

THE NEWSLETTER

Of the Houston Archeological Society

Number 8

April, 1962

(Published from time to time. Chairman of the Society, Alan R. Duke. Editorial committee, H. Mewhinney, L. E. Aten, Ivan Newlin.)

PLEASE SEND US SOME NEWS

Members of the Society are hereby reminded that they really ought to mail a little news from time to time to the editorial committee.

Such news need not be exhaustive, ponderously scientific in tone, or provided with a detailed bibliography.

One of the youngest members of the society, for instance, recently collected several thousand tiny waste flakes---the by-product of working flint with a mallet and punch---from a single small site.

This is a rarity for this part of Texas. But nothing has been written about it.

Members who know how to use a typewriter should double-space their contributions. Members unfamiliar with that technique may use pen and ink.

The Editors

\* \* \* \*

SOCIETY SYMPOSIUM

Our symposium on "Early Man In Texas" held on March 24, 1962 at Rice University was attended by 60 persons. Papers presented by Dr. E. Mott Davis, Mr. Edward Jelks, Mrs. Dee Ann Story, Dr. Jeremiah F. Epstein, Mr. Lathel Duffield and Mr. LeRoy Johnson, Jr. (read by Mr. E. Jelks) were extremely interesting. As usual, informal discussions during "breaks" and a fine display of artifacts aided in making the meeting a successful one.

On behalf of the Society, I wish to extend our sincere thanks to the speakers and to Rice University.

Alan R. Duke

THE PROBABLE FUNCTION OF CERTAIN PERFORATED SHELLS FROM  
THE GALVESTON BAY AREA OF TEXAS

Wayne B. Neyland and R.B. Worthington

In the past few years, on field trips to eroding shell midden sites in the Galveston Bay area, a great many perforated shells of the clam *Rangia cuneata* have been collected by the writers.

LAKE CHARLOTTE \*7  
CHAMBERS Co., TEXAS

HALL'S LAKE #1  
BRAZORIA Co., TEXAS



This is a brackish water clam, abundant in the shallow bays and lakes of the area. The shells form the bulk of numerous middens. Obviously, this species of clam was a common food.

Although perforated shells were collected from a dozen or more sites, there is little to show why the people perforated them. The workmen must not have meant to hang them as decorations, for no kind of trimming was done.

The hole seems to have been made usually by punching the shell from the inside. The circumference of the hole is fairly smooth on the inside of the shell but irregular on the outside, where bits of the successive layers broke off.

The holes range from about a quarter to about a half an inch in diameter. They were usually punched toward the rear of the shells about halfway between the umba and the lip.

Campbell (1958) suggested that perforated oyster shells, found at Aransas Focus sites, were used for net weights.

At Aransas Focus sites occasional fragments of asphalt with impressions of twined basketry have been found and there can be little doubt that Aransas Focus people also used nets. While no impressions of twined basketry or netting are known from Galveston Bay area, there is a strong possibility that the perforated *Rangia* shells served a similar purpose here, since the shell middens show numerous fish bones.

No other objects are found which might suggest net weights.

Suggs (1958) in his report on a Connecticut shell midden, reports finding similarly punched hard shell clams. He suggests their use as either net weights or fishing lures.

At Hall's Lake Number I, an oyster shell site in Brazoria County, a few spiraled salt water gastropods have been found with parts of the whorls broken away. The remaining loop of shell suggests another method of suspension. A single perforated oyster shell is also known from this site. Gastropods broken in this manner may also be classified as net weights, until further work is done on sites near the coast where shells of mollusks living in saltier water may be found.

Since similar artifacts are recognized in the Central Texas Coastal area as net weights, these perforated hard shell clams and modified gastropods may possibly be considered a local variation of the same cultural trait on the upper Texas Coast.

#### Bibliography

-----

- Campbell, T. N., "Probable Function of Perforated Oyster Shells Found in Aransas Focus Sites." 1958, Texas Archeology Vol. 2 NO. 2, Page 7.
- Cushing, Frank Hamilton, "Exploration of Ancient Key Dwellers' Remains on the Gulf Coast of Florida." Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, Vol. 55, 1896, page 336.
- Suggs, Robert Carl, "The Manakaway Site, Greenwich, Connecticut." Bulletin of the Archeological Society of Connecticut, No. 29, 1959, pages 21-47.

#### GALVESTON BAY FOCUS EXHIBIT

Mrs. Dee Ann Suhm Story, Curator of Anthropology at the Texas Memorial Museum, says it now has a permanent display on the Galveston Bay Focus.

Although the exhibit is small, consisting mostly of pottery and projectile points, it is hoped that the exhibit will soon be increased by contributions from members of the Houston Archeological Society.

Anyone wishing to add to this display may do so by sending artifacts to the Texas Memorial Museum, 24th and Trinity Streets, Austin 5, Texas. They will be much appreciated.

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE DAMEK SITE, LIBERTY COUNTY, TEXAS  
Alan R. Duke

The Damek site, about 14 miles east of Dayton, Texas, and a mile and a half from the Trinity River, was brought to light by the heavy rains of Hurricane Carla. The site is on a large sand hill which is a part of a ridge parallel to the Trinity. There is a big spring just north of the site. Many of the hills nearby show evidence of occupation.

The site was planted in potatoes at the time of the hurricane. The rain cut big gullies in the sloping field and exposed several skulls and other bones. Some of the bones were recovered by the landowner, James Damek. He also found numerous flint artifacts and potsherds. The flint artifacts are mostly Perdiz, Gary, and Alba points, with one cache of 18 small knives. The pottery is mostly Goose Creek Plain and Incised but other types, as yet unidentified, are present.

Perhaps the most interesting things found so far are a pair of ear spoons. They were close to the bones found by Damek and appear to have been associated with one of the burials. The spoons are 2.75 inches in diameter across the large grooved flange, 2 inches across the smaller flange and .75 of an inch thick. The center of the spoon is pierced by a hole  $7/16$  inches in diameter. The large flange is coated with a green material which has been identified by the Shell Research Laboratory as turquoise, a departure from the usual copper sheet used on ear spoons and also significant in that turquoise is not found in this area. It has been determined also that the spoons are made from a ceramic clay not found near the Gulf Coast but found in Mexico and also eastward toward the Mississippi River. The clay in the spoons was not fired above 100 degrees Centigrade.

The writer excavated a 5 by 5 foot test pit, 4 feet deep but found flint chips and potsherds in the top 18 inches only. The soil is essentially pure sand, with occasional striations showing evidence of organic material. Full scale excavation would be required to establish the area of heavy occupation, since cultivation over the years has caused sand to wash from the upper to the lower part of the hill.

The writer has a skull from the site which shows the person to have been a round-head, female (?), perhaps 40 to 50 years old. There are not enough bones to show how tall the person was.

Damek has been most gracious in permitting the writer to investigate the site. He has been plagued by trespassers digging up his field---even to the extent of using his "Posted" signs as shovels.

PAMPHLETS AVAILABLE

The following publications in the University of Texas Archaeology Series are available:

A Bibliographic Guide to the Archaeology of Texas, by T. N. Campbell. Number 1. 1952. \$1.

The Harroun Site: A Fulton Aspect Component of the Caddoan Area, Upshur County, Texas, by Edward B. Jelks and Curtis D. Tunnell. Number 2. 1959. \$1.

The Jake Martin Site: An Archaic Site in the Ferrell's Bridge Reservoir Area, Northeastern Texas, by William A. Davis and E. Mott Davis. Number 3. 1960. \$1.

The Pearson Site: A Historic Indian Site at Iron Bridge Reservoir, Rains County, Texas, by Lathel F. Duffield and Edward B. Jelks. Number 4. 1961. \$1.25.

These publications may be ordered from the Department of Anthropology, The University of Texas, Austin 12, Texas. The prices quoted are postpaid but the two per cent sales tax should be included.

PLASTIC COPIES OF POINTS

The Texas Memorial Museum has plastic copies of Texas projectile point types for sale. At present, 130 different examples of 66 types are available. These copies were made from the most distinctive points of each type in the museum's collections and should prove valuable in projectile point identification.

A complete price list of all types available may be obtained by writing the Texas Memorial Museum, 24th and Trinity Streets, Austin, Texas. A condensation of the list is provided below:

Early man dart points (7 types, 13 examples), \$1. each.

Archaic dart points (42 types, 74 examples), 75 cents each.

Arrow points (17 types, 43 examples), 35 cents each.

The two per cent sales tax should be included with orders.