

THE BIRMINGHAM ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY

PRESENTS

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THE BIRMINGHAM INQUIRER

Dr. Frank Soday was unable to give his awaited talk on Paleo Man for our September meeting due to last minute commitments. Member Ed Green, who has been in Mexico more times than the average Mexican, pinch hit for Dr. Soday in an extremely able and entertaining fashion. He had many slides showing the path he and Sterling Wortham took through Mexico in their search for things of archaeological interest. In addition to the slides, he had many dozens of artifacts ranging from obsidian flake knives and projectile points to such things as votive gods and casts. A most interesting display and lecture was enjoyed by all of us.

Our picnic at Moundville was not shared by as many as we had hoped. There were only about fifteen in attendance. However, Dave DeJarnette, Curator of the Museum, and Randy Gray, who has been working there this summer, made it a most memorable day. Of course we visited all of the usual places in the Museum itself, but then we went into the laboratory. Here Randy was in the process of collating and classifying material from a site on the Coosa River. Here were many skulls and bones, a fine collection of pottery, and many many artifacts. We went through the lab with many long stops and enjoyed every minute of it. We sincerely hope many of our members and friends can get to Moundville and take every opportunity to do so.

In addition to his kindness and hospitality, Dave DeJarnette has issued to our members an annual ticket which is good for admission to the Museum at any time prior to the expiration date shown on the face of it. These cards are being mailed with the Newsletter this month and should be filled in by the member with his name.

Last spring, two amateur archaeologists of Dallas, Texas, found a peculiar spear point in a pit of charcoal blackened earth a few miles from Dallas. Near it were bones of now extinct animals; an elephant, camels, and horses. They immediately recognized how important these things were. The spearhead was a Clovis point. Clovis points have always been considered older than the fully fluted Folsom points, but no one was sure just how old they are. Commonest guess was 15,000 years. The discovery of a Clovis point in a campfire hearth containing charcoal

made it possible to date the Clovis culture by Carbon 14. The amateurs were able to get their hearth dated by new Carbon 14 apparatus in the laboratory of the Humble Oil & Refining Company at Houston. The first of August, Messrs. Crock and Harris were celebrating the second and bigger climax. The test proved the charcoal to be 37,000 years old. This is an age far greater than any ever previously established for human races in America.

Mr. Harris visited our Society about a year and a half ago.

In August we received a report from Randy Gray as to his work and activities while at Mound State Park this summer. He says his principal job was preparing a study of the pottery and artifacts found in the 1948 excavations of the (presumed) Coosa Site. This means a complete study of every sherd found, a complete analysis of the pottery, and the typing of all artifacts found. He says he has completed the pottery study and has made a fair start on the artifacts. He studied more than fifty different types of beads and many interesting trade objects such as gun parts, bottles, axes, knives, and pipes.

Randy further states that he helped in the Museum and helped with the talks to various school groups and civic organizations.

Saturday, August 4th, Messrs. Gimmane and Hulleender visited at the home of Mrs. John B. Hay, Bremen, Alabama. Mr. Hay had recently died at Veteran's Hospital in Birmingham. Among other things they viewed part of Mr. Hay's collection of Indian artifacts. Mrs. Hay and son, John B., Jr., stated that it is their intention to keep Mr. Hay's collection intact. Mrs. Hay further stated that members of the Society would always be welcome at the home to view and study the collection. We would suggest that any member should contact Mrs. Hay previous to an intended visit. Many of Mr. Hay's notes and records are stored away. At some time later when these papers are available, the Society will be welcome to use any that are of value to the Society.

Mr. Hay, Jr., hopes to locate in this vicinity, and hopes he will be able to add to his father's collection. Judging from his conversation, the pupil is apt, and the teacher did a good job.

Mr. John B. Hay was for many years a member of the Alabama Archaeological Society, and a very valued and highly esteemed member of the Birmingham Anthropological Society. He was a collector of Indian artifacts in his locality for more than forty years. We shall miss him.

From Guatemala comes the news that a group of skin divers have found a resort lake that is a veritable archaeological treasure trove. Lake Amatitlan, about

twenty miles south of Guatemala City and traditionally a place of rest and play, has been yielding numerous Mayan pottery pieces. These have been lying on the bottom of the lake for about 1,000 years. When the divers first started they began just for fun, then about a year later, they began turning up pottery pieces later identified with the Mayan culture that flourished in the southern part of Guatemala. Recently one of the divers found a clay pitch pine burner, probably used in religious rites.

The burner is a circular receptacle adorned on three sides by small skulls and typical Mayan heads with elaborate headdresses. The burner is about one foot high and about one foot in diameter. It is almost in perfect condition. It was found at a depth of about seventy feet. The pieces, particularly the pine burner, are being studied by archaeologists not only for their artistic value but also as clues to the life of the Mayan races that inhabited the surroundings of the lake and Guatemala City.

DO YOU KNOW?

That hammocks were not known to Europeans before Columbus discovered America.

That Panama hats are of Indian origin and were first made by the Indians of South America.

That the Indians of many Indian tribes of both North and South America became skilled silver-smiths shortly after Europeans brought silver to America.

That the North American Indians were bead makers long before the coming of Europeans and that when colored glass beads were offered them in exchange for furs, they realized, at once, the very beautiful designs they could make with them. The Indians took these beads, that the Whites considered to be nearly worthless, and made them into ornaments of great beauty.

That some Indian tribes, around Puget Sound, raised long haired dogs solely for their hair which they used in weaving their blankets.

That most Indian men would have had beards if they would let them grow, but instead they would pull out any hair that started to grow upon their face. To do this they used mussel shell tweezers.

That nearly all primitive people, and some not so primitive, made masks which they used in their ceremonials. The Iroquois Indians of New York State have long been noted for their masks of the human face. The Northwest Pacific Coast Indians, from the state of Washington to Alaska, not only made masks of the human face, but masks representing the heads of birds and animals.

The Pueblo and Navajo Indians are also noted for their ceremonial masks.

In Mexico, Central America, and Northeastern South America, the Indians made use of masks.

The South Sea Islanders, Chinese, Japanese and Tibetans had a large assortment of masks. The Japanese actors used masks in their make-up of the character they represented.

Recently, in New Jersey, several skulls have been found that probably designate the first "bundle burial" pit found in that state. The site of the pit is prominent in Indian history, as it lies in what is known as the Great Peace Meadows, in the Passiac River valley west of Caldwell. Here the Iroquois are said to have imposed an uneasy peace on the local Lenape tribes after conquering them in 1720.

The first Indian remains in this vicinity were found ninety years ago when a cellar was being excavated for a nearby farmhouse. Interest was revived last spring when a bulldozer turned up Indian artifacts while moving dirt around a swimming pool.

The skulls in all cases had been crushed, but it was hoped that possibly at least one of them could be reconstructed so as to be able to determine how remote these people were, racially, from the modern Indian.

Hearths and graves, which had been under about four feet of water, were laid bare in a large area.

THE RESCUE OF AN INDIAN MAIDEN, A SACRIFICE TO THE MORNING STAR

It was the custom among the Skidi-Pawnee Indians to occasionally sacrifice a maiden, the more beautiful the better, to the Morning Star. Various reasons were given for the sacrifice, but probably the most important was that it would insure good crops. The ceremony of the sacrifice lasted several days, climaxed with the death of the maiden just as the Morning Star appeared above the horizon. The girl had to be captured from some neighboring tribe.

In 1818 the Pawnees prepared for such a sacrifice. The maiden had been captured and residents of all the neighboring tribes, having been invited, were present. The ceremonies were enacted and it came time for the sacrifice and the maiden was bound to the stake. All were waiting for the Morning Star to appear.

Among those assembled was a young Pawnee chief, named Petalesharo, who was very popular and considered the most handsome and the most daring in the tribe. Unobserved, he had stationed two fast horses a short distance away. Then as the Morning Star was appearing above the horizon, he rushed forward, cut the

girl's bonds and carried her through the crowd to the two waiting horses. Placing her on one horse, he mounted the other and with her rode swiftly away until safe from pursuit. He then presented her with the horse she was on, gave her some food and told her to return to her own people, some four hundred miles away.

Petalesharo returned to his tribe, but because of his prominence and good repute, no attempt was made to punish him. Probably, his tribesmen admired him for his courageous feat. Human sacrifice was never again practiced by the Pawnees.

From Oslo, Norway, comes news as to how the huge statues of Easter Island were erected and transported - an archaeological mystery - may have been discovered by an expedition headed by Thor Heyerdahl of Kon-Tiki fame. The experiment conducted by the expedition indicates that the people who inhabited the island in the Pacific west of South America had mastered sculpture and knew advanced principles of transportation.

A native chief, using a team of twelve men, showed the expedition, how, through the use of logs, stones and muscles a large statue lying on the ground could be made to stand erect on a platform six feet high. Mr. Heyerdahl said that the expedition had found proof that at least some of the statues had been transported by sea and landed below precipices on the coast. A large moon-shaped reed boat had been found carved on the chest of a statue that had been excavated. Mr. Heyerdahl collected enough ethnographical and archaeological material to keep him busy for at least two years study. He will write a scientific report, a popular book, and produce a film with the 57,000 feet of film that they made. When the expedition started work, the archaeologist working separately at different sites discovered that the island had been the home not of a continuous civilization, as was previously thought, but that there were the remains of three distinct civilizations, superimposed on each other. About six hundred of these statues in different parts of the island were previously known. They all belong to one specific type, characteristic of Easter Island and different from anything known in other parts of the world.

They are all made of a type of yellowish-gray volcanic tufa (candy stone) which exists only in the extinct volcano Rano Raraku, near the eastern corner of the island. This expedition uncovered a number of large and small stone statues of other material and of a very different style and workmanship. They were found buried in the earth, or deliberately broken and used in the masonry that supports the statues of the second epoch.

The Society plans to have a booth at the State Fair that will be on the second floor in the Grandstand Building. We plan to have a division of paleo, archaic, woodland, Mississippi, and historic artifacts, plus some explanatory notes and pictures concerning same. We sincerely hope that every member will come out and bring a friend to look at the ALABAMA INDIAN EXHIBIT.

MESSAGE FROM THE SOCIETY OFFICERS

President -- Brittain Thompson 3609 Montrose Road TR 1-0698
Vice President -- Floyd F. Taylor 1123 No. 16th St. AL 1-9984
Secretary & Treasurer -- Martin F. Hullender 202 18th Way SW 58-8900

Meetings: First Friday Every Month, 7:30 P. M., Birmingham Public Library,
3rd Floor, Art Room, unless
otherwise announced.

October 5th Guest Speaker Steve Wimberly

Subject: "Southeastern Pottery"

Steve Wimberly, former State Archaeologist for Alabama, has made a speciality of Indian pottery and is a recognized authority for the Southeastern states in this field. He is the author and co-author of several archaeological bulletins covering some of the diggings which he has been associated with. He plans to give an informal talk utilizing a few examples of different types. He has suggested that members bring to the meeting some of their pottery about which they may have some questions which he assures us he will gladly answer.

November 2nd Guest Speaker Donald C. Beatty

Subject: "Latin American Expedition"

Mr. Donald C. Beatty organized and financed (by way of Richard Whitney, J. P. Morgan and others) a Latin American Expedition for the purpose of conducting scientific research among Jivaro Indians in the upper Amazon River within both ethnological and archaeological areas. To insure scientific integrity of results, the Smithsonian Institution assigned Dr. Mathew W. Sterling to the expedition and the U. S. Navy assigned an officer and two petty officers with a large quantity of photographic equipment and supplies. The field party spent a number of months in the selected area of Eastern Ecuador, Peru and Western Brazil. The scientific areas of research included a study of the life, mythology, habits and customs of these Jivaro Indians. Mr. Beatty is a member of the Explorers Club, and a Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society. We are all pleased to have him as our November speaker.

We are including the first part of a summary on the Dead Sea Scrolls by Alfred W. Hobart. We believe that this summary may arouse further interest in our members and they will endeavor to pursue this subject on their own.