

Newsletter

STONES & BONES

April 1959

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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THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE

Looking back over the tide of years, we picture in our minds the fearless and stout-hearted first settlers of Alabama.

Their strong arms, undaunted courage, conquered, lived, and loved the hills, valleys, and rivers of Alabama in its primeval grandeur.

The Red Man's village, the Indian brave, and his dark-eyed maiden.

Fishing from his canoe in wide, beautiful rivers - the Coosa, Tombigbee, and Alabama.

Spearing fish from the bank of some clear creek.

Hunting in the quiet of the forest with his simple bow and arrow.

Holding "Pow-wows" or council meetings to form tribal laws or mete out justice.

His religion the Happy Hunting Grounds; his faith, the Great Spirit.

This was his verdant kingdom, and those before him for thousands of years.

Then came the great makers of history: De Soto, Cocke, Coffee, Crockett, Jackson - and his Indian fighters.

The traders with worthless trinkets and glass beads, traded for a slice of land here and another slice there.

The Buffalo Bills: the wild game slaughtered for pelts and hides, leaving the carcass to rot.

The Great White Father's broken treaties and faithless pacts.

The "stinking" Indian, the war dances - the "savage" fights back.

Fort Toulouse, Fort Jackson, Fort Mims, and many others.

Then the war of 'eighteen twelve....Horse-shoe Bend!

Alas - robbed, slaughtered, tortured and starved.

This archaic race of people virtually destroyed in less than three hundred years.

Perhaps it is best the sahde be pulled down over the events of the removal of the Indians and the hideous brutalities which we wish to forget.

With only the ashes of his village sites, bits of broken pottery, and occasional burials to tell a story of the death of a race of primitive people.

Let us promote archaeology with pity and humility, to leave those that are to follow, the history of their culture, their life, and in so doing the memory of the American Indians, that their past

may not be forgotten and lost forever.

Peggy Joice Edwards  
Age 12

Peggy, honey, we do like this!

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MUSCLE SHOALS CHAPTER NEWS  
Charles Hubbert

Vistors  
welcome!

Student Lodge, Florence State College, Feb. 23, 7:30PM. A very interesting program was presented by one of our own members, Mr. Robert Nelson, on "The Archaeology of Jamaica". Mr. Nelson has spent some time in Jamaica, is acquainted with some Jamaican archaeologists and gave us a first-hand account of excavations - of which he is having a series of slides made from pictures. He plans to return to Jamaica this summer.

Our general topic of discussion was a chapter project. Since few of us find representative specimens of many point and artifact types, we decided on the project of making plastic casts of artifacts. Master molds will be made available to all chapter members who master the art of making reproductions.

Mr. William T. Newsome, Jr., displayed a number of very nice game stones (discoidals). Mr. William Beinlich brought several nice points, including one Clovis. Charles Hubbert displayed a collection of paleo tools gathered from one site in the last month. Mr. O. P. Grogan and Jimmy Grogan, Mr. Robert Lacks, and Mr. Charles Gooch also brought artifacts.

We are very sorry to announce the death of George Hunt. Mr. Hunt was a resident of Sheffield and a member of both our chapter and the state organization. He died suddenly of a heart attack on February 22.

Charles Hubbert says his squaw is expecting a papoose in the lodge when the leaves begin to redden - Aug. 23.

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#### BIRMINGHAM ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Meeting: first Friday each month, 7:30PM, Birmingham Public Library. Visitors welcome - invited to join - not solicited.

Welcome back to the Floyd Taylors! More moons ago than we like to count, Mr. Taylor suddenly wasn't "attached to his hip bone", and our March meeting was the first the Taylors have made - thanks to (wouldn't you know it?) Bill Steele. Good to see these loyal members who were in the Society when it wore three-cornered pants. Mr. Taylor is widely known for his models of canoes, etc.

Mr. Lawrence Kwong, Colonel in the Chinese Air Force and U. S. educated engineer, gave us a delightful informal talk on China, its people, problems, floods, geographic areas, archaeology, war, boiled drinking water, building airfields, post office bicycles (made over several times), Chinese transportation problems, his varied career - and what-have-you. Mr. Kwong was thoroughly enjoyed.

Bobby Cline displayed numerous fossils of the scale tree, relics of Alabama's youth.

Mr. Hullender is doing a good job of bringing a large part of the Society's library to the meetings - for prospective circulation. He has turned in a catalogue, for which we hope to have stencils cut soon and mimeographed copies made for members so that one may order as his interests dictate. Two bound copies of "Arrowpoints" are out, and return requested.

A membership list of all State members has been received by Pres. Dahlen. We understand he plans to have mimeographed copies made for distribution to all.

Our April meeting will be another of those pleasant open meetings, grab-bag style, where you don't know what will turn up. Members always come through with an amazing number of artifacts, rocks, gems, brief discussions - well, the evening is never long enough.

By the way, how long has it been since you brought a visitor?

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### "THE OLD SARGE"

About 8-years ago a series of articles began in the TENNESSEE ARCHAEOLOGIST under the title, "The Old Sarge Says". They have appeared consistently ever since, and been consistently interesting, informative and readable.

Emerging from this almost legendary status, The Old Sarge, in the person of Arthus George Smith, Curator for Archaeology, Firelands Museum, Norwalk, Ohio, favors us with a most delightful letter.

The letter opens with a very nicely put correction pertaining to our filler (we were not getting any news material) on the Archaeology of Christmas. We had said "wassail" derives from "warm ale". The Sarge corrects: "Wassail comes from the Saxon 'Waes Hael', that is 'Your Health'".

There is a moral in this, if we may point. We have been writing a book for the last couple of years, and required one brief paragraph on Christmas. We devoured the two best books on the subject in our public library, and articles in two leading encyclopaedias - but neglected to consult our two unabridged dictionaries, one of which is quite thorough on the derivation of "wassail". The Old Norse, Anglo Saxon and Middle English are almost identical. It seems they were quite addicted to drinking "your health", and so often with warm ale that perhaps in the popular mind the meanings got mixed up by axiomatic

rule. Thanks to the Sarge, for we do hate to misinform - and for another lesson on consulting all sources available, even if only a brief paragraph is involved. The Sarge adds some more information:

"There was a resistance to Christmas among the godly much later than 1842. I was about 8 or 9 when a new preacher at the Methodist church put up a Christmas tree for the Sunday School. It split the church, the old hardshells forming a new congregation. They called it heathenism and idol worship.....

"My family for many generations has had an old pagan custom. The Yule feast is at noon by the sun. The place of honor at the master's right is left vacant, though ready. It is for a stranger, any who comes to your door within the hour before noon and asks for food. Such a one is taken in, given a chance to clean up if he wishes, treated as a most welcome guest, fed, given money for the road, and a warm coat if he needs one. It is pure paganism, Odin and Thor walked the earth at Yule seeking hospitality from men. It is called the Wanderer's Place."

Come Yule time, we should like to drop in for this gracious hospitality. The Sarge and his family sound like delightful pagans!

The so-called pagan religions of course contain many wonderful and splendid concepts - since they all represent man's age-old reaching for nebulous higher things. Christianity has adopted, wisely, many of these concepts - and perhaps some less wisely. Our word "hell" also derives from Odin and Thor, "Hel" being the goddess of the gloomy underworld. Our fire-and-brimstone picture of hell is borrowed from the "Hades" of the old Greek Orphic cult - whose wandering priests, for a fee, would assure that you wouldn't go there. It had flourished for some 900 years before the late anonymous Apocryphal writer purporting to be Peter obviously borrowed from descriptions of Hades, hence our Biblical concept. The original Yahwe, as the Jewish-Christian God was named (Jehova was a mistranslation of the Middle Ages), simply said, "unto dust shalt thou return". Genesis 3:19

We, like the Sarge, have a soft place in our heart for some of the old Norse religious concepts - Odin and his gang. When Sigurd asked his fate of the wise man, the prediction was gloomy, but:

"Never shalt thou be stained by baseness...

And a nobler man shall never live"

An ideal difficult to surpass in any religion. We won't mind so much tying on our Hel-shoon (hell shoes), as some folk still do for the dead in Norwegian countries, if we can live up to that. Especially so if we can find Socrates in Hades.

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#### REPORT ON THE MAHAN SITE

R. W. Edwards

The amateur may find it hard to project himself into a period of which

he knows practically nothing. Certainly a lot of questions are to be answered and problems solved before we will know about the people who lived at the Mahan site many hundreds of years ago.

This site has been surface-collected for years by some of our members and there has been a little excavating since it was marked for destruction. Unfortunately, much of this excavating has been mere "digging" to recover artifacts, rather than proper stratigraphic excavation to recover information.

Recoveries ranging all the way from late house-type "wattle" to ancient atlatl weights are certainly indicative of occupation at intervals over a period of thousands of years. A few dozen carefully excavated five-foot pits should yield material, and soil observations, which would give valuable stratigraphic information.

A curial recovered by Dick Humbarnd in good condition would seem to indicate that much informative skeletal material exists.

The soft, sandy soil invites more serious excavation.

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Dear Sir:

Have been reading the last few issues of Stones & Bones. I think we should congratulate the Editor on a fine job. He not only makes it interesting, but educational as well. And although I don't always agree with everything he says, I like the way he says it. (Our correspondent suggested this last be deleted, but we wouldn't deny anyone the pleasure of disagreeing with editors! Ed.)

In reading the last few issues you sometimes detect a thinly veiled note of sarcasm about all the help he gets from the members - that's us - help, that is, with a few articles. He wonders if anyone is still out there - "he hasn't even heard a beef". (We have, since!)

Looks like somebody ought to shoot a little bull, now and then. Most of us hesitate to send in our two cents' worth for fear it might look like a fly in the ointment compared to brother Josselyn's bouquets of rhetoric. I note in the Feb. issue the Editor seems to have taken a shot towards the north (direction). I don't blame him. In the last few issues I believe there's not so much as an "ugh" from this side of the river, or the south bank either.

We have a new president at the Huntsville Chapter, Tom Stogner. He is very good at it. The first thing he asked me was, "Why were you so late?" Of course, I've been late so many times, I've developed a crust, and it was not embarrassing. However, I'm not bragging.

I've been working on my museum in my basement, trying to get it presentable enough to appeal to the minds that are twelve years and even older - happy to show it to any member or interested parties.

Charles V. Brosmer

Thanks, Charles, for breaking the thick ice!