

Alabama Archaeological Society

sociate Editors
Bart Henson
Dorothy Luke

STONES & BONES NEWSLETTER

Editor
Amos J. Wright
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HIGHLIGHTS OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The Board of Directors of the Alabama Archaeological Society met at the Huntsville Hilton on Saturday, November 20, 1982.

The A. A. S. scholarship fund will be increased to \$350 per year and renamed the Steve Wimberly Scholarship Fund.

Mr. David DeJarnette has resigned as our representative to the Alabama Historical Commission. The A. A. S. will submit to the Governor a list of three names to fill out Mr. DeJarnette's term of office: Dr. Richard Karuse - UAB, Dr. John Cottier - Auburn, and Dr. Elizabeth Sheldon - AUM.

The June issue of the Journal of Alabama Archaeology (the report on the Fort Tombecbe dig) has been delayed because of problems with the binding. The Journal should be out within the next week.

Outstanding Society Member awards were made for both 1981 and 1982. The recipient for 1981 is Mrs. Bettye T. Henson; and for 1982, Charles and Mary-Eliza Moore. Our congratulations to all three.

The point-type book is out of print and will be reprinted.

The Editors

JACK CAMBRON

James W. ("Jack") Cambron, 62, of Decatur, Alabama, died September 23 after an extended illness.

Jack was well known in southeastern archaeology both as a writer and in site excavations. He was co-author of "Handbook of Alabama Archaeology, Part 1, Point Types" and the one on Uniface Tools. He was author of numerous articles in both the Alabama and Tennessee Journals. Jack was instrumental in the organizing of the Alabama society, in which he held various offices. He was also past president of the Decatur Chapter. He was a printer by trade.

Jack is survived by his wife Doris; two daughters, Janis and Alica; a sister, Mrs. Ray Harwood of Asheville, N. C.; two brothers, Woodrow of Black Mountain, N. C.; and Ralph of Greensboro, N. C. Burial was at Huntland, Tennessee.

December 1982

ANNUAL MEETING

The Program Committee and the Huntsville Chapter are to be commended for their efforts in producing a most outstanding annual meeting in 1982. The fine slate of speakers, scheduled by Program Chairman Jim Lee, presented a balanced and enthusiastic program of archaeological topics which both entertained and enlightened the approximately 90 members and visitors in attendance.

Organizations and arrangements for the auditorium, name tags, programs, newsletters, refreshments, directors' luncheon, evening banquet, and a myriad of other logistical details were handled so effectively by Dorothy Luke (Huntsville Chapter) that no delays, waiting, or other inconvenience of even a minor nature occurred.

Ellis Whitt, Huntsville Chapter President, made arrangements for and coordinated the exhibition of the many excellent and educational archaeological displays from across the state.

The book publisher provided attendees an opportunity to examine recent publications in archaeology - a most useful adjunct to a state archaeological meeting, and its continuation is certainly encouraged.

So, to the speakers, the Huntsville Chapter, those named and unnamed individuals who helped make the program a success, the archaeological and publication exhibits, and the Hilton Hotel, the A. A. S. expresses its sincere appreciation.

The Editors

IN REMEMBRANCE

Steve B. Wimberly died November 12, 1982 and was buried at Antioch Cemetery in Blount County. Steve retired as Labor Contract Administrator from U. S. Steel in Birmingham in 1978. However, we knew Steve in his long and honorable role as archaeologist. Steve graduated from the University of Nebraska and began his archaeological career in Alabama in the 1930's - being a protege of David DeJarnette, Walter B. Jones and William Webb, and working with them during the 1930's in the Tennessee Valley. Steve did the work at the Bessemer Site and also sites in South Alabama.

Steve approached archaeology with a little more than the outlook of the scientist - he took his work most seriously and consequently did a very thorough, methodical and studied job which resulted in a high degree of confidence and respect from his peers. Although Steve never pursued archaeology as a full-time career in later years, we all sensed that it was probably his first "love". Steve's contribution will long be remembered and we will all miss him.

The Editors

A CHRISTMAS GIFT LIST

CEMOCHECHOBEE: Archaeology of a Mississippian Ceremonial Center on the Chattahoochee River. By Frank T. Schnell, Vernon J. Knight, Jr., and Gail S. Schnell. With contributions by Mary E. Dunn, Mary C. Hill-Clark, Barbara Ruff, and Gary Shapiro. Foreward by F. Wayne King. Monograph No. 3, 1982; xiii, 290 pp.; tables, 75 maps and other illustrations, bibliography, index; 6 x 9 in. ISBN 0-8130-0710-0; LC 81-16080. \$18.

Based on the excavation of three Mississippian platform mounds and a large associated village, this study is an effort to understand the nature of one of the early chiefdom-level societies in the prehistoric southeastern United States.

Cemochechobee encompasses a district known as the Rood Phase, approximately A.D. 900-1400. The authors have collected data on the political organization, the ritual and symbolic system of beliefs, the domestic life, and the external relationships of this previously obscure but dynamic culture.

Excavations at the Cemochechobee site focused on the ceremonial and high status "nuclear zone". The resultant monograph contains a fascinating and carefully-crafted description of the changing utilization of this zone over a 400-year span. Chapter 2, "Historiography", presents the most thought-provoking and illuminating analysis of Mississippian ceremonialism to appear in quite some time.

ABORIGINAL SUBSISTENCE TECHNOLOGY ON THE SOUTHEASTERN COASTAL PLAIN DURING THE LATE PREHISTORIC PERIOD. By Lewis H. Larson. Foreword by F. Wayne King. Monograph No. 2. 1980; xii, 260 pp.; illustrations, maps, bibliography, index; 6 x 9 in. ISBN 0-8130-0675-9. LC 80-16279. \$20.

Describing the food-gathering techniques of several prehistoric Indian cultures from the southeastern coastal plain, Larson catalogues the kinds of plants and animals gathered and how they were prepared and eaten.

"Larson's volume sets out to provide the factual background of what one needs to know about the coastal environment in great detail and then gives us from archaeology and ethnography the aboriginal means used to exploit this quite diverse coastscape". (Per Stephen Williams - Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University.)

FLORIDA'S PREHISTORIC STONE TECHNOLOGY: A Study of the Flint-working Technique of Early Florida Stone Implement Makers. A University of Florida Book, 1981; xvi, 165 pp.; illustrations, maps, photos, tables, bibliography, index. 7 5/8 x 10 3/8 in. ISBN 0-8130-0697-X. LC 80-24726. \$25.

Note: The above three books are available from University Presses of Florida; 15 Northwest 15th Street; Gainesville, Florida 32603. Include \$1 postage and handling for the first book and \$.50 each additional book. Florida orders: add 5% sales tax.

BLAIN VILLAGE AND THE FORT ANCIENT TRADITION IN OHIO. By Olaf Prufer and Orrin Shane III. 1970, 280 pp. \$14.

HOPEWELL ARCHAEOLOGY: The Chillicothe Conference. By David S. Brose and N'omi Greber. 1980, 280 pp.; cloth \$22.50; paper \$12.50.

Note: These two books are available from The Kent State University Press; Kent, Ohio 44242.

#15 - Anthropological Studies at Moundville. Part I. Indian skeletons from the museum burials at Moundville. Part II, Possible evidence of scalping at Moundville. C. E. Snow. 57 pp.; illustrations. \$2.

#16 - Condylodiaphysical angles of Indian humeri from North America. C. E. Snow. 38 pp.; illustrations. 1940. \$1.

#17 - The Bessemer Site (Excavation of three mounds and surrounding village areas near Bessemer, Alabama). D. L. DeJarnette and S. B. Wimberly. 122 pp., illustrations. 1941. \$2.

#19 - McQuorquodale Mound, a manifestation of the Hopewellian phase in South Alabama. S. B. Wimberly and H. A. Tourtelot. 44 pp.; illustrations. (1941) 1943. \$1.

#21 - Two prehistoric Indian dwarf skeletons from Moundville. C. E. Snow. 90 pp.; 2 plates. 1946. \$1.20

#24 - The Whitesburg Bridge Site, MA^V10. William S. Webb and D. L. DeJarnette. 44 pp.; illustrations. 1948. \$.70.

#25 - The Perry Site, Lu^O25. William S. Webb and D. L. DeJarnette. 69 pp.; illustrations. 1948. \$1.20.

#26 - Little Bear Creek Site, CT^O8. William S. Webb and D. L. DeJarnette. 64 pp.; illustrations. 1948. \$1.

#32 - Guntersville Basin Pottery. Marlon D. Hemilich. 69 pp.; illustrations. 1952. \$1.

#36 - Archaeological Investigations in Mobile County and Clarke County, Southern Alabama. Steve Wimberly. 262 pp., 7 plates. 1960. \$4.

Note: The above are Museum Papers of the Alabama Museum of Natural History. They are available from Mound State Monument; P. O. Box 66; Moundville, Alabama 35474. Include \$.35 per item postage.

CHAPTER NEWS

Birmingham Chapter

The Birmingham Chapter meets the second Thursday of each month at the Red Mountain Museum Auditorium, 7:30 p.m. The December 9 program will be a discussion on the "Methods of Construction and Use of the Bow and Arrow". The speaker will be Mr. J. B. Salter. On January 13, 1983, Mr. Tom Hutto will present a program on "Archaeology of Central Mexico".

Cullman Chapter

The chapter met at the Cullman County Courthouse on November 15. A committee was formed at the October meeting to nominate a slate of officers for the coming year. Another committee was formed to set a date and place for a banquet meeting for the month of December. The Point of the Month was the Pickwick.

Huntsville Chapter

The Huntsville Chapter hosted the A. A. S. Annual Meeting on November 20 and 21. The chapter meets the third Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Arts Council Conference Room, Von Braun Civic Center. The December 21 meeting will be a lithic workshop. Officers will be elected for 1983. For more information call Program Chairman Larry Warren at 536-4533.

Muscle Shoals Chapter

The Muscle Shoals Chapter met Monday night, November 8, at the Indian Mound Museum in Florence. Al Beinlich presented a program on historic Indian crafts. Other members brought their own handicrafts, and crafts ranging from Cherokee baskets and Seminole dolls to Pueblo pottery and jewelry were examined and discussed. Fifteen members and guests were present.

The next meeting will be a holiday supper meeting, which will be held at the Western Sizzlin' Steak House on Tennessee Street in Florence. Charles and Mary-Eliza Moore will present a program on Chaco Canyon and Canyon de Chelly. The meeting will be Monday, December 13, at 6:30 p.m.

BREAKING THE JARGON BARRIER

(Designing Programs for Humanists)

Humanists seldom are trained to deal with quantified information or to express ideas in numerical form. Because computers are numerical devices and computer specialists belong to the scientific branch of society, a communication gulf often exists between computerists and humanists. Some humanists, such as "cliometric" historians (those who apply statistics to Clio, the muse of history), do use statistical methods to interpret information. These brave humanists must fight their way through one set of technical jargon in order to master statistics; and if they use computers in their statistical work, they must face the even more formidable barrier of computer jargon.

Humanists who persevere and master the new methods and jargon find that they are now working in the social sciences, with the emphasis on sciences. Traditional humanists, put off by the incomprehensible jargon, sometimes seem to feel that their quantitative colleagues have left the humanities and become scientists. Traditional scientists, on the other hand, are unlikely to regard social scientists as scientists of any kind. This situation hardly encourages more humanists to start using computers.

At a recent national conference attended by more than 700 archaeologists, only seven - less than 1 percent - attended the session on microcomputer applications in archaeology. This poor turnout confirms the existence of the jargon barrier. Busy professionals have not time for re-education in a new discipline. Because many humanists believe that buying a microcomputer would involve learning computer science, they can hardly be expected to queue up at their campus computer stores. Microcomputer manufacturers reinforce the barrier when they pack five thick volumes of documentation with each system, each volume filled with mystifying computer jargon. The humanist has a subtle appreciation of language. When he or she flips through one of these manuals, terms like initialize, diskette, and even user-friendly are sure to catch the eye and grate on the sensibility.

In short, the jargon barrier currently is formidable enough to keep most humanists from using computers. If computers are ever to gain wide use in the humanities, then the machines must be made to speak the language of traditional humanists. Like all the social sciences, archaeology is becoming increasingly statistical. A number of common statistical tools are in use. A "mean ceramic date" is not a tryst with a disagreeable china doll but a statistical tool used by archaeologists. Today's archaeologists also use such tools as pattern analysis, bracket dating, bore-diameter date formulas, and excavation registers.

For many years, in fact, archaeologists have used mainframe-generated information. Despite their growing reliance on computer products, however, few practicing archaeologists use personal computers. When social scientists or humanists need computer services, they traditionally work at arm's length, through a data-processing department or a social sciences package that runs on a central computer system.

The most basic archaeological activity is brute data handling. Every artifact and its associated find-spot is detailed in a document, commonly called an excavation register, that allows complete paper reconstruction of field observations for later analysis. To supplement the written register, archaeologists keep detailed drawings and maps of their sites, recorded in a three-dimensional grid system. Every drawing, every object discovered on the site, and every observed condition are carefully documented and keyed to numerical coordinates.

Archaeological sites often contain confusing patterns of post holes, pits, and foundations created at different times for different purposes. Traditionally, these patterns have been sorted intuitively, sometimes with controversial results. In one English example, over 2,500 post holes occurred in an area of 8,000 square meters distributed apparently at random. For 20 years, the site plan sat undeciphered; then a mainframe computer reanalyzed the pattern and found circular house patterns where none had been visible to the unaided eye. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and histograms) and measures of central tendency and dispersion (means, medians, and standard deviations) form the bulk of archaeological statistics. Few archaeologists have explored more sophisticated descriptive techniques such as measures of skewness or kurtosis (the peakedness or flatness of a graph representing a frequency distribution).

A very few also have begun to use probability distributions such as the Poisson distribution for certain types of site-location prediction. Beyond these standard procedures, archaeologists use statistical tools peculiar to the field, such as the mean ceramic date and the bore-diameter date formulas. While off-the-shelf programs can be adapted for standard statistical applications, they are nearly useless to the archaeologist in performing field-specific analyses.

Fairly standard recording systems are used throughout the profession, and reporting formats are almost ritualized. Since archaeological procedures already have been adapted to large computer systems, microcomputers are a natural next step. With the advent of truly portable computers, we expect that archaeological field notes will be written on cassette tape in digital form. When the cassette is returned to the lab, the field notes can be printed out on clean sheets of paper and electronically merged into the report. Electronic recording would be a tremendous labor-saver, since the present method of transcribing and retranscribing from smudged and dirty field notes is the source of many errors.

Such a system now exists in England. The Museum of London's Department of Urban Archaeology has installed a PDP-11 microcomputer in its laboratory for artifact analysis. Data is recorded in the field by three microcomputers that move from site to site. Floppy disks are used to transport data files from the microcomputers to the minicomputer.

The principal bottlenecks in archaeology, where work slows and errors creep in, are retyping and reproofing. Every archaeological report passes through several review and rewrite processes, which in the past have been among the most costly aspects of the profession. Some offices add as much as 140 percent overhead, largely for unproductive clerical work. In our office, professionals draft their reports directly into a word processor, from field notes to finished copy, without any retyping. Reports are cleaner, better organized, and at least \$1,500 less expensive, even for the simplest job. The obvious professional and financial advantages of eliminating clerical typing may, in fact, be the key to expanded microcomputer use in the social sciences and humanities. Unfortunately, most subdisciplines in the humanities and social sciences are too small to support commercial development of the specialized, user-friendly microcomputer software that is needed immediately. Such systems already are available for the large legal, medical and retail markets. The most practical way to market software for social scientists and humanists for some applications may be through modified off-the-shelf systems. We may see an "after-market" develop for customized database programs already being sold. But until the microcomputer community begins to communicate in plain English, microcomputers will be slow to arrive on the humanistic market.

(From an article by Ned Heite and Lou Heite, Heite Consulting, Camden-Wyoming, DE; in the July 1982 BYTE Publications, Inc.)

The Editors

SAINT AUGUSTINE
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CHECKS SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO: **ALABAMA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**
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