

Find Relics of Old Culture Here

Gunther Island Indian Burials Are Explored by Eureka Man

By GEORGE BESHORE

What kind of people lived along the shores of Humboldt Bay back in the old days before the coming of the white man? How did they live, what type of civilization was it? What was their medium of exchange, their type of government, their daily and annual activities? In short, what type of culture did they have?

These and many more are the questions that are asked by the more curious present-day inhabitants of the region, and it is in search of the answers to these questions that archaeologists, amateurs and professionals, pry into prehistoric burial places and camping sites of the ancient peoples.

A recognized authority on the subject is Dr. Robert F. Heizer, of the department of anthropology and archaeology at the University of California. And Dr. Heizer recommends another investigator of the subject, Dr. H. H. Stuart, Eureka dentist, who has been "digging into" the subject for the past 22 years in a scientific manner as a hobby, and who has come up with an amazing collection of the prehistoric Indians' mode of Indian artifacts and insight into living.

Pursuing his hobby of Indian archaeology, Dr. Stuart has dug into more than 500 Indian burials on Gunther Island in Humboldt Bay alone. He has dug into many other burials, both in Humboldt county and elsewhere, but his work on the island stands out as the only extensive piece of scientific work in the investigation of the island's past. Dr. Stuart was neither the first nor the last person to dig on the island, but he has done the most extensive archaeological work that the island can claim.

FIRST TEST TRENCH

Back in 1917 Llewellyn L. Loud of the University of California sank a test trench seven feet deep and 115 long along the island and published the results of his work in a University of California report. This interested Dr. Stuart, and ten years later, in 1927, he began digging on the island. It was during the next ten years that Dr. Stuart carried out his work with careful scientific preciseness so that he has every burial he found carefully noted on a map and numbered with notes on the depth of the burial, conditions of the bones, artifacts found, and similar data. Then in his huge collection of Indian relics, each piece is numbered so that he knows immediately from which burial it was taken.

In the late 1930s the Eureka high school became interested in starting a museum, and the late Superintendent George Albee took over digging on the island. Under the supervision of Miss Cecile Clark, students and WPA workers did a tremendous amount of work and many fine specimens were procured for the school. Unfortunately, due largely to the personnel used for the digging, no accurate records were kept. Since the Indians broke almost everything they put into a burial, making many items unrecognizable to the untrained eye, it is also likely that as much or more material was left in the burials as was removed.

But during the ten years that Dr. Stuart dug on the island, records that are noteworthy were made and many strange artifacts found that give us an insight into how the Indians of Humboldt county lived before the coming of the white man.

BURIAL PLACE

Dr. Stuart makes no estimate as to the length of time the Indians used Gunther Island, but Loud claims that it was used as a burial place for at least 2500 years. However, Loud believes that the Indians did not use the island for a regular camping place until the past 200 years, if they ever used it as such. He is inclined to believe that it was used only as a burial ground, but Loud's time estimate differs considerably from the estimate made by some archaeologists that Indians have inhabited this region for less than 1000 years.

The Indians who buried on Gunther Island were the Wiyots, according to Dr. Stuart. After the coming of the white man this tribe was almost completely wiped out, and only their graves remain to tell us how they lived.

What appeared to be the oldest burials were entirely cremations. Burying of the body without first burning it apparently came in much later and was practiced only during the past few hundred years. In both the burial and the cremation, however, the Indian's personal property such as his spearheads, arrowheads, knives, and even ceremonial implements which are known to be highly prized, were buried with him. In both the cremation and the burial, the tools were deliberately broken into several pieces and scattered through the grave.

It was the belief of the Indians that the spirit went to the "happy hunting ground," and that by breaking a knife, its spirit was also freed to travel with the In-

dian to the new life. Even in the case of pots and dishes, holes were punched in them or pieces broken out.

CEREMONIAL KNIVES

Among these broken implements are found huge ceremonial knives made of polished red or black obsidian. Holding them in the middle, the Indians brandished them during ceremonials. They were apparently all traded into this region, coming from the mountains where obsidian is found in large enough chunks to allow a big knife to be made from it, and cost many elk teeth, many ornamental beads, or maybe a canoe. But even though they were the mark of wealth, they were broken when the Indian died, and they went into the grave with him.

But one object was never broken. That is the "slave killer," a big stone ceremonial implement with an animalistic shape and a tail by which it was held during ceremonials. The name comes from a record by a Russian captain who, while ashore at a spot somewhere in British Columbia, witnessed the ceremonial being held for the building of a huge communal hall.

According to the Russian captain's report, the Indians danced about, then the leader killed four slaves, each seated at a corner of the space to be the hall, with a stone weapon shaped like an animal, which he had been brandishing during the dance.

What is the significance of the "slave killer?" That is a question since they began digging into the mounds and finding these strange objects. Why was it never broken before burial or cremation when the big, beautiful, highly-valued obsidian ceremonial knives were relentlessly broken? Those are the questions aroused by these strange devices.

Found only among west coast peoples, the "slave killers" are found up and down the Pacific coast from the Eel river north to Alaska. None have ever been found south of the Eel river, and Dr. Stuart estimates that 75 per cent of the "slave killers" ever found have been dug up in Humboldt county. Apparently they passed completely out of the Indians' culture before the coming of the white man, because no Indian has ever been able to tell an archaeologist anything about these strange objects. No legends about them have ever been heard, and their part in the Indian culture is a complete mystery.

What stage was the Indian civilization in when the white man entered this region? Dr. Stuart believes that the Humboldt county Indians had perfected the art of making stone and bone implements and that the Indians, living in a stone age civilization with no written records, had reached the peak of the civilization when the white man came into Humboldt.

"No white man has improved upon the design of the Indians' bone salmon spears," Dr. Stuart cites as an example. Although we make them out of iron, a product that the Indians didn't have, we use the same design that the Indians used.

WOVE NETS

The Indians wove nets to catch fish and developed the pocket net, used by the white man today in fishing. They designed unique fish traps in the sloughs and rivers, proving their great ingenuity. Their stone and bone tools were not rough pieces of rock, they were polished and perfected implements showing the finest kind of workmanship.

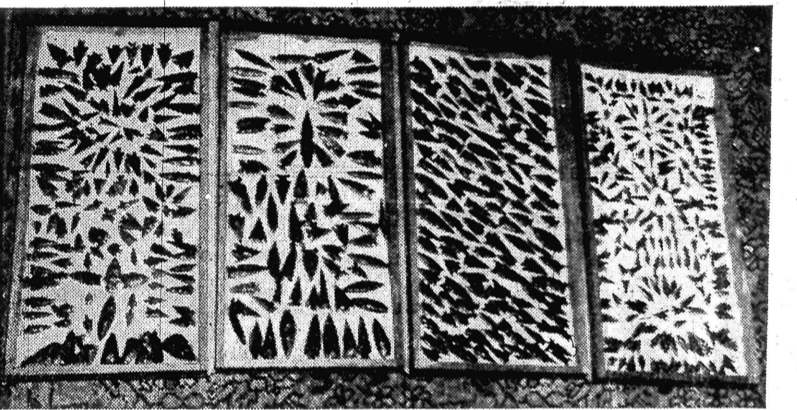
"These Indians were as artistic and highly civilized as any in the United States," Dr. Stuart claims. Not warlike as were the plains Indians of the middle west, they lived in isolated tribes and traded occasionally with others up and down the coast and up the rivers.

About 8000 Indians lived around Humboldt Bay, Dr. Stuart estimates. They lived in homes along the sloughs that extend back into the woods of the inland around here, up and down the rivers, and villages were located on both the north and the south sandspits of Humboldt Bay. Dr. Stuart further believes that they all buried their dead at Gunther Island.

"I've dug into more than 500 burials there and an untold number have been explored since," he comments. "It takes a long time to get that many graves into a cemetery despite the high mortality among the Indians."



A collection of Indian artifacts including two of the obsidian ceremonial knives on each side, two pipe stems, and two slave killers in the center. At the top are two adz handles and at the bottom is a slate paddle, apparently only for ceremonial use.



A few of the many arrowheads that Dr. Stuart has in his collection of artifacts that he has dug up in Indian mounds.

Living in isolation from other sections of the country the Indians here worked together on many projects such as the salmon runs when they caught and speared fish, dried them, and laid them away for winter, the felling of redwood trees, from which they made their canoes, or the building of a communal hall for the tribe's use during ceremonials.

CANOE BUILDING

When it came to building a canoe, a number of Indians gathered at the foot of the tree that had been selected and took turns at chipping out pieces of the butt of the tree by using a stone mallet and an elk horn wedge. After the tree was felled, it was trimmed, shaped into a canoe, and then the process of heaving out the center began.

A shallow trough was chopped out, then a fire was started to burn the center. After each burn, the Indians cleared out the charred wood with a gouging instrument made of stone with a sharp bone cutting blade. Here again they show their ingenuity. Instead of using a straight gouging instrument, which would have caused them to skin their knuckles when the instrument glanced off the wood by accident, they had a curved implement so the end would go against the side, taking the blow to keep the Indian's hand from receiving it.

The gouging and burning process was repeated until the Indian worked the redwood log into a canoe with sides about three inches thick. They undertook balancing of the canoe while constructing it so that it would not turn over in the water. Thus, they built their canoes from which they fished on the bay and the rivers of this region.

The Indians of this region had learned to mold and bake clay as Dr. Stuart has two clay pipes in his possession, taken from Indian burials. They never developed dishes, however, using instead soapstone for any bowls they needed. It is believed that they usually used their hands in eating, and perhaps never felt need for developing a clay dish.

TOY BOWLS

Remarkable among the artifacts found are miniature pestles and bowls, modeled after the larger ones used for grinding which Dr. Stuart found in graves with children's bones. They are toys, he believes, indicating that the Indians thought a great deal of their children because the two grinding implements are made with the same careful workmanship found on the larger instruments.



Close-up of a "slave killer." What was the significance of these strange ceremonial objects that seem to have passed completely out of the culture and knowledge of the Indians?

The Humboldt Indian was a master at basket weaving, and fragments of baskets have been found showing workmanship comparable to those turned out today. Although an Indian allegedly couldn't count above 20, the patterns with intricate designs woven in are usually perfect. The squaws apparently carried the patterns around in their heads, as they had no way to write them down.

Elk roamed through Humboldt in those days, and most of the burial sites contain elk bone implements. However, in all his digging, Dr. Stuart has never found the elk teeth which make handsome ornaments. In digging over in the Sacramento valley he found elk teeth ornaments, but never here, posing another question. Perhaps the elk teeth were so valuable as trade goods that they were traded up the rivers to other Indians, but could they have traded all the elk teeth out of this region? Like the slave killers, the missing elk teeth are an archaeological mystery that remains to be solved.

Nature was bountiful along Humboldt Bay with many fish to be caught on the Indians' carefully made bone fishhooks, elk and deer roamed the forest to be shot with bows and arrows or trapped in the elk traps that they laid carefully, and the Indians had only one domesticated crop. This was tobacco, which they raised in small patches amid the forests. The Indians again showed their ingenuity in raising this tobacco.

PLANTED TOBACCO

They had learned by experience that tobacco grew best in an alkaline soil, so they heaped up the prospective field with brush, burned it, then piled on more brush and burned it. When a thick layer of ashes remained, they planted the tobacco. As a dentist, Dr. Stuart was particularly interested in the dentition of these Indians. In all the teeth examined, he never found a

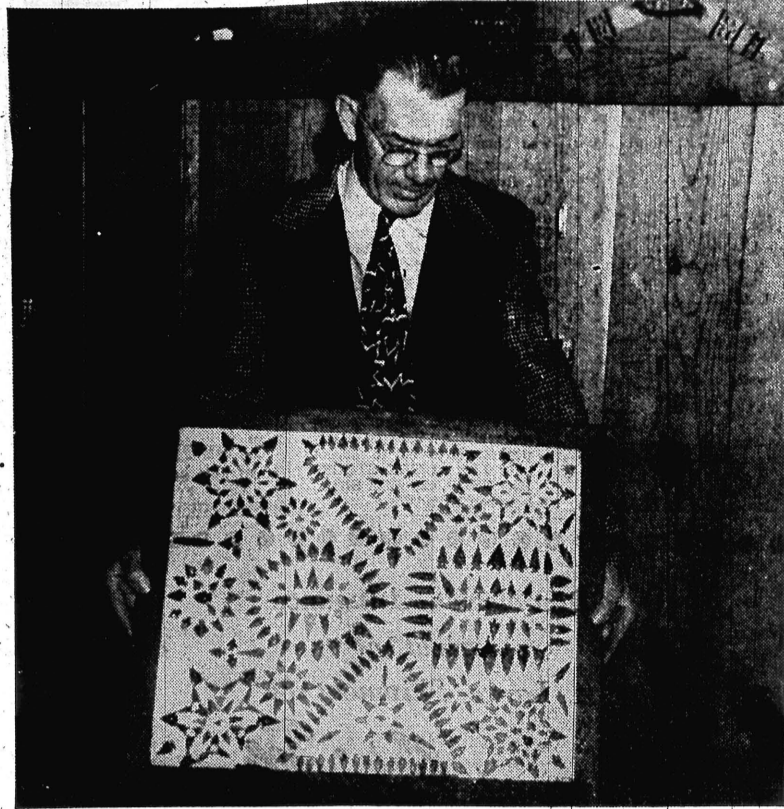
single cavity. A large percentage of the Indians had fine looking teeth.

The Inidans were, however, subject to gum diseases and also some of them suffered from impacted lower third molars. Due to the hard usage they gave their teeth, unfortunately, by middle life they had often worn their teeth down to the nerves and many subjects showed as many as a dozen badly abscessed teeth with the consequent misery attending. From this they had no recourse to a dentist, either.

With the bountiful natural resources, the Indians had a busy life here, however, Dr. Stuart states. Not only did they have to hunt and fish for game, fell great redwoods and slowly work them into canoes, chip off flakes of stone until they had designed a perfect arrow head or fish spear, and perform similar duties of making a living, but they also had many ceremonials. The Indian took his religious life much more seriously than the average present day person, and he spent hours in preparation for and execution of many religious ceremonials each year.

Isolated except for occasional trading expeditions to other tribes, the Wiyots lived on the rich shores of Humboldt Bay. To the south were the Mattoles, the Yuroks were north, especially along the Klamath, and the Chilulu and the Hupa lived inland. Trade goods passed back and forth from tribe to tribe and hunting was good. Stone and bone implements were perfected as the Indian sat for long hours working the elk horn spoon or the stone knife into perfect form.

Artistic ornaments were made and basket weaving perfected along with fish spears and fish nets. The stone age civilization of Humboldt Bay was at its height. Then the white man came.



A mounted collection of arrowheads, all taken from Indian burials by him personally, is displayed by Dr. H. H. Stuart, Eureka's leading amateur archaeologist.

Louis Angry—So Used Car For Battering Ram

LOS ANGELES, Aug. 13 (P)—Louis LeFranc, 36-year-old contractor, was sentenced to 30 days in the pokey today for using his auto as a battering ram in an argument with his wife.

Officers who arrested LeFranc on a charge of drunk driving, told Municipal Judge Mildred L. Lillie that the episode went like this:

Louis and his wife, Netta, were having a midnight reunion in a bar with a schoolyard chum, Marian Beville. When Louis objected to their talk about the old alma mater, the women walked out and climbed into Miss Beville's car.

Then LeFranc bashed his own car into Miss Beville's — twice. Next he sped around the block and smashed it from another angle.

Robert Hayden, who drives a street sweeper, maneuvered his machine between the two cars in an effort to halt the battle. But Louis pushed Miss Beville's car away — and bashed it again.

Officers found Louis an hour later. Two cars were parked in front of his home. Underneath one of them was Louis LeFranc — sound asleep.

Skeeters—Now Come Chiggers

MERCED, Aug. 13 (P)—Merced county residents, long troubled by mosquitoes, were told today they probably will be pestered by chiggers in the near future.

The report came from Edgar Smith, manager of the Merced county mosquito abatement district. He said the tiny red mites have been spotted, in adjoining Stanislaus and Fresno counties.

"We expect reports of them here at any time," he added. Smith said no control measures have proved successful against the chiggers.

Abatement district directors meanwhile urged county supervisors to deny Snelling Gold Dredging Co., a permit to shallow mine near the town of Snelling. Smith said dredger pits breed mosquito carriers of malaria and sleeping sickness.

Third Offer Made To Purchase Fruit

BERKELEY, Aug. 13 (P)—A third offer to buy California Gravenstein apples and Bartlett pears was announced today by the Department of Agriculture. It will bring purchases of apples to 150 carloads, and of pears to at least 450 carloads.

Prices under the third offer will not be announced until next Monday. Apples were taken at \$1.90 a box and pears at \$2.15 under the two previous offers.

In each case the department specified it would buy up to 50 carload of apples and 150 of pears. Today's announcement said a minimum of 150 cars of pears would be bought, indicating more may be taken.

Purchases will be made from growers, growers agents or associations of growers. Offers must be received by noon, next Tuesday, Aug. 16. Apples will be handled by the Santa Rosa office of the Agricultural Conservation association and pears by the Sacramento office. Deliveries will run from Aug. 17 through Aug. 21.



Dr. Stuart holds three "slave killers" that he has taken from Indian mounds.



Dr. Stuart holds two of the huge obsidian ceremonial knives that were highly prized by the Indians and used during their religious ceremonials.