

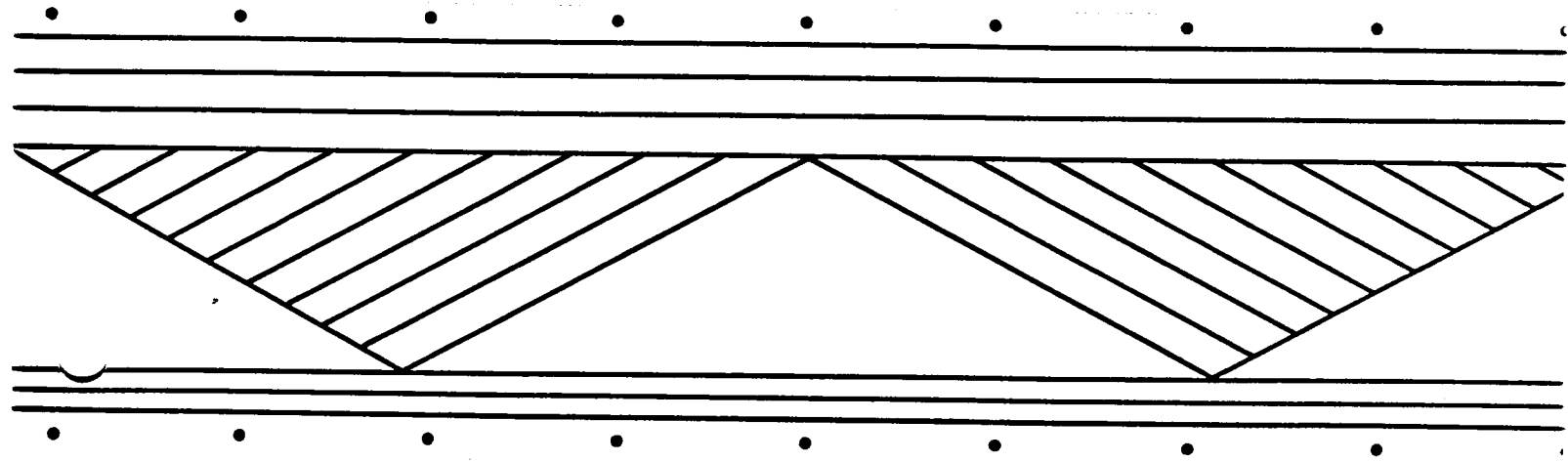
NEWSLETTER

of the

HOUSTON ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Number 24

March 1968



The Newsletter is published four times per year by the Houston Archeological Society. Contributions of news items, short articles and information of archeological significance should be sent to the Editor - Alan R. Duke, 1706 Oaks Drive, Pasadena, Texas 77502.

#

Officers 1967-68

Chairman - Charles K. Chandler, 1151 Chamboard, Houston, Texas
 Sec.-Treas. - Louise Caskey, P. O. Box 93, Bellaire, Texas
 Directors - Alan R. Duke
 W. I. Fullen
 J. W. Sharp

#

Front Cover

The reign of the Comanche on the southwestern frontier ended in June 1875 when a starving band surrendered to military authorities at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. For a century and a half they were the lords of an area encompassing large portions of Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma and Old Mexico. "The People", as they called themselves, have a bright-colored complexion, aquiline nose, and thin lips and are of medium height and generally heavy set. Shoshonean in origin, the Comanche arrived relatively late (1700) in the South Plains.

#

Past and Future Programs

January 1968 - Dr. Edward Horbeck, Rice University, discussed a phase of cultural anthropology "Achieving People and Achieving Nations - The Will to Work as Linked with Economic Development".
 February 1968 - Dr. George F. Carter, Texas A&M University, discussed "The Pre-Projectile Point Period in America".
 March 1968 - Dr. Gideon T. James spoke on "The Value of Geochemical Dating to Geohistorical Interpretation".
 April 1968 - Lou Fullen, Lawrence Aten and Alan Duke will present "A Primer on Houston Area Archeology".

#

Former Newsletter Editor

Hubert Mewhinney, a newspaperman and columnist by profession and a flint-worker and archeologist by choice, is retiring from the Houston Post and will live on his "Ponderosa" in San Jacinto County. Hubert, an HAS member and former HAS Newsletter editor, dispelled many inaccurate ideas concerning flint chipping through his excellent work "A Manual for Neanderthals". We hope Hubert won't get lost in those piney woods and forget to visit us occasionally.

News from Other Societies

The Fourth Annual Symposium of the Southwestern Federation of Archeological Societies will be held on April 27 in Iraan. Sponsored by the Iraan Archeological Society the symposium will include papers, a barbecue and a field trip. If interested in attending, contact Dalton King, P. O. Box 565, Iraan, Texas 79744.

#

Flint Flaking - Australian Style

Natural History magazine for February 1968 contains an interesting article on flint working by the Aborigines. Believe it or not, these people sharpen their tools and weapons by biting off small flakes with their teeth! Coronado's chronicler, Castenada, recorded he observed this technique on the Great Plains of North America in 1541. Prerequisites for this method of flaking are flat (worn) teeth and exceptionally strong jaw muscles.

It is interesting to note also that Aborigines fire-soften rather than harden their wooden spear tips. The charring softens the outer surface for easier scraping.

#

Describing Colors of Artifacts

It has been suggested that the colors of archeological materials and soil profiles could be described more readily and accurately if the Munsell Color System (or its equivalent) were used. The complete Munsell Soil Color Charts including the Gley Chart have been used and proven adequate. The Soil Color Charts are used to describe colors from the yellows through yellow-reds to reds while the Gley Chart is used for near-grey colors from yellow through green and blue. Determination of the color should be carried out in daylight and with dry specimens.

#

Early Man in America

Many of us are inclined to think of "Early Man" sites as being predominantly western geographically. It now appears that the heaviest concentrations of these sites, characterized by the presence of flinted points, may be in southeastern United States in the Tennessee, Cumberland and Ohio River valleys. Sites in these areas, including pebble tool sites, are being assigned dates in excess of 20,000 years and sites dating from 11,000 to 15,000 years are becoming increasingly common!! It seems eastern archeologists, both professional and amateur, have been making a concerted effort to locate the older sites and their efforts are paying dividends.

It is interesting to note that Wormington in his "Ancient Man in North America" concedes that the tradition of fluted points may have developed in the east even though he personally believed the Southwest or the Plains was the center from which fluting spread.

#

Dug Deep to Get Collection Of Indian Artifacts

BY LOUIS KOFFERBERT

Chronicle Reporter

"A man has to be some kind of a nut to pick a hobby that calls for shoveling dirt by the truckload."

The comment is by Andy Kyle, a wiry, 53-year-old former newspaperman turned chrysanthemum grower, who shovels more dirt for fun than he does while operating his large commercial greenhouse.

The fun shoveling has paid off with what probably is the largest private collection of Indian artifacts in Texas.

Kyle no longer counts his arrowheads by the dozen, or even by the hundred. He really doesn't count at all any more. Those neatly arranged in symmetrical patterns fill 40 wall cases. Those not yet arranged fill the drawers of a

large cabinet and innumerable boxes of various sizes.

More unwieldy artifacts—pottery, shards, pieces of utensils—fill bushel baskets and more boxes in the shop.

Where most Indian hobbyists are content to walk around with eyes cast down, finding an occasional arrowhead or spear point, Kyle puts muscle into the job.

I know the general areas to work, the places where early Indians maintained camps and villages. I study topographical maps and I walk through the areas looking for signs. If I find an arrowhead, I don't just pick it up and go on. I study the location, determine the best place to dig, and get busy with the shovel," he explains.

The drawbacks to this plan

can be seen in various "dry holes" that produced only perspiration and experience. The advantages can be seen in the cases that line the walls of the Kyle home on Highway 146 north of Liberty.

The search for artifacts is a secondary hobby with Kyle. His first love is his woodworking shop. In its cluttered confines he makes wall cases for his arrowheads and restores antique furniture with a skill that makes reproductions almost impossible to tell from originals.

Now awaiting attention are a delicately carved Windsor chair, a spinning wheel, and a solid maple bed frame with hand-turned posts, brought down last year from the ancestral farm in New Hampshire.

Much of the furniture in the Kyle home came from the shop adjoining the multiple greenhouses.

Kyle's interest in Indian artifacts came almost by accident, though one of his most prized possessions is an intricately carved, three-foot peace pipe with a genuine calumet bowl handed down from his grandfather.

It began some eight years ago when a highway construction crew cut into an Indian midden, or village site, near the Neches River. This was reported to Kyle by a friend in the highway department, and the fever of "treasure hunting" ran high in a hurry.

Since then Kyle has found and unearthed dozens of sites, his busy shovel usually going down to four feet or more to

find pay dirt. Some of his work was rushed by the rising water of Rayburn reservoir and some of the best locations are now far beneath the lake.

"I haven't worked north of Luik'in, nor west of the Trinity River," Kyle said, "but I intend to. There is a wealth of material to be found. All it takes is somebody not too proud to use a shovel."

The Kyle collection is maintained with scientific precision. The artifacts are arranged in accordance with the sites where the articles were found. Pertinent data on conditions, depth and date of discovery are meticulously recorded.

"My hope is that the collection can go into the museum now planned in Liberty," says Kyle, "but I don't want it bro-

ken up, with parts here and other parts there. It has scientific value if articles from different sites are available for comparison study.

"Some of the sites are beyond reach, and the only research possible now is from the things I have. I want them to be available for that."

Calling all pot-hunters!! Here is open and flagrant encouragement to destroy archeological sites. This is the approach we hope we can eliminate (or at least reduce) by convincing all who will listen that archeological sites are pages in the book of pre-history and once destroyed are lost forever.

We hope the "scientific precision" mentioned in the article includes site, stratigraphy, burial, etc. reports but this appears doubtful.

Here is a pleasant little article from Action Time magazine (March 1968). It expresses one man's opinions and thoughts on Folsom Man. Our thanks to L. D. Stewart for sending us the article.

FOLSOM MAN (Len Hilts)

The man was on his knees, his back bent into an arch as he dug into the gravel of the dry river bed. Slowly, patiently, he sifted through the gravel with an incredibly gentle touch. Once in a while, his fingers would pick at a piece of flint in the gravel. These he dropped in an envelope in his shirt pocket.

The man was Jerry Dawson, a tall, lean archeologist from the University of New Mexico. He had spent four months exploring a site just a few hundred feet square--carefully uncovering an ancient campsite of Folsom Man, a pre-historic hunter who roamed the Southwest 10,000 years ago.

Folsom Man was North America's first link to the far past. Until 1927, it was thought that man crossed the Bering Straights from Asia and worked his way south only a thousand or so years before Christ.

Then a group of archeologists, salvaging the skeletons of a mammoth extinct bison in an arroyo near Folsom, New Mexico, found tiny, well-carved stone lance points among the bones. The points had killed the bison. They had been made by man, and they were 10,000 years old. The early history of the continent had to be rewritten. Later archeological discoveries in Mexico show that man has inhabited North America for 24,000 years.

"Unlocking the mysteries of history is part of the fascination of this work, Dawson says. "That's why we keep digging."

The site that Dawson is exploring in his search for Folsom Man is called Ri Rancho. It is on a ridge above thousands of acres of stony New Mexican desert. In the distance below is the Rio Grande River.

Taking a break for coffee, Dawson walked over the site. "Here on the ridge he said, "they posted a watch. Those two depressions over there are dry now, but they were swamps that supplied water for the camp. This was all grazing land. The guard watched for the bison to come to feed and water. Then the hunters went after the big beasts.

"Below the ridge, I found thousands of tiny flakes, made as Folsom Man chipped away at flint and made his lance points. That was his work shop. Those depressions near the work area are earth hardened by hundreds of years of use as the floors of tents. That's where he lived."

Dawson is soft-spoken, with a scientist's reserve, but his enthusiasm for his work shows through. "We believe Folsom Man was big for his time--maybe six feet tall. He had to be to survive.

"Without food, he lost the strength needed to fight off other hunters and gigantic meat-eating predators. The Stone Age produced lion-sized saber-toothed cats, enormous bears and bone-eating dogs. The most dangerous of all were the over-sized Dire wolves which Folsom Man sometimes killed, although no doubt the wolves often killed him, too.

"Hunger made him too weak to avoid the six-foot horn span of the huge bison when it charged. These animals stood ten feet high, yet he stalked and killed them with a small lance tipped with these flint points."

Dawson brought out flint knives and hide scrapers he had uncovered. "He did his butchering with these. The bison provided his food and clothing. He was either good with that lance or his family starved."

Folsom Man probably wasn't dull either. The flint spear points used to tip his lances illustrate the best stone work ever done anywhere in the world. Hunting bison on foot and maneuvering them into spear range while avoiding their charges, weeded out the dullards and placed a premium on agility.

Dawson says, "We think that when he got too old to do his share of the hunting, he walked out of camp and let himself be killed by the giant and ferocious Dire wolf, an early ancestor of the wolf we know. His bones were probably devoured by Ice Age dogs."

Will a skeleton ever be found? Dawson's eyes light up. "Every time I turn a shovelful of earth, I hope. Little by little, we are piecing his story together. One of these days, we will find Folsom himself."

Dawson's digging isn't a random effort. Now and again, he stands in the middle of the site and looks around. He puts himself in the place of the square jawed hunter who once lived here, and tries to think as he did. He reconstructs how Folsom Man lived, and then puts his shovel to work in a likely spot. After years of experience plus careful planning, he is right more often than he's wrong. Why does he spend his time scratching for bits of flint and bone?

"Well, first," he says, "it's important scientifically and historically." Then he breaks out in a sunburned grin. "But there's a lot more to it than that I get a terrific satisfaction out of it."

He points at the areas he has uncovered. "I know that nobody has been there for 10,000 years. It's like traveling back in time. While you dig you feel you're actually there."

"And when I pick up a lance point and hold it, I know I'm the first man in a thousand decades to touch it. That kind of a feeling gets to you, and makes all the digging seem worthwhile."

How about eventually going back to school to teach?

"Not on your life!" Dawson says, "I love the outdoors. I couldn't stay cooped up in an office or classroom. I'd shrivel up. I go inside long enough to write up the reports of my work, but that's all..."

He waves a hand at the horizon and the land sloping toward the river. "You know, when you're alone out here, you sometimes look up from your shovel and almost see a herd of bison moving across that plain, just as he did. And then you want to know more..."

#

Expensive Lecture

Dr. George Carter, Texas A&M University, who spoke to the HAS in February on the pre-projectile age in the United States, advises your Editor that his trip to Houston was expensive. It seems he learned the location of several gravel pits in the College Station area while at our meeting and had to go out and buy a pick-up truck to visit these sites since the family vehicle was not suitable (and also unavailable).

#

The following three pages represent the first complete index of HAS Newsletters - Numbers 1 thru 24. A limited supply of back issues can be made available if requested.

#