

Alabama Archaeological Society

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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

SUMMER MEETING

The 1987 summer meeting of the Alabama Archaeological Society will be held at the Hightower Site on Saturday, June 27, 1987. This is a hands-on learning experience, so pack your picnic lunch, wear field clothes and gloves, and prepare to lend a hand at this important site. Work will begin at 9:00 a.m. and continue until 5:00 p.m. Remember that this is the first farm gate on your right after crossing the Tallaseehatchee Bridge going north on Highway 21 toward Talladega. Follow the directions at the gate for access to the site. Come on out and join us.

Work on this site has been organized to support the research efforts of the Alabama De Soto Commission in searching for evidence of the route of the Spanish explorers, Hernando De Soto and Tristan De Luna. The route of De Soto through Alabama is largely a mystery. Preliminary archaeological tests in the area have been encouraging, and some iron artifacts have been recovered. However, much additional work is needed, and the truly diagnostic artifacts have not yet been recovered. The 1987 field season (see below) will be dedicated toward these objectives. The site is also rich in information and artifacts concerning the Mississippian, or Moundbuilder, Indian culture.

Carey B. Oakley
Moundville

FIELD SCHOOLS ANNOUNCED

The Archaeology Division of The University of Alabama State Museum of Natural History wishes to announce the establishment of three field schools for the upcoming 1987 season.

Hightower Field School: This field school will be held from June 14, 1987, until August 15, 1987. Excavation efforts will be focused on a proto-historic site located on the Hightower Farm, which is situated approximately three miles north of Sylacauga just off Highway 21.

June 1987

This year's excavation will be co-sponsored by Alabama State Museum and Jacksonville State University. The Sylacauga Museum of Fine Arts will serve as local hosts for this endeavor. Dr. Harry O. Holstein of JSU will supervise the field investigations. Dr. John Hall will direct the 1987 museum expedition at this site.

Cahawba Field School: The official field school of the Department of Anthropology will be co-sponsored by the Alabama State Museum of Natural History and the Alabama Historical Commission. Research at this important site will include additional investigations of that portion of the site that recently revealed a moat and palisade dating from the protohistoric period. I might add that this is an area where some historians speculate the site of Maubila might be located. No doubt this summer's investigations will shed additional light upon this significant historical site.

Smith Bottom Archaeological Project: A joint venture between the University of North Alabama, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and The University of Alabama State Museum of Natural History, this site holds great promise in unveiling some of the missing information about the Woodland and Archaic occupation of this area. We are particularly interested in the floral and faunal remains which are well preserved at this significant site.

Project supervisor will be Richard Yarnell, assisted by Kenneth Styer. This project will begin on June 15, 1987, and will continue through August. Also, undergraduate credit will be offered through the University of North Alabama, while graduate credit will be offered by The University of Alabama College of Continuing Studies.

If you are interested in learning more about your Alabama heritage and have an interest in contributing your time, sweat and/or your financial support pertaining to one or more of these exciting projects, please contact Alice Cox, Staff Assistant; Alabama State Museum of Natural History - 205/348-7550.

Carey B. Oakley
Moundville

CHAPTER NEWS

Cullman Chapter

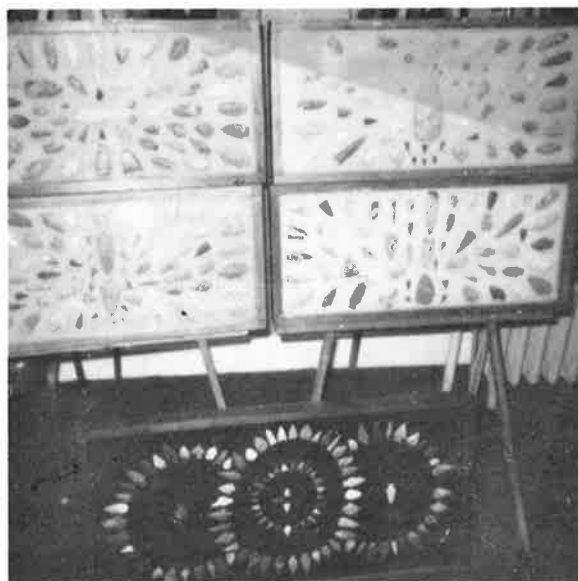
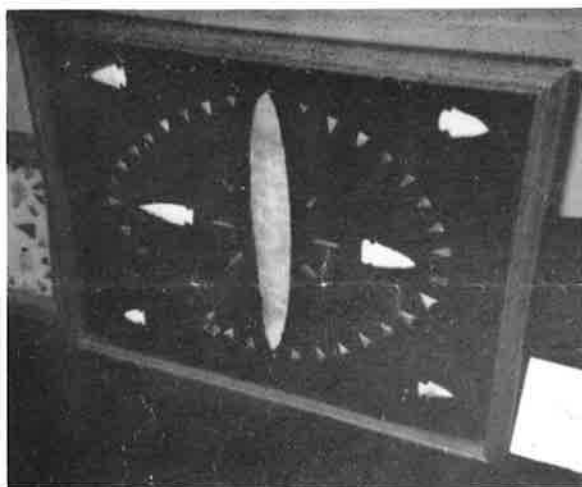
The Cullman Chapter met on May 18, 1987.

Fayette Chapter

The Fayette Chapter held its annual Indian Artifact Exhibit on Sunday, April 26 from 2:00 until 5:00 at the Fayette Civic Center. About 200 people viewed the exhibit, and several collections were displayed. Mr. Carey Oakley of The University of Alabama reviewed the exhibits and recognized Danny West, Carl Porter, Steve Skelton and John Franklin Phillips for outstanding displays. The members of the Fayette Chapter wish to express their thanks to Carey Oakley for judging the display and for always encouraging and helping the chapter and chapter members in any way he can.

The Fayette Chapter held its April meeting on Monday the 29th at the new fire station. Eugene Futato gave a slide presentation on his Israeli digs.

Shirley Porter



FAYETTE CHAPTER EXHIBITS
(Photographs by Shirley Porter)

Huntsville Chapter

The Huntsville Chapter meets the third Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. in the conference room of the United Way Office on Traylor Island. For more information on chapter meetings and other activities, call Program Chairman Bart Henson at 881-9389.

The May 19 chapter program was presented by Mr. Larry Beane of Russell Cave National Monument. Mr. Beane presented a slide-illustrated program and flint knapping demonstration entitled "Archaeology of North Alabama".

Mr. Beane is an interpretive archaeologist/park ranger at Russell Cave, with a special interest in the archaeological history of the Tennessee Valley. He is a graduate of Catawba College in North Carolina with a degree in archaeology/anthropology. He has done field work in North Carolina, Georgia, Michigan and Alabama. With Larry at the meeting was his wife, TaMara Hanvey Beane, an American Indian potter specializing in southeastern Indian pottery and gorgets.

Dorothy Luke

Muscle Shoals Chapter

The Muscle Shoals Chapter of the Alabama Archaeological Society held its April meeting on the 13th. Doug Puckett of Sheffield was the speaker. Doug's subject was the Transitional Paleo period. Eighteen guests and members attended the meeting.

The chapter held its May meeting on the 11th at the Indian Mound Museum in Florence. Fourteen members and guests attended. Howard King of Cullman presented an interesting program on a Plevna site on Smith Lake. After discussing the Plevna point type in detail, he gave the history of the site, describing the lithic assemblage that had been found there and comparing it with other nearby sites of the same period.

The June meeting will be on the 11th. It will be a picnic supper held on top of the Indian Mound in Florence, beginning at 6:30. Charles Hubbert of Huntsville will present a program on Early Man.

Charles Hubbert

Tuscaloosa Chapter

The Tuscaloosa Chapter held its monthly meeting April 6 at the Tuscaloosa County Library. The speaker was Mr. Timothy Mistovich of The University of Alabama Archaeological Research Center. Mr. Mistovich spoke on the recent project at the Oliver Lock and Dam.

The chapter held its May meeting on the 4th at the Tuscaloosa County Library. Mrs. Margaret Searey, of The University of Alabama, was the speaker. She spoke on the farming techniques of the Choctaw and Creek Indians.

The Tuscaloosa Chapter meets the first Monday of each month at the Tuscaloosa Country Library, in the conference room. For more information call Antonio Ferrell, at 752-6196.

Joyce Ferrell

TOMBIGBEE SALVAGE ARCHAEOLOGY

In early April, when it was learned that a natural gas pipeline was being installed from Choctaw County in southwest Alabama on down to the coast, the Alabama Office of Archaeological Research subcontracted a crew to help New World Research do a professional salvage archaeological job along the pipeline right-of-way. Business will be business, and with the sounds of buzzing power saws through the woods and a scheduled October 1 completion date in mind, it was clear the pipeline people weren't going to allow archaeologists a moment to spare.

On April 6, a crew of eight piled hastily into a tiny fleet of OAR vehicles, including the infamous old '74 University pickup lovingly dubbed "Big Red", and set out from Moundville en route to home-away-from-home motels, which proved to be abundant in "kind and friendly", but sometimes short on telephones and television, and where it would soon be learned that an evening's entertainment might consist of an informal gather-round briefing regarding paperwork format, or sharpening tools. It would be learned, too, during some of those first few days, that to clear trails through snakey swamps and sloughs, and through thick, thorned brush, and forests, in order to merely permit bodies and equipment access to the sites, could be anticipated throughout the project ahead, and was a formidable task in itself. However, the job, essentially, would be to mitigate High Probability Areas as determined by New World from test pits and surveys previously completed.

From the first, the soft Coastal Plain sand was a welcome factor which made bulk excavations relatively easy. Shakers with the 1/4-inch mesh screen were used. Generally, 2 x 2 meter squares, or 1 x 1 meter squares, were dug at 10 cm. or 5 cm. arbitrary levels from an established Datum, usually down to a natural bottom level of clay. Sometimes, however, a pit was justly terminated after a succession of several sterile levels though clay was not reached. Artifacts were bagged in brown paper bags, hand-printed with blanks which were to be filled in on completion of each level. Soil samples, and such special samples as charcoal carefully wrapped in aluminum foil, were bagged separately. Individual level forms requiring such contextual data as matrix descriptions; i.e., of soil types with corresponding Munsell color coding, and a description and percentage estimate of disturbances, if any, as well as artifact counts and descriptions, were to be completed. A detailed summary form of all the levels of each pit and at least one stratigraphic wall profile drawn to scale for each pit followed. Although features were treated with special profile drawings and photos, all the pits were photographed both in color and again in black and white. Site summaries and site maps were required. With the fair amount of redundancy in the numerous details recorded on such a variety of forms, it was clear that not only did New World Research expect a quick job, but they intended an accurate one as well, one in which no stone was to be literally left unturned, nor improperly described. And they expected the artifacts, properly recorded, to be turned in daily.

After nearly three weeks into the project, and with the completion of seven sites, except for a few historic pieces, including hand-made nails and sherds, it was apparent that most of the artifacts were lithics, either flakes or tools, made of local Talahatta quartzite, or "sugar quartz" (actually a beautifully sparkled quartzite when found in its purer state). There were a few sherds, both plain and decorated, and ceramic bead fragments. One projectile point/knife (PP/K) fragment found, of some interest, has a curious hole which appears to have been drilled through, perhaps to allow for some sort of hafting. And a brow was raised over some unusual sandstone PP/K's, but otherwise, the artifacts thus far appeared to be rather ordinary, and quite common to the area, from periods probably ranging from late Archaic to Mid- to Late-Woodland.

Mention should be made of the keen interest expressed by some of the county residents in having their local artifact finds evaluated. Also, fossils are apparently abundant in the area, and efforts have been made by some members of the historical society in Choctaw County to establish a museum. They are needing both administrative and scientific guidance, however, and as yet they have not been encouraged by much outside interest.

Looking ahead, with already one Moccasin and one Rattler behind them, and the sun soaring higher and hotter by the day in the southwest Alabama sky, it is for sure that somewhere in the distant woods west of Tombigbee, where the insects love it and where smart rabbits don't go, one jolly OAR crew will be racing over sun-baked ruts, or deep in muddy ones, out-running the pipeline hounds in high anticipation of some (rumored-to-be) 60-odd sites yet to be salvaged between them and the Gulf of Mexico.

Caroline Hodges
Huntsville

SNEAD GETS WATTS' COLLECTION

Preston Watts grew up in a small community about 10 miles from Boaz but his life's work took him far away before he decided to deposit his collection of rocks, minerals, metals and fossils in the Snead State Junior College Museum. Watts, now a resident of Huntsville, was recognized May 1 when the museum's Natural Science Division named in his honor was officially dedicated.

Watts was the valedictorian of his 1930 class at Snead Seminary, the forerunner of the current college, and later got a degree in electrical engineering at The University of Alabama. "This (the collection) has been a progressive effort over some 33 years", Watts said. "Everywhere I go I start looking for rocks or other natural phenomena".

There are specimens, including shells, from far-flung places like Canada, Brazil, Iceland and Greenland as well as those closer to home, such as mussels from the Tennessee River and agates from Paint Rock Valley.

Lack of display cases at the museum prevents Watts from placing all his collection in Boaz. Watts himself donated the antique cases which are currently in use. Dr. William Osborn, college president, said the college is proud to get the collection since several other larger institutions had wanted it. He said the collection will be available for the college students as well as others in the area.

(From an article by Laranda Nichols in The Huntsville Times, Sunday, May 3, 1987)

EDITOR'S NOTE: Preston Watts has been a longtime member of the A.A.S., and we are proud to report his gift to Snead.

The Editors

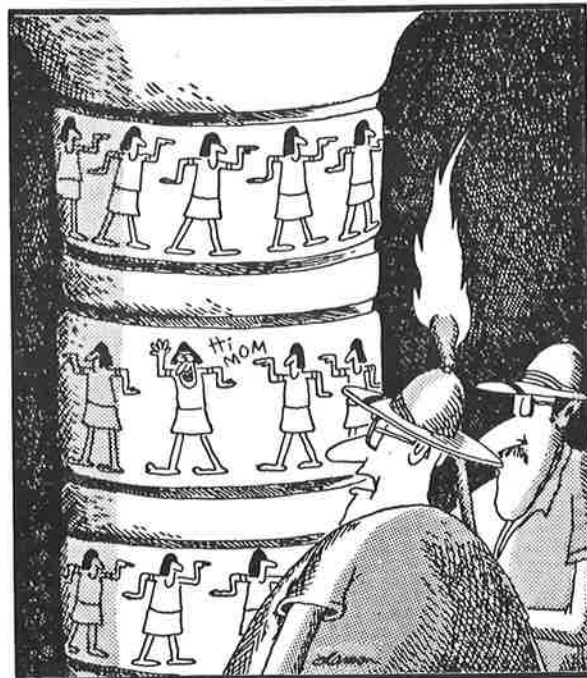
SIGFUS OLAFSON DIES

Amateur archaeologist Sigfus Olafson, who scoured the hilltops of Southern West Virginia for decades in search of Indian artifacts, died recently in Boone County Health Care Center. He was 90.

The Editors



Early archaeologists



"Any theories on this, Cummings?"

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Available issues of *Journal of Alabama Archaeology* Vol. 20-29 each issue (\$2.50 to Members) \$5.00 pp
Stanfield-Worley Bluff Shelter Excavations (Journal of Alabama Archaeology) Vol. VIII Nos. 1 & 2 - Reprint, each issue \$5.00 pp
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Handbook of Alabama Archaeology Part 1, Point Types \$10.00 pp
 Lively, Long, Josselyn - *Pebble Tool Paper* \$3.00 pp
Investigations in Russell Cave, published by the National Park Service \$7.50 pp
Exploring Prehistoric Alabama through Archaeology (Juvenile) \$7.00 pp

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 1 Mound State Monument, Moundville, Alabama 35474

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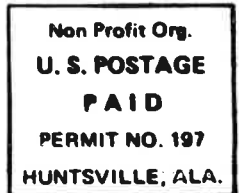
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