

THE SMOKE SIGNAL

Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Sweem and Dr. Ray Bentzen left on Wednesday to attend the 16th annual Plains Conference on Archaeology at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. Our society was invited to report on its investigations of this past summer. Glenn was to report on the cave project and Ray on the Medicine Wheel.

Groundwork has been laid for the teaching of an extension course in Field Archaeology at the Northern Wyoming Community College, possibly during the next semester. More of this later, but in the meantime keep your eyes and ears open for individuals who may be interested in taking such a course, so that as large a registration as possible may be signed up when the time arrives.

The January meeting will be the time of election of officers for the new year, so be thinking about whom you wish to have for our leaders.

Dr. Mulloy has been wanting to return to Easter Island ever since his visit there with Thor Heyerdahl. He writes now that the possibilities of making the trip seem almost definite. They will leave in June and he will spend six months teaching at the University of Chile. He will go to Easter in January, remain there for a year, and then return to Chile to teach until the following September, and then back to Wyoming. We shall certainly miss the most helpful assistance and friendly cooperation which Bill has given us in our apprenticeship in field work and preparation of manuscripts, but at the same time we are glad for him and wish him the best of health and luck to him and his fine family.

Recent Items of Interest

Scientific American, July, 1958. Early Man in Africa, by J. Desmond Clark,

This interesting article summarizes the researches leading to the discovery of the earliest man-made tools discovered to date.

Among the interesting things mentioned is that the Australopithecines may be fire and tool-using ape-men that are not actually ancestral to men but rather collaterally descended from a common ancestor. The article is recommended to all members.

Science, 21 Nov., 1958. Salt and Silt in Ancient Mesopotamian Agriculture,

by Jacobsen and Adams. Archaeological researches into the methods used by farmers of several thousand years ago are revealing useful information in the reclamation of soil with a high salt content. Archaeological is indeed a "practical" science.

Science, 1 Aug, 1958. Variation of Radiocarbon in Plants, Shells and

Snails in the Past 4 Years, by DeVries. This study answers an important question in radiocarbon dating: How long does the carbon remain in the atmosphere after being produced and before being assimilated by a growing organism? This time is shown to be short, and therefore a negligible factor in dating.

Science, 29 Aug., 1958. Radiocarbon Dating up to 70,000 Years by Isotopic Enrichment, by Haring and deVries. Methods used to produce the first enriched uranium for a bomb have been applied to carbon dating to extend the usable range of the method to 70,000 years instead of about 20,000 years as before.

Science, 26 Sept., 1958. A Climatic Record from Searles Lake, California, by Roosma. The methods of pollen counting have yielded a climatic record for Searles Lake bed deposits that clearly correlate with the last pluvial period in this region, probably the Wisconsin post-glacial. The methods of pollen-counting are becoming firmly established in archaeological work.

Science, 7 Nov., 1958. University of Michigan Radiocarbon Dates, III, by Crane and Griffin. The third set of dates published by this group. Dates from some of the island investigations by Dr. Mulloy are given. The oldest date for the United States is 16,700 years for a sample of uncertain relationship to human culture obtained from Santa Rosa Island, California.

The following article is from the United Association Journal, of October, 1958, and was submitted by Mrs. Anita Deininger. We have been trying to encourage members to send interesting articles to the Smoke Signal without much success. We certainly hope more members will follow in Mrs. Deininger's footsteps.

MAMMOTHS, ANYONE?

Although Alaska will soon be the youngest state in the Union, there is ample evidence that herds of pre-historic animals once roamed over lush green plains within this 586,400 square mile area.

Signs that prehistoric creatures had inhabited the now cold wastelands of northern Alaska came within the last two decades.

One such discovery was in the form of a complaint from gold prospectors. On the Alaskan side of the Bering Strait, prospectors found that after cutting through a hundred feet of frozen muck to reach gold-bearing gravels located on the underlying bedrock, riffles on their sluice boxes were clogged with long strands of black hair and rust-colored wool.

As the search for gold in the area widened, more stories of other miners running into similar but more bizarre discoveries began drifting into Nome. Weird-looking the size of camp stoves blocked the way of some gold miners as they tried to penetrate the ice with hydraulic hoses; tusks of ivory bigger than those of elephants were hauled to the surface and required two men to carry them.

As word of this discovery reached the cities and grapevined down the North American continent, paleontologists began packing for the north country. Once on the scene they started an education program aimed at the fossil-hating prospectors--finally talked them into turning their

hoses the other way when they ran into signs of a prehistoric find. With the cooperation of the prospectors ensured, the job of piecing together bits of hide, bone, and hair and drawing some valid conclusions began in earnest.

With the reconstruction completed, the fossil-hunters could now easily see the type of creatures that once roamed the area before the coming of the Ice Age. Mammoths and regal bison seemed to be the predominant types; next came the mastodon, similar to a mammoth but with different type molars; a saber-toothed tiger the size of a grizzly bear with six-inch fangs that made this animal probably one of the most feared of all prehistoric animals.

Scientists believe that these animals were trapped by ice walls and mudflows as the great glaciers advanced from the north, covered Alaska, Canada, and even extended as far as an imaginary line drawn from New York through Cincinnati to Saint Louis.

The first glaciers probably began to move a million or more years ago and others followed up to within 25 to 80 thousand years of the present time. (Editors note: Glaciers have been over the northern U.S. as late as ten thousand years ago.)

The big question that still remains unanswered is whether man was around when all this was taking place.

This riddle was thought solved when an expedition stumbled on the skull of a mammoth calf buried in the ice near Fairbanks. On close examination of the skull, it was found to contain an object like a jadeite axhead lodged in the lower jaw bone.

Most scientists, however, finally concluded that the animal had probably fallen to his death on a ledge. But the search is still being conducted by many North American scientists in the hopes of finding America's first citizen. If he is to be found, it's a good chance that the frozen north country of Alaska will be his icy grave. (Editor's note: If he is found, there might be enough preserved to paint his portrait. It's an exciting thought.)

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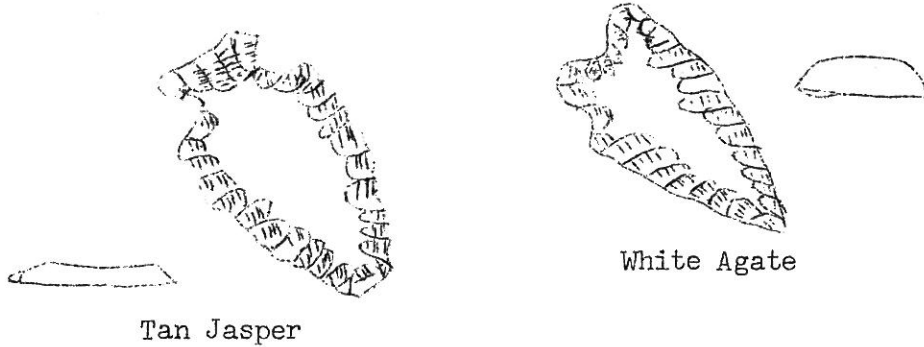
GLOSSARY

From time to time, as space permits, we will print definitions of words frequently used in archaeological terminology, so that our members will become accustomed to their use. This glossary is from Ancient Man in North America, by H. M. Wormington.

Artifact: A product of human workmanship. Commonly used by archaeologists in speaking of prehistoric tools, implements, etc.

Atlatl: An Aztec word meaning spear-thrower. Atlatls are throwing-sticks which have a handle on one end and on the other a spur which fits into a pit or cup drilled into the base end of a dart shaft. When the dart is thrown the atlatl remains in the hand. The benefit of this device is that the arm is effectively lengthened and a dart can be given much greater speed than by the hand and arm alone.

Plano-convex points?



The two points sketched above were shown to Don Grey by Mr. Harold Richardson who found them in the same general area near Upton while deer hunting this fall. They are of different general appearance, but have one thing in common; instead of being lenticular in cross-section, they are flat on one side. The flat side shows almost no chipping at all, while the convex side is almost completely finished. The manner of breaking of the jasper point's tip indicates that it might have been shot at something. We'd be interested to know of any other "plano-convex" points that members have found.

OVER THE CAMPFIRE

Who would have thought the Smoke Signal would be used to help teach a science class? Well, it's true! The children of the Beaver Creek school have studied the last two issues in their science class. Maybe our little paper will help start a sometime famous archaeologist down the right path.

Hospitality from several of our members was extended to Lou Steege and his brother-in-law, Harold Townx, while Mr. Steege was here to give the Wyoming Archaeological Society a report on the Glendo dig. Mr. and Mrs. Fred Hilman had the men overnight and Margaret Powers had the four of them to her home for some of her famous cooking.

Mr. Jim Russell is planning on spending the winter in Thermopolis.

Among our new members, we wish to welcome Mr. Stuart Conner, an attorney of Billings, Montana.

EMBERS OUT