

Newsletter

STONES AND BONES

February, 1960

Birmingham Anthropological Society

Morgan-Limestone Chapter

THE ALABAMA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Madison-Huntsville Chapter

Muscle Shoals Chapter

Member of the Eastern States Archaeological Federation

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SOMETHING MUST BE DONE

The New Year is traditionally a time to take stock and make resolutions. A few days ago we did just that, rather inadvertently, while reading a book, "NO STONE UNTURNED" by amateur archaeologist Louis A. Brennan. Mr. Brennan wields his able literary trowel, or rather bulldozer, in a way reminiscent of Thor hurling thunderbolts - no less! He at once demolishes and rearranges archaeology, physical anthropology, geology, oceanography and a few others. He easily leaps the Atlantic with Folsom to account for Solutrean. He puts his foot in it, as we say, so thoroughly - well, it even has a magnificent aspect.

AND PART OF THAT IS OUR FAULT. One of his major tenets is based on the "fact" that THERE IS ALMOST NO PALEO MATERIAL EAST OF THE GREAT PLAINS - he mentions four small sites, none in our area! He reads "Antiquity" but had missed the "Tennessee Archaeologist" and our own "Journal of Alabama Archaeology". (We notified him immediately, of course.)

The gap in his ignorance was as obvious, and damaging, as missing front teeth. No one can possibly talk sensibly about Paleo without taking into consideration the vast amounts of Paleo material in this area. We also have a number of fluted point types not reported from other areas, and indications of Paleo transition into later cultures. Paleo origins were long, and unsuccessfully, hunted toward Alaska and Siberia. Possibly the indications are that the search should turn southeastward.

Yet even in the sober professional literature we find little prominence given to southeastern Paleo. One fluted point from Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, etc., seems to outweigh a bucket full from Alabama.

We have written Dr. Lewis suggesting the need of a Paleo report such as he and Kneberg gave Archaic in the October 1959 "Antiquity". We do hope the Paleo study initiated by Soday, Cambron and Mahan several years ago is about ready to fruit. These would help a lot.

But nothing would highlight our local Paleo and focus world attention quite like a good excavation and a radio-carbon date. The nearest thing to Paleo from Russell Cave was apparently (last we heard) an "unfluted Quad" type of projectile point. We haven't heard definitely, but apparently Cambron and Mitchell (Journal of Alabama Archaeology, Vol. 4, Issue 1, 1958) and Cambron and Waters (Tennessee Archaeologist, Vol XV, No. 2, 1959) were unable to get a radio-carbon date on their properly excavated fluted Quad. At least there was no intimation of it in the two above reports, though another report is promised, and according to a report in the Decatur Daily, May 3, 1959 (with a photograph of Lewis and Kneberg visiting the excavation) charcoal for dating was being collected.

Be that as it may, we know that three or four EXCAVATIONS of Paleo material in the West have made that area dominate - despite the fact that Dr. Soday tells us (verbal communication) that in making the above mentioned study he, Cambron and Mahan had examined MORE LOCAL PALEO MATERIAL THAN HAS BEEN REPORTED FROM ALL THE REST OF THE U. S. Qualified excavations are needed to put this "missing link" of southeastern Paleo into the stream of archaeological thinking.

One of our members, C. H. WORLEY, has discovered and brought to attention what looks to be the IDEAL SITE FOR EXCAVATION. Both up and down the creek from it there is much Paleo material, on sites which cannot compare. In fact, we never saw a comparable site!

Mr. Worley has discovered a cliff shelter 56' deep, the better living space 130' wide, a fine permanent spring a few feet outside! It is dry, powder dry, with no wash, no erosion, stratigraphy certain, skeletal preservation no doubt exceptional to perfect. The soil is extremely soft and loose - trowel-easy. Sheltered, it makes all-weather excavation possible. AND IT IS A VIRGIN SITE, unmolested, not even any "modern hieroglyphics" on the walls - perhaps the first virgin site we ever saw.

Mr. Worley put down a small test pit to establish possibilities. Steve Wimberly managed to spare a few hours to put down a small professional test pit showing distinct layering, and identified potsherds which span the entire known range in the area: punctate fiber temper, Alexander incised, Wright check stamped, plain limestone temper and shell temper. To see this imposing shelter is to understand why no culture would have failed to use it. While not yet established on the basis of hurried and shallow sampling, it seems almost certain that Paleo Man must have used the shelter. If Paleo Man buried his dead (not yet established to our knowledge) this would seem the place to find his preserved remains. What bone was recovered was heavy and perfect. The shelter is limestone, and there is considerable shell in the midden, two factors which along with the powder dryness make for unheard-of bone preservation for our area.

And that isn't quite all. Our professional friend DAVE DE JARNETTE IS INTERESTED. He is excessively busy - Archaeologist-in-charge at Moundville, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Alabama, and if memory serves he is also studying for another degree. But he is planning a few days at the shelter for further exploration.

SO WHAT IS LACKING TO GIVE THIS ALL THE EARMARKS OF AN OPPORTUNITY? And shall we make this a Society resolution for the New Year? Shall we get behind Dave and push and shove in one way and another, and see that the right thing is done by this incredible virgin site - or shall we wait until its inviting innocence is despoiled?

We think, personally, that Mr. Worley started something! We think that nothing would be more invigorating for our Alabama Archaeological Society than to adopt this project - right up to our necks! WE THINK IT SHOULD BE COUNTED A PRIVILEGE TO CONTRIBUTE TO PUTTING SOUTHEASTERN PALEO ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MAP, ONCE AND FOR ALL.

And of course we should like to see our Society in a position to get some credit collectively (as Worley, Wimberly and DeJarnette individually) for what well may be the most important site in the southeast - possibly the entire country. You can expect to hear more about this as plans are made and needs determined. And we are not going to be bashful about making appropriate requests!

WHAT DOES OUR NEWSLETTER NEED?

The Newsletter is our organ of intercommunication between affiliates of the Alabama Archaeological Society, and a medium for stimulation, inspiration, education. And it affords valuable opportunity for self-expression and participation. A sample copy of the Newsletter of the Archaeological Society of New Jersey (just received by courtesy of Secretary Schaefer) which runs to NINETEEN PAGES caused us to wonder if our own Newsletter is living up to its possibilities.

The important thing, of course, is what you think, what you want - and that you voice these "thinks" and "wants". In the Birmingham Anthropological Society we feel somewhat guilty of dominating the Newsletter unduly for lack of affiliate contributions. We do not wish to be annoying, and do want the stimulation and information inherent in what the other affiliates are doing - and they often surpass us in both field work and meaningful meetings. We feel that we all could profit by - pardon the expression - a bit more "integration" via the Newsletter. What's your thought?

And we offer our sincerest apologies to Mr. Beinlich for overlooking the Muscle Shoals Chapter news last month - he has been a very good reporter. We were in the midst of assembling that Newsletter from the admitted jungle of papers on our desk when Britt Thompson descended upon us with the news that we had to do a TV show the following evening. From then on we didn't know for sure whether we were getting out the Newsletter or getting up the TV show. We later discovered the oversight and made a note to publish it in this issue, but a prolonged search through our papers only convinces us that we must have "eaten that report" as the saying goes, out of sheer chagrin. Our double apologies!

SECRETARY SCHAEFER REPORTS ON CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Ballots received on the Alabama Archaeological Society proposed constitutional changes show the following results:

Article III - Membership	FOR	<u>36</u>	AGAINST	<u>1</u>
Article IV - Officers	FOR	<u>36</u>	AGAINST	<u>1</u>
Article VI - Finances	FOR	<u>35</u>	AGAINST	<u>2</u>
Article IX - Amendment	FOR	<u>35</u>	AGAINST	<u>2</u>

This includes approval by the membership at large of dues as follows:

Associate (students)	\$1.00
Regular	3.00 (plus your local dues, of course)
Family	4.00
Sustaining	5.00
Life	25.00

Dues are due, by the way, and may be paid either through your local Chapter or direct to Rodger L. Schaefer, 1414 15th Ave., S.E., Decatur, Alabama.

We would like to note that we now have a new LIFE MEMBER, Mr. R. W. Weaver, Henagar, Alabama. (Mailing committee please note.)

Thanks, Rodger, for the report. And welcome and congratulations to Mr. Weaver,

our second life member along with the eminent Dr. Walter Jones, State Geologist.

BIRMINGHAM ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Meetings first Friday of month, 7:30 P.M., Birmingham Public Library.

Election of officers and discussion of business and plans occupied our Jan., 1960 meeting - without, we felt, sufficient expression of appreciation for the excellent two-year job outgoing President Dahlen has done for us. May he enjoy his rest!

Dr. Albert Gessmann was elected unanimously as our new President. Dr. Gessmann has long been one of our most active and enthusiastic members, driving the tedious distance from Talladega too, where he is Head of the Dept. of Languages at Talladega College. This is our first invasion into the rarefied Ph. D. ranks for a President, in our memory, and we can expect even more than usual the healthy newness experienced when we tap the diverse talents of members.

Ed Greene was not able to escape reelection as vice-President, nor Mrs. Martin Hullender as Secretary-Treasurer. We have lost track of the times Mrs. Hullender has served so capably in the not inconsiderable task of recording and reporting the minutes of meetings, collecting dues, disbursing funds, keeping accounts, contacting members and all the etceteras which this important position entails. We know the members are more appreciative than they can well express.

The agreed "one year trial" of affiliation was discussed, and the vote was unanimous to continue. In fact, the wish was expressed that we might become a little more affiliated, with more interchange, communication and common projects behind which we can throw our combined weights.

It was agreed to give notice that at our Feb. meeting we shall discuss, and vote upon, the desirability of making a Constitutional amendment allowing us to elect a second vice-President.

LIVING ON A SITE Mrs. Francis C. Smith

Little did we realize when we bought the little house on Atlanta's northside that we would be living on an ancient Indian site. At the time we were only interested in the attractiveness of the house and the fact that it overlooked Peachtree Creek with a fine view of woodlands and stream.

But it was not very long after we moved in that we picked up a crude arrowhead in our own back yard! This indeed was a puzzle to us; first we thought it might have been just one lost from our back porch collection of relics. Not too much thought was given to it at the time.

Later, when a couple of sherds were found nearby as well as a few pieces of worked flint, we began to suspicion that we were on or close to a site. What sort of site was it, and how large? Where was the center of concentration?

We knew that in grading and laying out of streets, building sewers and foundations for houses, landscaping, etc., the entire area had been much disturbed.

Possibly the site itself had been covered, destroyed beyond recognition, or even carted away.

The lands in our neighborhood gently slope to the edge of the creek, which has steep and eroded banks. Probably in past times there were a couple of large springs feeding into the now small spring branches that flow into the creek. One large area had been cultivated in the days of long ago, a descendant of the old settlers told us. Her family had owned the entire area, farmed it, and a little way downstream had grist- and sawmills operating years before the 1850's.

When my husband found the bannerstone on the creek bank in front of our house, we really did get excited and all the neighborhood kids got relic fever. The problematical use of the bannerstone as an atlatl weight and its rarity made it into one of our best loved relics in our collection. Should I say, a home-grown relic?

Now, artifacts are not plentiful in our area, but are found just enough to keep us on the lookout. We never know what the flick of a trowel will turn up in the yard, or appear after a severe freeze, or in the creek bed and banks when water is low, or even when just plain out walking the dog in the parkway....

The materials that have turned up are bird points, projectile points crudely made, sand-tempered sherds greatly eroded with only faint traces of an incised design which we have not identified as to type and exact culture age, pipe fragments, many worked chips of black and white flinty material, etc., and of course the bannerstone.

We have found no mention of our site on any map or book. We know of no scientific study or excavations on the site and all finds have been surface ones. My old Professor theorizes that the site was never a very large one, muchly disturbed by time and man, and probably an Archaic Type culture. We have all looked for remains of workshops, hearths, post holes and mounds but so far no definite traces. We do know that not far down Peachtree Creek where it empties into the Chattahoochee River was the village site of Standing Peachtree, prehistoric and historic Indian landmark.

So our "Lost Indian Town", as we prefer to call our site, is all about us. The kids are all much interested and any find is a treasure. One teen-ager has become an expert and made a large map showing site location, findings and topography. We are all keenly aware that ancient Indians lived right here on our own home grounds hundreds of years before we did and left evidence to prove it.

(Ed. note: We like the sense of quiet excitement over actually "living on a site" which Mrs. Smith has succeeded in transmitting. If the "community collection" could be brought to the attention of Dr. A. R. Kelly, University of Georgia, we should like to hear his diagnosis. See map of site, and bannerstone detail, on following page.)

Our Librarian, Martin Hullender, reports that two nice books were recently donated to our library by Harold Kleine, one of the people who has done a great deal for archaeology in Alabama. The books are:

THE OLD STONE AGE by Miles Burkett

PREHISTORIC MAN by LeRoi-Gourhan