Alabama Archaeological Society

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STONES & BONES NEWSLETTER

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MEMBER OF THE EASTERN STATES ARCHEOLOGICAL FEDERATION

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FIRST PHASE - SUMMER PROJECT - COMPLETED

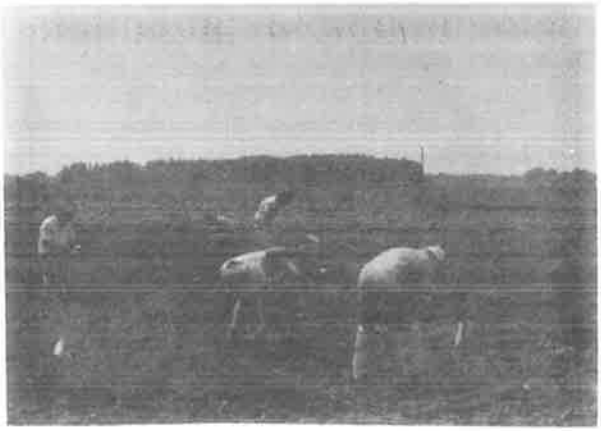
On June 5 approximately 40 enthusiastic Society members converged on North Alabama to help survey and collect from a Paleo site located northeast of Leighton. The Leighton Library was designated as the assembly point where we were graciously welcomed and given some local history. The Library contained a collection of early Americana, including artifacts, pictures and paintings of the nearby LaGrange Academy, which existed from 1838 to 1863, when it was burned by the Yankees along with over 100 antebellum homes in the surrounding area. A part of the Horace Holland Indian Artifact Collection was also on exhibit.

From the Library the group drove the few miles to the site, where the archaeological crew from the Office of Archaeological Research, University of Alabama, assisted by our able Jim Lee, were hard at work laying the two-acre site into four-meter by four-meter squares. We were given instructions and guidance by Carey Oakley, Director of OAR, on how to accomplish the survey and its purpose. Since this site was one of several Paleo sites scattered on top of the surrounding low knolls and which appears to overlook an old Pleistocene lake, the intensive surface collecting was to gather any and all material. These sites are known to have produced over 100 fluted points by collectors in the past, with perhaps as many unknown.

The two acres were "leased" from the landowner, and he was paid for crop deferral. He plowed the site just a few days before our survey, and the weather cooperated by giving us a good heavy rain on Thursday night and Friday. The OAR crew, arriving early Saturday morning, said there were no footprints on the site, which left it in prime condition.

The material was collected, bagged and marked by square. The "fun" was completed about 5 p.m., when everyone was tired, thirsty, but still in good humor. The dialogue among members during the day contributed to a better relationship and understanding, including compliments by the professionals on the quality work the amateurs were doing. In addition to the five professionals from the OAR, we were joined by professionals Charles Hubbert and Harold Huscher.

SCENES OF FIELD ACTIVITIES



Photos by Luke

The material collected was taken back to the OAR lab, where it will be cleaned, separated and analyzed. Based on this evaluation, plans for Phase II of the program will be developed for later this summer.

The weather was great, the fellowship outstanding, and we are looking forward to Phase II, which is tentatively scheduled for August 21. We will keep you informed.

The Editors

ENTREATY

Leave them.
Leave them,
The Old Ones,
The Ones who went before us,
The Ones who loved and fattened here,
Whose spirits haunt the woods about,
Whose laughter echoes through the hills,
Whose shadow sits among the rocks.
The hills resound with the echoes
Of their voices.

Leave them,
The Old Ones,
The Ones who gave us life,
Keepers of the People.
Let their Bundles
Lie beside them.

White Bird

(From a member of our Society using his Creek name, bestowed on him by Creeks of Oklahoma)

CHAPTER NEWS

Huntsville Chapter

The June program consisted of a workshop session on archaeological record keeping. This roundtable discussion focused on the importance of maintaining accurate documentation on artifact collections. Program Chairman Larry Warren led the discussion; he was joined by several chapter members, who told how they record their sites and label their artifacts. The Point of the Month was the Lecroy. Jim Lee was the moderator for this segment of the meeting.

The Huntsville Chapter meets the third Tuesday of each month in the Arts Council Conference Room, Von Braun Civic Center. For more information call Larry Warren at 536-4533.

Muscle Shoals Chapter

The chapter held its annual picnic on top of the Indian Mound in Florence on June 14. Eighteen members and guests attended. After the picnic the chapter meeting was held in the Indian Mound Museum, with John Adams presiding. Rather than a "Point of the Month", members brought "hard-to-classify" artifacts. All these interesting artifacts were examined and discussed. Charles Moore reported to the chapter on the Society's collection afternoon on the Paleo Indian site near Leighton. Charles Hubbert gave the group an interesting program entitled "Settlement Patterns of Early Man". The chapter will suspend meetings during the summer and resume in September or October.

MUMMY AUTOPSIES

Studies show that ancient South Americans were just as healthy as their modern counterparts.

Long before the ancient Egyptians were embalming their dead, South American Indians were making mummies the all-natural way: they were wrapping the bodies in reeds and leaves or cotton, and "sun-baking" them dry in shallow desert graves.

Today, these dehydrated preserved corpses have become fertile ground for research into the history of human disease. In the past decade, more than 2,500 mummies, some as much as 5,000 years old, have been excavated from desert coastal valleys in Peru and Chile.

In a study funded by the National Geographic Society, a team of medical detectives has X-rayed, dissected and rehydrated each mummy in a search for clues as to how these people lived and died. According to Dr. Marvin J. Allison, professor of clinical pathology at the Medical College of Virginia, "People died from the same causes 5,000 years ago as they do today".

The findings indicate that health in rural parts of western South America has improved little over the past five millenia. In some ways, it seems even to have deteriorated. Unchanged are adult height and life span, both of which are nutrition-related factors. And respiratory disease - tuberculosis, for instance - still ranks as the major cause of death in Latin America. Infant mortality and childhood illness, however, appear to have been lower 5,000 years ago than they are today, according to Allison, and there were fewer diseases caused by viruses. Toothaches were also less common, since hunting and gathering provided a diet high in protein instead of the carbohydrate-rich foods that came with agriculture. In documenting how little the causes of death have changed, the study also refuted some long-held myths. It had been thought, for example, that the Europeans introduced tuberculosis to the Western Hemisphere. But Allison has discovered well-preserved tuberculosis bacilli in people who died centuries before Columbus set foot on the New World. Similarly, many anthropologists believed that South American natives, until they mated with European settlers, had only type-O blood. But after examining tissue samples from the mummies, Allison has found that many Indians had A- and B-type blood.

(From an article in SCIENCE DIGEST, December 1981)

PUBLICATION AVAILABLE

THE MAPMAKERS - John Noble Wilford. Knopf, 1981, 414 pages, illus.; $20.

The story of how earth and then earth's nearest neighbor came to be mapped. The story has many characters: scholars and scientists, soldiers and sea captains, explorers and adventurers, monks and clockmakers, to name a few. The first two parts of the book are devoted to the achievements of cartography and geodesy prior to the 20th century. The rest of the book focuses on the 20th century, a time of new technologies, when so much that was once thought unmappable has come to be mapped.

VALLEY FEVER

The disease is so bizarre that some have termed it occult. It made a dramatic appearance in 1968 when students from the University of California at Davis dug into an ancient Indian burial site not far from the campus. Within weeks 11 of the 23 students were racked with chest pain, dry cough and high fever, and in some cases with pneumonia. Two years later 103 students from Queens College in New York traveled to Chico, California, to excavate another Indian site. Sixty-one of them came down with the same symptoms.

The likely cause of both outbreaks: a commonplace but sometimes lethal ailment known locally as valley fever. The result of inhaling a rare fungus found primarily in the dry topsoil of the Southwest, the disease is technically known as coccidioidomycosis. To some lurid imaginations, it is a curse that strikes those who tamper with sacred burial sites. "In fact, there is probably a very good reason the fungus is found around those places", says Dr. Demosthenes Pappagianis of the University of California at Davis. "It may have resided in decayed bodies. Perhaps their remains reinoculated the soil with it".

Pappagianis himself inadvertently fueled the myth about valley fever last year, when he gave an interview recounting the prevalence of the disease among archaeologicsts. He sardonically compared it to the curse of King Tut's tomb. Since that story, the doctor has pointed out that the malady has also taken a heavy toll among tourists digging for prehistoric marine fossils at Shark's Tooth Mountain, near Bakersfield. Indeed, all of Bakersfield and surrounding Kern County is regarded as a valley fever hotspot, as is Florence, Arizona. Berkeley microbiologist Hillel Levine, who with Pappagianis, has spent years investigating valley fever, says it is most virulent when it attacks minority groups and pregnant women. "Please don't call it 'Indian revenge'", Levine asks. "The sad part is that native Americans in Arizona are very susceptible to the disease".

Almost anybody exposed to the dry, dusty soil of the San Joaquin Valley in central California is a candidate for valley fever - and an estimated 85,000 people contract the disease every year. Eight years ago Pam Epps, 33, went dirt-biking with her family near a Bakersfield city park. Within days, she recalls,

she began "losing weight and feeling run-down". One doctor diagnosed it as "nerves". Valley fever was not discovered until a year later, when Epps was hospitalized after her lungs filled with fluid. Since there is no cure for the disease, Epps was sent to bed for two weeks to relieve her symptoms. "I thought I was well until March of 1981", she remembers. "Then I couldn't catch my breath". Doctors removed part of her left lung because it was abcessed, and Epps is now taking an antifungal drug and sees her doctor regularly. "I still have valley fever", she says.

Most victims of the fever eventually recover and remain immune to the fungus for the rest of their lives. Kern County doctors estimate that more than 50 percent of the population of the San Joaquin Valley has had the disease. Though most victims experience symptoms no more severe than those of the common cold, the ailment can linger. Some victims suffer severe skin lesions, meningitis and even dementia - and some 50 to 70 die each year. State Assemblyman Don Rogers lost a friend to valley fever in 1966. "He was a fine, healthy man", Rogers recalls. "In a period of six months he went down, down, down. I watched the guy literally die before my eyes".

Determined to help stamp out the disease, Rogers sponsored a $300,000 appropriation in 1980 that has allowed Pappagianis and Levine to test a valley fever vaccine on a large scale for the first time. Although some residents of the affected areas are unwilling to take the required three injections, the researchers hope their vaccine will prove effective - and that the Food and Drug Administration will quickly approve it. The FDA's imprimatur will come none too soon. Says Kathy Thiroux, head nurse in the Kern County vaccine study: "I remember one bright, articulate man who lost control over his emotions and every part of his body. It took him a couple of years to die. This vaccine could prevent a lot of suffering".

(Article by Nancy Faber in PEOPLE Magazine, February 15, 1982)

The Editors

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Available issues of *Journal of Alabama Archaeology* Vol. 13-18 ..... $1.00 pp
Vol. 20-24 ($2.50 to Members) ..... $4.00 pp
Stanfield-Worley Bluff Shelter Excavations (Journal of Alabama Archaeology) Vol. VIII Nos. 1 & 2-Reprint ..... $5.00 pp
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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 ..... $7.35 pp
Lively, Long, Josselyn - *Pebble Tool Paper* ..... $3.00 pp
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Exploring Prehistoric Alabama through Archaeology (Juvenile) ..... $7.00 pp

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