Alabama Archaeological Society

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STONES & BONES NEWSLETTER

Editor
Amos J. Wright
2602 Green Mountain Rd.
Huntsville, Alabama 35803

MEMBER OF THE EASTERN STATES ARCHEOLOGICAL FEDERATION

ANNUAL DUES SCHEDULE FOR 1980

As announced in the January STONES & BONES, 1980 Alabama Archaeological Society dues will be increased as follows:

Individual	$ 9.00
Family	12.00
Associate (Student)	7.00
Sustaining (Individual)	15.00
Sustaining (Family)	20.00
Institutional	13.00
Life (Individual)	180.00
Life (Family)	250.00

The Editors

FROM AROUND THE STATE

by Dave Chase

Where Did They Come From? Where Did They Go?

Of growing interest to the modern-day archaeologist is the tracing of certain of the historic tribes backwards in time and determining, through archaeological investigation, the identity of their historic tribal ancestry in prehistory.

Like actors on the chronological stage, culture groups made their entrances and their exits, often leaving no clues as to their origins or their ultimate fate - or did they?

The archaeologist, despite sophisticated technology available to him, still is confined mainly to the study of artifact complexes, burial remains, housepost patterns and whatever food remains are preserved. Of the material culture, or artifacts, pottery stands out as the most useful of all clues in cultural identification. A pot fragment, like stone, is as durable. Moreover, it reflects the "fingerprints" of the responsible culture through vessel shape, color, hardness, temper and decoration.

Pottery making was usually a woman's role, and the traditions embodying the "right" way to make a pot were passed from mother to daughter for generations.

If, in a given area, the evidence of a culture group disappears from the archaeological calendar, one is tempted to find out why. Did the people shift from one place to another because the ecosystem broke down? Were local food resources exhausted? Were the people displaced by another group? Warfare is a possibility, but war in the present-day sense of the word rarely if ever took place in prehistory. Intertribal conflict probably never became more traumatic than occasional forest skirmishes, village raids or an ambush along the hunting trail.

It is safe to say that success of a culture group may be measured by how long a people managed to stay in one geographical area. Assuming that this may be true, we might presume that the Miller culture of the Upper Tombigbee River was among the most successful of all prehistoric groups in Alabama. Their nearly one-thousand-year residence in western Alabama began in the last century B. C. and lasted until the tenth century A. D.

Clues to support the evidence of this long tenure may be seen mainly in the Miller ceramic tradition, wherein decorations were confined to cord- or fabric-impressed designs over this long time period. Variations were minor and amounted only to changes in tempering techniques or variations in the percentage of corded- versus fabric-impressed pottery. Curiously, interaction with other peoples did not seem to influence these traditions to any great degree. A more distinct change in lithic traditions is seen wherein early projectile points in Miller times were stemmed, shifting later to ovate or tear-drop shape and finally to small Madison-like triangles.

Miller disappearance seemed to coincide with the arrival of the corn-growing Mississippian peoples. In fact, in late Miller times, some corn agriculture may have been a borrowed trait reflecting Miller-Mississippian contact and interaction.

The question here is, did the Miller culture really "disappear", or were they simply "Mississippianized"? The parallel in historical annals may be seen in the case of the Etruscans who may have been "Romanized", so that after Rome's rise to power, no trace of the former culture group can be detected archaeologically - and historically as well, since even the language of these ancient peoples vanished.

Could it be, then, that the Choctaw-speaking peoples whom the soldiers of DeSoto met in 1540 had "Miller blood" in their veins? A long shot in the speculation process, but not entirely unlikely.

THE ALABAMA STONE

The inscription HISPAN ET IND REX 1232, translated in English to mean "King of Spain and the Indies, 1232", found on a stone near Tuscaloosa in 1817, still conjures up many questions that most likely will never be answered. But that does not diminish the historical interest the stone has and the continuing "speculation" of what, when and who.

The stone, which is sandstone, measures 21.5 inches vertically, 18 horizontally and 12 in thickness and weighs 204 pounds. It was found by young Tommy Scales and his father while clearing new ground on a farm on the north bank of the Black Warrior River near the mouth of Big Creek just south of Tuscaloosa. The Creek made a sharp turn east just before its junction with the Black Warrior and flowed a short distance before emptying into the River. This resulted in a slender neck or peninsula being formed between the Creek and River. It was on this peninsula under a large tulip tree that the stone was found. At the time, evidence of an earthern fortification existed in the form of an embankment six feet high stretching across the peninsula from Creek to River.

The stone was carried into the village at "the falls of the Black Warrior" which later became Tuscaloosa and sat unceremoniously for several years at the log cabin door of Lewis Powell, a Tuscaloosa attorney. Then the stone somehow made its way to Massachusetts, in the possession of the American Antiquarian Society at Worcester. The stone remained in Massachusetts until the curiosity of a Tuscaloosa high school senior, Donald Guyer, was aroused after hearing an account of the stone given by Matt Clinton in an Alabama history class. Guyer wrote several letters to Massachusetts - the governor and the Massachusetts Historical Society - and was finally told the stone was the property of the Antiquarian Society. Assistance was obtained from Peter Brannon (Director of the Alabama Department of Archives and History at the time) and others, resulting in the stone's being flown in an Alabama National Guard jet plane from Massachusetts to Alabama in 1963, where it was placed in the custody of the Department of Archives and History at Montgomery, where it has since resided.

What about the inscription and its possible meaning - and its authenticity? Some discrepancies are difficult to reconcile. The same inscription, "King of Spain and the Indies", is found on old Spanish coins, but not until after Columbus discovered America; therefore raising the question - how can the date 1232 relate to the inscription if the latter could not occur until after 1492, or 260 years later? It seems that there have been no serious answers to this question - only speculation, such as: the date was in error, it was meant to be 1532; it was the joke of some early trader in the area; the date was added later by some prankster; somehow it is related to MADOC or ancient Crete explorers; it was left by DeSoto and was proof he visited the area; etc.

A number of such stones and inscriptions have been found over the country for many years, and all are controversial. There are a few archaeologists/historians that believe in the general authenticity of these inscriptions and of early contact prior to Columbus and other than the Vikings. However, it seems that the great majority of the scholars' feelings range from skepticism to outright rejection. These stones and other evidences do not fit the pre-programmed models and concepts of contemporary thinking of today. But regardless, there appears to be enough circumstantial evidence, with more accumulating as time goes by, to support a case of early contact by other European/Asiatic groups - anyway, it sure makes for fascinating reading and study.

(The information about the Alabama Stone in the above article was obtained from the files of the Alabama Department of Archives and History.)

The Editors

CHAPTER NEWS

Birmingham Chapter: The Birmingham Chapter meets the second Thursday of each month at the Red Mountain Museum. Call Tom Hutto for further information at 956-1895.

Cullman Chapter: The Chapter program for August was given by Mr. David Chase from Montgomery on 20 August at the Colonel Cullman Home.

East Alabama Chapter: The Chapter meets on the second Wednesday of each month in Thach Auditorium, Auburn University, at 7:30. For information, call Dru McGowen at 821-2595.

Huntsville Chapter: The Huntsville Chapter meets the third Tuesday of each month at 7:00 in the Arts Council Conference Room, north end of the Von Braun Civic Center. The speaker at the August meeting was Mr. Hal Ensor, a professional archaeologist associated with the Office of Archaeological Research. Mr. Ensor spoke on "Lithic Classification Systems and Their Purpose in Archaeological Research". The Huntsville Chapter is actively engaged in a "dig" at Constitution Hall Park. Ed Fulda is the archaeologist in charge of the dig; O. D. Hartley is the Site Manager. Chapter members and other interested persons are providing the labor.

Muscle Shoals Chapter: The Muscle Shoals Chapter held its August meeting on the 13th at the Indian Mound Museum in Florence. The points of the month for study were the Kirks - both corner-notched and serrated. The study was led by Charles Moore. Eugene Futato presented the program for the evening. His subject was "Chronology of the Bear Creek Watershed". Twenty people attended this interesting program.

A NEOLITHIC FLINT MINE

The unique form of silica called flint has been a mainstay of mankind for at least half a million years. Harder than steel, it is also brittle and so is easily trimmed into any wanted shape by hammering and flaking. Nodules of flint, some of them as much as a meter in diameter, are particularly abundant in beds of chalk that were deposited on ocean floors around the world during the Upper Cretaceous period, some 80 million years ago. In Europe uplifted beds of Cretaceous chalk lie exposed here and there from France and the south of England eastward to Poland and Czechoslovakia.

During the Old Stone Age the hunters of Europe favored as a raw material for making choppers, scrapers and other tools loose nodules of flint that had naturally weathered out of the chalk beds. Only a few thousand years ago, with the rise of farming as a way of life, an increasing demand for flint tools turned the Europeans of the New Stone Age from gathering flint nodules on the surface to mining them. Here I shall relate what has recently been learned about one such flint-mining site where Neolithic workers some 5,000 years ago produced more than 150 million tools. The site, near Rijckholt in the Netherlands, was discovered in 1881, was studied on and off thereafter for three-quarters of a century and was finally excavated in detail by a group of amateur archaeologists who did their work one night per week over a nine-year period.

In 1964 a Dutch investigator, H. T. Waterbolk of the University of Groningen, came to the site as the head of a group from the university's Biological and Archaeological Institute. They tried to dig a passage into the Neolithic workings, but they were unsuccessful because none of them had had any mining experience. The investigation came to a halt. It looked as though no one would ever learn what the Rijckholt flint mines had been like.

At this point a professional geologist and enthusiastic amateur archaeologist approached Waterbolk with a novel proposal. The newcomer was Werner M. Felder. Employed by the Netherlands Geological Survey, Felder was an active member of the Limburg chapter of the Dutch Geological Society. He suggested digging a tunnel into the slope above the Grand Atelier in order to follow the stratum of flint-rich chalk the Neolithic miners had exploited by driving shafts down from the tableland above. Such a tunnel would surely intersect many of the horizontal galleries the miners had dug through the chalk to extract the flint nodules. It was Felder's estimate that such an exploratory tunnel need not be more than 140 meters long. He further suggested that the first 10 meters of each prehistoric gallery intersected by the tunnel should also be explored. Waterbolk endorsed Felder's plan and offered to act as scientific supervisor.

The trial excavation had carried our tunnel 15 meters into the chalk. The results were encouraging enough to warrant a full-scale project, although still an amateur one, and so official government permission was needed. It was

forthcoming, conditional on the use of steel supports rather than timber ones. The Netherlands Foundation for Scientific Research provided a subsidy that helped us to meet the added expense.

In 1965, 50 tons of steel were brought to the site by hand to substitute for the wood supports that had been put in place during the trial excavation. In 1966 one of the companies interested in the project lent us an air compressor and pneumatic hammers so that we could make better headway against the increasingly hard chalk.

As the work progressed it became necessary to split up our Friday-night groups into smaller teams; following coal-mine procedure, each team was directed by a leader who was responsible for safety and who also recorded all finds. By the end of the year the tunnel was 38 meters long.

In 1967 the transport of the waste chalk by mine cart became increasingly difficult. The Dutch coal-mining industry, which had shown much interest in our project, lent us a conveyor with a total length of 150 meters. In 1968 the team system was continued. One team worked to extend the tunnel. A second team saw to supplies, maintenance of the equipment and clearance of the site. A third team and sometimes a fourth cleared the side galleries of rubble. In 1969, in consultation with Waterbolk, the group decided to extend the tunnel the full length of the Neolithic mining area.

In 1970, 1971 and 1972 work continued both at the excavation and at home. The homework included fund raising. Nevertheless, before the end of 1972 the tunnel had reached the planned length of 150 meters. In 1973, having come to the end of the mine area, we were able to spend more time clearing out the remaining galleries. Even these activities had been completed by the end of the year. After nine years of weekend labor underground we could now turn to working up the final data.

What had the Rijckholt mines been like in Neolithic times? We know from the discovery of two other datable charcoal samples that flint mining was in progress here somewhat more than 5,000 years ago. Joseph Felder has been able to compile some overall statistics for the operation. First, the Rijckholt mining area covers some 25 hectares (62 acres). In the course of exploring only 3,000 square meters of the 25-hectare area we had encountered 66 mine shafts. If our sample was a representative one, the entire Rijckholt area must have had some 5,000 mines. (Each shaft, together with its cluster of galleries, is counted as a single mine.) It is Felder's estimate that the 5,000 Rijckholt mines together yielded 41,250 cubic meters of flint nodules. That would be enough raw material for 153.3 million axheads. If one supposes the miners worked at Rijckholt for 500 years, the average production rate would have been 1,500 axheads per day, assuming that both the miners and the flint shapers at the Grand Atelier were active year round and not just seasonally.

The length of the shafts leading from the tableland down to the flint-bearing chalk stratum varied from 10 to 16 meters, depending on the thickness of the sand, gravel and loess overlying the chalk. The shafts ranged in diameter from a meter to a meter and a half. While digging down through the loose overburden, the miners evidently prevented cave-ins with a retaining wall of plaited tree branches: hollows resembling the imprint of branches were visible in the wall of the single shaft we cleared all the way to the surface. (We ourselves guarded against a cave-in by installing successive cylindrical steel sections as we went along.)

The flint-bearing layer of chalk, about 30 centimeters thick, was undermined and removed a block at a time; at intervals the chalk was left untouched to provide pillars that helped to support the gallery roof. To supplement these natural pillars the miners also backfilled the undermined area with waste chalk. Once a gallery was mined out it served as a dump for the waste chalk being excavated from the next gallery; 95 percent of the galleries we discovered had been refilled in this way.

How did the miners hew their way through these uncountable tons of chalk? They worked with axheads their flint-shaping colleagues manufactured at the Grand Atelier overhead. Judging by certain hollow spaces we found in the piles of waste chalk, the axheads had been mounted on wood handles some 80 centimeters long.

Mining the chalk was hard work that called for considerable skill; we estimate that a miner would wear out five axheads in the course of removing one cubic meter of chalk. As the axheads were blunted the miners sharpened them on the spot, using chalk hammerstones to retouch the cutting edge. A particularly hard type of recrystallized chalk was selected for the purpose. We found most of the hammerstones in association with groups of 10 or 20 axheads at what we came to call ax depots. These resharpening sites were generally in the vicinity of a shaft and were marked by numerous flakes of waste flint.

We found more than 15,000 artifacts in the mines. Most of them were either blunted or broken axheads. On the basis of Joseph Felder's extrapolations this suggests that 2.5 million additional axheads, abandoned by the Rijckholt miners, remain in the unexplored galleries. If that is true, the miners reinvested less than 2 percent of their total flint production in the extraction effort, the cost per mine being about 350 axheads. We also found a few antler picks resembling those de Puydt had found on the surface at Rijckholt during his 19th century investigations. The fact that we did not find many suggests they were seldom used in excavating galleries because the chalk there was harder than antler.

How the miners descended from the surface to the bottom of their shaft and ascended again is not known for certain. Neither is the method of raising the flint nodules to the surface. It seems reasonable to conjecture that ropes served both purposes, but the only evidence for it is the presence of deep grooves worn into the chalk where the shafts end and the galleries open inward.

We found no evidence of lamps or of torches underground; such flames would probably have depleted the oxygen the miners needed more than they did illumination. The ax depots were near the bottom of the shafts, perhaps because the miners needed light to sharpen their axheads. The miners working in the galleries, however, apparently made do with whatever indirect illumination filtered through to them from above.

Today the tunnel floor has been dug deeper so that visitors can walk upright for its full length, and the tunnel walls and roof have been waterproofed. A small shelter for the reception of visitors stands at the tunnel entrance and electric lights illuminate both the tunnel and the galleries. Tourists and scholars alike can now come to see how their ancestors mined the flint needed for their tools 5,000 years ago. In retrospect it seems remarkable that 20 amateur archaeologists made this possible by their work on Friday nights.

(Scientific American, June 1979 - from an article by Peter W. Bosch)

The Editors

NEW MEMBERS

Bartholf, Mr. Frank H. (I)	Route 4, Box 801 Terrace Drive Phenix City, Alabama 36867
Brose, Mr. David S. (I)	Curator of Archaeology Cleveland Museum of Natural History Wade-Oval - University Circle Cleveland, Ohio 44106
Harris, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick (J.S.)	2717 Highland Avenue, South Birmingham, Alabama 35205
Hartzell, Mr. Roy D., Jr. (I)	510 North Shiloh Street Linden, Alabama 36748
Johnson, Mr. Sam (I)	Route 2, Box 173-A Murfreesboro, Arkansas 71958
Turner, Mr. Clyde C. (I)	Route 3, Box 248 Pinson, Alabama 35126

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The Editors

OF SHIPS AND SEALING WAX

Richard R. Goodwin is a mechanical engineer in DARCOM's (Army Materiel Development & Readiness Command) Directorate of Development and Engineering. Along with 15 other members of the Scientific Exploration and Archeological Society (SEAS), Goodwin came to the Bimini Islands this summer to investigate several unusual finds made there by SEAS members and others.

"The Society is interested in Pre-Columbian evidence of exploration and trade between America, Europe and Asia before the time of Columbus and colonization", Goodwin said. "We believe there is substantial evidence to that effect, and we're out to find more". The expedition was especially interested in "Proctor's Roadway", a "colonnade" of regularly-shaped, apparently fluted stones first photographed by SEAS founding member Steve Proctor in 1972. The straight, even line marked by these stones across the ocean floor looked too perfectly drawn to be the work of the waves. Although encrusted with sea life, the stones seemed too symmetrical for beach rock formations. But if the columns are not beach rock, what are they doing at the bottom of the Caribbean?

High seas and heavy winds prevented any serious underwater exploration until the third and last day of the SEAS expedition. But that last day proved unexpectedly productive for Goodwin. While snorkeling over the large, underwater "pavement" known as the "Bimini Roadway", Goodwin found an arrangement of stone blocks set in the shape of a man. He said he had barely enough time to photograph the formation and fix its location, and no time to research it once he left the water. "Proctor and his wife went down a day in advance of the expedition, and tried to locate an old find - a cluster of columns similar to the ones in Proctor's Roadway", Goodwin said. "But they were gone. Upon inquiry they learned the grouping had been raised and shipped to the Bahamian Department of Antiquities' museum in Nassau."

Nor were SEAS and the Department of Antiquities the only ones interested in the area. At least one member of the famous Cousteau family planned a voyage to the islands later this summer.

The idea of a Pre-Columbian cultural exchange has been around for years, but it did not become scientifically respectable until Thor Heyerdahl crossed the Atlantic in a papyrus boat. Suddenly historians remembered Phoenician sailors traded in Cornwall as early as 1000 B.C., and circumnavigated Africa 2000 years before Vasco da Gama.

Last year the SEAS expedition went to Maine. The most tangible results of this expedition were a large copper coin of unknown origin, and a latex impression of an undeciphered inscription. One member of the expedition found what he claims is a Roman coin near the bay, and became convinced a Roman gallery had sunk nearby. The SEAS could prove nothing.

Goodwin refuses to be discouraged. He freely admits the evidence for Pre-Columbian trade with the venerable civilizations of Europe, the Near East and Asia is contradictory. The theory could be wrong. "If you let yourself become enclosed by what you know, then you tend to be prejudiced against what might have happened", Goodwin said. "No scientist, be he professional or amateur, can afford that. You have to have an open mind until the last shred of evidence is in."

(DARCOM News, July 1979, from an article by Jean Marie Ward)

The Editors

FORT SAN FELIPE II

Archaeologists who have found the second oldest fort and town in the U. S. - at Parris Island, South Carolina - Fort San Felipe II and the surrounding town of Santa Elena, dating to 1566, uncovered two gun emplacement bastions and a 14-foot-wide moat. They also found several pieces of 16th century Spanish pottery and a large nail believed to have been used by soldiers above their bunks to hang their belongings. The National Geographic Society will finance further work on the site.

(From Archaeological Society of Virginia Newsletter #69, July 1979)

The Editors

VACUUM DRYING TECHNIQUE

At Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, General Electric Company's Space Division has a large environmental chamber for simulating the conditions under which an orbiting spacecraft operates. Normally it is used to test company built space systems, such as NASA's Landsat and Nimbus satellites. It is also being used in a novel spinoff application - restoring water-damaged books and other paper products and textiles.

This unique technology transfer began in 1972 when Temple University's Klein Law Library caught fire. In the course of extinguishing the fire, almost 60,000 books, some irreplaceable, were completely soaked by tons of water

from high-pressure fire hoses. Looking for a means of salvage, Temple's insurance company contacted GE's Space Division, whose officials felt that the space vacuum chamber could be effectively employed as a dryout tank. Temple's books were loaded onto wheeled racks and placed in the chamber 4,000 at a time. The technique worked and Klein Law Library's books are back on their shelves. GE is now providing the service regularly, treating items damaged by storms, floods, fire-fighting activities, waterline ruptures or other environmental conditions. When the books are in place and the vault-like door secured, chamber pressure is reduced to spacelike conditions of 1/100th of an atmosphere, promoting evaporation of water. As the water evaporates, it freezes in the near-vacuum. After 24 hours, pressure is increased to break the vacuum. Then hot freon gas is introduced to the chamber, causing the ice to melt; the water is drained off through an opening in the chamber. This process is repeated until the damaged materials are thoroughly dry.

The process represents a major improvement over an existing method, which involves blotting individual pages by hand and air-drying them slowly at a cost of about $100 a volume. The space simulator process costs only $2 per book. GE has used it to dry many loads of books, blueprints, important government records, historical documents, a stamp collection and several thousand pairs of shoes. Among the numerous customers who have benefited from the technique are the University of Pittsburgh, Otis Elevator, Corning Glass, the Paul Mellon estate, Hillside Jewish Memorial Hospital and a number of state, city and county governments.

(From Spinoff 1979, publication of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration; February 1979)

The Editors

BOOK REVIEW

THE POLYNESIANS - Prehistory of an Island People. By Peter Bellwood; Thames and Hudson, New York, 1978, $16.95. Maps, photographs and tables.

This is an interesting and informative book about the prehistory of the island people from Hawaii to New Zealand. The amazing number of islands and how they were settled at many different periods make good reading. The author, who is the senior lecturer at the Australian National University at Canberra, made many archaeological investigations in various islands. Also, he visited most of the Polynesian Islands; some tentative dating was around 1500 B.C.

Margaret Perryman Smith
Atlanta, Georgia

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Archaeological Salvage in the Walter F. George Basin of the Chattahoochee River in Alabama, a hardbound report, published by University of Alabama Press ($2.50 to members) ..... $5.00 pp

Available issues of *Journal of Alabama Archaeology* Vol. 13-18 ..... $1.00 pp
Vol. 20-24 ($2.50 to Members) ..... $4.00 pp

Stanfield-Worley Bluff Shelter Excavations (Journal of Alabama Archaeology) Vol. VIII Nos. 1 & 2 - Reprint) ..... $5.00 pp

Special Publication 1 — Fort Mitchell ..... $2.00 pp

Special Publication 2 — *The Archaeological Sequence at Durant Bend, Dallas County, Alabama* ..... $4.50 pp

Handbook of Alabama Archaeology Part I, Point Types ..... $7.35 pp

Lively, Long, Josselyn - *Pebble Tool Paper* ..... $3.00 pp

Investigations in Russell Cave, published by the National Parks Service ..... $5.00 pp

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Mr. Amos J. Wright
2602 Green Mountain Road SE
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