

ARCHAIC COPPER NEWSLETTER
THE A.C.N. In our 4th Year!

Edited by Monette Bebow-Reinhard

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TEXAS COPPER

First, my thanks to Johnney Pollan, Brazosport Museum of Natural Science in Clute, Texas. While he had no artifacts, he gave me contact names in Austin and has become the first to keep me in mind and forward me other information on finds. Thanks to him, a late Archaic burial near Houston revealed a copper pin or rod (awl)? I've contacted his source to get more information.

Pollan also helped me get in touch with the University of Texas in Austin, who will see if they can put a database together for me, and also gave me more names to contact. Texas has



friendly copper people!

I also found one copper point that

appears more modern, as though cut from a kettle.

What does this mean, though, to find

so few in eastern Texas? Here I've been talking about establishing the vast amount of trade between Mexico and the Southeastern U.S. and yet this area of the Gulf Coast has nothing? There has to be a reason for it.

While we were in Galveston for my son's wedding, we stayed at a house on the Gulf. One night a storm hit, so windy, wet, and filled with lightning that it magnetized my necklace, knocked the contacts out of my phone and kept most of us up for the duration, fearing a hurricane.

And it occurred to me—maybe this area is just too unstable. If there were no real settlements here, then there would have been no real trade, and populations were transient only.

Of course there's also the idea that materials have not yet been uncovered, or are in the hands of private collectors. For now, however, I think the unstable environment idea is a valid one. As always, I'd love to hear your thoughts.

Things to Ponder:

'WHEN COPPER WAS KING.' Bob Birmingham, former state archaeologist, is giving a two-class course on "this spectacular development in ancient Wisconsin history and present different views of its meaning." The course will include a short "field trip" to view the Hamilton collection at WHS.

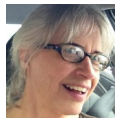
Consider registering! The dates are Tuesdays, February 18 & 25 and the cost is only \$30.

I don't have details of when you need to register by but you should probably mail the registration ASAP to: UW-Madison Continuing Studies Registrations, Pyle Center, 702 Langdon St., Madison, WI 53706-1487.

You can call 608-262-2451 if you want to register with a credit card.

I hope to get to one of these, but right now, waiting to get employed, I don't know where I'll be or when. I do hope to have the complete Hamilton database for him to reference.

editorial



One of the first members of the Copper Culture

Historical Society died on December 26th. Tom Fruit, 78, enjoyed finding artifacts including arrowheads, pottery pieces, and copper items

throughout the state of Wisconsin. He found the early people of many regions of interest to him but especially the people of our own area and their tools. He formed friendships with others with the same interests and will be missed. I

enjoyed knowing him and having him as a member of the Copper Culture Historical Association back in 2009.

I wish I didn't have to get a job but needs are as they are and time may become premium in the near future.

BETWEEN HOPEWELL AND MISSISSIPPIANS

I know some people think me highly inventive in my approach to the people who used copper. But most of what I relate is likely what I've learned or read somewhere even if I don't or can't footnote all my thoughts. I will try to share my sources when I find them, such as the following, from "Miskwabik: Metal of Ritual" by Amelia Trevelyan (2004). She may not be a noted authority and I disagree with some of her analysis, but not this:

The last vestiges of Hopewellian-related ritual and copperwork died out between AD 500 and 600. Use and manufacture of copper paraphernalia never died out completely in those centuries, but only a few examples exist from that period. It is clear, however, that neither mining techniques nor those required to produce refined metallurgy were lost. When copperwork became ritually important once again, no need for gradual redevelopment of the necessary skills was apparent. Even the earliest examples from the Mississippian periods exhibit highly refined craftsmanship in both the working of the metal and the application of designs. The focus of activity shifted to the south as it had with every previous manifestation of the complex (52).

There is no indication that the descendants of copper toolers had to start over; thus, as argued here, they never stopped. I believe "copper headquarters" simply moved elsewhere. Ms. Trevelyan's background in this research is as professor and chair of Art History at Principia College, a college for Christian Scientists, in Illinois. She received a PhD at UCLA.



She is currently Art History Professor at University of North Carolina—Pembroke. Her book has not yet been reviewed at Amazon.



These photos from this source compare Hopewell (she calls Middle Woodland, left) with Mississippian.

Once in the past, I mentioned my belief in the development of two different kinds of civilization in the world—those that annealed copper, and those that got into smelting and a Bronze Age. Since that time, I've come to see that South America and Mexico were both entering a bronze age when the Spanish arrived and put a halt to all of their progress.

Progress. We all know where that's gotten us today—now the monarchs are disappearing. I'm reading a book "The Southeastern Indians" by Charles Hudson and here's a quote that reflects my belief that people who annealed copper (not smelted) never thought to "create" something that nature didn't already provide by blending materials together to create a new material (and all the pollution that goes with it):

"While the industrialized nations have for so long assumed that nature exists for man to use in any way he sees fit, and that nature is infinitely forgiving, the Cherokees recognized that man had to exploit nature in order to live, but that man should do so carefully, and that nature was not infinitely forgiving. If mistreated, nature could strike back. (This story) shows that the Cherokees realized that man tends to abuse nature, and that man can become too populous, and that when he does nature suffers. Although this Cherokee concept of natural balance is expressed in an unfamiliar idiom, their concept of natural balance would seem to have a long-term superiority over our own. It is we, after all, who are now realizing that we cannot exploit natural resources indefinitely and that the very process of exploitation itself degrades the quality of our lives (159). (This story refers to a myth related immediately preceding this comment.)

MUSEUM DATABASE UPDATES:

Total number of museums completed: 133

Total number waiting for further info: 105

Total number of artifacts in database: 27347

Next month I'll provide the location breakdown on a map as the feature article.

I just finished compiling a private collector's database based on his notes and photos and next I hope to get the Hamilton artifacts inserted. I got the original database from Madison but when I visited their archives found a lot more than what was included, with some further details. From there I'll be working on my Neville/Speth notes. Lots of intense Wisconsin to keep me busy into spring! I also am working on Texas, Florida and hopefully Minnesota this year. But as always, I'll take anything anytime.

I recently queried a number of antique stores in the Galveston area. Most did not respond; two said they have nothing.

The major museums (Dallas & Houston) have a number of Peruvian and Mexican artifacts but nothing from Texas, although one museum had six of these points turn up:



Has anyone seen these before? I told them I'd let them know as soon as we can figure out more on these.

They don't have a provenience on them, but there is a possibility they came from the Spiro site in Oklahoma because that's the location of other artifacts from this donor.

I finally heard back from the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. They have a moratorium on research there for all of 2014, but I was given a form to fill out to demonstrate what I need their material archives for. More on this as I hear.

ARTICLE SUBMISSION UPDATES:

I have applied to present a short version of my current copper bell research at the Midwest Mesoamerican conference in DeKalb, Illinois in late March.

I also submitted queries on my Wittry Type IV (axe, celt, etc.) research to both American Archaeology and Archaeology magazine. Both have rejected it, calling it too specific for their market. I have it currently being considered by

another magazine and another journal.

If I cannot demonstrate by this time the relevance of copper to the BIG picture, then maybe it doesn't exist.

I plan to submit an article to a contest that will award \$5,000 for an "archaeology for the people" article.

Only one photo is allowed. Maybe my earspool research to establish range of trade?

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Back in July I mentioned the sunburst and how developments may have been encouraged by what they see in the sky. Petroglyphs have been found, for instance, that indicate they saw and were in awe of the supernova in the sky in 1054 CE. This may have preceded climate change that forced abandonment of some sites starting in 1100 CE.

In the book by Amelia Trevelyan (see page 2) she talks about a possible reason that birds become so important. I don't know if anyone's applied this research, so it's possible it's already disproven. But birds were highly revered at Spiro, Cahokia and in the SECC (and elsewhere) and I might have shared my idea that the bird ideology took the place of the snake at some time during the growth of Cahokia and the SECC, which could coincide with the supernova.

Now Ms. Trevelyan noted this: "Eagles and hawks (especially those with distinctively jagged circumocular eye markings like the peregrine) are frequently associated with rain, thunder and lightning among Historic Period Native North American groups." This indicates how widespread the bird theology became, and at first glance seems to have little to do with the supernova. But if you can imagine for a moment that the supernova created a new kind of "god symbol" in the bird, rather than the snake, then we can more clearly understand why the bird symbolism and reverence would have lasted even into historic times.

If this kind of research holds up, we might get better datings for things like the huge serpent mound in Ohio. It would have been probably between the height of the Hopewell culture and into the Effigy Mound period, which began shortly after this collapse, but before the supernova.

Archaic Copper Newsletter

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Please remind people to share location & type of their copper artifacts with us! Anonymity if requested.

This newsletter is dedicated to dissemination and exploration of the archaic copper artifacts in collections in North America, to gather that information into a master database and let that information speak on behalf of the cultures that used them.



SPOTLIGHT ON: AZTALAN

New feature if I don't get any member submissions, and I went to a fund raiser there on Jan. 25th, so here's what I have so far on Aztalan in Jefferson County:

A rectangular celt (called an axe) and a spear-point. The first is at MPM and the second is at the American Museum in New York City; both are questionably related to this site. Positively identified are fragments from WHS.



Bob Birmingham told me that copper discovered at the site included fragments, indicating a worksite, but also awls, knives, rolled beads and

these earring maskettes.

Birmingham's book on Aztalan has a map that links these maskettes to other locations in the Mississippian region, mostly along major rivers. His index, however, does not show copper.

Jefferson County in the database has a number of copper artifacts, but they are not associated with Aztalan directly. They include worked pieces, 2 chisels, an adze, awls, several points, a bangle/earring, a celt, a tubular bead, an earspool, a hook, and more. Some from sites that seem suspiciously related. These in this photo were also from this county.

