

Alabama Archaeological Society

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STONES & BONES NEWSLETTER

Editor

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MEMBER OF THE EASTERN STATES ARCHEOLOGICAL FEDERATION

FORT MORGAN

The Alabama Historical Commission has commenced organization and investigation in preparation for extensive restoration work. Consulting archaeologist is David DeJarnette of Orange Beach. Some of the special projects will be restoration of officers' quarters, restoration of one of the barracks and the bakery. The Mobile Point Lighthouse, which was located near the fort before it was deactivated and dismantled, has been given to the AHC. The 40-foot iron tower will be reassembled near the fort.

DUGOUT CANOE - NORTH CAROLINA

The draining of a pond near Laurinburg, N. C., revealed a dugout canoe that may date from early 1400 or at least the Colonial period, according to David A. McLean, archaeologist at St. Andrews College. The 27-foot, 2,000-pound cypress log canoe was found in three feet of mud in the drained pond. The canoe was unfinished, and the Indians were apparently about half finished when one of the sides broke off. The axe marks and indications that the log had been "fired" led McLean to believe it predated White settlers.

After making several unsuccessful efforts to remove the canoe, the Army at Ft. Bragg was asked to assist. A helicopter was provided; and rigger Staff Sgt. Charles Stalnaker designed a special platform, rolled the canoe onto the platform, rigged a harness around the platform and slowly lifted the heavy canoe from its mud grave. The canoe was airlifted to the Indian Museum of the Carolinas in Laurinburg for preservation and research.

(From Soldiers, November 1977)

PREHISTORIC HEAT TREATMENT OF CHERT

A study made by C. L. Melcher and D. W. Zimmerman, of the Center for Archaeometry at Washington University in St. Louis, indicates that thermoluminescence (TL) techniques applied to chert artifacts result

April 1978

in a reliable determination of whether the material was heat treated. They indicate that visual determination (color, etc.) is not reliable, as some material from the Koster site resulted in unheated cherts being very similar in appearance to the controlled samples heated by archaeologists. The reliability of TL is also dependent on the age of the site, as older sites must be more carefully measured. The technique is similar to that used on ceramics, and the authors believe it can also be successfully applied to fire rocks and obsidian.

(From SCIENCE, September 30, 1977)

DONATIONS

Our thanks go to the following annual donors:

Mr. Harold Howard - Huntsville
Col. (Ret.) and Mrs. William Given - Foley
Dr. Philip Phillips - Bolton, Massachusetts
Mr. Thomas Watson - Panama City, Florida

NEW MEMBERS OF THE ALABAMA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Blitz, Mr. John H. (I) - 76 Woodland Hills, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401
Forrester, Mr. Glenn (I) - Route Two, Box 114-B, Columbia, Alabama 36319
Krakker, Miss Linda A. (A) - 522 Monroe - Apartment 6, Ann Arbor,
Michigan 48104
Minish, Mr. Xavier D. (I) - 1916 Dresdon Drive, S. W., Decatur, Alabama
35603

CHAPTER NEWS

Birmingham Chapter: The Chapter meets the first Thursday of each month at the Red Mountain Museum, 1425 22nd Street South. Call Tom Hutto for further information at 956-1895.

Cullman Chapter: The program for March was given by Mr. Al Beinlich of Florence and the Muscle Shoals Chapter. His talk was on "bone tools".

East Alabama Chapter: The Chapter meeting on March 8th was the last of the 1978 Auburn Forum Lectures. Students, who may receive credit by attending all seven Forum Lectures, added some 50 persons to the audience. Dr. James Dobie, Auburn Zoology Department, discussed his study of the faunal remains from Fort Toulouse excavations under Donald Heldman. With an introduction of the history of the forts which had been built at the site, he outlined the living conditions and possible diet in those days. Of the 375 bones he studied,

East Alabama Chapter (Continued)

117 could be identified as to species. Deer and cow were the most numerous. The April 12 meeting will be in Thach Auditorium at 7:30 p.m. Craig Sheldon will talk on work at Brunswick Island, Georgia, where "Roman Pottery" has been found.

Huntsville Chapter: Mr. Richard Wright presented the March program, a talk on archaeological research in the R. L. Harris Reservoir, with emphasis on "stone weirs" (stone dams utilized for trapping fish and eels) in the Alabama Piedmont. The presentation was illustrated with both aerial and ground-level slides of dozens of aboriginal stone fish weirs discovered by the Office of Archaeological Research at the University of Alabama during the 1977 field season in the Harris Reservoir on the Tallapoosa River System.

Muscle Shoals Chapter: The March meeting was a slide presentation by Mr. Roy McKee on the King Tut exhibition. The presentation included the archaeology and burial furnishings of King Tut's tomb. Thirty-nine people attended the meeting (out of a total of 50 Chapter members). In addition to the main program, at each Chapter meeting a point type is studied in meticulous detail, with numerous examples presented for display. The point covered at the March meeting was the Big Sandy; the Pine Tree will be studied in April.

BOOK REVIEW

HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY, A GUIDE TO SUBSTANTIVE AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS - Edited by Robert L. Schuyler. Baywood Publishing Company, Inc.; 120 Marine Street; Farmingdale, New York 11735.

Over 30 chapters present the reader with an introduction to the field and a lifetime reference library between the covers of one volume. Included are reprints of the most famous classical items in the field; full site reports for the Eastern and Western parts of North America; a series of well-known statements on the "how" and "why" of historical archaeology and a clear indication of future research and trends within the discipline.

Marjorie Gay
Standing Rock

HOW IMAGE ENHANCEMENT MAY EXPLAIN PAST EVENTS

A Holy Shroud Conference was held in Albuquerque last March to study the question of the famous "Shroud of Turin". The controversial shroud is a linen cloth that bears a remarkably detailed image of a bearded, long-haired man, with numerous lacerations over his body.

Tradition dating back to at least 1354 A.D. has it that the fabric, with its brownish, stain-like shadings, is the burial shroud of Jesus Christ. Enshrined in the northern Italian city of Turin since 1578, the shroud has inspired widespread curiosity, especially since the first photographs of it taken in 1898 showed the markings to be a "negative" rather than a "positive" image. The resulting "picture" resembles rubbings made from bas-relief art works.

The Albuquerque gathering consisted of 40 participants, including forensic specialists, clergy, scientists from the Air Force Academy, Sandia Laboratory, and the nearby Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, and eminent Protestant and Catholic scholars, including Vatican representatives.

Their common objective was to share current studies on the relic and to prepare for greater scientific examination of the garment at an unprecedented exhibition of the shroud in Turin in 1978. (The Shroud was not available to the Albuquerque Conference.)

That exhibition could be the "moment of truth" for the shroud's authenticity, according to Anglican scholar John A. T. Robinson of Trinity College, Cambridge, especially if the use of the destructive Carbon-14 dating process (now successful when applied to fragments as small as a square centimeter) is permitted on the fragile fabric.

(From NASA Activities, November 1977)

"AX GROOVES" REVIVED

Several years ago (May and November 1968) two letters with photographs were published in *Geotimes* concerning "ax grooves", man-made features worn into granitic and volcanic rock surfaces. Since that time I have observed very similar features in several localities in southern Montana and northern Wyoming. The grooves I have observed are worn into sandstone. All groove sites I have seen occur with or near evidence of aborigines such as petroglyphs or prehistoric camp sites. The grooves occur mostly in clustered groups as were those reported in *Geotimes*. They are elongated, smooth and round-bottomed with tapering ends. Many I have seen are the shape of a half banana (longitudinally split). The size is usually somewhat larger than a banana with a range in length of 5 to 12 inches, some even longer. The depth of the grooves ranges up to 1 inch. Most often the orientation of the grooves is vertical or at a slight angle off vertical.

Amateur and professional archaeologists in Wyoming and Montana call them tool grooves referring to an origin in fashioning or sharpening primitive tools. The writers in *Geotimes* expressed the tentative opinion

that the elongated, hollow grooves worn into the rock surfaces were the result of stone-ax grinding by aboriginal people. In all the surface and professionally excavated collections from Wyoming and Montana that I have observed I recall seeing only one ground or polished stone ax. The stone axes I've seen pictured from other areas such as southwestern U. S. have sharp edges. It seems incongruous to me to hone a sharp edge in a round-bottom groove or wear a round-bottom groove with a sharp edge tool. Mauls or hammers with grooves encircling their mid-section are common to this area but they are generally made from stream cobbles and the ends are usually modified only as a result of pounding. Flattened, hand-sized grinding stones are quite common to this area. These stones are found in different stages of manufacture or wear with the shape modified by use or design from a flat, sub-rectangular form to one resembling a worn bar of soap. The original stone was sometimes a flat stream cobble and sometimes a flat piece of firm-to-hard sandstone. The edges and ends are generally well worn and smooth. They could have been shaped in the "tool grooves" but I have no direct evidence for such. Bone and antler tools are found in sites here where they have been protected from moisture. These include awls, hide fleshers and root-digging tools. It's hard to imagine wearing sandstone away with bone or antler. I wonder if there are other occurrences of these grooves and what other artifact or cultural associations might exist with them.

(A Letter to the Editor of Geotimes, May 1973, by Ken Feyhl, Billings, Montana)

NEUTRON ACTIVATION AIDS DATING

Progress toward an accurate method of determining the age of hard-to-date petroglyphs - prehistoric rock engravings - has been reported by scientists at the University of California's Lawrence Berkley Laboratory. The research, reported in the February ARCHAEOLOGY, was conducted on petroglyph and various other rock samples from the Carson Sink desert, near Fallon, Nevada.

Archaeologist James Bard and nuclear chemist Frank Asaro examined the carvings that had been pecked out of rocks thousands of years ago by the Great Basin Indians. To create the designs, the Indians had to chip through the rocks' natural "desert varnish", a dark coating that derives its color from manganese and iron oxides. But over the years the carvings themselves became covered with newer varnish.

In a procedure uncommon to archaeology, the two scientists scraped off and crushed chips from the face of the petroglyphs and other rock fragments and exposed the samples to a stream of neutrons. The subsequently released gamma rays revealed trace amounts of various

elements. Bard and Asaro found that 20 of the trace elements were more abundant in the varnish than in the rocks' interiors. The researchers suggest that such knowledge, combined with a growing understanding of the varnish formation process, could lead to a feasible dating technique for petroglyphs.

Despite its accuracy, however, neutron activation is "expensive, time-consuming" and necessitates some defacing of the engravings, say the researchers. But, they add, their results could lead to somewhat less precise but adequate faster and more economical methods of analysis. "With portable X-ray fluorescence systems, for example", says Asaro, "it might eventually be possible to estimate the ages of petroglyphs quickly in the field without defacing their surfaces".

(From Science News, March 4, 1978, Vol. 113, No. 9 129-144)

Barbara McAdams
Vernon

HIGHLIGHTS OF BOARD MEETING

The Board of Directors of the Alabama Archaeological Society met in Birmingham on March 18, 1978. The nominating Committee announced that, having carefully considered nominees for the office of Journal Editor, it was placing Mr. Eugene Futato's name in nomination for that office. The Board unanimously elected Mr. Futato, whose responsibilities begin immediately. However, work on the June 1978 issue of the Journal, now nearing completion, will be handled by Interim Editor Britt Thompson and the Associate Editors. (All correspondence concerning future issues of the Journal should be directed to Mr. Futato at the address shown on the back cover of the Newsletter.

Mr. Steve Wimberly, Society Representative to the Alabama Historical Commission (AHC) and officer of the Archaeological Research Association of Alabama, announced the planned dissolution of the Research Association within the next few months. He recommended that the activities of the Research Association be incorporated into the Alabama Archaeological Society. Publications by the Research Association will continue to be available from the Society through the Journal Editor.

Plans for the Summer Meeting were reviewed and a tentative program outlined by the Program Committee, with some speakers having already been scheduled.

Mr. Warner Floyd, Executive Director of the AHC, reviewed the three proposed state bills which would have adversely affected archaeological

and historical activities in Alabama, reported that these bills were being soundly defeated (see editorial in the March 1978 STONES & BONES for additional information on these bills).

Copies of recent publications by the AHC of particular interest to the Society were made available to Board members, including the Preservation News and a new book of sites and properties listed in the Alabama Historical Register, "Alabama's Tapestry of Historic Places".

MEETING

The Society for Georgia Archaeology will hold its spring meeting at the University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, April 22. For more information contact Mrs. Betty Smith, Department of Anthropology, Tennessee Junior College, Marietta, Georgia.

Marjorie Gay
Standing Rock

BOOK REVIEW

AMERICA B. C. - Ancient Settlers in the New World - by Barry Fell, Published by Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co., Inc., 1976. 312 pp. \$12.50

In his recent book, America B. C., Barry Fell presents amazing evidence that European people were living in North America as early as 800 B. C. Remains of "temples" testifying to their occupation are plentiful in the New England states and have been found as far west as Oklahoma, and inscriptions attributed to these early travelers have been found even further west.

An expert in ancient languages and alphabets, Fell has found that the Celts and Carthaginians had built and occupied small stone chambers in New England, and that these were visited by other peoples - if the translations or interpretations of the strange inscriptions and alphabets are correct. "If" is the key word here. Archaeologists have been unable to decipher these inscriptions and have largely dismissed them as forgeries or accidents of nature, and there are few others who can challenge Fell in his own game of ancient languages. Fell's thesis is a controversial one, well known, but not widely accepted in academia. But Fell persuasively presents his evidence and effectively documents what he believes to be ancient links between Europe, Africa, and America. America B. C. is well illustrated with photographs and drawings of examples of ancient alphabets, celtic art, copper and bronze tools, dolmen, subterranean stone chambers, outdoor altars, Iberian art, stelae, inscribed stones, libation bowls, cupules (cup marks), phallic monuments - all found within the United States. It is a fascinating book, recommended for those who enjoy archaeological mysteries and puzzles.

1978 COMMITTEES OF THE ALABAMA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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