

Samuel Cary Evans, Jr. and His Beloved Cogged Stones

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Abstract

Long sequestered effects of Samuel Cary Evans, Jr. (1866-1932) have recently surfaced, many of which relate to the former Riverside, California, mayor's obsessive and quixotic quest to understand the function(s) and meaning(s) of cogged stones. This article introduces the reader to some of these letters, photographs, formal documents, and ephemera.

Introduction

In his younger years, Samuel Cary Evans, Jr. developed a passion for Indianology, this after his gentrified family had arrived in the Riverside area from Indiana. At this time, 1876, Riverside was little more than a few shacks occupied by table grape (raisin) farmers. Local Native peoples, then a familiar sight, piqued the 10 year old's curiosity, and he began to collect Indian artifacts. Eventually, Evans amassed an ethnographic collection¹ that was to form the nucleus of the Riverside Municipal Museum's holdings.

In his later years, S. C. Evans (Figure 1) strove to learn the meaning(s) and purpose(s) of southern California's most celebrated species of Native American artifact, the cogged stone (Figure 2).² Beginning in 1923 and continuing almost to the day he died (Dec. 31, 1932), this four-time mayor of Riverside committed a substantial outlay in time and money to satisfy a curiosity of mind that at the same time might provide documentation of certain beliefs/practices for the edification of anthropological science and that might also preserve for Native posterity what Evans believed

was only recently a relict of traditional culture of California's Mission Indians, people for whom he held an abiding affection. Evans' legacy includes a collection of actual and replicated cogged stones presently curated at the Riverside Municipal Museum, as well provenance data useful for characterizing areal distributions of the enigmatic artifact.

Two articles (Langenwalter and Brock 1984; Woodward 2006) gave quick measure of Evans' obsession with an artifact type whose range of shapes, as it turns out, had been imagined and crafted many millennia before the remembered history of contemporary southern California Native peoples (see e.g., Eberhart 1961; Dixon 1968; Herring 1968; McKinney 1968; Koerper and Mason 1998; Koerper et al. 2006; Underbrink and Koerper 2006). Both articles reported that in 1930 the ex-mayor put together a handbill (Figure 3) explaining his desire to gather information on cogged stones. This 1930 flier, pictured in full by Langenwalter and Brock (1984:Figure 1), was often paired with a circular (see Langenwalter and Brock 1984:Figure 2) in postings as far away as Europe and South Africa.

Absent from either article was any mention of a different handbill that had been produced in 1928 (Figure 4). The first purpose of this article is to document the earlier flier and briefly discuss its contents.

The circumstances leading to the senior author's awareness that a 1928 handbill even existed are

explained. Cogged stone related letters, documents, photographs, newspaper clippings, and a partial draft manuscript (all herein designated as the “Evans Collection”), and other papers had been stored and preserved by Samuel Wayne Evans, one S. C. Evans’ two sons, at the home in which the family had resided since 1905 and where S. W. Evans passed away in 2000. One of us (BM), alarmed that these and other items could become irretrievably lost to Inland Empire history, successfully negotiated their acquisition from Evans’ heirs. In casual conversation between this article’s two authors, a fortuitous reference to S. C. Evans’ acquaintance with a Cahuilla Indian famously known as Fig Tree John (Figures 3-5 and front cover, this *Quarterly* issue) precipitated the senior author’s awareness that a privately held repository of the popular politician’s papers had yet to be tapped.

Another purpose of this article is to share some of these materials from the Evans Collection³ with students of California history and anthropology. This sharing is selective, offering snippets restricted to Samuel C. Evans’ passion for cogged stones and indigenous culture generally.

The 1928 Handbill

The 1928 handbill (Figure 4) emphasized knowledge for knowledge’s sake. Large lettering at the handbill’s upper left (below cut with four cogged stones) solicited assistance for gathering “accurate scientific information.” Just below but in small print are the words “not commercial.” In the final paragraph Evans offered assurances that the research would be “done carefully and not as a financial venture.” Readers of the handbill might easily surmise



Figure 1. S. C. Evans, Jr. (1866-1932) at his desk in Riverside, California, ca. 1920s. Mayor of the city four times (1907-1912, 1922-1926, and elected for a fifth term but died shortly before inauguration), and 39th District state senator serving Riverside and Imperial counties (1916-1921). Evans Collection.

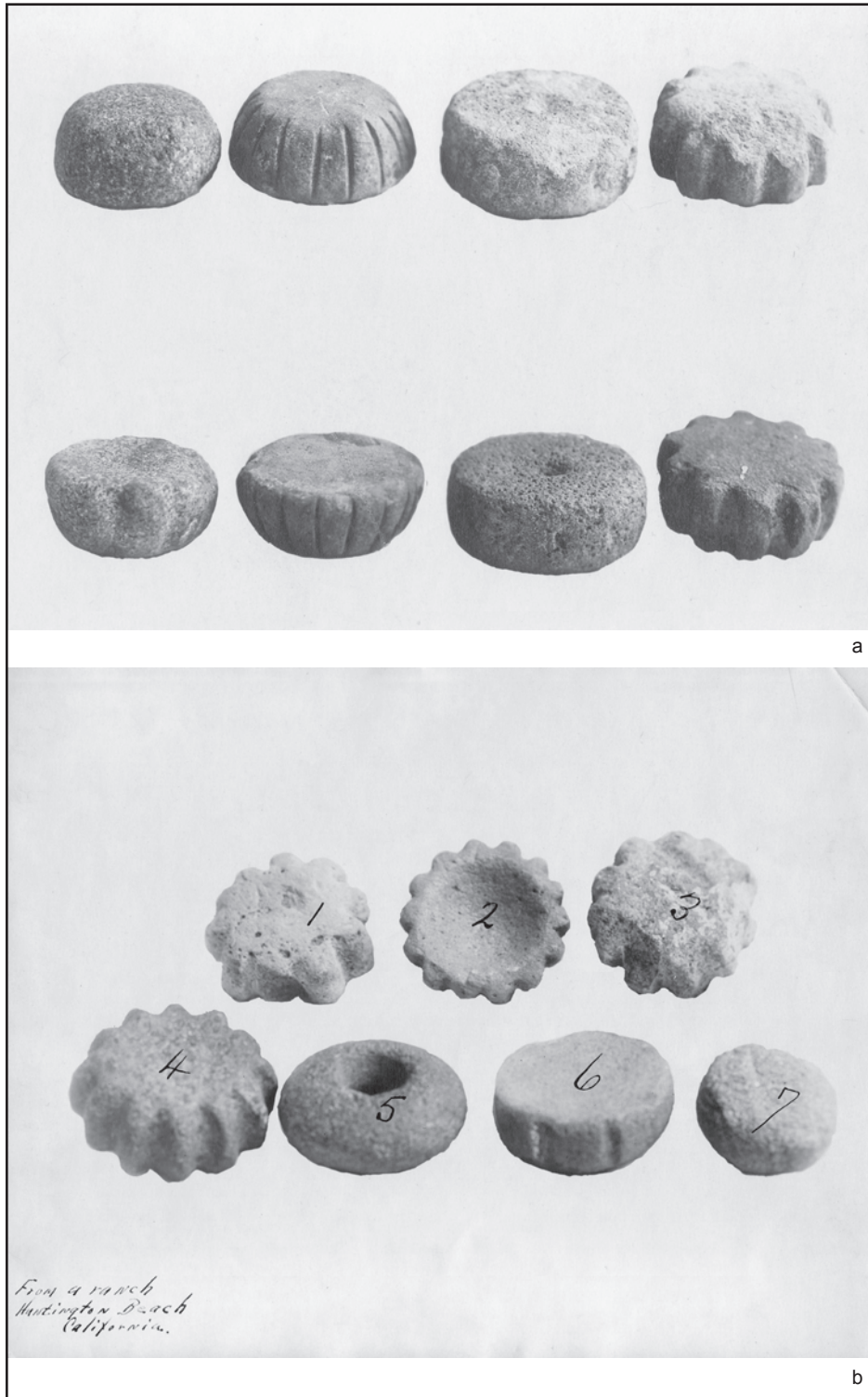


Figure 2. Two of various circulars used by S. C. Evans to promote his research. (a) four ceremonial stones from a private Orange County collection; (b) five cogged stones, a donut stone, and a discoidal found at a Huntington Beach ranch. Evans Collection.

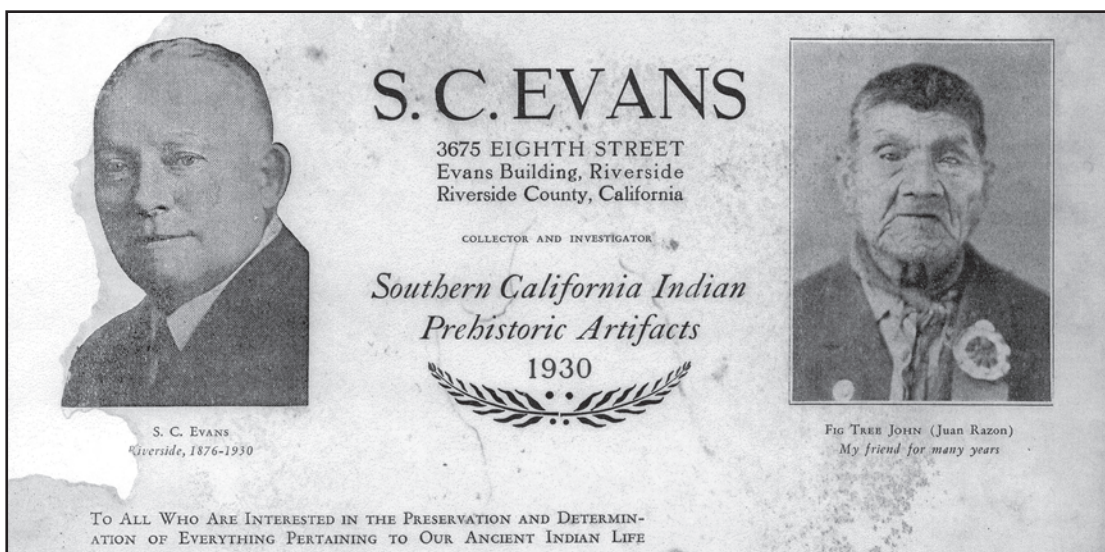
that financial gain fell well outside of Evans' purview since he referenced recent fact-finding efforts involving long-distance travel, activities not commensurate with cost-effectiveness in any trade involving low value antiquities. There was his 1927, 3,000 mile summer odyssey blanketing Arizona and New Mexico as well as visits to far away museums, including the Museum of the American Indian in New York and the Logan Museum, Beloit College, Wisconsin. Evans had perhaps calculated that his credibility would benefit from disclosing that he was himself a collector of Indian artifacts.

Briefly recounted in the 1928 handbill were efforts seeking counsel through interview and/or correspondence with regional Native peoples and with scholars at colleges, universities, and museums. One individual was specifically named, "Prof. E. L. Kroeber" [sic]. Within the Evans Collection are letters of enquiry and of response bearing names of now decades deceased contributors to California anthropology—David Prescott Barrows (UC Berkeley), Edward W. Gifford (Curator, University of California Museum of Anthropology, San Francisco), John P. Harrington (Smithsonian Institution), Mark R. Harrington (Southwest

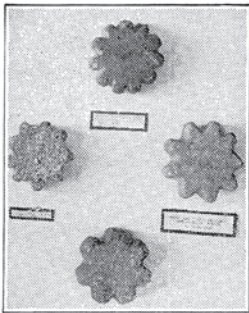
Museum), A. L. Kroeber (UC Berkeley), and W. Egbert Schenck (UC Berkeley).

Parenthetically, the cut in the upper left hand corner of the 1928 flier was lifted from a photograph provided Evans by Dr. Edward C. Bull, a curator at the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art. This cut was not recycled for the 1930 handbill; in its stead Evans substituted his portrait (Figure 3). He relied especially on the circular shown in Langenwalter and Brock (1984:Figure 2) for acquainting potential respondents with the varied shapes of cogged stones.

In addition to the giveaway just noted, other circulars were used. For instance, Evans made a request of a Laguna Beach man, a Mr. Murphy, that he send along "fifty (50) prints of the eight (8) stones which you photographed for me...from you father's collection" (S. C. Evans to Mr. Murphy, letter, 16 January 1929, Evans Collection [copies], PCAS Archives). Only one photographic print in the Evans Collection showed eight images, but with two views of each of four ceremonial objects; perhaps Evans had misspoken, the circular of Figure 2a having been his referent.




3. Top end of 1930 handbill showing S. C. Evans and his "friend for many years," Fig Tree John (Juan Razon). Evans Collection.



INDIAN COGGED STONES
Courtesy Exposition Park Museum
Los Angeles, California

The S. C. Evans
Indian Collection
1877-1928

Evans Block - - 675 Eighth Street
RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA



"FIG TREE JOHN"
Captain Juan Razon
Agua Dulce Tuba Band, Cahuilla Indian
(Deceased)
My friend for many years

To all interested in obtaining accurate scientific information concerning our Mission Indians
(NOT COMMERCIAL)

GREETING:

Some three years ago I commenced the study of the Indian Cogged Stone, per cut shown to the left above. During the summer of 1927 I drove 3000 miles in Arizona and New Mexico. Have been fairly well over the southern counties of California. Have seen the specimens in the Museums of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, at New York; also those in the Academy of Sciences, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco; also those in the Southwest Museum and Exposition Park Museum, Los Angeles; also the one specimen in Pomona College, Claremont, California; also at Balboa Park, San Diego; also from collection of Jonathan Tibbet, and from my own somewhat extensive Indian Collection. These are the only places, so far as I know to date, where this stone is preserved, though I have yet to hear from the Peabody Museum and from Beloit College, which places I am told received some of these stones from California. Also have track of a few private persons who may have one or more specimens.

The Los Angeles Times of April 3, 1923, contains a cut and an article and draws the conclusion of the use of the stone as gears. Three other uses have been told me.

I found a picture of one of these stones, or more probably a nearly allied stone, in the Museum at Deerfield, Mass., and found that the stone (now lost) was purchased at Ward's Store at Rochester, N. Y., but its birthplace is unknown.

I have had photographs made of ALL the known specimens, as above enumerated, and splendid casts have been made of those at San Francisco, and may later be made of the other stones.

I have distributed photographs among the Cahuilla Indians, particularly in Riverside and San Diego Counties. I have known many of these Indians for many years and have often visited them, camped with them, collected from them, attended their games and ceremonies, and been familiar with them and other tribes since 1877.

I have lately pursued a process of elimination, by writing or interviewing a large number of people who have had experience among these and other Indians; and find no information in our Colleges; nor at Santa Barbara, Catalina or Santa Maria; nor do any of the individuals I have seen know anything of the ancient use of this stone to a certainty.

At the start, I procured a letter from Prof. E. L. Kroeber, of the University of California, to the effect that the ancient use of this stone was unknown. Until quite recently I found no authentic trace of this ancient use among our Southern California Indians, when unexpectedly I found two very old Indian women who immediately, without any hesitation and certainly with no time to prepare a story, told me its ancient use, as they knew it. On the same day, and before I saw the two women, I met a man, a part Indian, who told me the same story. Since then one other Indian woman says the same thing. I am about to visit these old Indians again—they may or may not be right, and their version is different from one other excellent authority and acquaintance.

The area of these stones seem so far very well defined, with slight variation, and they are relatively few in number, about ~~35 or so~~ ⁷⁰, more or less, to date.

I am now about to insert a cut and an advertisement in a number of papers to try to find those who may know of further specimens. I intend to print the result in booklet form with photographs of ALL the known stones, and some Indian photos, including these two old Indian women; together with the main correspondence.

This work is being done carefully and not as a financial venture. If interested, or if you have ever seen one of these stones or know where one is, I would appreciate hearing from you. If you have no information and know nothing of this stone, I would appreciate your statement to that effect, so that I may be as sure as possible of the localities in which this stone has so far been found.

References, if requested.
Owner the S. C. Evans Indian Collection

Figure 4. Handbill designed and printed in 1928 and widely broadcast to advance Samuel Evans' cogged stone research. This was Evans' personal copy to which he has penned several edits; for instance, the handbill noted 35 or so known cogged stones, but Evans has overlaid that number with "70." Evans Collection.

Other artifacts photographed for Evans' study and presumably for production of circulars included five cogged stones pictured along with a donut stone and a discoidal (Figure 2b); this arrangement was courtesy of Ida Segerstrom. The objects had all come from a ranch in Huntington Beach. Nine more photographs showing respectively 1, 2, 2, 3, 4, 4, 6, 9, 9, and 11 certain to near certain cogged stones occur in the Evans Collection.

The 1928 handbill points up Evans' association with Indians, particularly Cahuillas. He wrote:

I have distributed photographs among the Cahuilla Indians, particularly in Riverside and San Diego Counties. I have known many of these Indians for many years and have often visited them, camped with them, collected from them, attended their games and ceremonies, and been familiar with them and other tribes since 1877.

Fig Tree John

The Cahuilla association is further pushed by a cut showing the locally famous "Fig Tree John," a.k.a. Captain Juan Razon (Figure 4), a Desert Cahuilla. This same image was recycled for the 1930 handbill (Figure 3). The studio portrait employed for the cut had been placed together with two other photographic poses of Fig Tree John (see Figure 5 and front cover, this issue) and all nestled among the many letters, news clippings, cogged stone photographs, and other items once belonging to S. C. Evans and inherited by son Samuel Wayne. As a side note, one letter reveals that Evans had seen a photograph of Fig Tree John displayed on the dining room mantle at the Caravansary Hotel, Mecca, California (see Figure 6). Evans asked his secretary to enquire as to where a similar portrait might be purchased (M. M. Grip [for S. C. Evans] to proprietress Caravansary Hotel [E. Mills], letter, 1 May 1928, Evans Collection [copies], PCAS

Archives). A reply (E. Mills to S. C. Evans, letter, 10 May 1928, Evans Collection [copies], PCAS Archives) from the proprietress directed Evans to Steele's, a photographic studio in San Bernardino.

Juan Razon, of the Agua Dulce clan, came by his moniker, Fig Tree John, for the fact that he had planted just such trees around a spring near the Salton Sea (Figure 6) where he lived in a jacal-like house. In the draft dedication to his never completed manuscript on cogged stones, Evans wrote of having many talks with the Cahuilla, who claimed to know nothing of the cogged artifact. He did recall for Evans his witness to Mormon covered wagons on their way to San Bernardino. One wonders whether the two men ever discussed the rumors about Fig Tree and a secret gold mine he was alleged to have worked in the Santa Rosa Mountains. The rumors were spawned by testimonies that the Cahuilla paid for supplies in Banning (see Figure 6) with gold dust. Many colorful stories surround the man, some true (Beidler 1977), others not (see Corle 1955). Fig Tree John is buried in Palm Springs (see *Riverside Enterprise*, 17 April 1927:2; *The Date Palm*, 22 April 1927).

More Ephemera: Images of Ishi and Captain John

Ephemera in the Evans Collection includes penny postcard images of two celebrated California Indians (Figures 7 and 8). These items are noted here to reflect Evans' broader embrace of California indigenous cultures. Figure 7 shows Ishi, last survivor of the Yahi, of the southernmost division of the Yana linguistic tribe (north Central California) (see e.g., A. L. Kroeber 1925:Chpt. 23; T. Kroeber 1971; Johnson 1978:361-369). This halftone postcard was published and sold by the University of California Museum of Anthropology at the Affiliated Colleges in San Francisco, where Ishi lived and where he received the general public for demonstrations of such aboriginal skills as flint knapping and fire making⁴ (T. Kroeber 1971:Chpt. 9). It is uncertain whether the ca. 1912-1913 photograph of



Figure 5. Fig Tree John in his signature top hat and long blue coat. Ca. 1910s photograph taken at Steele's, San Bernardino. Evans Collection.

Ishi (Figure 7) was taken near Deer Creek, part of his former stomping grounds.

Less celebrated than Ishi was Captain John, seen in the colorized, halftone penny postcard of Figure 8. Photographed by A. W. Ericson in the 1890s, the Hupa wore battle dress. The scene was previously published by McCorkle (1978:Figure 2) with this explanation:

His left hand holds a typical close-combat weapon, the short thrusting spear with an obsidian point. Under his right arm he carries a quiver made of whole animal skin. The deer-skin wrap, the grass-filled deerskin-covered headband, and the dentalium necklaces are typical of northwestern California. Behind him is a sweathouse.

More Evans Collection Treasures: Images of Two Transient Indian Villages

In the late 1870s and early 1880s, Evans' father employed Indians to clear sage brush and cactus from several thousand acres in the Riverside area and also to work on the Riverside canals. Much local real estate was held and developed by the Evans family. At times, the future mayor accompanied his father to visit the camps/villages where Native workers had settled (Evans ca. 1930:8).

The year 1877, referenced twice in the 1928 handbill (Figure 4), indicates that S. C. Evans was about ten years

old when he started to collect objects of Indian manufacture. His certain acquaintance with the largely Cahuilla settlement known as Spring Rancheria (Figure 9) on the western high terminus of Tenth Street, Riverside, on North Mount Rubidoux, and with Indians camped on Fairmont Hill above the northerly terminus of Pine Street, no doubt prefigured Evans collecting and subsequent fascination with indigenous peoples' life-ways.

The photograph of Spring Rancheria was taken in 1886 by William Collier (Goodman 1993:76). The Riverside settlement seen in Figure 10 was not the camp/village that occupied Fairmont Hill. The

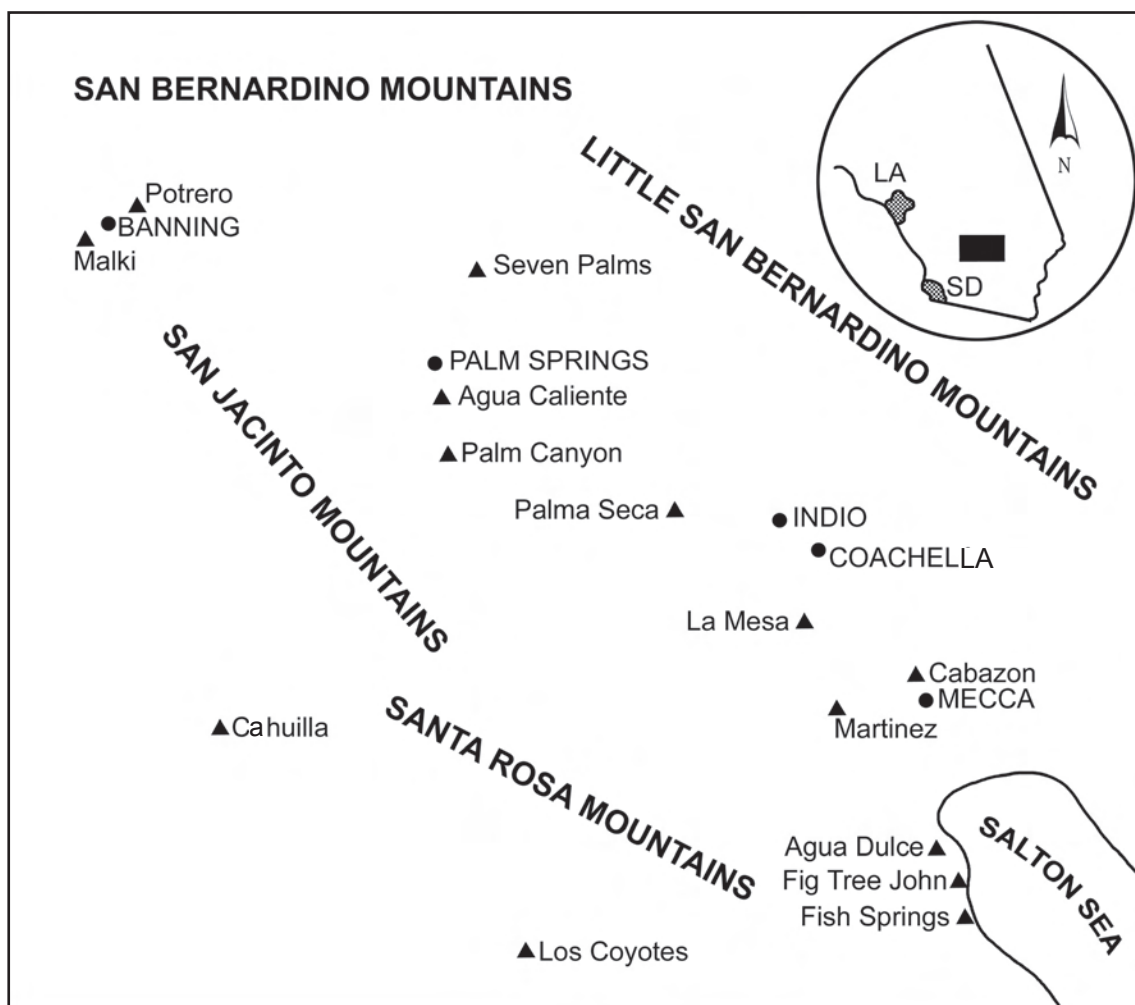


Figure 6. Cahuilla territory: the world of Fig Tree John. After Harvey (1967:Figure 1).

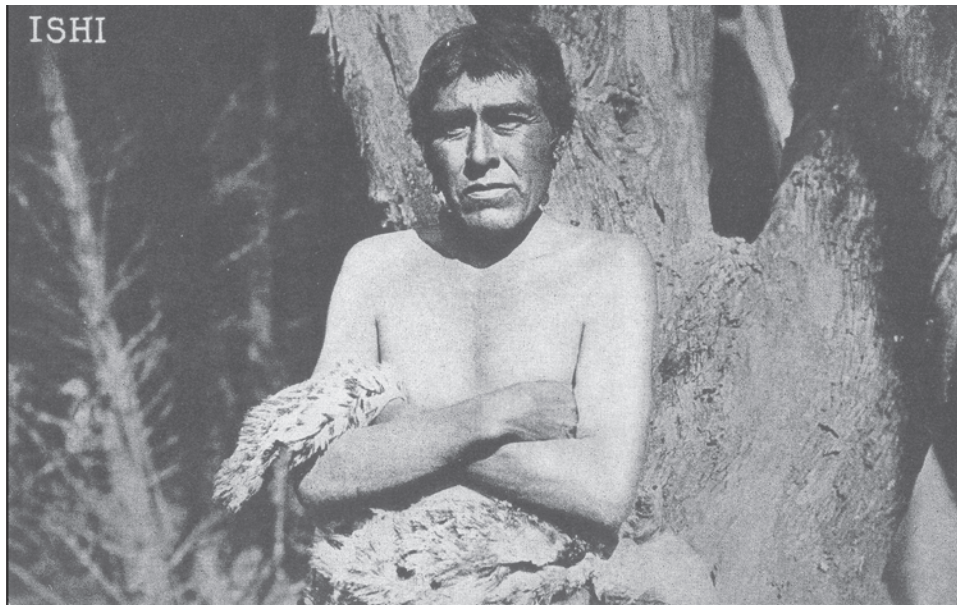


Figure 7. Ishi. Photograph taken ca. 1912-1913. Souvenir penny postcard published by the University of California Museum of Anthropology, ca. late 1910s-early 1920s. Evans Collection.

rectangular thatched brush house constructions seen at both photographed settlements (Figures 9 and 10) are not representative of traditional dwelling architecture, which had instead been circular. The modified house plan in Cahuilla territory commenced at least as early as the 1870s (see Bean and Lawton 1965).

The Figure 10 photograph was taken by R. H. Benson in 1883 or 1884. Interesting information attaches to this image since Evans had sought out Benson, sending him a list of questions (S. C. Evans to R. H. Benson, 19 July 1928, letter, Evans Collection [copies], PCAS Archives). Benson penciled his answers directly on this correspondence which he posted back to Evans. Benson wrote that the camera was positioned about 50 yards east of where a bandstand was later built in Fairmont Park. Perhaps 60 to 70 people lived there when the photo was snapped. As regards the houses—"Probably poles were on top and brush put on them and sides were made of tules."

Evans asked Mr. Benson the following:

You doubtless remember that the other Indian camps on Mt. Rubidoux or Fairmont Hill and

on the peninsula running northerly from 4th and Pepper Sts. were all on high ground without any water immediately available; and that the [women] carried all the water for those camps from Spring Brook, as I have seen them do many times. It is rather remarkable that this picture of yours evidently shows an earlier camp down on what we would now call the damp or lower lands and much nearer the water. Can you give me any information concerning this?

Benson responded that he thought he remembered "a camp near where the Experiment Station now is by Evergreen Cemetery and that later the camp was moved to near 4th and Pepper Streets."

Revisits to Local Indian Reservations: A Paper Trail

Samuel Evans had traveled far and wide seeking data that might inform on the use(s) and meaning(s) of cogged stones. He came to believe that a solution to the mystery held implications for theories about



Figure 8. Captain John in his Hupa battle dress, ca. 1890s. A. W. Ericson, photographer. Penny postcard published by A. W. Ericson Co., Arcata, California. Evans Collection.

the origins and migrations of American Indians (Los Angeles Times, 31 March 1929:B3).

Increasingly, his favored interview subjects were not so much learned men of science but rather aged Indians. Indeed, in 1929 he was planning a "train, stage, and trail" journey that would deliver Evans into the "wilds" of southeastern Utah, this effort developing ostensibly on the strength of a rumor about an old "tribal seer" who might just have the right knowledge. The hyperbolic news article (LAT, 31 March 1929: B3) reporting the scheduled trip reflected an overly romanticized take on archaeology. Was the tone of the

story set by a man who had now seriously embraced an adventurer-scientist persona, or had the Times reporter exercised unwarranted journalistic creativity? The outcome of Evans' Utah trip is unknown, if the trip occurred at all. More prosaic "expeditions" had unfolded closer to home, where Evans had sought insights especially from tribal elders spread across several ethnic/linguistic territories in Riverside, Imperial, and San Diego counties.

In a perceived race against time, and ever hopeful that regional employments of coggled stones had continued into the mid 1800s, Evans revisited nearby reservations. Obviously the issue of mortality loomed large in Evans' mind, certainly with regard to Native elders, but possibly for Evans himself. Counting from the time his revisits commenced, Evans had less than five years to live.

During his covering of old territory, some Native contacts professed no knowledge of the coggled stone. There were others whose recollections either identified the artifact as a tool to straighten arrows or associated it with ritual behavior.

Certain letters in the Evans Collection attest to the peripatetic ex-mayor departing Riverside by automobile to collect data at least as far away as Campo, a Tipai community just on the California side of the international border. More revealing than these correspondences, however, are two documents written by Evans (1928, 1929), one relating to a three day, whirlwind "expedition" undertaken in 1928 and the other relating to a more circumscribed trip in 1929. Both testaments recount interviews with Native informants. Another kind of record accompanies the 1928 documents, for Evans had engaged the services of a professional photographer, Charles Rasmussen, who added his witness to the events.

Details of the above noted paper trail and Rasmussen's pictures will be the main subjects of a future essay.



Figure 9. Spring Rancheria, 1886, on land that subsequently became part of the City of Riverside. Photograph by William Collier. Evans Collection.

That study also will list numerous hypotheses regarding cogged stone use/meaning encountered by Evans in his pursuit of an unfulfilled obsession.

Summary

S. C. Evans' interest in Native Americans and their cultures began in childhood and continued throughout his life. One manifestation of this avocational commitment was an intense need to understand the true nature of cogged stones. Evans never did figure it out, but then neither has anyone else.

The compulsion to satisfy a curiosity of mind, among other motives, produced a wealth of materials that inform on Evans' obsession. Until now, the Evans

Collection had not been tapped. Our article has allowed a cursory viewing of some of its contents.

The centerpiece in this telling has been a 1928 handbill that the ex-mayor disseminated far and wide to promote his research. Other materials that help characterize Evans' scientific passion for many things aboriginal include numerous correspondences with luminaries of anthropology; photographs of artifacts, Indians, and historic Native villages; ephemera such as postcards, circulars, and news clippings; a fragmentary manuscript; and somewhat formal documents testifying to trips undertaken to interview informants. The authors are preparing for publication additional information relating to S. C. Evans and his beloved cogged stones.



Figure 10. Historic Indian settlement within what became Fairmont Park in Riverside, California. Photograph by R. H. Benson, ca. 1883-1884. Evans Collection.

Acknowledgments

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End Notes

1. Evans' anthropological interests expanded. For instance, in 1899 a collecting trip to Hawaii sought Polynesian art and artifacts.

2. Also known as cog stone or cogstone; other terms/spellings, never very popular and not used in recent decades, include: cog wheel, cog-wheel stone, sprocket stone, gear wheel, corrugated disc, sun stone, sun wheel, radiate stone, stellar-shaped stone, rose wheel, and gaming stone. The origin of "cogged

stone" is S. C. Evans (S. C. Evans to Gentlemen, UC Berkeley Museum, letter, 8 August 1930, Evans Collection, PCAS Archives).

3. Copies of items in the Evans Collection are available from the PCAS Archives, Old Orange County Courthouse, Santa Ana.

4. Parenthetically, Theodora Kroeber (1971:185) wrote, "No manufactured object could be less complicated than Ishi's fire drill, which consists of a lower and an upper piece: a woman piece and a man piece, as he symbolized them." Similar sexualization, obviously following from tool morphologies and from the kinetics of employment was reported for the Yurok (A. L. Kroeber 1925:93; see also Koerper 2006). The Serrano attributed the introduction of fire making to Fly (Ramon and Elliot 2000:352); as Dorothy Ramon noted, "If you look at a fly today, he's rubbing his hands."

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