

NEWSLETTER

of the

HOUSTON ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

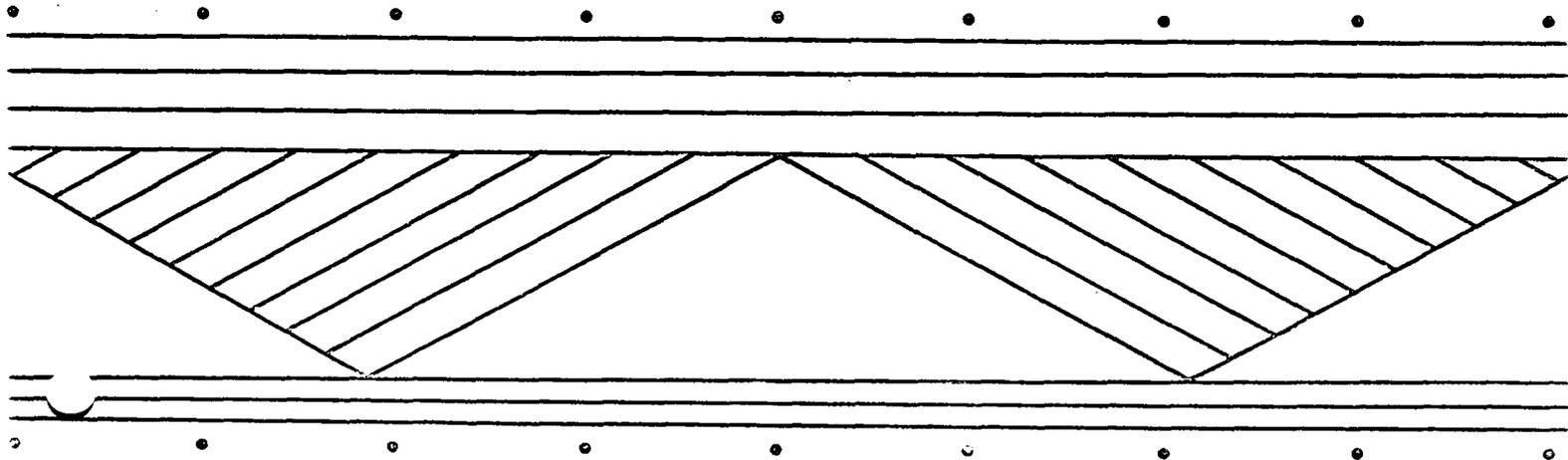
Number 19

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"Among the citizens who are concerned with archeology, there are a few professional archeologists and a large number of amateurs. Each of these groups needs the other, and by close cooperation between professionals and amateurs adequate recordation of sites is possible."

"It is the responsibility of the professional to interest himself more completely in the activities of amateurs, as individuals or as societies, and the amateur must become more professional in his outlook."

--- Charlie R. Steen
Regional Archeologist
National Park Service
Southwest Region



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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Front Cover

Sage remarks made by Charlie Steen in an address to the Colorado Archeological Society in October 1965.

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Past and Future Programs

- September 1966 - Mr. Harold Geis, Head of the Oceanographic Society, substituting for Mr. George Herrera who was unable to attend, presented a film and talk on "Scuba Diving and Archeology".
- October 1966 - Dr. Frank Hole, Susie Kitchen and Bruce Grove of Rice University presented reports on excavations carried out this past summer in Mexico, New Mexico, Wyoming and Washington.
- November 1966 - William Sorrow, Texas Archeological Salvage Project, will discuss "Problems in Excavation and Analysis".
(Meeting to be held November 18 instead of November 11 to permit members to attend TAS annual meeting on November 12, 13.)

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Field Activities of the HAS

Wallisville and Livingston Surveys - Both surveys are still active Contact Alan R. Duke in regard to participation in the Wallisville survey and Lou Fullen for information on the Livingston work.

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News from other Societies

The Texas Archeological Society will hold its annual meeting November 11-13, 1966 at the Witte Museum, San Antonio. 15 papers will be presented and a tour of the Missions in the area has been arranged. Collections of artifacts from many locations will be displayed.

The Midland Archeological Society plans a field training school for MAS members in November. Mapping, excavation techniques, recording and report writing will be covered during the three scheduled sessions.

The Oklahoma Anthropological Society held its Fall Dig on October 28-30 at the Lee I site near Lindsay, Oklahoma.

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Department of Obscure Information

A "Folsom Man" community has been discovered outside Albuquerque, New Mexico. Evidence of about 20 lodges, 15-20 yards apart, has been uncovered under the direction of Dr. Frank Hibben, professor of Anthropology, University of New Mexico. Previous Folsom sites have generally been "kill" sites rather than communities.

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TAS Annual Meeting - 1967

The Houston Archeological Society voted, by an overwhelming majority, to bid for the privilege of sponsoring the Texas Archeological Society Annual Meeting in 1967. The last time the HAS was host to this affair was in 1960. Here's hoping we make it again next year!!

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Anthropologist Moves to Houston

Dr. Erika Wagner, who received her degree in Anthropology at Yale University, and who is an authority on South American archeology, has become a resident of Houston. We hope to prevail upon Dr. Wagner to speak at one of our meetings in the near future.

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Maya Authority at Rice University

Dr. Robert Wauchope, professor of Anthropology at Tulane University, will speak at Rice University in February. HAS members are invited to attend. Time, date, and place will be announced later. The Mayan civilization will be the subject.

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A Victorian's excavation of an Indian camp site south of the city has turned up some significant findings for archeologists and others interested in the history of the Indian of this area.

A. Vogt Jr., of 2206 E. Stayton St., has uncovered the remains of 13 skeletons and several hundred artifacts, including arrowheads, dart and spear points, flint knives, cutting and scraping tools, potsherds and others.

It is believed the site was used as a summer camp by either a Karankawa or Tonkawa tribe, with some evidence to indicate that it was used for several hundred years. The site is located on a hill within a bend of a small tributary stream of the Guadalupe River, not far from the river and just a few miles south of the city.

Vogt prefers the location of the site to remain secret until the project can be completed. Some damage has already been done by trespassers.

The site is apparently what archeologists call a living midden, as opposed to the curious Indian burial mounds found in other parts of the county. The evidence suggests that the site was used annually by the tribe as a summer encampment, and that the skeletons are the physical remains of members of the tribe who died of natural causes. Nothing has been found to indicate they died violently.

The skull of one child was found; all the rest were adults. Vogt, after careful analysis, estimated the average height of the adults at about five feet, eight inches.

It can be fairly safely assumed that the tribe was either Karankawa or Tonkawa, since the histories of both nations are deeply rooted in this area.

Generally, the Karankawas inhabited a 300-mile fringe of the Texas Coast, with the main concentrations between the Brazos and Nueces Rivers. The Karankawas were one of the lower orders of all the tribes in Texas, and were detested even by the other Indians because of their cannibalistic tendencies. They remained at the coast in the winter, living chiefly on oys-

ters and fish, and occasionally, the Indians. In the summer they moved inland as far as the Victoria and Goliad areas, to escape the mosquitoes of the coast and to hunt deer and gather roots, nuts and berries.

The Tonkawa were of a more advanced nature and a more complex social order. They came generally from the Victoria area up to what is now known as the Texas Hill Country.

Beyond that was Apache country. Apaches are known to have visited this area, on hunting expeditions and on the occasions when they were driven down by the fierce Comanche warriors from the north. But their forays here were infrequent, and it is believed they had no permanent settlements in this area.

Vogt, on the basis of his findings at this point, believes the site to be of either Karankawa or Tonkawa origin, but said that his preliminary investigations have not yet indicated which tribe.

One clue could be the skeletons themselves. The early Spaniards who came to Texas have left accounts describing the Karankawas as magnificent physical specimens, towering to six and seven feet.

But Vogt, and many other modern researchers, believes the accounts may have been exaggerated. The Spaniards themselves are a race small in stature, (and were even smaller 300 years ago) and would be properly impressed by an Indian of 5-8 or 5-10, particularly one with grotesque facial tattooing and smeared with shark oil and alligator grease to keep the mosquitoes away.

Of the four adult skeletons he measured, heights ranged from 5-6 to 5-10. Consequently, Vogt does not dismiss the possibility of the site being Karankawa in origin.

Other evidence suggests that the site could very well be Karankawan. Vogt has found primitive ornamental shells at the site, which were highly prized by the tribe.

The manner of burial is another legitimate clue. The

Kronks are known to have had two main types of burial custom. In one, the body of the deceased is flexed, with the feet brought up to the bottom of the torso and the knees brought up against the chin, with the head in a vertical position. The other is called the bundle type burial, in which the long bones, the arm and leg bones, are loosely gathered in a bundle and placed in a shallow grave with the skull. The ribs and pelvic bones are not buried with the rest of the remains in the bundle burials.

At any rate, Vogt has found both types of burials, which may be the best indication of all.

But Vogt carefully refrains from positively identifying it as a Karankawan site. He is in good company by doing this. A University of Texas professor of anthropology, Dr. T. N. Campbell, has written:

"The identification of archeological sites as specifically Karankawa is not easy. It would be easier if other Indians, such as the Coahuiltecan, the Tonka-

wa, the Akokisa, the Lipan-Apache, etc., had remained out of the Karankawa territory in historic times. Our procedure in identifying a site as Karankawa is simple, but it leads only to a probably identification, not a certain one."

Aside from this aspect of his investigation, Vogt has uncovered enough evidence to draw certain other general conclusions. For example, he believes that the site is a fairly modern one, settled probably sometime after the birth of Christ and abandoned shortly before the coming of the first European explorers in this area.

Modern researchers use a general rule of thumb that the depth at which an artifact is found indicates, to a certain degree, its age. Thus, the deeper in the soil it is found, the older it is. Over great periods of time, the natural rain of matter upon the face of the earth will leave the artifact at correspondingly great depths.

But after three years of part-time probing, Vogt has found nothing deeper than 36 inches.

The artifacts have been arranged generally in the classic archeological manner: The crudest, most primitive tools have been uncovered at the deepest levels; the more refined ones, fashioned by craftsmen of a higher order as the tribe evolved, have been found nearest the surface.

Vogt's reason for believing the site was abandoned before the coming of the white man is equally sound. The Indian was quick to adapt to some of the ways of the white man, substituting steel tips for flint arrowheads, and valuing greatly the white man's glass beads and trinkets. None of these have been found at the site.

If the site was used from about the time of Christ until sometime in the 16th Century, as Vogt believes, this would make it a fairly recent one as far as archeologists are concerned.

Artifacts from other sites in this area of South Texas have been estimated on the basis of radiocarbon tests, to be as much as 12,000 years old. It is believed that "the mound-builders," whose works have been examined near the Guadalupe River south of Victoria, could be the earliest inhabitants of this area, but the identity and origin of these ancient peoples have been lost in the mists of time, and their story will probably never be fully understood.

Vogt is the first to admit that much work remains to be done. In the past three years of investigation, some 3,000 cubic feet of debris has been sifted through a one-quarter inch shaker screen, but this represents only about one-third of the total camp site.

Most of this is hard work, a pick and shovel, bucket and wheelbarrow type of work. It is also a matter of careful and painstaking research and record-keeping.

But to Vogt, a member of the Texas Archeological Society, it is a serious pasttime, and the work is done easily. There is a certain amount of satisfaction with each new discovery, and each one sheds light a little farther back into the dark and shadowy origins of the Red Man.

Excavation Bares

Indian History

VICTORIAN PROBES BURIAL SITE

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