

Alabama Archaeological Society

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MEMBER OF THE EASTERN STATES ARCHEOLOGICAL FEDERATION

ALABAMA'S ABORIGINAL ROCK ART

ALABAMA'S ABORIGINAL ROCK ART, by Bart Henson and John Martz (Alabama Historical Commission, \$3.00, 44 pp.) The Alabama Historical Commission announces publication of an intriguing booklet about the mysterious rock art - in pictograph and petroglyph form - found in Alabama's caves and bluff shelters. Written, photographed and illustrated by the Huntsville authors, the book, with several full-color pictures, depicts some of Alabama's most interesting archaeological discoveries. Available from the Alabama Historical Commission; 725 Monroe Street; Montgomery, Alabama 35130.

LITTLE SALT SPRING, FLORIDA

Until 1959, Little Salt Spring, located near Charlotte Harbor in southwest Florida, was thought to be one of the shallow water ponds typical of the region. Diving explorers found instead a large, flooded sinkhole some 60 meters deep. The spring consists of a basinlike depression 78 m across with its water surface 5 m above mean sea level. The floor of the depression slopes at 25° from the land surface to 12 m in depth. A roughly circular opening 25 to 30 m across occupies the center of the depression. Below this opening, the wall is generally overhanging with two prominent encircling reentrants at depths of 18.0 and 26.0 below the surface. The diameter of the sinkhole at its base is about 60 m, and the bottom is covered with an unknown thickness of soft detrital and organic sediments. Mineralized water, with a salinity of 3.2 per mil, a temperature of 24.4°C, and virtually no dissolved oxygen, flows from the cavity at a rate of 42.8 liters per second. This weak flow of mineralized water is apparently a relatively recent phenomenon linked to present sea level. In the past, during periods of lower local groundwater level, the sinkhole was a freshwater cenote. As such, it attracted primitive humans in considerable numbers and for a considerable length of time.

Periods of human association with the site are clearly related to lower water levels in the feature, which in turn reflect periods when surface water was scarce on the porous Florida carbonate platform. During periods of lower sea level associated with a cooler world climate, lower groundwater levels, lower

average ocean and land surface temperatures, and the extended effects of frontal activity on peninsular weather created drier, even semiarid conditions in much of Florida. Conversely, when the water level in the feature was high, surface water was abundant everywhere and primitive humans apparently had little need for the essentially bottomless well the site represented. With the approach of sea level to its present elevation, heavily mineralized water began to issue from the feature and its usefulness to prehistoric man ended.

The earliest evidence of human activity at Little Salt Spring has been found on the lower reentrant. There, the overturned, collapsed shell of an extinct species of giant land tortoise, *Geochelone crassicutata*, was found with a sharply pointed wooden stake between the carapace and plastron. Wood from the stake, which evidently killed the tortoise, was dated by carbon-14 at 12,030 years ago. Several of the long bones and portions of the carapace appear carbonized and numerous fragments of fire-hardened clay were found under and around the animal's remains.

A few meters farther east along the ledge, portions of an immature mammoth or mastodon (*Mammuthus* or *Mammut* sp.) and an extinct bison were found. Vertebrate food refuse, together with wood, bone, shell, and stone artifacts, has been found in association with drowned informal hearths on the sand surface below more recent sediments now lining the basin. Near the bottom of the basin, around the opening to the lower cavern, numerous crudely pointed stakes made from small saplings and split segments of pine are driven into the sediment. The average radio-carbon age of wood from these stakes is 9572 years. Hickory nuts, isolated from the water-laid sediment into which the stakes were driven, were dated at 9920 years.

Among the artifacts recovered are a socketed antler projectile point with the tip of the dart shaft still preserved in its base and the basal portion of a carved oak mortar dated at 9080 years ago, similar in style to some of those recovered from peat at the much younger (~1200 years ago) Key Marco site some 130 kilometers farther south on the coast.

The most important Paleo-Indian artifact so far recovered is a well-preserved portion of a nonreturning oak boomerang. This specimen displays the thinned lenticular cross section and right-angled top of some of the weapons found in Australia, particularly the swan-necked or beaked variety from the Northern Territory, and should not be confused with the slightly curved, rounded "rabbit sticks" used by various American Indian groups including the Hopi of southwestern North America. Before the recovery of this specimen at Little Salt Spring, evidence for the use of nonreturning boomerangs was found in Australia, where the weapon type may still be in use among isolated aborigine groups; in ancient Egypt, where specimens of this type are reported among the

grave goods of Tutankhamen; in India; and in western Europe. The discovery of a Paleo-Indian nonreturning boomerang in North America has a fundamental bearing on the age, origin, and distribution of this weapon. The specimen found at Little Salt Spring may be the oldest specimen of this type of weapon in the world and is the first found in the Western Hemisphere.

Sometime between 8500 and 8000 years ago the water level in the feature began to drop. This is evidenced by the deposition of a second layer of brown peat, the base of which, at approximately 3.9 m above mean sea level, was dated at 8145 years ago, the dropping local groundwater level and the concomitant reduced availability of surface water again made the feature attractive to humans, and Little Salt Spring became a focus of activity of Archaic Period people.

The dead were formally interred initially in the moist, soft peat of the slough, apparently just above the changing water level of the hard-water pond. The cemetery covers more than 6000 m. The bodies were buried in extended fashion, apparently either on biers of green leafy limbs of wax myrtle, *Myrica cerifera*, or with leafy limbs placed between the arms and torso. Portions of the bodies were ceremonially wrapped with grass. Preservation was sometimes remarkable because of the hard water and the resettling of fine peat, which combined to maintain an anaerobic environment after burial. In one case, a substantial portion of a brain with still discernible convolutions and cellular processes was found within a skull in a burial. Dates of about 6000 years ago were obtained for human bone removed from an immediately adjacent burial. Wooden tools, including a pointed oak digging stick dated at 6830 years, and extremely well-preserved bone, shell, and stone tools have also been found with the burials. The most common artifacts are tapered points with roughly beveled bases, averaging 10 cm in length, made from the long bones of deer. The density of the burials is very high. Test explorations suggest that more than 1000 individuals rest in the cemetery.

The associated stone projectile points are a distinctive large, triangular stemmed type known as Newnan's Lake points. This type was dated at about 6000 years ago at the type site in north-central Florida and is found widely distributed over the Florida peninsula.

The youngest radio-carbon date for a human bone specimen, which was recovered from approximately 8 to 9 m below the present water surface of the basin, is 5220 years.

Little Salt Spring has already provided the earliest evidence of activity of humans in Florida, their first association with an extinct vertebrate in the Southeast, and the first evidence that they preyed on an extinct species of giant tortoise.

(C. J. Clausen, A. D. Cohen, Cesare Emiliani, J. A. Holman, J. J. Stipp, from *SCIENCE*, 16 February 1979, Volume 203)

CHAPTER NEWS

Birmingham Chapter - The Chapter program for May will be a talk by Mike McEachern, who works with Dr. Rodger Nance at U.A.B. He will give a slide and talk presentation of a "dig" performed by amateurs under the direction of an archaeologist. Mike is a graduate archaeologist with experience in California, Texas and Alabama. The Birmingham Chapter meets the 2nd Thursday of each month at the Red Mountain Museum. Call Tom Hutto for further information at 956-1895.

Cullman Chapter - The April Chapter meeting, on the 16th, featured Eugene Futato from the University of Alabama. His program consisted of material gathered during the 1978 season at the Bear Creek Watershed on the Tennessee River.

East Alabama Chapter - At the April 11 meeting, Gregory Waselkov reported on a survey along the Potomac River in Virginia. Of special interest were the numerous shell middens which date back as far as 2,000 B.C. Greg's excellent slides showed the river area, the paintings of the Indians of Roanoke Island done by John White in 1585 and the excavations of several relatively undisturbed shell middens. Analysis of the sites is still under way. Chapter officers for 1979 are; President, Dru McGowen; Vice President and Program Chairman, John Cottier; Treasurer, Norman Cranford; Secretary and Publicity Chairman, Marjorie Gay; Student Liaison, Joe Herbert. The next Chapter meeting, Wednesday, May 9, will be in Thach Auditorium at 7:30. The program will be an illustrated talk. Watch the local news for the subject.

Huntsville Chapter - The speaker at the April Chapter meeting was Mr. Ned J. Jenkins, an archaeologist with the Office of Archaeological Research, University of Alabama. Mr. Jenkins' very interesting talk was titled "Archaeological Sites in the Gainesville Reservoir of the Tombigbee River". The Huntsville Chapter meets the third Tuesday of each month in the Arts Council Conference Room, north end of the Von Braun Civic Center, at 7:00.

Muscle Shoals - The Muscle Shoals Chapter held its April meeting on the 9th at the Indian Mound Museum in Florence. Two points were studied this month; the Jacks Reef Cornernotch and the Jacks Reef Pentagonal. The film "The Early Americans", which was furnished by the Shell Oil film library, was shown. Thirty members and visitors attended the meeting.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

There will be a meeting of the Board of Directors of the AAS on May 20 at 3:00 p.m. in Birmingham. Board members will be advised of the location and agenda by letter. One of the main items of business will be the planning of the Summer Meeting.

NEW MEMBERS

Hawthorne, Mr. Robert J. (A)	75 Many Levels Road WBL St. Paul, Minnesota 55110
Kuhn, Mr. Thomas C. (I)	2124 11th Avenue Huntington, West Virginia 25703
Mobley, Mr. Wallace (I)	956 Five Mile Road Birmingham, Alabama 35215
Reece, Mr. Marion F. (I)	P. O. Box 199 Springville, Alabama 35146
Shepherd, Mr. C. A. Jr. (I)	909 Southridge Drive Birmingham, Alabama 35216
Swinea, Mr. Jerry (I)	7909 Tea Garden Drive, S. E. Huntsville, Alabama 35802
USDA - National Forestry Commission	P. O. Box 60800 New Orleans, Louisiana 70160

AHC PRESERVATION CONFERENCE

The 12th Annual Preservation Conference of the Alabama Historic Commission will be held at the Stafford Hotel in Tuscaloosa on July 27 and 28. Of particular interest to Society members will be the full-day archaeological workshop scheduled for Friday the 27th. Among the panelists for the workshop will be Rex Wilson from the Interagency Archaeological Services. Full details will be presented here as soon as they become available.

A NOTE OF APPRECIATION

The Society expresses its appreciation for the generous contribution to the Society's Publications Fund from the Tuscaloosa Chapter.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION REQUESTED

Each Chapter President or Secretary is requested to submit a list of officers and membership to Society Secretary/Treasurer for inclusion in the Society's records. Please mail as soon as possible to Mrs. Bettye T. Henson; 7608 Teal Drive, S. W.; Huntsville, Alabama 35802.

REQUEST FOR "FIRST TEN YEARS"

Anyone having an extra copy of "First Ten Years of Alabama Archaeology" please quote your price to Mr. David M. Whitacre; 1000 Beechwood Drive; Girard, Ohio 44420. He desperately wants a copy.

PICTOGRAPHS AND PETROGLYPHS
IN THE TENNESSEE VALLEY REGION

Is There an Astronomical Association?

"In many areas of the world there are people whose interactions with their environment are so close and so immediate as to be virtually incomprehensible to someone raised in a modern urban setting, and whose powers of observation and intuitive grasp of complex ecological factors are frequently such as to be a source of admiration to the contemporary scientist. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, to find that the sky - characterized by some of the most striking yet inaccessible objects in the universe - is often regarded as one of the more significant (albeit mysterious) aspects of man's environment, or that the various celestial bodies whose movements and characteristics so profoundly affect the human condition from day to day and from season to season are often closely observed and described by metaphors incorporated into myths and rituals. What is surprising is the lack of attention this segment of culture has generally received in the past from either anthropologists or astronomers; both groups of scholars have apparently harbored the common assumption that significant astronomical knowledge was only to be found in conjunction with complex agriculturally-based and calendrically-oriented societies. It is only in the last few years that this assumption began to be seriously questioned (ironically, as a result of new data accumulated primarily in association with the re-examination of such famous European megaliths as Stonehenge), and as a consequence the fascinating field of ethnoastronomy is still in its infancy. What is still notable by its absence is adequate information on the astronomical knowledge of simpler (and especially non-agricultural societies)". . . . Ballena Press; P. O. Box 1366; Socorro, New Mexico 87801.

NEW MUSEUM UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Construction of the Confederate museum at the Confederate Memorial and Park is nearing completion, and the building is expected to be furnished with exhibits and open to visitors by summer.

Located on the grounds of the former Old Soldiers' Home at Mountain Creek, the log museum building will be the focal point of the 40-acre memorial complex which is under the jurisdiction of the Alabama Historical Commission (AHC). The AHC is now gathering materials for display and is asking for donations of Confederate States of America and Civil War artifacts and memorabilia for permanent display in the museum. All donations to the project will be tax deductible.

(From PRESERVATION REPORT, Volume VIII, Number 1, January-March 1979)

ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION GRANTS - 1979

The Alabama Historical Commission has approved more than \$800,000 in matching grants for the acquisition, development and restoration of landmarks across the state and over \$94,000 for survey and planning projects.

Among the non-profit groups receiving survey and planning funds for FY 1979 were:

Auburn University at Montgomery, \$12,890 for a systematic survey and inventory of archaeological sites along 246 miles of the lower Alabama River, with the Department of Sociology making a report and nominating selected sites for the National Register of Historic Places.

The Alabama Historical Commission is charged with administering the National Register program in Alabama and makes nominations to the Register. The sites nominated for consideration may have local, state or national significance.

In recent weeks, eleven additions have been made from AHC nominations, bringing the total state listings on the Register to 294, affording protection for more than 2,500 sites and buildings.

Among the newly recorded properties appear:

The Jere Shine Site, a significant archaeological site in Montgomery County. AHC policy prevents revealing the exact nature and location of archaeological sites to discourage "pot hunting" which has destroyed many sites.

The Liddell Archaeological Site, located in Macon County.

(From PRESERVATION REPORT, Volume VIII, Number 1, January-March 1979)

PUBLICATION

ALABAMA LIFE, a new magazine published six times a year, contains stories about people, events and places in the state, with much of interest to those interested in history and genealogy. Subscriptions are \$5.00 a year from ALABAMA LIFE; 1005 Frederick Road; Opelika, Alabama 36801.

(From PRESERVATION REPORT, Volume VIII, Number 1, January-March 1979)

Marjorie Gay
Standing Rock

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 <i>Journal of Alabama Archaeology</i> from Vol. XX, No. 1, June 1974 forward (\$2.50 to members)	\$4.00 pp
<i>Stanfield-Worley Bluff Shelter Excavations</i> (Journal of Alabama Archaeology) Vol. VIII Nos. 1 & 2 - Reprint)	\$5.00 pp
Special Publication 2 — <i>The Archaeological Sequence at Durant Bend, Dallas County, Alabama</i>	\$4.50 pp
<i>Handbook of Alabama Archaeology Part I, Point Types</i>	\$7.35 pp
<i>Handbook of Alabama Archaeology Part II, Uniface Blade and Flake Tools</i>	\$2.25 pp
<i>Lively, Long, Josselyn - Pebble Tool Papers</i>	\$3.00 pp
<i>Investigations in Russell Cave</i> , published by the National Parks Service	\$5.00 pp

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

MAIL CHECK TO: **MR. EUGENE FUTATO, Drawer BA, University, Alabama 35486**

MEMBERSHIP

The coupon below may be used EITHER to APPLY FOR MEMBERSHIP in the Society, or for the PAYMENT OF ANNUAL DUES. Please be sure that your name and address are CLEARLY entered, and that appropriate boxes are checked.

TO: **THE ALABAMA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, for**

☐ NEW MEMBERSHIP ☐ PAYMENT OF ANNUAL DUES ☐ REPORTING OF NEW ADDRESS

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7608 Teal Drive, S.W.
Huntsville, Alabama 35802

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