

NEWSLETTER

of the

HOUSTON ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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OFFICERS 1964 - 65

Chairman - Alan R. Duke
1706 Oaks Drive
Pasadena, Texas

Sec.-Treas.- Miss Elaine Burleigh
3816 Ruskin Street
Houston, Texas

Directors - Mrs. William Caskey

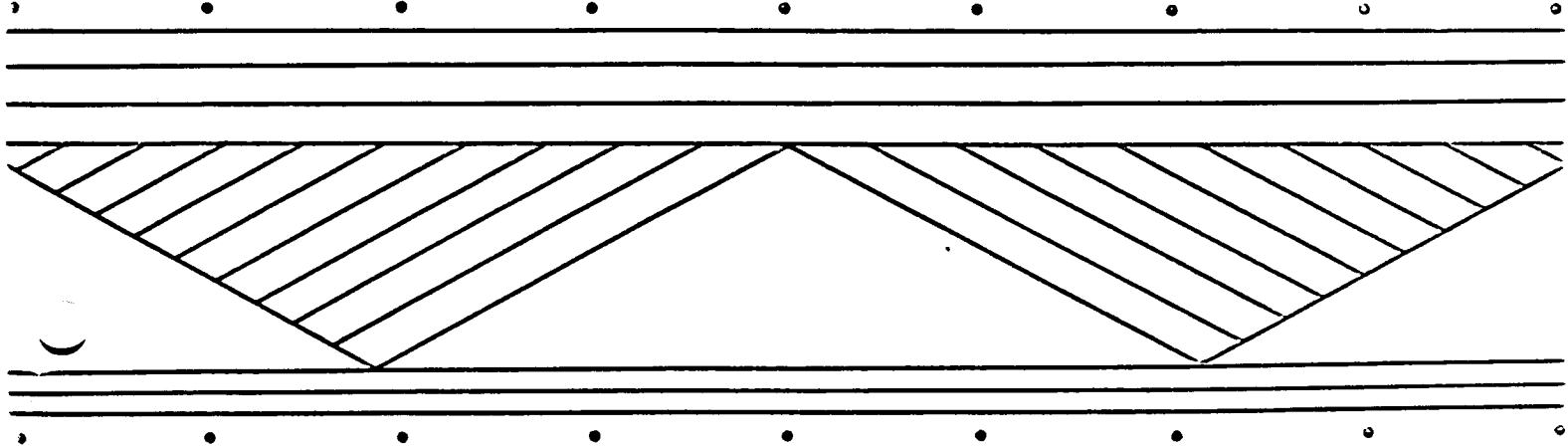
Donald R. Lewis

Charles F. Deane

Editorial Committee

Hubert Mewhinney

Lawrence E. Aten



NOTES AND NEWS

Alan R. Duke

Conservation:

The Texas State Legislature is debating and pruning its proposed budget as this Newsletter goes to press. It is hoped the budget, when finally approved, will include an appropriation to establish the position of State Archeologist and funds to protect the archeological and historic sites in Texas.

The letters sent out by the Houston Archeological Society to members of the Legislature, presenting the resolution approved by the membership at the March, 1965 meeting, were well received by the legislators. Representatives Brooks, Harrison, Whatley and Grover and Senator Cole promised to support the position of the Houston Archeological Society as set forth in the resolution which reads as follows: "The Houston Archeological Society supports without reservation Governor Connally's recommendation to the Texas State Legislature on January 27, 1965, that the position of State Archeologist be authorized on the staff of the State Building Association and that an appropriation be made to establish a formalized method for cataloging or protecting historical homes, frontier missions and archeological sites".

We have local legislators on our side. Let's hope the rest of the good people in Austin will follow suit.

Livingston Survey:

We will attempt to have our portion of the Livingston Survey Report completed in May. This will be forwarded to the Texas Archeological Survey group in Austin along with artifacts from the Livingston area. The T.A.S.P. will photograph and study the artifacts and return them to us. All Team Captains are requested to bring their team collections to the May meeting - properly identified and ready to be packaged and mailed. The completed report will be issued by the T.A.S.P. to the National Park Service.

T.A.S. Summer Dig:

The Fourth Annual Texas Archeological Society Summer Field School will be held June 12 thru June 26 at a site near Beaumont. Any T.A.S. member wishing to participate must send in an application to the Texas Archeological Society, Balcones Research Center, Route 4, Austin, Texas (78756), before May 15.

"An Introduction to Prehistoric Archeology":

Dr. Frank Hole, Department of Anthropology, Rice University and an active member of the Houston Archeological Society, is the co-author of the book bearing the above title. This is excellent reading and if you don't want to wait

to obtain the Society's library copy which was presented to us by Dr. Hole, you may obtain a copy at Brown's Bookstore in Houston.

Newsletter Cover:

The "new look" on the Newsletter cover is the work of Lawrence Aten of our Editorial Staff. The design represents a section of incised pottery.

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Two books which have recently come to our attention are worth noting to the membership.

Method and Theory in American Archaeology by Gordon R. Willey and Philip Phillips. University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books. \$1.50.

This work, which originally came out in hardback, is now available in paperback. This magnificent little volume explains in its first part, archaeological unit concepts and their integration into an intelligible whole; in its second part, an historical interpretation of all the developmental stages in American archaeology. This book isn't the last word (and wasn't intended to be), but anyone who seeks to rise above the cigar box collection stage should obtain, and study, this book.

Mammal Remains from Archeological Sites: Part I; Southeastern and Southwestern United States by Stanley J. Olsen. Papers of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. Harvard University. Vol. 56, No. 1. \$5.35.

The title of this book speaks for itself. It abounds with illustrations of mammal bones, aiding in their identification. Also included are maps showing the distribution of many animals. This is a very valuable reference for an oft neglected aspect of archaeological materials.

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An Archaeological Vacation in Mexico and Central America

Shirley Thompson and Elaine Burleigh

We have just returned from a three week archaeological tour of Mexico and Central America. The tour was conducted by Dr. C.B. Hunter of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.

The tour began in Mexico City where we visited the new archaeological museum - one of the most beautiful and best planned museums we have ever seen.

We spent a day at Teotihuacan where extensive excavation is in progress. Teotihuacan was for many years believed to be Toltec, but in light of recent archaeological findings, it is now considered part of a new culture called

Teotihuacan. We visited Tonayuca, a small reconstructed pyramid just outside Mexico City. It is one of the few remaining Aztec structures, and features some unique snake designs around the base of the pyramid.

The religious center of Xochicalco is located between the cities of Taxco and Cuernavaca. Excavation is in progress here also. Xochicalco was probably a Toltec center, but the artifacts indicate influences of Aztec and Teotihuacan cultures. This center is believed to have been a place of worship of the flower goddess.

The tour continued on to Guatemala, where we spent several days at Antigua, Lake Atitlan and Chichicastenango. This part of the trip was ethnologically oriented, as we visited many Mayan villages, where the way of life has changed very little since the Spanish conquest.

A real high point of the trip was a plane flight into the Guatemalan jungle to the ruins of Tikal where excavation is being done here by the University of Pennsylvania. It was one of the most important early Mayan religious centers. The largest pyramid in the western hemisphere is here in Tikal - 225 feet high.

The last week was spent in Yucatan. The first few days were at Chichen-Itza, where the hotel seemed to be in the middle of the ruins. You can see the Caracol (astronomical observatory) from your room. The original culture here was Mayan, but the Toltecs built over most of it.

We went on to Uxmal, where we again stayed among the ruins. A few miles from Uxmal are the beautiful ruins of Kabah. On an all day jeep trip into the jungle, we visited Sayil, Labna, and Ilapak. These were some of the late Mayan religious centers in Yucatan.

This was a very exciting trip - we climbed lots of pyramids, saw lots of artifacts and had a terrific time.

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(Shirley and Elaine will present an illustrated program on their trip at the June meeting of the HAS. - Ed.)

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We wish to welcome Mr. Randall Peterson and Mr. William Peterson, 11715 Greenbay Drive, Houston (Tel. HO 8-5814) into the Society.

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Site Reporting

L. E. Aten

Site discovery and reporting has been, and remains one of the most important, if not the most important, function of non-professional archaeologists in serving their discipline. For the benefit of some of our newer members, a review of the site reporting procedure is presented here.

All site report forms have in common, certain information regarding the disposition of a site; thus the presence or absence of a particular standard form used by one of the Federal or State institutions when presenting your data, won't be of great concern to anyone.

Of prime importance, obviously, is the site's location. There is no single method of determining this; any way in which you can relate the location of a site to others such that they can find the site easily, is satisfactory. However, some ways are more satisfactory than others.

Since the system of dividing and subdividing a state into townships, ranges and sections is not generally used in Texas, this method is of little use to us. The most practicable means is to use either the General Highway Maps of the various Texas counties, prepared by the Texas State Highway Department, or U.S. Geological Survey topographic quadrangle sheets. The General Highway maps have the advantage of being more up to date than the USGA topo. sheets with respect to roads and cultural features (i.e., prominent buildings, bridges, etc.) which are of great value in locating a site. The method of locating a site's position on a map are several; position with respect to a prominent land or cultural feature, mileage along specific roads, point of intersection of two compass bearings taken on prominent features, etc. Whichever of these methods is to be used will depend on the judgement of the site surveyor. It is important to include in your records, a written description of the location of the site rather than just a dot on a map. A sketch of the site is always useful.

After having located the position of the site, you are ready to record a name (usually after the property owner), and a number (serially for more than one site on the same property, i.e., Jones Farm #1, #2, etc.). If the site is commonly known by more than one name, it is necessary to record this also.

The logical next step is to record the name and address of the owner of the property upon which the site rests (if known) and the attitude of the owner toward further investigation of the site.

Next comes the description of the site. This includes the type of site - sand midden, burial, shell midden, etc.; area - measured by tape or pace; thickness of deposit - as exposed by erosion, road cut or test excavation. A test excavation is here defined as a pit of some regular dimensions - three or five feet square - and excavated by arbitrary levels - six inch levels

being the most common. It does not mean an irregular hole dug with no control, just "to see what is there". THIS IS POT-HOLING!!!!

Also necessary to be included in your site report are the direction and distance to the nearest water supply (fresh, saline, brackish); the character of the soil comprising the site deposit (loose or compact, ashy or shell-bearing, sandy or clayey, etc.); and effects of eorsion - is the site in danger of being destroyed by degrading streams, shore-line retreat, or some other agent of man or nature?

It is also useful to record any knowledge of previous excavation at the site and an analysis of the artifacts you may have collected at the site. This is helpful in estimating the site's potential for future investigation.

One must, of course, take full advantage of the et ceteras utilized above; the descriptive terms used here are only a sampling of those that may be used. Remember, the object in mind is to accurately describe the site. Also, one may supply more detailed information than is outlined here. This outline, however, constitutes a minimum amount of archaeological data necessary to a meaningful survey report. Situations may arise, however, when only less information is available. As long as the position of a site is accurately known (and this may be considered the absolute minimum quantity of information), by all means report the site.

To whom should the site be reported? The official survey of archaeological sites in Texas is maintained by the University of Texas. One may correspond with practically anyone on the staff of the Anthropology Department and expect results; specifically however, try Dr. E. Mott Davis or Dr. T.N. Campbell.

Why should located sites be reported? Some aspects of anthropology require data on the position of a large number of sites; i.e., demography and ethnogeography - the studies of the distribution of populations. The site survey provides information needed in order for an archaeologist to choose a particular site for excavation. It will provide also, information on sites that are in danger of being destroyed and upon which investigation is urgent.

Site reporting is just one aspect of "recording and preserving Archaeological remains and data in harmony with scientific procedures" as stated in our constitution and to which we all subscribe.

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Additions to the HAS Library since Newsletter No. 12, January, 1965:

Plains Anthropologist, Journal of the Plains Conference, Vol. 8, No. 20,
May, 1963.

Southwestern Lore, The Colorado Archaeological Society, Vol. 26, No. 1.
June, 1960.

The Missouri Archaeologist, Vol. 15, No. 3. October, 1953.

Aten, L.E. (Manuscript) Five Crania from Site 41Gv5 - Jamaica Beach, Galveston County, Texas."

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In September, 1964 issue of the Florida Anthropologist (v 17, no. 3) we see a report of the first in situ discovery of Clear Fork gouges in the peninsula state. Two dry caves in the limestone country of central Florida were tested and the gouges were found with and below the earliest notched points recognized in Florida (Bolen points). Also associated are abundant animal remains. The age of the zones dominated by the Clear Fork gouges is estimated at approximately 5000 B.C. Excavation at the Dixie Lime caves will continue by the Florida State Museum.