

BELLE'S PARK

There is a canyon in the Madera Canyon region of the Santa Rita Mountains that the Green Valley Hiking Club refers to as "Trial and Error Canyon". When you have hiked about a third of the way up the canyon toward Josephine Saddle you enter an area called "Belle's Park". We have not been able to determine any particulars on who "Belle" was but someone had made a major effort to commemorate her life by inscribing a number of modern petroglyphs on the rocks and developing an altar like area. One of the inscriptions indicates that Belle's initials were GBD and that she was born in 1914 and died in 1990. Over the years, the Forest Service had attempted to catch the "artist" in the act of inscribing the inscriptions and images on the rocks without success. The following pictures (Figures 1 through 11) present a few of the inscriptions and images that you will pass by as you hike upstream to what had been the "altar" area.



Figure 1. Belle's Park Inscription



Figure 2. Memorial to Belle
1914 to 1990

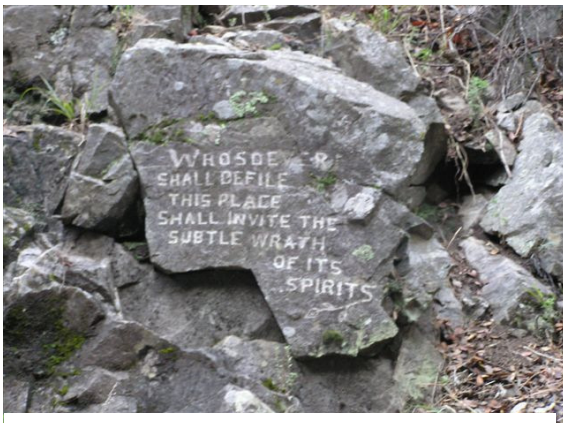


Figure 3. Friendly Warning



Figure 4. Unknown Symbol



Figure 5. Rabbit



Figure 6. Deer Head & Tracks



Figure 7. Spotted Owl



Figure 8. Trogon



Figure 9. Dragon Fly



Figure 10. Butterfly & Small Bird



Figure 11. Snake

The “altar” area was quite an elaborate place in the late 1990s when the Hiking Club first found Belle’s Park while exploring the various washes and streams in Madera Canyon. The altar was quite impressive (see Figure 12) and the trees in the surrounding area were adorned with various artifacts (see Figures 13 through 17). Subsequently someone ignored the “warning” (Figure 3) about defiling the area and knocked over the rocks that were used to form the altar.



Figure 12. Original Altar Configuration



Fig. 13 Pictograph Installed on Tree



Figure 14. Artifacts Mounted on Tree Near Altar



Figure 15. Turtle Shell



Figure 16. Angel & Sand Dollar



Figure 17. Sand Dollar & Horseshoe

Figure 18 shows the configuration of the altar after it was partially dismantled. This photo was taken in 2009. The altar was never returned to its original configuration.



Figure 18. Altar after Partial Dismantling

During the spring of 2021 the Forest Service commenced a program of restoring to a more natural state those wilderness areas that had been illegally modified .

As of May 2021, the Forest Service had buried the Altar rock and removed all of the various trinkets with the exception of the pictograph installed on the tree. Figure 19 shows the Altar rock area as it now appears from the same view point as in Figure 18.



Figure 19. Altar area after FS Restoration

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Updated in June of 2021 by T. Johnson and Duane Dotson. All figures are by T. Johnson except Figure 19 is by Duane Dotson.