

Alabama Archaeological Society

Associate Editor
H. Blaine Ensor



STONES & BONES NEWSLETTER

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SOCIETY SUMMER MEETING

If you suffered from the sweltering heat of Alabama last July 11, it was your own fault. If you were driven inside with nothing to do but watch reruns on television or squabble with your "significant other," tough luck. The descriptive drawing from the cover of the newsletter did not do justice to the site of the Society's summer meeting. Picture, if you will, those of us fortunate enough to share the day with the students and archaeologists at Dust Cave near Florence and wipe the sweat from your brow as you remember what you did.

The short trip began in the van from the Florence Mound. Next we joggled and bumped along in a four-wheel vehicle pulling a loaded passenger wagon through the soybean fields and mud holes, glad not to be walking. Unloading, the choice was a short walk to the site or ride in the boat. What an option!

The boat ride was all too short, through cypress trees and stumps and the quiet backwaters of the Tennessee River sluice. It is hard to believe that such serene locations exist not in the pages of the "National Geographic Magazine," but right here in our North Alabama.

The air-conditioned cave was a natural gathering place not just because it was 20 degrees cooler than the outside air. The two summers' previous work by the University of Alabama and University of North Alabama students has shown good results and meticulous workmanship. Everything was arranged for a casual visitor or enthusiastic hobbyist for show and tell.

The living spaces and work area clung to the shady sides of the bluff; everything was neat and operable. The cold drinks and iced watermelon were great. The return boat ride, sharing a unique interest and companionship, made it hard to go back into the real world of interstate traffic and sweltering heat. Thanks, Boyce Driskell and students, for sharing your site with the Society.

Nancy Rohr
Secretary, A.A.S.
Huntsville

July 1992

A.A.S. COMMENTARY

Blaine Ensor's March "A.A.S. Commentary" accurately describes a justified concern for the integrity of our archaeological data base. It is growing and will predictably get worse. A visit to one of the increasingly frequent Indian artifact shows or auctions demonstrates one contributory cause for the situation. Case upon case of spectacular lithic materials are displayed for sale at high prices to a long line of green-eyed and trusting visitors. Conveniently placed "authoritative" valuation books support or inflate the prices further. A long-time surface collector visiting such an affair could easily get the feeling that his legitimate surface collection was made by a group of highly inept and careless aboriginal knappers. The new-interest amateur might conclude that purchasing is the only way to accumulate a satisfactory collection. It is quite a sight and certainly one reason that personal collections could be contaminated with questionable materials from a variety of sources. Anyone attending one of these shows could easily leave with the impression that his legitimate collection is either worth a lot of money or is inadequate or both. It is an invitation to do something - and many do.

Years ago, our Society was founded upon the desire of a number of interested individuals to learn more about early man from the professional. Thousands of highly knowledgeable amateurs resulted from the association. The professionals benefitted also. Never before had they access to so many individuals eager to reveal everything they knew about sites and materials in their local areas. Additionally, they had volunteers to assist with a broad range of excavation tasks and, eventually, they were receiving publication-quality reports on a variety of subjects. Surface collecting was encouraged, and the valid reasons for amateurs not excavating a site were understood by all. Lithic materials became a common bond between the members as they learned the science of archaeology. The showing of a few finds at each meeting added to the excitement and provided a catalyst to the learning process. Well-documented collections were applauded and studied by professionals to understand the range of materials being found in specific areas. Few individuals had any thoughts of profiting from their collections, there was very little artifact traffic, and the placing of a monetary value on the materials was appropriately discouraged. What went wrong?

Man is a materialistic animal who thrives on ownership of just about anything. The list of "collectibles" goes from the sublime to the ridiculous. Generally speaking, the value of a collectible is determined by the ease of acquisition - a supply/demand equation. It is no different for Indian artifacts, and the durable lithic materials have quickly become a base upon which the average person could build. Years ago, their value was little or nothing, and almost anyone willing to put in the effort could locate sites where it was possible to accumulate a large collection. Most individuals were satisfied with materials eroded

out of the river banks or plowed out in fields. A few greedy and uncaring individuals eventually pursued the quest with a shovel, and a few unfortunately moved to mechanical means to satisfy their needs.

Over the years, artifact values climbed slowly as more and more individuals sought a "collection." Then events occurred which would forever change the public view of Indian artifacts. Well intentioned state and Federal laws aimed at preserving our Indian heritage were imposed on the public. And like all acts of prohibition, it made the already collected materials more valuable, scarce materials scarcer, and presented the opportunity for a number of individuals to profit, rather than preserve. The supply/demand balance had been shifted. The laws caused public outcry and focused news media and public attention on Indian artifacts, which were being described by professionals as rare treasures. Artifact values soared further as a growing number of law-abiding citizens seeking a collection were limited to a decreasing number of private land sites. Many turned to the other options - illegal collecting on public land, pot-hunting, and purchase. This, in turn, led to contamination of collections, reluctance to report important finds on public lands to knowledgeable individuals, and the inevitable manufacture and sale of fraudulent artifacts for profit. The supply/demand equation was simply being provided with an answer - at any cost.

The surface collection data base is indeed becoming compromised. More and more people are purchasing and trading artifacts, information on important public land finds is suppressed, and hungry collectors are falling prey to an increasing volume of fraudulent artifacts. What can we, what should we do? The answer is certainly not more laws. Human nature in combination with laws have only exacerbated the problem. Since we cannot change human nature, why not seek changes in the laws which prevent nondestructive surface collecting? This should only be done in combination with a program which would encourage or reward the proper documentation of located materials at some type of formal information depository. This may not solve all the problems, but at least some facts on finds would be recorded for future study, pride in legitimate material ownership would be enhanced, and surface materials currently lost to nature on public property might be saved. Properly documented surface collections provide both information and preservation. Both should be encouraged on public and private land.

John H. Gustafson
Somerville

RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AT TROY STATE UNIVERSITY

During the month of February, Troy State University conducted Phase II investigations of an Archaic site in Bibb County

which was threatened by the construction of a proposed prison. An undisturbed matrix was discovered containing both Dalton and Early Archaic lithic material. The site was determined to be significant, and the proposed construction plans were changed in order to protect the site.

During the month of March, Troy State students participated in a cultural resource assessment of a one-mile section of Choccolocco Creek in Calhoun County near Oxford. Twelve sites were discovered as a result of the survey. The majority of the sites were inhabited during the Archaic period, including two significant Early Archaic sites with a buried undisturbed strata. Both sites are considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The field crew is currently surveying an additional five-mile stretch of the creek where a dozen more sites have already been discovered in the first mile.

During the month of April, Troy State conducted test excavations at a historic house site in Pike County for Alabama Electric Cooperative. The excavations revealed both back corners of the structure, the back porch area, the archaeological remains of the detached kitchen, a wooden drainage pipe leading from the area of the dining room to the back yard, remains of back yard flower beds and well as archaeological evidence of a vegetable garden, and the archaeological remains of a chicken coop. The recovery of botanical remains was exceptionally good. Archival research indicates that the structure was constructed in 1854 and as a result of the investigations, the site was determined eligible for nomination to the National Register, and construction plans were altered in order to protect the site.

Recent research surveys by the Troy State archaeological program has resulted in the discovery of dozens of previously unrecorded sites in the southeastern corner of the state, where very little archaeological research has ever been conducted. Several of these sites promise to be very significant and will be tested during the coming summer by the Troy State Field School. One site that will be targeted for test investigations is a Weeden Island Period mound site. Unfortunately, this site has recently been pot hunted, and the field school's goal is to "clean up" the pot hunters' holes in hopes of determining more about the mound and the surrounding habitational area, which appears to be extensive, covering an area of 30 or more acres.

Other research currently going on at Troy State includes an inventory of Paleo and Early Archaic projectile points from sites in and adjacent to Pike County. The study will examine southeast Alabama variations on common Paleo and Archaic point types as well as correlations of preferred lithic materials. Trey Earnest, a Troy State student, is also conducting heat alteration experiments with both Tallahatta Quartzite and Ocala Chert, both local lithic materials. Trey will be completing his research this summer and is working on an article for publication.

The coming summer promises to be an exciting one for the Troy State archaeological program. In addition to the planned testing of the Weeden Island site, a survey of portions of the Pea and Choctawhatchee River drainage systems will be conducted for Soil Conservation Service, an archaeological field school for outstanding high school students from the wiregrass area will be going on in June (funded by the Wiregrass Science and Technology Consortium), the Choccolocco Creek survey will be completed, and a dozen sites will be Phase II tested in Geneva and Covington Counties for Alabama Electric Cooperative.

McDonald Brooms
Troy State University

ARROWPOINTS

Thanks to Jim Parker of Montgomery, who recently donated a number of issues to the Society collection, we now need only the following issues:

Volume 1 # 1, 3-6 - 1920
Volume 2 # 1, 2, 5, 6 - 1921
Volume 3 #1-4 - 1921
Volume 22 #3-6 - 1937*

*We are not sure these last three issues were ever printed. Does anyone know? If so, I would appreciate this information. Contact me at 205/883-0040, or 2602 Green Mountain Road; Huntsville, AL 35803.

A. J. Wright, Jr.
Chairman
Archives Committee
Huntsville

CHAPTER NEWS

Muscle Shoals Chapter

The Muscle Shoals Chapter held its June 8th hamburger cookout/picnic supper on the grounds at the Indian Mound in Florence. Forty-five members and guests attended. After a bountiful supper, Scott Shaw brought us an update on the progress at Dust Cave. A good bit of the lab work has been completed since Scott gave us a brief report in December 1991. He invited members of our chapter to participate in the excavation, and encouraged us to attend the A.A.S. Summer Meeting at Dust Cave.

Charles Moore
Florence

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Available issues of *Journal of Alabama Archaeology*

Vol. 20-31, each issue	\$3.50 pp
Vol. 32 & up, each issue	\$6.00 pp
<i>Stanfield-Worley Bluff Shelter Excavations</i> (Journal of Alabama Archaeology) Vol. VIII Nos. 1 & 2 - Reprint	\$7.50 pp
Special Publication 2 — <i>The Archaeological Sequence at Durant Bend, Dallas County Alabama</i>	\$6.00 pp
Special Publication 3 — <i>Archaeological Investigations at Horseshoe Bend</i>	\$8.00 pp
<i>Handbook of Alabama Archaeology Part 1, Point Types</i>	\$15.00 pp
Lively, Long, Josselyn - <i>Pebble Tool Paper</i>	\$3.00 pp
<i>Investigations in Russell Cave</i> , published by the National Park Service	\$10.00 pp
<i>Exploring Prehistoric Alabama through Archaeology</i> (Juvenile)	\$9.00 pp

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