ARCHAEOLOGY

Explorers Astonished—Mayas Buried Huge Jade Treasure

A 200-POUND boulder of jade — a sort of Cullinan Diamond of ancient America—has just been unearthed in ruins of a Mayan pyramid near Guatemala City by an expedition of the Carnegie Institution of Washington.

"We were astounded, for no piece of jade even remotely approaching this in size has ever been found in America before," declared Dr. A. V. Kidder, in charge of the excavations, reporting the discovery to the Institution.

The rough ball of jade bears scars where Mayan Indian workers had cut out slices of clear green stone for use in jewelry or ceremonial objects. Why the Indians then buried their treasure at the very center of a pyramid stair is a mystery.

"The whole boulder was of good quality and might have represented a vast value," said Dr. Kidder. "Its burial was doubtless ceremonial; but what a sacrifice! Or, was it for protection, like the cache of gold in Kentucky?"

Modern scientists have searched without success for the natural source where American Indians got their much-treasured jade in Mexico or Central America. The American jade is similar to Oriental jade in appearance, but differs in chemical structure, and in range of coloring.

Science News Letter, April 3, 1937

PHYSICS

World's Highest Laboratory Now Open on Mt. Evans

THE CAMPUS of the University of Denver has been extended up to the peak of Mt. Evans at 14,259 feet. There, at the end of the highest automobile road in the United States, stands the highest laboratory in the world, being some three thousand feet higher than the famous laboratory on the Jungfrau Joch in Europe.

This laboratory is a joint project of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of Denver. The building was pre-fabricated in Denver, cut into sections and transported from Denver to Mt. Evans in one day by the use of a nine-truck caravan.

C.C.C. men did yeoman service in carrying 40 sections averaging in weight from 200 to 500 pounds, up the rocky knoll from the terminus of the automobile road to the site of the laboratory. They also constructed the foundation for the building.

The laboratory is designed to withstand a wind velocity of 150 miles per hour and to screen out electrical disturbances of this region, which at times cause electric sparks to jump from one's finger-tips, ears, and nose, and make the hair stand out like the quills of a frightened porcupine. Also it had to be made as impervious and impregnable to rodents and souvenir-hunting tourists as possible.

To make the structure wind-proof, side walls were eliminated, while the protection from lightning was accomplished by having the end walls, the roof, and the floor completely surrounded with metal which is connected to ground wires buried deeply in the mountain. This also protects against rodents, but no satisfactory method has been found for protection against tourists.

The new laboratory is expected to be one of the sights which the hundreds of scientists attending the meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science next June 21-26 will wish to see.

The need for such a laboratory in the United States has been felt for some time. There have been ten expeditions to Mt. Evans to study cosmic rays, and at least eight to Pike's Peak. The importance of this work is indicated by the fact that the only Nobel Prize winners in physics in the United States, viz.: Carl Anderson, R. A. Millikan, and A. H. Compton, have been among those making studies on Mt. Evans or Pike's Peak. Dr. Anderson has just recently been awarded the Nobel Prize for his work on cosmic rays, which led to the discovery of the positron. It is impossible to make the prolonged accurate observations at this altitude without the necessities for physical comfort and laboratory facilities for scientific work.

Use of the laboratory will not be limited to research work on cosmic rays. The first work done was that by Dr. Fred D'Amour of the Department of Zoology, who studied the physiological changes in the rat due to high altitude. The Department of Meteorology has long desired a station at high altitude where observers could be placed.

Requests to use the laboratory next summer have been received from cosmic ray workers at McGill University, Harvard University, and the University of Chicago. Requests from workers in other fields have been received from the Colorado State Museum, Colorado State College, and the University of Michigan.

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RADIO

April 6, 5:15 p.m., E.S.T.

KNIGHTS IN ARMOR — Steven V. Grancsay of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

April 13, 5:15 p.m., E.S.T.

A DINOSAUR MONUMENT—Dr. Barnum Brown of the American Museum of Natural History.

In the Science Service series of radio discussions led by Watson Davis, Director, over the Columbia Broadcasting System.