ANTHROPOLOGY

Earliest American Found

Near Mexico City the remains of an unfortunate hunter were found by a geophysical prospecting method. Skull is estimated at 10,000 to 15,000 years old.

➤ REMAINS of America's earliest known human being, with age estimated at ten to fifteen thousand years, have been discovered near Mexico City through the use of a geophysical prospecting method borrowed from seekers after oil and ores. This triumph of the very new to find the very old was achieved by a tri-national scientific team consisting of Dr. Hans Lundberg, Canadian geophysicist, Dr. Helmut de Terra, American geologist, and several Mexican scientists, operating under the auspices of the American Viking Fund, of New York.

Dr. de Terra describes the skull as very primitive, with long, narrow shape as seen from the top, a low-vaulted cranium, and pronounced eyebrow ridges. Although he does not undertake to classify it on such short notice, these features do suggest such Old-World primitives as Neandertal and Peking men. Its estimated age in years, however, is considerably less than theirs. With the complete skull were some of the other skeletal bones.

This earliest American apparently came to his end in the rush and excitement of an elephant hunt. His skull and bones were found buried under about three and one-half feet of soil along with a great quantity of mammoth bones, tusks and teeth. The locality, near the town of Texpexpan, was obviously the marshy shore of a shallow lake in early post-glacial time. Apparently this luckless hunter's more fortunate mates drove the elephant herd into the marsh, where the great beasts bogged down and perished.

Earlier digs in the same vicinity had turned up numbers of stone weapon-heads of a primitive pattern, and similar artifacts have been found with bones of elephants and other extinct animals in the southwestern United States; but this is the first time that any part of a human being has ever been dug up at such an ancient site. It is the find that archaeologists have been awaiting for decades.

The method used in locating the present sensational find is what prospectors call earth conductivity. It consists in sending an electric current into the ground, measuring the potential of the soil at many surrounding points, and plotting lines of equal potential. At the spot where the measurements showed the highest resistance, the scientists made their first trial dig.

They struck a bonanza.

Science News Letter, March 8, 1947

ORDNANCE

V-2 Rockets Deteriorate

➤ U. S. ARMY ORDNANCE is not having as much success firing German V-2 rockets as the Nazis who developed the weapon.

The Army at the White Sands, N. Mex., Proving Ground has fired 19 of the missiles, armed with scientists' instruments to gather data in the upper atmosphere. Of the 19 launched, five have failed to climb high over the desert in useful flights.

This gives the Army rocket-firing unit a "batting average" of slightly less than 75% for its V-2 shoots, compared with a better than 80% success claimed by German experimenters at the Peenemunde Experiment Station on the Baltic, where the weapon was tested before its use against England in World War II.

When the rockets were fired at England, an estimated 30% of them failed, but the Army program, which fires one rocket about every two weeks, is more comparable to the test flights at the Baltic station.

Army Ordnance officials believe the bad shoots are caused by deterioration. The rockets used in the New Mexico experiments were taken in May, 1945, and virtually all of the intricate mechanisms are retained intact for the peacetime scientific firing.

German scientists, who fired new rockets, believed the weapons would deteriorate quickly if not used.

Although credited by some Army sources with being the twentieth rocket fired, the one shot over the desert recently, from which scientific instruments were successfully parachuted to the earth from a high altitude, was actually number 19. First rocket of the series was given a static test on the ground without actually being launched.

In addition to the standard scientific instruments brought down by the parachute from a record altitude, fruit flies, a package of seeds and cameras loaded with color film were carried by the 'chute.

Scientists hope to learn more about the effects of cosmic rays at high altitudes from the fruit flies and seeds, while unique pictures and possible new knowledge of the upper atmosphere are expected from the camera record of the descent.

Science News Letter, March 8, 1947

MIGRATION

Mexican Border Fence To Improve Patrolling

➤ THE 2,000-MILE line fence proposed for the Mexican boundary, as an aid in keeping foot-and-mouth disease out of the United States, is not expected to function all by itself. Its advocates expect the fence, if built, to make the job of the border patrol easier and more effective—but it will still have to be backed by vigilant human eyes and ears.

The proposed fence (of which short sections have already been built) is to be of the interwoven, heavy spring-wire type often seen around factories. Its ten-foot height is necessary in order to keep deer and antelope, which are potential carriers of foot-and-mouth disease, from jumping over the top. It will also have to be securely anchored in the ground, to prevent peccaries, or wild pigs, from rooting their way under.

The proposed fence is not to be thought of as a barrier against foot-and-mouth disease alone. If properly patrolled, it should do much to control smuggling, and particularly the entry of unauthorized immigrants, or "wetbacks", who at present slip across the border in large numbers during the truck-growing and fruit-picking seasons. This illicit migration is as little liked by the Mexican government as by our own, and anything that can be done to check it will be welcomed by the Mexican authorities.

Science News Letter, March 8, 1947

Soil rich in *nitrogen* is not suitable for newly rooted plant cuttings.