

# The Case of the Missing Buck Ranch Mortuary Remains: A Mystery Partly Solved

Henry C. Koerper

## Abstract

Recent attention focusing on the winter 1930-1931 discoveries at the Buck Ranch prehistoric burial ground in Huntington Beach raises the question of the present whereabouts of missing artifacts and human bone removed from the site by local amateur archaeologist Herman Strandt (Chace 2008). The present article discusses evidence and circumstances leading to the rediscovery of some Buck Ranch mortuary remains at the Bowers Museum of Cultural Art, Santa Ana. A multi-holed steatite tablet recovered at Buck Ranch was pivotal in this sleuthing, and ironically, for several years it had been hiding in plain sight in a Bowers exhibit that showcases various talismanic effigies of the regional portable cosmos.

## Introduction

A just published *Pacific Coast Archaeological Society Quarterly* article by Paul Chace (2008) located the former Buck Ranch prehistoric burial ground, placing it near the present-day intersection of Edwards Street and Varsity Drive in Huntington Beach (Figure 1). Buck Ranch was situated near an area once called Wintersburg.

Chace (2008) also revisited events surrounding the discovery of this mortuary site. His primary sources include 1930-1931 newspaper accounts from which one learns that prior to anyone taking charge of archaeological investigations at the Native American cemetery, members of the public, alerted to the findings by media coverage, descended on the area

and carried off skulls and artifacts not already pilfered by persons working on or near the ranch property. Herman F. Strandt was eventually in control of the dig (Anonymous 1931b), which became known as the “Wintersburg excavations” (see Anonymous 1953); he was a local amateur archaeologist who had acquired a reputation as an expert on regional Indian lore (see Koerper and Chace 1995; also Koerper et al. 1996).

The first announcement of the discoveries appeared in a *Santa Ana Register* December 27, 1930, article that was repeated by the paper on Monday, December 28 (Anonymous 1930a), followed by a December 29 story (Anonymous 1930b) giving more specifics. Much of the archaeological information was in error, such as the idea that some of the deceased had been buried standing up, that all were male, that the area had possibly been the site of a great battle, and that these Indians raised corn. On December 30, *The Huntington Beach News* published its story (Anonymous 1930c) and touted the Indian cemetery as “believed to be the oldest in the State of California” yet later gave the estimated age of the burial ground as only about 200 years. The ancient battle scenario was repeated. The *Register* provided a captioned photograph on December 31 showing an excavator holding a skull in front of human skeletal

remains in situ (Anonymous 1930d). On January 1, *The Huntington Beach News* (Anonymous 1931a) rehashed the story.

It was in a January 2 *Los Angeles Times* article (Anonymous 1931b) that Herman Strandt's name made its first appearance, as far as I am aware. Strandt, according to the *Times*, was placed in full charge of the excavation by officials of the Orange County Historical Society. Strandt "shattered the opinions given in first reports that many warriors had been killed in battle and were given one common burial in the cemetery." Strandt's leadership of the project was

repeated in a January 15 *Huntington Beach News* article (Ruoff 1931). In 1967, Paul Chace examined the 1930-1931 minutes of all regular and special meetings of the Orange County Historical Society and found no record indicating that the Society had any connection to the Buck Ranch excavations (Chace 1967). Had Strandt received but a casual nod from the Society or perhaps from its then-president Dr. C. D. Ball, or did he take some liberties with the truth? The January 8, 1931, *Huntington Beach News* follow-up noted that the cemetery contained children, women, and men, but erroneously reported that these people had raised corn, potatoes, and tobacco (Anonymous 1931c).



Figure 1. Location of Buck Ranch and Wintersburg. (Map is an adaptation from the *Orange County Directory*, 1936, pg. 22.)

Contemporary racist/ethnocentric ignorance and insensitivity found its way into the article, to wit, there was the observation that the physical attributes of the skulls were typically those of “savages of a rather low type in the scale of civilization and mentality.”

Chace (2008:46) lamented that no professional study of any of the artifacts or human remains was ever published, since “the skulls and other materials from the [Buck Ranch] location have not been traced.” Herein, some of these materials are traced to the Bowers Museum of Cultural Art, Santa Ana. For the record, an eminent forensic scientist, Cyril Courville, M.D., did in fact publish specific osteological notes, albeit flawed, on one of the Buck Ranch skulls (Courville 1952:153, Figure 3f, 159).<sup>1</sup> Unwittingly, Courville also presented repackaged ideas that reflected some questionable speculations previously proffered by Strandt (1935, 1965). Also, another professional scholar, E. K. Burnett, published a brief discussion and illustration (1944:47, Plate 49) of a tablet-like ornament that had probably come to the Heye Foundation, Museum of the American Indian, via Strandt from the Buck Ranch burial ground. Later in this essay, detailed information is provided on the just noted skull and ornament.

Chace offered the strong suspicion that several crania from the burial ground may have ended up at the Bowers Museum. The former Museum Technician and Archaeologist of the Charles W. Bowers Memorial Museum explained:

Recently, some of the skulls in the Aldrich Collection at the Bowers Museum were noted as being labeled “Huntington Beach” (Sherri Gust, personal communication, 2006). These specimens may have been acquired from the ranch workers and curiosity seekers at the Buck Ranch discovery in 1930-31, or even from Strandt. [Chace:2008:46]

It is now possible to identify with high confidence certain materials among the Bowers holdings that almost certainly had been collected from Buck Ranch in the winter of 1930-1931. The first major break in this case revolves on the match of an artifact described in contemporary Buck Ranch discovery news accounts to an artifact (Figure 2) presently in a gallery exhibit at the Bowers Museum of Cultural Art.

### **Hiding in Plain Sight**

Among the resurrected newspaper stories, mention is given to a relic (see Figure 2) so distinctive that it could easily be identified if rediscovered. It was described in a *Santa Ana Register* article (Anonymous 1930b) as a four by five inch stone object with slightly rounded edges and with seventy quarter inch diameter holes in fairly even rows. A later *Huntington Beach News* story (Anonymous 1931a) repeated the description verbatim; earlier, however, a *Huntington Beach News* reporter (see Anonymous 1930c) had referred to the holed artifact as “about five feet by six feet with seventy round holes in it.” This same article (Anonymous 1930c) noted the object was flat, smooth, and made of gray slate, adding that it was “one of the greatest curiosities found.” This artifact (Figure 2) has been hiding in plain sight in the Richard P. Ettinger Gallery at the Bowers. A more complete description is offered in the section that follows.

Additional relevant information is contained in Strandt’s amateurish and at times fanciful discussions regarding local burial practices that he prepared for State Emergency Relief Administration (SERA) Historical Research Project #31-F2-96 in 1935 (reproduced in a 1965 *PCAS Quarterly*). Chace (2008:46) surmised that Strandt’s treatment of mortuary customs probably contained data on the Buck Ranch burial ground, noting similarities between artifact descriptions from an unspecified 1930 dig (Strandt 1935, 1965:30-32) and artifact descriptions in the contemporary media accounts (see Chace 2008:46).

Strandt's SERA manuscript (1935, 1965:31-32) contains detail regarding a "medicine man's burial." Within the artifact inventory associated with this individual there were a necklace of 210 limpet rings, an exotic cowrie shell (*Cypraea moneta*) (see Koerper and Whitney-Desautels 1999:84), 11 well-crafted slender knives of high quality stone ("jasper, opalite, and agate"), an obsidian turtle-shaped effigy, a finely polished bone medicine tube, a tubular red stone pipe, and "one ceremonial stone with thirty-eight holes." Could the 38-holed ceremonial object and the 70-holed

tablet in the nearly eight decades old news story be one and the same? Almost certainly they are.

To explain, there seems to have occurred a transpositional error in Strandt's 1935 (see also 1965:32) reporting of this unusual burial good. In his paragraph following reference to the multi-holed ceremonial stone, Strandt provided information relating to the inhumation of a girl whose grave furniture included a pecten shell with tiny shell beads inlaid with asphaltum around the edge of the artifact. "It took

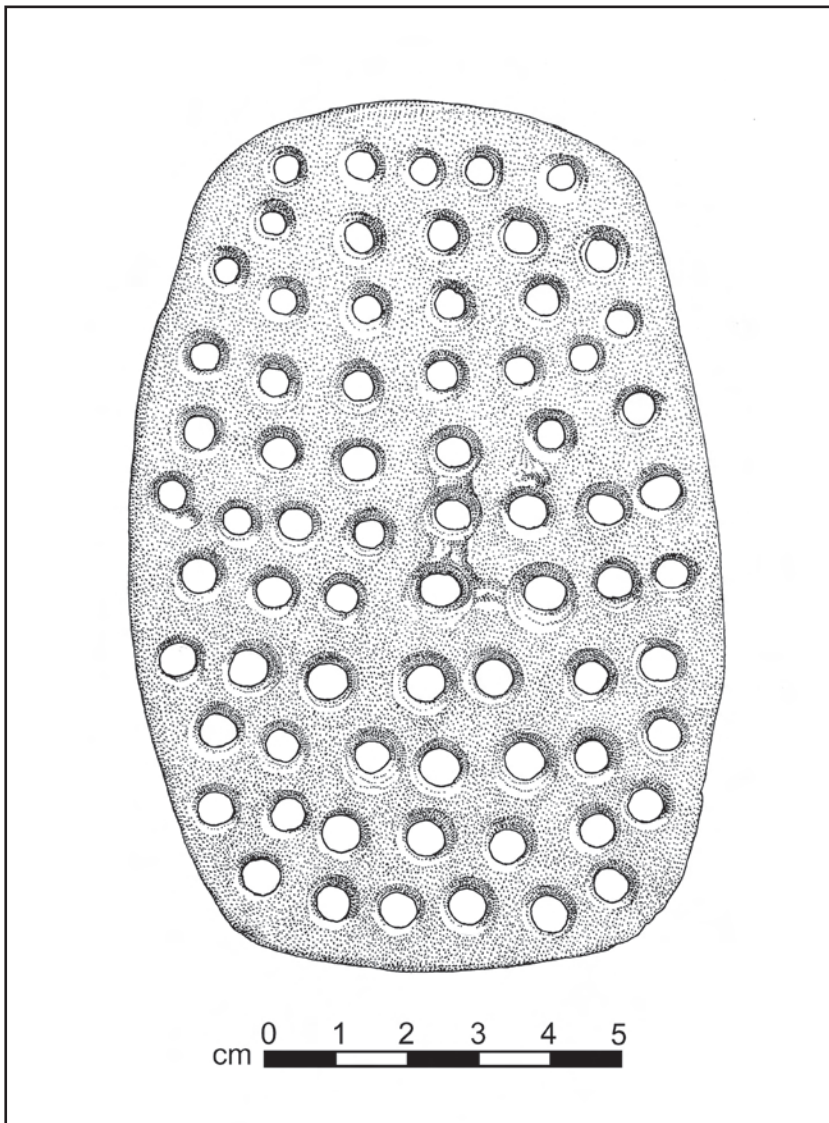


Figure 2. Multi-holed tablet from the Buck Ranch burial ground, Huntington Beach. Courtesy, Bowers Museum of Cultural Art.



thirty-eight of them [tiny beads] to make an inch in length.” Assuredly, Strandt miswrote in his description of the tablet, for the probability of such a numbers coincidence (“thirty-eight” soon followed by another “thirty-eight”) is remote.

### The Specimen (Bowers Cat. No. 80223)

The Bowers Museum had not connected their artifact #80223 (Figure 2) with Orange County. A number of years ago, when I directly handled the multi-holed tablet and when at the same time artist Joe Cramer rendered the piece, the museum’s locational notation cited Point Mugu, Ventura County. In the intervening period, for whatever reasons, the Ventura County

provenance was expunged from the museum’s record. In 2002, the late Armand Labbé, Bowers Curator, offered a somewhat generic provenance, the Channel Islands (Jennifer Ring [Collections Manager Bowers Museum of Cultural Art], personal communication 2008). Perhaps Labbé was thinking in terms of place of manufacture, an educated guess following first from the material of the object (steatite) and perhaps from a knowledge of similar artifacts found on two of the Channel Islands (see Figure 3).

The specimen measures 123 mm in length and 84 mm in width. At the time I took these measurements (ca. 2001), I neglected to document either thickness or weight. Only recently have I again viewed the

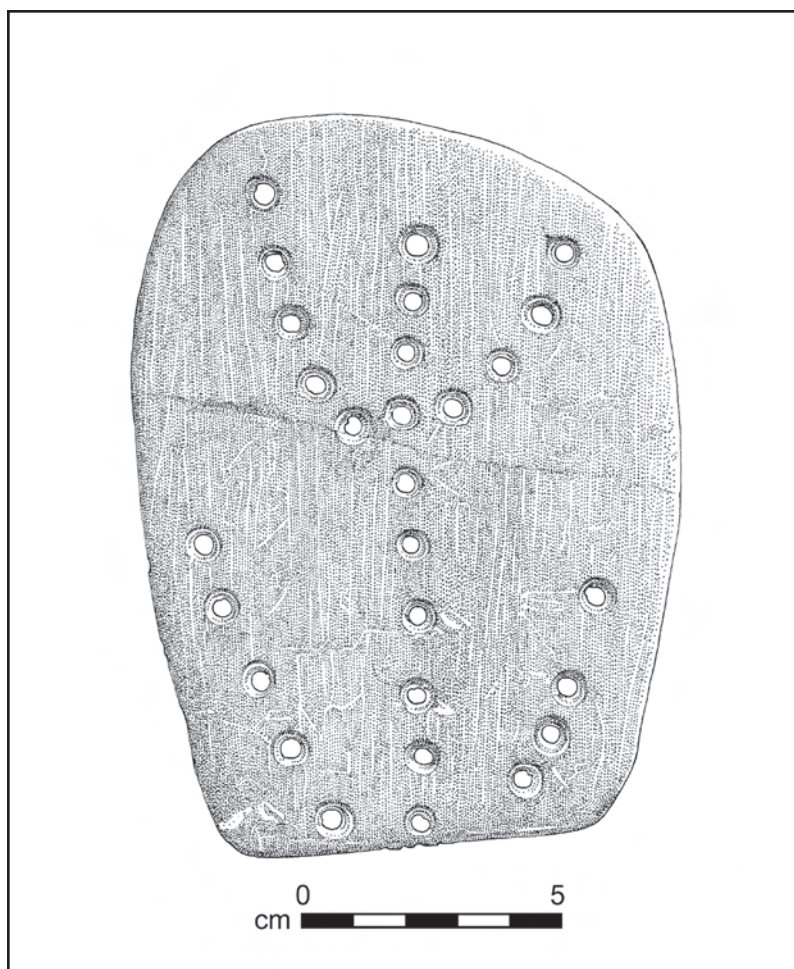


Figure 3. Multi-holed steatite tablet from Catalina Island. Catalina Island Museum specimen G-152, Glidden Collection. (After photograph provided by the Catalina Island Museum).

artifact, but because it is displayed in a sealed case, I can offer only a visual estimation of thickness, 5 to 7 mm. Its relative thinness and holey design together project an ethereal quality, a most unusual look set against other artifact types known for the regional portable cosmos.

Method of manufacture included grinding with an abrasive stone. Obverse (side illustrated, Figure 2) and reverse faces are relatively smooth, but neither is finished to the degree that the term “polish” would be an appropriate characterization.

Effort had been directed toward achieving a palpable degree of symmetry. Seen in plan view, the artifact reflects a compromise between rectanguloid and ovoid design. The 70 perforations are laid out in rows. Starting at the narrow end, there are two noncurvilinear rows of five and then four holes, followed by curved rows of 6, 7, 6, 8, 7, 7, 7, 7, and finally 6 holes. Other attention to aesthetics includes fairly uniform thickness.

If there is any magic/meaning to the numbers or arrangement, it remains elusive. Similar multi-holed tablets offer little help since the numbers of holes differ among them. Further, holed tablets (see Figures 3 and 4) show different arrangements of perforations and/or divots (e.g., Bates 1972:18-20, Figure 4; Hudson and Blackburn 1986:218, Figures 318.9-76, 219, Figures 318.9-77, 318.9-78; McCawley 1996:Figures 28, 29; see also Gifford 1947:35, 98, X3b1). The Catalina Island specimen shown in Figure 3 has 28 holes arranged in what could possibly be a representational motif. Another Catalina Island example is quite small and has but two columns of five perforations each (see Hudson and Blackburn 1986:182, 218, Figure 318.9-76; McCawley 1996:99, Figure 28). The multi-holed tablet having the greatest number of perforations is also from Catalina Island (see Hudson and Blackburn 1986:182, 219, Figure 318.9-77).

Two biconically drilled, thin tablets, both slate, one with three roughly parallel columns of perforations (9, 11, and 11) and one outlier perforation (Figure 4a) and a smaller specimen with seven rows of perforations (5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 4, and 2) (Figure 4b), were recovered at LAN-270 in Long Beach (Bates 1972:18-20, Figure 4). Bates (1972) places them in the “Late Horizon.”

A recent steatite find in this genre comes from the Late Prehistoric/Mission period mortuary/mourning area of LAN-62, located near the Ballona Wetlands (Koerper et al. 2009). This Ballona Creek specimen helps corroborate Chace’s (2008:42) Late Prehistoric time placement for the Buck Ranch tablet and other artifacts. However, because of significant breakage, no estimation of hole number for the once-complete artifact is attempted for either surface. Also, except for a single hole that is a perforation, the remaining holes (obverse and reverse) are deep divots, not breaking through to the opposite side.

The shape of the Buck Ranch specimen (Figure 2) has little to recommend it as a utilitarian item. Any speculation that the holes had served to keep shell bead blanks in place to facilitate drilling is weakened by the fact that it and other such tablets are not robust but rather are thinly constructed using easily breakable stone (steatite or slate). Consequently, there would have been great risk of a tablet fracturing from pressure exerted using a drill bit. The best case in point is this extremely thin Buck Ranch artifact, its vulnerability compounded by a high ratio of perforation area to intact surface area. Also, the generally careful arrangement of holes to produce geometric designs seen on most tablets tends to belie, albeit weakly, the hypothesis of a bead blank drilling platform. Interestingly, an ovoid slate tablet from Santa Cruz Island, which may or may not belong to the genre under discussion, has 40 drilled holes, but within 26 of the perforations there remain shell beads adhered with asphaltum (Gifford

1947:35, 98; also Hudson and Blackburn 1986:219, Figure 318.9-78).

There is no use wear in evidence on the Buck Ranch holed tablet. The fact of its association with a burial feature makes it a sacred object. Possibly, it had also functioned as a talismanic effigy in shamanic practice.

The LAN-62 holed, steatite tablet was associated with a mortuary/mourning area (Koerper et al. 2009). Also, the smaller LAN-270 slate tablet (Figure 4b) was part of a sacred cache, it having been placed into a Giant Egg Cockle (*Laevicardium elatum*) that also contained

two limpet ring beads. Egg cockles, both Giant and Little (*L. substriatum*), and Great Keyhole limpet (*Megathura crenulata*) beads were frequent mortuary offerings in the Late Prehistoric period.

### Tracking the Buck Ranch Multi-Holed Tablet

The ritual object pictured in Figure 2 was unearthed at Buck Ranch in 1930. On March 10, 1962, this tablet entered the Bowers Museum as part of a large donation known as the Aldrich Collection (sea shells and prehistoric Indian artifacts). Where had it been in the intervening thirty-one and a half years?

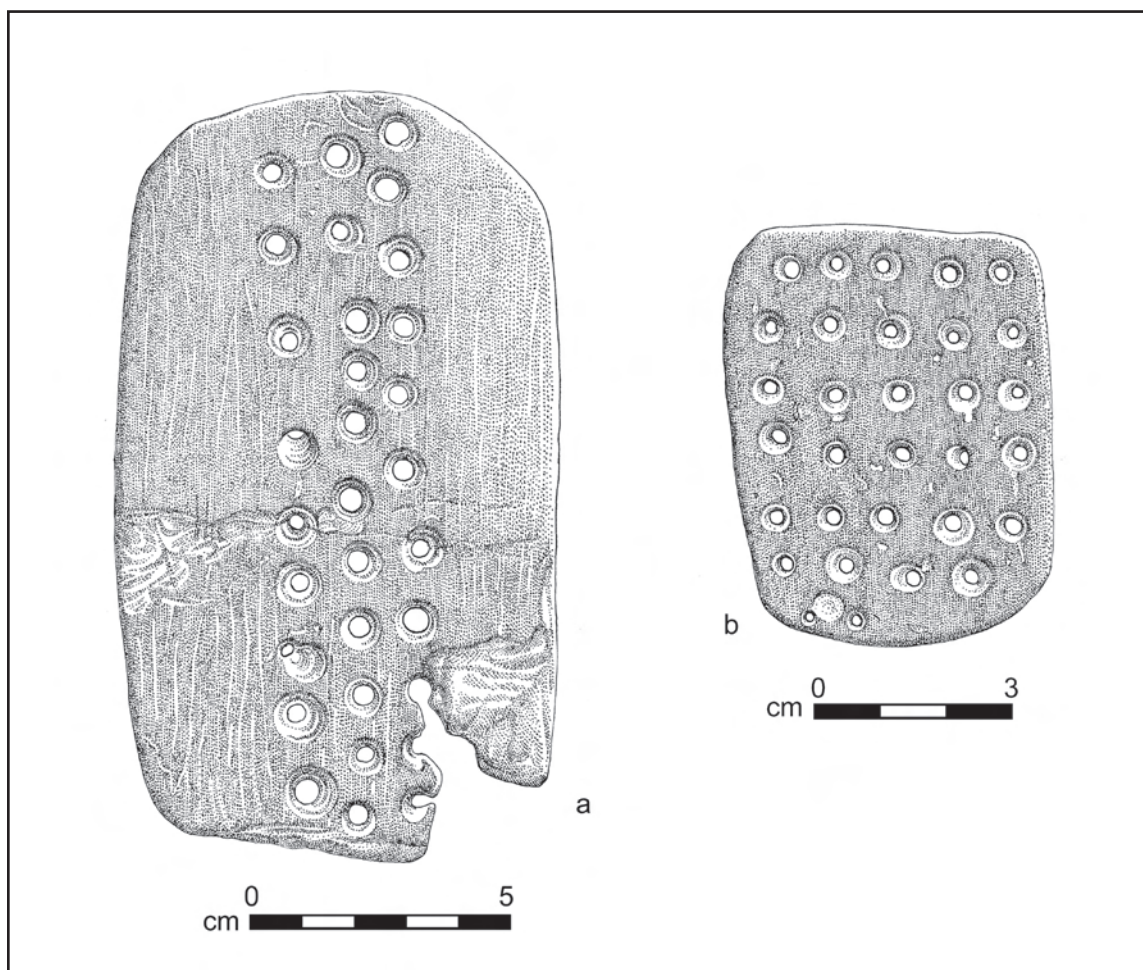


Figure 4. Multi-holed slate tablets from LAN-270 (Los Altos site). (a) CSU Long Beach cat. no. 66-27; (b) CSU Long Beach cat. no. 66-875; both specimens after Bates (1972:19, Figure 4) and after McCawley (1996:99, Figure 29).



Aldrich had maintained a public museum at his home on Bay Island in Newport Bay (see Chace 1965, 2008:46)<sup>2</sup>, and one might suppose that an artifact so unusual and intriguing would have been on view for visitors to admire and ponder. Aldrich most probably acquired the piece directly from Strandt or, much less likely, from a collector who had obtained the artifact from the cement contractor, builder, and amateur archaeologist. Strandt may have held onto the artifact for a time. After all, he too maintained a museum at his Anaheim home,<sup>3</sup> where he might lecture the curious on Native American customs (see Koerper and Chace 1995:281). His guests included “adults, boy scouts, and school classes” (Strandt 1965:32).

sold.” Here is proof that Fred Aldrich purchased antiquities from Strandt at an unknown time prior to a March 20, 1936, sale of items to George Heye. In the context of the Great Depression, Aldrich’s two payments to Strandt, one for 500 dollars and the other for 100 dollars, represent a substantial investment.<sup>5</sup> It seems highly likely that many Buck Ranch items were part of the exchanges that totaled 600 dollars. Also, one wonders what to make of the ledger entry penned just above “Mr. F. A. Aldrich. Balboa” (Figure 5). The notation following “Huntington Beach” is perhaps “sculls” or maybe “2culls” (skulls[?] or 2 skulls[?]). I believe it more likely than not that the reference is to a sale of one or two Buck Ranch osteological specimens to someone for \$12.50.

There exists a ledger, the entries in Strandt’s hand,<sup>4</sup> which on its page 71 (Figure 5), lists “Indian Relics

Interestingly, forensic scientist Cyril Courville (1952:159) indicated that Aldrich had himself been

71

*Indian Relics sold.*

Mr. Baron. Pasadena.	25	00
" " " "	3	00
Huntington Beach sculls	12	50
Mr. F. A. Aldrich. Balboa	500	00
" " " "	100	00
Mr. Hugh Proctor	15	00
1 Mortar to a lady	7	50
Union College Sacramento	90	00
Mr. Mayer.	190	00
" " " "	60	00
" " " "	25	00
1936. March 20. Geo. G. Heye New York.	200	00
Oct. 18 Mr. R. Kerner of Orange. N. J.	5	00
		1233.00
1938 Mr. Rudy Proctor. Olla		20.00
1938 G. G. Heye. New York.		1100.00
1939. G. G. Heye. New York.		200.00
1941. G. G. Heye Stone Rings.		550.00
1942. G. G. Heye Fishhawk pipe. Elmer App.		55.00
1941 Mr. Harry Oliver, Capistrano.		45.00
	Total	2503.00
1948-1949.		1873.00
		4376.00

Figure 5. Page 71 from a ledger owned by Strandt. Note the sale of antiquities totaling 600 dollars to Fred Aldrich. Also note the 550 dollars for “Stone Rings” (see Koerper and Chace 2009) that ended up in the Museum of the American Indian, New York.



a participant in the unearthing of human remains at Huntington Beach. It is not possible to confirm the accuracy of this assertion. Also, Courville gave 44 as the number of burials explored.

Aldrich passed away in September 1953, and the contents of his museum were purchased in 1954 by the owners of the Balboa Pavilion, who wisely anticipated that the display of the collection at the Pavilion would draw tourists. One of the owners, Roy Gronskey, had a 50 percent interest in the Pavilion.

Gronskey, along with two business partners, paid 5,000 dollars for a huge accumulation of archaeological, geological, and sea shell specimens (Moe Gronskey, personal communication 2008). When the Balboa Pavilion with its restaurant and shops was sold in 1961 or 1962, Roy Gronskey leased it back, and ran it until 1965. In order to make way for a banquet room, the Aldrich collection had to be moved. The Smithsonian Institution offered to buy the Native American items, but Roy Gronskey had promised Fred Aldrich that the Indian artifacts would remain in Orange County. He then donated the shells and archaeological materials to the Bowers in 1962. Long Beach State University took receipt of the rocks and minerals in 1962. It is unremembered whether Roy Gronskey and his partners had ever received a catalog listing the Indian artifacts that might also have revealed important information relating to provenance, seller, or purchase price (Moe Gronskey, personal communication 2008). There is no record at the Museum of a catalog having accompanied the transfer of artifacts, bones, and sea shells (Jennifer Ring [Bowers Collections Manager and Registrar], personal communication 2008).

### **Other Bowers Museum Holdings**

Of the many burials investigated at Buck Ranch by Herman Strandt, only six were referenced in his SERA report (1935, 1965:31-32). Two of those are of particular interest here.

Strandt (1935, 1965:31-32) described a skull that “had a beautiful red jasper knife three inches long in the mouth, with the point toward the mouth opening, resembling very much on account of the color, a tongue. This rare specimen was left as found and can be seen in this collection.” This refers to skull 11 (a male) of the Aldrich Collection housed at the Bowers Museum (Figure 6). The jasper biface is complete. Its maximum length is 70.8 mm, and maximum width is 35.8 mm. Thickness measures 8.4 mm. It is percussion flaked with some pressure flaking evident at the margins.

Strandt (1935, 1965:31) described another skull, said to be that of a small, young female whose postcranial bones had been “carefully arranged about the skull.” Also, “this skull had a hole clear through it in a straight line, measuring about 7/8”, showing clearly she was killed with a [round] spear sharpened at the end.” Strandt (1965:31) wondered whether this individual had been a wife of the nearby “medicine man” buried with multiple grave goods, including the holed tablet illustrated in Figure 2.

This juvenile individual is represented by Skull 7 (Aldrich Collection, Bowers Museum). Chronological age at death is unlikely to have exceeded 12 years; consequently, sex determination is not actually possible. The perforation at the right parietal bone measures 18.5 mm x 13.8 mm (Figure 7a); that of the left parietal is 23.3 mm x 17.8 mm (Figure 7b). The former appears to be an entrance hole and the latter an exit hole.

Strandt (1965:31) considered this individual to have been a sacrificial victim, presumably dispatched to accompany the “medicine man.” This liberal interpretation is somewhat mirrored in Courville (1952:159), who likely received some of his information second-hand from Fred Aldrich. Courville is extremely incautious on many counts, as the following sentences will help illustrate:

This cranium probably represents a female.... It is possible that she was a captive from some regional tribe, for the occurrence of a bilateral puncture wound of the cranial vault and her interment in the grave of a chieftain and his wife strongly suggests that she was sacrificed at the time of the burial. In the lower part of the left parietal bone is found an irregularly oval opening with shelving edges suggesting a blow from some pick-like instrument. The opening measures about 4 by 3 cms. [sic] in size. In the upper part of the right temporal [sic] bone is a similar opening, evidently made at the same time. The wounds were evidently fatal ones. [Courville 1952:159]

As previously noted, the skull was that of a young juvenile, and thus an assessment of female sex cannot be supported. The sacrificial captive interpretation does not follow logically from any observation upon the perforations. The leadership status and marital

status offered are purely speculative. Another kind of sloppiness is Courville's oversize mismeasurement of the perforation of the left parietal bone. He described the perforation on the right side of the neurocranium as being through the upper temporal bone when it is instead found on the parietal, adjacent to the squamosal suture.

Further, Courville seems not to have been apprised of the disposition of the postcranial bones about the skull. Had he known such particulars, perhaps the ideas of reburial and/or fleshing would have crossed his mind. The forensic scientist seems to have overlooked some gouges made by a stone cutting tool that are easily detected at and just above the glabellar region. The fact of these cut marks and the erroneous perforation measurement leads one to wonder whether Courville physically handled the skull or only peeked at it through the glass of a display case. Were the perforations perhaps postmortem? Most probably they were, and one is left to wonder whether there had been an intent at

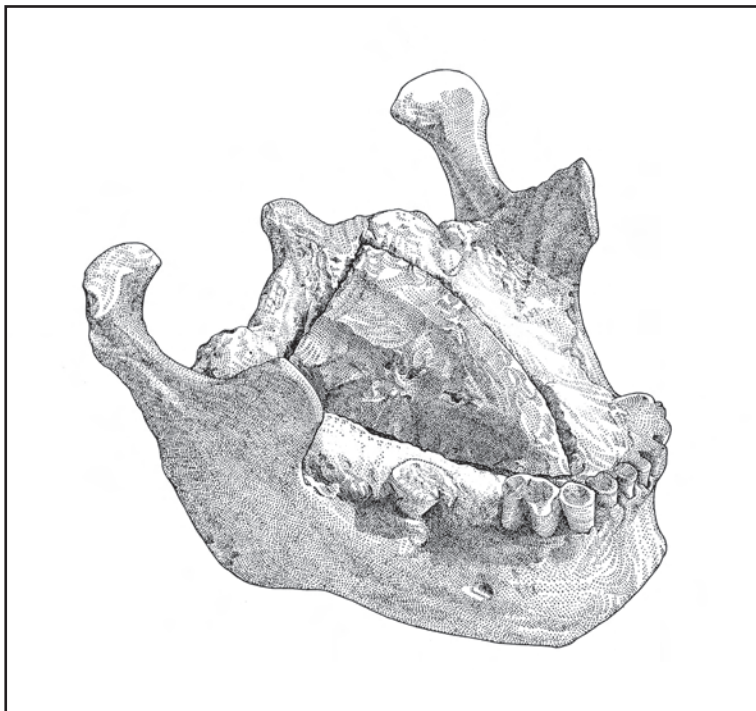


Figure 6. Buck Ranch burial objects. Skull 11 mandible with *in situ* ritual jasper biface. Biface is 70.8 mm long. Aldrich Collection, Bowers Museum.

ceremonial “killing,” akin to the practice of “killing” a mortar/bowl or metate?

A perusal of Bowers Museum cranial material by the author and Sherri Gust indicates that there are 25 adults and three sub-adults in the Aldrich Collection that had almost certainly come from Buck Ranch. Gust is preparing for publication a study of the physical anthropology of these individuals. Presently, it is not possible to identify any of four other individuals referenced by Strandt (1935, 1965) as being among the skeletal individuals at the Bowers.

Given the number of burials explored by Strandt, with or without Aldrich, that is 44 if one follows Courville (1952:159), there remain 16 missing individuals. Moe

Gronsky (personal communication 2008) recalled an unspecified number of skulls held back and not transferred to the Bowers. Some prehistoric artifacts were also retained. These materials are unlikely to resurface with their provenance information intact. However, it is anticipated that additional missing Buck Ranch artifacts will one day be recognized among the Bowers holdings.

**A Pendant/Pectoral from Wintersburg: Another Buck Ranch Artifact?**

Most shell inlaid stone and bone artifacts described and illustrated in Burnett (1944) are fraudulent in one way or another (Gamble 2002; see also Hoover 1974; Lee 1981). Arthur Sanger and O. T. Littleton are the major

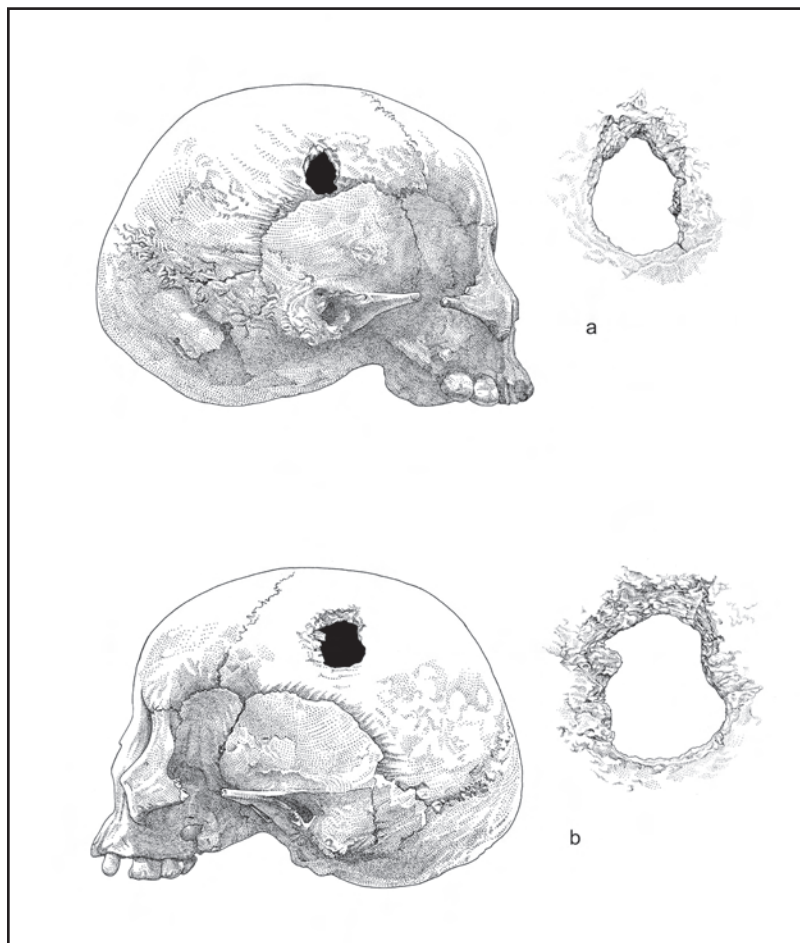


Figure 7. Skull 7 (Aldrich Collection, Bowers Museum). (a) right side view, entrance perforation; (b) left side view, exit perforation.



suspects in this dishonesty (see Lee 1993; Koerper and Chace 1995; Gamble 2002). Some few artifacts shown in Burnett are unequivocally genuine, such as the three chlorite schist discs (Burnett 1944:42, Plate XXXVI) received by the Heye Foundation from Herman Strandt (see Koerper and Chace 2009) (see Figure 5).

There is another artifact in Burnett's book (1944:47, Plate LXIX) that Heye most likely purchased from Strandt that I believe is fully genuine – the tablet-like

pendant/pectoral shown in Figure 8 (see also McCawley 1996:101, Figure 30). Provenance is given simply as Wintersburg, Huntington Beach, and one reasonably suspects it had originated from the winter 1930-1931 Strandt excavations. It may relate to the March 20, 1936 entry in Strandt's ledger (Figure 5), a 200 dollar item (or items) going to George Heye.

Shell beads decorate one face only, and they are glued into channels using asphaltum. There are two

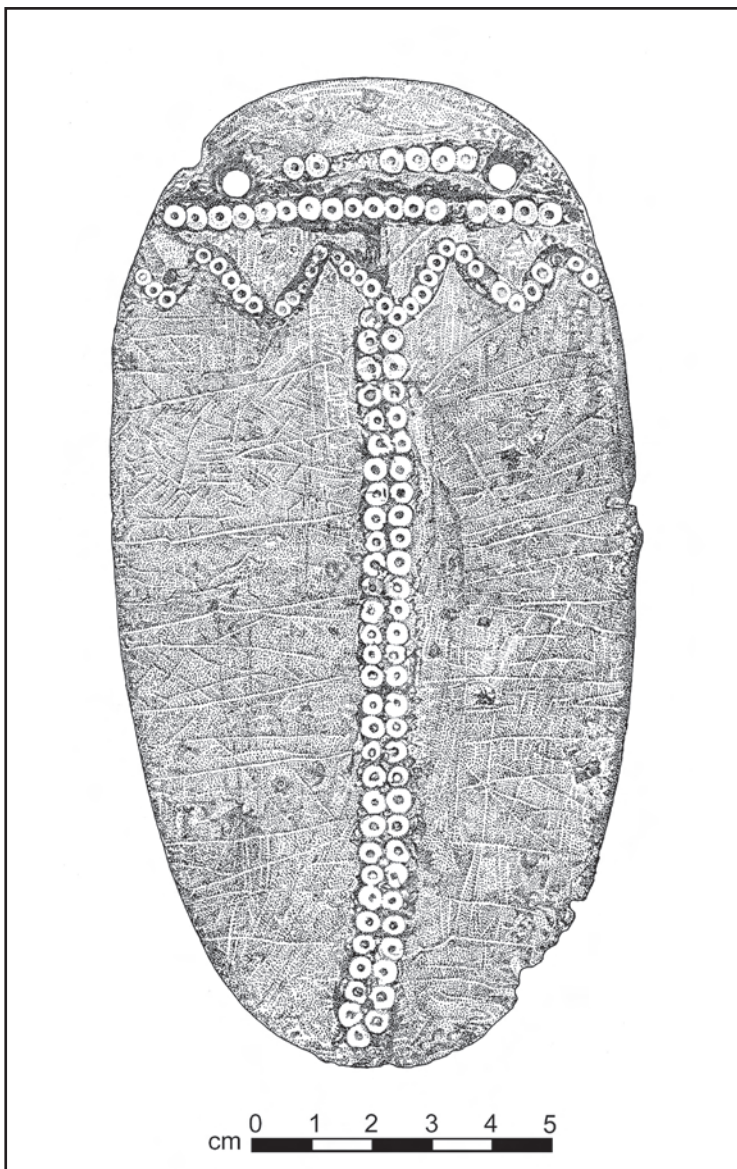


Figure 8. Chlorite schist tablet-like pendant or pectoral from Wintersburg, Huntington Beach. NMAI Cat. No. 20/3709. (After McCawley [1996:101, Figure 30] and Burnett [1944, Plate XLIX]).

suspension holes which “show marked grooving from wear” (Burnett 1944:47). There are two transverse incisions adorning the beaded face, and some form “light herringbone pendant lines which show a definite decorative arrangement.” Gamble (2002:17), however, implies that this piece, which is now with the National Museum of the American Indian (Cat. No. 20/3709), is unlikely to be good, citing its similarity to “Chumash artifacts that are considered of questionable origin.” The similarities of which she writes, I believe, are superficial. Judicious consideration of provenance and of stylistic attributes, especially the incising, casts considerable doubt on Gamble’s assessment.

### Summary and Concluding Remarks

A number of archaeological finds from the winter 1930-1931 Buck Ranch investigations have now been traced to the Bowers Museum of Cultural Art. They include two artifacts used in death rites, a steatite holed tablet (Figure 2) presently on display in the Ettinger Gallery and a ceremonial jasper biface kept in a curatorial storage area. The jasper object, its associated skull (in storage), and another skull with two manmade perforations (also in storage) are easily attributed to the Huntington Beach burial ground through reference to Herman Strandt’s 1935 SERA study of regional burial customs. The multi-holed tablet is attributed to Buck Ranch by reference to both Strandt’s (1935, 1965) work and contemporary media accounts (see Chace 2008:42). Strong circumstantial evidence indicates many more Buck Ranch osteological remains are held at the Bowers.

It is unknown how long Strandt may have kept the artifacts or skeletal material, if he held on to them at all, or whether he might have sold these items immediately to Fred Aldrich for his Bay Island museum. A ledger book once owned by Strandt (Figure 5) provides circumstantial evidence that Buck Ranch artifacts were likely sold by the Anaheim contractor to Aldrich. The year following the demise of Aldrich,

the collection that included geologic and sea shell specimens was purchased for display at the Balboa Pavilion. The shells and Indian items were donated by the Gronskey family in 1962 to the Charles Bowers Memorial Museum.

In this article, the holed tablet (Figure 2) has been described and placed amongst the Late Prehistoric portable cosmos. Similar objects, both steatite and slate, have been referenced for comparison. The jasper biface has been described, and it is illustrated along with the Skull 11 mandible, in which it had been discovered (Figure 6). Skull 7, without its mandible, is rendered in right and left views in order to show its perforations (Figure 7) which are almost certainly postmortem.

Next on the research agenda are metric and nonmetric analyses of the crania, mandibles, and dentition from Buck Ranch (Sherri Gust, personal communication 2008). Such efforts would, for instance, help test the hypothesis that the Gabrielino people tend more toward a lower average cranial index than other Takic speakers to the south (e.g., Luiseño), Yumans further south along coastal California, and Chumashan speakers to the north. In this, there are implications for investigating the question of Takic incursions into Los Angeles and Orange counties (see Sutton 2009, this volume).

Given the reasonable presumption that other Buck Ranch burial offerings were acquired by Aldrich, a systematic search of holdings at the Bowers is likely to be rewarding. Without an Aldrich Collection catalog for guidance, such an effort necessarily requires familiarity with Strandt’s (1935, 1965) observations of burial artifacts.

It is very likely that the ornament with shell bead inlays (Figure 8) first described and illustrated in Burnett (1944:47, Plate XXXVI) and from Wintersburg, Huntington Beach, is one of the winter 1930-1931 Buck Ranch discoveries (see also Hudson and Blackburn

1986:183, 218, Figure 318.9-79; McCawley 1996:101, Figure 30). Solid confirmation for such might turn up in as yet undiscovered contemporary news accounts.

### Acknowledgments

A great many people were helpful with their assistance, advice, and encouragement, and for this I am most grateful. They include: Mariah Davis, Huntington Beach Library; Steve McLeod and Andrew Jones, U.C.I. Langson Library, Special Collections; Jennifer Martinez-Wormser, Sherman Library and Gardens, Corona del Mar; Jennifer Ring, Bowers Museum of Cultural Art; Jeanne Pederson, Catalina Island Museum; Bob Blankman, The First American Corporation; Ymelda Ventura, Anaheim Public Library, Heritage Services; Joan Love, Costa Mesa Historical Society; Doug Westfall, The Paragon Agency, Publishers; Dr. John Johnson, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History; Dr. Paul Chace, Paul Chace and Associates; Sherri Gust, Cogstone Resource Management; and Joan T. Seaver Kurze. Moe Gronsky provided invaluable information relating to his family's involvement with the Aldrich Collection. Karen Koerper typed the several drafts of this article, and Joe Cramer provided the pen and ink drawings. Also, I wish to thank the several reviewers, Guest Editor Dr. Jill Gardner, and the Pacific Coast Archaeological Society Quarterly Publications Committee.

### References Cited

- Anonymous  
 1930a Skeletons of Thirteen Unearthed. *Santa Ana Register* [27 December] and 28 December:1 (Stories identical)  
 1930b 500 Attracted to Old Indian Burial Ground. *Santa Ana Daily Evening Register*, 29 December:3.  
 1930c Indian Burial Ground Found. *Huntington Beach News*, 30 December:I, 1.
- 1930d Digging into the Past. *Santa Ana Daily Evening Register*, 31 December:2-11. (With photograph by Rundell).  
 1931a Indian Burial Ground is Unearthed on Buck Ranch. *Huntington Beach News*, 1 January:1, 3.  
 1931b Indian Relics Preserved. *Los Angeles Times*, 2 January:9.  
 1931c Indian Graves Give Evidence of Antiquity. *Huntington Beach News*, 8 January:1.  
 1953 Indian Artifact Quest Yields Fine Collection. *Los Angeles Times*, 1 June:II, 8.
- Bates, Eleanor  
 1972 Los Altos (LAn-270): A Late Horizon Site in Long Beach, California. *Pacific Coast Archaeological Society Quarterly* 8(2):1-56.
- Burnett, E. K.  
 1944 *Inlaid Stone and Bone Artifacts from Southern California*. Contributions from the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, Vol. 13. New York.
- Chace, Paul G.  
 1965 A Spoon-Shaped Steatite Artifact from San Nicolas Island, California. *Pacific Coast Archaeological Society Quarterly* 1(4):19-21.  
 1967 January 27, 1967 letter from Paul Chace to the Archaeological Survey Office, U.C.L.A. (Copy of letter provided to H. C. Koerper by P. G. Chace).  
 2008 Locating the Buck Ranch Prehistoric Burial Ground, Huntington Beach, California. *Pacific Coast Archaeological Society Quarterly* 40(2):41-50.
- Courville, Cyril B.  
 1952 Cranial Injuries Among the Early Indians of California. *Bulletin of the Los Angeles Neurological Society* 17(4):137-162.



- Gamble, Lynn H.  
2002 Fact or Forgery: Dilemmas in Museum Collections. *Museum Anthropology* 25(2):3-20.
- Gifford, Edward W.  
1947 California Shell Artifacts. *University of California Anthropological Records* 9(1):1-114. Berkeley.
- Hoover, Robert L.  
1974 Some Observations on Chumash Prehistoric Stone Effigies. *The Journal of California Anthropology* 1(1):33-40.
- Hudson, Travis, and Thomas C. Blackburn  
1986 *The Material Culture of the Chumash Interaction Sphere, Vol. IV: Ceremonial Paraphernalia, Games and Amusements*. Ballena Press Anthropological Papers No. 30. Menlo Park, California.
- Koerper, Henry C., and Paul G. Chace  
1995 Heizer, Strandt, and the Effigy Controversy. *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* 17(2):280-284.  
2009 The Southern California Universe Effigy: An Inventory and Discussion. *Pacific Coast Archaeological Society Quarterly*. In press.
- Koerper, Henry C., David Earle, Roger D. Mason, and Paul Apodaca  
1996 Archaeological, Ethnohistoric and Historic Notes Regarding ORA-58 and Other Sites Along the Lower Santa Ana River Drainage, Costa Mesa. *Pacific Coast Archaeological Society Quarterly* 32(1):1-36.
- Koerper, Henry C., and Sherri Gust  
2009 Additional Revelations Concerning Arthur Sanger and Archaeological Fakery. *Pacific Coast Archaeological Society Quarterly*. Under review.
- Koerper, Henry C., Polly Peterson, and Patrick Stanton  
2009 Five Decorated Tablets from CA-LAN-62. *Pacific Coast Archaeological Society Quarterly*. In preparation.
- Koerper, Henry C., and Nancy Whitney-Desautels  
1999 A Cowry Shell Artifact from Bolsa Chica: An Example of Prehistoric Exchange. *Pacific Coast Archaeological Society Quarterly* 35(2 and 3):81-95.
- Kurze, Joan T. Seaver  
2003 *Insular Connections on Bay Island*. Ganso Press, Newport Beach.
- Lee, Georgia  
1981 *The Portable Cosmos: Effigies, Ornaments, and Incised Stone from the Chumash Area*. Ballena Press Anthropological Papers No. 21. Ballena Press, Socorro, New Mexico.  
1993 Fake Effigies from the Southern California Coast? Robert Heizer and the Effigy Controversy. *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* 15(2):195-215.
- McCawley, William  
1996 *The First Angelinos: The Gabrielino Indians of Los Angeles*. Malki Museum Press, Banning, California and Ballena Press, Novato, California.
- North Orange County City Directory  
1951 North Orange County City Directory. The Directory Service Company, Publishers, Santa Ana.
- Orange County Directory  
1936 *Orange County Directory*, 1936. Western Directory Company, Long Beach.

Osburn, Barbara Stephens

1960 Bay Island Club. Hendrick Printing Company, Corona del Mar.

Ruoff, Mildred

1931 Indian Burial Ground. *Huntington Beach News*, 15 January:8.

Strandt, Herman F.

1935[1965] Life and Customs of the Southwestern Indians in Prehistoric Times; Burial Customs of the Orange County Indians. SERA Historical Research Project #31-F2-96. Ms. on file, Special Collections, Langson Library, University of California, Irvine. [published 1965, *Pacific Coast Archaeological Society Quarterly* 1(3):27-32].

Sutton, Mark Q.

2009 People and Language: Defining the Takic Expansion into Southern California. *Pacific Coast Archaeological Society Quarterly* 41(2&3):31-93.

## Notes

1. Courville (1952) was careless in his treatment of other coastal southern California specimens, and when one understands the particulars, the doctor is counted as yet another naive victim of antiquities dealer Arthur Sanger, a man infamous for both his alterations of Native American archaeological specimens to enhance their marketability and for his participation in the sale of phony items purporting to be genuine Indian artifacts. A separate paper (Koerper and Gust 2009) is being prepared on Sanger's connection to the doctoring of regional prehistoric and/or contact/historic period remains for sale to museums and relic collectors.

2. Fred Aldrich became a member of the very exclusive Bay Island Club with his 1920 purchase of a house at #12 Bay Island. His wife Olive sold the property the year following her husband's death in 1953 (see Kurze 2003). To house his collections, Aldrich is said to have had a separate structure where he shared his knowledge of malacology, geology, and prehistory with museum visitors who were admitted free of charge (Joan Seaver Kurze, personal communication 2008). When the large collection was transferred to the Pavilion, it was transported across the water since only a narrow footbridge connected the island to the mainland (Moe Gronsky, personal communication 2008). Parenthetically, Bay Island, at one time referred to affectionately as Modjeska Island, is a natural island in Balboa Bay (some enlargement occurred with dredging and reclamation) (Osburn 1960).

3. Herman Strandt owned in succession three Anaheim homes. At the time of the "Wintersburg excavations," he had been living at 1104 West Center Street for about seven years, and for most of that time he maintained an Indian artifact museum. That house survives today. It has a cottage behind it where Strandt may have displayed his collection of ethnographic and archaeological specimens. I speculate such for the fact that when he resided at 1025 East Broadway, begin-

ning in the mid-1930s, a separate structure in back of his residence housed the "Strandt Indian Museum."

Starting in 1951, his museum was listed in the white pages (Northern Orange County City Directory 1951:185). This was the only year that the museum also had a yellow pages listing (p. 43). By 1957, he had ceased to put the Strandt Indian Museum in the local directory. His last residence was at 1315 South Los Angeles Street in 1963, the year he passed away.

4. A copy of the Strandt ledger page (71) was given to the author by the late Nadine Zelenka, who had been my Chapman College student in the early 1970s. She had access to the ledger through her association with the late Jack Maddock who had borrowed it from an unnamed owner.

5. There were other expensive purchases, one with special interest for the author. Ledger page 71 (Figure 5) records three "stone rings" sold for 550 dollars to George Heye or the Heye Foundation for placement in the Museum of the American Indian. These are some of the "Universe Effigies" found in 1940 at San Mateo Canyon, northern San Diego County (see Koerper and Chace 2009).



