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Alabama Archaeological Society

Associate Editors
Bart Henson
Dorothy Luke



Editor
Amos J. Wright
2602 Green Mountain Rd.
Huntsville, Alabama 35803

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AN INDIAN HUNTERS' CAMP FOR 20,000 YEARS

(A rock shelter in western Pennsylvania was periodically occupied from about 19,000 B.C. to A.D. 1000. The extreme age of the site bears on the question of when men entered the Western Hemisphere.)

The site, named Meadowcroft, is near the Ohio River 47 miles west of Pittsburgh. The greater part of the prehistoric record at Meadowcroft from upper Stratum II to upper Stratum IX belongs to the cultural period American archaeologists call Woodland. A long series of Carbon-14 age determinations indicate that this period spanned some 2,250 to 2,500 years at the site, beginning in about 1115 B.C.

The earliest Woodland remains come from the upper part of Stratum III, where a large fire pit was found to contain sherds from several different pottery vessels. The wares, tempered with pulverized ironstone or sandstone and impressed with cord markings, are the earliest example of Indian pottery yet found in the upper Ohio River valley. Preserved squash seeds of the same age; that is, about 1115 B.C., indicate that horticulture, which is a key characteristic of the Woodland culture, probably reached this part of the upper Ohio more than 500 years earlier than had been supposed.

The continuity of horticulture is indicated by the presence of a squash seed in the lower part of the overlying level, Stratum IV, dating to about 865 B.C. The recovery of a carbonized cob of 16-row popcorn from the upper part of the same stratum, dating to between 375 and 340 B.C., establishes a new early date for the cultivation of maize in the upper Ohio area.

The utilization of the Meadowcroft shelter by the Woodland people was preceded by some 7,000 years of visits by the hunters and gatherers of an earlier Indian culture: the Archaic. Moving again from older to younger levels, the Archaic Indians left evidence of their presence from the upper part of Stratum IIa, dating from about 8500 to about 8000 B.C., up to just below the upper part of Stratum III, dated at about the end of the second millennium B.C. The beginning of the Archaic period at Meadowcroft approximately coincides with the retreat of the last glacial ice sheet from North America and the beginning of the Holocene: the currect geologic epoch.

The earliest inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere are assigned to a rather broadly defined cultural stage: the Paleo-Indian. Its most familiar characteristics are the hunting of big-game animals (most of which are now extinct) and the manufacture of elegantly fluted stone projectile points. The evidence that Paleo-Indians had reached Meadowcroft, in eastern North America, more than 19,000 years ago generated considerable controversy among American archaeologists. The crux of the controversy is precisely when the first emigrants from Asia crossed over the land bridge in what is now the Bering Strait. If some of them had reached the upper Ohio River by 17,000 B.C., it seems logical that, allowing some time for the migration east, they had crossed the land bridge at least 2,000 or 3,000 years ealier. Yet such a time of entry is thousands of years before the rough date customarily assigned to the event: 13,000 B.C. or later. This left those who still held to the customary view recourse to only one argument: The early dates at Meadowcroft must be mistaken, perhaps because the charcoal samples had been contaminated.

Actually, as part of the normal pretreatment procedure at the Smithsonian laboratory, each of the Meadowcroft samples had been microscopically examined for possible particulate contamination. None of the samples showed any signs of such contamination.

The oldest evidence for the use of stone tools at Meadowcroft consists of 123 complete or fragmentary tools and several hundred waste flakes from the manufacture and maintenance of the tools. All were associated with occupation-floor features in Middle and Lower Stratum IIa. Some of the tools are bifacial (flaked on both sides). A few knives were flaked on only one side. Among them is a distinctive form of knife, the Mungai, named after another Cross Creek site, Mungai Farm. Also present were blades, unshaped flakes that had been utilized in various ways and fragments of the "cores" from which the tools had been struck.

The living floor at the top of Middle Stratum IIa yielded the first and oldest projectile point to be found at Meadowcroft. The type has been named Miller Lanceolate, in honor of our host at Meadowcroft, Albert Miller. Other projectile points of the same type have been found at the Mungai Farm site, the Pershina site (which will be further investigated this summer) and at other places within or near the Cross Creek drainage. So far these sites have not yielded Miller Lanceolate points in any stratigraphic context that would make it possible to date them directly. The Miller Lanceolate from Middle IIa, however, is one of the oldest projectile points yet unearthed in eastern North America. It may be locally ancestral to the widely distributed Paleo-Indian points named Clovis.

The archaeologists of the Meadowcroft-Cross Creek project have collected some 20,000 artifacts: both flaked and ground stone and tools made of bone and other perishable materials. The project zoologists have amassed nearly a million animal bones and the botanists have collected 1.4 million plant specimens. The geologic samples number in the thousands. Data from

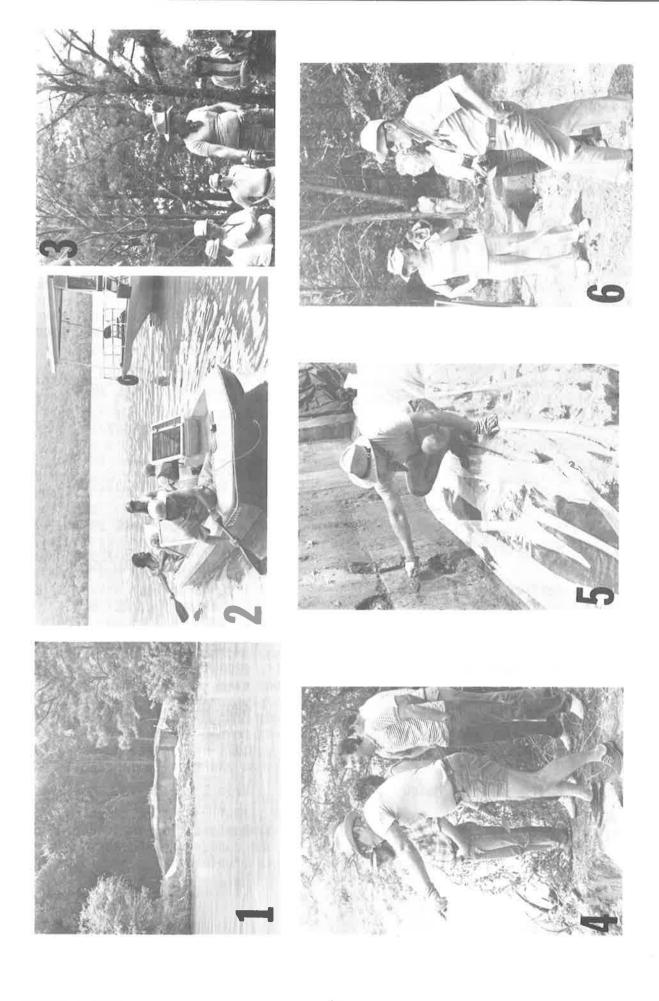
all these collections have been or are being prepared for computer analysis. They offer an unparalleled opportunity to examine the adaptations of different human populations to life in a single drainage system over a period of nearly 20 milleniums.

(From an article by J. M. Adovasio and R. C. Carlisle in "Scientific American, May 1984)

The Editors

NEW MEMBERS

<u>Name</u>	Туре	Address
Bennett, Mr. & Mrs. Clinton C.	F	Cedar Ridge, P. O. Box 1249 Scottsboro, AL 35768
Brewer, Ms. Olivia B.	I	401 Picadilly Drive Scottsboro, AL 35768
Campbell, Mr. & Mrs. Harry	F	Drawer B Section, AL 35771
Holloway, Mr. Robert D.	I	Route Four Oneonta, AL 35121
Kennamer, Mr. Stephen M.	I	P. O. Box 5 Scottsboro, AL 35768
Layfield, Ms. Betty	I	514-C Chateau Drive, S. E. Huntsville, AL 35801
Mayo, Mr. Jeffrey A.	А	12003 Greenleaf Drive, S. E. Huntsville, AL 35803
Newell, Mr. & Mrs. James	F	Route One, Box 170-A Grant, AL 35747
Robinson, Mr. & Mrs. Murray S.	F	6207 Sandia Blvd., N. E. Huntsville, AL 35810
Rodgers, Mr. & Mrs. Augustus D.	F	4591 Maysville Road New Market, AL 35761
Sheldon, Ms. Kitty	I	1711 Rosalie Ridge Drive, N. E. Huntsville, AL 35811
Stevenson Railroad Depot Museum	Inst.	Main Street, P. O. Box 894 Stevenson, AL 35772
Weems, Mr. Ricky D.	I	Route 14, Box 128 Florence, AL 35630

















1. Snodgrass Site. 2 and 12. Shuttle Boat from Shore to Island Site. 3, 4 and 5. Dr. Richard Krause, University of Alabama, briefing Society Members on Site Features. 6—10. Candid Views of members during the day. 11. AAS President, Jim Lee, relaxing aboard the field school support craft. (Photos by D. Luke.)

More Scenes From the AAS Summer Weeting-30 Jun 84

LETTER FROM A LIFE MEMBER

Mr. Amos J. Wright, Editor of Stones & Bones 2602 Green Mountain Rd. Huntsville, Alabama 35803

Dear Amos:

You may remember that last year I told of my experience at the Maya site of Colha, Belize, where I dug for 4 weeks as a member of an EARTHWATCH volunteer team. The project was under the direction of Dr. Thomas Hester and Mr. Jack Eaton of the University of Texas at San Antonio, and I enoyed the experience so much that I decided to go to Central America again early this year. This time, again as an EARTHWATCH volunteer, I dug for 6 weeks at the Maya site of Copan, Honduras, and vicinity, in a project under the direction of Dr. William Sanders of Pennsylvania State University.

This year's project was part of an ongoing program at Copan. A large part of the effort was to do the archaeological work associated with the excavation and restoration of a site called "Sepulturas", which is an area near the main ruins of Copan. This site has many buildings with interesting architectural features. It has also yielded a large number of burials and important artifacts, etc., which have added much to the general knowledge about the Mayas who occupied that region.

Of equal importance, is the Maya settlement pattern study, which has as its purpose the determination of the population densities, lifestyles, etc., of the ancient rural population and their relationship to the urban population. Information for this study was gathered by putting down test pits at the rural sites that had been located and mapped in previous years. In order to obtain a valid statistical sampling, the sites were divided into several categories, and the actual sites to be tested were chosen randomly by a computer. Each day it was necessary to travel to a rural area, locate the site to be tested using maps and aerial photographs, clear it off, and put down several 2 by 2 meter pits to sterile soil before the end of the day. It was a real challenge, as the job had to be accomplished rapidly but at the same time maintaining proper archaeological standards for the excavating and record-keeping.

The work was physically exhausting at times, and the food consisted mostly of beans, rice, and tortillas. However, the hands—on archaeology and the excellent lectures by Dr. Sanders and visiting archaeologists provided an experience that was both enjoyable and highly educational.

The project was well run, and it seemed to me that it met its planned objectives. I can highly recommend this kind of activity for amateurs wishing to vent their archaeological frustrations. This will probably hold me until next year! Please give my regards to my friends in Huntsville.

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Sincerely, James S. Farrior August 1984

CHAPTER NEWS

<u>Cullman Chapter</u>

The July chapter meeting was held at the home of DeWitt Coleman in Hartselle. DeWitt has one of the outstanding collections of artifacts in this area of Alabama, and they were on display at the meeting.

Howard King

Huntsville Chapter

Howard King of Cullman was the speaker at the July 17 chapter meeting. Howard presented a slide program on the Bay Springs, Mississippi site survey, in which he was a member of the survey team. Bay Springs is a portion of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway. Fifty-seven archaeological sites were identified in this area, of which four were recommended for excavation.

The Huntsville Chapter meets the third Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Arts Council Conference Room, Von Braun Civic Center. For more information call Program Chairman Ken Helms at 539-0939.

Dorothy Luke

Tuscaloosa Chapter

The Tuscaloosa Chapter July meeting was held at the town library. The Chapter President Jeanie Allan showed a film entitled "Lost In Time". The next meeting will be August 6, 1984.

Bill Adkison

BOOK REVIEW

"The Facts On File Dictionary of Religions" - edited by John R. Himmells, 1984, 550 pages, price \$24.95. Published by Facts On File Publications; 460 Park Avenue South; New York, New York 10016.

The book is in alphabetical sequence and has the format more of an encyclopedia than a dictionary. Of interest to our readers are the various Indian beliefs and religions included under many headings. The Dictionary covers religious beliefs worldwide, and there are some amazing and interesting beliefs that you wouldn't believe!

The Editors

PUBLICATIONS AVAILAB	LE		
Available issues of Journal of Alabama Archaeology Vol. 13-18, each issue			
Vol. 20-24 (\$2.50 to Members)	\$5.00 pp		
Stanfield-Worley Bluff Shelter Excavations (Journal of Alabama Archaeology) Vol. V	'III Nos. 1 & 2 - Reprint, each issue \$5.00 pp		
Special Publication 1 — Fort Mitchell \$2.00 pp			
Special Publication 2 — The Archaeological Sequence at Durant Bend, Dallas Coun			
Special Publication 3 — Archaeological Investigations at Horseshoe Bend			
Handbook of Alabama Archaeology Part 1, Point Types			
Lively, Long, Josselyn - Pebble Tool Paper			
Investigations in Russell Cave, published by the National Park Service			
Exploring Prehistoric Alabama through Archaeology (Juvenile)	\$7.00 pp		
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Mr. Amos J. Wright 2602 Green Mountain Road SE Huntsville, Alabama 35803



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