VOL. IV, NO. 1 JANUARY 1960

THE WASHINGTON ARCHAEOLOGIST

NEXT MEETING: Seattle Chapter - Thursday, Jan. 14, 1960 - 8:00 P.M.

MEETING PLACE: City Light's North Service Center at North 97th St. and Stone Avenue--2 blocks east of Aurora on North 97th St.

PROGRAM: BILL HOLM will show pictures of a Potlatch he attended in the Fort Rupert - Kingscombe Inlet area.

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At the Seattle Chapter December meeting, ALAN BRYAN, former graduate student at the University of Washington and now at Yale, conducted a round table discussion about the Fish Town Site.

Mr. Bryan, who made archaeological surveys of this site when working on his Masters thesis several years ago, thought it had good potential with the presence of house depressions and burials being possibilities.

In addition to the Society's present activity at the site, Mr. Bryan suggested several things which might further substantiate and place the culture of this site.

First among the suggestions was to select a potential house depression and excavate to the extremities of the depression in three-inch layers, being watchful for changes in the earth stratification and location of post holes.

It was further recommended that the Society might explore the innundated areas of lagoons present in the area in search of perishable materials such as wood, bone and basketry. This would involve a rather complicated pumping

arrangement and would require the wholehearted assistance of the membership.

Cairn burials were also mentioned as perhaps being present in the area and a thorough investigation of this possibility should be made.

Last, and perhaps of greatest significance, was the expression by Mr. Bryan of the possible existence of an earlier prairie culture in the open areas only slightly removed from the Fish Town Site as we know it. Earliest material may be oriented toward a plant collecting culture which would be accentuated by the presence of chipped stone artifacts.

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EARLY WOODCARVING ACQUIRED BY UBC - (Reprinted from UBC Reports, Nov., 1959)

The earliest piece of Pacific northwest coast woodcarving known has been acquired by UBC for its museum of anthropology.

James C. Garner, acting curator, who purchased the carving from the H. R. MacMillan Gift Fund, claims it to be "a masterpiece of carving and an absolutely unique specimen of the prehistoric spear throwers widely used up and down the northwest Pacific coast." It was dredged from the bed of the Skagit River in Washington about 1936.

The 15½ inch carving in yew wood represents a human-like face surmounted by a monstrous looking animal figure with beach pebbles inlaid for eyes.

Consensus of campus scientific opinion fits the spear thrower with archaeological materials dating from about the first millennium B.C. It was used to provide added leverage for both distance and impact of projectiles.

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SPECIAL NOTICE

JANUARY

MEETING

THURSDAY

JANUARY 14

Bring a guest

- - -

ANNUAL REPORT — 1959

WASHINGTON ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

C. G. Nelson

In keeping with the tradition established in 1958, an annual report is made evaluating the activities of the preceeding year. The Society has followed the pattern of activity established in previous years: meetings, digs, lab and writing sessions.

In comparing 1959 with 1958, membership has dropped from 142 in 1958 to 129 in 1959. This in part is directly related to publicity (the lack of publicity). There is a potential for an expanded membership within the state but the Society's first obligation is to function within the framework of its constitution and by-laws. The Society is lacking depth in professional support at the working level. Additional members, especially additional chapters, would require additional professional support. A serious problem would than become critical. The creation of the position of a State Archaeologist combined with a state-supported archaeological research program is the ideal solution to this problem. The position of state archaeologist is a long range problem as is the possible effect that the new State Museum and its staff will have on our activities. The relative efficiency of the Society at state level is a measure of the efficiency of the Society at chapter level. Again this professional malnutrition is the principle problem which is further accented by the geography of the state. Some relief will come as the stature of the non-professional members grows. This is more than a prospect since there is ample evidence of growth during the past year. Following the comparisons made in the 1958 report, meeting man-hours decreased from 1,980 in 1958 to 1,630 in 1959. The decrease is 18% as compared with a 10% decrease of membership. This is also symptomatic of problems discussed in part above. Programing is also a part of the problem. While the lack of publicity is a deliberate part of a containment policy, a decrease in interest requires remedial action. A further comparison to the 1958 report, The Washington Archaeologist increased its output from 93 pages in 1958 to 128 pages in 1959. More significant than the increase in volume is that the Washington Archaeologist has been included in the list of "Some Recent Publications" published in Volume 25, Number 1 of American Antiquity, July, 1959. This, of course, is a very important step in the eventual unqualified acceptance of the Society by professionals. It has been the professional contingent of the Society that has made the principle contribution in this area. The general quality of the paper has improved and this is largely a result of hard work at the non-professional level.

In reference to activities: The final report on 45-KT-6 is in process; 90% of the laboratory work having been completed, and 40% of the writing in the rough draft stage. The Seattle Chapter has started excavations at the Fish Town Site, 45-SK-33, enough work having been completed to determine that this is a major coastal site. The Palus Chapter is continuing work at 45-WT-18. The Columbia Basin Chapter is working on an ethnobotanical problem dealing with the local variety of camas root growing in the Beezley Hills. Also under investigation are the fortifications associated with the lava buttes in Grant County.

Again the members can seek solace in the statistics for it can be said that the statistics indicate a moderate degree of success. The note of candor of this report would be hypocritical if we did not admit that there is a lack of continuity in the approach and participation of the various groups in the state that purport to have a genuine interest in archaeology. The challenge should be obvious as indeed it was one year ago: all the interested groups will have to coordinate their efforts.

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THE CLASSIFICATION OF ARTIFACTS IN ARCHAEOLOGY

(Abstract of paper read at the Twenty-fourth Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology.)

There are two main kinds of classification, analytic and taxonomic. The former groups the artifacts in such a manner as to formulate cultural traits, and the latter, so as to establish artifact types.

Analytic classification is done by forming successive series of classes, referring to different features of the artifacts. Each class will be characterized by one or more attributes which indicate a custom to which the artisan conformed, e.g., a technique of manufacture, or a concept which he expressed in the artifacts, such as a design. Each of these customs and concepts is a cultural trait, and their sum total constitutes the culture of a collection which has been classified analytically.

Taxonomic classification is done by formulating a single set of classes, one for each kind of artifact in the collection. Each class will be characterized by two or more cultural traits, selected from among the total number of traits obtainable by means of analytic classification. The cultural traits diagnostic of each class constitute its type.

It is suggested that both analytic and taxonomic classification have to be done in order to make a complete study of any collection. The traits produced by analytic classification are useful not only in doing artifact taxonomy but also in classifying components to formulate foci (phases).

Types have their greatest utility in identifying artifacts and, through such identifications, in establishing chronologies. Studies of culture change can better be done in terms of traits, since they are the primary units of culture.

Irving Rouse
Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut

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REMEMBER

TIME TO PAY DUES FOR 1960

A COMB FROM THE DALLES AREA, OREGON

While in Connecticut in 1958, we were permitted to borrow for study a comb (Figure 1) from the collections of the Peabody Museum of Natural History, Yale University (Catalogue No. 492/55592). This comb was presented to the Museum in 1873 by O. Hager and O. C. Marsh; the latter was a famous paleontologist. It was at that time catalogued as "Flathead Indian, The Dalles, Oregon". It was found by Marsh (who was apparently not above disturbing recently interred bones) on a cranium now catalogued as 4050 (the cranium and the comb were formerly jointly catalogued as 2441), from a burial on Memaloose Island. It is uncertain which burial island was the source, but it is presumed that the large one near The Dalles is meant.

The comb is carved of a fine hard light-colored wood which could be either vine-maple or serviceberry. There are 22 growth rings in 4.5 cm. The tines of the comb (26 in all) are probably carved from the same wood. The specimen is in excellent condition - only the tips of four of the tines are broken at the top end of the comb and the alignment there has been slightly disturbed. All of the bindings are present. The comb is in the shape of a human figure with the tines of the comb extending through the portion which would be the body proper.

It obviously belongs to the same carving tradition as do the well known Salish spirit figures (Underhill, 1945, Fig 63; Nordquist, 1959, p. 12; Nordquist 1957, p. 7). The forehead and nose are straight-cut, connected and raised; the eyes are represented by depressions high on each side of the bar-shaped nose. There is no mouth. The neck is represented by four heavily carved ridges with deep incisions between. The body section, also the functional one, begins immediately below the neck or collar, and here, likewise, begins the lashing cord which holds the toothpick-like teeth in place. The body of the object or the trunk of the figure is a central column of oval cross section (the long diameter is front to back of the figure) which has been pierced laterally by a slit 5.6 cm. long and 3.5 mm. wide (see Figure 2). The 26 teeth have been inserted to the mid-point in the longitudinal slit and bound with wrappings around the wooden body and between each tine. The length of the teeth units ranges from 6.2 to 6.4 cm.; they taper at both ends and are oval in cross-section with the greater diameter of the oval again being front to back of the figure. Diameters of the oval center part of the teeth are 2.5 to 3.0 mm. by 1.0 to 1.5 mm.

The leg pedestal below the body is a flat disc decorated with eight deep alternating gouges. Four of these originate from the top and four from the bottom. The shortened legs which emerge from the pedestal are bent at the knees. There are no arms but there is an open space at the top of the body slit and an unfilled binding loop there which may have held another tooth or the arms. The latter are unlikely and we believe that the piece originally had 27 teeth. The present weight of the comb is slightly less than one ounce; the left foot has been broken and there is a large check through the right side of the face. The object appears to be late (ethnographic period) and was certainly carved with metal tools.

The tooth-carrying section was first wrapped with flat bands of untwisted sinew going around the body and between each of the tines. This first wrap-

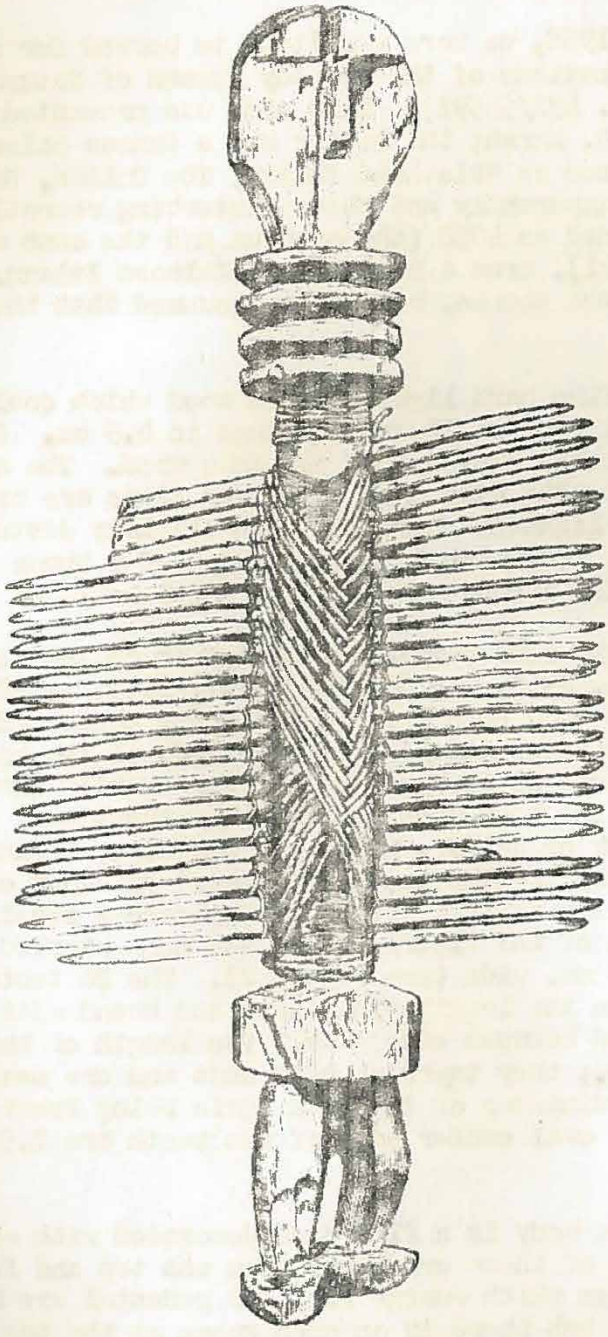

Figure 1

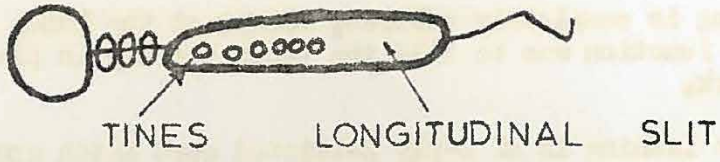

Figure 2

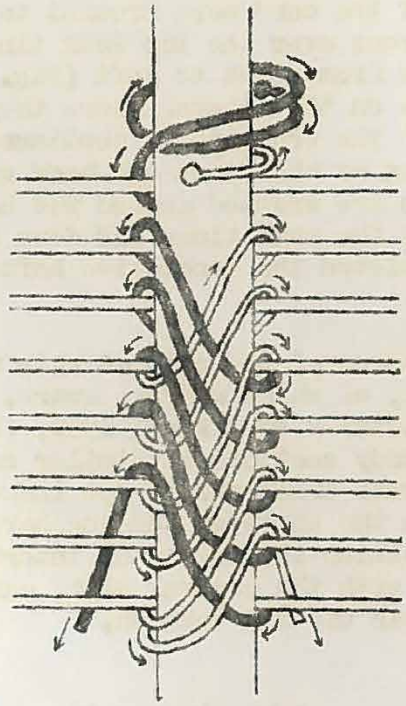

Figure 3 a

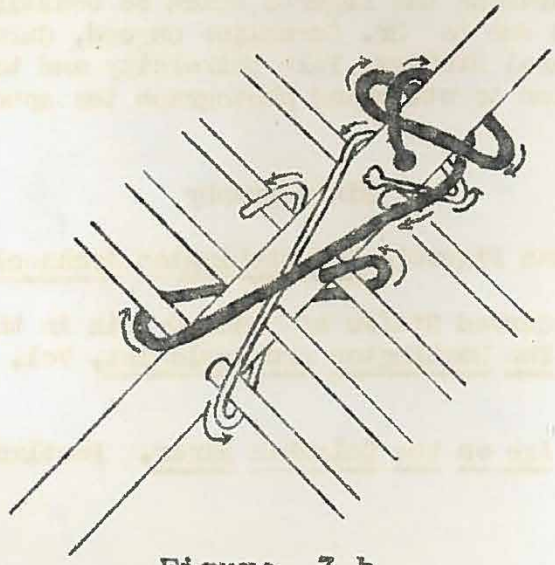

Figure 3 b

ping or serving is completely covered, except at the base, by an ornamental lashing. Its function was to hold the teeth tightly in place for the decorative overwork.

The decorative lashing is of 2-ply Z-twisted cord which appears to be sinew (no fragments were removed for more accurate identification). The cord was started at its center point on the reverse side of the comb. In Figure 3 a and b, the bindings were drawn as solid and open in order to make the method of tying easier to follow; these two figures illustrate the binding as seen in the back side of the comb and are in the opposite direction from those shown in Figure 1. The two ends of the cord were brought to the front at the top of the first tine (Fig. 3, b), cross over the top four tines, the end from left to right passing over the one from right to left (Fig. 1). Going under the fourth tine, the two ends are now on the reverse where they cross up and over the second tine from the top. The wrapping is continued in this way with each end going down over three tines on the front and back up over three at the reverse. At the bottom the two ends are wrapped around the base of the split body section and go up one side of the comb tines and down the other with a row of simple twining. This completed the decorative hafting. The tines are held very securely in place.

There can be little discussion of the comb at this time; it is the only complete specimen of its type, of which we are aware. However, it seems very probable that the items pictured by Strong, 1959, (top 2 items of Fig. 89, p. 200) carved of bone, are body sections of similar combs. Mr. Strong's suggestion that these may have been hair ornaments is apt indeed. It would be unusual to find as complete a comb in the earth as the one here described. It was complete only because of its acquisition shortly after interment. Other items of this type, carved or uncarved, with the central slit, can now often be identified as comb bodies. Formerly their use was unknown.

Acknowledgments

I wish to express my gratitude to Mr. Gordon Lelander, Wetherill Mesa Archaeological Project, for drawing the figures which so beautifully illustrate the comb. Thanks are also due to Dr. Cornelius Osgood, Curator of Anthropology, Peabody Museum of Natural History, Yale University and to his assistant Dr. Leo Pospisil, for permission to study and photograph the specimen.

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Carolyn and Douglas Osborne
Mesa Verde National Park

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HISTORY PUSHED BACK 8,150 YEARS - (Reprinted from UBC Reports, November, 1959)

A UBC archaeologist has unearthed crude stone knives and scrapers used by Fraser Valley Indians 8,150 years ago. Dr. Charles Borden, leader of an expedition which spent the summer excavating in the Fraser Canyon north of Yale, says the implements are the oldest known evidence of human habitation yet discovered in western Canada. Charcoal and wood ash found imbedded in sand 20 feet below the surface of the site has been dated by the radioactive carbon method at the University of Saskatchewan. Scientists there say the remains of the campfires date back 8,150 years, give or take 310 years.

Charred pits of the choke cherry have also been found in the ancient ashes. Dr. Borden says the Indians who gathered the cherries and threw the pits into the fire must have occupied the site in August of September since the choke cherry matures in these months. "By inference," he says, "we can assume that the Indians came to the site to catch the salmon which would be moving up the river at that time on their way to spawn."

The site of the excavation is about 60' above the high water mark of the present river. In the intervening years the Fraser has deepened its channel by cutting through the solid rock. Dr. Borden says he has uncovered a second layer of sand below his present excavation. "There are tentative signs of occupation at this level also," he says. Samples are now being dated at the University of Saskatchewan. Dr. Borden plans to return to the site next summer for further work.

One of the most interesting items unearthed by the scientists was a small piece of clear obsidian, a type of volcanic glass which the Indians used to make knives and projectile points. "This particular piece of obsidian is clear rather than opaque," explains Dr. Borden. The closest deposits of clear obsidian are to be found in southern Oregon which probably means that local Indians carried on a thriving trade with more remote tribes. These ancient inhabitants were probably quite similar in appearance to present day Indians, Dr. Borden claims. "They were not an agricultural people," he says, "and were nomadic to the extent that they moved around in search of food."

Dr. Borden's attention was drawn to the site three years ago by a local resident who noticed Indian artifacts nearby. His expedition of last summer supported by grants from the university's committee on research, the Leon and Thea Koerner foundation and the National Museum of Canada. Dr. Borden feels he is involved in a "race against progress" in his investigations of ancient sites. He feels government action is necessary if prehistoric sties are to be saved from destruction by the flooding which occurs when public and private power projects are constructed.

He says that many important sites occur along rivers and points out that the provincial government and the Aluminum Company of Canada helped finance research before the Nechako dam project flooded vast areas of Tweedsmuir Park. "We need an act with teeth in it," Dr. Borden says, "before old sites are ruined."

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