

Louisiana Archaeological Society

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ATTENDING THE ARCHAEOLOGY GAME

Jon L. Gibson
LAS President-Elect

Fall is here and with it many thoughts turn toward new seasonal activities, including attending football games. It is also an appropriate time to take stock of the happenings of the preceding seasons, assess their impact, and determine where we are heading in the future. My analysis bears a strong resemblance to witnessing a football game.

We keep talking about firsts for Louisiana Archaeology and indeed more has been done for archaeology in the state during the past year and a half than in all previous years combined. These efforts have been primarily concerned with organization and program implementation areas. New federal and state antiquities legislation has been passed; federal agencies are responding admirably to new directives to conserve archaeological and historical resources; the Louisiana Archaeological Survey and Antiquities Commission was created and is now staffed and operational. Efforts are now being made to create a Council of Archaeologists which will serve as an advisory panel for the conduction and conduct of Louisiana archaeology. And the Louisiana Archaeological Survey was formed. All of these are absolutely essential to make sure that our children and our children's children will still have first-hand exposure to archaeological resources.

Despite these much desired advances, there has been oppressively little said about the thing that brought all of them into existence--the archaeological record itself. This is not a chicken and egg controversy. Planning of an organizational type done in advance of detailed consideration of the nature of the archaeological record runs the strong risk of being successful only

by accident, or to put it another way, of being irrelevant and unsuccessful. All of the programs I mentioned above are above all devices to record the archaeological presence. If there can be no consensus agreement on what constitutes the archaeological presence--what it consists of--and what are the most appropriate ways to record and preserve the archaeological record, then the most efficient organization in the world is an absolute waste of taxpayers' or members' monies. I am not suggesting that all archaeologists must restructure their interests, special knowledge, or skills to conform to a single delegated approach to archaeological recovery. This would be as unproductive as organizations without ties to the archaeological record. Archaeologists are a variable lot; simply saying one is an archaeologist is about as informative as using the word "car" to describe both a Volkswagon and a Cadillac Eldorado. Being an archaeologist (or calling oneself an archaeologist) is not a ticket which permits everyone to be seated along the 50-yard line; some should be seated on the 30, others should be restricted to the end zone, and a very few should not be allowed inside the stadium. Not until everyone understands the game should 50-yard line tickets be provided (and even then, they will have to be sold on opposite sides of the field!). We need to talk about the game; we need to decide soon about what we want to do about recovering comparable aspects of the archaeological record. If there are some who cannot or will not participate as intelligent observers, then we must exclude them. If we don't, someone who doesn't know anything about the game at all will make up all the rules for attending the archaeology game and will even tell us what we can and cannot see.

EDITOR'S PREFACE

Election of Officers. Our by-laws call for the election of a vice-president (president-elect) and a treasurer for 1976. After receiving suggestions from the LAS chapters and individual members and following much deliberation, the Executive Committee finally selected 4 nominees, 2 for president-elect and 2 for treasurer. These individuals were contacted by President Webb and all, except one of the nominees for treasurer, have expressed a willingness to serve if elected. All three of the gentlemen would make excellent officers and I know your decision is going to be a difficult one. Please mark the ballot attached to this newsletter and return before December 15, 1975 to: Marcus B. Mapp; 3710 Rapides; Monroe, Louisiana 71201. To aid in your decision a brief introductory resume' of each candidate is provided below.

1. HIRAM "PETE" GREGORY. Nominated for president-elect. Gregory, a native of Ferriday, and a distinguished graduate of LSU and SMU (Ph.D.), is an assistant professor of anthropology at Northwestern State University. Gregory has been active in Louisiana archaeology since his childhood days, is especially knowledgeable of central and northwestern Louisiana, and has been actively working with Louisiana's modern Indians lately. He has published widely on archaeology and ethnology (folk cultures).

2. SHERWOOD "WOODY" GAGLIANO. Nominated for president-elect. Gagliano, a native of New Orleans, received his Ph.D. from LSU, where he served for a number of years as a faculty member in the Coastal Studies section. Gagliano is now president of his own company, Coastal Environments, Inc., based in Baton Rouge. Gagliano, too, has been involved in Louisiana archaeology for many years, particularly of Louisiana's coastal zone and of the Lake Pontchartrain area, and has reported his work in a number of journal articles, monographs, and books. He founded the original LAS in 1961.

3. WILLIAM "BILL" BAKER. Nominated for treasurer. Baker, a native of Missouri, attended the University of Missouri. He is presently office manager for Louisiana Delta Plantation, a large agricultural company based at Jonesville, Louisiana. Baker has been active in Louisiana archaeology since the 1960's and has been personally responsible for discovering hundreds of sites in Catahoula Parish and preventing their destruction. He serves as president of the East-Central Chapter of the LAS and as chapter representative to the LAS executive committee. Baker has published in the LAS newsletter and in Louisiana Archaeology.

Treasurer Nominee Withdraws. Jack C Bonnin, currently serving as LAS treasurer, was again nominated for the office by the Executive Committee. Jack, unfortunately, has been advised by his doctor to decline the nomination. The Executive Committee regretfully accepts his withdrawal. It also extends to Jack its sincere wishes for good health and its heartfelt thanks for a job well done. The treasurer's office is one of the busiest in the Society; it has been especially so in this our first full-year of operation--every financial aspect of the Society had to be tended and all operational precedents were set; Jack has prepared all of our tax returns and was instrumental in finally achieving tax-exempt status for the organization. Yes, Jack has done a creditable job and the Society will always be indebted to him.

Annual Meeting of the Louisiana Archaeological Society. The 2nd annual meeting of the Louisiana Archaeological Society will be held at Northeast Louisiana University on January 24 - 25, 1976. The first session will begin at 9:30 A.M. and the registration table will be open at 8:30 A.M. The department of Geosciences will act as official sponsor; Marcus Mapp, LAS recording secretary and head of NLU department of Geosciences will be host; and Glenn and Lorraine Greene, NLU archaeologists, will serve as program chairmen and coordinators. The Northeast Louisiana Chapter of the LAS, Recca Jones, president, will serve as co-sponsor and official LAS liaison.

Motel arrangements for LAS members have been made with the Holiday Inn in Monroe. Members should write or call the motel to secure reservations.

Special sessions will be devoted to contributed papers, thematic symposia, Ouachita Basin Archaeology (Sunday morning), and business. Changes in by-laws may be considered during the business meeting. This is an official call for papers. Send abstracts to Glenn and Lorraine Greene, Department of Geosciences, Northeast Louisiana University, Monroe, Louisiana. Deadline for submission is December 1, 1975, and the Greene's inform me that acceptance will be on a first come, first serve basis. Presentations should be planned for 20 minutes or less. Presentations which run over 20 minutes will be interrupted.

Additional details about the meeting will be mailed prior to meeting. Make plans now to attend the meeting, hear some good presentations, and enjoy the good company. See yall in Monroe.

THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF POVERTY POINT
Clay Figurines and Bird-women
Clarence H. Webb

Many prehistoric cultures in the Americas have shown figurines of various kinds - stone, solid and hollow in baked clay, stick figures in dry western caves, and the elaborate kachina dolls of the Southwest, for example. They are known by at least 3000-2500 B.C., in the Valdivia culture of Ecuador. The outstanding development of baked clay figurines occurred in Mesoamerica, in Formative, Preclassic and Classic cultures. Initially they were solid and hand-molded, then hollow figurines and casting in molds appeared. The latter were turned out in enormous numbers.

Female figurines have been found world-wide and are generally thought to be symbols of fertility. They were used as household votive offerings to insure pregnancy and children, or scattered in the fields to insure abundant yield.

The sudden appearance of hand-molded, solid clay female figurines at the Poverty Point site apparently signals the advent of this trait in the Mississippi Valley. Subsequently, more elaborate clay figurines were produced during the next cultural climax, in Hopewell culture of the northern valley. The occurrence at Poverty Point at a time that parallels the manufacture of solid clay figurines in Olmec, in the Tehuacan Valley, then at Tlatilco and at Panuco on the Mexican Gulf Coast, is one of the strong evidences that Poverty Point people received cultural stimuli from Mesoamerica.

The collections from Poverty Point that I have seen include 133 clay figurines or fragments. Sixteen are whole, 10 are heads, and 107 are torsos or torso fragments. Five have been found at Claiborne (one whole), two at Beau Rivage near Lafayette (personal communication from Jon Gibson), and one each from Norman and Tackett in the Yazoo Basin.

These little figurines are typically 3 to 6 cm in height; the tiniest is 2.2 cm and the largest, a torso fragment, was probably 15 cm in height. They depict seated females with rounded-off thighs, reasonably life-like trunks, absent or vaguely indicated arms, but with facial features formed by finger modeling and punctations (Figure 1). Occasionally breasts or pregnancy are indicated (Figure 1c); rarely, decorations appear (Figure 1b). Like the Mesoamerican figurines, hair clefts or coiffures sometimes show (Figure 1d).

Several of the whole figurines have poorly formed faces with prominent beaks and human bodies. We call them the Bird-women of Poverty Point (Figure 1e). There is so much bird symbolism or decoration in Poverty Point culture that the bird-women may have had some special significance.

A trait of added interest is suggested by the numerous figurines that have the head snapped off. This is much more frequent than should have happened by accident and we suggest that it was an intentional trait. Possibly the figurines were blamed if the wives failed to have babies or the gardens failed to produce; it was probably easier to snap off the figurine's head and make a new one than to throw out the wife and get a new one.

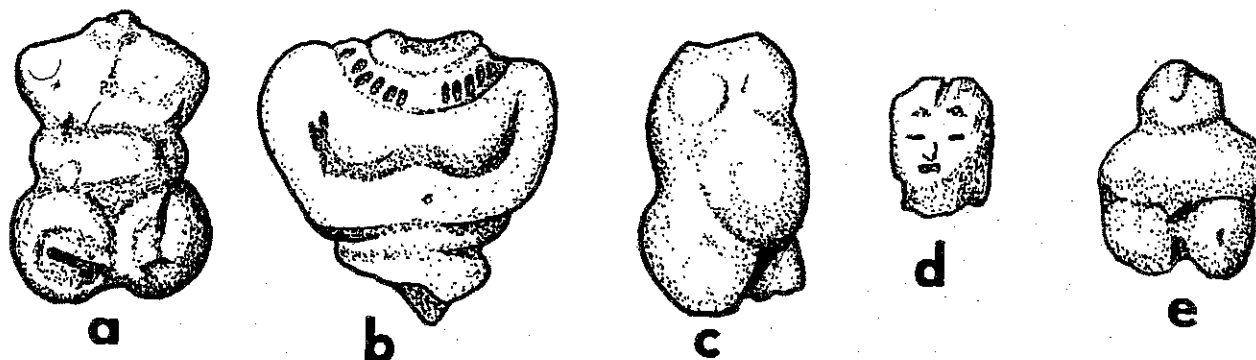


Figure 1. Figurines from Carl Alexander collection, Poverty Point. a well modeled torso; b necklace simulation; c showing breasts and pregnancy; d snapped-off head showing cleft and coiffure; e "bird-woman". Full size.

CURRENT RESEARCH

Excavations at Poverty Point (16WC5). Under the direction of William G. Haag, Alumni Professor at LSU and State Archaeologist, excavations were conducted at the Poverty Point site from June through August, 1975. LSU students and field supervisor Deborah Woodiel worked near the center of the plaza area, with additional test pits placed on the east slope of Ridge 1, southwest sector. The purpose of excavating in the plaza area was to investigate further the nature of "postmold" features discovered during the 1973 field season.

A number of these features were discovered, but their size, depth, and distribution as determined from the limited excavations poses more questions than answers. More extensive fieldwork is necessary before functional hypotheses can be demonstrated.

In addition to these features, several others of interest were unearthed. Two regularly shaped cavities extending into the buried A horizon were discovered. One yielded a large amount of charcoal. The other contained charcoal and about forty-five Poverty Point objects. Most of these were whole, and all were of the cylindrical grooved type. No other cultural remains existed in association with this cooking pit and no macroremains of fauna or flora were discernible in either of the two deposits.

Laboratory analysis will hopefully provide additional significant information. Pollen, radiocarbon, and various soil tests are planned for the coming year.

NOTES AND NEWS

Louisiana Archaeological Survey and Antiquities Commission Adopts Rules and Regulations. The date September 10, 1975 will be recorded as an important milestone in the development of a coordinated program of archaeology for the State of Louisiana. On that day, after extensive interaction with numerous people interested in the state's past and after holding a public hearing, the Louisiana Archaeological Survey and Antiquities Commission formally adopted rules and regulations concerning the conservation, salvage, and study of state historic and prehistoric resources. The rules and regulations implement the state's antiquities law (LRS 41:1601 through LRS 41:1613) in much the same manner as income tax guidelines supplement the basic internal revenue law. They became legal and binding on September 20, 1975 upon publication in the Louisiana Register.

The rules and regulations are divided into seven chapters. The longest chapter, "Regulations," provides guidelines for the study, identification, evaluation, excavation, salvage, recovery, and preservation of historic and prehistoric resources. The regulations identify the requirement for a contract for survey and salvage to investigate archaeological sites on any land, public or private, which has been properly designated a State Archaeological Landmark. The regulations also define the purposes of contracts, a minimum standard of investigation, types of contracts, qualifications of contractors, application procedures, and the execution of contracts.

Chapter II, "Bylaws," establishes a set of provisions which govern the conduct of business by the Commission. The bylaws explain the function of the State Archaeologist's Office as the administrative and operational arm of the Commission.

Supplemental regulations, entitled "Registry," define and create a Registry of State Archaeological Landmarks. These regulations explain the purpose of Landmarks and the several procedures by which archaeological sites on state owned lands, public lands, and private lands can be designated and established as Landmarks.

Another supplemental chapter, entitled "Files and Custodianship," establishes the central state archaeological survey files. The supplemental regulations define the contents of such files, access to the files, and the custodianship and use of state owned antiquities.

Chapter V outlines a long range coordinated program of archaeology for the State of Louisiana. The inventory of objectives and actions includes a number of activities in which L.A.S. participation can be a very important factor.

Supplemental regulations contained in Chapter VI pertain to the location and recovery of sunken treasure in Louisiana waters. Due to the potentially high monetary value of the objects that conceivably will be recovered by underwater exploration, additional contract requirements are set out and title to the recovered remains is clarified.

The final chapter deals with Indian burial sites. These regulations recognize the special nature of Indian burial sites as archaeological landmarks and the need to protect places of interment of human remains from wanton disturbance or desecration. Investigations of Indian burial sites and the removal of burial furniture from Indian graves will be controlled by the Commission through contracts, so that such activity is limited to that which is archaeologically necessary.

In all, the newly adopted rules and regulations provide an organized structure through which the state's historic and prehistoric resources can be protected at the same time as they are scientifically investigated by persons and groups representing a broad spectrum of archaeological interests and experience. Copies of the rules and regulations are being distributed to all L.A.S. chapter presidents. It is suggested that each chapter select a review committee to study the regulations and identify those areas which will effect local activities. In addition, the Assistant State Archaeologist, Alan Toth, will be visiting L.A.S. chapters during the coming months to explain the rules and regulations in greater detail and to answer questions.

Alan Toth
Assistant State Archaeologist
Louisiana Archaeological Survey and
Antiquities Commission

New State Archaeological Positions in Louisiana. Since 1974 Philip "Duke" Rivet has been employed by the Louisiana Department of Highways filling the position of Highway Archaeologist. This position is contained within the Highway Department's Environmental Unit. Duke is responsible for conducting archaeological surveys for new highway routes or for changes in old routes. Before construction begins, Duke evaluates the archaeological resources of the area involved to insure the protection of these resources.

On September 2, 1975 a new staff member joined the Art, Historical, and Cultural Preservation Agency. Dottie Gibbens, Staff Archaeologist, has been charged with protection of both prehistoric and historic sites of Louisiana. She conducts and evaluates surveys, sees that necessary cultural assessments are made, and nominates archaeological sites for the National Register of Historic Places.

Laura Wooldridge also recently became a staff member of the Art, Historical, and Cultural Preservation Agency. She holds the M.A. degree from Tulane University in art history and her special field is American architecture. Her expertise in architectural history will aid greatly in nominating sites for the National Register of Historic Places and in evaluating federal grants given through the National Register. In addition, she plans a program of community education in historic preservation.

The Louisiana Archaeological Survey and Antiquities Commission has added a new staff member, Deborah Woodiel. As Staff Archaeologist she will aid in the assembly and updating of the central state archaeological files. She will also conduct surveys and excavations, nominate sites to be State Archaeological Landmarks, and aid in recommending and evaluating cultural assessments.

McNeese State University welcomed a new faculty member this fall, Dr. G. Harry Stopp. Dr. Stopp holds a doctorate in geography from LSU and a master's degree in anthropology from the University of Alabama. As Assistant Professor of Anthropology, he will be teaching courses in geography and anthropology and he also hopes to actively pursue his interest in Louisiana archaeology.

Deborah Woodiel
Louisiana Archaeological Survey and
Antiquities Commission

LAS Member Appointed as Staff Archaeologist for COE. Brent Smith, M.A., Northwestern State University, has recently been employed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Louisville District, as staff archaeologist. His new address is: Environmental Resources Branch, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Louisville District, P.O. Box 59, Louisville, Kentucky 40201.

Lafayette Natural History Museum and Planetarium Exhibit. From October 1 - 31, 1975 the Lafayette Natural History Museum and Planetarium is featuring an exhibit of Louisiana Indian basketry. About 130, 19th and 20th century, baskets of the Chitimacha, Coushatta, and Choctaw tribes will be on display. The baskets are on loan from several outstanding private collections as well as the Louisiana State Museum. Never before in Louisiana has such an outstanding collection of old, beautiful baskets been assembled. It is well worth seeing.

On October 24 - 25 - 26, 1975, the Museum will sponsor the Native Louisiana Crafts Festival, featuring among others, basket-weaving by Coushatta and Chitimacha craftswomen.

CHAPTER NEWS

Imperial Calcasieu Chapter. The Southwest Louisiana Archaeological Society was invited to hold informative classes for three days during the summer vacation for the Camp Fire Girls at Camp Wi Ta Wentin near Lake Charles. The purpose was to acquaint the girls and counselors with the archaeological potentials and pre-history of the Lake Charles area. The camp is on an extensive archaeological site and it is hoped that, if permission is granted for excavation, the Southwest Louisiana Archaeological Society will be able to not only excavate, but also to help educate the girls in proper techniques of locating and reporting sites and site-care. Any artifacts found would, after identification and cataloging, be returned to the camp for the purpose of display and education.

The first class was held on June 6, 1975 at the camp by Mrs. Lou Harris and Mrs. Myrna Fleming. The girls ranged in age from 8 to 12 years old. They were shown slides of artifacts and sites and stories of the Attakapas were told or read. Included in the visual aids was an extensive artifact display and a field trip. There was great interest shown by both the girls and their counselors.

This program was introduced through the combined efforts of Mrs. Mona Riley, retired Executive Director; Mrs. H. M. Hollins, current Executive Director; Miss Sandra Maddox and Miss Emma Hughes, all of the Sowela Area Council Camp Fire Girls, and Mrs. Lou Harris, of the Southwest Louisiana Archaeological Society Education Committee.

The SWLAS Education Committee is in a young stage but is making efforts to work with interested groups and individuals in the area by providing speakers to interested groups, assistance to other areas in forming local societies and, in general, to acquaint the public with the aims and purposes of archaeology.

John T. Toomey of Chicago, a member of the faculty of the Department of Defense Overseas Dependent Schools, was the guest speaker for the July meeting of the Southwest Louisiana Archaeological Society. He discussed pottery similarities found in the coastal areas of Peru and those excavated in Japan, as well as ceramic types in the far east. The meeting was well attended.

Mr. Vance Plauche donated funds to the society to purchase memberships from the LAS for the Frazar Library at McNeese State University and the Lake Charles Public Library.

McNeese will offer introductory anthropology courses this fall. Dr. George Stopp will be the instructor for these courses.

Lou Harris
LAS Representative

PUBLICATIONS ON LOUISIANA ARCHAEOLOGY

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Hunter, Donald G.

1975a Coushatta Basketry in the Rand Collection. The Florida Anthropologist 28(1):27-37.

1975b Functional Analyses of Poverty Point Objects. The Florida Anthropologist 28(2):57-71.

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- 1975 The Use of the Contemporary Ecological Model in Archaeological Research: An Example from Northwest Louisiana. Mississippi Archaeology 10(7):6-21.

Webb, Clarence H.

- 1975 (letter to Sam McGahey in response to "Where Did Odd-style Projectile Points Come From?" by Ben Cessna, and the accompanying editorial comment). Mississippi Archaeology 10(6):5-6.
- 1975 Dugout Canoes and Adzes in the Prehistoric Southeast. Mississippi Archaeology 10(6):7. (Reprinted from Newsletter of the Louisiana Archaeological Society 2(1):7).