The Charlebois pictoglyphs are probably the most maligned prehistoric rock writing site in the Southwest. The site is located just upstream from the confluence of the Charlebois and La Barge Canyons in the Superstition Wilderness Area. Prior to the heavy pumping of the ground water in the Salt River Valley the seeps and springs along La Barge Canyon were a verdant oases for many of the early inhabitants of the region. The prehistoric native Americans hunted Big horn sheep, Mule deer, and other mammals in this area. Archaeologist’s claimed it was the success of these hunts that were recorded on the canyon wall in the form of pictoglyphs along La Barge Canyon.

Prospectors and treasure hunters found their way into the Superstition Mountains shortly before the turn of the century. They cast their critical eye upon these figures carved in stone by ancient hunters in La Barge Canyon and believed they had found an ancient Spanish treasure map. It wasn’t long before the pictoglyphs were known as the Spanish Master Map.

One man promoted this scenario more than any other individual. He was John T. Clymenson (Barry Storm) a pulp fiction writer of the 1930’s. Storm was not the only man to promote the Master Map in La Barge Canyon as Spanish rock writing. Oren Arnold (1930-1972) used the same landmark in La Barge in some of his writings. Another man, who would never allow the truth to stand in the way of a good story, was Barney Barnard. He called the pictoglyphs a master map also. Most writers have included the stone writings in their books in one way or the other.

I first visited the Inscription Rock in 1954 with my father. Dad thought it was important to check it out. He studied the main rock for a few minutes and was convinced it was nothing more than pictoglyphs. I traveled to the site several times between 1954-1959. Each trip produced some new markings on the rock.

Sometimes the alterations were minor; while on other occasions the alterations were major. Early photographs taken on different dates show a considerable change in the configuration of these pictoglyphs.

Author’s note: Presently the entire Tonto National Forest region is closed because of the extreme fire danger.
Pictureglyphs in LaBarge Canyon near Charlebois Springs, circa 1986