

NEWSLETTER

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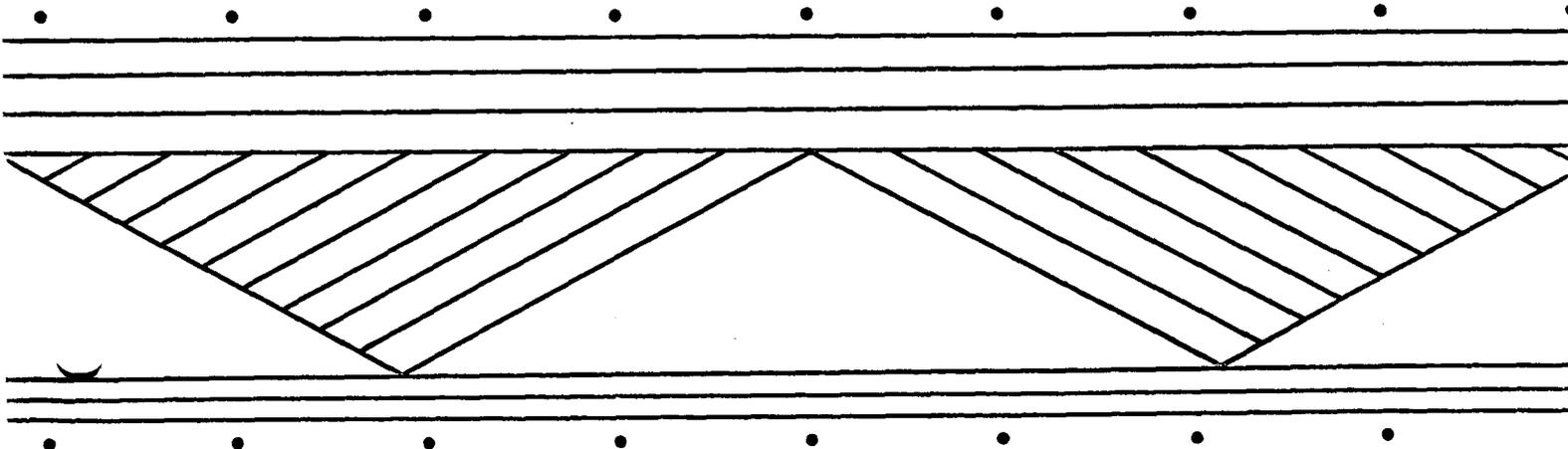
HOUSTON ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Number 28

April 1969

The interest (in archeology) derives from "a subconscious yearning to recapture the distant past which is filled with wonders and myth, the ambiguous thrill of grave robbing, the excitement of a treasure hunt, and, for the large number of amateurs who 'go on digs', the satisfaction of engaging in an outdoor activity that is also cultural".

M. I. Finley
Cambridge University



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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.

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Officers 1968-69

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Directors - Alan R. Duke
Jay W. Sharp
Frank J. Brezik, Jr.

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Front Cover

The statement on the cover presents M. I. Finley's (Cambridge University Classicist) comments on the recent increased interest in archeology as indicated by the publication and sale of large numbers of books on the subject. Well, at least he is convinced the activity is cultural.

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Past and Future Programs

February 1969 - A film titled "Ancient World of Greece" was shown. Mr. Hsu, Survey Archeologist for the TASP, discussed the need for additional survey work on the Shepherd Site.

In addition to our regular program, HAS members were invited to attend two lectures at Rice University. The first lecture was on "Cultural Premises and Problems of Social Change" by Dr. George M. Foster of the Dept. of Anthropology of the University of California at Berkeley. The second was an illustrated lecture by Dr. Lawrence E. Toombs, Professor of Old Testament Studies at the Union College of British Columbia, on "The Excavation of Schechem".

March 1969 - Dr. Douglas Mitchell, University of St. Thomas, presented a lecture on "Linguistics - Ancient and Modern".

April 1969 - Charles Chandler presented a report on four sites containing paleo material northwest of Corpus Christ Iou Fullen discussed site 41HR84 on Clear Creek, Harris County.

May 1969 - To be announced.

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Antiquities Code of the State of Texas

The Texas Archeological Society has requested active support from all local Societies for the proposed Antiquities Code now receiving consideration in Austin. Copies of the proposed Code can be obtained from any HAS officer. You can support the bill by contacting your state senator or representative.

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Livingston Survey Work

Work is continuing in this area and in addition to survey work, the time has come to do some testing on some of the sites. Dick Hsu, TASP, is particularly interested in getting pollen and charcoal samples from some of the sites. Contact Lou Fullen or Charlie Chandler for information on the areas to cover and the sites where testing is required.

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Boy's School Site

Lawrence Aten plans to excavate this site during the period from May 31st - June 8th. He will need help from the HAS. More information on this project at our May meeting.

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Happy Anniversary!!

The Houston Archeological Society celebrates its 10th birthday this month. Like most societies, we have seen a number of members come and go as their archeological interest grew and waned. It is encouraging to see that many of our charter members are still with us and participating regularly in the Societies activities. These are the folks that help hold the Society together. Here's hoping the next ten years will see us grow bigger and better than ever.

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Texas Archeological Society Field School

The TAS will hold its 1969 Field School on the Stanford Recreational Area on Lake Meridith - northwest of Amarillo from June 14th thru June 21st. The site selected for the school is believed to encompass the evolutionary stages of the Antelope Creek Focus and includes house ruins and other interesting features. Further information on the School will be available in the TAS Newsletter and at our May, 1969 meeting.

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TAS Annual Meeting

The 1969 TAS meeting will be held in Corpus Christi and based on correspondence received from Dick Bowen, President of the Coastal Bend Archeological Society, it should be a good one if thorough planning, fine location and enthusiasm for the job are prerequisites.

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Arizona Clovis Point

Former HAS member Bruce Duke reports he found a Clovis fluted point of red jasper in the Huachuca Mountains in southern Arizona. The point was found at an elevation of 4900 ft. - the highest altitude at which a paleo point has been found in the state. The Huachuca Mountains border the San Pedro Valley where the now famous Naco, Lehner and Murray Springs paleo sites are situated and where most of the Clovis points found in Arizona have been located. The point has been turned over to the Arizona State Museum.

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Custom Made Archeological Site

A soil mound 80 feet long, 15 feet wide and 5 feet high - is being created by students at Cornell University. As they build, they will bury articles such as bones, pottery, coins and textiles. Then each year, for the next 100 years, a one-hundredth slice of the mound will be dug up and examined to determine the effects of weather, plant growth and burrowing animals.

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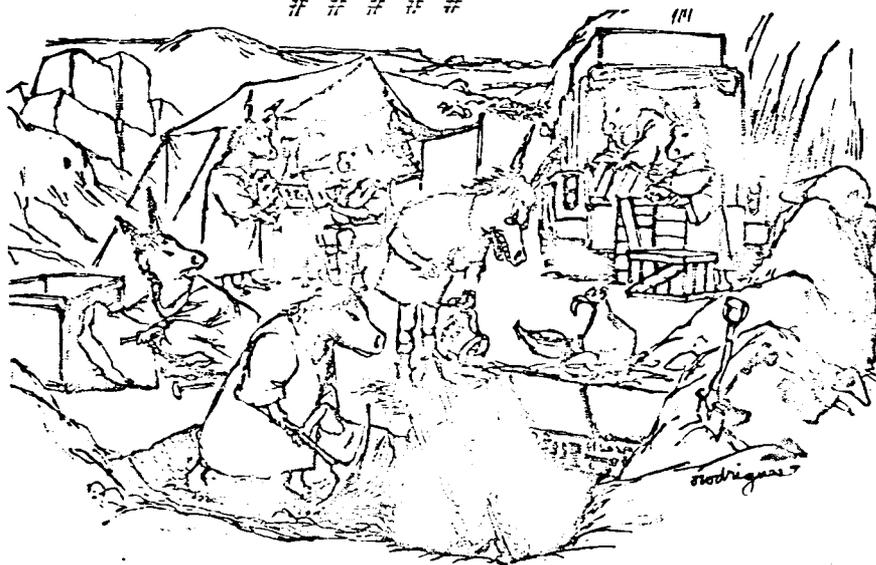
News From Other Societies

The El Paso Archeological Society is currently conducting a membership drive. Other activities include a major field trip to the Casas Grandes Ruins in Chihuahua, Mexico and hosting the annual meeting of the Archeological Society of New Mexico in May.

The South Plains Archeological Society recorded 36 new sites in February 1969. The Society is currently attempting, through its members, to determine the goals and objectives of the organization.

The Midland Archeological Society has been conducting a member training program at a site south of Midland. The sequence of training included reconnaissance, planning and finally, excavation.

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"Pemberton, I thought I gave explicit orders that the cursed tomb of King Tutah was *not* to be opened!"

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF THE TEXAS PANHANDLEJay W. Sharp

At the present time, one might think there would be no more unlikely place to search for Indian sites than the southeastern corner of the Texas Panhandle. The country is a dry, dusty, rolling prairie covered with mesquite, juniper and salt cedar trees; prickly pear, pencil and devil's head cacti; a variety of intrusive and natural weeds, e.g., tumble weeds, careless weeds, various thistles, various crotons and numerous others; and several intrusive and natural grasses, e.g., ryes, grammas, Johnson, buffalo and mesquite. Occasionally, one will discover the hackberry, the willow, the cottonwood, and, now and then, the pecan.

The land is scarred both by drought and erosion, and there are a fair number of outcrops and cliffs, or, bluffs, comprising exposed beds of limestone and gypsum. Much of the surface ranges from a blowing sand to a reddish sandy loam to gravel outcrops.

Most of the streams, even the rivers, are usually dry, carrying only the sediment-filled waters from flash flooding. What "live" streams there are usually tend to be either salty or torpid and mineral-filled, thus restricting marine life.

But much of this harshness was visited on the country by "civilized" man, who drove his cattle through to spread the mesquites, who built windmills and drilled wells to lower the water table, who pastured excessive livestock to eliminate the better ranges, who plowed up the land to set off wind and water erosion.

In Indian times, even as late as the Comanches, the rolling hills were covered with grass "as high as the belly of a horse," according to oldtimers. The streams ran full with "sweet water", which contained fish, turtles and mussels. Animal life was apparently abundant. It was a good country.

Evidently, it furnished a fair living for a number of Indian cultures over a considerable period of time.

Between August 11th and 16th, 1968, I got a chance to see several private collections, talk to several collectors (who could be classified neither as pothunters nor trained archeologists), and look over a few sites.

From areas along the Prairie Dog Town Fork of Red River, there was a rather extensive and diverse collection containing: a number of Fresno, Harrell and Scallorn and miscellaneous points (45% Fresno, 45% Harrell, and 10% other); large and small bone tools (e.g., large shoulder-blade long bone digging tools on one hand, tiny awls on the other); a large number of lithic tools (e.g., rude circular choppers, thumb-nail scrapers, thin bifacial pounding stones, metates, manos, and a sort of duck-bill shaped chopper which is strangely prevalent in the area as a whole); a fair number of potsherds (some sort of Pueblan black-on-grey and red-on-grey, Borger cord-marked, and some very coarse plain potsherds); two small effigies (both about the size of the last joint and one-half of a man's little finger, both of some dark stone-like material); and a variety of

elbow pipes (produced by skilled hands, made of either a white or red pipe-stone, left in various stages of completion). Incidentally, there were also a few samples of wattle and a few ornaments of stone and mussel shell.

Material collected from farther south, in the Pease and North Wichita River areas, was much less extensive, but was apparently of an earlier vintage. There were a few apparent Paleo points (two much like the Clovis, one much like the Plainview), plus a number which resembled, at least superficially, Meserve, Marcos and a few other dart points. There were also a few apparent Harrell, Perdiz and Starr arrowpoints as well as a number of others I could not identify. There were also a few stone tools. A single item of some interest was a Waco sinker, which had been picked up on the South Pease River (refer to Site Survey Form 41CT1, August 11, 1968, Balcones Research Center). As far as I know, this is as far north as one of these curious objects has been found. In general, there was a relative dearth of materials from this more southern area, but I suspect that this may be explained by the fact that not too many collectors and pothunters have been in the vicinity.

Overall, the lithic materials comprised a light grey flint, a pale brown flint, the Quitaque flint, quartzite, obsidian and Alibates. I suspect that all except the obsidian and Alibates occur locally. The bone materials ran from the small--like a rabbit--to the large--like a buffalo.

The primary local authority for the Red River area is Mr. A. V. McFarland, Childress, Texas. He has been conducting investigations for many years, and belongs to the Texas Archeological Society and has knowledge of proper archeological procedures. It is his Red River collection I am referring to above; and it is his figures concerning relative frequency of points that I am quoting.

He tells me several additional things which are of interest. He has excavated a few house sites, which generally turn out to be dugouts evidently covered at one time by branches and straw and rainroofed with wattle. He has also excavated several burial sites; the skeletons are usually in the flexed position, but are faced randomly. There are seldom any artifacts present (refer to Site Survey Form 41CT4, August 11, 1968, burial site, Balcones Research Center). He reports finding Fresno points with basal or side notches, as if they were to have been made into Harrell points. He says that he has recorded data and notes for virtually all of his material. He says that pioneers told him the area was once a sort of "headquarters" for many Indian tribes and bands in historical times. He reported, incidentally, that an unusually large and fine Folsom point had been found by a pothunter just south of Childress, and sold for something like \$150.00. It was his intention last summer to give his material for display in the new high school recently constructed in Childress, Texas.

Two other people working in the Red River area, as well as areas to the south, are Stanley Terry and Tom Isbell. Both live on farms near Highway 83, between Paducah and Childress. It is my understanding that they, along with Mr. McFarland, have continued working actively since last summer, and have located a number of new sites. Indeed, Mr. McFarland has reported some 60 sites to Balcones.

In regard to sites in general, it may be said that the ones I visited seemed to be characterized by large amounts of lithic debris, either on the surface or outcropping. Much of this is large cracked quartzite stream pebbles, some stained by fire, others merely broken or possibly flaked. There are also a fair number of flint cores and flint flakes. The quantity is sufficient for farmers to refer to the sites located in present day fields as "rocky places". There is no confusing the sites, however, with natural gravel deposits, once both have been seen and recognized.

The southeast corner of the Texas Panhandle is a region long neglected by archeologists. Hopefully, this summer, on the way to field school, some of us could meet McFarland, Terry and Isbell, and see their collections and perhaps visit some sites. If there is sufficient interest, I feel sure that I could help make arrangements. Such a thing would certainly encourage archeological work in the area.

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Charcoal and Pollen Collecting

For the benefit of those members who will be testing sites in the Livingston area, here are the recommended procedures to be used for obtaining good samples of charcoal and pollen for analysis:

Charcoal (C-14)

A piece of charcoal must be at least the size of a ping-pong ball. The sample(s) should be kept in a relatively sterile environment. Tin-foil or a clean plastic bag are excellent containers. Wet specimens should be air dried in a low humidity atmosphere. An oven with a pilot light would be satisfactory; the temperature should not be greater than 120°F.

It is extremely important to keep records of provenience of the specimens and all artifacts that can be associated with the specimens.

Pollen

A measuring cup of soil is required for pollen analysis. In the Livingston area, leeching occurs very rapidly; therefore, soil samples must be taken from sheltered areas. Sheltered areas are those in a ceramic vessel, beneath a large (20 square inch) sherd or rock. If a large rock or sherd is found in situ, carefully remove the object and take soil directly beneath it to a depth of ca. 2 inches. A sterile plastic bag is the best container. Again, depth of deposit and associated cultural material are vital information.

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"I believe in the spade. It has fed the tribes of mankind. It has furnished them water, coal, iron and gold. And now it is giving them the truth - historic truth - the mines of which have never been opened 'til our time."

-- Oliver Wendell Holmes
London Academy

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