

# Alabama Archaeological Society

NADB DOC # - 4,056,751

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## STONES & BONES NEWSLETTER

Editor  
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2602 Green Mountain Rd.  
Huntsville, Alabama 35803

MEMBER OF THE EASTERN STATES ARCHEOLOGICAL FEDERATION

### COPENA BURIAL CAVE

Early in July a bulldozer operator working on a land development project just south of Canoe Creek in St. Clair County sliced open the entrance to a small cave which turned out to be one of the most significant archaeological finds in Alabama in recent times. It was a Copena burial cave, and there may have been as many as 60 burials. On July 2 Alabama Bureau of Investigation officers called in Kenneth Turner, a physical anthropologist at UAT, for assistance. Turner quickly determined there was no "modern foul play" involved and that it was instead an Indian burial cave.

Preliminary investigations were made and the material surveyed and photographed. It was then decided to reseal the cave and organize a later project for excavation and study. However, it was discovered on July 5 that the entrance had been reopened by vandals and virtually all the artifacts and skeletal material removed. This was a tragic event as it may have been the only undisturbed burial cave found in Alabama. However, officials quickly recovered, and law enforcement officers were brought in on the case. Some of the material was recovered from the vandals, with one man being arrested.

The landowner, Lewis Jones, has been very cooperative and helpful. The University of Alabama made emergency funds available for a dig which commenced on July 23 with 32 students working the first weekend around the clock.

A conch shell spoon along with some copper and shell beads and galena were found or recovered from the vandals. These are artifacts usually found in relation to Copena burials, which according to Turner was zero to 500 A.D. Turner also indicated that some of the skeletons showed slight artificial deformities - perhaps from a cradle board. It is believed that the bones had been "tumbled" by water running through the cave; this consequently left them in disarray. There was also evidence of cremation.

Other university staff members working on the project were Farle Smith, Department of Anthropology; Carey Oakley and Eugene Futato, Office of Archaeological Research.

The above information was extracted from accounts in "The Anniston Star", "The Gadsden Times" and "Quad" (the University of Alabama faculty and staff monthly).

October 1977

Tuscaloosa Chapter: The Tuscaloosa Chapter will meet in the Anthropology Department, Ten Hoor Hall, University, on October 13 at 7 p.m. This is an important meeting, for the 1977-78 officers will be elected. All members are urged to make a special effort to attend.

#### DIG FUND REPORT

Your Research Association again thanks our supporters for the fine number of donors we were able to report last month; and while we have none to list this month, we want to remind those who want their names included in the 1977 Dig Fund that we hope to have the full listing for 1977 ready to be set forth in the November Newsletter, as in previous years. So please use the information on the inside back cover of this issue to do your part.

Milt Harris  
Birmingham

#### NEW MEMBERS

Fletcher, Mr. Kenneth (I)	3110 Carlisle Road; Birmingham, Alabama 35213
Forest Supervisor, U. S. Forest Service	P. O. Box 1050; Tallahassee, Florida 32302
Jenkins, Mr. R. B. Jr. (I)	P. O. Box 998; Gastonia, North Carolina 28052
Stitcher, Mr. Buford R. (I)	Route One; Wedowee, Alabama 36278
Wilson, Mr. Robert C. (I)	Department of Archives and History 400 Jefferson Davis Boulevard Natchez, Mississippi 39120

#### WALL DRAWING: SWEET HONEY ON THE ROCK

Honey-gathering scenes, common in South African rock art, have only been found three times among European rock art. The three are, furthermore, sketchy and undetailed. Now two scientists have discovered, in eastern Spain, the most elaborate and revealing European honey-gathering scene. It is associated with the late Ice Age, about 10,000 years ago.

The particular drawing reveals in known Levantine rock art "the first definite ladder constructed of side ropes, with rigid intersecting rungs," report M. and L. Dams of Brussels. Two of the previously discovered paintings show very little else than free-hanging parallel strands of rope.

A major portion of the 52-centimeter-high scene shows five humans on the ladder, which extends from the ground up to an apparent tree branch adjacent to several modules, presumably wild-bee hives.

### TIP FOR CLEANING FLINT ARTIFACTS

In order to clean flint artifacts of hard-to-dissolve moss as well as hard clay or other mineral crusts, simply soak your artifacts in household vinegar for about 48 hours. Then rinse with water. The vinegar is not so strong as to discolor the flint material as stronger acids can do. Caution: do not try this on bone, shell or softer stone artifacts, as it may cause them to disintegrate.

Charles Moore  
Florence

### IMAGE ENHANCEMENT - THE FUTURE DOCUMENTS THE PAST

Complex image enhancement techniques originally developed for the space program currently are being used to investigate records of man's history on Earth. Two medieval documents - a fragment of Cicero's Republic and a 14th century medical work - are being studied at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

The immediate objective of the study is to decipher erased or faintly visible words on the valuable parchments. The ultimate goal is to design equipment for manuscript study in museums and libraries.

They are using the breadboard model of the vidicon camera developed for Mariner spacecraft imaging science experiments. This camera scans and measures the brightness of hundreds of points along hundreds of lines in the field of vision in the manuscript. The degree of brightness, or gray level, for each point is recorded on magnetic tape on a scale from zero for jet black to 255 for white.

The information is then "read" by a computer, where it is filtered to remove shading, and "contrast-stretched" to a level that makes otherwise invisible marks visible to the naked eye.

Thus, the processes designed to produce pictures of the Earth, Moon, and Mars from weak satellite or spacecraft television signals, are now used to retrieve weak images of writing on the parchments.

(From NASA Activities, July 1977 [Reprinted from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory's house magazine, JPL Universe, dated May 20])

### CALL FOR PAPERES

Call for mini-papers - limit 15-20 minutes - to be presented at the 1977 Winter Meeting of the Alabama Archaeological Society, which will be held in Auburn on December 10. Theme: "Archaeology in Action" (summarizing activities in archaeological research during the last year). Deadline for abstracts (one paragraph to half a page) is November 1. Send abstracts and requests for further information to Michael C. Wells; 2713 Southbury Circle; Birmingham, Alabama 35216.

2. Beginning in 1978, Institutional membership dues will be \$10; and the Associate class of membership will be abolished.

3. Claims for "unreceived" copies of the Newsletter made more than three months after the date of issue will not be honored. Copies will be available upon request for \$1 each. Claims for "unreceived" copies of the Journal of Alabama Archaeology made more than one year after the date of publication will not be honored. Copies, of course, will be available for purchase for \$4 each.

4. Mr. Milt Harris of Birmingham has been nominated for Honorary Life Membership in the Alabama Archaeological Society in acknowledgment and appreciation of his many thousands of hours of dedicated work spent in the preparation of the STONES & BONES Newsletter. A form is included in this issue of the Newsletter so that members may vote on this nomination.

#### OLDEST DATES FOR MAYAN ORIGINS

A second year of excavations at Mayan ruins at Cuello, Belize (formerly British Honduras), has confirmed earlier estimates of an established settlement at the site by 2500 B.C. and suggests that the original occupation may have occurred before 4000 B. C. The results are reported by a six-member group led by Norman Hammond in the June 16 NATURE.

Radiocarbon dating of specimens of partially burned wood from various strata at the excavation has produced a consistent chronology of occupation at the site from the earliest known times in the formative periods of the civilization. According to this new chronology, these early periods should now be redated by as much as a thousand years, compared to previously accepted theories:

- Early Formative Period: 2500-1300 B. C., which coincides with the limits proposed by others for early ceramic making in Mesoamerica.

- Middle Formative Period: 1300-450 B. C., marked by extensive slash-and-burn agriculture on the surrounding ridges.

- Late Formative Period: 450 B. C.-A. D. 250, ending with the first appearance of inscribed stone monuments that marked the beginning of the so-called Classic Period of Mayan Civilization.

Three specimens of charred wood, however, did not fit into the otherwise consistent chronology. All three were found in strata of the Early Formative period, but in each case they apparently predated the immediately surrounding material by more than 1,500 years. Two of the samples appear to date from about 4000 B. C.

The authors conclude that these samples probably represent material that was reused and redeposited at the site by people who lived more than a millenium after the wood was originally charred

# THE ALABAMA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Following are the objectives stated in our Constitution, slightly modified for emphasis: To promote informed interest in the study of Archaeology in Alabama and neighboring States; to encourage careful scientific archaeological research in such ways as surface scouting, mapping, marking, studying and especially reporting; to promote and support professionally directed excavations and discourage unsupervised "digging"; to promote the conservation of archaeological sites and to favor the passage of laws prescribing such; to oppose the sale of antiquities, and the manufacture and sale of fraudulent artifacts; to encourage and develop a better understanding of archaeology through providing Newsletters, Journals, Chapter and State meetings, helpful associates and good fellowship; to serve as a bond between individual archaeologists in the State, both non-professional and professional; and perhaps most importantly, to give everyone the opportunity to "do something about archaeology" through the accomplishment and enjoyment of these high aims.

The Society needs and welcomes as members, all persons whose ideals are in accord with the objectives set forth above. Active members receive the JOURNAL OF ALABAMA ARCHAEOLOGY, devoted to articles on the archaeology of Alabama and nearby States, and also receive the STONES & BONES NEWSLETTER, published monthly, containing news of members and their activities, also State, national and worldwide events of archaeological importance.

The Society is a non-profit corporation and all contributions are deductible when making your income tax return.

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## THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION OF ALABAMA, INC.

This Association, an affiliate of our State Society, is a non-profit corporation, whose aim and purpose is to finance archaeological advancement in Alabama, the FIRST State to provide such financial support through popular subscription. All contributions to this association are deductible in making your income tax return (if, of course, you itemize your deductions). Your check should be made payable to the association as shown above.

### MAIL TO:

Mr. Wm. M. Spencer, Suite 1510, First National - Southern Natural Bldg., 1900 - 5th Ave., No., Birmingham, AL. 35203

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## Journals and Special Publications

Available back issues of the Society's Journal *THE JOURNAL OF ALABAMA ARCHAEOLOGY*, and all Special Publications are available from the Journal Editor. Please see back of this page for listing.

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## Stones and Bones Newsletter

Comments, news items, reviews and other material for inclusion in the Newsletter should be addressed to:

**Stones and Bones Editor / Amos J. Wright**  
2602 Green Mountain Road • Huntsville, Alabama 35803

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## MEMBERSHIP

The coupon below may be used EITHER to APPLY FOR MEMBERSHIP in the Society, or for the PAYMENT OF ANNUAL DUES. Please be sure that your name and address are CLEARLY entered, and that appropriate boxes are checked.

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