

BIOLOGY

NATURE RAMBLINGS

By FRANK THONE



Pumpkin

After the turkey has been stripped to his framework and the cranberry sauce and sweet potatoes and all the rest of the "fixin's" have departed with him, the Thanksgiving feast is appropriately rounded off with pumpkin pie. Even the least thoughtful of small boys will have left a corner somewhere into which he can drive a wedge of it.

The fruit pie is a typically American dessert, and the pumpkin is a typically American pie material. Europeans know it not; they are abashed and embarrassed in its presence. There is a tale that a member of Sara Bernhardt's entourage once informed the great diva that pumpkin pie is "the American national cake." But it is as natural for an American to demolish pumpkin pie as it is for him to turn a deaf ear—or radio dial—to patriotic orators.

The typical farm scene, of orange-yellow pumpkins littered among dun-colored cornshocks, was American while the Pilgrim Fathers were still Englishmen. For the Indians cultivated corn and pumpkins together exactly as we do today, and when the white men came they learned this agricultural trick from the red men. Though there is little doubt that pumpkins originated on this continent, they are not known anywhere in the wild state. Like the corn they grow with, the Indians had them in cultivation but knew nothing of their source when the white man first arrived. Unlike corn, however, pumpkins have relatives all over the world, and the modern varieties have become much mixed with foreign stocks from Asia and Africa, which give us our amazing assortment of squashes, melons and gourds. But the yellow pumpkin that makes our pies is still of straight American ancestry.

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ANTHROPOLOGY

Ancient Man in America

A little flint arrow point, such as primitive men used in hunting game, has been accepted by a number of scientists as real evidence that America was inhabited when mammoths and mastodons roamed this country, in the pleistocene period, at least 15,000 or 20,000 years ago. The arrow point was discovered beside a buffalo skeleton at Folsom, New Mexico, about two months ago, and it has remained untouched while experts on American Indians and experts on geology have visited the scene to express their opinions as to what story it really tells.

This is the first time that a tool used by man has been found beside a prehistoric animal and has remained undisturbed for careful scientific examination, according to Dr. F. H. H. Roberts, Jr., of the Bureau of American Ethnology, who has just returned from investigation of the remarkable discovery.

"It has been said that prairie dogs burrowing into the ground can push an object into old, deep layers of earth, where much older objects lie," said Dr. Roberts, "But in this case there are four distinct layers over the bones of the buffalo and the arrow. There are no prairie dog holes in the vicinity, and the layers are entirely untouched.

"The arrow lies close to a rib bone of the buffalo, in such a way as to indicate that it was in the animal at the time of death."

Four other arrow points were also found and bones of eight buffaloes were counted altogether in the pit, but some of this other material was moved in early scientific study of the site. The buffaloes were apparently caught in a bog while being pursued and sunk there to die.

The arrow points are beautifully chipped, Dr. Roberts reports. A unique feature is a hollow groove down the center of each flint. In the recent war, bayonets were grooved to cause greater bleeding, and it may be that the Stone Age Americans had this same idea.

The first discovery of prehistoric animals at this site was made two years ago by a cattle inspector who was passing the ravine and saw bones sticking out of the bank. He recognized them as buffalo bones, and sent specimens to J. D. Figgins at the Museum of Natural History, in Denver. Since then, Mr. Figgins and his assistants have made further discoveries and the site is still con-

sidered likely to yield further evidence of the same sort.

"There is no question that the arrow and the buffalo most recently found there came there together," Dr. Roberts concludes. "It remains for the geologists to determine the age of the deposits in which they occur."

Dr. O. P. Hay, paleontologist of the U. S. National Museum, who visited Folsom this summer and has examined some of the prehistoric buffalo bones found there, considers this discovery "one of the most certain pieces of evidence produced that man existed in America in the pleistocene period." From this and other similar finds Dr. Hay says that it seems impossible to believe that man has been in America only a few thousand years.

The buffalo bones are those of an extinct species, somewhat larger than modern buffaloes, and they may turn out to be a kind different from any heretofore known.

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PSYCHOLOGY

Origin of Speech Lost

Quotation from *SPEECH: ITS FUNCTION AND DEVELOPMENT*—Grace Audrus de Laguna—Yale University Press (\$5).

No existing culture and no existing language is anywhere near primitive. The language of the lowest savages is ages old and bears in its structure the marks of an age-old evolution. The former hope of philologists, that they might by the comparison of different types of languages be able to place them in a developmental order, and so to trace a curve of evolution which could be followed back to its origin, has been wholly abandoned. Indeed, so far has the pendulum swung in the other direction, that a careful anthropologist like Boas not only denies that any language is superior to any other, but also seems to doubt that any existing language is more primitive in its structure than any other. We may be able in the future, from the now rapidly accumulating archaeological remains of early man, to reconstruct primitive culture in its essential outlines; but primitive language, unfortunately, leaves no record, being limited to the winged word, eked out perhaps by the no less fleeting gesture. It seems beyond the limits of the most sanguine hope to suppose that we shall ever have any direct evidence as to how primitive men spoke in the dawn of culture.

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