

ARCHAEOLOGY

# Rosetta Stone of Prehistoric Mississippi Valley Found

## Small Bowl and Other Louisiana Discoveries May Link Shadowy Mound Builders With Indians of Recent Times

**D**IGGING into an Indian mound at Marksville, La., archaeologists have found a "Rosetta Stone" of American prehistory, and evidence which may at last link the mysterious and shadowy Indian Mound Builders with Indian tribes of recent times. The discoveries are the result of a cooperative venture between the Smithsonian Institution, the city of Marksville, and the Emergency Relief Administration of Louisiana.

Frank M. Setzler, archaeologist of the Smithsonian Institution, has just returned from Marksville, where he directed the mound excavations at the city's invitation. Crews of 50 to 75 men drawn from the city's unemployed assisted in the project of exploring three Indian mounds and reconstructing them to their original ancient appearance. The mounds and a curved line of earthworks are features of a city park development.

The object which Mr. Setzler likens to a Rosetta Stone is a small bowl of unusual shape and intricate decoration. The Rosetta Stone of the Nile bore the same inscription in known and unknown writing, and thus Egyptologists learned to read the hieroglyphics of Egypt. The Mississippi Valley's "Rosetta Stone" bears two kinds of art designs—known and unknown. One is the art style of the well-known Hopewell Mound Builder culture that flourished in the Mississippi Valley around Ohio. The other is an art style new to archaeologists. It had been seen on a few objects found in the South before, but it was like an unknown language, in that no one knew definitely what sort of people made such art or where they belonged in the prehistory of the South. Finding the known and unknown art combined on one bowl is pronounced convincing evidence that there was a southern variation of the Hopewell culture which existed contemporaneously with it and was closely allied.

The bowl almost looks as though the potter had made two generous halves of vases, each decorated in a distinctive

manner, and then had joined them in a twin form.

One mound explored by Mr. Setzler at Marksville was a burial mound, which originally contained some 30 graves. Parts of some skeletons, almost completely disintegrated, were found, and most of these were remains of young children.

The manner of burial was quite distinct from the tombs in Ohio's Hopewell mounds, Mr. Setzler found. A platform of clay was built by the Indians. After several years a pit was dug in the center for the graves. Then a vault of vertically placed logs was built around the pit and roofed with small oak limbs and layers of bark and wild cane. After that, the vault was covered by the mound to a height of 20 feet. Only the imprints of the logs and bark and other construction features remain to show the unusual construction of this ancient tomb. A few Mound Builders were buried in this central vault. Oth-

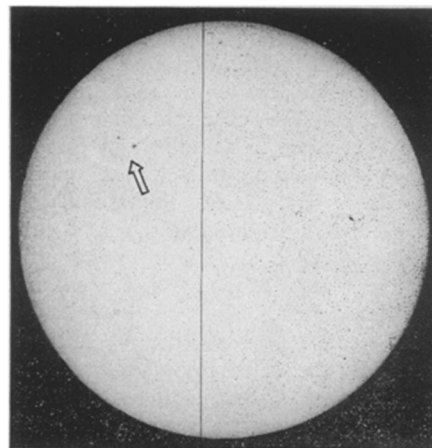
ASTRONOMY

# Observations Show New Sunspot Cycle Begun

**T**HE NEW cycle of sunspots has now begun.

Dr. Seth B. Nicholson of Mt. Wilson Observatory, Calif., has observed two spots opposite in magnetic polarity to the old procession of gigantic disturbances on the sun that have held sway for the past ten and a quarter years. This was announced by the Carnegie Institution of Washington, of which the Mt. Wilson Observatory is a part.

One spot was seen on the last three days of October, while another very small one was observed Oct. 10. It is now the time of sunspot minimum. The sun was nearly inactive in July and August, slightly active in September and



SUNSPOTS

*This group of spots, indicated by the arrow, is the most important observed at the U. S. Naval Observatory in several months and may belong to the new cycle. This photograph was taken Oct. 29; the black line is a north-south marker.*

ers were buried in shallow pits dug in the raised platform around the vault. In all cases the bodies had been placed upon and covered with bark.

The important vase with dual-decorations was found in this mound. Other contents included broken platform pipes, additional pieces of pottery with the southern and northern style of art design, and a single fragment of copper, perhaps a bracelet, which shows that these southern Indians like the Hopewell people had the cultural advantage of using copper. (Turn Page)

nearly inactive in October. The new family of spots now beginning will continue to troop across the sun's face for nearly eleven years.

J. D. Phenix, astronomer on the staff of the U. S. Naval Observatory, Washington, who photographs the sun about noon every day when the weather is clear enough, observed a group of spots near the solar meridian on Oct. 26, which were not seen Oct. 25. Following a parallel about eight degrees north of the sun's equator, they moved slowly toward the edge of the sun, at the same time dwindling in size, and appeared last in the daily photograph taken Nov. 1.

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