

## THE CRUMP BURIAL CAVE.

(BLOUNT COUNTY, ALABAMA.)

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This cave was discovered in the summer of 1840, by Mr. James Newman and some of his friends while hunting. It is located on the banks of the southern branch of the Warrior River, in Murpheys Valley, Blount county, Alabama, and is in the steep limestone cliffs where the river entered a gorge and left the valley. The entrance to the cave was about 400 feet above the stream and 50 feet below the plateau above. The opening into the cave was so small that a man could scarcely crawl into it. Procuring lights, the hunters entered the cave. They found it perfectly dry, the air pleasant and cool, and the rooms sufficiently large to accommodate the rather large party of young men. A short distance from the entrance was a room, which proved to be a "burial cave" of the aborigines. They found eight or ten wooden coffins of black and white walnut, hollowed or cut out of the solid, after the fashion of the "dugout" canoe. The coffins were sent to the Smithsonian Institution, where they have been restored as far as possible, and are now exhibited in the department of prehistoric anthropology. Eight have been restored, and there are in addition many parts of coffins. The coffins are about  $7\frac{1}{2}$  feet long, 14 to 18 inches wide,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches thick, and 6 or 7 inches deep. They have been hollowed out by fire, aided by stone or copper chisels, or hatchets. Traces of the use of both implements are to be seen on the inside. The ends are open, as shown in Fig. 1 of the accompanying plate. (Pl. VI.)

In proximity to the coffins were twelve or fifteen human skulls, and also a large number of human bones. These were scattered around, showing that there had been disturbance after burial, whether by beasts of prey or otherwise could not be determined. If there were bones of other animals, it was not observed or not reported.

There were five or six wooden trays—one was secured and sent to the Smithsonian Institution. It is 18 inches long, 12 inches wide,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches thick at the bottom, reduced to thin edges at the top, and 3 inches deep. Also six small wooden bowls, a fragment of one only being secured. Scattered about, but near the skeletons and coffins, were found the

following objects: About 200 pounds of galena, some of the larger pieces being rudely grooved, similar to the aboriginal stone axes and mauls, as though for warclubs—*casse-tetes*; a number of arrow and spear heads and other relics; a small copper hatchet, a copper chisel about 5 inches long, and about twenty copper ornaments, most of these having small holes drilled as though for suspension; six or seven large shells (*Fulgur carica*); some shell disks and beads and pieces of wooden matting about 6 inches square, made of bark or cane and much decayed. One of the copper chisels and some of the galena were in one of the coffins.

The opening of the cave was enlarged, and became a place of some celebrity, being visited by the citizens, neighbors, guests, etc., who carried away such things as suited their fancy. The skulls were carried away by doctors, and the beads were appropriated by the children, while others broke up the galena and carried it away for the purpose of making bullets.

The cave remained in this condition for twenty or more years. During the war for the suppression of the rebellion, the cave was excavated for saltpeter, and was also a hiding-place for refugees. The coffins were badly damaged, as is shown by their present condition, but fortunately were not destroyed. How they could have escaped use as firewood is scarcely imaginable.

The late Rev. William Crump owned the land on which the cave was situated, and from whom it takes its name, and his family still owns it. They had in their possession a few years ago, a number of copper objects, a few stone implements, and two of the large shells, one of which was used at the blacksmith shop for pouring water on hot iron. I made effort to obtain these relics, but failed. They permitted me to visit the cave and collect the coffins and pieces there, which I hauled a distance of 30 miles to the railroad, and shipped them to the National Museum. I spent some time on different occasions in visiting this cave and talking to Mr. James Newman and others who discovered the cave, and obtained from them the facts which I have here recorded and which I regard in every way as reliable. That the cave was a very old burial place is undeniable.

There is a small mound at the foot of the bluff in the narrow river bottom, and around it a number of relics have been plowed up, one of which was a "stone wheel" with a groove around it, probably used as part of a machine for drilling holes in stone and copper.

About five miles north of the Crump Cave, on the mountain of limestone just beneath the overhanging cliff of Millstone Grit, I found and forwarded to the Museum an Indian ladder which stood against the precipice and had been used to mount or climb up to what the people call a "rock house," *i. e.*, a large, roomy, dry place under overhanging cliffs of stone, probably used like the cave, for burial purposes. This ladder is the trunk of a cedar tree about 8 inches in diameter, is about



OBJECTS ILLUSTRATING PREHISTORIC BURIALS. (Bronze age.)

Fig. 1. Hollowed oak coffin, containing skeleton of a man. (Treenhoi, Denmark.)

Fig. 2. Woman's woolen dress found in oak coffin. (Borup-Eshoi, Denmark.)

Fig. 3. Detail of woman's woolen dress. (Denmark.) A similar specimen in the U. S. National Museum. (Cat. No. 136615.)



14 feet long, has 7 or 8 steps, 18 or 19 inches apart, made by cutting into the tree a scarf about 6 inches high and 2 inches deep. Near the foot of the ladder, but out in the open air, was a rock mound of good size, from which some relics had been dug by parties hunting for buried Indian money.

There are many such houses in the coal measures, and they were used by the aborigines as dwelling or burial places. I have found human bones, and in one instance some beautiful arrow-heads, in a number of such places among the mountains. The aborigines would lay their dead away in rock crevices in wild and retired spots, and cover them with stones enough to protect them from wild animals and leave them in the "Eternal Silence." I have in some instances sent the bones to the Museum; in other cases I left them undisturbed. I have walked many miles for the purpose of making similar investigations through the country formerly belonging to the Creeks or Muscogees, when it was impossible to ride and dangerous even to walk.

In the year 1881 I visited the site of a former Creek Indian village in Brown's Valley, Marshall County, Ala. This was a village of friendly Creeks. They had helped Gen. Jackson in the war against their countrymen, and after peace was made, he removed and settled them on lands of the Cherokees until they were sent west of the Mississippi. The early settlers told me that when one of the Creeks died, they buried him in a corner of one of the huts or wigwams, which in this village were small houses made of logs after the manner of the white settlers, and that when a person was buried in each corner of a hut, it was pulled down and removed to another spot. I had no means of verifying this report. In the Cherokee country they buried their dead in caves in some instances, but generally in the ground, like Americans.

REMARKS BY MR. THOMAS WILSON.—While this method of coffin burial was unusual, if not unknown in the United States, yet there were similar burials among the prehistoric peoples of other countries. In the center of one of the display rooms in the great Prehistoric Museum at Copenhagen stand two coffins, similar in appearance to those just described, made of the cloven and hollowed trunk of an oak tree (Pl. CI, Fig. 2). One came from Treenhoi and the other from Borum-Eshoi, Denmark. One contained the body of a man; the other that of a woman. The skeleton of the man had crumbled away; that of the woman was well preserved. From the remains of the clothing they have been able to reconstruct the garment of that period (Pl. CI, Fig. 3). The material was wool, which had been closely spun, and was of the color known in the United States as "butternut"; whether that was the original color, or whether it had been changed by contact with the oak coffin, was not determinable. The garments consisted of a high cap, a wide, roundly cut mantle, a sort of tunic, pieces of wool which had probably covered the legs, while at the feet were

remains of leather or skin, which had possibly been shoes. The cap was without a visor, and it and the garment were covered with a projecting knotted thread, which hung down. The tunic was kept together with a long woolen belt, which went twice around the waist, was knotted in front, and the two long ends hanging down were decorated with fringe. At his left side lay a bronze sword in a wooden sheath lined with skin. At the foot was a round wooden box containing a smaller box of the same kind, which, in its turn, contained an extra woolen cap, a horn comb, and a bronze razor. The bodies in both burials were wrapped in cow-hide. The woman's coffin contained a bronze fibula, or safety pin, a bronze dagger with a horn handle, a spiral finger ring, two bracelets, a torque, and three round and beautifully decorated bronze belt plates of different sizes, with points projecting in the middle.

There is in the National Museum a square of the same cloth from a similar burial, obtained by myself at Frederichsund, a detail of which, the fiber and mode of weaving, can be seen as shown in Fig. 3 of the plate. In these cases the coffins were different from those at Crump's Burial Cave, the corresponding upper half of the tree trunk having been hollowed out and serving as a coffin lid.

The *London Chronicle* (1767) reports the opening of a mound (barrow) near Wareham, Dorsetshire, wherein was found a human burial in the hollowed trunk of an oak tree. The bones were wrapped in a covering of deer skins sewn together. And here was found what was considered a piece of gold lace wrought into lozenge pattern. (Mrs. Bury Pallister, *History of Lace*, p. 3.)]