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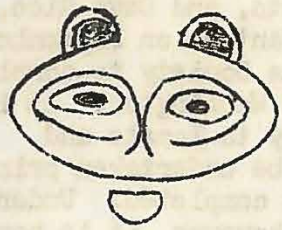
THE WASHINGTON ARCHAEOLOGIST



NEXT MEETING: Seattle Chapter - October 12, 1960 - 8:00 P.M.

MEETING PLACE: Washington State Museum
4037 15th Avenue N. E.
Seattle 5, Washington

SUBJECT: SEMINAR conducted by DR. ERNA GUNTHER comparing basketry and perishables recovered from Site 45-SN-100 with the available ethnographic materials. A part of this material was described in detail in the last issue of the Washington Archaeologist: Basketry from Site 45-SN-100, General Comments by Del Nordquist, An examination of this and other material recovered, a side by side comparison with ethnographic specimens, and a statement of this comparison by Dr. Gunther and those members who have other observations to contribute will constitute the main portion of the seminar.

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ELECTION

OF

1961 - OFFICERS

ANNUAL ELECTIONS ARE HELD AT THE OCTOBER MEETING

BE SURE TO ATTEND

AND VOTE

TWO DAYS SURVEY
AT THE MOUTH OF CAYUSE COULEE
KITTITAS COUNTY

Members of the W-A-S, e.g. the Nelsons, Svendsons, Nordquists, and Dave Rice, made an excursion into the Columbia River Valley north of Vantage on September 17th and 18th. This was the first effort on the part of the Society to comply with the agreement made between W-A-S and the University of Washington. It is the belief of both parties that a minute survey is necessary to locate and evaluate all archaeological sites so that salvage work can be undertaken prior to the flooding that will be caused when the Wanapum dam is completed. Understandably, many prehistoric occupation areas will be lost, however, it is hoped that both the University of Washington in Seattle, the State University in Pullman, and W-A-S can give of their efforts to reclaim some of the data to be found in significant areas.

Since it is specifically stated by the State Parks Commission, who gave us permission to cross their lands, that nothing be touched or investigated on their domain, W-A-S has commenced from their boundaries and worked north. At present only areas in danger of inundation were inspected. This constituted land belonging to Mr. Clarence Scammon who readily gave his permission that the survey be done. W-A-S appreciates the Scammon's favor, as well as their interest in the work being done. In the consequence we wish to bestow a W-A-S membership to the Scammons so they can follow our activities in the future.

A detailed account of the survey will be published in the Washington Archaeologist in the future.

Del Nordquist

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OCTOBER FIELD TRIP - WEEK END OF OCTOBER 15th & 16th

The current issue of the Washington Archaeologist reports the results of the field trip completed September 17th and 18th. The survey work will be continued and expanded to the extent that some test work will be done and the area of the survey extended. Details of the trip will be discussed at the October meeting. People interested in making this trip but who will be unable to attend the October 12th meeting should call: Del Nordquist CH 2-5602

Ted Weld EM 3-5887

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Editor's Note: The Editors of CHANGING TIMES, THE KIPLINGER MAGAZINE, have kindly granted the Washington Archaeological Society permission to reprint the following article from the August 1960 issue in its entirety.

IT'S FUN TO DIG THINGS UP ON WEEK ENDS

HOW AMATEUR ARCHEOLOGISTS UNEARTH THE AMERICAN PAST

While digging in a cornfield near Washington, D. C., a few months ago, Charles Douglas came upon a stone arrowhead, It turned out to be at least 5,500 years old, the oldest evidence of human life in the Potomac Valley.

S. P. Dalton of Jefferson City, Mo., one day noticed a deep pit dug by men building a highway along the Osage River. Investigating the hole, he discovered a batch of pointed stones that probably were used by small bands of hunters almost 10,000 years ago.

Professional archeologists at work? Not at all. Mr. Douglas is a printer and Mr. Dalton is a judge. They are amateur archeologists, part of a growing number of outdoor enthusiasts whose hobby is searching for traces of ancient man.

Archeologists now think man first came to this country more than 20,000 years ago, crossing over from Asia on the land bridge that once connected Siberia and Alaska. Ancient settlers left no written records, so archeologists must piece together their way of life by studying the traces they left in the earth. These include human bones and artifacts. Artifacts are remains of buildings, pottery, carvings, stone tools and weapons and other man-made products.

It's not at all unusual for amateurs like Judge Dalton or Mr. Douglas to make notable finds. Amateurs, in fact, lead trained archeologists to many important discoveries. This isn't surprising when you consider there are thousands of amateurs and only 300 professional archeologists.

If you are intrigued by the idea of hunting for clues to man's past, here's a brief outline of how to go about it. The advice is not for the mere souvenir-hunter, but for the man who wants to learn the meaning of what he finds.

HOW DO YOU START? The best way to learn archeology from the ground down is to work with trained scientists. Many states and cities have archaeological societies, composed mostly of amateurs who dig in their spare time under professional guidance.

The Dallas Archeological Society, for example, is helping scientists from the Smithsonian Institution remove artifacts from future reservoir areas before they are flooded. The Missouri Archaeological Society's 1,500 members, working with the state university, have discovered almost 5,000 ancient Indian sites.

Membership in the society usually costs $2 to $5 a year. If you have trouble finding a group near you, your state university or museum should be able to help. Even if a society doesn't have a branch in your area, it may furnish helpful guidance on how to explore for artifacts.

You can even form your own local club, if none exists. A state society, university or museum may be able to steer you to someone in your area who has had archeological training. Three years ago, Bill Tidwell, who works for the federal government in Washington, formed a southwestern chapter of the Archeological Society of Maryland. The group of 60 includes a restaurant owner and a government worker, both of whom majored in archeology in college.

What if you can't find or form a group? Then work on your own, and watch for any archeologists who may come your way. All over the country, digging teams now rush in ahead of builders of roads, dams, reservoirs and pipelines. They want to get their licks before the construction projects destroy lingering traces of lost cultures. You may be allowed to dig with these teams in your spare time.

WHERE DO YOU SEARCH? At one time or other, Indians lived in every part of the country. (When archeologists talk about Indians, they mean all ancient settlers of America, not just the latter-day redskins you see on television.) The trick is to spot the exact places they settled, worked, hunted or buried their dead. Some of the logical places to look:

Near bodies of water. Most Indians settled along streams, rivers, springs or lakes.

Big, well-lit caves.

Overhanging rock ledges that provide shelter.

Mounds. These were used for burials, as ceremonial structures, or to dump refuse.

Quarries or pits on hills of flint or other rock used by Indians for their tools.

Keep an eye, too, on excavations made for buildings, roads, cables, sewers or gravel pits. Workers might recall digging up artifacts if you explain what they are.

And don't overlook local sources of information. A historical society of a newspaper library may tell of past explorations in the area. Hills, trails, or towns with Indian names may indicate Indians once lived nereby.

HOW DO YOU GO EXPLORING? There are two ways to search for remnants of the past. You may choose to collect only artifacts that lie on top of the ground. Or you may want to dig below these surface finds.

SURFACE COLLECTING: For this you will need a detailed map of the area, paper bags, paper and pencil and a compass. The U. S. Geological Survey puts out

excellent local maps, showing land elevations, roads, streams and houses. They are available for a small sum from the Survey's Office of Map Information, Washington 25, D. C. County road maps are a good second bet.

Best time to go surface hunting is after a rain. The water washes the dirt off artifacts, making them easier to spot. Many archeologists drive from farm to farm along streams and ask whether they may search in the fields. Sometimes farmers themselves find artifacts while plowing.

Anything you pick off a site should be kept in its own paper bag, separate from what you collect on other sites. Number each bag to identify the site. Experts suggest that you write down the exact location of the site on a sheet of paper, perhaps sketching a map to pinpoint it. The notes should also include a site number and a description of the remains you find and the type of land. This will help locate the site for digging later on.

DIGGING. To do the job right takes considerable care. The federal government and some states, in fact, bar amateurs from searching for relics on public lands. It doesn't take much skill to dig a hole and pluck out relics. But an inexperienced digger often overlooks important things or destroys traces of the past. So check first and see whether any experienced archeologist is interested in your site before you go ahead on your own.

If you do undertake a dig, you will learn more, and destroy less evidence, if you go about it in a systematic way. In addition to the tools used in surface collecting, you should bring along wooden stakes, shovel, pickax, tape measure, small trowel, pocketknife and whisk broom. Archeologists like to know what a site looks like before, during and after you dig, so a camera will come in handy, too.

First step, the experts advise, is to establish a base point and mark it with a wooden stake. It ought to go near a permanent landmark, such as a building or a tree. Note its exact location. Using this point as one corner, mark off several 5-foot squares, each adjoining the next. The corners of the squares ought to be marked with wooden stakes. From above, the site will look like a grid.

Now comes the digging. A widely used technique is to dig 6 inches deep in each square, then 6 inches deeper in each, and so on. How deep do you go? Until you dig a foot of soil without finding any remains. Then mark off new squares to dig next to the old ones. This system will let you pick right up the next time if you don't finish a site in one day.

As important as the digging is keeping good records. One way is to lay out, on a sheet of graph paper, a sketch of the grid as it takes shape. Then, in the proper squares, you can draw the outlines of major finds, such as traces of buildings, buried skeletons, big concentrations of artifacts or refuse pits (usually patches of soil darkened by decomposed garbage). Each 5-foot square ought to be numbered on the graph paper.

Experienced diggers recommend use of a separate bag for the artifacts found at a specific depth in a specific square. Thus a bag might be labeled "Square 23, depth 6-12 inches." The site number should also go on the bag.

Sounds quite elaborate doesn't it? But it's not hard once you get the hang of it. And it is vital for interpreting what you find. Keep in mind that an artifact's position in relation to others on the site is as important as the artifact itself. Weapons and ornaments found next to a burial, for instance, may indicate that a culture believed in an after-life and wanted its members well-prepared. Or say you find a second layer of artifacts below a higher one. This usually means two cultures occupied the site at different times, the lower layer left by the older inhabitants.

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THE STUFF? Once you bring the relics home and clean them off, the next step is to organize your collection. A catalog will help you keep track of your artifacts. Here's a typical setup:

One loose-leaf notebook describes the sites you explore and the artifacts you find on the surface. A second notebook or a bunch of 5 by 8-inch cards list the things you dug up. Each page or card would correspond to a bag of artifacts, that is, it would cover a specific depth of a specific square on a specific site. You might list, too, the different types of artifacts in the particular chunk of earth. Each card would get its own catalog number.

Now you are ready to label each artifact. The marking should be done with India ink on an unobtrusive spot. On surface artifacts, you would simply mark the site number. On those excavated, the card catalog number.

Once you've done this, you can throw together similar kinds of relics, no matter where they came from--all pointed stones in one shoebox or other container, scraping tools in another, pottery pieces in a third, and so on. The number on an artifact will now tell you, after a quick check in the catalog, exactly where the piece was found.

What do you do with the collection? Artifacts generally have little commercial value. Even if you keep them for your own, you ought to let a trained archeologist see at least a sampling. An expert, of course, can tell far more about the people who left the artifacts than you can. And, after all, the folks who get the most satisfaction out of archeology, as a hobby or as a science, are the ones who collect, not things, but knowledge.

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