

Intermarriage and Smallpox Wiped Out El Paso's Early Indians, TWC Museum Curator Believes

Mansos and Sumas Tribes Disappear

By MARSHALL HAIL

When the Spaniards came through El Paso more than three centuries ago they met some Indians called Mansos and Sumas. Today there is no trace left of these earliest E. P. residents.

What happened to them? Rex E. Gerald, newly appointed curator of the Texas Western College Centennial Museum, believes two things caused the Mansos and Sumas to vanish: smallpox and intermarriage.

The Spanish explorers and priests told of finding Indians in the Pass, referring to them as non-agricultural hunters and gatherers.

"There is no evidence that these Indians made their permanent homes here," Mr. Gerald said. "They probably were hunting parties from tribes that lived a little farther up the river."

"When the Franciscan missionaries founded Guadalupe Mission (Juarez) in 1599 they brought some of the Mansos down from about where Las Cruces is now and Sumas up from the Fort Hancock area. They were converts who helped to settle the mission town."

"Lacking immunity to smallpox, they probably caught the disease from Spaniards and other Indians and died. Others intermarried, and they were wiped out as a separate tribe."

"Only the Apaches survived. They remained aloof from the Spaniards. Consequently they were not much exposed to smallpox, or to intermarriage."

Mr. Gerald believes that El Paso is the center of an important archeological area and that a lot of digging and exploring should turn up interesting information about the prehistoric peoples and animals that roamed the Southwest.

An anthropologist and archeologist, Mr. Gerald plans to do some exploring and digging himself. He said that Casas Grandes in northern Chihuahua is "a tremendous archeological zone," and that the Hueco Mountains, Big Bend, and other sections around El Paso promise of future discoveries.

"I hope to enlist the aid of



NEW CURATOR—Rex E. Gerald, new curator of Texas Western College Museum, shown with a few of dinosaur bones and pottery specimens which cannot be exhibited for lack of space.

amateur archeologists," Mr. Gerald said. "Many of the amateurs in the Southwest are as good as professionals."

Mr. Gerald praised the work of his predecessor, Col. M. H. Thomlinson, who has retired. "He has built up the museum greatly," Mr. Gerald said.

Mr. Gerald hopes that something can be done about one of the problems that faced Colonel Thomlinson. As museum collections were enlarged and new

ones added, space became inadequate.

At present there are various collections, such as dinosaur and mammoth bones, Indian artifacts and historical material, that cannot be exhibited. They are stored in the basement.

Both Mr. Gerald and Colonel Thomlinson hope that some way can be found to finance construction of wings to the present museum building.

"All museum specimens are

not of exhibit quality, of course, but they are valuable as study collections," Mr. Gerald said. The basement lacks room for such study collections and table space for visiting scientists who might wish to use those collections.

Mr. Gerald was born in Stanton, Texas. He attended grammar school at Hobbs and high school at Midland and received his bachelor of arts degree at the University of Arizona. He got his

Archeological Projects Planned

master's degree at the University of Pennsylvania. He is now working on his Ph. D.

Mr. Gerald was a fellow with the Amerind Foundation at Dragoon, Ariz. Recently he helped dig two sites, one of them a perfect Pueblo village, which showed that the Pueblo Indians lived centuries ago in southeastern Arizona, farther south than they were supposed to have lived.

He has worked on both sides of the border and hopes to do more research in the Casas Grandes area of Chihuahua, as well as to check reports of recent archeological finds south of Juarez.

"Very little is known of the Pueblos above El Paso, or about the earliest occupation of the El Paso area," Mr. Gerald said.

Mr. Gerald said present evidence indicates the earliest people in North America were arriving from Siberia via the Behring Strait between 10,000 and 15,000 years ago. Spear points found with extinct bison and mammoths indicate that man lived in New Mexico and Arizona 10,000 years ago, he added.

"There have been finds near Denton, Texas, which, according to dates estimated by carbon examinations, indicate man may have been in that area 37,000 years ago," Mr. Gerald said. "But this has not been fully substantiated by other finds of comparable age."

First Meeting Outside Texas Slated by Group

The first meeting of a Texas chiropractic group outside the state will be held Saturday at White City, N. M.

Dr. Leon Halsted of El Paso, West Texas district president of the Texas State Chiropractic Assn., said New Mexico chiropractors in the Carlsbad Caverns area have been invited to attend.

The program will be directed by Dr. J. C. Cox of El Paso. Speakers will include Dr. William Fauset of Monahans and Dr. William Gentry of Marfa.