

SOUTHWEST EXPEDITION FINDS NEW AMERICAN CULTURE

The Field Museum Archaeological Expedition to the Southwest has resumed digging the now famous SU (pronounced "Shu") ruin. This ancient village is located in the west central portion of New Mexico, on a ridge in the Apache National Forest. The expedition has been financed through the generosity of Mr. Stanley Field, President of the Museum.

For the past six weeks, Dr. Paul S. Martin, Chief Curator of the Museum's

Pueblo, and the Hohokam. It has been only within the last two years that knowledge of a new major culture has begun to unfold. This new group, called "Mogollon" (pronounced "muggy-own") after the name of a high mountain range near which it is found, is distinct from the above two cultures. Its house types, pottery, and bone and stone tools follow a pattern distinctly their own. The great importance of Field Museum's SU site is that it stands at

But when the soil in the trench suddenly becomes black, filled with pieces of charcoal and broken pottery, and is easy to dig, then the diggers know that they are in "fill." This fill—which might be called the archaeologist's "pay-dirt"—is soft, refuse-laden soil which washes into abandoned pithouses. Cleaning out this fill is an arduous and delicate task, for if the digger is not careful, he will dig right through a wall, since it also consists only of dirt.

In the soft dirt which lies on the house floor, tools of stone and bone, and broken pieces of pottery are found. These discarded, broken, partly disintegrated, and forgotten fragments of an ancient civilization are the clues which Dr. Martin and his assistants use for piecing together the story of this now extinct culture.

What people lived in these long abandoned pithouses, and what became of them, are mysteries which Dr. Martin would like to solve. Did these people die out, leaving no descendants? Did they migrate and merge with other Indians, whose modern descendants carry a strain of the ancient Mogollon blood? Or did other Indians move in and intermarry with the people of the SU village? No one yet knows the answers to these questions.

SKELETONS TO BE STUDIED

However, some light may be thrown on this Mogollon race by the study of skeletons which have been discovered. One such skeleton, recently unearthed, was of particular interest. Apparently this person had been buried in the debris of a burned house, instead of in a small pit beneath the floor, as was the usual custom. Later, the house had served as a general dump for the rest of the village. Two bone awls and five pieces of mineral paints were found in the lap of this individual. These articles had presumably been contained in a leather bag, all traces of which have long ago disappeared. These paints were green (malachite); blue (azurite); red (hematite); yellow (limonite), and black (magnetite). This person had probably been an artist or possibly a healer who had achieved some importance in the village. The sex and race of this skeleton will be determined when the other skeletons are studied, measured, and analyzed next winter in the Museum laboratory.

Dr. Martin believes the SU village to be 1,500 years old, or older. Exact dates have not yet been determined, although it is hoped that the charred roof beams which are being recovered and carefully preserved will give the exact dating for this village.

Less spectacular than the fossil skeletons of large prehistoric animals in Ernest R. Graham Hall (Hall 38), but equally interesting to the student of life forms and evolution, are the exhibits of primitive invertebrates in Frederick J. V. Skiff Hall (Hall 37).



FARM HORSES AND EQUIPMENT AID ARCHAEOLOGISTS

"Pithouse J"—one of the prehistoric underground habitations of prehistoric Indians, uncovered by excavations of the Field Museum Archaeological Expedition to the Southwest during the present season on the SU Site in New Mexico. Such pithouses are estimated to be some 1,500 years old, and are probably the oldest type of shelter used in North America.

Department of Anthropology, and a crew of twelve men have been uncovering the remains of primitive pithouses. (A pithouse is just what the term implies—a pit large enough to live in.) These pithouses are about 15 feet in diameter, and represent probably the oldest house type in North America.

Eight houses have been excavated and these have yielded a vast amount of potsherds, bone tools, stone weapons, and household utensils, according to a recent report received from Dr. Martin. It will take months of study to digest the mass of information they supply, and establish reasonable conclusions and hypotheses.

Dr. Martin is able, however, to hazard the judgment that the civilization unearthed at the SU village is a hitherto unclassified one, as only one or two sites even vaguely like it have ever been found and dug. Until recently, archaeologists have known only two major cultural groupings in the great Southwestern area: the Basketmaker-

what is apparently the beginning of the Mogollon culture.

A DIFFICULT EXCAVATION TASK

The houses, tools, and pottery are so crude and so early that they almost defy description. It is a great triumph even to locate the houses, because they are so deeply and perfectly buried that they cannot be detected by outward manifestations. There are no walls showing as in better-known ruins; there are no prominent mounds of earth and stone waiting to be explored. The only manner in which the Field Museum crew can locate these ancient, crude houses is by stripping off all the surface soil down to glacial clays, or by trenching.

Therefore, trenches four feet wide and one foot deep are sunk into the top and sides of the ridge on which the SU village is located. If the men encounter "sterile" (that is, undisturbed, primeval earth), the soil will be yellowish and hard to dig.



1941. "Farm Horses and Equipment Aid Archaeologists." *Field Museum news* 12(9), 7-7.

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