

Ancient Man in America

Anthropology

New evidence that human beings may have lived on this continent near the close of the Great Ice Age has been found in a cave full of ancient bone deposits in the lower slope of Bishop's Cap Peak in southwestern New Mexico, according to William Alanson Bryan of the Los Angeles Museum.

The discovery consists of the fragments of two human skulls and other human skeletal remains, mixed with the bones of many extinct mammals and birds in the sandy deposit that floors the cave. The human bones were so deeply buried and so intimately associated with the bones of extinct species of horse, camel, sloth and cave-bear, that a later intrusive interment seems highly unlikely.

The find was due to the enthusiasm of a well-trained amateur excavator, Roscoe P. Conkling of El Paso. Mr. Conkling, whose work for a smelting and refining company has taken him afield a great deal, has occupied his spare time with scientific excavations. Recently he arranged with four other men to locate and make preliminary diggings in any caves near El Paso that might be expected to yield fossil bones. Spurred in addition by a legend that the Bishop's Cap cave contained buried Spanish treasure, these men selected that place as their first venture and began digging. Coming

upon bones, they thought they might be those of a mule belonging to the old-time treasure hidiers, and dug more feverishly than ever.

Then they turned up fragments of the first skull, at a depth of twelve feet. Realizing at last the nature of their discovery, they reported to Mr. Conkling, who took charge of the further excavation. The second find of skull fragments was made at a depth of eighteen feet, and ten feet distant from the first. Directly between the two was the almost complete skeleton of an extinct ground sloth. All the bone material so far taken out has been removed to Los Angeles, but there is still a great deal of unexcavated earth left in the cave, on which work will be continued.

It is expected that this newest clue to man's antiquity in America will add fresh fuel to the fires of controversy that have raged about the discovery of human bones and stone implements associated with the remains of extinct animal species in other places. The most notable of these earlier finds were made at three sites in the Southwest by Harold J. Cook and J. D. Figgins of the Colorado Museum of Natural History, and at two sites in Florida by an expedition under the direction of Dr. J. W. Gidley of the U. S. National Museum. In all these places stone implements were found associated with the bones of extinct animals; in one or two instances directly underneath the bones. At Vero, one of the Florida sites, a crushed human skull, practically complete, was

unearthed in the same stratum of earth that yielded bones and teeth of mastodon and mammoth.

There are two possible interpretations that can be placed on such discoveries of human relics associated with the bones of extinct animals, which have usually been regarded as belonging to the time of the Great Ice Age—a hundred thousand years ago or such a matter. One theory is that man appeared on this continent that long ago. The other is that man came much more recently, but that these animals survived, in the South at least, much longer than they have been given credit for. Whichever view finally prevails, it is expected that there will be some lively debates at scientific meetings during the coming autumn and winter.

Science News-Letter, August 10, 1929

National Park in Scotland

Geography

The wild Scottish Highlands are losing their wildness at such an alarming rate that a movement has been started for the creation of a national park in some typical portion of the Highlands as yet untouched by civilization. Already many of the highest, and once the wildest, places in Scotland have become easily accessible by motor. The main object of establishing a Highland park would be to preserve the solitude and mystery of the high and wild places of nature—to keep a portion of the Highlands in its primitive condition both as regards scenery and the fauna and flora.

The first step in the project for acquiring a national park for Scotland was taken at Glasgow early in June, when a conference of representatives of leading Scottish societies considered the matter and arranged to form a National Trust for Scotland, for the purpose of acquiring the necessary land. Already the support of the National Trust of England has been promised. At the Glasgow meeting a committee was appointed to examine further into the possibilities of the project, and to report at a later meeting. Science News-Letter, August 10, 1929

Heel Print Traps Spider

Entomology

A hole in the sand made by the high heel of a woman walking along the water's edge near Chesapeake Beach, Maryland, was the trap in which Herbert Barber, of the Smithsonian Institution of Washington, found a very rare tarantula known as the "Lost Atypus".

This species of spider, the scientific name for which is *Atypus bicolor*, is a velvety jet-black and the legs are bright orange. Only two specimens had ever been caught by scientists previously. One of these was found a few years ago at Plummer's Island, Maryland.

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