'72 Digs Bare
New Theories

Discovery of evidence indicating the possibility of two different Indian cultures, living side by side in peace for 300 years or more, is the major product of SVAS 1972 digging, Dig Chairman Ned Swigart reports. Yet, other significant aspects of Indian history continued to unfold, as 300-plus SVAS volunteers dug to unlock still-buried secrets from the earth.

The Kirby Brook site and the Nettleton Hollow site -- two miles apart as the crow flies - yielded the exciting evidence of two different cultures, both dating to before 2000 B.C., overlapping in peaceful coexistence for at least several hundred years.

Six Sites Dug

Besides these two sites, four other sites were dug last year by SVAS's skilled and disciplined volunteers. These were: Boulder Home Site, Bethel Site, Pratt Site I and Pratt Site II.

In the December 1972 ARTIFACTS, John A. Pawloski, who led the excavation of the Boulder Home Site in New Milford, told the full story of this dig.

Digging at the Bethel Site, also led by John Pawloski, was completed just ahead of the bulldozers. As reported by ARTIFACTS of September 1972, the Bethel finds were mostly small-stemmed points, quartz tools and shell-heaps (middens).

Details of the digs at Pratt Site I and Pratt Site II will be revealed soon.

The probability of two separate cultures within two miles of each other grows from the findings at the Kirby Brook Site and the Nettleton Hollow Site, where Dig Chairman Ned Swigart took personal charge of the operations.

In both digs were found quartz tools . . . but quartz tools of different kinds. And the projectile points had major differences. The Nettleton Hollow Indians used small quartz triangles; the Kirby Brook group, small-stemmed points. At Nettleton Hollow were unearthed stone mortars, apparently used to crack nuts, and a skinning rack surrounded by cutting and skinning stones. At Kirby Brook appeared pitted stones for cracking nuts, and tools like scrapers and hammer-stones. Both cultures apparently depended on similar diets, because nuts were found in firepits at both sites. Acorns predominated at Kirby Brook; hickory nuts at Nettleton Hollow. Hunting grounds, too, may have been shared, judging by the few points of one culture found on the others' camp grounds.

Finders Explained

"It is possible," according to Dig Chairman Ned Swigart, "to explain the findings in these two digs as different manifestations of the same culture. But the different-side-by-side-cultures explanation seems more likely. The Beekman-Brewerton people at the Nettleton Site probably occupied the area before and during the time that the Sylvan Lake people lived at the Kirby Brook Site."

"If this is true, then these two peoples lived in close proximity to one another for at least 300 years. (The oldest Sylvan Lake date at the Shepaug Site is 2515 B.C.; the most recent date at the Nettleton Site -- for the Triangle people -- is 2235 B.C.) Over the entire region, Triangle points seem to disappear at this time and are replaced by the small-stemmed points. These continue until at least 1850 B.C. and are, in turn, replaced by a large flint-projectile-point culture."

At the Kirby Brook Site, Swigart reports, the stratigraphy of the cultures previously encountered remains good. From the surface, the following levels were maintained: plus or minus three inches deep has Colonial material; plus or minus six inches deep has four additional Levanna-Triangle points (circa 1500 A.D.). Plus or minus eight inches deep has ten additional Sylvan Lake stemmed points. Plus or minus ten inches deep has three additional Orient points (circa 1100 B.C.); and plus or minus twelve inches deep has eight additional Snook Kill points (circa 1500 B.C.). Plus or minus fifteen inches deep -- or three inches into subsoil -- has twenty-one Sylvan Lake stemmed points. Seven firepits, four underground storehouses of artifacts and one cache of nuts were also discovered on this level.

2415 B.C. Firepit

One firepit consisting of three layers of stones with three layers of charcoal in between, was C14 dated at 2405 B.C. This feature has been moved to the Gunn Memorial Museum. Four firepits were stone-lined in a clover leaf design. The other two were charcoal deposits with no associated rocks. Both, however, were associated with major caches of material.

One of these areas was clearly a work area 18 inches diameter, and ringed with large stones. In the first inch of this bed were 451 pieces of quartz and 12 quartz tools. About 11 feet northeast was another charcoal bed directly associated with 15

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AFTER HOURS

-with SVAS President Ned Swigart

Why is it so vitally important to build the American Indian Institute anyway? How does it differ from other Indian museums? Why must it be built new? These are serious questions which we who are so deeply committed to the Institute must answer—and CAN ANSWER.

First of all there are very few museums in the east with significant Indian collections. Even fewer have a preponderance of their collections from local, known sites and stratigraphic levels on the sites as does the Shepaug Valley Archeological Society. This alone makes our collection worth housing in a suitable manner, even in a standard museum context if necessary.

Secondly, the Institute will not be a museum in any traditional sense. It will be a Center where people of today may come to face head on a viable alternative to present man's predicament of impending ecological disaster. This will be done through five life-experiences which should add up to a total sensory and intellectual awakening. These five experiences will be the five parts of the Society's Institute program:

1) Actual rebuilt Indian dwellings with Indian instructors demonstrating by their life and personality the Indian Way.

2) An Indian Nature Trail where the modern visitor may enter an Indian forest and water environment to feel first hand the bounty, beauty, and strength of a Nature still in harmony with man.

3) An Education Center where the best audio-visual and professional services will be shared with the visitor.

4) An Exhibit Center of seasonally changing exhibits which take the visitor step by step backward into the distant past.

5) An ultra modern, computerized Research Center where the secrets of the past may be better and more precisely understood by visiting scholars in a controlled atmosphere which will best preserve these irreplaceable objects of past cultures.

It is obvious that this concept of a potential "total" life experience must be accomplished on an undeveloped and essentially inaccessible and remote location which has the mystique of Indian occupation stretching back through 10000s of years, and that the facility must be built to best accomplish this end. Clearly no existing facility could be remodeled to accomplish this.

Finally, the Institute must be built NOW, because it is in the Here and Now that the answers to 9000 years of largely unrecorded Indian history must be discovered. We are losing 20% of our sites in west-central Connecticut each year.

IT WILL BE TOO LATE in 10 years! Our Museum Building MUST STAND as a rallying point, as a visual memorial to the purpose and sweep of modern man's quest for a new dimension to his life.

72 DIGS (continued)

quartz tools. Some two or three feet east of the 18-inch work area was another cache of two hammerstones, one anvilstone and 10 artifacts. An additional two or three feet further east was a third cache of one large granite rock and 10 artifacts. The other cache was a "storage pit" of nuts (mostly acorns). It was 16 inches in diameter and 12 inches deep. The Sylvan Lake people did store nuts in this fashion, but these nuts did not seem to be as old as 4500 years—when the Sylvan Lake people flourished.

Mixed with Sylvan Lake material, and up to six inches below it, were seven small quartz Beekman Triangle and Brewerton eared Triangle projectile points. All were whole, and very few other artifacts were found associated with the deeper ones, indicating that these may have been lost hunting points. About six inches further down, a new living level with quartz debris appears to be present, but no diagnostic projectile points have been found as yet.

The Nettleton Hollow Site, a new location not previously dug except by the landowner, proved to contain a potentially exciting story. This site is on Sprain Brook on a glacial outwash terrace. Here a layer containing 19 broken and entire small quartz triangle points of Beekman and Brewerton eared types is located below the same comparable levels of other less abundant and probably lost hunting points of Levanna and Orient cultures. Below these two cultures was found a refuse pit 23 inches in diameter and 11 inches deep, containing charcoal, flint and quartz debris, and tools. This pit was dated by the Geochron Laboratories at 1710 B.C. and was on the Sylvan Lake Stemmed level.

On the Triangle point level are five firepits, all about 20 inches in diameter and without stones. Associated with these pits were three postmolds in a triangular configuration, which might have been a tripod for skinning game. Each mold was six feet from the next mold. On this level also were six mortar-like flat stones of mica schist, which may have been used for cracking nuts or grinding meal. There were numerous quartz tools and other artifacts. Several firepits at Nettleton Hollow contained carbonized hickory and acorn shells and a complete fawn toe bone was found.

So it is clear that on the lowest levels the Kirby Brook and Nettleton Valley sites have essentially different artifacts for two very similar habitats—which are close together and occupied at essentially the same time.

Much work has yet to be done to verify the hypotheses offered in this report. But the Indian history of this area is definitely beginning to be pieced together, thanks to the efforts of SVAS volunteers.

Artifacts

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Miss Adelphena Logan, a direct descendant of the great and respected friend of Indians and whites alike, Tal-ga-yea-ta, chief of the Cayuga Iroquois, is among the most archaeologically-oriented SVAS Directors. She is currently Arts and Crafts Director for the Syracuse (N.Y.) Department of Recreation, a consultant for the Smithsonian Institution. Recently she was appointed as Woodland Indian Representative to President Nixon's twelve-member Board of Indian Awareness, leading up to the 1976 Bicentennial celebration. As the only Indian on the SVAS Board, it is fitting that hers be the first of this series of brief biographies introducing SVAS Board members to the entire membership.

— photo by S. R. Hoyt

Indians Had 2 Writing Forms

It is sometimes said that the early Connecticut Indians had no written or recorded history.

Perhaps not, but they did have some oral histories and two forms of writing. One of the two graphic systems had an important role in preserving the fidelity of oral tradition from one generation to the next.

Pictographs were one form of Indian "writing" and a series of glyphs, symbols and notches, called Olum by the coastal Algonquins was the other. It was the Olum which helped greatly to preserve the fidelity of the oral traditions.

Indian pictographs consisted of figures and characters whose symbols were understood by tribes of various dialects and even by different language groups. Glyphs for man, woman, enemy, friend, few, many, deer, bear, hunter, etc. — when placed side by side, sentence-like — told a story the exact meaning of which was subject to interpretation, understanding and misunderstanding. The symbols used could be woven into wampum belts, painted on birch bark and wood strips, or cut into wood or stone. Several "readers" after talking it over, could usually agree on the meaning of the message.

It was, in short, a graphic form of Indian Sign Language - demotic, understood by many people in many Indian tribes, and subject to interpretation of meaning.

The form called Olum, on the other hand, was more esoteric. It was understood only by a few select initiates. Pictographs, tally marks and notches served as mnemonic aids to rehearsed, oral, traditional story.

The Olum series of glyphs, symbols and notches employed some of the same glyphs as the pictographs. The difference in usage lay in the simultaneous singing or chanting of tribal lore. The singer of such stories would be specially trained and might be selected because of an exceptional memory, a good voice, or because of a disability which prevented him from making his living as a hunter. The singer would travel from village to village appearing at the ceremonial lodge on special occasions such as the Green Corn Festival. The story selected for recital might be dictated by the occasion or could be specially requested by a villager who would make a suitable gift of corn, venison, or yokeg to the chanter.

The Olumapi were hieratic, were understood by a few specially trained singers. Their purpose was to preserve the fidelity of the story. They were memory aids to a rehearsed verse not subject to interpretation of meaning or variance in retelling from generation to generation.

The one story which has come down to us in fairly complete form is the Walum Olum of the Lenape. This tells the migration legend of the Delaware Indians from the Canadian Northwest across the continent to their colonial period location along the Atlantic Shore at the Delaware, Chesapeake, and Hudson River Valleys. One verse appears to refer to the Munsee-Mohican Pequot-removal across the Housatonic into Connecticut and Massachusetts.

Scholars who have studied the Walum Olum from many points of view believe it to contain valid Indian history for about 1500 years prior to initial white contact.

Carbon Sample Results

The Society recently received word on two carbon fourteen samples that had been sent to the Geochron Laboratory in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The first date was for the Nettleton Hollow site. A trash pit on the large flint spearpoint level has yielded a date of 1710 B.C. (GX 2878, 3660 plus or minus 150 C14 yrs. B.P.). This compares favorably with the date of 1715 B.C. from the Lover’s Leap site for similar types of artifacts.

The second date of 1150 B.C. (GX 2880, 3100 plus or minus 175 C14 years B.P.) from the Lover’s Leap site in New Milford was for a firepit. This closely parallels the date of 1115 B.C. already recorded for the Orient level at that site by the Society. The most recent date would appear, therefore, to be a sunken pit, since it was 8 inches below the Orient on a late Archaic cultural level. This site was on a steep ridge facing northwest and therefore recessed pits would have had a distinct advantage for cooking.
Goal for '73
$300,000

More than $160,000 had been received in gifts and pledges toward SVAS's AMERICAN INDIAN INSTITUTE as this issue goes to press. This is more than half-way to the $300,000 that must be raised before January 1, 1974 to bring in a $50,000 "challenge gift" from The Kresge Foundation. The Kresge grant resulted from a visit of President Ned Swigart and Vice President Tate Brown with Kresge Foundation President William H. Baldwin last summer. The provision grant was Mr. Baldwin's way of encouraging SVAS to implement its plans for the Museum.

Immediately upon voting last September to proceed with a fund-raising program, the SVAS Board of Directors recognized that their first responsibility was to support the program with their personal gifts. To date, members of the Board of Directors have contributed $71,000 to the Institute.

The Directors also have recognized the need to concentrate on special gifts as the required next step in the fund-raising program. An analysis of hundreds of successful fund-raising programs shows that about 90 per cent of the donors in gifts of $1,000 or more. To date the results of the fund-raising program substantiate this analysis; 85% of the money has been given by 15% of the donors.

A committee has been enlisted to present the need for an American Indian Institute to individuals, foundations and corporations throughout Connecticut. The following individuals have agreed to serve on the committee: Naugatuck - Mrs. David Hyde; New Preston - Mr. Lloyd Young; Newtown - Mrs. Seth Brody; South Britain - Mr. Les Searle; Warren - Mr. Richard Combs; Washington - Mr. Tate Brown, Mr. Elmer Browne, Mr. Kenyon Greene, Mr. Sidney Hessel, Mr. John Sheehy, Mr. John Payne, Mr. Edmund Swigart; Washington Depot - Mrs. Elisha Dyer, Mrs. Henry Pennel; Woodbury - Mr. Harlan Griswold.

HELP! HELP! HELP! President Ned Swigart needs two additional volunteer typists, each of whom will give a half-day each week -- or one volunteer for a day each week. The volume of letters to be typed grows daily. For details call 868-7850.

Program

April 15, 1973
RECONSTRUCTION CRAFTS AND TOOLS - This program will be conducted by Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Hart of New Milford. It will be devoted to authentic reconstruction of Indian crafts and tools.

May 3, 1973
EARLY AMERICAN POTTERY -- This slide-lecture will be devoted to early American pottery and porcelains. It will be specially designed a preliminary to the upcoming 1973 summer digs.

Both programs will be at the Town Hall in Washington Depot -- and will start at 8 p.m.

Books
for archaeological readers

Archeology of New York State
- William A. Ritchie. Natural History Press 1969 (Revised)

Beginning with the first known inhabitants (paleo-Indian hunters who lived about 7000 B.C.), this book details chronologically the various culture units that have existed in New York State. It ends with the Iroquois tribes' culture at the time of the first white contact in the early 1600s.

Many of the New York sites are close to the Western Connecticut boundary. So, much of what Dr. Ritchie talks about is now being corroborated and added to by the SVAS excavation program. This book has good source material for the reader who wants not only to identify artifacts, but also to learn what is currently known about the cultural life of the people who used them.

A Typology and Nomenclature for New York Projectile Points
- William A. Ritchie. New York State Museum and Science Service Bulletin #384. New York State Education Department, Albany, N.Y.

This is a field guide to the arrowheads. Each major type of projectile point in New York State is pictured and described. A brief summary of the age, cultural affiliation and distribution is given, as well as a list of references and a few general remarks. It furnishes the amateur archaeologist with a means of identifying a majority of artifacts and teaches him something about each type. (An inexpensive little pamphlet, it is well worth the low cost.)

Important among the artifacts which reveal the story of early Connecticut Indian cultures are broken projectile points (spearheads to the neophyte) which have been reworked into other cultural tools. The location and physical characteristics of these tools give the archaeologist his needed clues. Shown here are broken and reworked projectile points from the Orient culture which existed about 1000 B.C. Note the variety of uses.