

Late Pleistocene Human Occupations of the Paisley Caves

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The Paisley Caves are a complex of eight west-facing caves and rockshelters cut by pluvial Lake Chewaucan wave action into the soft brecciated basalt flows of 5-Mile Point in the Summer Lake basin of south-central Oregon. The site was made famous by Luther Cressman's (1940) claims of obsidian artifacts stratigraphically associated with extinct megafaunal remains (horse, camel, bison) in a cultural feature. Periodically vandalized over the next 60+ years, the site remained the best possible location for establishing the co-occurrence of humans and extinct megafauna in the Great Basin. New investigations by the University of Oregon began in 2002 and continue in the present. Multi-disciplinary studies include ancient DNA, human versus animal biomarkers (sterols, bile acids), protein residues, botanical (macro, pollen, phytoliths, starches) and faunal remains (large and small mammal paleontology, birds, fish), human subsistence, consumed and parasitic insects, and artifacts (chipped and ground stone, bone, fiber, wood), obsidian sourcing and hydration, and extensive radiocarbon dating ($n \approx 400$). There is no reasonable doubt that humans occupied the site from ~14,500 years ago and coincided with extinct megafauna 1500-2000 years.