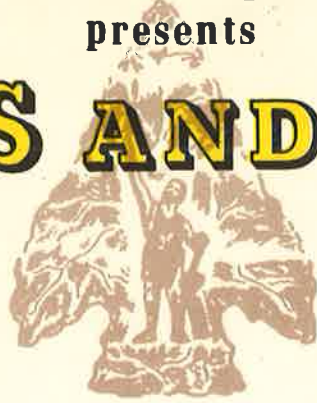


The Birmingham Anthropological Society
presents

STONES AND BONES



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NEWS FLASH!

The Dick Humbards (father and son team) made a return trip to the Montevallo site and discovered and removed a burial. They report that the skeleton was in an excellent state of preservation.

After this, their first burial excavation, they offer some good hindsight advice. First, they neglected to take a camera to photograph in situ, orient position, etc. They hadn't expected such luck - but you never can tell. Second, they did not take a tarpaulin to erect a shelter to work under - just in case. So, of course, it intermittently rained the proverbial pitchforks, chasing them into the shelter of the car and flooding the excavation. Third, no sketch pad or compass. Fourth, no 2½' by 4' sheet of steel to drive under the burial that it might be brought home in one impressive and still articulated piece.

Wet, cold, muddy, hurried - under the circumstances, they did a good careful job and got the burial out in nice shape. That is no small job under the best of conditions.

Perhaps this incident will renew Society interest in the site - which, remember, is to be completely destroyed. If so, the Humbards advise that you go prepared - loaded for b'ar. It would be a service to get some documented information from this site while it is still with us. And a complete burial taken up in one piece would look mighty good on the Stones and Bones program (Ala. Educational TV every Thurs. 8:30PM) and as a Public Library display might get us some members.

Dr. Raymond A. Dart, of Johannesburg, So. Africa, whom some of the Society members heard speak at the Dental College, was and is an amateur...and he discovered our ancient cousin Australopithecus.

Boy Scout Troop #54, Vestavia Hills, under the guidance of Scoutmaster Sam Thomas and his assistant, Ted Rybka, camped on high ground under canvas, March 8 & 9, near the Montevallo site. The 29 boys formed an appreciative audience for the Humbar's efforts in unearthing the burial reported above.

The troop had been briefed before leaving for their camp site on the rudiments of scientific digging & field methods, which were illustrated on a blackboard. They concentrated on the banks at the site until rain drove them to shelter; so they did not stake out test areas. As the boys came well-prepared with proper paraphernalia such as screens, shovels, brushes, etc., their efforts paid off in the form of about 2-dozen points ranging from bird-points to "clunkers" in size, a number of flake knives and a quantity of potsherds. One piece of pottery showed a very distinct repetitive diamond-shaped design, but the balance were plain. All pottery was sand-tempered.

Mr. Sisco, owner of the property, gave the boys his permission to camp there at any time so they have named it Camp Birdpoint. The logic behind this name is that it is smaller than the B'ham. Boy Scout Council's summer camp called Camp Arrowhead! Just as soon as the weather turns pleasant they plan to return in force.

Here is a prime opportunity for the Society to accomplish at least part of its ideals: to train young people in proper archaeological investigation, while at the same time recording what seems to be an important site.

REMEMBER: Next meeting is April 11, 1958 instead of April 4. The meeting will be held the second Friday in April at the Public Library, 7:30PM.

The following items will form part of the business session:

1. Cataloging, relocating & method of lending Society books & papers now on hand.
2. Future additions to Society's library.
3. Field trips & possible sites of importance.
4. Society mapping project.
5. Education & training of younger members.

Please come prepared to discuss the above.

The formal program planned will be an interesting one. Ted Rybka will talk on a trip that he and his family took thru Southwestern United States. He plans to show his slides and momentos, so that Archaeological, Geological, and "Beach Comber" interests will be satisfied.

Bill Steele and Mr. Ginane have been "bird-dogging" several weekends in March. However, they are reticent about their findings pending further investigation of the sites.

LEGENDS OF PRECOLUMBIAN DISCOVERIES OF AMERICA

Randolph F. Blackford

Finding that many people have never even heard of the many possible precolumbian discoveries of America, I am encouraged to share my own sketchy acquaintance with this fascinating subject.

First, of course, is the classic "Atlantis" myth - of which we might remark that there were "flying continents" long before there were "flying saucers". Aristokles, popularly known as Plato, in the Timaeus, represents an Egyptian priest as describing Atlantis to Solon - much as we would begin a tall tale with "once upon a time", one would judge. Atlantis was thus described as an island larger than Lybia and Asia Minor combined, lying beyond the Pillars of Hercules (Rock of Gibraltar). Nine thousand years before the time of Solon (about 500 B.C.) it had been a powerful nation, resisted by Athens alone (though obviously that was some 8,000 years before Athens was dreamed of!).

Aristokles in the later Critias, apparently to point a political moral, developed the Atlantis idea into a fabulous country, peopled by the descendents of Poseidon's ten sons, and having mysterious metals, building huge tunnels to accomodate seagoing ships, and other science fiction which would sell today.

In fact, and unfortunately, it does sell today. It seems that many are still credulous enough to swallow the many impossibles of Atlantis, Poseidon's sons and all, as factual. Beginning with Ignatius Donnelly, hundreds of modern writings have inflated this gossamer myth to the size of an "unequivocal fact", even more fabulous with each retelling, until now the Atlantians are represented as having had submarines, airplanes and even atomic energy! In the next episode they will have sputniks, space ships, and the like. Lewis Spence then masterminded the lost continent of Mu in the Pacific, whose people tunneled through the Andes, sailed down the Amazon, and contacted the Atlantians!

Those who for reasons best known to themselves (mostly financial) insist upon a Lost Continent of Atlantis and use many pseudo-reasonings such as "the well known fact that there is a sunken continent in the Atlantic" - which geologists say there never was.

These modern writers of mythology tell us America was peopled from Atlantis, thus accounting for the high cultural development in South and Central America - utterly ignoring the fact that some ten thousand years separated the Atlantis myth from the American cultures.

The second and somewhat less mythological legend is that the Phoenicians, known to have been intrepid seamen, discovered America during the Bronze age - accounting for the Bronze Age culture existing in Central and South America in the midst of an otherwise neolithic age. Carthage was in part peopled by Phoenicians, and a hoard of Carthaginian coins of the fourth century B. C. was found in the Azores, over 800 nautical miles from the nearest coast of Portugal - evidence that someone got about one third of the way to America as a very early date. It was more than seventeen centuries before the Azores were rediscovered. Even A. W. Brogger, late director of the excellent

Norwegian museum in Oslo, thought it could "well be believed that the route to America was discovered during the Bronze Age when sea voyaging was at its height" - though of course, he considered Norwegians the best of all sailors.

The third legend is the more familiar one of Lief Erecson in the tenth century A. D. According to "The Saga of Lief Ericson" translated from the Icelandic, Lief had been attached to the Icelandic Colony of Greenland (thoroughly documented by archaeologists) missed his route on one trip and arrived at a land he called "Vineland". One theory among many is that this was Nantucket, based on the ruins of an ancient stone wharf there.

The fourth legend is that of Madoc, Prince of Wales. The Alabama Historical Society has considered this story has sufficient substance to allow the erection of a marker near Mobile - though they have also erected a De Soto marker, despite the fact that his route is entirely unknown. The story is that Madoc, in 1175, had trouble with the English King and sailed away to the west with three ships. Eventually, as the story goes, he discovered land and left a colony at the mouth of a river - which some proponents identify with the Alabama. Returning from another voyage from Wales with more colonists, he is supposed to have missed the Alabama and planted the second colony near the Mississippi. Both colonies were driven in from the sea-coast and, as the story goes, by some miracle met on the Tennessee near Mussel Shoals. They are supposed to have wound up in Missouri and, to stretch the tale to the breaking point, still spoke Welch when contacted by explorers about 1800 as Mandan Indians - though Swanton assigns the Mandan language to the Siouan linguistic stock. To bury the story as a mystery which cannot be solved, some of the proponents say the Mandans were exterminated by an epidemic shortly after 1800. They were decimated by a smallpox epidemic shortly after 1837, but not exterminated. Swanton gives their number as 150 in 1850, and the Indian Office Report for 1937 gives 345 - none of which speak Welch.

The fifth legend is of a nameless Icelandic fisherman who in 1364 made a landfall on the continent, according to one Antonio Zeno... who himself is the sixth legend. "The Fourteenth Century Discovery of America by Antonio Zeno" (William Hubert Hobbs, Scientific American, Vol. 72, PP. 24-31) is my source on this legend. According to Hobbs there is a "well authenticated narrative account" of the Venetian brothers Nicolo and Antonio Zeno making extensive explorations in the North Atlantic in the 1390's. The younger brother is said to have discovered Newfoundland and Nova Scotia (finding a European named Icarus rulling as king in Newfoundland!). The brothers supposedly founded a colony, briefly, in Nova Scotia.

The seventh legend concerning one Andrea Bianca has been made into a "best seller" in Frank Slaughter's "The Map Maker". A galleyslave of the Moors, Bianca seems to have sailed far and wide (see his attached map dated 1436). Escaping his captors, he united with Henry the Navigator, Prince of Portugal, and on a trip made in his service, was blown off course and, as the story runs, discovered what is supposed to have been some of the West Indies and the coast of Florida. These are represented on the Bianca map as the two large islands west of the main group of the Azores - though if we judge by comparative distances, these would be the Flores cluster so far from

the main group of the Azores. Surely it seems that an experienced sailor would have allowed more distance for the width of the Atlantic. As the story goes, Henry the Navigator was preparing for a crusade so Bianca's tale about his discovery of "Antillia" was never followed up. The University of Minneasota has published a brochure on "Antillia and America".

It is therefore apparent that Indian relics are not the only challenge to American archaeology. If you want to become famous, discover an artifact which might lend some substance to any of these exciting legends.

