

Alabama Archaeological Society

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STONES & BONES NEWSLETTER

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2602 Green Mountain Rd.
Huntsville, Alabama 35803

Volume 24

MEMBER OF THE EASTERN STATES ARCHEOLOGICAL FEDERATION

No. 6

A.A.S. SUMMER PROJECT

As a reminder, our summer project, in cooperation with the Office of Archaeological Research at The University of Alabama, is in two phases. The first phase is an intense surface collection and survey of the site in Colbert County near Leighton, Alabama, which was held June 5. The OAR wanted some time to analyze this collection and to use the results in planning the second phase, which will consist of a weekend of selective test excavations. The second phase is tentatively planned for late July-early August. All the details will be in the July STONES & BONES. We are excited about the possibilities of this site and look forward to the second phase. Remember - if you have not already registered, you need to do so soon. The registration fee of \$10 for the second phase (\$15 for both phases if you registered for Phases One and Two) goes to help pay the land owner for crop deferral and OAR personnel and supplies. Send your fee to Bettye Henson; 7608 Teal Drive; Huntsville, Alabama 35802.

READERS' COMMENT

In the March issue of STONES & BONES, we ran an article on historic archaeology being performed by Michigan State University on the Tennessee-Tombigbee project. We sort of mixed apples and oranges - that is, we discussed earlier archaeological (?) projects in Alabama that resulted in the removal of large quantities of artifacts to permanent storage and exhibit outside the state along with the current project in Mississippi being performed by MSU. We in no way intended to categorize MSU with these earlier endeavors and apologize if it came across that way. We received a letter from Charles Cleland and W. Lee Minnerly, Co-Principal Investigators on the project, in which they shed additional information that we had not been privy to previously. We just hope the State of Mississippi somehow comes up with the facilities to house this giant collection of artifacts. We are pleased to print their letter in full:

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

THE MUSEUM

EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824

May 7, 1982

Mr. Amos Wright
Editor
Stones and Bones
2602 Green Mountain Road
Huntsville, AL 35803

Dear Mr. Wright:

As Co-Principal Investigators for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project, we are writing to correct some misimpressions that result from your editorial in the March issue of Stones and Bones. We sympathize with the drain of archaeological materials from the south. Further, we believe that artifacts should remain in the state from which they were excavated. It is true that the artifacts excavated during the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project belong to the Federal Government since they were excavated with federal dollars from public land. Currently, these materials are on loan to Michigan State University for description and analysis. For the last three years, we have been trying to find a permanent curatorial home for these artifacts in Mississippi. Thus far, we have approached the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, the Cobb Institute of Archeology at Mississippi State University, and University Museums at the University of Mississippi, asking that they eventually assume responsibility for these well-documented, completely catalogued and valuable collections of nineteenth century material. However, with the possible (and highly tentative) exception of something "ultimately" being worked out at the University of Mississippi, there has been no real progress. Each of these institutions is hard pressed for storage facilities and are not willing to take on the Tombigbee material. We will not see these collections go to an institution which cannot provide adequate curatorial care and are reluctant to see them reside outside of Mississippi. We are still trying to make some suitable arrangement but can hardly be faulted for either our intentions or the lack of sufficient curatorial space in Mississippi.

As for Michigan State University's participation in the project, we have difficulty with your argument that "southern universities are just as well qualified." In fact, there are very few universities anywhere in the United States qualified to do nineteenth century archaeological research. There are two southern universities which are qualified to assume this kind of research and both were given an opportunity to bid on this project prior to the involvement of Michigan State University. Both declined due to other commitments or lack of interest.

Mr. Amos Wright
May 7, 1982
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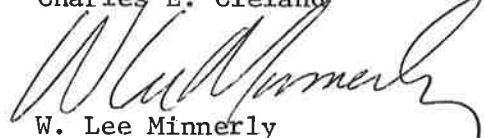
Again, we believe it is unfair of you to accuse us of "carpet bag archaeology" in view of the fact that this research necessarily had to be done and no qualified southern university was prepared to take it on.

We hope you will publish this letter in order to correct the impressions left by your editorial.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Cleland



W. Lee Mimmerly
Co-Principal Investigators
Tombigbee Historic Townsites
Project

CHAPTER NEWS

Cullman Chapter

The May program was a presentation by Mr. John Gustafson of Decatur, who showed slides, artifacts and a film on "Fluted Point Technology". John came to the chapter last year with a program on the Quad Site. He has collected several fluted points and has done quite a bit of research on this subject.

The chapter had an excellent field trip to a shell mound on April 25, with 16 members participating. It was the first time for some of the participants to look at a shell mound; it took quite a bit of looking to get familiar with the shell. All in all, everyone enjoyed the trip and "learned something".

Huntsville Chapter

The speaker at the May Huntsville Chapter meeting was Dr. Frances Roberts, recently retired from the Department of History of The University of Alabama in Huntsville. Dr. Roberts gave a very timely and interesting account of the historical and archaeological background of Huntsville's Constitution Hall Park, which opened May 1. She is on the Board of Directors of the Park and has been involved with its planning and operation.

Muscle Shoals Chapter

The chapter met on Monday night, May 10, at the Indian Mound Museum in Florence. Twelve members and four guests attended the meeting. The A.A.S. summer project at Leighton was discussed.

Charles Moore then presented a slide narration of Indian sites in southern Ohio. The chapter plans to have a picnic meeting on the Indian Mound in Florence on June 15 at 6 p.m.

NEW MUSEUM BULLETIN

"Plant Resources, Archaeological Plant Remains, and Prehistoric Plant-Use Patterns in the Central Tombigbee River Valley", Bulletin #7, 1982, of the Alabama Museum of Natural History, by Gloria May Caddell, with the preface by C. Earle Smith, Jr. Thirty-nine pages; price \$5. Order from Alabama Museum of Natural History; Box 5987; University, Alabama 35486.

During 1976-1977 large samples of plant remains were recovered from five archaeological sites in the Tombigbee Basin. The time period covers Archaic through Mississippian. One of the conclusions drawn is that nuts were a consistently important carbohydrate source from Archaic to the Mississippian Period. The earliest occurrence of corn in the Valley is carbon-dated to A.D. 910; although earlier samples were found, they could not be considered reliable. Some 27 common beans were identified, large numbers of seeds from herbaceous annuals, chickweed seeds (appear to be the first recovered from a site in the U.S.), and other vegetative and root resources were recovered. The hickory nut was the predominant, followed by acorn and walnut remains. Although this Bulletin has only 39 pages, it is packed with tables and new information on plant remains that is not readily available elsewhere, simply because the remains have not been collected, analyzed and published. This is an addition that gives insight to the food consumption patterns from Archaic through Mississippian times and allows us to better understand these prehistoric peoples. This work was made possible by the Office of Archaeological Research, University of Alabama, under direction of Carey B. Oakley. The project was funded by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers - Mobile District - on contract with OAR.

The Editors

FOUR FINED \$2,000 FOR ILLEGAL EXCAVATIONS

Three Wellsville, Ohio residents and one Chester, West Virginia resident were recently cited in Federal Court for illegal excavation of Indian artifacts on Government property at Bluestone Lake, near Hinton, West Virginia. The four persons, who are members of the Aboriginal Explorers Society, pleaded guilty to violation of Part 327.14 of Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations, which carries a maximum penalty of \$500 or six months imprisonment or both. United States Magistrate Jerry D. Hogg elected not to impose imprisonment but levied the maximum fine for each violator.

U. S. Attorney Mike Carey explained that the United States could have prosecuted the case under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (Title 16, Part 470 ee(d)), which carries a maximum first offense penalty of \$10,000 fine or one year imprisonment. Should restoration fees exceed \$5,000, the maximum penalty is \$20,000 or two years' imprisonment or both. Magistrate Hogg indicated that future violations of this sort will be tried under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 and greater penalties will be imposed.

Park Ranger David Eskridge, who issued the citations, and Corps of Engineers Archaeologist Robert Maslowski testified on behalf of the Government at the hearing. Dr. Maslowski stressed that the artifacts were not exceptionally valuable, but archaeological sites are non-renewable resources and extensive damage was done by the illegal excavations. It will also cost the Government money to wash, label and analyze the four boxes of artifacts that were dug from the site.

Bluestone Reservoir has several important archaeological sites, and the Army Corps of Engineers has spent over \$70,000 to date on preservation and professional excavation of three major Fort Ancient Village sites. The 58 recorded archaeological sites in the reservoir are protected under Federal law, and any excavation is prohibited.

According to Bluestone Lake Resource Manager Howard Chesne, illegal digging in the reservoir has been a problem for several years. The Corps of Engineers have taken steps to prevent further degradation of the archaeological resources. Law enforcement patrols will be increased, and violators will be prosecuted.

Robert F. Maslowski
Huntington, West Virginia

OLDEST BUILDING IN AMERICA FOUND

The National Trust for Historic Preservation made a \$50,000 grant in April from its Endangered Properties Fund to the Colorado Historical Foundation to help pay for an emergency excavation of what archaeologists say are likely the oldest known buildings in North America.

The remains of the two structures are at Windy Gap, near Granby, Colo. They are in the right-of-way for a 45-foot-wide trench for a water pipeline being dug by the Northern Colorado Water District.

According to Arthur C. Townsend, the Colorado state historic preservation officer and a representative of the Colorado Historical Foundation, several radiocarbon dating tests have revealed the remains to be 4,000 to 5,000 years old. Before the remains of these structures were discovered last fall, the oldest buildings that had been found in North America were estimated to be 2,500 years old.

"Archaeologists think that the remains survived for so long because a fire passed over them and baked the wattle-and-daub walls into a brick-like substance", Townsend said. "Wattle-and-daub buildings usually decay in 200 years. If that is true, the Windy Gap remains may be unique". So far archaeologists have not found any artifacts of the people who built the structures.

(From PRESERVATION NEWS, May 1982, the monthly newspaper of the National Trust for Historic Preservation)

The Editors

EASTERN STATES ARCHEOLOGICAL FEDERATION

Dues for ESAF individual membership are \$12 until November 15, 1982. This will include Volume 10 of ARCHEOLOGY OF EASTERN NORTH AMERICA. AENA #10 will include the initial count of known fluted points in the East, state by state; pieces esquillees from the Vail Paleo-Indian site in Maine; prehistoric ceramics from the mid-Atlantic region; chronological glossary of 75 Anglo and American wares dating between the 16th and 19th centuries in the U.S.; and other articles. Send your \$12 to ESAF; Box 260; Washington, Connecticut 06793. Other volumes of AENA still available are: #2, #3, #4, #5, #6 at \$5 each; #7 at \$10; #8 and #9 at \$12; \$10 by ESAF membership at \$12 (when published in the fall of 1982, the price may be higher due to increased publication and mailing costs, so send your membership today). Also available are the 1963 Bibliography for \$2 and the 1977 Bibliography for \$7. For all books include a total postage of \$1.

Marjorie Gay
Standing Rock

VENUS AND THE MAYA

New Haven, Conn. - The Mayan Indians fought battles, celebrated victories and crowned kings according to where Venus was in the sky. Archaeoastronomers have long known of the Mayan obsession with the planet; but this finding, by Yale University anthropologist Floyd Lounsbury, is the first evidence that it directed their lives.

The discovery came when Mary Miller, a Yale student in art history, was studying the murals of a three-room building at Bonampak, a Mayan site in south-east Mexico. The murals depict royal ceremonies, the raid of a settlement, and the presentation of prisoners to the king. Dates are painted on the wall near the murals; astronomical symbols, often found on Mayan structures and usually thought to represent Venus, are painted above the murals. Earlier scholars believed the dates over the ceremony mural to be December 10, 790, and November 11, 791, but the date accompanying the prisoner scene is only partially legible. Wondering if the symbols might be a clue to the missing date, Miller consulted Lounsbury.

Loundsbury checked seven possible dates for the prisoner mural and found that one of them, August 2, 792, was the day on which Venus would have been blocked from view as it passed in front of the sun. Hoping this was not just coincidence, he looked at other inscriptions scattered throughout additional structures at Bonampak. All of the dates that mark a ceremony or raid also coincide with a significant point in Venus' orbit, such as its appearance as a morning or evening star. Moreover, dates at other Mayan sites also match certain Venus positions. The Maya, he says, must have consulted astrologers before planning rituals and battles.

(From SCIENCE - January-February 1982)

The Editors

NEW EASTER ISLAND DATA

No one knows why they decided to leave their native land, but over 1,500 years ago, unknown groups of people bound for unknown destinations set sail on the Pacific Ocean. After a journey of thousands of miles, the voyagers landed on one of the world's most isolated spots - Easter Island. There they built a civilization - 10,000 strong, that prospered in relative peace. Then, for some still unexplained reason, virtually the entire population disappeared in a violent period of civil war and cannibalism.

Three scientists, led by anthropologist George Gill of the University of Wyoming, are trying to discover where these people came from and how such a society could have vanished so easily. They hope that the 308 skeletons they recently unearthed on Easter Island may at last provide some answers to these questions.

The team collected the bones largely from ahus, vaults that rest beneath many of the 600 brooding rock sculptures that dot the island's slopes. Early evidence supplied by analysis of the skeletons appears to conflict with the theory that only one wave of travelers originally settled Easter Island. Rather, Gill suggests, the early residents may have come from two areas: Polynesia and Peru. That this remote spot could be found even once has long left archaeologists amazed. "The possibility that it may have happened two times", Gill says, "makes it more incredible yet".

Still, some think this is just what happened. Many of the skulls exhumed display traits that are characteristically Polynesian. Other skeletons, however, as well as unearthed masonry, may hint at South American origins.

(From an article in Science Digest - April 1982)

The Editors

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Available issues of <i>Journal of Alabama Archaeology</i> Vol. 13-18	\$1.00 pp
Vol. 20-24 (\$2.50 to Members)	\$4.00 pp
<i>Stanfield-Worley Bluff Shelter Excavations</i> (Journal of Alabama Archaeology) Vol. VIII Nos. 1 & 2-Reprint	\$5.00 pp
Special Publication 1 – Fort Mitchell	\$2.00 pp
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Special Publication 3 – <i>Archaeological Investigations at Horseshoe Bend</i>	\$6.50 pp
<i>Handbook of Alabama Archaeology Part 1, Point Types</i>	\$7.35 pp
Lively, Long, Josselyn - <i>Pebble Tool Paper</i>	\$3.00 pp
<i>Investigations in Russell Cave</i> , published by the National Park Service	\$5.00 pp
<i>Exploring Prehistoric Alabama through Archaeology</i> (Juvenile)	\$7.00 pp

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 SEND CHECKS TO: **MR. EUGENE FUTATO, Office of Archaeological Research**
 1 Mound State Monument, Moundville, Alabama 35474

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