



## The Story Behind the Flag



### The Location

Petroglyph Point, southeast of Tulelake, is one of the historical treasures of Lava Beds National Monument. Petroglyphs carved 2,000 to 5,000 years ago can be seen along the cliff face. On the east aspect of Petroglyph Point, also known as Castle Rock, nearly 50 feet (15 m) above the ancient lake bottom, there is a painting of the United States flag. Although the flag is much younger than the petroglyphs below, it also symbolizes one historical period of the area.

### A Family History

According to a 1997 letter from Charles Coppock, “The Coppock family arrived in 1898 and homesteaded on the east side of the peninsula. Later, Milo Coppock (my father) obtained three additional homesteads which gave him several miles of waterfront land. Our family raised cattle, sheep and had a small five-acre orchard which

was primarily for family use.”

The Coppocks sold their Tulelake property in 1923.

### The Painter

Charles Coppock was born on December 28, 1900 in his family home on the ranch in Tulelake. He grew up on his family’s ranch with his three older sisters. In 1908, the Bureau of Reclamation began to drain Tule Lake, increasing the acreage of the Coppock ranch. In 1917, Charles Coppock (age 16) longed to enlist and fight in World War I. However, not yet 18 and unable to obtain his father’s signature of permission, Coppock was denied the opportunity. Determined to express his patriotism, Coppock decided to paint the United States flag on the flat surface of Petroglyph Point.

Coppock wrote, “The flag was not painted from a boat. The water had receded away from the base of the cliff about three or four years prior to painting the flag, and there was a road that went into the ranch past Castle Rock at that time. I built a 2 x 6 foot long platform from which I painted the flag. The platform was nailed to the stone with spikes much like a shelf. I worked on it on Sundays as I was pitching hay the rest of the time. It

took about two or three Sundays to complete. My father encouraged my idea and, in fact, supplied the white paint. I purchased the red and blue paint out of my own earnings.”

The following year, Coppock enlisted in the Marine Corps for the duration of World War I. “The recruiting officer in Reno got the year of my birth a couple of years early and I was able to go. After the war I returned to the Tulelake area briefly before going to a trade school in Kansas City, Missouri. I worked as a mechanic until I was about 25 years old. From 25 to 36 years of age I raised sheep and farmed in Siskiyou County. Then I returned to work as a mechanic and construction worker until I retired in 1965.”

### Time Passes

Since the flag was painted over 80 years ago, it has been subject to a great deal of weathering (as well as vandalism), but the faded image of one young soldier’s patriotism can still be seen on the east side of Petroglyph Point. The Petroglyph Section of Lava Beds National Monument was listed on the National Register of Historical Places on May 29, 1975. All features of historical significance, the petroglyphs as well as those of local importance, are protected.

If you are interested in visiting this site, do so with care. Petroglyph point (Castle Rock) is a significant roosting site for several species of birds of prey including owls, falcons and hawks.

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