

Wilmington, California  
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Walter S. Campbell  
University of Oklahoma,  
Norman, Oklahoma

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Perhaps, if it is not too great an imposition, you can help me in solving a minor mystery that has been puzzling me for a number of years. Your factual books of the Old West lead me to believe you can enlighten me.

This mystery concerns a skeleton that was uncovered by a road gang in the Southeastern part of Oklahoma, in 1937. The skeleton, presumed to be that of an Indian, was uncovered by a dynamite blast during the road building. It was badly shaken up by the blast, but examination showed that it had rested in a wide crevice (filled, no doubt, after burial) between two good-sized rocks, in an almost standing position. The crew-boss was a friend of my dad, and mentioned the incident to him the same afternoon. I was about seventeen then, and the story captured my imagination. I learned that the skeleton was in the possession of the county Sheriff, and went to his office to look at it.

In addition to the main members of the skeleton, the road gang had brought several shovelsful of earth from around the skeleton. In this earth there were smaller body bones, white and blue beads and carved ornaments of bone and animal claws. In pawing over the pile of bones, I found part of a flint arrowhead imbedded in one of the vertebra. I scratched in the dirt until I found a piece of flint that matched the broken arrowhead perfectly. The point was stuck in either the front or rear face of the vertebra -- it did not occur to me then, that the arrowhead could have entered through the front of the body and struck the spine. It was in his backbone, therefore he was shot in the back!

I persuaded the crew-boss to let me visit the site next day. There, I conducted an enthusiastic, if not systematic, search of the adjoining country for more skeletons. I sifted the earth where the original find was made, and recovered a double-handful of beads and bone ornaments. I found no more skeletons, however.

In talking to old-timers of the community, I learned that five or six other skeletons had been found very near the same location. I also learned that a nearby watering place had never, in the memory of the oldest old-timer, been dry -- an indication that it might have been a favorite Indian camp ground. A search of Oklahoma history books at a school library turned up nothing. It was decided that the deceased was an Indian because the bones were of a reddish color. This seemed pretty flimsy evidence to