Alabama Archaeological Society

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OPEN HOUSE AT THE OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The University of Alabama, Office of Archaeological Research, will host an open house for the Alabama Archaeological Society, its members and guests on Saturday, August 22. The open house will be held at the David L. DeJarnette Archaeological Research Facility, located at Mound State Monument, Moundville, Alabama. Moundville is located 13 miles south of Tuscaloosa on Alabama Highway 69.

The following activities are planned for the open house. The morning will be devoted to tours of Moundville. Guides will be present at the museum and at the reconstructed Indian village to answer any questions you may have about the displays. Lunch will be at 12 noon at the park picnic grounds. If desired, box lunches may be ordered ahead of time or at registration, until 11 a.m. Drinks and snacks may be purchased at the souvenir shop at the picnic ground.

After lunch, there will be a tour of the David L. DeJarnette Archaeological Research Center. This is the new home of OAR, containing some 12,000 square feet. There is a 5,000-sq.-ft. laboratory; 4,000 sq. ft. for storage of collections; and a 3,000 sq. ft. office complex. Included in the office complex are a darkroom, a drafting room, a file room, and a library. Following the general tour of the facility, participants will have an opportunity to form small groups and spend time in several specific areas of the lab. Depending on your interests, and on the laboratory activities at the time of the meeting, you will be able to talk with members of the OAR staff working ceramics and lithics from various sites, plant remains, chert type collections, flint knapping, or other topics. Outside of the lab, you may choose to visit the map and drafting room, or browse in the library.

Registration will be at the Administration Building at the park from 9 to 11:30 a.m. The registration fee includes admission to the park, the museum, and all exhibits at one half of the regular price.

There are no motel facilities in Moundville, but a full range of accommodations is available at Tuscaloosa for those who wish to spend the night. Mound State Park does have a fully-equipped campground, and camp spaces are available for trailers or tents.

For more information write to the Office of Archaeological Research; 1 Mound State Monument; Moundville, Alabama 35474. Advance payment is required only if you want to reserve a camper space (\$6 per night for camper hook-up; \$4 per night for "primitive" camping).

This is a rare opportunity for Society members to observe archaeology "in action". The open house is more than just a tour of the facilities, since you will be able to see and discuss with members of the staff various activities they are actually working on. We urge all our members to attend and enjoy the fellowship of old and new friends. Regardless of how many times you may have visited Moundville, each time creates an awe-inspiring conception of how the Indians lived in the Late Mississippian period.

We want to express our deep appreciation to OAR; Carey Oakley, the Director; and the staff for dedicating their time and effort for this occasion.

The Editors

FORT TOULOUSE

In the April 1981 "Stones & Bones Newsletter" an article entitled "Archaeological Spotlight on Parkers Island" appeared on the front page. This article was taken from the January/March 1981 issue of ENVIROSOUTH which furthermore was taken from newspaper articles, which in themselves contained conflicting information about the archaeological and historical heritage of the island. As a result, the ENVIROSOUTH article contained a few minor errors such as misprints in dates, etc., but it also erroneously indicated that the island probably contained the site of Fort Toulouse; the same Fort Toulouse which was thought to be on the Alabama Historical Commission's property across the river.

The ENVIROSOUTH article and the condensed reprint in the "Stones & Bones" has caused many inquiries concerning the mysterious case of the "disappearing fort". In view of the many misconceptions created by the numerous articles that have appeared in print in the last year and a half regarding the "lost French fort", I would like to take this opportunity hopefully to shed a clearer light on this matter.

In the fall of 1976 I became the director of archaeological investigations at the site of Fort Toulouse/Fort Jackson for the Alabama Historical Commission. Shortly thereafter, Jim Parker joined me as my assistant. At the time I took over the investigations, it was known that the French had constructed a fort at the junction of the Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers in 1717, possibly rebuilt the fort around 1735, did rebuild the fort sometime between 1748 and 1751, abandoned the fort in 1763, and the Americans built a fort at the junction in 1814. In addition, the archaeological data gathered between 1972 and 1976 strongly indicated that the property owned by the Alabama Historical Commission contained the sites of the 1751 French fort and the 1814 American fort. The "heart" of this archaeological data was an enormous amount of artifacts dating from both of these two time periods.

In addition to the cultural material recovered, archaeological investigations between 1972 and 1976 also revealed two distinct architectural components of the site. One of these components was interpreted as the remains of the 1717 French fort, while the other was interpreted as that of the 1751 Fort Toulouse. Fort Jackson was considered to be nothing more than the reconstruction of the 1751 French fort's southeast bastion. The error was made in the interpretation of the architectural remains.

By the end of the 1977 field season, Jim and I realized that something was wrong with the above-mentioned theory. Our suspicions were caused more by a lack of architectural remains and artifacts dating from the French period in areas where they should have been rather than anything else. By the end of the 1978 field season, we knew that the archaeological remains that had been attributed for the past five years to the 1751 French fort were actually those of Fort Jackson. The question that remained was "where was Fort Toulouse?" By the end of the 1979 summer field season, portions of two bastions, three curtain walls and five buildings of the 1751 French fort were located. It was also evident that the 1814 construction of Fort Jackson had destroyed a third of Fort Jackson. The east curtain wall and eastern moat of Fort Jackson had cut through the middle of these archaeological remains.

As a result of the excavations and archival research conducted between 1976 and 1979 by Jim and myself and the most recent work conducted by Auburn University last summer, we now know that Fort Jackson was a large four-bastioned fort with thick earthen walls backed by picketts in the bastions and horizontally-stacked logs along the curtain walls. It was totally encompassed by a deep picketted moat and had as an additional defense a very large and elaborate system of earthwork protecting its eastern wall, the area of main entrance.

Fort Toulouse, on the other hand, was only about half the size of Fort Jackson and was constructed in the same basic rectangular design with at least two bastions - and probably four. The curtain walls and bastions of Fort Toulouse both consisted of a picketted wall line made of charred, quartered logs. No evidence of an earthen parapet or moat was found in association with the French fort.

What happened to the 1717 Fort Toulouse? At the present time, we do not know. It may eventually be discovered very near the remains of the 1751 French fort, or it could be found anywhere on the peninsula between the two rivers, including Parker's Island (Parker's Island did not become an island until 1886). Another very real possibility is that the remains of the 1717 fort have long since fallen into the Coosa River.

Archival information and surface collections from archaeological sites on Parker's Island strongly indicated that the inhabitants of the island played an important part in the success of the French fort. The Alibamus not only traded with the French and supplied them with necessary food items, but they also served as their protector against any possible enemies, including the English. In addition, we also know that French civilians settled in the area with their families during the occupation of the fort, and it is quite possible that some of these households resided on the island.

Parker's Island and Fort Toulouse share a very similar prehistoric and historic heritage. Unlike the Fort Toulouse property and so much of central Alabama, many of the archaeological sites on Parker's Island have not been disturbed. To successfully preserve the island would be like depositing a reserve of archaeological riches in the bank for the future.

McDonald Brooms Alabama Historical Commission Montgomery

TOM CORNELL

We regret to announce that Mr. Tom Cornell of the Huntsville Chapter died in July. Mr. Cornell had been a president of the Alabama Archaeological Society (A. A. S.); he was an ardent supporter of Society activities - at both state and local levels - for many years.

Mr. Cornell made numerous presentations on archaeology and on fossils to schools and civic organizations, as well as to A. A. S. chapters. He once taught a course on fossils at the Huntsville Senior Center. Several of his point-type and fossil boards are in use in the Huntsville city schools; the Burritt Museum houses part of his collection of Indian artifacts.

An active member of the Huntsville Gem and Mineral Society, Mr. Cornell received several honors over the years. At a regional meeting in Tampa, Florida, in 1979 he received two of the top awards. He was also active in the Antique Collectors Guild.

The Boy Scouts of Huntsville will long remember Mr. Cornell: he was a Scoutmaster for nearly 40 years. At a ceremony in his honor in 1976, he stepped down to become Assistant Scoutmaster; he remained a supporter of scouting until his death. The Scout Room in Huntsville's First Methodist Church was named for him in January of this year. Mr. Cornell was a charter member of the Optimist Club and long active in that organization. The Huntsville Bar Association presented Mr. Cornell with its Liberty Bell Award.

Mr. Tom Cornell was a self-effacing man, yet he will be remembered for his many contributions to his community. He lived a long and active life and had a profound influence on at least two generations of young people. We of the Alabama Archaeological Society are proud to have had Mr. Cornell as a member and a friend.

The Editors

CHAPTER NEWS

Huntsville Chapter

The Huntsville Chapter held a workshop session on Tuesday, July 21. Members and their guests brought artifacts to display and to identify.

Huntsville Chapter members Bart Henson and O. D. Hartley recently attended a four-day flint-knapping workshop in Campsville, Illinois. Mr. Hartley brought his flint-knapping tools to the July meeting and gave an interesting presentation on the workshop sessions and on the archaeological sites he and Mr. Henson visited in conjunction with their trip to the field school. O. D. said he gained a real appreciation for the skill involved in flint knapping, and he is now looking at lithic artifacts with this in mind.

The Huntsville Chapter meets the third Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Arts Council Conference Room, Von Braun Civic Center. Visitors are always welcome.

PUBLICATION AVAILABLE

Fossil Vertebrates of Alabama, by John T. Thurmond and Douglas E. Jones. Hardbound, 256 pages, approximately 250 illustrations.

The first complete treatment of the fossil vertebrates of Alabama - a pivotal state in the geology and paleontology of the Atlantic and Gulf Coastal Plain Province, Fossil Vertebrates of Alabama is an important contribution to the literature:

- Southwestern Alabama is considered by many to expose the finest section of Tertiary marine strata in the world; Thurmond and Jones have provided the only comprehensive description of the fossil-vertebrate content of this important part of the world.
- The book is an invaluable reference for workers in vertebrate paleontology and coastal-plain stratigraphy. Moreover, it will be of great use to fossil collectors and others interested in prehistory, especially the prehistory of Alabama and the Southeast.
- The work provides readers with a long-range look at environments throughout geologic time and aids in assessing the significance of short-range environmental changes.
- The principal emphasis is on description and geologic occurrence of fossil vertebrates. The book also includes a summary of Alabama geology; a section on the general principles of paleoecology; material on techniques of excavation, preservation, and curation of specimens; and over 200 individual drawings permitting identification of many genera and species of fossil vertebrates, especially the sharks and rays.

This book is available from The University of Alabama Press; P. O. Box 2877; University, Alabama 35486.

The Editors

NEW MEMBERS

Florida State Dept. of Archaeological Research

Silvers, Dr. Morgan D. (I)

Skrivan, Mr. Robert J. (I)

Stewart, Ms. Ella M. (I)

Division of Archives, History and Records Management The Capitol Tallahassee, FL 32301

1320 Leighton Avenue Anniston, AL 36201

1 Mound State Monument Moundville, AL 35474

1 Mound State Monument Moundville, AL 35474

New Life Member

The Alabama Archaeological Society is happy to announce a new individual life membership:

Dr. Robert L. Schuyler

University Museum University of Pennsylvania 33rd and Spruce Streets Philadelphia, PA 17104

EARTHWATCH

If you want to join an archaeological team to just about anywhere in the world this summer - Mexico, Maine, Caribbean, England, Australia, Israel, Peru, California, New Mexico, Scotland, Italy, Tunisia, Germany, Guam, Spain, Virginia, South Dakota or Africa - write for more information to Earthwatch; Field Research Corps; 10 Juniper Road; Belmont, Massachusetts 02178.

The Editors

ARTIFACT REPRODUCTIONS

Excellent dimensionally and color correct replicas of both Old World and New World classic artifacts are available from the Denver Museum of Natural History. Prices range from as little as \$3.50 to \$15.00 for Clovis points to Acheulian hand axes. Catalog available. Write to Denver Museum of Natural History; City Park; Denver, Colorado 80205.

The Editors

TREE TALK

Tree ring dating, or dendrochronology, was pioneered by the late Andrew E. Douglass, who established the prototype Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research at the University of Arizona.

To establish a chronology, a living tree is dated; the pattern of the earliest formed tree rings is then matched to the later rings of an older piece of preserved wood such as a beam. By repeating the matching process with even older wood samples, investigators can produce a chronology with which to compare future samples.

Dendrochronologists recently have begun to extrapolate climatic information from rings. A computer program developed at the Arizona lab relates tree ring widths to existing records of temperature, precipitation, and air pressure for the period 1901-1963. The result is a series of equations describing the manner in which climate in all four seasons relates to tree ring width. In conjunction with the 65 existing species chronologies, these equations can be used to reconstruct air pressure, precipitation, and temperature in portions of North America for every year since 1601.

Wherever historical records are available, the reconstructions have been verified. Diaries of would-be miners who crossed the western plains in the spring of 1849 noted encounters with frequent and severe thunderstorms. One interesting observation from these reconstructions is that winters in the East during most of this century have been milder than in the preceding three centuries.

Similarly, tree ring records can be used to reconstruct river flow data and to determine the probability of extended periods of drought or increased precipitation.

A fascinating, but as yet unexplained, phenomenon has been observed by Samuel K. Eddy of Syracuse University. He has found that growth rings in southern California's giant Sequoia apparently reflect climate in the southeastern Mediterranean. Also, he has shown that the size of tax payments (a measure of agricultural production) in the ancient Greek town of Byzantion is proportional to the thickness of tree rings. Comparison with Greek records reveals that the Sequoias correctly indicate crop conditions nearly 90 percent of the time.

Climate may well have influenced many prehistoric events. The Sequoia chronologies show that each year of constitutional crisis in Athens between 632 B.C. and 510 B.C. — a time when democracy was being forced on the aristocracy — was preceded by one or two dry years. The expansion of the early Christian church seems also to be closely related to dry periods. Persecution was most likely when the Nile failed to irrigate Egypt, or the Tiber flooded Rome, or when drought set in.

(From an article by Thomas H. Maugh, II in SCIENCE - June 1981)

The Editors

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