

The Malcolm Rogers legacy collections at the San Diego Museum of Man

*Ken Hedges
San Diego Museum of Man*

The pioneer archaeologist Malcolm J. Rogers is perhaps best known for his research on the Paleoindian San Dieguito culture, beginning with his initial discovery of San Dieguito in 1919 near Escondido, California, and continuing with a lifetime of research to define the extent of San Dieguito and its relationships to other prehistoric cultures throughout the Far Southwest, a term I use here to refer to the contiguous areas of southern and eastern California, southern Nevada, western Arizona, and northern Baja California. The San Dieguito artifact collections, field notes, and site records of Malcolm Rogers at the San Diego Museum of Man form the basis for all previous work and remain as a significant resource for present and future research.

During his first two decades of research in southern California and the deserts of the Far Southwest, Rogers defined not only the early San Dieguito culture, but also the archaic cultures that he named Amargosa in the desert and La Jolla on the coast. In 1929 he began his archaeological survey of the southern California coastal region with the aid of a \$500 grant from the Smithsonian Institution. After recording 162 archaeological sites in coastal San Diego County, he had money left over and crossed the border, recording 38 sites along the Baja California coast from Todos Santos Bay to the international boundary. History does not record the reaction of his Smithsonian sponsors when he spent the remainder of his budget in Mexico! His observations and test excavations confirmed the position of the La Jolla culture -- at first thought to be an earlier "pre-Scraper-Maker" culture because of the unrefined nature of the stone tools -- as the successor to San Dieguito on the coast, with most sites having an upper layer of late prehistoric Yuman (now called Patayan). Early in his career, Rogers recorded important evidence about the La Jolla culture in what stands as one of the earliest salvage archaeology projects in southern California as he rescued La Jollan burials and buried artifacts from the graders and bulldozers engaged in preparing streets and lots for the new upscale development at La Jolla Shores (Figure 1). Rogers assigned his first site numbers, W-1 and W-2, to the beachfront village site and the extensive remains in the adjacent highlands at La Jolla Shores.

In 1930, Rogers made a brief but productive visit to San Nicolas Island, the most distant of the Channel Islands, returning with extensive collections and site notes from 32 sites on the island. He followed up with a couple of brief visits, and salvage archaeology projects in the 1950s added some additional materials, but the materials have not been fully analyzed or published. The field note diary from the 1930 expedition makes fascinating reading and remains as untouched raw material for some future dissertation.

Rogers published his research on the desert regions in his 1939 classic, *Early lithic industries of the lower Colorado River basin and adjacent desert areas*, and continued to refine his interpretations of prehistoric cultural sequences in the years leading up to World War II. In 1938, with funding from the Carnegie Institute, Rogers conducted his major excavation of the Harris Site on the San Dieguito River in San Diego County. Here deeply buried stratigraphic



Figure 1. Malcolm Rogers addresses visitors to the salvage archaeology operations at La Jolla Shores.

layers (Figure 2) confirmed without a doubt the cultural sequence for coastal southern California, laying the foundation for all subsequent research in the area. The intervention of World War II and a series of unfortunate personal events prevented Rogers from publishing his work at the Harris Site. He finally returned to the museum in the late 1950s to complete his pioneering studies on southern California archaeology, with plans to publish the manuscript that would present his final views on the prehistory of our region, only to be killed in an automobile accident in 1960, his work unfinished. In 1966, Claude Warren assembled a report on the Harris Site excavations from Rogers's collections and notes, and in 1966 his edited manuscript was published by the Union-Tribune Publishing Company as *Ancient hunters of the far west*.

The artifact collections, field notes, site records and manuscripts of Malcolm Rogers remain at the Museum of Man as important resources for future research. He is the acknowledged pioneer in southern California archaeology, and his influence extends north into eastern California and Nevada, east into Arizona and south into Baja California. Although the general outlines of his work are well known, the notes, photographs and specimens have not been catalogued or analyzed in detail.

It is less well known that Malcolm Rogers left important collections in other areas of anthropological research. This presentation focuses on three additional topics represented in the Rogers legacy collections at the San Diego Museum of Man.



Figure 2. Malcolm Rogers (foreground) and Museum Director Edward Hardy point out deeply buried layers at the Harris Site, 1938.



Figure 3. Vessel form reconstructed from pottery fragments found along the C-43 trail near the Colorado River.

Archaeological ceramics

Rogers assembled a massive collection of pottery type specimens, individually labeled and arranged to document his evolving typology of Patayan (Yuman) ceramics. Using hundreds of specimens from desert trails and selected collections from excavation projects, Rogers developed a Yuman ceramic typology that, like other projects, remained uncompleted at the onset of World War II. Although Rogers never published his typology, his collection is the basis for the re-study of Patayan ceramic typology by Michael Waters (1982), ongoing research by Jerry Schaefer and others, and future studies of this important topic.

To support the typological studies, Rogers devoted considerable time and effort in the reconstruction of vessel forms by painstakingly sorting sherd collections to identify individual vessels and piecing them together to provide examples of whole vessel forms from sites that had only fragments (Figure 3). These, combined with whole vessels from rock shelters in southern California and from excavation of Patayan cemetery sites give us a collection of nearly 600 pottery vessels. Vessel form is a component of typological studies, but the whole vessel collections combined with his extensive notes and design drawings for specimens in other collections show that Rogers envisioned a future ceramic design study that awaits completion by

future researchers.

Ethnographic studies

To augment his ceramic typology studies, Rogers undertook his one major ethnographic study in 1928. Working with Kumeyaay potter Wass Hilmawa, he documented her production of pottery from raw clay to final firing with photographs, notes, and the completed ceramic vessels, which remain in the Museum's collection today. The resulting publication, *Yuman pottery making* (Rogers 1936), is a southern California classic, unfortunately out of print. As a personal project, I hope that we may see a future new edition with a catalog of the known pottery vessels by Wass.

The ethnographic documentation of pottery making was a bit of a departure for Rogers, undertaken to support his archaeological ceramic work, but we find in various places in his unpublished notes and records other bits of ethnographic data, including some mythology and oral history from Wass and her husband, Santo Lopez. In addition, Rogers collected and filed away cultural information from a variety of sources, both published and unpublished, that will reward the future efforts of archival research.

Rock Art

Last year for our Rock Art 2005 Symposium, I prepared a presentation entitled "75 Years of Rock Art at the Museum of Man." Recently we discovered a note in Rogers's own hand that told us the title should have read "85 years." Beginning in 1920, Malcolm Rogers, later joined by his father Frederick S. Rogers, began assembling information on rock art in the Far Southwest. Many of the sites recorded by Rogers are petroglyph and pictograph sites, and references to the rock art are found throughout his field notes. There is note from the 1940s referring to a rock art manuscript in preparation, but no manuscript has ever been discovered. Nevertheless, we have the field notes, sketches, and photographs that provide largely untapped documentation of rock art in the Far Southwest. For the Mojave and Colorado Deserts, it is clear that Rogers had definite ideas on style and chronology that conform in broad outline with what we know today, but only a detailed compilation of rock art comments in his field notes will enable us to synthesize his understanding of the rock art. In addition to his interest in petroglyphs and rock paintings, Rogers conducted and published the first detailed survey of the giant geoglyphs north of Blythe, California, and his site records document many other ground figures throughout the desert west. Unlike many archaeologists of his time, he considered rock art and related topics as an important part of the archaeological record, deserving study as much as any other part of prehistory.

Frederick Rogers served as his son's field assistant and photographer throughout the pre-War period, and he took on rock art as his special area of interest. In the 1930s, Frederick Rogers accompanied Adan Treganza in fieldwork that included a visit to the site we know today as El Vallecito. He photographed several of the main sites in the valley (Figure 4), including some that have been damaged by vandalism in recent years. Unfortunately, they did not find the painting we know today as the "Sunwatcher" or "El Diablito," but the photos of other panels provide valuable data for comparing the state of the rock art 70 years ago with conditions as they exist



Figure 4. Photograph by Frederick Rogers of the main panel in La Cueva del Indio, El Vallecito, near La Rumorosa.

today. Aside from vandalism, the paintings appear to have survived remarkably well.

Although their rock art data were never published, the Rogers photographs and field notes have had a major effect on our understanding of rock art styles in southern California and northern Baja California. Studies of California rock art from Julian Steward's pioneer effort in 1929 to the Heizer and Clewlow overview in 1973 treat the international border region in ethnographic Kumeyaay territory as if it did not exist. Rather than one red "rectilinear abstract" style for all of southern California, studies using the Rogers data at the Museum of Man enabled the present author, beginning in 1966, to define three distinct rock art styles in southern California and northern Baja California, including the previously unrecognized La Rumorosa style of the Kumeyaay Indians (Hedges 1970, 1973, 2002). Before this time, important sites such as Indian Hill, Canebrake Wash, El Vallecito, Hakwin, Valle Seco and Las Pilitas were unknown to researchers who had ignored the Rogers archaeological files.

Epilogue

The rock art records and photographs stand as examples of the resources available to researchers as part of the Rogers legacy collections. Much of this material has seen little use, with indexing and archival processing as a necessary first step. In 1999, with financial support from the Bureau of Land Management in California, the photographic prints for California and Arizona archaeological sites were scanned, and over 2,100 photos are now available for research. At the same time, Rogers's unpublished field notebooks were transcribed, and they await editing and future publication. Many photos exist in the files only as negatives and have not been

scanned. Later this year, we hope to begin the task of scanning the photographs of Baja California sites, making them available to researchers on both sides of the border.

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