

Newsletter

STONES AND BONES

December, 1959

Birmingham Anthropological Society

Morgan-Limestone Chapter

THE ALABAMA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Madison-Huntsville Chapter

Muscle Shoals Chapter

Members of the Eastern States Archaeological Federation

ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the Alabama Archaeological Society will be held Sunday, December 13, 1959, at the Electric Auditorium, Electrical Department, 110 Johnston Street S.E., Decatur, Alabama.

Registration:..... to 2 p.m.

Business Meeting:..... to 3 p.m.

Speakers:..... to 4:30 p.m.

A.W. Beinlich: "Birdseye Conglomerate"

J. V. Cambron: "Flint Creek Rock Shelter"

J.P. and Betty Ann Knudson: "Pottery Restoration".

Guest Speaker:.....4:30 to 5:30 P.m.

Dr. Albert M. Gessmann: "Interesting Features of Indian Language".

Following the meeting, a Dutch-luck dinner will be held at 6:30 p.m. at Holiday Inn on U.S. Highway 31 South.

It is hoped that all the members will take advantage of our annual meeting and will plan to attend; and those who wish to do so, should bring their artifacts for display.

The Electric Auditorium is located in the center of Decatur about one-half block west of Second Avenue on the North side of Johnston Street.

ARTHUR B. DUNNING

We hereby nominate Arthur for some sort of degree -- perhaps Master of Amateur

Arthur B. Dunning, M.A., has been appointed Curator of Minerals by Birmingham Southern College. Furthermore, this honor is well-deserved. Although Arthur's interest in this field is relatively brief, we are assured by those in a position to know that he now ranks among the authorities on Alabama minerals, and is making a real contribution.

This should remind us that there are real possibilities in the amateur societies, and that one of our functions is to discover and interest, shall we say the "brains" in our midst which have not been functioning at full steam. Such people can contribute. Better to find an Arthur than an artifact!

Under the circumstances, we can forgive Arthur for not being a more active member of the Birmingham Anthropological and Alabama Archaeological Society. We do hope he will be alert to note and report all signs of Indian quarrying. In the meantime, he hasn't forgotten us and sends in the following report:

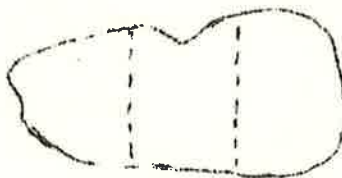
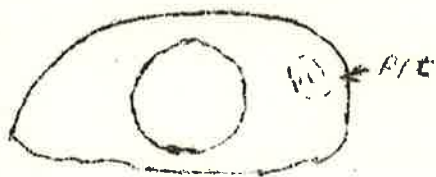
REPORTING ON AN ARTIFACT
Arthur B. Dunning

Enclosed is a tracing of an artifact (atlatl weight ?) from the Old Town field site in Clay County, near Ashland, Alabama. I thought that this should be a matter of record as it belongs to someone who will surely lose it.

I have never visited this site but during my many mineral collecting trips to Clay County, I have encountered several people with curious objects picked up on the site.

This weight (?) is made of a mass of weathered kyanite, which material is common locally. While being soft (as kyanite weathers to an amorphous form of mica) it is extremely tough and is a good substance for drilling and grinding into useful objects.

While my first membership dates back 30 years in the B'ham Anthro. Soc., I have been a sporadic and useless member. But if you can use it I have quite a bit of information of interest to archaeology.



We certainly can use this kind of reporting which rescues a stray artifact from oblivion -- an excellent example of the use of method to make amateur archaeology useful. And we know that Mr. Dunning has more important things to offer us. A knowledge of stone is something we all need in greater measure.

We can think of two things without even giving the matter thought which we should like to see Mr. Dunning work up for our Journal. One is a map of sources of supply in Alabama where Indians could get the major materials they used. One finds a pink granite disconformity in Clarke Co., for example, and should include in his study a possible source. We recall a green jasper artifact which looked like imported material but Mr. Dunning told us he had found green jasper in Alabama. A source of supply on a continuing basis, new finds reported from time to time to be entered, would be a milestone for archaeology in any state.

And why was "greenstone" so popular for colts, etc., all over the world? That would deal with its physical properties. And, briefly, what is the geology and chemistry of this material? Mr. Dunning could gradually work up a primer which would fill a near-vacuum in our average knowledge, and tie together two wonderful hobbies. We once showed Mr. Dunning some hornblende schist (as we recall somewhat vaguely) from a distant state. He identified it at once and said it looked to come from an old mine near Brewster, New York. He didn't miss it far at all. It came from an old mine some 12 to 15 miles from Brewster -- no doubt the same formation if not the same mine. We are still impressed!

And by the way, those interested in rocks and minerals and gem polishing should by all means join the Alabama Mineral and Lapidary Society (Dunning is one of the founders and past-president). They meet at Birmingham-Southern College, second Friday evening of each month, and our President Dahlen is getting out a corking good newsletter -- location maps 'n' everything.

THE MAN WHO DIDN'T MAKE IT

Last month we reported that Dr. Louis S.B. Loaky found the skull of what seems to be the oldest known tool-making man, which he tentatively dated at about 600,000 years ago.

Now Dr. Johannes Hurzeler comes through with a follow-up on a report we made some time ago about the "near-man" found 600 feet deep in soft-coal mines of Northern Italy. That first report was concerning a single jaw, which aroused some skepticism for who would believe a near-man TWELVE MILLION YEARS AGO (this age is said to be beyond dispute).

But now Dr. Hurzeler (who took up coal-mining as a profession for several years) reports on about 60 complete skeletons of this near-man he calls Oreopithecus. And anthropologists are agreeing that this is a hominid -- a basically more human than ape type, with our types of teeth and pelvis.

But of course anthropologists agree with Dr. Hurzeler that it is unthinkable that this is an early member of our family tree -- there are too many evidences of evolution from the ape some ten million years later. But it fits in with the common statement of anthropologists that man survived by one chance in a million -- this "ape bereft of his tail and grown rusty at climbing", as Cabel put it. Not an animal; not yet quite a man -- there must have been some rough years between gang-and-claw and the invention of weapons. So Oreopithecus looks as if he might be one of the perhaps many offshoots that tried to be a man but didn't make it.

What is this upward-reaching thing in evolution, anyhow, which doggedly persists in trying to develop more complex and intelligent beings? For some reason which escapes us, there are those who still look down their noses at evolution. To us it seems pretty wonderful, and as worthy a mystery of life as any.

Well, sorry you didn't make it, Mr. Oreopithecus -- with ten million years start you probably would be a better man than we are. But thanks for crawling into an early Pliocene swamp to leave us a petrified record of your effort. You plainly had anthropology on your half-mind even then!

NORTH-LIMESTONE CHAPTER NEWS

J. P. Knudson

Meeting Nov. 2, 1959, 7:30 p.m., City Electric Auditorium, Decatur, Alabama.

Program: Display of Grooved Axes, Celts, and Game Stones (Discoidals) and Discussion and Display.

This will be the final program devoted to Pecked, Ground and Polished Stone Artifacts. As in the past we will have the camera set up to photograph the outstanding pieces. And again, THE SUCCESS OF THE MEETING DEPENDS UPON YOUR COOPERATION AND SUPPORT. Please come, and bring your celts, axes, and game stones.

In addition to the display we will have a report on the annual meeting of the Tennessee Archaeological Society which was held last week end.

MUSCLE SHOALS CHAPTER NEWS
A. W. Beillich

For the October 26, 1959 meeting the President gave a talk on blowguns, how they were made, and the meager accounts of their use during historic times by the Indians of the Southeast.

Several collections of projectile points, including scales of the gar which could have been adapted for use as points for darts, were displayed.

At the Annual Meeting of the Tennessee Archaeological Society, Jackson, Tennessee, Oct. 24-25, Alabama was well represented. There were two members from the Huntsville Chapter, six from the Decatur Chapter, and three from the Muscle Shoals Chapter at the meeting. Mr. James W. Cambren of the Decatur Chapter presented a paper on the Flint Creek Rock Shelter.

We are awaiting news about the Annual Meeting of the Alabama Archaeological Society... (There is a meeting at Cullman Nov. 18 to settle this matter. Sorry we can't make this meeting -- we always enjoy the guys, gals and orange rolls -- but a medical appointment interferes. But we vote with the crowd.) (Any papoose news?)

BIRMINGHAM ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWS

First Friday of month, 7:30 p.m., Birmingham Public Library.

Nov. 6: Dan Josselyn discussed archaeological excavation -- a few famous amateurs who have made history by doing it right -- a jillion "diggers" who have done terrible destruction. We are all to blame in some measure for not supplying a better educational program both in our Societies and for the public at large. There are wonderful possibilities for those who have the enthusiasm to learn the tedious science of excavating, but remember:

One excavates the story, the history -- not the artifacts. There is no story in a pot or artifact of any kind -- the story is in its placement, associations, charcoal and soil recovered adjacent, etc. And excavating does not destroy a site: it is transferred to maps, both vertical and horizontal, so archaeologists can see the whole underground situation as if they had X-ray eyes. We are getting a bad habit of rhyming things:

EXCAVATING VERSUS "DIGGING"

We want the facts, not artifacts,
And frown upon all vandal acts,
We study people, not just pots,
And excavate to see just what's
The kind of man we used to be --
We excavate his history.

Those folks who simply want to dig
Might take a lesson from the pig:
He digs but peanuts, or a root,
And digs with nothing but his snout!

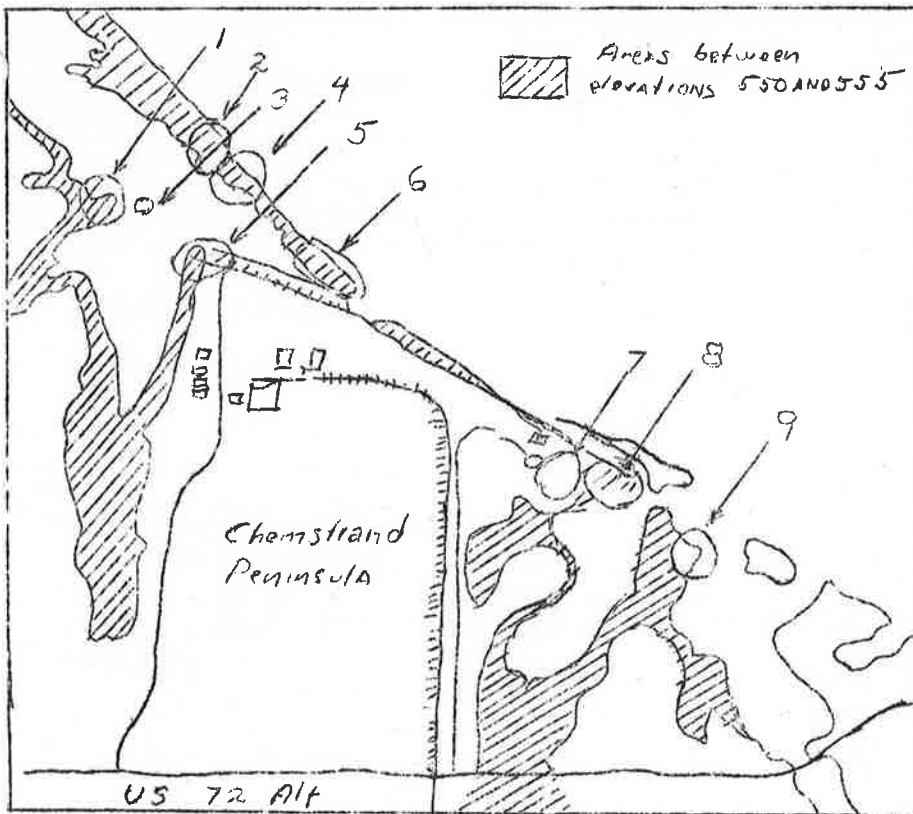
Dec. 1, 1959 meeting will be an "open" one, so bring your "talking" material.

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF WRITING

thssmplfncntwrtnng....That could be read, after vowels are put in, "this is a sample of ancient writing". Or other vowels might make something else. That gives an idea of the problem of translating the Dead Sea Scrolls -- written without vowels, word or sentence separation, capitals, punctuation, and with much more indefinite grammar, tense and a few other things than writing has today. The word "bd" might be bad, bade, bed, bead, bede, bid, bide, bode, bud, abide, abode.

And just what was the exact usage at this particular time? Languages change from age to age. Can we read our own first English Bible today (Wycliffe)? This is how Isaiah XXXV began; "Gladen shal desert and the with oute weie, and ful out shal be the wilderness, and fouren as a lillie. Buriowmynge it shal buricoune, and ful out loyoyen, loyeful and preising. The glorie of Liban is youe to it, the faârnesse of Carmel and of Seron...."

After a few thousand years of jumping from the frying pan of Hebrew to the fire of Wycliffe we hardly wonder that our last revision of the English Bible (with the scholars of all the English-speaking Protestant churches all over the world working for many years with many new discoveries of ancient Bible manuscripts) -- we hardly wonder that the New Testament alone of the King James version was changed in 5,780 particulars! English scholars are now revision again, and admit another revision will be in order when the Scrolls are thoroughly studied. They provide our oldest Old Testament evidence by a thousand years, and in particular will shed new insights upon the more real meanings of ancient usage. In our King James version, for example Psalm XVI, 10, we find "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell". By the time of our Revised Standard version it was known that there was no Hebrew concept of either "soul" or "hell" at that time, and this was changed to "For thou dost not give me up to Sheol". But exactly what, at any given time, did "Sheol" denote and connote? Speaking of micro-excavation!



1. Knudsen Site 1 Mo. 5
Located at mouth of Baker's Creek
2. Knudsen Site 1 Mo. 12
Small Island in Baker Creek Backwater.
3. Knudsen Site 1 Mo. 13
Old South Bank just West of gas line ditch
4. Knudsen Site 1 Mo. 10
Chemstrand Island #3
5. Knudsen Site 1 Mo. 2
Chemstrand Point
6. Knudsen Site 1 Mo. 11
Chemstrand Island #1
7. Knudsen Site 1 No. 8
Field site east of the Chemstrand Guest House.

8. Knudsen Site 1 Mo. 5, Island off Chemstrand Point East. Joins to mainland at extreme low water.

9. Knudsen Site 1 Mo. 9, Paleo Hut Site on the West bank of Clancy's Ditch.

Sites 1,2,3 and 4, shown on the map above have been destroyed by dredging operation at the site of the new state docks. Site 7 formerly planted to cotton is now in permanent grass and unhyuntable. Site 9 has washed through and is no longer product

Since these sites are no longer huntable for the above reasons, I propose to write descriptive articles on each of them for future issues of the Journal of Alabama Archaeology. I therefore sollicit your cooperation and request that you make available to me any material you may have collected from these sites; or, if you prefer, to write the article let me know so that I may make my collection available to you.

(signed) John P. (Pete) Knudsen
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Doatur, Alabama
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