

Find Remains of Eight Indians on Interstate 29



Archeologists from St. Joseph are investigating the discovery of a number of human bones along Interstate 29 southwest of Rock Port at the junction with Highway No. 111 at the Hunter farm on the road to Langdon.

First discovery was made Thursday when a new secondary road was being cut through by graders working for Potashnick Construction. Operations were immediately halted and Bill Herndon, State Highway Department district soil and geology specialist, was notified. Herndon in turn notified Mike Fisher of the St. Joseph archeological society and Don Reynolds of the St. Joseph museum shown in the picture above.

With Herndon, they began an extensive search of the area and have come up with at least eight separate sets of human remains from what was believed to be an Indian burial ground. Fisher indicated that these were apparently secondary burials explaining that the Indians first buried their dead on scaffolds and then reburied the bones later.

The men are looking for pottery and artifacts to give some indication of the age of the bones, but so far only one point has been found believed to be part of a spear head.

One large bone was found and speculation is that it may have belonged to a buffalo. Most of the bones are being forwarded to Missouri Archeologists at Missouri University for further study.

Dist. Engr.	<i>W</i>
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Office	
Survey & Plans	<i>19</i>
Materials	<i>JRS</i>
R/Way	<i>RW</i>
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*Duisenberg
Constr. Inc.
Potashnick*

9/28/73

MATT SHIPPEE ON ROCK CREEK SITE, ATCHISON CO., MO.

On September 27, 1973, color slides, flint points and an animal bone specimen were taken to Kansas City along with the preliminary site report for the purpose of getting any comment or recommendation that Mr. Shippee might have in respect to the age and culture of the burials. Also for advice on further disposition.

Mr. Shippee had been kept advised of the findings and progress at the highway construction find and the subsequent St. Joseph Museum preliminary investigation and salvage effort (described in previous report) but he had not seen the flint points nor the animal bone (#3 in report) that we suspected might be an ancient bison horn core. The large side notched point bases had been found in the highway fill area several days after the burial site was graded through and remaining portions of burials in the grader bank removed.

The following is from the conversation between Mr. Shippee, Don Reynolds and Mike Fisher as pertains to the Rock Creek site..

Upon being shown the point bases from the Rock Creek site Mr. Shippee immediately identified them as from the Old Copper culture.

Yes, Old Copper culture. This stone mason up here at Parkville..that Aker (R.B.).. He used to take Aker out when Aker was a boy.. and.. he found two that I have illustrated in here..(Mo. Arch. Soc. Research Series, No. 2, Oct., 1964)..and, my gosh.. one of them sure is a big thing! Livingston County, Mo. (A in Fig. 12) And Dr. Felling up in Platte County at Weston.. he has one of these. (B in Fig. 12) That's the one that Felling has right there. That's a tracing of it. Some old fellow brought that one (C in Fig. 12) to the Mo. State fair.. That's this one here. (in hand) I traced this thing about thirty years ago.. in this fellow's collection.. and about ten years after he died they were going to have an auction so I had to get up there.. and.. well, they wanted me to tell them what the artifacts were..and..I had this book along.. and laid that point down on it (the tracing) and they gave me the point. It's from the Edgar Archer collection.. he was the Circuit Court clerk.. collected around Liberty and probably down to the Nebe Hill. This was one of about twelve from highway 71 by-pass which now, I believe, is 291.. and it was just before it crosses the Missouri river, on the east side... and now the hill is completely gone.. because they have doubled the highway. One of these women from out at Raytown (Archaeological Club)..she found one (there) and it was one of these. (Old Copper culture) Aren't these something! (Fig. 14) There were a whole bunch of these and they are now up at Liberty at that little museum. The one that Aker bought from the fellow that he used to go hunting with, (Fig. 14, C) must have been at least twelve inches long. These two (A&B) were plowed out together.. this fellow walked in on this plowed field and found them. I'm pretty sure that's what you've got.. Old Copper culture.

Don. R.: Was the age on these points 5000 B.C. or years ago?

Matt S.: Well, it could have been 5000 B.C.

Don. R.: Do you think that the polish (on the points) means that they were ceremonial?

Matt. S.: I think that they were using something that polished them.. like ramming them into the dirt.. or actually polishing them for some reason. I think they are ... (Interruption)

Phone call to Matt from Dr. A. Johnson. Matt mentioned our Rock Creek discovery.. He told Matt that he hoped we saved some bones that were graded out. (We saved them all) Also that he thought that the Missouri Highway Department should start a highway salvage arrangement.

Mett S.: (After seeing slides) Yes, that's what you have alright.. You have some of this misplaced Copper Culture.. I wish somebody would get busy with it.

Mike Fisher: Notice the gloss on those. (Points) Mett: Yes..

Mett S.: There's a heck of a good picture.. (Showing broken ends of all points) You can really tell about the thickness of them.. Diamond cross section. Is that the first piece? (Point) I didn't notice that it was that kind of flint. Unusual..

Don. R.: That was a fresh break there.. The first point that we found.

Mett S.: There's no chance of stuff still being around there is there and showing up? Don. R.: Not likely.. Probably all in the highway fill.

Mike F.: We went out there with rakes.. and spading forks and everything.

Mett: That's where you found it? It was that far down.. Don R.: Just about a foot and a half into the loess. Mett: It's old.. You bet your life!

Don R. (Describing slides) Now this is the hill (Behind) starting from the right--a pan of three slides. Rock Creek is to your right. The view is to the east towards the Missouri river bluffs. The site was just behind the left hand highway department office trailer. The highway road cut through back there? D.R.: Yes, through that finger from the loess bluffs.

Mike F.: Now, the fact that it was in the bottom.. does that make any difference? Well, yes. Mike: Look how high the hills are in the bank and here is where the site was.. down in here. Mett: Yes, and that's what puzzles me.. that you are finding this stuff (Copper Culture) down there (Near the bottom) whereas down here (Kansas City area) it's always been on a high hill. More likely it should be on an overlook of the Missouri. I would expect it to be up on that hill back there.

(Behind to the east) Mike: Look at that high point up there.. (North of site) D.R. They are going to take that point off for fill.

Mett: You mean the point above the barn? What the heck is that?

Mike: Just part of the bluff.. They say it was higher years ago so there might have been a mound up there. D.R.: A man that lives just underneath it said he found two quarry blanks that he had up there.

Mett: That is unusual. (Very prominent)

D. R. View to north.. It shows depth of burials.. Graded right off..

Mett: Is this in loose dirt or where they actually occurred?

D. R.: In the grader bank. (Where they occurred.)

Mett: That looks like a flexed burial.. I believe it is. Mike: You think its flexed? Mett: Yes. D. R.: There was a patella on this end there.. Mett: Yes.. Because that was the knee. Mike: You don't think it's a bundle burial then? Mett: No, I don't. (Mett expands further his opinion by identifying more bones) (#2 area)

Don. R.: Now, that's the thing we are wondering about! We have that in the ear. Would like for you to look at it. It looked enough like a tusk or a horn that we put plaster around it. That's it again (slide) Dug out a little more.. See, it has a cylindrical shape.. (What's left of it) and..a texture of.. I'm not sure what.. It isn't exactly bone.. Could be a core of the tusk I guess. [I'll have to go out and look at that thing! (To the ear) (Mett S.)]

Mike F.: What's that red in there? That red puzzles me. I don't know if that is a stain or could be Red Ocher culture. (#2 burial)

D. R.: I don't know if that is pelvis or flattened skull bone. (#2 burial- Bones in poor state of preservation) Mett: God only knows.. I don't blame Johnson for saying that Missouri should have a highway project.

D.R.: I think so too: We have that (burial #2) in two pieces. Mett: Yes, with stuff like that coming up. De Chapman or any of these fellows know about this? D.R.: No, not yet.. We brought it down here so that you could see it first and make some recommendations on it.

Mike F.: You see, all these (bones) are exposed by the grader before we got to them. So.. what got dug out, we don't know. Mett: And what a heck of a place to expose them. (Angle grade) You have this whole thing? (Burial #2) D.R.: Yes, we have it in two pieces.

Mett: They (Highway contractor) sure want through something there that should have been investigated

D.R.: That's where it went.. (Slide of highway fill) All through that I guess. (Bone and artifacts graded from road area) Mike F.: They took the dirt (Graded burial area) out and put it on that fill.. D.R.: Except for what little that we could see in the bank (And excavated)

Mike F.: I guess that's me there with a spading fork trying to come up with some of the rest of these points from the fill. Don R.: We worked over about a hundred yards of that (fill) area. Mett: Looks like flat country.. D. R.: Yes, river bottom.. Mike: Back up in here (towards bluff) the terrace went up and that is where the site was. (More slides showed relation of site to loess bluffs) Mett: There's that knob.. The terminus of a ridge isn't it? Boy, I'll bet the Indians didn't miss that! (Prominent Knob on bluffs to north) Mike: I wouldn't think they would.. Where did that come from! (Animal bone in question shown in slide--From same level as burials) (Slide projector was reversed to show the area in which it was found in relation to other bones, depth etc.)

D. R.: Now on the right there, there's a good chance that there are more in there. (Burials) And, now later they are going to take that out of there. (Remainder of ridge to the west of disturbed burials in roadway) The land-owner wants to move it and the contractor and she have an agreement to move it over to the west and fill up an area that is low.. and the way it looks..surely there are more in there. (Burials)

Arrival of Mrs. Shippee. Rock Creek site slides were shown for her. More comment followed.

Mrs. Shippee, we were called up to north Missouri, Atchison Co., near Rock Port... They graded through a low bluff up there.. the highway department did... in the process of building I-29. They graded through several burials. We (St. Joseph Museum staff people) went up and searched the area.. and in the fill these large points were found by us and some of the people up there. Mrs. S.: I notice that the bases are significant. They are all the same aren't they. D. R.: You might wonder.. we did.. how many there were in the first place. There must have been more.. Mike F.: They were all fresh breaks too.. Mett: Look how thick they are. Mrs. S.: They were all made by the same people weren't they. Mett: Yes they were. And what's more there were human burials with them... Which we have never found before. No one ever excavated a site where they were so maybe the ones plowed up by farmers had bones with them that were not noticed.

D. R.: This and the next two slides show a pan of the complete area to the rear or east of the site. The burials were about one and a half feet down into the loess soil and over that about three and a half feet of "washed down" soil.. from the top.. it was mixed.. The person with us, Mr. Herndon, is a geologist, and he called it colluvial soil.. that on top.. and it wouldn't be from flooding. According to him it was mottled and was from wash down and erosion up on the bluff... which would take quite awhile. Now if it were flood plain and sediment it wouldn't take so long..it could be a matter of a few years I suppose. Mrs. S.: That would be alluvial..

Mett: These are good photographs. D.R.: Not as good as I would have liked. It was a bad day with rain and foggy.. I was concerned about soft light and maybe lack of contrast. Wish I had taken more film too. We left in a hurry.. We were kind of lost really.. When you get there and they have a pan of broken bones..like this.. (slide) and they tell you where they came from..now all graded away..and it seem like..to you..they picked them up later.. but probably saw them sooner.. Well, they finished the job. That's the impression that I got. I hate to say that, but I really

believe, just between us present, that the contractor hurried things up before... Don't you? Mike F.: You think he tried to turn his back on it? D.R.: I think he got his job done there.. Really.. At least, all but the finish work on the bank where the few partial burials were still exposed. Mike F.: Yes, he may have. D. R.: Because look how much lower he went than the burials. (New road level as compared to burial level in bank) Mike F.: And the thing that tipped it off is the fact that they said there were eight (possibly) in there. D. R. Yes, they must have known about the bone before they went this much lower. Mike F.: And out in the flat where they dumped it is where the points were found and where we found a lot of teeth and bone later on.

D. R.: But here's the disheartening part of it.. when we got there they were all standing around wanted to know what we could do and how long it would take to do it... Well, here we were.. two people..possibly three with Bill Herndon who pitched in to help since he had a personal interest in archaeology. (Highway man that took us up there) And here we were in almost mud.. You see the conditions! Mrs. S.: Most of that is bone isn't it? Yes it is bone, burials cut through by the grader blade. With the poor condition of the bone material it was hard to make much out of it. As we worked with it the bone was about as soft as the soil. It was some drier when we were called back for more bone exposed when the bank was being re-shaped. Now, we got to this and it is what worried us. (Animal bone-#3 area) You always have visions of mastodon tusks.. And you see the shape of that.. But deep enough into the loess? Or then I thought maybe bison.. an old bison.. one of the older ones (Because of the size) And haven't they been found as late as 7,000 B.C. or six maybe? Mett: Yes. Well I wonder, could that be what this is? Well it sure could because up here in Platte County we found a ... Schultz.. up in Nebraska, who is a pretty competent paleontologist, he said the bison.. Mrs. S. It's Bison bison isn't it? Mett: No, Bison antiquus. But it was right down on a bed of gravel up here in Platte Co. under this loess. The thing here.. this is only about a foot and a half into the loess.. and.. I guess.. really.. it should have been down quite a ways in it if.. Mett: No, Mrs. S.: No, not necessarily, it could have been eroded. D.R.: It was at the same level as the people.. their bones. Mike F.: You think it was? D.R.: Oh yes, absolutely. Mike F.: Why couldn't some of that have been washed off before it filled in? Could you have had a double action there.. or not? Well.. I don't know.. earth can be moved by erosion in an awful fantastic manner. D.R.: Well Mett, we want you to look at that bone to see what you think about it. Mett: I'm anxious to see that bone! D.R.: It's too big for a Bison bison horn core. Mrs. S.: Well now, what bone is it? D.R.: It looks to be the core of a tusk or horn.. But.. I'm just guessing.. I don't know.. but you say to yourself what is it? And common sense tells you it looks like this or that.. And old bison horn core is what I arrived at by that method. Mrs. S.: It hasn't been excavated yet? D.R. Oh Yes, we have it out in the car. We took it out in plaster of paris. That's the thing that worries us. (This horn bone or whatever it is) Now the bone in the burials, not so much.. then we hit this.. when I saw that I thought.. Oh my gosh.. this could put us on the spot! Because.. here we are.. a rapid excavation excavation.. we already had the rest of it mostly already out.. And we didn't take any pains..except to save what we could and take as many pictures..and couldn't make heads or tails of a lot of it because it was too far gone.. But then we ran on to this and that set me off..because here was something that could be looked at all over the country.. and what have we done to the rest of it? (What might we have overlooked?) Mike F.: We didn't find any artifacts with the burials.. they were with the bones out in the fill.. you see, they had already hauled them out. Mike F.: There were bones scattered all up and down this fill. D.R.: We didn't find any flint directly associated with burial bones, but there

is no doubt in anyones mind up there.. And Bill Herndon was there.. and others we asked.. all were satisfied (that it came from the burial area) Where else could it have come from? Because wherever you found bone (in the fill) is where they (and we) looked and where the bone was is where the flint points were found. Mrs. S. And so it almost means direct association. D.M.: I would think so. Mike F. There was even bone stuck to one of the blades.. You could see it. But if the bone that we have out in the car is something else, we can quit worrying about it.

Matt, after looking at the bone in the car, stated that in his opinion, it is the core bone from the horn of a Bison antiquus. He said that he would notify people at the University of Missouri.

From tape
of
Don R.