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VOLUME XIV DECEMBER, 1923

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MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

DIRECTORY

Edited by Rollin H. Tanner, General Secretary

OFFICE OF THE INSTITUTE
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AMERICAN SCHOOL IN FRANCE OF PREHISTORIC STUDIES, 1922–23

To the Council of the Archaeological Institute of America:

I have the pleasure of submitting to you herewith the annual report for the year 1922–23 of the Director of the American School in France of Prehistoric Studies for printing with the annual reports of the Institute.

Respectfully yours,

GEORGE GRANT MACCURDY,
Chairman of the Managing Committee.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE AMERICAN SCHOOL IN FRANCE OF PREHISTORIC STUDIES, 1922–23

To the Council of the Archaeological Institute of America:

Following my predecessor, Prof. George Grant MacCurdy of Yale University, I assumed the Direction of the American School of Prehistoric Studies July 1, 1922.

During the preceding year, by the kindness of Dr. Henri Martin a tract of land for excavation had been accorded the School, about one hundred metres to the east, that is, up the valley from the old classic station of La Quina, near Villebois-Lavalette (Charente Inférieure). This Mousterian station first explored by Mr. Chauvet, and later for many years by Dr. Henri Martin is famous the world over for the beauty, variety and abundance of its chipped flints and for the great quantity of animal bones carrying the traces of intentional working. The excavations of 1922 were undertaken in two places: one, the so-called Trench M of La Quina, and, second, a little grotto which we called Grotto O by reason of its position with regard to the former. (The trenches of La Quina are catalogued alphabetically from west to east.) Trench M is less involved than those of the classic station, such as Trenches B and C, as it contains but three strata clearly distinguished, as against a dozen, more or less, in the latter.

At the top is vegetable earth of about M. 0.50, then stratum 2 underneath, of gravel mingled with blocks and slabs of limestone of a thickness of about 6 metres, and then stratum 3 of river sand of about half a metre; this reposes on the rock. As in the old station, strata 1 and 2 are composed of a sort of talus that has rolled down from above and rests against the wall of the rock-shelter: its sub-strata are inclined at an angle of forty five degrees, exactly as do the strata of disintegrated cliffs in nature; this may be most clearly seen along the Valley of the Vézère and in the case of the mesas of the southwestern United States. These strata contain the implements

in stone and bone, and the fragments thrown away by the prehistoric inhabitants who lived and established their hearths on the plateau above or immediately on the overhanging corbels that line the valley at this place. Trench M is less rich in specimens than the old station where there is an indescribable conglomerate of stone and bone; nevertheless we succeeded in securing several hundred pieces large and small, of which some were of special interest. For the most part the industry is purely Mousterian, and the scrapers, knives and points, the utilized flakes, nuclei and hammers, resemble those studied and published by Dr. Henri Martin. However, there are certain features to be noticed.

First, we found in the upper part of Trench M several chipped axes recalling the small "coups-de-poing" of Acheulian industry; this recrudescence of the Acheulian towards the end of the Mousterian had already been noted by Dr. Henri Martin, but in small numbers, whereas we found as many as ten lying more or less near one to the other. On the other hand at the bottom of Trench M we took out a similar "coup-de-poing"; thus we have perhaps a left over of the Acheulian properly so-called, followed after a great number of years by a "renaissance" of the same industry; a similar phenomenon has been observed at Le Moustier and elsewhere; it rests however, unexplained; it may well be that, as it is probable that this site was never glaciated, the old palaeolithic specimens were left lying on the surface, and that at a given moment the Mousterians bethought themselves of collecting, using and imitating them. In the upper levels of Trench M there was a considerable quantity of Aurignacian specimens; we tried to establish a tentative line of demarcation at a depth of 2M. 90, but without entire success.

A single Solutrean point, a small "laurel-leaf" was found lying on a heap of soil that had been thrown down from above; it is possible that this, from the color of the soil adhering to it, had rolled down from above where it had lain undisturbed through the ages.

Quartz specimens, hammer-stones and fragments used or unused were not very numerous, but we considered briefly the origin of the series. It is certain that their presence in the trench is due to human influence; then where is their place of origin?

In a field across the Voultron on a plateau about six hundred metres distant is a collection of quartz pebbles which may be *in situ*, but which, also, may have been collected and deposited by man. It may be noted that this same field provided us with a good series of neolithic surface specimens, mingled with a sprinkling of earlier ones; so it may be that the quartz specimens are what remains of a sort of arsenal or cache established by the prehistoric inhabitants, as are the collections of sling stones found in certain Gallo-Roman forts in the Gard. But it is more probable that the La Quina quartz

pebbles were sought in a deposit on the plateau near Dignac where there is a thick gravel stratum with the quartz in place. According to Abbé Breuil this is a tertiary deposit and has nothing to do with later torrential or glacial action, as has been suggested. A trade-route of quartz pebbles may, therefore, explain their occurrence on the neolithic field and in the deposits at La Quina.

As during the preceding year, the fauna in Trench M represented large quantities of the bones of the horse, bison, ox and reindeer. There were but few bones left entire, but a great number of fragments bearing the marks of use — cuts, scratches, and the results of compression, active or passive. Since Dr. Henri Martin first called attention to this class of bone specimens, many such have been found in widely-scattered stations on both sides of the Atlantic; La Quina, however, still remains the classic station, and that most rich in artificially marked Mousterian bones. On one September day, to settle a bet, we went into the old section of La Quina, and in half an hour took out one hundred bone fragments. The same afternoon in the presence of Mr. Hubert of the Museum of Saint-Germain, Dr. Henri Martin and the class, it was unanimously agreed that the following proportions were correct:

Bones, worked or utilized	84
Bones, not worked	13
Bones, doubtful	3
Total	100

About half way to the bottom of Trench M we came across a very irregular stratum of loose soil containing hundreds of fragments of bones of small rodents and batrachians, intermingled with very small fragments of flint. According to Dr. Mayet of the Faculté des Sciences of Lyon, these represent the vomitings of owls, who must have been very numerous at that time. It is to be determined whether they can be used in determining the date of La Quina; whether it is interglacial, or rather to be referred to the interval preceding the Buehl Stadium. In general, we observed during the season that the specimens had a tendency towards localization, sometimes being found in a sort of pocket; this is hard to explain; water, and torrential rains which may have washed down from above accumulations of débris do not account for the phenomenon; it still remains a fact that sections of the Trench nearest the rock wall are often nearly sterile; this is understood when one considers the direction of the falling water which rolled the flints and bones over the cliff.

Besides Trench M we excavated in part a small grotto of tube-like form in height about 2 m. 50. The deposit was about two-thirds of the total grotto in depth; at the top was vegetable earth and

bones of recent animals, below this yellow clay, very hard for 1 m. 50, and under this slabs of limestone very difficult to distinguish from the native rock; this last was practically sterile. The yellow clay contained an industry almost exclusively Aurignacian, not very rich but with a considerable number of retouched blades. At a distance from the entrance of 3 m. 50 there is a hole in the roof which is now stopped up, but which must at one time have given entry to the yellow clay; it must have been formed after the Mousterians departed from the region and have become blocked again during Aurignacian times; this provisional explanation may be revised with further excavation, if another means of entrance for the deposits is found. At the same time below the hole in the roof there are in the rock the marks of trickling water, so that it is likely that some of the contents entered the cave by this way. During the season nothing of very great rarity was found, save perhaps a tooth of lion or large panther, animals rare at La Quina.

In a previous preliminary report mention was made of the courtesy of the French savants and of our French friends. Mr. Hubert of the Museum at Saint-Germain and Mr. Passemard, the excavator of the cavern of Isturitz very kindly gave lectures to the School; Dr. Henri Martin followed the Director with a lecture on palaeontology every afternoon, and the hospitality of his family will long be remembered; Mr. Peyrony accompanied the School during an excursion at Les Eyzies, and through the courtesy of Count Begouen it was possible for the students to visit Trois Frères and Tuc D'Audubert. Later in the fall the students were invited to preliminary museum walks. At Saint-Germain, Mr. Hubert, at the Museum of Natural History, Professor Marcellin Boule and at the Musée Carnavalet Mr. Alcanter de Brahm, personally addressed them. Facilities for study and for following lecture courses were arranged for the students at the Ecole d'Anthropologie, the Sorbonne, the Institut de Paléontologie Humaine, the Louvre and the Museum of Saint-Germain. In the month of June, 1923, theses or reports were presented by the three scholarship holders and one of them, Mr. Noguera of Mexico City remained in Paris until July.

It is impossible to accord too much appreciation to the French professors and the officers of the Scientific Societies; every opportunity that could be taken advantage of, was freely offered and offered in the tactful way that makes the pleasure in accepting it so much the greater. Dr. Rivet of the Société des Américanistes de Paris freely offered the rooms and the excellent libraries of the Societies to the students. It is hard to say what we should have done without this privilege.

CHARLES PEABODY.

October 15, 1923.