

Below are additional photographs of our excavations at Bonneville Estates Rockshelter.



Field school students working in the West Block, Central Block, and Trench in 2003.



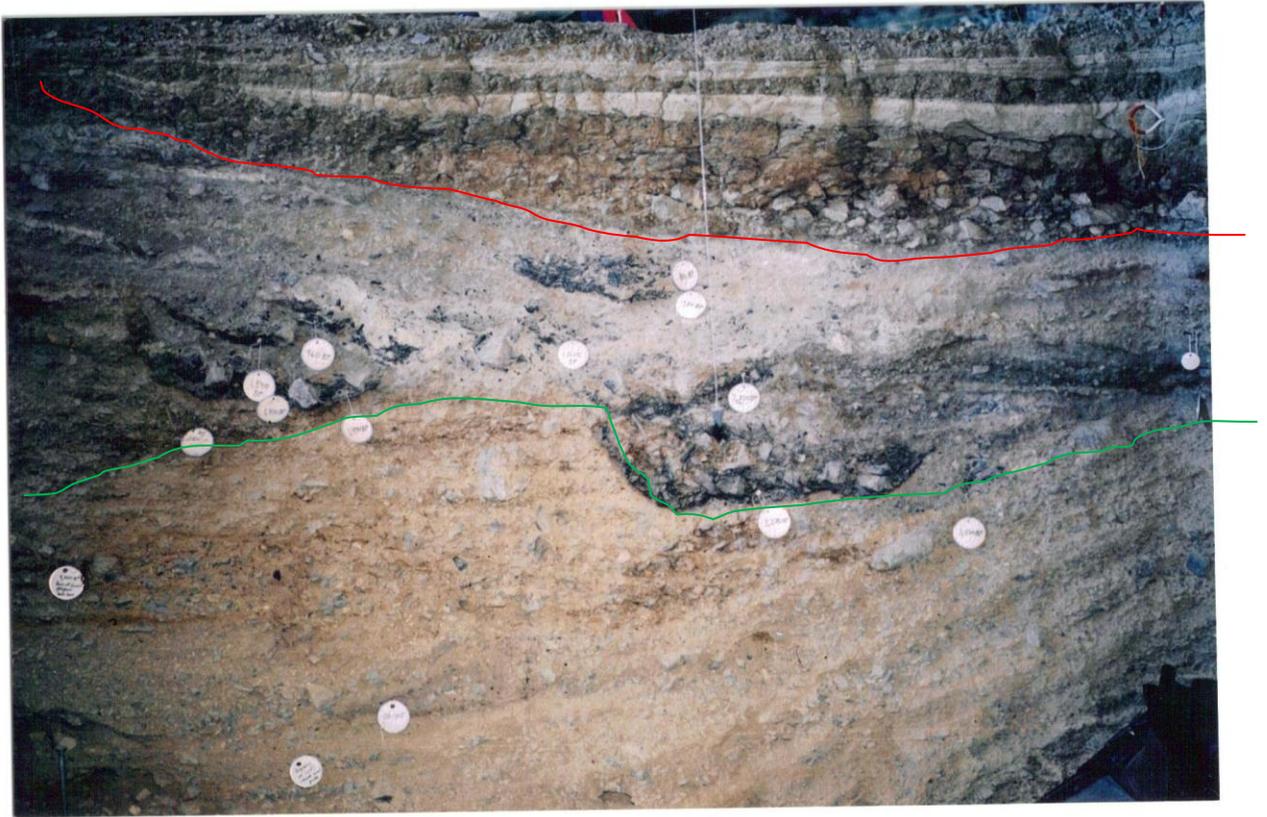
These two photos show an intact rock-lined hearth in the East Block, the only rock-lined hearth discovered at BER. The feature dated to about 3,000 years ago, or during the Middle Archaic. The center of the hearth was filled with cactus pads, suggesting it was used to process cactus for consumption. Note the jagged edges along one side of the excavation unit – that edge represents the margins of the looters pit. These are the types of features destroyed by illegal excavations. In this case, the looters just missed destroying this unique feature.



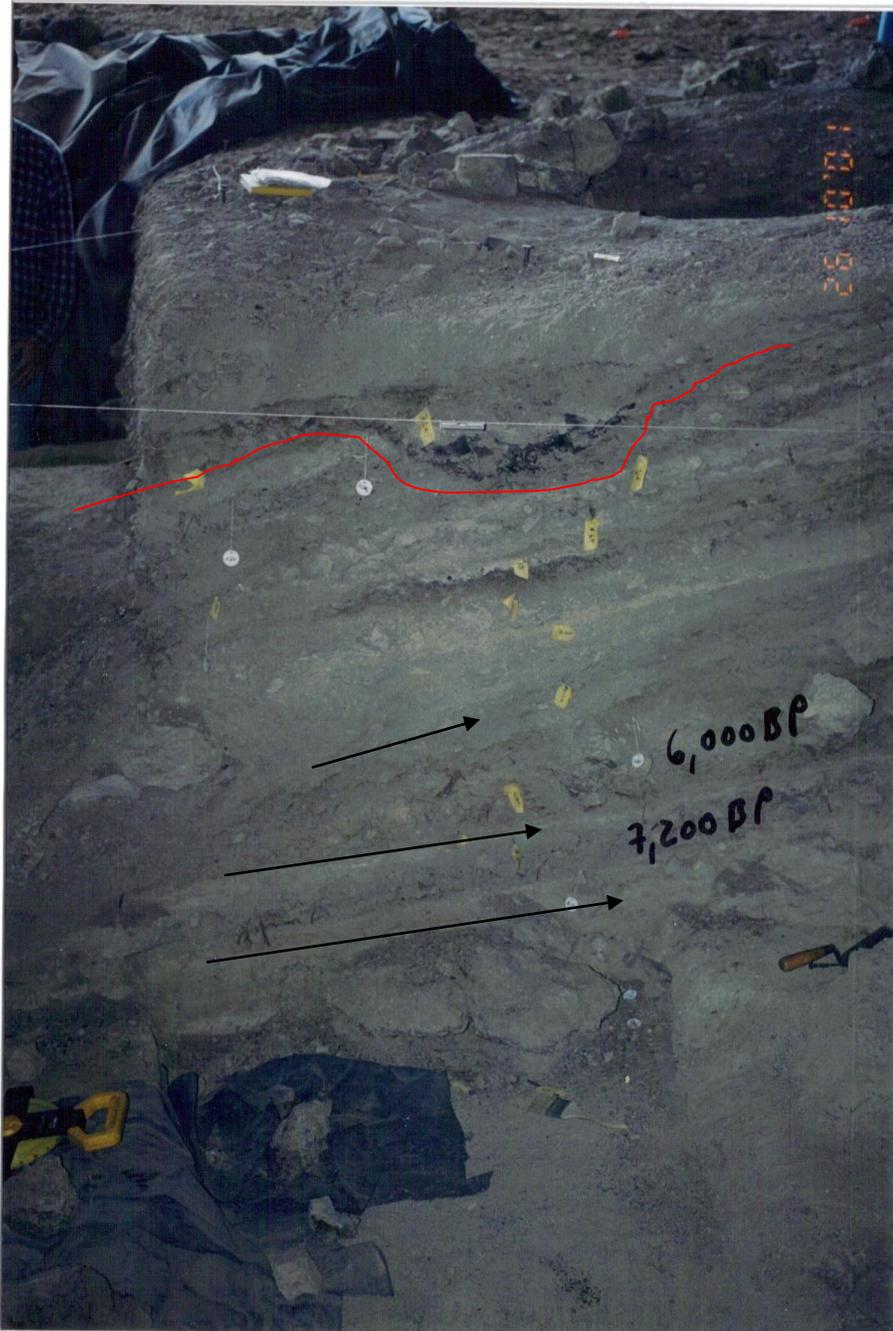
This is an intact grass-lined storage pit found in the East Block in 2002. The top of the pit was found in a layer that dated to about 1,300 years ago, or during the earliest stages of the Late Archaic.



Here is a side-wall profile of a series of 'stacked hearths' or perhaps an 'earth-oven'. When excavated, it is not always easy to determine whether these represent single features such as an oven, or more than one hearth built on top of one another. Charcoal was collected from the top, middle, and bottom of this feature. All of the dates returned the same, suggesting this was either a single oven feature in which wood and rock was placed on the bottom (the wood ignited), some type of plant resources were placed on top of that, and additional wood and rock was then placed above the food to be cooked (with the top wood ignited); or there were two or more open-faced hearths built on top of one another but closely spaced in time.



Here we see a series of intact hearths (between the red and green arrows) in the East Block that were dug into much older sediments by the inhabitants of the shelter. The sediments above the red line consist primarily of historic sheep dung laid down when shepherders used to bed their animals inside the shelter. The hearths here all date to the early part of Late Archaic period, between about 1,300 and 800 years ago.



An intact section of sediments in the West Block. Note the presence of a hearth here (red line) also dug into older sediments by the inhabitants of the shelter. This profile provides an excellent look at the Middle Holocene occupational sequence in BER. The Middle Holocene was a time of prolonged droughts in the Great Basin between about 9,000 and 5,500 years ago. While BER was not completely abandoned during this time, human occupation of the shelter diminished greatly. Two short-term Middle Holocene occupations occurred at 7,200 radiocarbon years ago (8,000 calendar years ago) and 6,000 radiocarbon years ago (7,000 calendar years ago). These occupations were clearly separated by sterile silts and gravels above and below each of these occupations (black arrows), sealing these layers and preserving one of the best records of Middle Holocene occupations in the Great Basin.



Two contrasting pictures from the East Block, again showing the damage caused by illegal excavation. The top photo shows the end point of the removal of all of the looted sediments from the East Block excavation area. At the base of the looted area (top photo), we can see the remaining intact sediments not destroyed, and can make out the base of the shovel holes created by the destroyers of America's past. After excavation reached below the level damaged by the looters (bottom photo), we finally had only undisturbed sediments to excavate here.



Ted Goebel (top photo) excavates in the trench connecting the West and East Blocks. Kelly Graf (bottom photo, second from left) leads a contingent of screeners. All material was passed through 1/8" mesh screens.



Bryan Hockett screens in front of the East Block.



A charcoal and rock filled 10,500 year-old hearth encountered in the East Block. Like almost all of the oldest hearths at BER, sage grouse bones were found within and surrounding these hearths. The bones lying inside this hearth are all sage grouse.



Near the base of excavations in the East Block. Note the stark presence of Pleistocene Lake Bonneville beach sand and gravels as they first encountered below the terrestrial, tan-colored silts. The white tags mark the location of the earliest hearths in this part of the shelter. The sediments between these hearths and the beach gravels were devoid of any evidence of human occupation.



A close-up of the Lake Bonneville beach gravels in the East Block, deposited when lake waters filled BER.