They Dig Missouri's Past

Start with the name, Missouri. It's Indian. So are corn, Irish potatoes, tomatoes and peanuts. So are tobacco and chicle, moccasins and the sleeping hammock, domesticated turkey and the guinea pig, handball and the quonset hut. From Niagra Falls to Walla Walla, from Tallahassee to Kahoka, Mo., Americans owe much to their country's Indian heritage.

No one is more conscious of this debt than the archaeologists of the University of Missouri, who this summer directed the most extensive salvage operations of any group in the United States. As one person put it, "The Indian of historic times disappeared from Missouri before the advancing flood of white men. Now the records of their prehistoric ancestors are destined for the same fate under the rising waters of Missouri reservoirs."

With the cooperation of the National Park Service, which is underwriting the projects extensively, and the Missouri Archaeological Society, University scientists are attempting to obtain and record irreplaceable historical and cultural information before it is lost forever behind the huge dams. In South Missouri the areas around Bull Shoals, Pomme de Terre, and Table Rock all have been worked, as has the Joanna vicinity in North Missouri.

Although the great emphasis since 1945 has been on salvage, Missouri has a broad program of archaeological research.

"The state has a vast storehouse of human history that is just beginning to be tapped," says Dr. Carl Chapman, director of archaeology research activities in the University's Department of Anthropology. "It almost staggers the imagination when we consider that the Indians were here more than 10,000 years ago, 30 times as long as we have been. There are more than 50,000 of their campsites, mounds and other works scattered in every part of the state."

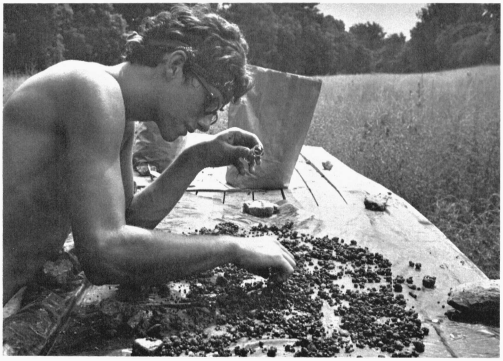
The archaeological survey of Missouri, conducted jointly by the University and the Missouri Archaeological Society, has recorded more than 12,000 of these sites, and a thousand members of the society enthusiastically search for the remains of the earliest Missourians.

It wasn't always thus. Thirty years ago, little was known about Missouri's history before Marquette and Jolliet journeyed down the Mississippi River in 1673. Everyone knew Indians had been here for a long time, but the solid evidence of thousands of years of occupancy was missing.

Impetus for an effective archaeological organization was provided by two professors, the legendary Jesse E. Wrench and J. Brewton Berry, in

Control is the archaeologist's watchword. All material not inspected piece by-piece is carefully screened. The location of any discoveries then is noted accurately on a grid map.

Tedious search for tiny fragments, such as rodents' teeth, is made by student Robert Owen from diggings at Rogers Shelter. A one-foot square column out of every five is hand checked.



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the early thirties. Wrench and Berry contacted interested persons throughout the state, and in 1934 the society was born. Missouri has been an archaeological leader since.

This summer the Anthropology Department held its 21st annual field class in archaeological method at the University's Lyman Archaeological Research Center and Hamilton Field School near Marshall. During the eight weeks both undergraduate and graduate students studied at the early historic village site of the Missouri tribe of Indians, at an ancient Archaic (5000 B.C.) site near Sedalia, and at an historical American site at the town of Arrow Rock. The classes were under the direction of Robert T. Bray, assistant professor of anthropology.

The Missouri State Park Board has enabled the University to give special attention to visitors through an interpretative museum on the center site. The Board provides a full-time student archaeologist at the museum and helps underwrite some of the costs of research and interpretation. Throughout the state park system, the park board and University cooperate to recover, preserve, interpret, and display archaeological finds. This summer, in fact, a field group of five archaeologists worked at the site of a new state park in Mississippi county.

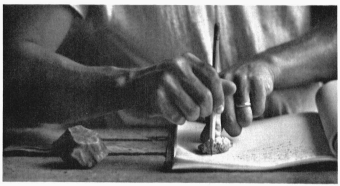
Another state park, Graham Cave, became the first archaeological site in the nation to be designated as a National Historic Landmark.

Located near Mineola, in Central Missouri, Graham Cave is known to have existed more than 9700 years ago, through the process of radiocarbon dating. Stone spearheads similar to those used 12,000 years ago have been found on the floor among other evidence of fires once built by Indian men and women. Graham Cave has provided portions of the story of a people who, 10,000 years ago, hunted the mastodon and mammoth, and then later became small game hunters and berry gatherers.

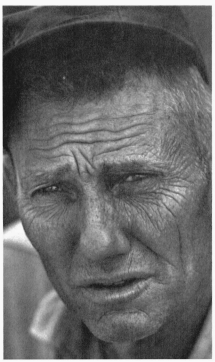
This, of course, is part of the romance of archaeology, piecing together the history and cultures of peoples, often from thousands of broken artifacts and seemingly unrelated bits of evidence. If all this sounds a little like putting together a jigsaw puzzle — it is. But each piece, the scientists point out, is dependent on someone who found, recorded and interpreted it in order for it to fit with the other pieces of the past and make the total picture.

In their book, *Indians and Archaeology of Missouri,* (published by the University of Missouri Press), Carl Chapman and his wife, Eleanor, see this value in their field: "Our own culture, our civilization, is so complex and we are so involved in it, unconsciously as well as consciously, that we have difficulty in looking at it objectively to see how and why it works. If we turn to the Indians and to the past, we can look at simple, less complicated ways of living, and as we are not involved in that way of living, we can look at it more objectively. . . . It is even possible to see the effects of potentially

In the field, archaeology has many similarities to hard work. The researchers are racing against time: The Rogers Shelter area, located in Benton County, will be flooded by Kaysinger Dam waters by 1971.



Field cataloging specimens is an important part of the long day of an archaeologist. The descriptive record of the find is then permanent even if the specimen itself is later destroyed or lost.



A 10-year veteran of the University's archaeological team, technician Roland Pangborn, headed the Stockton Reservoir project.

destructive inventions such as the bow and arrow, which was as greatly advanced a weapon in Missouri at approximately 800 A.D. as the atomic bomb is in our own time."

This, obviously, is a statement of lofty purpose, and the romance of the task was noted earlier. But when an observer visited Rogers Shelter in Southwest Missouri this summer, the site of the most extensive Missouri diggings, what he saw looked like work. There were shovels, mattocks, hand trowels, knives, pencils and lots and lots of record sheets. Dirt and perspiration covered most of the glamour. It's also another case of researchers working against time, because Kaysinger Bluff Dam on the South Grand and Osage rivers will flood the site area, located in Benton county, by 1971.

"Rogers Shelter is an important archaeological site in any context," says Dr. W. Raymond Wood, University director of river basin archaeology at Columbia. "It contains the longest single cultural sequence in Southwest Missouri, and its deposits, laid down over thousands of years, extend to a depth of 30 feet. The locality provides the finest possible opportunity to reconstruct the environmental history of the western Ozarks from the time the area was inhabited by mastodons to about 1200 A.D."

Mastodon bones were found in some of the spring bogs near Rogers Shelter as far back as 1839, but as yet no such bones have been proved to be associated with early man in the area.

Under supervision of the University, scientists from the Columbia campus, the Universities of Kansas and Arizona, and the Illinois State Museum are accumulating significant data on Indians, geology, climate, animal and plant life during the 10,000 year period. Research Associate R. Bruce McMillan is the University's on-site field director.

Started in 1963 as basically a salvage program with support from the National Park Service, an $18,000 grant last year by the National Science Foundation enabled the research to be expanded. This June the Foundation added another $35,900 to help the work even more.

One of the significant finds has been a Plainview projectile point, which in discoveries elsewhere dates back about 10,000 years. In an Early Archaic deposit about 8000 years old, researchers came across a dark-stained area some eight feet in diameter containing four centrally-located hearths, which could represent the remains of a house. If it does, it would be the first record of such houses in the Ozark Highlands. Evidence of a canine burial may indicate one of the earlier instances of dog domestication in America.

In Mississippi and New Madrid counties in Southeast Missouri, Dale R. Henning, director of American archaeology at the University, is directing investigation of several highly promising sites which will be destroyed by leveling operations to ready the land for irrigation.

"Southeast Missouri had a large prehistoric Indian population for thousands of years," he said, "and was a center of cultural developments."

Six important prehistoric sites make up this project. One near East Prairie is known as Hoecake and contains the remains of at least 31 mounds ranging up to 100 feet in diameter and nine feet above the surrounding grade. On Hoecake, 67 ten-foot squares at least two-feet deep have been excavated. Twelve houses have been uncovered, as well as a number of food pits and fire places, and hundreds of various artifacts.

There is, of course, still much more to be learned about the archaeology of Missouri. But each day new light is shed on pre-recorded history through the efforts of hundreds of amateur archaeologists working with the archaeologists of the University of Missouri.

"Some day when you are driving down a back road near a stream," says Dr. Chapman, "your curiosity may be aroused by the sight of several people walking across a cultivated field. They will seem oblivious to the surroundings, keeping their gaze to the ground as they search the fields systematically.

"If you should stop and inquire about their unusual actions, you might stay and join them, for they are enthusiastic people having fun looking into the past." □