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Alabama Archaeological Society

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SUMMER MEETING 1990

The summer meeting of the Alabama Archaeological Society will be at the Blue Hole Site near Anniston, Alabama on Saturday, June 23, 1990. The Coosa Valley Chapter will sponsor the meeting. The site is less than two miles from several chain restaurants and fast food outlets. One may choose to bring a bag lunch or take a five-minute drive for lunch. Dr. Harry O. Holstein will be directing an excavation at Blue Hole as part of the Jackson-ville State University Archaeological Resources Lab program. You are welcome to join in. The board meeting will be held in the usual manner.

Schedule:

8:00 - 10:00 - Meet at the Lenlock Shopping Center (very small) on Highway 21 between Jacksonville and Anniston for site directions

8:00 - 12:00 - Investigations at the Blue Hole Site

12:00 - 1:00 - Lunch (bring your own or eat nearby)

1:00 - 4:00 - Continued site investigation

4:00 - Summary of the day's activities

5:00 - Dutch dinner at a restaurant to be selected during the day

Phillip E. Koerper Jacksonville

CALL FOR PAPERS

All papers to be presented at the joint Winter Meeting of the Alabama and Georgia Archaeological Societies must be submitted before Saturday, September 15, 1990. The meeting will be held at Columbus Museum in Columbus, Georgia on October 27, 1990.

Papers will be 15 minutes in length - perhaps some leniency in length if few papers are submitted. Each of the three sessions will be chaired and will be divided as such: 1) Paleo-Archaic, 2) Woodland, 3) Mississippian-Historic.

Title, abstract, request for tables, equipment needs, etc., must be submitted by September 15, 1990 to Mr. Dave Chase; 1801 Summit Creek Drive: Stone Mountain, Georgia.

808 870 4

Phillip E. Koerper A.A.S. Program Rep.

CHAPTER NEWS

Birmingham Chapter

The May meeting of the Birmingham Archaeological Society was on the 10th at the Red Mountain Museum Auditorium. Chris Hill and Don Frazier from Jacksonville State University spoke on recent digs at Coosa 3 and the Big Spring site.

Sandra H. Bergstresser

Cullman Chapter

Dr. Boyce Driskell with The University of Alabama was the speaker at the May meeting. He showed slides of his work in Egypt. Dr. Driskell has worked the past few years at the Smith Bottom Cave project in Lauderdale County.

Our prior meeting was a most rewarding one, in that uniface tools were discussed by Mr. Van King, who had many examples of such tools.

Huntsville Chapter

TaMara Beane of Bridgeport gave the presentation at the May 22 chapter meeting. TaMara is a potter who works in the Native American style. She demonstrated her pottery-making technique and discussed gathering her materials and how her methods have evolved into her current style.

The Huntsville Chapter meets the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Public Library. The public is welcome.

NEW LIFE MEMBERSHIP

We welcome

Mr. Bobbie R. Gillespie 20493 County Road #460 Trinity, AL 35673

into our life membership.

Bettye T. Henson A.A.S. Secretary

1989 Field School at Moundville

by Cynthia L. Avery

During the fall semester of 1989 an archaeological field school composed of undergraduate and graduate students from the University of Alabama was taught by Dr. Vernon J. Knight, Assistant Professor of Anthropology. The season was spent excavating at the prehistoric Mississippian ceremonial mound complex in Moundville, Alabama. Mound Q, one of 20 surviving mounds at the site, was the focus of research.

This was the first excavation in Mound Q since the site was visited by Clarence B. Moore of Philadelphia in 1905 and 1906. Moore placed nine trial-holes into Mound Q with negative results as far as burial recovery was concerned. He did report finding a ceramic owl head which had adorned a pottery vessel, and a small copper ornament in the shape of a six-pointed star within a circle.

Unlike C.B. Moore, the students were not expecting to find burials during their excavation, but were looking for clues that would help in dating the construction episodes of Mound Q. They were to accomplish this mainly by means of the ceramic chronology which has been established for the Moundville site.

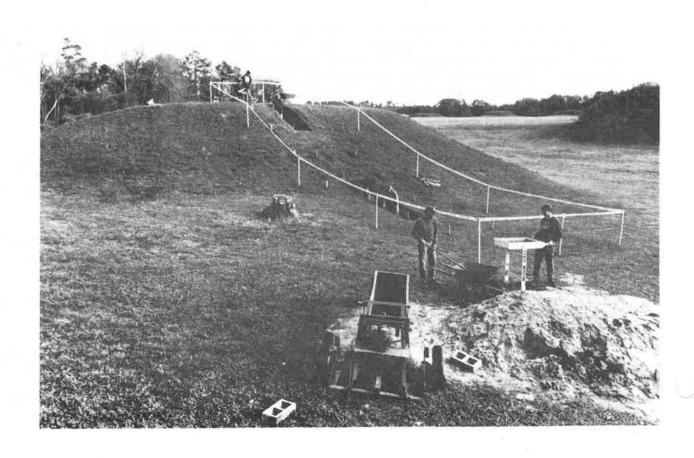
Their objective was to place two trenches into the western slope of Mound Q. One exploratory trench was to be dug in arbitrary 20 cm. levels, while the adjacent control trench would be excavated by observed stratigraphy. The second trench was not begun before the end of the semester and will be opened next season (see accompanying photo).

An excavation grid was laid out oriented to the mound, with a vertical datum stake set at 50 meters above mean sea level. Base stakes were labeled 24R0 and 26R0, with grid stakes placed two meters apart and numbered consecutively up the mound; for example, grid stake 26R2 was located at the mound base while stake 26R16 was on the mound summit.

A total of four excavation units each measuring 2m x lm, were opened up in Trench 1. The lower units (26R6 and 26R8) were excavated to subsoil, with the recovery of light amounts of daub and a good number of small sherds in the plowzone. Larger pottery sherds and animal bone were found in the zone beneath.

The upper units (26R14 and 26R16) were excavated to a depth of 120 cm below datum, and revealed the last three building stages in Mound Q. Although there were many root and rodent intrusions in the profile, three distinct floor levels could be seen. The lowest of the three appears to be associated with hematite-engraved pottery which is presently dated to the Moundville I phase (ca. 1050-1250 A.D.). The upper two floors can be dated to the late Moundville III phase based on the pottery recovered, indicating that perhaps only the final meter of mound construction can be attributed to the later part of the Moundville sequence. This possibility will be further investigated next season.

Although an analysis of the artifacts recovered has yet to be made, a few items of special interest were noted during the initial procedure of artifact washing and rough-sorting. Examples of trade beyond the Moundville area included potsherds classified as Sikeston Negative Painted from the Central Mississippi Valley. Pieces of galena were also found. How the aboriginal occupants made use of this non-local material has not been determined. The artifacts found in these excavations will be used to help define the late end of the pottery chronology for the Moundville site. Other artifacts, many of non-local stone, will provide evidence for craft-producing activities in a mound context.



JOURNAL

The June 1990 Journal of Alabama Archaeology is at the printer and will be mailed on schedule.

B. Bart Henson Publications Committee

MUSEUM LAUNCHES ITS 12TH EXPEDITION IN JUNE

On Sunday, June 10, 1990, the Alabama State Museum of Natural History will open Expedition #12, the annual summer camp which takes science out of the classroom and into the field.

"This summer we're delighted to have Dr. Paul Welch, archaeologist from Oberlin College, to serve as our camp Scientific Director", announced Kenneth Gaddy, Museum Curator of Collections, who acts as Expedition Leader.

"Our plan is to excavate the northernmost mound of the chiefdom, located in Tuscaloosa County some miles upstream from the main Moundville site. This mound was tested in 1978 by Dr. Welch and other archaeologists."

The summer Expeditions offered by the Museum of Natural History began in 1979, and are especially targeted toward high school students, teachers, and parents. The Expedition features a large tent camp, supervised by Museum naturalist Rosa Newman. Students and adults live on the site with scientists and Museum professionals.

Expedition #12, which runs for four one-week sessions from June 10 to July 6, will be based near the Black Warrior River west of Tuscaloosa. More information may be obtained by calling the Museum at 205/348-2040.

Frances Tucker Moundville

PUBLICATION

PROJECTILE POINT TYPES IN VIRGINIA AND NEIGHBORING AREAS - by Wm Jack Hranicky and Floyd Painter. 1988. \$10.00 plus \$1.50 per order for postage. Available from the Archeological Society of Virginia; 10604 Patterson Avenue; Richmond, VA 23233. Checks should be made out to the Archeological Society of Virginia.

ARCHAEOLOGY OF DUST CAVE

July 6-7 - Join professional archaeologists and their students in an actual field school in North Alabama. Learn the importance of correct archaeological procedure as you gain hands-on experience in the excavation of

cave sites up to 9,000 years old. Depart from Smith Hall at 8 a.m. July 6, return by 4 p.m. July 7. Cost \$50. Naturalist: Leigh Cummins. For additional information and registration materials, call 205/348-2040, or write State Museum of Natural History; University of Alabama; Box 870340; Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0340.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MUSEUM EXPEDITIONS 1979-1990

1979-80

An excavation of 16th century Indian sites in Tuscaloosa and Hale Counties expands from archaeology into paleontology in joint digs with the Red Mountain Museum of Birmingham.

1981

An exploration in Greene County produces Dinosaur Age fossils.

1982

An excavation of 500-year-old Indian village in Dallas County along the Alabama River near Selma includes research in both archaeology and paleontology.

1983

A survey of the Bankhead National Forest in Winston County produces 39 previously unknown Indian sites. A return to Greene County uncovers a large fossil mosasaur and a number of bones from flying reptiles.

1984

A fossil excavation in a Colbert County cave near Florence results in the largest collection of Ice Age animal bones (50,000+) ever found in Alabama. Archaeological test of a cave site in Lauderdale County is still being excavated.

1985

A return to the caves of Colbert County reveals a complete fossil skeleton of a 5,000 pound giant ground sloth.

1986

Extensive excavations at Alabama's first State Capitol at Old Cahaba in Dallas County, now deserted, locates the notorious confederate prison camp and a major Indian site.

An excavation at the Hightower farm near Sylacauga in Talladega County links the site to the 1560 visit of Tristan de Luna.

1988

An excavation uncovers the 50-foot-long Braggs Mosasaur, the largest Dinosaur Age fossil ever discovered in Alabama. Fossil turtles are also found in Lowndes and Dallas Counties.

1989

A zeuglodon dig in Choctaw County uncovers a number of 40 million-year-old whales.

1990

An archaeological dig in Tuscaloosa County will excavate the northernmost Indian mound in the Moundville complex on the banks of the Black Warrior River.

DATING ROCK ART

A new technique developed by scientists at Texas A&M University may make it possible to carbon-date pictographs. In theory, rock art is datable if the paint contains the radioisotope carbon-14. However, Harry Shafer, an archaeologist, and Marvin Rowe, a chemist, encountered a problem at the outset of their research with pictographs from the Lower Pecos River in southwest Texas. These pictographs were painted on limestone, of which carbon is a major component. To obtain valid dates for the pictographs, they would have to find a way to isolate the carbon in the paint without contamination from the carbon in the limestone. Rowe devised a plan which would do just that, using oxygen plasma, an agent that reacts only with organic material containing carbon.

Shafer experimented with a piece of limestone that had broken off the wall of a Lower Pecos River cave. Although the sample contained no definitive evidence of paint, it did have a reddish tint indicating an iron-oxide rust. "Harry tells me the ancient Indians frequently used inorganic materials for pigments, like ground-up rust, and may have mixed them with urine or blood or some other organic material to make paint", Rowe says. "In fact, that's what we think we're working with."

Rowe, his graduate student Jon Russ, and their colleague Marian Hyman, placed a sample of the red colored limestone into a vacuum system, introduced oxygen into the tube, and converted the gas to oxygen plasma using a radio frequency generator. If any organic material containing carbon was present in the sample, the oxygen plasma would react with it, producing water and carbon dioxide. This carbon dioxide could then be used for dating purposes. The experiment did produce water, indicating that such a reaction may have taken place, and a small amount of gas that may include datable carbon.

(From an article in "Archaeology" - May/June 1990).

PUBLICATIONS	S AVAILABLE					
Available issues of Journal of Alabama Archaeology Vol. 20-29 each issue						
Stanfield-Worley Bluff Shelter Excavations (Journal of Alabama Archaeology) Vol. VIII Nos. 1 & 2 - Reprint, each issue						
Special Publication 1 — Fort Mitchell	**************************************	\$2.00 pp				
Special Publication 2 — The Archaeological Sequence at Durant Bend, Dallas County Alabama \$4.50 pp Special Publication 3 — Archaeological Investigations at Horseshoe Bend \$6.50 pp Handbook of Alabama Archaeology Part 1, Point Types \$10.00 pp						
			Lively, Long, Josselyn - Pebble Tool Paper	Lively, Long, Josselyn - Pebble Tool Paper \$3.00 pp		
			Investigations in Russell Cave, published by the National Park Servi	ce	\$7.50 рр	
Exploring Prehistoric Alabama through Archaeology (Juvenile)	9 856 866 865 856 857	\$ \$7.00 pρ				
CHECKS SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO: ALABAM	A ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY					
SEND CHECKS TO: MR. EUGENE FUTATO, Office of Archaeological Research						
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Alabama Archaeological Society

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