

ARCHAEOLOGY

Oldest American Skull

Bones of most ancient American yet known discovered in Texas. He predated Folsom Man, whose remains have never been found, by 2,000 to 10,000 years.

See Front Cover

► THE MOST ancient American, whose skull was found at a prehistoric water hole near Midland, Texas, and now rests at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, was probably a human in early middle age, with a long, narrow head.

The sex is not clearly shown, but was most probably male.

This is the judgment of Dr. T. Dale Stewart, physical anthropologist at the Smithsonian, who has fitted the skull fragments together. The skull fragments were found by an amateur archaeologist, Keith Glasscock, of Pampa, Texas.

Dr. Stewart is shown on the cover of this week's SCIENCE NEWS LETTER with the pieced-together skull. For comparison, the skull of a modern Indian is suspended in the background.

The ancient skull, which has been dated by geological evidence as at least 12,000 and possibly as much as 20,000 years old, is nevertheless not different from the skull of a modern Indian, according to Dr. Stewart. For this reason, Dr. Stewart believes that the older date may be too far back.

"If the skull is 20,000 years old, you might expect evolution to have brought about more change," Dr. Stewart has stated.

The teeth of the first American show considerable wear, Dr. Stewart said. This would indicate that our earliest ancestor lived on a harsh diet. He probably did not eat meat, but may have lived on hard berries and tough vegetable foods.

Although his bones were found at a prehistoric water hole in company with the bones of a large number of now extinct animals, there was no evidence that the animals were killed by man. It may have been the other way around, Dr. Stewart speculates. The ancient man may have been killed by one of the animals he disturbed drinking there.

The bone fragments were found lying on top of the ground where they had been exposed by action of the wind blowing away the overlying soil. With the bones were found stone spear points and tools known to be the work of Folsom Man. At first, the bones were thought to be those of Folsom Man.

Even then, the discovery was very exciting to anthropologists because, although the tools of Folsom Man have been known for some time, no human remains have ever been found in association with these 10,000- or 12,000-year-old instruments.

Later geological study of the site revealed, however, that the entire Folsom layer had

blown away and that the heavy stone objects from the Folsom layer had dropped down into the underlying layer of gray soil where the skull fragments lay buried.

Between the gray soil of the ancient American and the later Folsom layer there had been a layer of red dirt indicative of a long period of severe drought. It was after the drought had come to an end, that Folsom Man entered on the scene.

Dr. F. J. McClure of the National Institute of Dental Research ran fluorine tests on the human bones and prehistoric animal bones discovered at the same site. He found that the animal and human bones were of relatively the same age. They had all absorbed 0.7% of fluorine, compared with 0.02% for a modern rabbit found in the same soil. Dr. McClure also found that the ancient bones had a high ash content, showing that they are fossil bones.

Anthropologists who studied the bones and the site in which they were found are Dr. Fred Wendorf of the New Mexico Laboratory of Anthropology and Dr. Alex Krieger of the University of Texas.

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• RADIO

Saturday, July 24, 1954, 3:15-3:30 p.m. EDT

"Adventures in Science" with Watson Davis, director of Science Service, over the CBS Radio Network. Check your local CBS station.

Dr. Charles Glen King, scientific director, Nutrition Foundation, New York, will discuss "The Foundations of Our Nutrition."

MEDICINE

New Drugs Not Guilty Of Causing Intestinal Ill

► NEW DRUGS for combating bacteria are exonerated from causing a serious inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract that is involved in deaths following operations.

An inquiry by a Mayo Clinic group in Rochester, Minn., shows that, in the Clinic records, pseudomembranous enterocolitis occurred about as frequently as now in the days when no antibacterial drugs were used. Some doctors had believed that a new disease had been created by the use of the new drugs.

In 14 years ending in 1934 there were 45 cases, compared with 49 cases in the same number of years ending in 1952. Autopsies showed that about half of the cases involved carcinoma of the colon.

The Mayo Foundation physicians reporting were Drs. Jacqueline D. Pettet, Archie H. Baggenstoss, Edward S. Judd, Jr., and William H. Dearing.

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FOR EUROPEAN DEFENSE—This Martin-made B-61 Matador rests on its launching platform ready to wreak destruction on an intruding airplane. A second pilotless bomber squadron will go to Europe this fall to be stationed in west Germany, the U. S. Air Force has announced. The first overseas Matador squadron is now at Bitburg, Germany.