

GEOGRAPHY

# Redfern Probably Not Alive

## Ethnologist Returning From Venezuela Reports Area Has Been Approached by White Miners and Farmers

"IN MY opinion it is extremely unlikely that Paul Redfern will ever be found alive."

This is the verdict of Dr. Vincenzo Petruccio of the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, expressed in an exclusive interview with Science Service on his return from Venezuela.

Dr. Petruccio headed a joint expedition of the University Museum, Columbia University and the Latin American Institute, to study the Guajiro Indians.

While Dr. Petruccio on this expedition did not visit the exact country in which Redfern has been reported alive, yet not only is he familiar with the jungle and Indians of South America, but he has also discussed Redfern's fate with people in the region.

The territory that is supposed to hold the mystery of the unfortunate aviator's fate, the man who eight years ago left Brunswick, Georgia, for Rio de Janeiro and who was lost, is wild and unmapped, according to Dr. Petruccio. Strangely enough, the world depression and rise in the price of gold, Dr. Petruccio said, are forcing white men into this country from the north in search of gold, and at the same time forcing white men out of the country to the west, where there were farms. Unable to make farms pay in these times, their owners are abandoning them, and the land is reverting to the Indians of the jungle.

### Highly Organized

The men who are seeking gold include not only the unscrupulous adventurers always found seeking new frontiers and fortune but also highly organized companies employing geologists and airplanes in prospecting. To one of these latter men, a man of exceedingly good reputation, the Indians had on one of the prospecting trips, shown a piece of airplane fabric and told a story of a plane being in a tree. This probably was Redfern's plane.

Knowing the Indians of the region, and the country itself, Dr. Petruccio feels that, if Redfern were alive, in eight years he would have come out of the jungle.

While these Indians are still little known to white men, and are hostile, in a measure, to each other, Dr. Petruccio says that they would most probably not attack a single white man who was helpless among them, and they would assist such a man out of their country.

The strongest argument, by far, against Redfern's being alive, Dr. Petruccio stated, is the fact that Felix Cardona, a Spaniard, passed through the very country in which Redfern is supposed to be, in 1930.

### Indians Trusted Him

Cardona made three geographical expeditions through this country, sponsored by a wealthy man, A. Jahn. So great was the confidence displayed by the Indians in Cardona, that at one place they waited two years for his return. Cardona found the map of the region greatly in error. Even mountain ranges were misplaced on the present maps.

Surely, reasons Dr. Petruccio, the Indians would have told Cardona about any white man living in their midst, be-

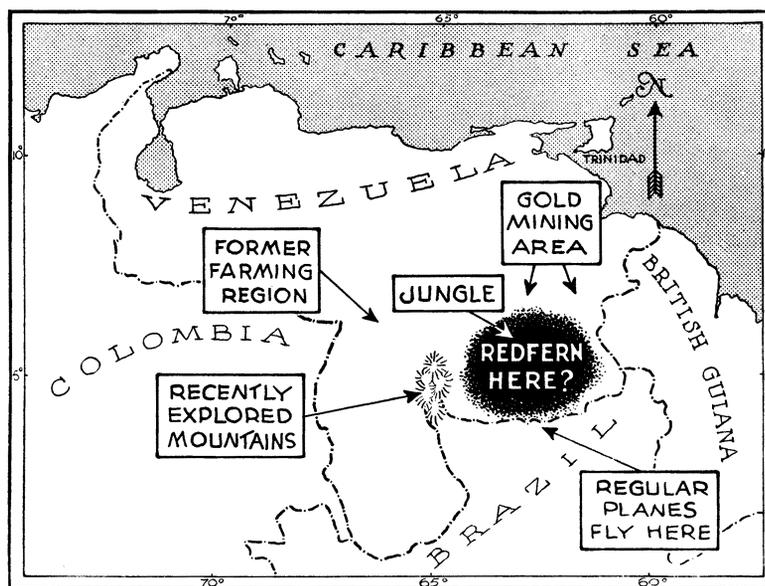
cause they showed absolute faith and confidence in Cardona; in fact, he traveled amongst them alone for years. Yet Cardona makes no mention of any story regarding Redfern having been told him.

### Nomadic Tribes

Dr. Petruccio also points out that these Indian tribes are nomadic, and at the very best semi-nomadic. It would be extremely difficult to find a tribe. Dr. Petruccio also feels that had Redfern been alive he could have come out of the country, because Cardona, for one, has gone in and out three times, alone.

Airplanes are unusual but not weirdly so to these Indians, because for years the Brazilian-Venezuelan Boundary Commission has been working near this region, using planes in an effort to fix definitely the boundary line. The Indians, for the most part, have either seen or heard of planes.

The plight of Redfern, or rather his fate, Dr. Petruccio points out, shows the extreme hazard of the direct straight-line air route over the jungles to the great cities of South America. While the route is shorter, the dangers are great, so the air-lines still follow the coast. Di Pine-



### CLOSING IN ON REDFERN

*Is Paul Redfern alive in this region, where Indians have displayed a fragment believed to be part of his wrecked plane? "Very doubtful he lives," says Dr. Vincenzo Petruccio, just returned from Venezuela. With gold miners, farmers, explorers, and aviators around, definite news of a white captive would have surely leaked out.*

do, Italian aviator, flew over this section successfully.

There are cases on record where the Indians have held white men prisoners, Dr. Petruccio points out, but none of these are of recent date. The lure of gold is taking men into this jungle deeper and deeper, and some day more may be learned of Redfern's fate; in fact his plane wreck may be found, but Dr. Petruccio feels that there is small chance indeed that he is alive.

*Science News Letter, November 23, 1935*

## CHEMISTRY

## Tarred Roads Spoil Wine Taste, is Claim

**S**URFACING roads through vineyard regions, by the hot tar process, brings about bad flavor in the wine, is the claim advanced by German vintners. The tar vapors, that fill the air while the road work is going on, condense on the grapes, and tar particles settle on them out of the dust later on. Surfacing of roads with a cold asphalt emulsion is recommended as a way out of the difficulty.

*Science News Letter, November 23, 1935*

## MEDICINE

## Blood Pressure Machines At Fairs Disapproved

**A**MUSEMENT parks and fairs will have to get along without a popular new attraction if the American Medical Association can have its way.

The latest device to attract customers at fairs is an apparatus for measuring blood pressure. For a dime the customer learns what his blood pressure reading is. If he is of the nervous type, he begins to worry.

The great danger to the public is in the use of such apparatus without the necessary medical background for interpreting the results, according to an editorial in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*. (Nov. 9)

"Any single reading of blood pressure, pulse rate or even temperature, without relationship to the general physical and mental condition of the person concerned, is bound to lead to false interpretations and the associated hypochondria," the editor states. When approached by physicians, the manufacturers of such apparatus "protest earnestly and long that they are doing their utmost to stop the sale of such devices to persons outside the medical profession," the *Medical Journal* states.

*Science News Letter, November 23, 1935*



### Farmers Without Animals

**O**UR TABLES on Thanksgiving Day are a grand summary of the plants cultivated and used by Indians, and adopted readily enough by white men: white potatoes, sweet potatoes, corn, pumpkin, squash, tomatoes, peppers, beans of many kinds, cranberries, avocados, peanuts, Brazil nuts, black walnuts, hickory nuts (including pecans), tapioca, chocolate, vanilla, with tobacco to top it all off. The Indians of the great cultures of Mexico and the Andean uplands were versatile farmers and raised a considerable variety of crops. But they had very few domestic animals. Even the less civilized Indians first known to the English and French settlers in North America did a good deal of farming, and taught the white immigrants how to raise corn, pumpkins and many other products. But these northern tribes had no domestic food animals at all, if we except the dog—which the Caucasian newcomers declined with thanks.

The one really important animal contribution of the New World to agriculture and the dinner table has been the turkey. The nations of Mexico and Yucatan had turkeys in great abundance when the Spaniards came, and both the

bronze and white varieties were introduced into Europe very promptly. Within a generation after the death of Columbus, the bird was already figured and described in Conrad Gesner's *Historia Animalium* as "the fowl of the Indies." It got the name turkey later, probably by its introduction into the then Turkish lands of the lower Danube and thence to the northern and western parts of Europe.

Our domestic turkeys are descended from these Mexican turkeys, re-introduced from Europe, and not from their wild cousins of our own forests. So when we carve the turkey on Thanksgiving Day we may be continuing a laudable practice initiated by the Pilgrim Fathers, but we shall not be working on exactly the same kind of bird.

One reason why the red natives of the Americas had so few domestic animals, probably, is that there were almost no animals here that could be tamed. The beasts we commonly think of as typical of the American forest and prairie faunas—deer, elk, bison, pronghorn, bighorn, peccary—are still either too shy or too fierce and intractable to be captured and tamed. So the Indian let them rove and contented himself with hunting them when he wanted meat. Only the turkey, and in South America the llama and alpaca, could he induce to share his villages and serve his purposes.

*Science News Letter, November 23, 1935*

## RADIO

Tuesday, November 26, 4:30 p. m., E.S.T.  
OCEANS AROUND US, by Capt. Jean H. Hawley, Assistant Director, U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey.

Tuesday, Dec. 3, 4:30 p. m., E.S.T.  
AMERICA 8,000 B.C., by Edgar B. Howard, University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania.

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