

AMERICAN ANTIQUITY

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EDITORIALS

BON VOYAGE . . . It is with pleasure and relief, not unmixed with a certain amount of trepidation born of our fervent desire to please the membership of this Society and to see its journal start out on an even keel, that we launch this first issue of *AMERICAN ANTIQUITY*. The Editorial Board earnestly shares with you, we hope, the ambition to make of this journal a publication of outstanding interest and sterling scientific worth. Moreover, we believe that it will become an instrument of value in coördinating the research efforts of all sincere students of American archaeology, and in greatly encouraging an improved understanding and friendly coöperation between such students, professional and amateur.

It should be readily apparent that the Editorial Board can not hope to realize this ambition without the intelligent support of the membership. The editors are nothing more than your agents in this matter. It is their duty to develop and adhere to wisely sympathetic policies and standards, and to guard constantly the scientific value and reputation of the journal. But it lies with the membership of the Society to submit to the editors constructive criticism, matter for publication, and the active support which alone can insure the life and worth of such a publication.

With confidence that you are earnestly disposed to support our efforts, we shall expect a number of things from each of you. First, we hope that you, having subscribed to membership yourself, will show this copy to those of your friends whose interests are seriously inclined towards the study of American archaeology. We trust that this may encourage them, too, to become members of the Society. An increased membership will render possible a larger and better journal. Second, we rely upon you to assume the responsibility of collecting in your locality any items of archaeological news that may be of interest to other

members of the Society, and of sending these items to the Editor, or to the appropriate Assistant Editor. Third, we invite you to contribute to our "Correspondence" section such letters or discussions pertinent to the subject of archaeology, factual or controversial, as may reflect your interests and experience. No man's opinions are better than the facts arrayed in support of them, and it should be borne in mind that science thrives on criticism, and languishes on an exclusive diet of indulgence. Fourth, if you are inclined to be adversely critical of any policy or action of your Editorial Board, tell us all about it. Your correction will then, no doubt, have a more chastening and salutary effect than if confided to a neighbor or permitted to fester imprisoned in your mind. My family physician says that medicinal remedies are most efficacious when applied directly to the seat of trouble.

It seems appropriate that this auspicious occasion should bring to you a brief editorial statement from each of the Society's officers. Your Editor has hereby delivered himself of the gist of his more important reactions. He now relinquishes the typewriter to his superiors and sincerely appreciated co-workers.

W. C. MCKERN, *Editor*

GETTING DOWN TO FACTS . . . Time brings changes and new attitudes. It has been so with American archaeology during the past score of years. The older emphasis of gathering great quantities of archaeological material for its own sake has given way to that of selecting archaeological sites as specific problems and gathering data cumulatively for the purpose of interpretation.

Only by pursuing the latter method may archaeology be built up as a deductive science and only from the body of facts so brought together may we hope to shed any adequate light upon America's prehistory. Museums of science thus prefer to present their exhibits of aboriginal artifacts as evidences of certain conclusions rather than as a mere excuse to fill cases with rare and artistic forms. The mountain of arrowheads from hither and yon has given way to an interpretation of the meaning and significance of one.

These facts are generally known but until now the student primarily interested in archaeology has lacked the organized means of stating them. Certain it is that effort has been scattered and methods individualistic.

Through the Society for American Archaeology it is hoped that

standards will become more uniform. Through the publication of *AMERICAN ANTIQUITY* it is hoped that literature may be provided for a more uniform nomenclature, for culture classification and for the common facts and methods needful for concerted action. The Society and the publication provide a forum for discussion as well as for statements of fact.

There are many things that we hope to gain by the support accorded the publication and the Society. One of the most important of these is the conservation of sources. The fact that anyone with a spade has had the right to excavate ancient sites and hawk relics as a commercial venture has had baneful results. It is impossible to guess how many unique sites, key locations and individual objects of surpassing interest have been lost or destroyed by inexpert hands. One of the first efforts of our Society should be to place in the possession of every amateur printed facts that will assist in guiding his attempts at field work. Unless this is done our field of operation will become progressively destroyed and, once destroyed, there is no repair. As a society we now have in our hands an organized means of overcoming the unhappy practises of former years. We should now use every effort to exercise the power that is ours. It is an obligation as important as our desire to further explore.

ARTHUR C. PARKER, *President*

MORE AND BETTER DATA . . . I hold in my hand an exquisite specimen of the flint-chippers art; the form, the curious lengthwise grooves tell me it is no less than a Folsom dart-point, a relic of that distant day when primitive Americans hunted the mammoth and the giant broad-horned bison. But *where* was the choice specimen found? Alas, nobody knows. It came in an old "arrowhead collection" gathered here, there and everywhere, without a scrap of data, by a Mr. Soanso, now deceased.

Doubtless the collector himself knew where each treasured piece was found, but when he passed on, this information died with him, and so died also any value the collection might have had for posterity. If he had only marked on the specimen itself the names of the town and the state, we would have had at least an item of information as to the extent of territory occupied by the mysterious hunters of long-extinct beasts. If he had numbered the dart point, and against that number in his catalogue had written, let us say, "Found in an ash bed in a cut

bank ten feet down from the surface with a lot of broken big bones at such and such a place," what a clue we would have had to a very early camp site that might well prove an archaeological treasure house.

If he had photographed the dart-point in place amid the bones of mammoth, extinct bison, camel or ground-sloth, with careful measurements, descriptions, samples of the surrounding ashes and soil, and of the accompanying bones, we would have had a real scientific record of great value in reconstructing the remote ancient history of our country.

Let us start cataloguing our own collections this very day. We may have no Folsoms, but our little collection, provided it is catalogued, will have some value to the world after we depart. And nobody, not even an archaeologist, can expect to live forever.

M. R. HARRINGTON, *Vice-President*

AT YOUR SERVICE . . . During the last few years, there has been a constantly growing interest in the history of the American Indian as revealed by materials found through archaeological work. A good deal of information has been obtained from material found on the surfaces of old village sites, and excavations carried on by many institutions have helped us in translating this fascinating story. At frequent intervals, new discoveries are announced in the newspapers and in weeklies telling another detail of Indian history. Only a few years ago, the discovery that tree-rings could provide an exact chronology brought the story of the Southwestern Indians into history. More recently, the large number of excavations carried on under the auspices of the Tennessee Valley Authority have done much to clarify the records the Indians left behind them in that region. Last fall, government men found a village site which had been occupied by the ancient hunters of extinct bison. And so it goes. Each of these details is interesting, and many people want to know more about their significance and the place they fill in the entire story.

The professional archaeologist is, of course, better acquainted with the history of the Indians than those who make archaeology an avocation only. We feel that American Indian archaeology has many friends, and we are anxious to become acquainted with them. At the suggestion of one of them, the idea of a national Society for American Archaeology came into being. Its purpose is to make it possible for everyone, professional and non-professional alike, to become acquainted with the story in which all are interested. The Society has been so organized that the

office of the Secretary-Treasurer may serve as a center for this interest and as a means by which the members of the Society may be kept in touch with activities and brought into contact with the men and the problems with which they are most concerned.

In this first issue of *AMERICAN ANTIQUITY*, the quarterly journal of our Society, I wish to extend greetings to all friends of American archaeology, and hope that each of you will take advantage of the services this office is prepared to render in bringing you into more direct contact with that phase of archaeology in which you are most interested.

CARL E. GUTHE, *Secretary-Treasurer*