

THE CLARENCE RUTH COLLECTION OF THE LOMPOC MUSEUM

Roger H. Colten
Lompoc Museum
200 South H Street
Lompoc, CA 93436

ABSTRACT

Clarence Ruth conducted pioneering archaeological research in northern Santa Barbara County from the 1930's through the 1960's, amassing a huge collection of complete specimens of various artifact types. In 1969 Ruth donated his collection to the City of Lompoc to ensure that it would always be available to scholars for research purposes, and remain on exhibit for the general public. This remarkable collection is curated in the Lompoc Museum. This paper is a brief description of Ruth's research, the Ruth collection, and the ongoing documentation efforts of the staff of the Lompoc Museum.

INTRODUCTION

Clarence Ruth was born on April 1, 1890 in Portsmouth, Ohio. He moved to Chico, CA as a child, and moved to Lompoc, CA in 1925. Ruth was a school teacher and administrator in Lompoc and Santa Maria, as well as an archaeologist, earning a Masters degree in archaeology from the University of Southern California in the 1930's. Ruth's Lompoc area research included preliminary reconnaissance and excavations at about fifty sites in northern Santa Barbara County. During this work Ruth amassed a collection of over 3,000 prehistoric artifacts, which he maintained in a private museum in his home. Ruth was considered a local authority on Native Americans. School children paid regular visits to Ruth's museum, and Ruth consulted with scholars and visitors about local archaeology.

To ensure that his collection would always be available for research and for public exhibition, Ruth donated his collection to the City of Lompoc in 1969, with certain restrictions. His main concerns were that the collection would be on exhibit in the recently vacated Carnegie Library building, admission would be free, and that the collection would be properly cared for and available to scholars for research purposes.

After accepting the collection, the City of Lompoc approached the Lompoc Valley Historical Society about forming an organization to manage the Ruth Collection, and to administer a museum. In 1969 the Lompoc Museum Associates, Inc. were formed. The Lompoc Museum opened to the public in February of 1970. The Museum is housed in Lompoc City Landmark No. 1, a Carnegie Library built in 1910.

The Museum is open six days a week, and access to the collections and research library is by appointment. In addition to managing and exhibiting the Ruth Collection, museum staff and volunteers host tours for school children and adults, coordinate

public lectures on archaeological and historical topics, and serve as a primary community resource on Native Americans. In addition to the Ruth Collection, the Lompoc Museum holds several other collections of ethnographic and archaeological specimens, and maintains a research library. This paper is a brief description of Ruth's research and the portion of his collection housed at the Lompoc Museum. (Some specimens are apparently still in the possession of the Ruth heirs).

RUTH'S RESEARCH

The bulk of the Ruth Collection is comprised of archaeological and ethnographic specimens from California, the Northwest Coast and the Southwest. The majority of the archaeological material is from the Chumash territory, including a limited number of specimens from Malibu, the northern Channel Islands, and San Luis Obispo County. Figure 1 shows the Chumash territory, which extended from near Malibu on the south, to Morro Bay on the north, as far inland as the San Joaquin Valley, and also included the Northern Channel Islands (Grant 1978:505). Most of the material in the Ruth Collection is derived from sites in the area surrounding Lompoc, from Gaviota to Point Sal, an area that corresponds roughly to the territory of the Purismeno Chumash (Figure 2). Ruth's archaeological investigations in this area were conducted primarily in the 1930's. The archaeological sites represented in the collection span the prehistory of the region, from the early Millingstone Horizon (Wallace 1955) to the historic period.

Ruth produced several manuscripts on his archaeological investigations. The most widely known are his Masters thesis papers (Ruth 1936, 1937) from the University of Southern California, and a later manuscript called A Survey of Fifty Pre-Historic Village Sites 1930-1967 (Ruth 1967). Many of the sites Ruth visited are now within the boundaries of Vandenberg Air Force Base, and all but two or three of the sites have been recorded. Many of these sites have been the focus of subsequent investigations and many have been radiocarbon dated. Table 1 lists the Santa Barbara County sites currently known to be represented in the Ruth Collection, with sites that have been radiocarbon dated noted.

Most of Ruth's work was done in the early 1930's, and his methods and research orientation reflect those of his contemporaries. Emphasis was placed on constructing or testing chronological schemes, excavations were focused in cemetery areas, and spatial control was limited, by modern standards. Ruth was, for most intents and purposes, expanding the archaeological research current in the Santa Barbara area (Ruth 1936:vii), and testing the recently published chronological scheme of D.B. Rogers (1929) in the northern part of the county. Ruth considered his work an effort to inventory and test the archaeological sites beyond the known area of the Santa Barbara Channel, to provide some basic observations on these sites, and to lay the foundation for future research. This research



Figure 1: The Study Area

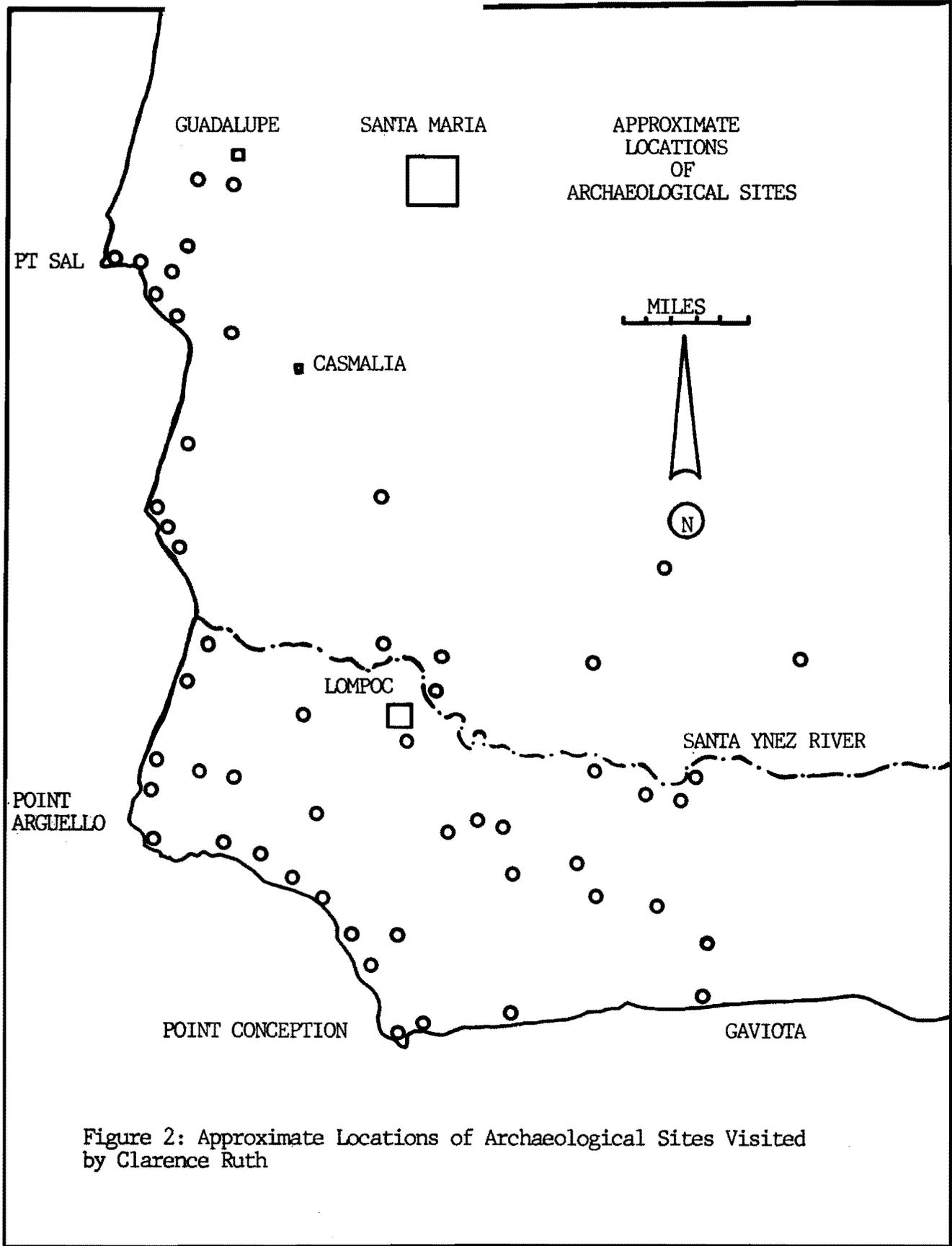


Figure 2: Approximate Locations of Archaeological Sites Visited by Clarence Ruth

TABLE 1
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY SITES REPRESENTED IN THE RUTH COLLECTION

46*	78*	96*	125	203	204	205
206	207	208	209*	210*	212	214
215	219	220	221	223	224	225
226	228	230	232	237	238	240
242	244	245*	246	247	248	249
252	512	515	516	519	521	530*
531	539*	541	552*	553*	568	573
734	828	1187	1189	1190	1191	1192
1491*	1492*	1494*				

* sites with radiocarbon dates

orientation lead to an emphasis on large, easily located sites.

The broad patterns of prehistory are quite similar between the Santa Barbara Channel area and northern Santa Barbara County. Rogers' (1929) chronological scheme gives a fairly accurate depiction of the major changes in artifacts and adaptation in the northern county, and King's (1981) more refined chronological scheme, based on shell and stone artifacts, reflects changes in social organization. A recent synthesis of early Holocene adaptations along the Santa Barbara coast (Erlandson 1988) incorporates data from several of the sites visited by Ruth.

Ruth (1936:3) noted several differences between the archaeology of the Santa Barbara Channel and the Lompoc area. Some of his observations include a heavy reliance on shellfish along the coast, and a material culture that was relatively impoverished, compared to the Santa Barbara Channel area.

Glassow and Wilcoxon (1988), in a recently published article on adaptations north and south of Point Conception, discuss some of the differences between these areas. Population density was lower north of the Point, village sizes were smaller, the famous Chumash plank canoe (Hudson et al. 1978) was not used north of Point Conception, and the unique maritime adaptation of the Chumash was less developed.

THE RUTH COLLECTION

The Ruth Collection contains a wide variety of artifacts, including numerous complete examples of most local artifact types, and several unique specimens. Ruth's research orientation included an emphasis on complete artifact specimens, rather than quantification of midden constituents or collection of faunal remains. The purpose of this paper is not to give an exhaustive discussion of this material, but rather to give a preliminary description of the major artifact categories in the Ruth collection, based on the current stage of documentation.

The ground stone collection is comprised mainly of mortars and pestles made primarily of sandstone. We have only a few metates, but quite a few manos. There are a dozen or more "doughnut" stones made of a variety of materials. Over 200 complete ground stone artifacts are included in the collection.

Steatite or soapstone objects include ollas and comals of Santa Catalina Island material, tubes, charmstones, shaft straighteners, effigies from San Nicholas Island, and numerous beads and pendants. Many of the smaller items are made of Figueroa Mountain steatite. Several of the shaft straighteners are made from pieces of broken ollas.

The chipped stone assemblage includes well over 1,000 pre-forms, projectile points and micro-drills. The material is primarily Monterey chert from Vandenberg AFB, but there are also small amounts of Franciscan chert, obsidian and Santa Cruz Island

Monterey chert. Several of the smaller bifaces retain portions of their hafting material, and presumably are arrow tips.

Shell artifacts include beads of Olivella, California Mussel, scallops and clam, other ornaments of Haliotis and limpets, and about 30 fishhooks. Ruth measured beads in yards of strung beads; as you can imagine, there are quite a few beads in the collection, and several hundred other shell artifacts.

A group of over 100 bone tools includes primarily awl-like objects, hair pins, tubes and sweat scrapers. The Ruth Collection also contains bone abalone pry bars from San Miguel Island, and a unique whale bone knife handle from a site in Honda Canyon, currently within the boundaries of Vandenberg AFB.

Artifacts from historic Chumash sites include a fair number of glass beads from several sites, notably both La Purisima Mission sites, and metal artifacts from Sudden Ranch (CA-SBA-208) and San Lucas Ranch (CA-SBA-516). Examples of unique wooden artifacts include two snares and several rungs from a ladder from a site near Cuyama. Quartz crystals, fossil shark's teeth, tarring pebbles and asphaltum basketry impressions from prehistoric sites are also represented.

In addition to artifacts of local archaeological origin, the Ruth Collection includes approximately fifty Native American baskets from California and the Southwest, and other assorted artifacts from the New World, including some ceramics from the Southwest. There are also examples of artifacts from the South Pacific.

RESEARCH POTENTIAL OF THE COLLECTION

Although this collection was not recovered with modern methods, the research potential is great. Except for the chipped stone artifacts, most of the specimens can be associated with particular recorded archaeological sites. Much of the chipped stone was probably recovered as surface material by local residents who gave the material to Ruth, and is therefore inconsistently provenienced. Students brought surface finds to Ruth when he worked as a school teacher.

The quantity and quality of the complete specimens in the Ruth Collection is unique, complementing more recently collected archaeological data, and a variety of topics can be addressed using this collection. For example, the collection could be used in studying the differences between the Purisimeno and Barbareno Chumash. The diagnostic shell ornaments, in conjunction with site location information, would help in reconstructing changes in settlement patterns through time, and refining the local culture history. Certain sites contained numerous steatite artifacts and chipped stone pre-forms that might be useful in studies of craft specialization. The presence of exotic materials such as Santa Catalina soapstone, obsidian, Santa Cruz Island micro-drills and glass beads documents prehistoric and

historic trade. The wooden artifacts are rare examples of a technology under-represented in the archaeological record. The near absence of milling stones from Ruth's sites may be important in early Holocene studies in the region.

COLLECTION DOCUMENTATION

Since the collection was transferred to the Lompoc Museum, there has been a continuing documentation effort. All artifacts have been cataloged, labeled and photographed. The process of transferring our written catalog information to a computer data base system and the addition of county site information to the records has recently been completed.

The Lompoc Museum's research library has been greatly expanded over the past several years. In addition to copies of Ruth's manuscripts, we have copies of many of the published references on local archaeology, archaeological site record forms for sites visited by Ruth, and numerous publications on Native Californians.

For archaeologists conducting research in the northern part of Santa Barbara County, the Ruth Collection is an important chronicle of local prehistory. Archaeologists engaged in such research should consult the resources of the Lompoc Museum. For the people of Lompoc, the exhibits of the Lompoc Museum are an enduring monument to their Native American predecessors.

NOTES

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