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CRAIG SANDROCKS: HISTORIC PLAINS HORSE PETROGLYPHS IN NORTHWESTERN COLORADO

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ABSTRACT

Historic period rock art in western Colorado is predominantly Ute and Navajo horse and rider images, while rock art of the same time period in southwestern Wyoming's Green River Basin shows typical Northwestern Plains equestrian art that was apparently drawn by artists from the Northern Shoshone and other Plains tribes. Recent work at the Craig Sandrocks petroglyph site, located on the Yampa River in northwestern Colorado, recorded a group of previously unpublished horse images that appear to be stylistically more like those of the Green River Basin. These horses indicate that in Historic times this part of northwestern Colorado was heavily used by Northern Plains tribes.

INTRODUCTION

The Historic period rock art of western Colorado (Figure 1) is dominated by horse and rider images drawn by Ute and Navajo artists during the period from the early 1600s through the late 1800s (Cole 1990:201–251; Schaafsma 1980:302–341). These drawings characterize the latest rock art styles of the Colorado Plateau region (see Figure 2, left column), and some typical Ute imagery extends northward into the southern Green River basin of extreme southwestern Wyoming (Keyser and Poetschat 2008).

However, despite the occurrence of late Historic Ute rock art in the southern Green River Basin, most of that region's historic period petroglyphs are horses, riders, and combat scenes more typical of Plains styles than of the nearby Colorado Plateau imagery (Keyser and Poetschat 2005, 2008; Keyser et al. 2004; Loendorf and Olsen 2003; Tanner 1991, 2002; Tanner and Vlcek 1995). These Green River Basin scenes (Figure 2, middle column) are dominated by explicit Biographic narratives illustrating detailed coup-counting and horse-raiding episodes (e.g., Keyser 2004; Keyser and Poetschat 2005:22–53,

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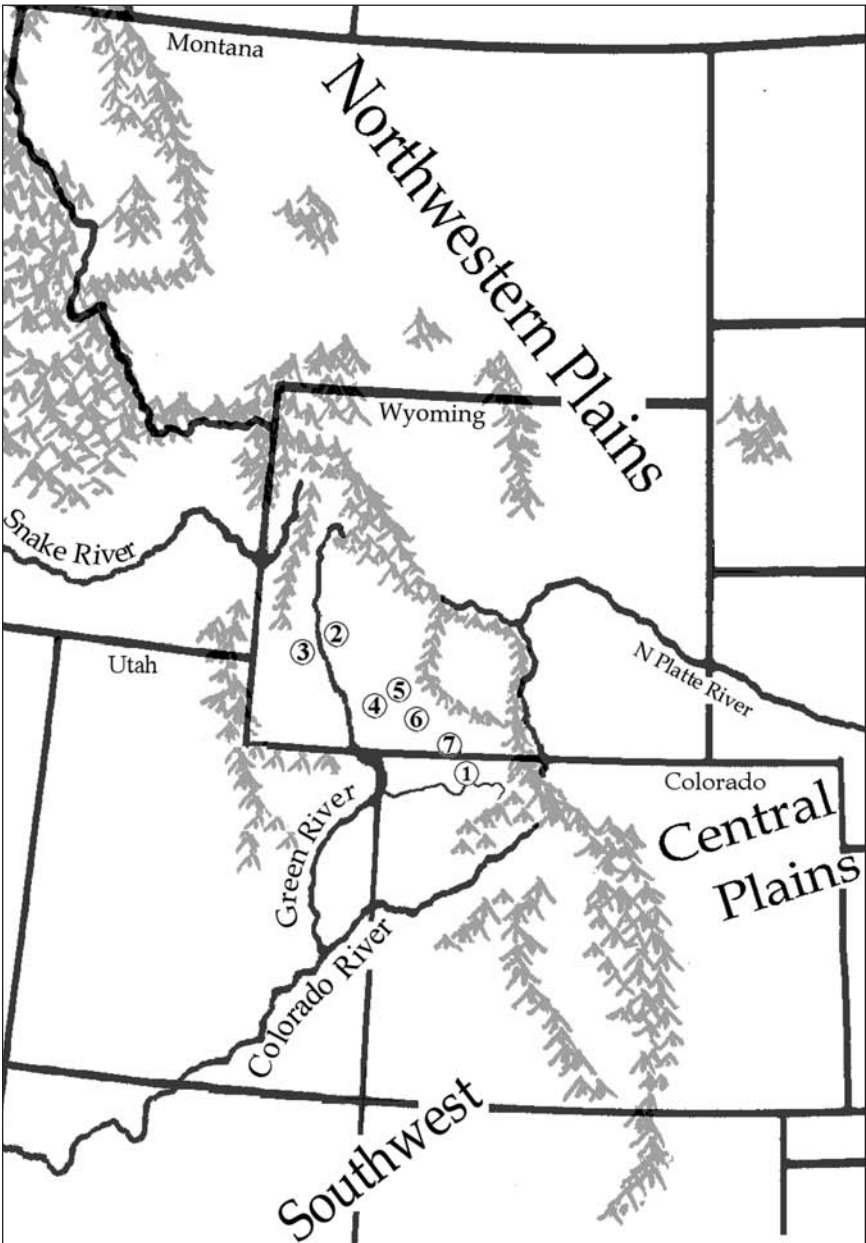


FIGURE 1. The Craig Sandrocks site is located on the Yampa River in the southernmost Green River Basin of northwestern Colorado. Sites are 1, Craig Sandrocks; 2, La Barge Bluffs; 3, Names Hill; 4, White Mountain; 5, Pine Canyon; 6, Tolar; 7, Powder Wash.

65–71, 86–90; Keyser et al. 2004) complete with the fully developed conventions and attention to detail that characterize typical Plains Biographic art (Keyser 1987; Keyser and Klassen 2001). In contrast, most Historic period









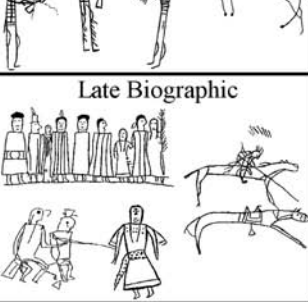
<p>Colorado Plateau</p> <p>Uncompahgre</p> 	<p>Green River Basin</p> <p>Uncompahgre</p> 	<p>Uncompahgre</p> <p>1000 B.C. to A.D. 1000</p>	
<p>Early Historic Ute</p> 	<p>Verdigris</p> 	<p>Seedskaadee</p> 	<p>Protobiographic</p> <p>A.D. 1650 to A.D. 1750</p>
<p>Late Historic Ute</p> 	<p>Early Biographic</p> 		<p>Biographic</p> <p>A.D. 1750 to A.D. 1850</p>
<p>Shoshone Biographic</p> 	<p>Late Biographic</p> 		<p>A.D. 1850 to A.D. 1880</p>

FIGURE 2. Comparison of rock art on the northern Colorado Plateau with that of the neighboring Green River Basin. Names within boxes denote published named styles, titles in the right column are named rock art traditions with general dates (see Keyser and Poetschat 2005, 2008 for more detailed discussion and comparison of traditions and styles in these areas).

Colorado Plateau rock art is the less explicit Biographic art of both Early and Late Historic Ute styles, which primarily show horses (with and without riders) that are rarely if ever arrayed in truly narrative scenes. Although biographic (in that the drawings appear to show stolen horses) they almost never use the conventions of Plains Biographic art, and only infrequently show the detail of weaponry and horse tack that characterizes Plains art.

The only exception to this generalization that is so far published is an intricate Biographic composition near Glenwood Springs, Colorado (less than 70 miles south of Craig), that shows horse tracks, postures, a fortification pit, and stacked weapons—all typical Plains Biographic tradition conventions. Due in part to its intricate narrative structure, Cole (1990:219–222) identifies this as Shoshone Biographic art (Figure 2).

Thus, the best available rock art evidence indicates that during the Historic period, Green River Basin symbolism was more like that of the Northwestern Plains than the neighboring Colorado Plateau. This is likely due to the position of the Green River Basin as the “Crossroads of the Continent” (Keyser and Poetschat 2005:3–14) where influences from the Plains were dominant throughout much of the contact period. Given this scenario, it should come as no surprise, then, that Plains-type Historic period imagery would be found in extreme northwestern Colorado, especially where the southern Green River Basin occupies a small part of the state (Figure 1). In fact, this conclusion was first suggested by Sally Cole (1990:213–222) who identified a Late Shoshone rock art style that appeared to her to be more like the Ceremonial and Biographic art found to the east on the Plains than that she had defined as Ute styles. Recent fieldwork at the Craig Sandrocks site (5MF4306), conducted by the author during and immediately after the May 2007 Colorado Rock Art Association (CRAA) meeting, supports this thesis and provides some outstanding examples of Historic period Plains-style horse and rider scenes that will be of interest to rock art scholars in both the Plains and Colorado Plateau.

THE SITE

The Craig Sandrocks site, 5MF4306, is located on the north edge of the city of Craig, Colorado, where prominent sandstone bluffs form rimrocks that bound the north side of the floodplain of the Yampa River, a first-order tributary of the Green River with its confluence approximately 75 miles to the west. The site has long been known in the rock art literature (Cole 1990:104; Collins and Walker 2000; McKern 1983; Naze 1997) but has never been carefully studied nor have most of the images been accurately traced. The site consists entirely of petroglyphs, incised and pecked into the soft sandstone rimrocks. Images are found in several clusters scattered along nearly 500 meters of cliff face, including the sides of a large cleft near the east end of the site that can be relatively easily climbed to access the bluff top. Images are scattered from present ground level to nearly three meters above this level in one area. Historic graffiti, spanning a century from the early 1900s until today, mars most of the panels and bullet scars damaging several major figures attest to the fact that the site has served as a target range for vandals armed with high-powered rifles.

Images at the site include numerous bear tracks, several animal figures including bear and elk, horses, weapons, a tipi, and humans of various types including shield bearing warriors, V-neck humans, and rectangular body figures. Some of the bear tracks and associated imagery may be related to Cole's (1990) Uncompahgre style. Near the western end of the site are two large, incised, ghost-like figures that Cole (1990:96–108) classifies as part of her Late Prehistoric period “Interior Line” style that she dates to between AD 1 and AD 1000. These two figures are the only images from the site so far illustrated in the rock art literature (Cole 1990:104).

Given the complexity of the imagery at 5MF4306 and the existence of several different styles at this one site, full recording of the petroglyphs there should be undertaken. As a start to this, I traced approximately a dozen images (in seven compositions) at the site in May 2007 and report them here and in another recent article (Keyser 2008). Following this research my tracings have been provided to the CRAA archives in Fort Collins, Colorado.

HORSES AT CRAIG SANDROCKS

Because of limited time to do these tracings, coupled with my current interest in Historic period rock art in the Green River Basin and elsewhere (e.g., Keyser 2007; Keyser and Poetschat 2005, 2008; Keyser et al. 2004), my work at 5MF4306 focused on the horse and rider imagery at the site. With the help of Bill Lawrence, who provided a copy of the site form, and Mavis and John Greer, who assisted in locating all of the images, I was able to record the seven horses drawn at the site and the riders or other images associated directly with four of them.

The “horse and rider” imagery at Craig Sandrocks occurs in three areas in the east-central part of the site. Four images are carved on an extensive panel near the site's center and a fifth is carved only a few meters to the east. The other two horses are incised on the northeast side of the large cleft in the cliff more than 100 meters east of the main central panel. These horses and riders at this site are unique for the rock art so far reported from western Colorado, but fit quite well within the rock art known from the Green River Basin. The horses themselves show a distinct stylistic progression from an early, square-bodied form like those characteristic of the Protohistoric period Verdigris style in the Green River Basin (Keyser and Poetschat 2005:29) to various mature-style forms identical to those commonly illustrated throughout the Northwestern Plains, including the Green River Basin, from the late 1700s to the mid 1800s (Keyser and Poetschat 2005:46, 58, 88, 97, 100, 2008; Keyser et al. 2004:136–141). These mature-style horses are simple but elegantly elongated animals with long necks, long legs, flowing tails, and small heads—all attributes that accentuate a horse's speed and grace. Hooves are usually shown as small hooks or C-shapes to indicate the animal's unique one-toed track. Occasionally other animals are drawn in a similar mature style, as is one bear at this site.¹

As is typical throughout the Northwestern Plains, these later mature-style horses show a variety of anatomical details and horse tack that clinch their

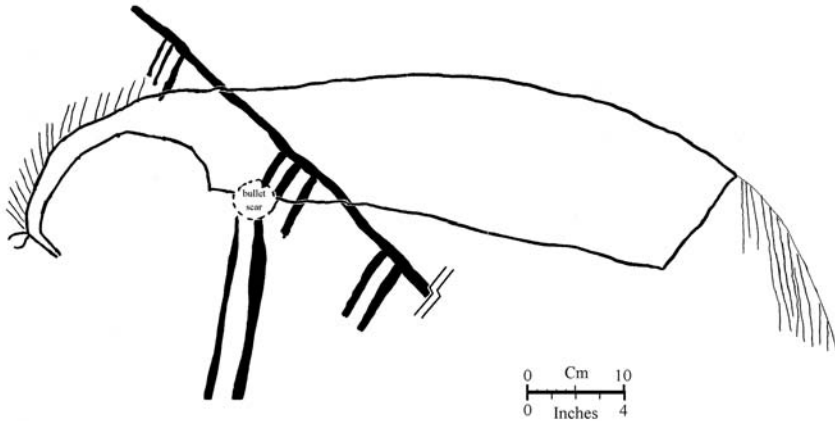


FIGURE 3. Horse 1 at Craig Sandrocks. Note the scratched mane and tail. Heavy diagonal solid line indicates large spear superimposed by horse (note that spear continues to lower right but is not shown here). Two heavy vertical lines at the front legs are tool grooves.

identification as horses. Each horse at Craig Sandrocks is described below from west to east as they are encountered in the three areas of the site.

Horse 1

This mature-style animal (Figure 3), carefully incised with an elongate body, arched neck, and small head, would be difficult to positively identify as a horse were it not for the lightly scratched mane and tail, almost certainly added by a later artist. The animal—the largest at the site, measuring nearly a meter from head to tail—has no legs of its own, although two much more deeply cut “tool grooves” at its forequarters clearly suggest front legs. The horse is superimposed on a large lance, which has groups of pendant lines spaced along its length.

The horse has two distinct ears, carved in lines similar to those composing the body, a long arched neck, a too-small, open-nosed head, and an elongate, boxy body. All of these lines are of similar depth and width, suggesting that they were carved with the same instrument, all at one time. In much more lightly scratched lines, a (presumably) second artist has added a distinct mane and feathery tail. As originally drawn, the arched neck, elongated body, and prominent ears would suggest a horse (though if the ears were seen as horns the animal could possibly instead be identified as a pronghorn) but the addition of mane and tail clinch the identification. Whether the two long incisions at the position normally occupied by the front legs were intentionally incorporated into the drawing cannot be determined, but since there has been no effort to modify these into obvious horse’s legs (e.g., by the addition of hooves) or to add rear legs, this seems unlikely.

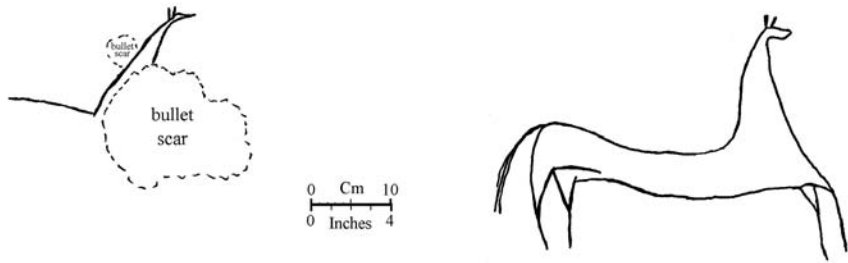


FIGURE 4. Horses 2 (left) and 3 at Craig Sandrocks. Note bullet scars on Horse 2.

Horse 2

Drawn below and slightly to the right of Horse 1 and less than 40 cm directly to the left of Horse 3, this animal is a typical “shorthand” mature-style horse showing part of the back, a highly arched neck, prominent ears, and a small head (Figure 4). A bullet scar has damaged any front quarters that the animal would originally have had. The form of this animal is typical of horses drawn in shorthand form throughout Northwestern Plains rock art, and despite the lack of mane, its sleek shape enables its identification as a horse by comparison with dozens of similarly drawn others found at numerous Plains sites (Keyser 1977:73, 2005:30, 2007:11–13; Keyser and Klassen 2001:231, 236, 245). Such “head and neck” horse depictions are common in both rock art and ledger art, where they are used to indicate stolen animals.

Horse 3

Drawn just to the right (east) of Horse 2 is a classic mature-style, riderless horse, shown with prominent erect ears, an elongate body, long sleek legs, an arched neck, and a flowing tail (Figure 4). Although it has no mane, this animal’s identification is certainly based on the constellation of other characteristics. Such portrayals are among the most common images in Historic period Biographic art found throughout the Plains and Green River Basin, usually signifying horses stolen from enemy camps (Keyser 1977:73, 1987:49, 55; Keyser and Klassen 2001:232, 263).

Horse 4

The last of the four horses found in this area of the site is the most complex example found at 5MF4306 (Figure 5). Carrying a V-neck rider who spears an enemy shield bearing warrior, this horse is a typical early mature-style animal, with two eyes on the same side of its head, prominent ears, a mane, flowing tail, and small, C-shaped, hooked hooves at the end of noticeably too-short legs. The horse’s tail, with lines flowing only from the underside of the main branch, is stylistically identical to the tail added to Horse 1. The similarities of tail and mane strongly suggest that the artist who drew this animal also added the lightly scratched mane and tail to elaborate Horse 1.

The tack worn by Horse 4 is very detailed. A headstall is indicated by a line about two-thirds of the way up the head, drawn perpendicular to its long

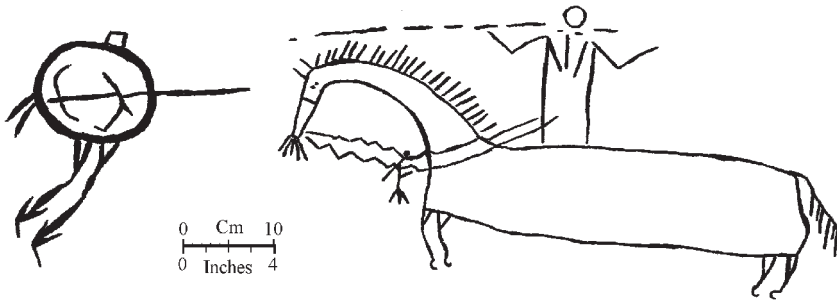


FIGURE 5. Horse 4 at Craig Sandrocks is part of a detailed Biographic coup count scene. Note hightop moccasins on shield bearing warrior to left and horse accoutrements including decorated bit and “lightning” rein.

axis. Five lines dependent from the horse’s nose indicate a scalp- (or less likely, feather-) decorated bit (Keyser and Mitchell 2001). Two zigzag, lightning reins extend from the bit back across the horse’s lower neck to the rider’s body. Dangling from these reins is a small, somewhat crudely drawn anthropomorph, apparently representing some sort of human effigy figure and possibly suspended there as war medicine. This figure, incised with exactly the same sort of lines as the rest of the horse, rider, and tack, and much smaller than any of the other human images at the site, appears to be best explained as some sort of effigy figure rather than an actual human.

The V-neck rider, whose head is quite faint (possibly from cattle rubbing against the panel), is shown in front view atop the profile horse, in a depiction common to Early Biographic-style imagery (Ewers 1968:7–9; Keyser 1987:45–48, see also Figure 2). Both arms are held outward from opposite sides of the body and posed with elbows bent and hands held up. This warrior holds a spear in his forward arm, pointed toward his pedestrian enemy. Rather than being held, the reins terminate at the rider’s body.

The shield-bearing opponent carries a large, but less than full-body-sized, shield decorated with a version of bison horn heraldry and two feathers or streamers pendant to one side. This warrior wears high-top moccasins that typically identify enemy Pawnee warriors (Keyser 1996:36) and thrusts his spear toward the mounted rider.

Horse 5

Arranged in a schematic biographic scene (Figure 6) composed of images incised with deep, wide lines, Horse 5 is a crudely drawn, rectangular-body animal with a simple rectangular-body rider. The horse has four legs, each with a small ball-shaped hoof, a flowing tail, and an odd U-shaped head whose upward pointed ends form two upright ears. The rider, whose short arms extend straight out from each shoulder, perpendicular to the body, has a small dot head. The horse wears no tack and the rider neither carries a weapon nor wears any regalia. This simple horse would be unrecognizable were it not for its rider, but it and the sketchy human are nearly identical to several Verdigris-style

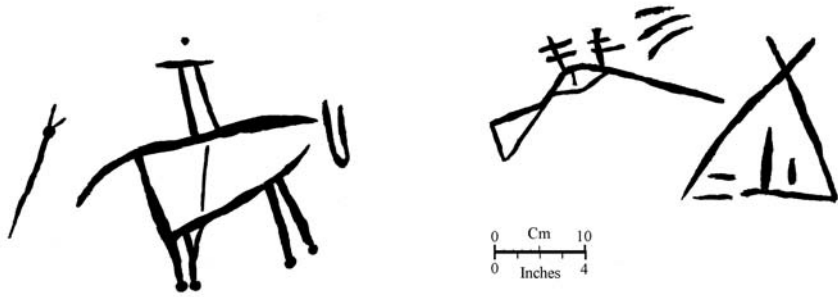


FIGURE 6. Biographic scene involving Horse 5 at Craig Sandrocks. Note flintlock with double hammers and tipi at right.

horses and riders (Figures 2, 7b, e) drawn in Protobiographic scenes at La Barge Bluffs (48LN1640), only 180 miles northwest of Craig (Figure 1) in the northern Green River Basin (Keyser and Poetschat 2005:29)

One narrow line incised diagonally across the horse's body is not identifiable—and may not even belong as part of this composition. Likewise, behind the horse is a long line and dot whose identification and association with the scene cannot be determined.

The horse and rider appear to be approaching a triangular tipi that has a gun pointed toward it. The tipi is a wide, stubby triangular form with crossed poles at the top formed by the extended lines forming the sides of the figure. Three lines within the tipi could represent a door and possibly decorative elements. Tipis in Protobiographic and Biographic tradition art are frequently shown in this simple manner (Keyser and Klassen 2001:233, 234, 254; Keyser and Mitchell 2000:27), and a nearly identical example is found at La Barge Bluffs (Figure 7a) on the same panel as the rectangular body horses that resemble the one in this scene (Keyser and Poetschat 2005:29, 54).

The gun, pointing at the tipi but not showing any obviously discharged bullet, shows a distinct butt stock, trigger and trigger guard, and two flintlock hammers, each clearly showing the clamp that holds a flint. Three lines just above the barrel may be flying bullets or a muzzle blast(s), indicative of weapon discharge. Given the attention to detail in Biographic art (cf, Keyser and Klassen 2003), the double hammers almost certainly indicate a double-barreled flintlock weapon. Other rock art flintlocks (Figures 7f, 8) are equally detailed (Keyser 1977:64, 76, 1987:59, 68), but this is the only known example that shows a double-barreled weapon.

Double-barreled long guns were not common among the Plains Indians, but there are both ethnohistoric records and archaeological finds of such weapons, including shotguns (Scott et al. 1989:182). Such guns, used throughout the 1700s and 1800s, were often cheap Belgian examples sent to America as Indian trade guns. They were also occasionally found among the Mountain Men (Rudy 2008) and thus could easily have passed into Indian hands in this area.

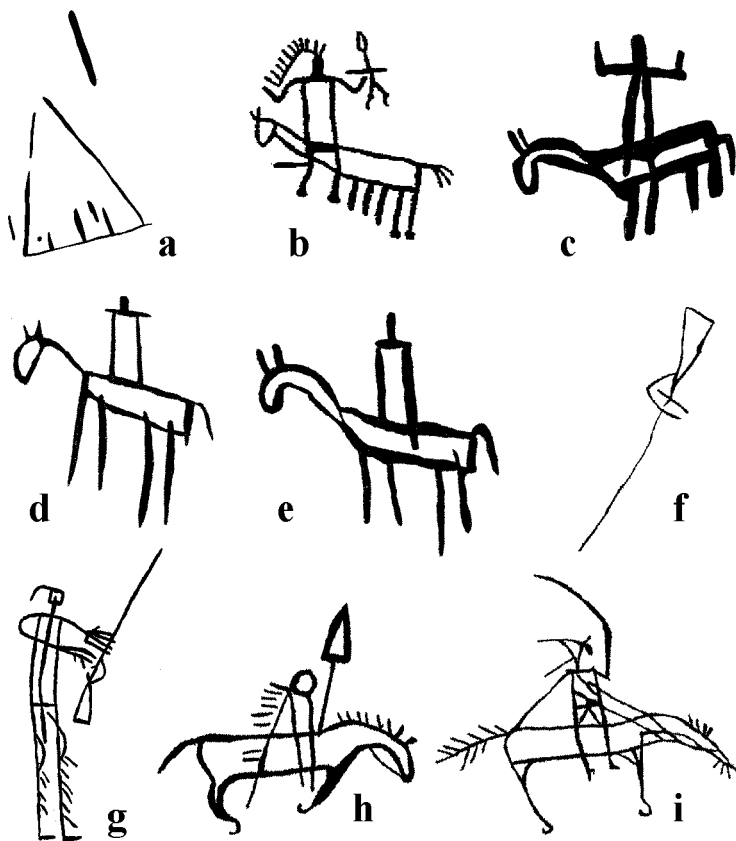


FIGURE 7. Figures from other Green River Basin sites similar to those found with Horses 5 and 6 at Craig Sandrocks. a, tipi, La Barge Bluffs; b–e, horses and riders, La Barge Bluffs; f, flintlock, La Barge Bluffs; g, warrior, Pine Canyon; h, i, horses, White Mountain.

Horse 6

Horse 6, a well-drawn mature-style animal, has four hooked hooves, two large upright ears, a long arching neck, a distinct mane, and a long flowing single line tail (Figure 9). What may be a brand is incised on its right hip. The legs are bent in a unique running posture and the animal has a tall, rectangular-body rider. This human figure has no arms, a squarish head, and a long scalp lock. The rider holds neither weapon nor reins.

Just below and slightly in front of the horse is a simple mature-style bear, identified by three-clawed feet, short erect ears, and an open, slightly upturned snout. The bear's rear leg is extended forward under the body, apparently to portray a running posture similar to that of the horse. There is a long line, probably a spear, stuck vertically from above into the animal's hind quarters. This weapon appears to have been thrown or thrust by the rider drawn just above.

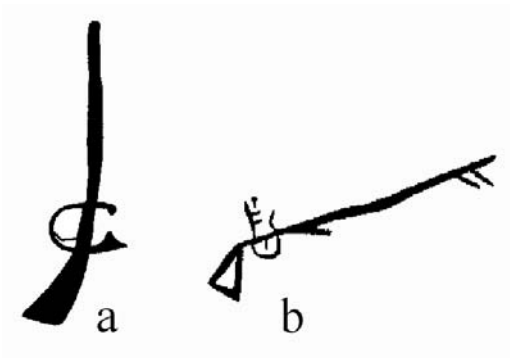


FIGURE 8. Flintlock guns from other Plains sites. a, Writing-On-Stone, Alberta; b, Castle Butte, Montana.

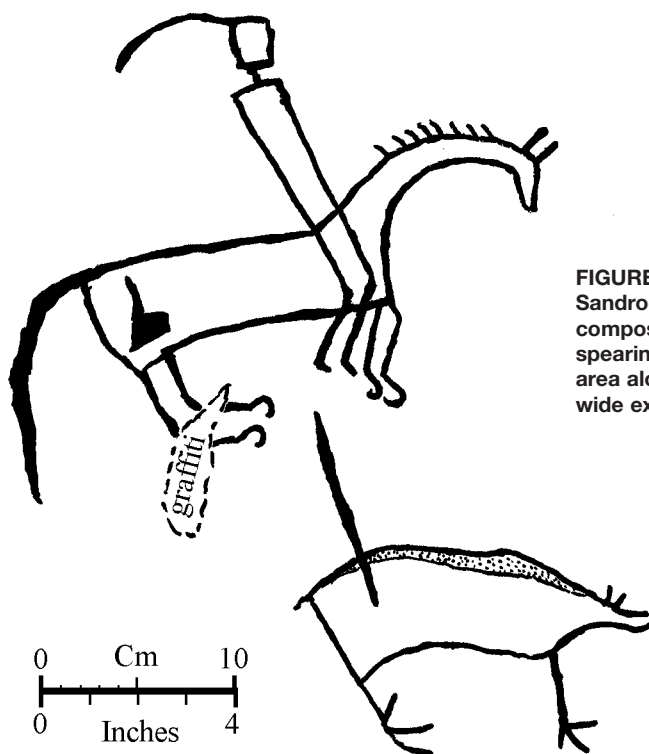


FIGURE 9. Horse 6 at Craig Sandrocks is part of a composition showing the spearing of a bear. Stippled area along bear's back is wide extension of groove.

The human figure here, with elongate, rectangular body, and especially the squarish head with flowing scalp lock, is quite similar to the central of three human figures arrayed in a combat scene at Pine Canyon (Figure 7g), in the central Green River Basin (Figure 1), about 100 miles northwest of Craig (Keyser et al. 2004:138). This horse and Horse 7 closely resemble several Early Biographic-style horses (Figures 2, 7h, i) drawn at the White Mountain petroglyphs (Figure 1).

Horse 7

This is a single mature-style horse, approximately the same size as, and located quite near, Horse 6. The animal has a long arching neck, prominent ears, a mane, and flowing single-line tail (Figure 10). The legs, though lacking hooves, are both extended underneath the body in a running posture much like that shown on Horse 6. A large zigzag design on the horse's right hip may be a brand but later graffiti cannot be ruled out. One vertical line across the horse's body just behind the right shoulder may indicate the margin of a pad saddle or saddle blanket.

This horse is sufficiently similar in form and size to the nearby Horse 6 that I suggest they were both drawn by the same artist.

COMPARISON AND INTERPRETATION

Several lines of evidence enumerated below show that the horses drawn at Craig Sandrocks, and the scenes in which some of these participate, are obviously more closely related to Northwestern Plains/Green River Basin Biographic tradition imagery than they are to any horses and riders currently known in Colorado Plateau rock art.

Compositions

Three Craig Sandrocks horses are part of obviously Biographic tradition compositions. The earliest of these appears to be Horse 5, a block-body animal with simple, sketchy rectangular-body rider, associated with a simply illustrated tipi and a detailed double-barreled flintlock gun (Figure 6). The action in this scene is more stiff and static than that characteristic of later Biographic narratives, although the three short lines above the flintlock may be a narrative convention indicating muzzle blast or flying projectiles. The horse and rider are almost iconically "posed" rather than actively galloping into the fray or wielding a weapon, and the gun floats next to the tipi in a symbolic portrayal of

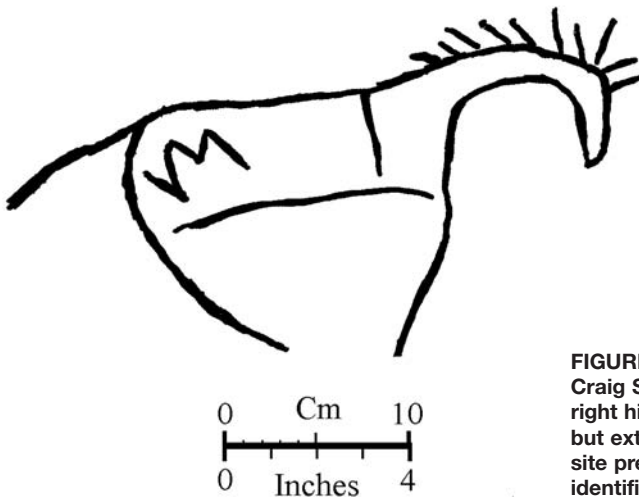


FIGURE 10. Horse 7 at Craig Sandrocks. Mark on right hip may be a brand, but extensive graffiti at the site precludes positive identification.

attacking the structure or counting coup on it. This depiction is quite similar in its basic structure to one that includes nearly identical horses and riders at La Barge Bluffs (Keyser and Poetschat 2005:24). Such scenes have been designated the Protobiographic rock art tradition (Keyser and Poetschat 2005:137–155) and dated to the earliest phase of horse and rider rock art on the Northwestern Plains (Figure 2, middle column). The presence of a flintlock in this scene suggests an early date and suggests that this scene was likely carved in a 50-year period spanning the last half of the 1700s. This suggested date is somewhat later than other Protobiographic horses and riders throughout the Green River Basin (Keyser and Poetschat 2005:145–155), but it is consistent with a few scenes elsewhere on the Plains that show Verdigris-style images associated with the first guns.

Horses 4 and 6 are drawn in simple Biographic compositions—one showing warfare and the other an attack on a bear. Both horses and the bear are fully developed Early Biographic, mature-style animals, suggesting they date to the early to mid 1800s—an assessment supported by the shield carried by the pedestrian opponent of the rider on Horse 4. Using a formula developed to assess the size of shields relative to the height of the person carrying them (Keyser 2009), this shield measures between 27 and 33 inches in diameter, exactly the size illustrated in use by pedestrian warriors as late as 1840 as shown in portraits by Catlin and Bodmer (Catlin 1973:Vol. I: facing 188, Vol. II: facing 69, 75, 188; Thomas and Ronnefeldt 1976:217) and a few bison robe illustrations from this period (Schuster 1987:31; Thomas and Ronnefeldt 1976:17).

The composition in which Horse 4 participates (Figure 5) is a classic Biographic tradition combat scene, in which the mounted man appears to be killing or counting coup on his pedestrian opponent. The position of the pedestrian's legs and feet indicate either running or falling, both of which are used in Biographic art to indicate the loser in a fight (Keyser 1987:63; Keyser and Klassen 2003:12). Likewise, the simple form of this figure, who has only a barely recognizable shield design and high-top moccasins, suggests that he is not the victorious artist, but instead the vanquished enemy. In contrast, the horse is well detailed with carefully drawn tack, legs, and tail—just the sort of décor for a victor's mount. These details are consistent with those of numerous other victorious warrior artists' horses drawn in rock art, robe art, and ledger art (e.g., Afton et al. 1997; Berlo 1996; Maurer 1992; Keyser and Klassen 2001; Keyser and Mitchell 2001).

The other scene, including Horse 6, shows an obvious encounter with a bear, which has apparently been speared (Figure 9). The horse and bear are almost certainly drawn by the same artist to form a composition, but its specific meaning is less certain. It may simply be a hunting scene, since such were occasionally drawn as Biographic compositions throughout the history of Biographic art (Keyser 1977:71; Keyser and Klassen 2001:231; Petersen 1968:50, 60), but I think it more likely that it indicates a coup counted on this animal. For many Plains tribes, attacking such dangerous carnivores (specifically bears and mountain lions) was equated with attacking a human enemy and such scenes were illustrated as coups (Keyser 2004:101). Given the fact that

bears were invested with significant supernatural power in most Plains societies, and thus not often hunted for economic reasons, I suggest that this encounter was illustrated as a coup count.

Dating

The horses at Craig Sandrocks represent Protobiographic and Early Biographic-style animals and appear to date from the late 1700s to the mid 1800s. Horse 5, whose stylization indicates a Protobiographic origin, is juxtaposed in a scene with a flintlock gun, which implies a date after AD 1775. The pedestrian shield warrior and V-neck rider on Horse 4 in another scene also suggest a similarly early date about 1800. Horse 6 could have been drawn any time in the first half of the 1800s, but stylistic development chronicled at La Barge Bluffs and Names Hill in the northern Green River Basin (Keyser and Poetschat 2005:138–139) suggests that some native Green River Basin artists were drawing both horses and humans with significantly more realism from the 1850s onward.

Stylistic Comparison

Based on both style and content, more than half of the horses and humans at Craig Sandrocks show their greatest affinities to rock art elsewhere in the Green River Basin (and thus, ultimately, to that of the Northwestern Plains—see Keyser and Poetschat 2005) than they do to pictographs and petroglyphs of the Colorado Plateau (cf. Figure 2). Initially, all these images are deeply incised petroglyphs—like those at nearly a dozen sites in the central and northern Green River Basin (including those discussed above)—rather than charcoal-drawn pictographs that are more typical of Ute and Shoshone Biographic styles that dominate the Historic period rock art found on the Colorado Plateau south and west of Craig (Cole 1990:219–243) and also in significant quantities north of Craig in the Powder Wash area (Keyser and Poetschat 2008).

Manufacturing technique aside, however, Horses 4, 6, and 7—each showing fully developed hooked hooves and mature-style form with emphasized mane, and one who sports detailed tack—simply *look* more like Northwestern Plains/Green River Basin animals (Keyser 1977; Keyser and Klassen 2001; Keyser and Poetschat 2005) than they do those of the Colorado Plateau (cf., Castleton 1984:174–175; Cole 1990:221, 230, 231; Keyser and Poetschat 2008; see also Figures 2 and 7h, i). Across the Colorado Plateau, the great majority of horses (more than 80 percent at Powder Wash, the only complex of sites so far analyzed in detail) are simpler and less detailed in both anatomical features and tack than these three animals at Craig Sandrocks. In fact, for Colorado Plateau horses, only decorated bits and simple bridle reins have so far been recorded as horse tack, and there are no hooked hooves illustrated on any typical Colorado Plateau animal.² In contrast, lightning reins, a wide variety of decorated bits, hooked hooves, and emphasized manes (Figure 7h, i) are characteristic of Green River Basin and Northwestern Plains horse depictions (Keyser 1977, 1987; Keyser and Klassen 2001; Keyser and Mitchell 2001; Keyser and

Poetschat 2005:46, 88; Keyser et al. 2004:136–141; Loendorf and Olsen 2003).

Lightning reins like those clearly illustrated on Horse 4 are so far known at only six other Plains/Green River Basin rock art sites (Figure 11)³ and in a few Plains ledger and robe art drawings. The rock art sites—Joliet (24CB402), No Water (48WA2066), Tolar (48SW13375), Boxelder Creek, Box Canyon, and Picketwire—are located from the central Green River Basin out onto the Plains and from central Montana to southeastern Colorado (Keyser and Klassen 2001:32; Keyser and Mitchell 2001:203; Keyser and Poetschat 2009; Loendorf and Olson 2003:6–7; Stewart 1992). The nearest of these is 100 miles to the north at the Tolar site, and this image is quite reliably attributed to a Comanche artist (Keyser et al. 2004; Loendorf and Olsen 2003; Schuster 1987). Others at Joliet and No Water appear to be Crow drawings (Keyser and Poetschat 2009). The ledger drawings using this motif are by Comanche, Hidatsa, and probably Arapaho artists, all of which are Plains tribes, among whom lightning symbolism is widespread as an indicator of supernatural power and speed—symbols often applied to horses. I can find no example of this symbolism on any other horse from the Colorado Plateau region or Navajo territory in the Four Corners area (e.g., Castleton 1984; Cole 1990; Schaafsma 1975, 1980).

Decorated halters like that on Horse 4 (Figure 5) are likewise more typ-

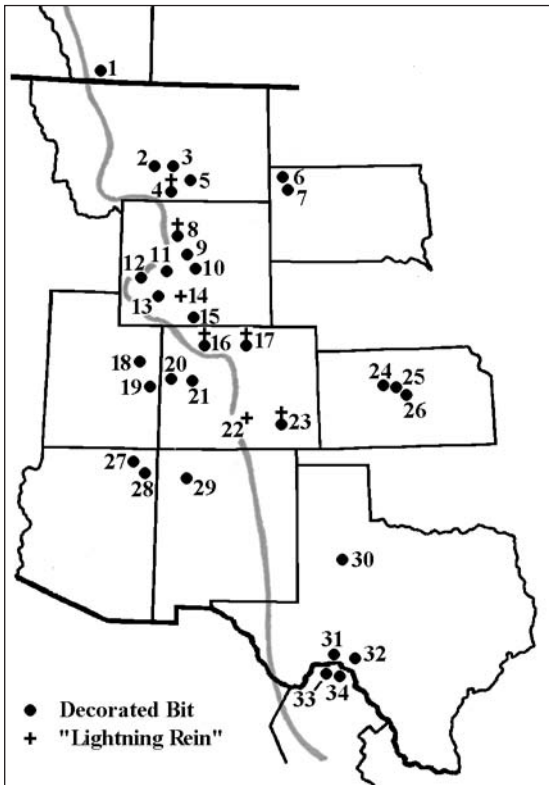


FIGURE 11. Distribution of decorated bits (dot) and "lightning" reins (+) in rock art of western North America (see Note 3 for identification of sites). Grey line demarcates approximate boundary of Plains (to east) with Colorado Plateau and Southwest to west.

ical of Plains rock art than that of the Colorado Plateau or Southwest. Although a few examples do occur in these latter two areas (Figure 11), this motif in all its variations is clearly more common across the Plains (Keyser and Mitchell 2001).

Hooked hooves, seen on Horses 4 and 6 (Figures 5, 8), are characteristic of Plains/Green River Basin rock art. Examining horses in all of the easily accessible published literature for the Colorado Plateau and Four Corners area of the Southwest (e.g., Brugge 1976, 1999; Cole 1990; Castleton 1984; Kolber 2001; Schaafsma 1980), I cannot find any example in these areas with such hoof treatment. The only reference to possible hooked hooves in Navajo rock art is a statement by Brugge (1999:33) stating that “Painted horses . . . hooves may be in the footprint perspective.” However, close examination of all the published horse images in this article and others, shows only ball feet—another way of showing hoofprint perspective. Such ball foot depictions occur here at Craig Sandrocks and at other sites across the Plains (Keyser and Klassen 2001:19, 225, 236).

The shield decoration, high-top moccasins, and V-neck style of the rider mounted on Horse 4 also more closely resemble Green River Basin/Northwestern Plains rock art rather than that of the Colorado Plateau. All three of these stylistic traits are so characteristic as to be diagnostic of Plains Ceremonial and Biographic tradition rock art (Keyser 1977, 1996; Keyser and Klassen 2001; Keyser and Mitchell 2001), but they do not occur in Historic period Colorado Plateau rock art (e.g., Cole 1990; Keyser and Poetschat 2008).

Finally, the occurrence of two obviously biographic coup count scenes in which Horses 4 and 5 participate (and a probable third involving the bear and Horse 6) suggests that this art is of Plains origin, since the Ute—the Historic period equestrian tribe most frequently associated with the Colorado Plateau (Cole 1990)—reportedly did not participate in the coup-counting complex characteristic of Plains warfare (Smith 1974). Across the Plains, such coup count combat scenes are standard in Biographic tradition art (e.g., Keyser 1987, 2004; Keyser and Klassen 2001) where they often incorporate standard conventions such as the falling or running enemy, floating weapon, muzzle blast or flying projectiles, and highly detailed horse tack that characterize these Craig Sandrocks scenes. However, on the Colorado Plateau such specifically detailed combat scenes are much rarer, as evidenced by Cole’s (1990:219–222) research and the fact that nine sites with Biographic “horse art” at Powder Wash contained only five typical Biographic narrative scenes that obviously represent coup counts (Keyser and Poetschat 2008). Instead of coup-counting scenes, Colorado Plateau Ute artists appear to have focused their Biographic imagery on illustrating horsemen and riderless (probably stolen) horses (Cole 1990; Keyser and Poetschat 2008).

Finally, the attack on the tipi (Figure 6) and the horseman apparently spearing the bear (Figure 9) include images that are nearly identical to examples at other Green River Basin sites (Figure 7a–g). The single rectilinear horse ridden by the simple rectangular-body rider, the tipi, and the flintlock gun are each quite similar to images at La Barge Bluffs (Keyser and Poetschat 2005:29–

30, 54). In addition, the rectangular-body rider of Horse 6, with his squarish head and scalplock, is stylistically very similar to the central of three combatants in a coup count scene at Pine Canyon (Keyser and Poetschat 2005; Keyser et al. 2004:138) and the horse resembles several drawn at the Pine Canyon and White Mountain sites (Figure 7h, i), even including the leg posture (Keyser et al. 2004:136, 141).

In summary, the scenes with Horses 4, 5, and 6 are obviously more closely related to Plains/Green River Basin Biographic rock art than to any known Colorado Plateau rock art, and Horse 7 appears to have been drawn by the same artist as Horse 6, so it probably also represents a Plains artist rather than a Colorado Plateau Ute artist.

The three other Horses (1–3) are so simple that they cannot be readily attributed to any stylistic tradition. The light scratches forming the mane and tail of Horse 1 appear to be patterned after the form of Horse 4, but if so, the body almost certainly is the product of an earlier artist. Both Horses 2 and 3 are so simple that they resemble examples elsewhere on both the Plains and Colorado Plateau (Cole 1990; Keyser 1977; Keyser and Klassen 2001).

Cultural Affiliation

Since a constellation of factors including manufacturing technique, general form for horses and humans, specific details of costume and tack, and the inclusion of several specifically narrative coup-counting scenes suggests that most of these horses were carved by artists affiliated with Plains tribes rather than the Utes of the Colorado Plateau, what tribes might likely be the artists responsible for these images? The Craig area is well within the territory used by Northern Shoshone groups, among whom are those who lived in the Green River Basin prior to their removal to Wyoming's Wind River and Idaho's Fort Hall reservations in the late 1870s. As the sites in the northern Green River Basin attest, these Shoshone people had a well-developed rock art tradition with extensive Biographic narrative imagery (Keyser and Poetschat 2005; Keyser et al. 2004). Shoshone groups occasionally lived as far south as the Yampa River drainage, but even more frequently war parties moved into and through this area of the Colorado Plateau in their quest to capture horses and acquire war honors. War parties in enemy territory are a prime candidate for drawing their own heroic deeds at places enemies would see them—a form of bragging and taunting that was well developed in the Historic Plains coup-counting system (Keyser 2007; Keyser and Poetschat 2008). Pre-existing rock art sites—like Craig Sandrocks—would be ideal targets for such taunting images. That Shoshones could have made rock art in the Craig area is supported by Cole's (1990:219–222) identification of a Shoshone biographic composition about 70 miles south of Craig, near Glenwood Springs.

Comanche artists might also be responsible for some of these drawings—especially Horse 4. A horse with lightning reins whose rider carries a small shield and a Spanish lance at the Tolar site, only 100 miles north of Craig, is almost certainly a Comanche drawing (Keyser et al. 2004; Loendorf and Olsen 2003; Schuster 1987) from the mid 1800s. Although the Comanche were resi-

dent on the southern Plains in Oklahoma and Texas, they ranged widely and, in fact, originally separated from their Shoshone kinsmen somewhere in the Green River Basin sometime just prior to the Historic period. They were some of the earliest horse traders who traveled to the Shoshone Rendezvous from the 1700s onward (Loendorf and Olson 2003). If one or more Comanche artists carved petroglyphs at Tolar, it is certainly possible that one or more others could have carved images at Craig Sandrocks.

Other than Shoshone or Comanche artists, several other Plains tribes raided into or traveled through this area in their quest to obtain war honors and steal horses. Ethnohistoric records document the Sioux and Arapaho raiding into this area of Northwestern Colorado as late as the 1870s (Nadeau 1967:44, 146), and Crow, Flathead, Blackfeet, and Gros Ventres are noted in the Green River Basin and upper Snake River in the Fur Trade period from 1820 to 1840. Cheyenne and Arapaho ledger drawings also show combat with Utes (Berlo 1996:88–89), suggesting that they too ventured into the general area of western Colorado. Artists from any of these tribes moving through the area could have added a few of their own images to a site that had obviously been used by other warriors to record their triumphs.

Interestingly, despite the presence of other Craig Sandrocks imagery that is probably Ute in origin (e.g., bear tracks, a woman's portrait), only Horses 1–3 are possible candidates for Ute images. These are so simple, however, that they could have been done by artists from any group.

SUMMARY

Seven horses are among a dozen images at the Craig Sandrocks site that document the Historic period use of the site by artists drawing Biographic tradition petroglyphs. These horses are more detailed than typical Colorado Plateau examples and several of them are arranged in narrative coup-count scenes characteristic of Plains/Green River Basin rock art rather than that of the Colorado Plateau. These petroglyphs add significantly to our knowledge of rock art in the southern Green River Basin portion of the Colorado Plateau, and suggest that this area was utilized by Shoshones and other Plains warrior artists more frequently than previously suspected.

Stylistic criteria suggest that these Plains warrior artists were using the site throughout the Protohistoric and Early Historic periods—from about A.D. 1750 to approximately 1840. The occurrence of a flintlock gun in one scene with a Protobiographic tradition horse and rider and a very simple tipi may represent one of the earliest recorded instances of this weapon in either the Green River Basin or Colorado Plateau.

Future research should be focused on rock art in the Yampa and White river drainages to assess how far Plains Biographic tradition art extends into the northern Colorado Plateau.

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NOTES

¹ See Dewdney 1964, Keyser 1977, or Keyser and Klassen 2001:231 for a more detailed definition and description of the mature style of rendering horses and other animal figures.

² Hooked hooves have been used to set apart several more Plains-like Powder Wash horses from those obviously related to Colorado Plateau styles (Keyser and Poetschat 2008).

³ The numbered sites in Figure 11 are: 1, Writing-On-Stone; 2, Goffena; 3, 24ML1044; 4, Joliet; 5, Castle Butte; 6, 39HN49; 7, 39HN210; 8, No Water; 9, Cottonwood-Argo; 10, Central Wyoming; 11, Lander; 12, La Barge Bluffs; 13, White Mountain; 14, Tolar; 15, Powder Wash; 16, Craig Sandrocks; 17, Boxelder Creek; 18, Main Canyon; 19, Book Cliffs; 20, 5GF1339; 21, 5GF2; 22, Pinyon Canyon; 23, Box Canyon; 24, 14RU10; 25, 14RU304; 26, 14EW401; 27, Canyon de Chelly; 28, Canyon del Muerto; 29, Chaco Canyon; 30, 41GR282; 31, Ringbit Shelter; 32, Hussie Meyers; 33, El Caido; 34, Arroyo de Los Indios.