stage lines were established, connecting mining districts to the railroad. Several lines ran between the Carlin/Palisade area and the Eureka mining district; most passed through the project area. Among these were the Palmer, Palmer, and Russell stage line which began operation in 1869 (Patterson et al. 1969:159); the White Pine Stage Line operated by Woodruff and Ennor beginning in 1870 (Angel 1881:439; Goodwin 1966:7-11); the Palisade Fast Freight Line opened in 1871 by W. Pritchard (Angel 1881; Bancroft 1890); and the Nevada Transportation Company (Goodwin 1966:7-11). Stations were established at 5 to 10 mile intervals along these lines to provide changes of horses and overnight lodging (Goodwin 1969: 157).

With increased output by Eureka smelters in the early 1870s, a more efficient means of transportation was needed. A railroad route was first surveyed in November of 1871 (Eureka Sentinel 1871), but construction did not begin until 1873 when local businessmen formally organized the Eureka and Palisade Railroad Company. The narrow gauge railroad was to run from Palisade, a station on the Central Pacific Railroad, south to Eureka, a distance of 83 miles. In 1874, financial interests representing the Bank of California, the V and T Railroad, and the Comstock took over the project, and completed construction of the line in October 1875 (Bancroft 1890). A telegraph line between Palisade and Eureka, constructed along the western margin of the railroad corridor, was completed in the summer of 1875 (Goodwin 1966:13).

Stations established along the railroad included three within, or adjacent to, the project area: Summit, Mt. Hope, and Garden Pass. The Summit and Garden Pass stations appear on time tables and in correspondence dating to the beginning of railroad operation (EPRR 1878). Reference to the Mt. Hope station first appears in railroad correspondence in 1890 (EPRR 1890:276). The name Tyrone is encountered frequently in early 1900s railroad literature (e.g., EPRR 1923; EPRR 1938), and may be synonymous with the Mt. Hope Station.

Output from the Eureka mines declined during the 1880s and 1890s. As a result, the Eureka and Palisade Railroad was forced into receivership in 1900 and was ultimately reorganized under new ownership as the Eureka and Palisade Railway. Eureka experienced a brief mining revival between 1902 and 1910, as did the railroad. However, in 1910 disastrous floods washed out miles of the grade, stranded equipment, and shut down operations. Without a means of ore

transport, the Eureka mines once again ceased operation. In 1911, George Whittell purchased the railroad and reconstructed the grade. The refurbished line began operation in 1912 as the Nevada Transportation Company.

The line remained in limited operation until 1938 (Myrick 1962). The rail and much of the rolling stock was removed during the winter of 1938-1939 by the Hymen-Michels Co. Ties, buildings, and property were sold to local ranchers and townspeople (EPRR 1938).

Mining

Mining was the major impetus for settlement in the region, beginning with Austin in 1862 and Hamilton in 1868. In 1864, silver was found at Eureka, but it was not until 1869 that the town was established and mining flourished. Details of its history can be found in Angel (1881), Bancroft (1890), Curtis (1884), Hague (1892), Lincoln (1923), Paher (1970), and Reichman (1967).

Several smaller mining districts existed near Mt. Hope, including Alpha, Diamond, and Diamond Marsh. The Alpha District was located north of Mt. Hope on the slopes of the Sulphur Spring Range (Emmons 1910:99). The district apparently did not exist before 1880, as Angel (1881) makes no mention of it. The Diamond District was established in 1864 after silver-bearing ore was discovered north of the Diamond Springs Pony Express-Overland Stage Station, but it yielded little (Angel 1881; Lincoln 1923; Paher 1970; Wheeler 1872; Whitehill 1873). Another, apparently more recent, Diamond District was reported further south, closer to Eureka. The Diamond Marsh District, or William's Salt Marsh, was located at the north end of Diamond Valley (Angel 1881; Lincoln 1923; Reichman 1967; Whitehill 1873). The salt was used to process silver ores in Eureka, Mineral Hill, and Hamilton during the 1860s and 1870s.

Mineral exploration in the project area began in 1871 after lead-zinc ore was discovered by charcoal producers (Matson 1946; Roberts et al. 1967:103). A mining district was established in December of that year and named after its discoverer, J. McGarry (frequently spelled McGeary) (Eureka Sentinel Dec. 6, 1871). Prospects from the the Rambling Boy and Fair View mines were promising, and plans were made for laying out the townsite of Morlath. A wagon route was proposed from the old Overland route, through Morlath, and north to the Palisade stage route (Eureka Sentinel 1872). The Garden Pass stage station constituted the southeast corner of the district, with the boundary then running northerly to Sulphur station, west to Robert's Creek, south to the Overland route, and east back to the station. This district, which neatly encompasses the project area, is clearly the predecessor of the Mt. Hope mining district.

The McGarry District is not mentioned in major published mining reports (e.g., Angel 1881; Bancroft 1890; Emmons 1910; Lincoln 1923; Raymond 1870; Wheeler 1872), nor are production figures listed for the period 1865-1940 (Couch and Carpenter 1943). By the mid-1870s, references to the McGarry District in the Eureka Sentinel are derogatory in tone, indicating that the district had failed to pan out. When and why the McGarry district became the Mt. Hope district is unclear. However, by the mid 1880s it was referred to as Mt. Hope and limited development was underway. Workings in the Lorraine area were opened in 1886 and Thomas Wren, a noted local lawyer and politician, sank

the Mt. Hope #2 adit and whim shaft in the early 1890s. Early historical data on the Mt. Hope District are provided by Vanderburg (1938), Roberts et al. (1967), and Matson (1946).

The main period of district development occurred between 1936 and 1938 and again between 1946 and 1949 (Roberts et al. 1967:Table 12). During that time, limited company housing was provided at the mine site. These are depicted on the 1949 USGS Garden Valley topographic map as a row of structures northeast of the mine. With the decline in mining in 1949, the houses were removed.

Archaeological inspection of the Mt. Hope Mine has not yet been undertaken, as this area is currently involved in litigation. Therefore, it is difficult to make archaeological statements regarding mining or mining technology there. Surveys have revealed that very little mineral exploration has taken place outside the immediate Mt. Hope Mine vicinity. The little evidence discovered argues against any mining activity during the 1870s or 1880s, leading to the possibility that the McGarry district and the townsite of Morlath are within the currently uninvestigated Mt. Hope Mine area. It is also possible that they were located 3 km northeast of the Mt. Hope Mine on a hill at the southern end of the Sulphur Springs Range (the 6791 hill depicted on the Garden Valley USGS map), an area not included in the Class III survey strategy (Zeier and Stornetta 1984).

Charcoal Production

Pinyon-juniper cordwood was used to fuel the Eureka and Palisade Railroad until 1890 when a change to coal was made. Cordwood (in 4 ft lengths) was delivered by contractors to stations along the line (EPRR 1882). The most pervasive historic activity affecting the project area, however, was pinyon-juniper harvesting for charcoal production during the 1870s and 1880s. Charcoal fueled the smelters in Eureka and adjacent mining districts. In 1880 alone, it is estimated that 1.25 million bushels of charcoal were consumed in the Eureka smelters:

The demand for charcoal was so great that deforestation became a severe problem. From our estimates of wood yield, 4,000 to 5,000 acres of woodland had to be cut annually to supply the Eureka mills. By 1874 the mountain slopes around Eureka were denuded of pinyon and juniper for a radius of twenty miles. By 1878 the average hauling distance from [charcoal] pit to smelter was thirty-five miles. (Young and Budy 1979:117)

Charcoal production sites consisted of oval-to-circular, temporary surface ovens containing pinyon stacked 12 to 25 m in diameter and some 5 m high. Juniper and mountain mahogany require higher burn temperatures than pinyon, and where these fuels were prevalent, beehive-shaped kilns were constructed. Beehive ovens are still to be seen in the Diamond Range, the Fish Creek area south of Eureka, and at Ward and Bristol in eastern Nevada. None, however, were observed in the project area. Charcoal was produced in many valleys along the Eureka and Palisade Railroad route and shipped to Eureka via rail (Rodman 1984:31). Charcoal production was halted in 1887 when the clear cutting of the pinyon-juniper woodlands was stopped by the U. S. Department of the Interior (Goodwin 1966:14; Rodman 1984:31).