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## U.A.S. Newsletter, no. 38 (November 15, 1956)

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# U. A. S. NEWSLETTER

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Published approximately every six weeks by THE UNIVERSITY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. The purpose of the Newsletter is to disseminate knowledge of recent archaeological discoveries bearing on the Latter-day Saint scriptures; also, of the Society and its members. Subscription by membership in the Society: three dollars per year; or Life Membership, fifty dollars. (Membership also includes subscription to other publications of the Society and the Department of Archaeology of BYU.)

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38. 0 The Contents of the Bronze "Dead Sea" Scrolls. Now that the contents of the pair of ancient bronze scrolls from the Qumran caves near the Dead Sea is known, it is clear that the excited expectations connected with their opening (See April 30 Newsletter, 34. 5) and decipherment were not without reason. The news that these two scrolls disclosed the existence of ancient treasure hoards in Palestine, of nearly 400, 000 pounds of gold and silver, could hardly have been more spectacular.

Dr. G. Lankester Harding, director of the Jordan Antiquities Department under whose auspices the scrolls were translated, released the official statement of the scroll's contents simultaneously in Manchester, England (where the scrolls were unrolled), and Amman, Jordan. The announcement read in part:

"The scrolls contain, most surprisingly, a collection of traditions about the hiding place of ancient treasure, altogether about 60 hoards being described. The treasure consists of gold, silver, boxes of incense, etc., and the area referred to ranges from Hebron to Mount Gerzim near Nablus, although most of them appear to be in the vicinity of Jerusalem."

The International News Service report stated that the translation had left the experts "virtually breathless" with astonishment, but later reports suggest that scholars are coming to regard the reality of such "treasure" deposits with increasing pessimism. Some scholars connect the lists with an account by Josephus reporting that Hyrcanus I and Herod the Great had opened the tomb of King David and removed treasure from it. But Dr. Harding, though he admits that it is possible that such a treasure actually existed--big hoards have been found before in the Near East, but little of great size in the Palestinian area--states that it is more likely that the scrolls record purely a collection of traditions of such treasure deposits in ancient times. Whatever the facts, it is certainly true that the contents of the caves of the Qumran community continue to surprise us as have few finds in archaeological history.

38. 1 Excavations at Yagul. Of interest to UAS members is the appearance of Mesoamerican Notes, No. 4, issued by the Department of Anthropology of Mexico City College, which reports that institution's recent work at Yagul in the Oaxaca valley of southern Mexico. The Oaxaca explorations were planned by Ignacio Bernal, and the specific site of Yagul was chosen, among other reasons, because of its promise of containing materials from the early and late periods which were insufficiently illuminated by work at Monte Alban. Yagul is located approximately 33 kilometers (20 miles) southeast of the City of Oaxaca and not far north of the International Highway, on a hill overlooking an oblong

valley which was once the bottom of an ancient lake. This valley is dominated by an ancient fortress at Yagul which towers over the surrounding area and the lower hill which connects it with the main ceremonial area.

Work was begun here in February of 1954 and continued intermittently through the summer of 1955. The site has proved to be one of considerable importance. Most of the remains uncovered date from the Classic Ceremonial age (early post-Book of Mormon period, c. 400-900 A. D. ), which was probably the main occupation; these have excited the Mexico City College staff with their obvious close relationships with the site of Mitla (located at the head of the same valley, see August 10, 1955 Newsletter, 28. 52). There are many striking similarities between the architectural features at Yagul and the palaces at Mitla, and hundreds of small stones of the kind used in the mosaics at Mitla were found in the early diggings. Later these "grecas" were found in places with designs that parallel the Mitla stone decoration. Grecas of designs corresponding to those at Mitla have until this time only had a possible counterpart in the Maya area.

Thirteen tombs were discovered, many of which contained Mixtec jade offerings, while a few were filled with the more ordinary offerings of the Zapotecs. In the later tombs there were also found beads of copper, pearl, and shell, with handsome examples of the graphite-on-red pottery of the Late Post-Classic Mixtec period. The site was apparently largely rebuilt during this late Mixtec occupation.

Buried under an extraordinary amount of loose debris, there was found a very large stone figure which seems to be one of the "frog altars" reported from Honduras. On the top of this sculpture there was a receptacle for coals, incense, and other sacrificial materials.

38. 10 "Pre-Classic" (Book of Mormon-period) Remains. For members of the UAS, the most important discovery at Yagul was that of material dating from the so-called "Pre-Classic" horizon--a find which increases our list of known settlements in southern Mexico in the period of the Nephite occupation. Within the palaces, several pits which were sunk to bedrock have not revealed any level dating back before Early Classic times. A trench approaching the mound from the east, however, revealed a pocket of sherds which without exception were of Pre-Classic or Nephite date. This was the first such collection at the site to be found in situ, many fragments having been found on the surface before this. Almost directly above this spot was found a single sherd of a very fine Classic-style cylindrical vessel, with a handsome human face and plumed headdress carved upon it in champ-levé.

During the last field session, in a pit which had not reached bedrock at the end of the previous work at the site, there was encountered still another deposit of apparently Pre-Classic-age sherds. The location was such as to suggest that a Pre-Classic or Nephite-period building may underly some of the adjoining Classic-period constructions. This situation points up one of the difficulties in the study of the Pre-Classic or Book of Mormon period in Mesoamerica, which will undoubtedly grow as excavation continues and interest in the Pre-Classic civilization increases: since the ruins of many of the Pre-Classic-age buildings must be expected to underly later constructions, there will be the constant problem of getting at these earlier remains for their

study without destroying the usually more spectacular monuments of later date. This problem is made especially difficult by the Mexican Government's prohibition against the dismantling of any standing ruin-- a regulation which, of course, is certainly justifiable. In the future, it may be necessary to allow exceptions to this ruling when the dismantling is done under the supervision of officials of the Mexican Department of Antiquities.

The stratigraphy at Yagul is still a major problem. An appreciation of the difficulties involved may be gained from just one statement in the report which reads: "Classic sherds persistently turn up in the bottom layers of the pits, although Pre-Classic wares are not rare in surface finds"! It is hoped that further work at the site will solve this conundrum and that a definite stratigraphy can be worked out.

- 38.2 Executive Committee Meets. The first official act of Dr. Franklin S. Harris, Jr., the newly elected president of the UAS (see last Newsletter, 37.00), was to call a meeting of the Executive Committee. At his request, seven members of this group met in Salt Lake City on September 16th to discuss matters of Society policy and authorize new appointments and the organization of a new UAS chapter. Written opinions from members of the Executive Committee who were unable to attend because of distance were read at appropriate points. The following actions were taken:
- 38.20 General Secretary-Treasurer and Assistant Named. In accordance with the newly-amended constitution, which has changed the office of general secretary-treasurer from an elective to an appointive position, the committee asked Dr. Ross T. Christensen to continue in that position for an indefinite term of office. Miss Luana Collett, an undergraduate major in the BYU Department of Archaeology, was named assistant to the general secretary-treasurer.
- 38.21 Publication Committee Formed. The position of General Editor, created by a constitutional amendment in the last election, was filled by the appointment of Dr. M. Wells Jakeman, retiring president of the Society. As members of the Publications Committee, over which Dr. Jakeman will preside as chairman, the Executive group appointed Dr. Wilfrid C. Bailey, Alfred L. Bush, Dr. Ross T. Christensen, and Dr. Clark S. Knowlton. (At a later meeting of the Publications Committee called by the General Editor, Alfred L. Bush was appointed Editor of the Newsletter to succeed Dr. Christensen. Mr. Bush was also named Secretary of the Committee, with the other members to serve as Associate Editors of the Society's publications.)
- 38.22 New Director of Salt Lake Chapter. In view of his election to the Society presidency, it was necessary for the committee to release Dr. Harris from the directorship of the Salt Lake Chapter. To replace him in this position, Stanford G. Robison, former executive assistant to the director (December 9 Newsletter, 31.5), was appointed to this office.
- 38.23 Long Beach Chapter Authorized. A new chapter of the University Archaeological Society in Long Beach, California, proposed by Dr. Jakeman, was authorized (see below 38.30). Bishop Verne S. Handy was appointed Director. Both he and the new director of the Salt Lake Chapter automatically become members of the Executive Committee and general officers of the Society.

38.24 Decision as to the Lehi Stone and a Future Expedition. In view of difficulties which have arisen preventing the transfer at the present time of the Lehi Tree-of-Life Stone to the National Museum at Mexico City (see March 7 Newsletter, 33.00), the meeting authorized Vice-President Otto Done to take any action considered necessary in behalf of the Society, in negotiating on the matter with Dr. Eduardo Noguera of the Mexican National Institute. The Committee held to the decision, however, that the Mexican Government in the meantime use part of the amount provided by the Society in making a latex negative of the carving and plaster casts therefrom for the National Museum and the Chiapas State Museum, and in sending the negative to BYU for a plaster cast also for the Society.

The planning of another UAS expedition to the Central American site explored in the expedition of 1956 was also discussed and authorized.

### 38.3 Activities of the Chapters:

38.30 Long Beach Chapter. On August 19th some 40 persons interested in the archaeology of the scriptures met in the Long Beach Third Ward for the organizational meeting of the new Long Beach Chapter of the UAS. Dr. M. Wells Jakeman, who was visiting southern California between academic quarters at BYU, spoke to the group on the achievements and projected undertakings of the UAS. Bishop Verne S. Handy was appointed Director of the chapter (pending the approval of the Executive Committee; see above 38.23), at the brief business meeting which followed Dr. Jakeman's lecture.

At the September meeting of the Executive Committee, the Long Beach Chapter became the seventh chapter of the Society to be organized.

Following this first meeting of the new chapter, plans for the next three gatherings were reported to the editor of the Newsletter, including a lecture on October 21st by H. Thayne Johnson, who addressed the group on a subject pertaining to the archaeology of the Book of Mormon lands.

38.31 Campus Chapter. Official activities of the Campus Chapter at Brigham Young University for the new school year began with a quarterly business meeting on October 3rd. Luana Collett of Kaysville, Utah, who has recently been appointed assistant to the general secretary-treasurer of the Society (see above, 38.20), was elected to serve during the autumn quarter as president. Assisting her, Helen Harley of Los Angeles, California, and Rita Vance, whose home is in the Mormon Colony of Mexico, were elected to the offices of vice-president and secretary, respectively.

Carl Hugh Jones, retiring president, who was honored at the meeting by being named Honorary President of the Chapter, completed the evening by presenting a lecture illustrated by slides taken during the Smithsonian excavations in South Dakota last summer, in which he participated (see July 13 Newsletter 36.5 and below, 38.53).

On October 17th, Dr. Ernest J. Wilkins, assistant professor of Spanish at BYU, presented an evening of photographs and commentary on the recent BYU Tour of Book of Mormon Lands, which he had directed through Mesoamerica during the preceding summer.



The BYU field archaeology class at the Utah Lake "dig".

last spring. There were soon a 50-foot test trench run along the base line, with carefully cut sides, and squares being excavated by crews of two or three students at strategic points south of this trench.

Though the early work in the peripheral squares found many of the novices carefully recovering little more than the skeletal remains of gophers, soon everyone was coming up with substantial finds. By the third week, with a now "veteran" crew, what appears to be the central feature of the mound was discovered: the remains of a small wattle-and daub dwelling, which was supposed-

ly destroyed by fire, since beams of charcoal and scattered walls of daub which had been hardened by fire were uncovered. Also found in the vicinity were fragments of large jars, bone gaming pieces, flint points, stone utensils, awls, and bone fragments. Though uncooperative weather may bring this field work to a close soon and send the class inside for the task of cleaning, classifying, and interpreting the materials they have found, it is clear that this experience in practical "dirt archaeology" is one these students will not soon



Dr. Christensen supervises the removal of one of the more delicate objects.

forget. And from the professional manner with which this "dig" has been executed, it is also apparent that it has furnished the data for a genuine contribution to the field of Utah and Southwestern archaeology.

### 38.5 Activities of Individual Members.

38.51 Ross T. Christensen returned to his teaching responsibilities in the Department of Archaeology this autumn after a brief trip to Mexico City to appraise a private museum collection. This collection, which has recently been offered for sale to BYU, is composed mainly of artifacts from the valley of Oaxaca. The question of its purchase is still under study.

38.52 James Gillings, who left the campus last spring to join the New World Archaeological Foundation in its work on the Grijalva River, returned this fall. Mr. Gillings was with the NWAFF for a period

of almost two months, and returned to the United States after visits to several early archaeological sites including the Pre-Classic site of Cuicuilco near Mexico City.

- 38.53 Carl Hugh Jones resumed his studies at BYU after a summer of excavation in connection with the Missouri River Basin Archaeological Salvage Project in South Dakota and Iowa. These salvage projects are being conducted under the direction of the Smithsonian Institution in areas soon to be flooded by dams and other reclamation projects. Mr. Jones spent ten weeks excavating near Whitlock's Crossing, South Dakota, on a fortified village site under the direction of Mr. Carl F. Miller. Later, four weeks were devoted to survey and excavation in Iowa near the Corrville Reservoir where Dr. Warren W. Caldwell acted as field director.
- 38.54 Welby W. Ricks, UAS general officer, who was last year's recipient of the graduate assistantship in the Department of Archaeology at BYU, has had that grant renewed for the present school year. Dr. Ricks is teaching lower division classes in the Department.
- 38.6 Four Life Memberships Issued. Four new Life Memberships in the UAS have been issued since those reported in Newsletter 36. They are to Dr. Melvin J. Hatch of Midland, Michigan; Mrs. Mildred Henry Makin of American Fork, Utah; Bruce W. Warren of Provo, Utah, a charter member of the UAS and former editor of the Newsletter, presently with the New World Archaeological Foundation expedition in Chipas, southern Mexico; and Mrs. Katherine Wilcox of Murray, Utah, former assistant director of the Salt Lake Chapter. This brings the total number of Life Memberships in the Society to nine. Life Membership is available for a fee of \$50.00.
- 38.7 "Interamerican" Publishes on Book-of-Mormon Archaeology. In the July-October issue of The Interamerican, newsletter of the Instituto Interamericano of Texas, there appeared an article entitled "Mormon Archaeology." This brief statement of the major issues involved in the archaeology of the Book of Mormon was written by Professor Ross T. Christensen of the Department of Archaeology at BYU in response to a request from Carl B. Compton, Director of the Instituto Interamericano. Mr. Compton, who is also editor of The Interamerican, stated that his request for information was the result of many inquiries directed to his office regarding the relationship of the Latter-day Saints to archaeology. The Interamerican, one of the most lively newsletters in the field, should be congratulated for being one of the first non-LDS publications with scientific attachments to print a competent statement on the Nephite record. Inquiries and remarks concerning this article may be addressed to Carl B. Compton, 5133 NT, Denton, Texas.