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Archaeological Finds in Arizona

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Abstract: Several crosses with Latin inscriptions, a spear, and sword that were excavated near Tucson, Arizona, are discussed as possible evidence for pre-Columbian contact between the Americas and Europe. The author speculates that a reference to a “mountain” in the inscriptions may be connected to the Hill Cumorah mentioned in the Book of Mormon.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS IN ARIZONA

BY J. M. SJODAHL

According to accounts in the possession of President Anthony W. Ivins, a number of interesting antique objects have been discovered during the last few months, near Tucson, Arizona, by a gentleman named Thomas W. Bent and a friend of his by the name of C. E. Manier.

It appears from the correspondence, which President Ivins has courteously placed at the disposition of the *Era*, that the gentlemen mentioned, during the latter part of September, last year, happened to discover some metal plates, formed in the shape of a cross, and containing quite legible inscriptions. Afterwards more crosses and other objects, it is said, were unearthed in the same locality.

It is not my intention at this time to discuss the evidence for or against the genuineness of the articles in question. That must be left till the results of further investigations shall have been made known, and to abler pens than mine. But the story of the finds may already now be told and a brief description of some of the objects given, as a matter of interest to the readers of the *Era*.

On September 13, 1924, according to Mr. Bent's account, so we are told, Mr. Bent and a party, while passing, in a car, some lime kilns six and a half miles from Tucson, stopped, at the suggestion of Mr. Manier's father, to investigate the kiln, and while doing so, discovered an odd looking object protruding about two inches out of the side of the hill in which the lime kiln was built, and on striking it with a small pick which he usually carried in his car, he noted that it had a metallic sound. His interest was aroused and he proceeded to excavate the object, and on uncovering it, found it to be a cross of metal about $17\frac{1}{2}$ inches long by 12 inches wide. He took the cross home with him, and on washing it thoroughly, found it to be made of lead, silver and copper. A neighbor, Mr. D. M. Bruce, of 938 Penn Place, Tucson, Arizona, who was present at the time, noticed that it had a crack in it, and on further investigation, it was discovered that the cross was made in two parts, and had been sealed together with a preparation which had the appearance of being a substance similar to beeswax; however, it was not in fact, beeswax. The two halves of the cross were fastened together with lead rivets, and together weighed about 90 pounds. The cross was roughly made, having the appearance of being moulded in the rough ground, and on the inner surfaces of the two parts, there was an inscription. Mr. Manier at first thought the inscription to be in Spanish, and called Mrs. Kennison, the wife of Professor Kennison, of the University of Arizona, who lives close by, to look at the inscription, and if possible,

to translate what he thought was Spanish. Mrs. Kennison, on seeing the inscription, noted that it was in Latin, and so Mr. Manier immediately took the cross to Professor Fowler, of the University of

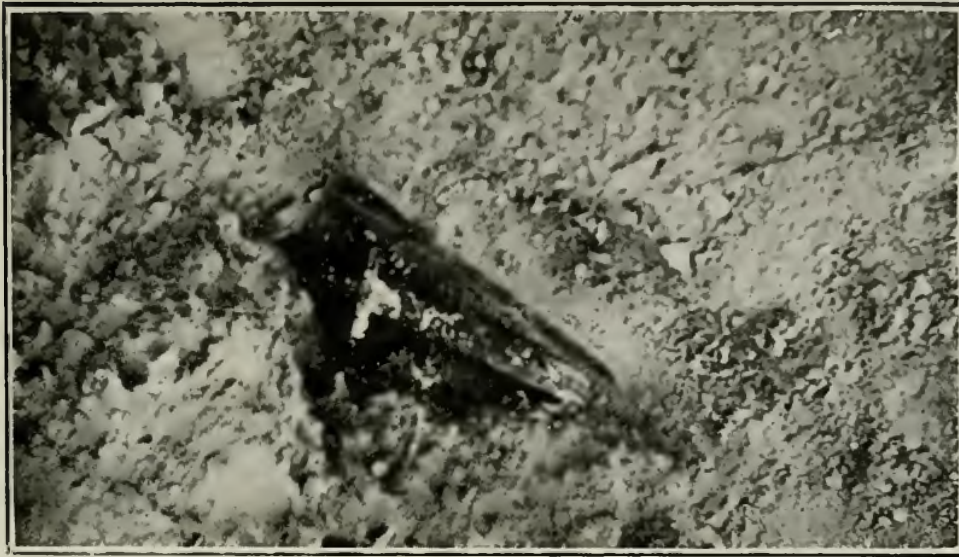


First Cross Found.

Arizona, at the suggestion of Mrs. Kennison, to have the inscription translated. The cross was buried in a partly excavated hill and was about 95 inches below the surface, in a caliche formation. Starting at the surface, the composition of the strata of earth were as follows: On top, about thirty inches of piled-up loose rock and dirt, and below this, about 29 inches of virgin, undisturbed soil, while the next stratum consisted of about thirty-six inches of loose caliche, and below this was a stratum of solid caliche. The cross was found in the loose caliche well down toward the solid caliche.

Two days following the day on which the cross was found, a party from the University conducted some excavating at the same place, and found a piece of flat caliche about twelve inches across, on which was contained some inscription, together with two heads.

The second cross was found by Mr. Bent on November 28, 1924, about a foot and one half further into the side of the hill from the first one, and about the same distance to the left of the first cross. This cross was brought to light under the following circumstances: Manier, after discovering the first cross, talked the matter over with Bent, and although the University of Arizona had done some excavating and brought nothing to light except the piece of caliche, Mr. Bent felt that there must be something else of interest buried at the place where the first cross was found, and convinced Manier that it would be well worth while to excavate further and this was done,



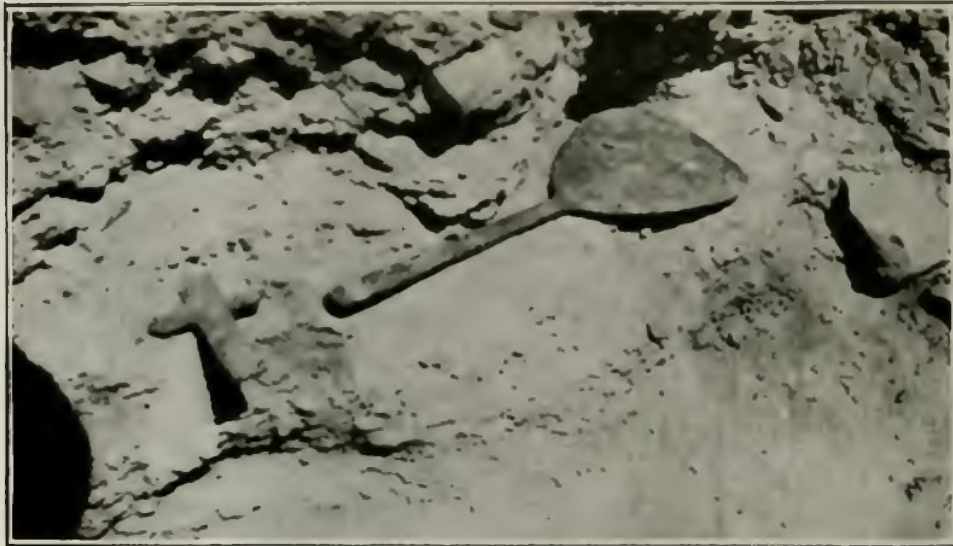
This is the latest sword found. The white spots are what appear to be lime or caliche that has cemented to the metal.

with the result that a second cross was found in the same stratum of loose caliche formation and at the same depth as the first. This cross was dug out by Mr. Bent and it was much smaller than the first, weighing only about 25 pounds, but in all other respects, was similar to the first in shape, and the inscription was written in Latin. The metal composition was different from the first, in that this cross contained only lead and silver.

The third cross, which consisted of only one side and appeared to have not been completed, was found by Manier while he and Bent were excavating on November 30, 1924, and was about three feet in the hillside, being at the same level as the first and second crosses, and in the same stratum of caliche. This cross was about thirty inches to the right of the first cross. This cross was not completed and contained very little inscription, and weighed about 10 pounds.

The fourth cross was found about four feet in the hillside and about three feet to the left of the first. This cross was found by one of several Mexican laborers who had been hired by Manier and Bent to do the excavating. It was at the same depth as the others, and was an exact counterpart of the cross found by Bent, except as to the inscription. It contained more inscription than any of the others and tells a more complete story. This cross was found December 5, 1924, and weighed about 25 pounds, being of the same composition as the second cross.

The fifth and sixth crosses were found on January 24, 1925, and there were present at the time Professor Rupert, of the University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona; Mr. Eli Abegg, of Fort Lowell, Arizona; Mr. T. W. Bent, Mr. C. E. Manier, and four Mexican laborers names not known.



Date on this is 560 A. D. 62 inches under surface in solid caliche.

The two crosses were about 8 inches below the level at which the other four were found, one of them being about five feet in the side of the hill from the first cross found and the other about seven feet both of them being almost directly behind the first cross. They were both the same shape as the others, one weighing about 30 pounds and the other about 20 pounds, the metal composition being the same as that of the second, third, and fourth crosses. There was very little inscription on these two. However, they contained many figures of heads and one of them was a temple with a large E a couple of inches in front of it, and above the temple is what appears to be the sun. There are many hieroglyphs on these two crosses.

Mr. E. Abegg, in a letter to President Ivins, supplements this account with the information that the lime kilns were built 42 years ago, and that, according to rumor, an ancient sword was found there on a previous occasion; also, that Mexican laborers claim that crosses similar to those now unearthened are found in Mexico, 90 miles from Tucson—a statement which, if true, is of considerable interest.

INSCRIPTIONS

REGNAVIT. POPULORVM. BENIAMINVS. AD. SEINE.
ROMAM. VENERVNT. GALLORVM. FORTISSIMI.
VENIT. POPVLI. AVXILIO. VRBI. FVNDAMENTA. IACERE.
MVRVM. VRBI. CIRCVMDEDIT. HOSTIBVS. RESISTERE.
INGENS. VIRIVM. BENIAMINVS. MVLTITVDINEM. RELIGION
IS. IMPLEVIT. OCCISVS. EST. ATHEBANS. HOC. AVDIVI.
DE. PARENTE. MEO. ANNIS. QVINGENTIS. POST. POST.
MONTEM. IN. MEMORAM. PATRIS. IOSEPHVS.

A. D. DCCCLXXX. ISRAEL. TERTIVS. CVM. TOLTEZVS.
LIBERASSET.
EXPVLSVS EST. PRIMVS. MOREM. SOLVIT. TERRA. TER-
MIT.
MORTALIA. CORDA. STRAVIT. PAVOR. ANNO. TERTIO.
POSTQVAM.

PROFVGERAT. SE. IN. VRBE. RECEPERVNT. MVRISQUE.
 SE. TENEBANT.
 HOMINEM. MORTVVM. IN. VRBE. NE. SEPELITO. VEVE.
 VRITO.
 ANTE. VRBE. PLANITIES. PATEBAT. COLLES. VRBE. CING
 EBANT.
 CENTVM. ANNI. SVNT. CVM. REX. FVIT. IACOBVS.
 IACOBVS. IN. PRIMA. ACTE. VERSARI. OMNIA. PROVI-
 DERE.
 MVLTEM. IPSE. PVGNARE. SAEPE. HOSTEM. FERIRE.
 ISRAEL. SACERDOTIBVS. CREANDIS. ANIMVM. ADIECIT.
 NOBIS. VITA. EST. POPVLIS. LATE. REGEM.
 OL.

A. D. DCCCXCV. TERRA. INCOGNITA.
 VTINAM. CONATA. EFFICERE. POSSIM. REGI. SERVIRE.
 INCERTVM. EST. QVAM. LONGA. VITA. FVTVRA. SIT.
 MVLTA. SVNT. QVAE. DICI. POSSVNT.
 FLAGRANTI. BELLO. CAESI. SVNT. TRIA .MILIA.
 DVX. CVM. PRINCIPIBVS. CAPIVNTVR. NIHIL.
 ALIVD. NISI. PAX. QVAESITA. EST. DEVS. OMNIA.
 CONSTITVIT.

OL.

Suggested Translation of these inscriptions

Benjamin governed the people. To Seine Roma they came of the Gauls the bravest. Came to the aid of the people, to lay the foundations of a city. He surrounded the city with a wall, to resist the enemies. Benjamin, mighty among men, imparted of religion to the multitude, is slain by Thebans. This I heard from my parent 500 years afterwards—after the Mountain.

In memoriam Father Josephus.

A. D. 880. Israel III, with Toltesus he had liberated, the first to break the custom. The earth trembles. Fear overwhelms mortal hearts after he had fled. They betook themselves into the city and kept themselves within the walls. Dead people in the city they neither buried nor incinerated. Before the city there was a plain. Hills surrounded the city. A hundred are the years Jacobus was with the king. Jacobus in his first act reversed all things, provided much, himself often fought the enemy. Israel gave his mind to the creation of priests. Life is ours, a people of wide rule.

O. L.

A. D. 895. Land unknown. O that I could succeed in my attempts to serve the king. It is uncertain how long my future life may be. Many things could be said. In the raging war 3,000 are slain. General with princes are captured. Nothing but peace is sought. God has disposed of everything.

O. L.

Notes

(1) It will be noted that some of the names in the inscriptions are Bible names, in their Latin form, such as Joseph, Benjamin, Jacob, Israel, and even Paul and Peter, and not the Spanish form of the names. There are no such names, for instance, as Jose, Benjaminito, Jaime, Pablo, Pedro, etc. Assuming, for the sake of the argument, the genuineness of the finds, the form of the names would suggest the probability that they did not belong to any one connected with

the Spanish conquistadores that followed in the wake of Columbus after the year 1492.

(2) The familiar letters A. D. prove that the authors of the inscriptions, and in all probability the original owners of the supposedly genuine relics, made use of the Christian chronology for the annotation of dates. But this system of chronology, the books tell us, was first proposed by the Scythian monk Dionysius Exiguus in the year A. D. 527, who fixed the first year of the new era, that is the year of the nativity, at 753 years after the foundation of Rome. But the proposition of Dionysius was not accepted everywhere at once. Italy was the first to adopt the change. Among the Anglo-Saxons it came into use early, as appears from the charters issued in the seventh century. It became quite general after the year 1000, but in Spain it was not generally adopted before the middle of the 14th century. These facts, again assuming that the finds are genuine, would prove that they belong to some time after the 6th century, and if the dates recorded are correct they are not of Spanish origin, nor, probably, of French.

(3) One of the dates recorded, if I have interpreted the expression *post montem* correctly, seems to refer to some epoch-making event connected with some hill or mountain. What that event was cannot even be profitably conjectured. If, however, it should be assumed that it might refer to the hill Cumorah and the last battle between the Lamanites and Nephites, in the year A. D. 385; if we should assume that the story of that terrible conflict lived in tradition as an epoch from which to count dates, as the exodus, the founding of Rome, the beginning of the Olympian games, the birth of our Savior, the hegira of Mohammed, etc., then the dates noted, A. D. 880 and 895, said to be 500 years "after the mountain," presents an extraordinary coincidence with the chronology of the Book of Mormon.

Traditions

Are there any records, or even traditions, relating to the communication between Europe and America before Columbus?

Mr. Bancroft tells us that there is in old Welsh annals an account of a voyage made in the latter part of the 12th century by one Madoc, or Madog, across the great deep. His brothers quarreled about the succession after their father, a prince of north Wales, and Madoc left them and went in search for a place where he could live in peace. He came, finally, safely to America. After a time he, according to the accounts, returned to Wales, but only in order to lead a company of emigrants out to the new land. He fitted out ten ships, and many of his countrymen, well supplied with provisions, went with him. In a foot note Mr. Bancroft quotes Baldwin as follows: "All this is related in old Welsh annals preserved in the abbeys of Conway and Strat Flur. * * * This emigration of Prince Madog is mentioned in the preserved works of several Welsh bards who lived

before the time of Columbus. It is mentioned by Hakluyt, who has his account of it from writings of the bard Guutun Owen."

The voyage of Leif Ericson and other Icelanders of Scandinavian descent to Greenland and North America in the 11th century are so well established that even Mr. John Fiske, who is not suffering from credulity, says: "But when we come to the voyages of the Northmen in the 10th and 11th centuries, it is quite a different affair. Not only is this a subject of much historic interest, but in dealing with it, we stand for a great part of the time upon firm historic ground. The narratives which tell us of Vinland and of Leif Ericson are closely intertwined with the authentic history of Norway and Iceland."

These voyages belong to history. But neither of them can easily be connected up with the finds in Arizona, if the dates A. D. 880 and 895 are correct.

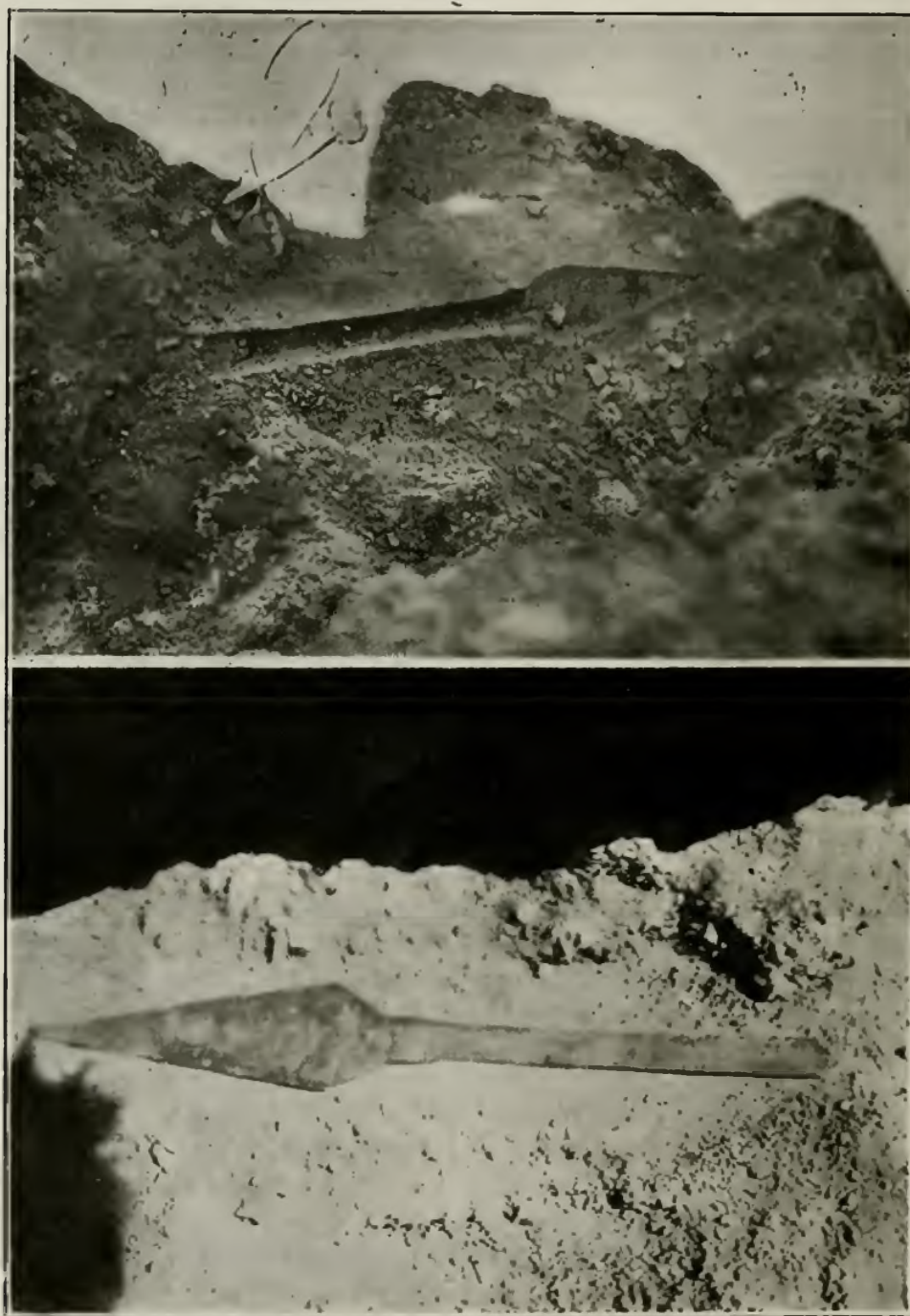
Tradition has it, however, that previous to the Welsh and Scandinavian explorations, there was a country on this continent known as "The White Man's Land," and that this was also called "Greater Ireland." Professor Rafn, the Danish historian, expressed the opinion that this country was situated to the south of Chesapeake Bay and included North and South Carolina, Georgia and East Florida. Just how much historical evidence there is in support of this tradition I do not know. But it is asserted that the Northmen learned from the Indians that there was a "White Man's Land" to the south, and that the Shawnee Indians still have a tradition that "Florida was once inhabited by white men, who had iron implements." (*The Norse Discovery of America*, by Rasmus B. Anderson, p. 278.) The Northmen, who called this country "Greater Ireland," must have done so, because they had reason to believe that it had received settlers from Ireland, in the early days, which is by no means impossible, or even improbable. When the Northmen in the beginning of 11th century mention this Greater Ireland, they refer to it as a country not newly discovered but long known among the Indians, and this fact would rather favor the supposition that the finds in Arizona may have belonged to people descended from, or in some way connected with, the Irish colonists, who, in course of time may have penetrated to the interior of the continent. But all this is, on the supposition that the finds are genuine.

Further Discoveries

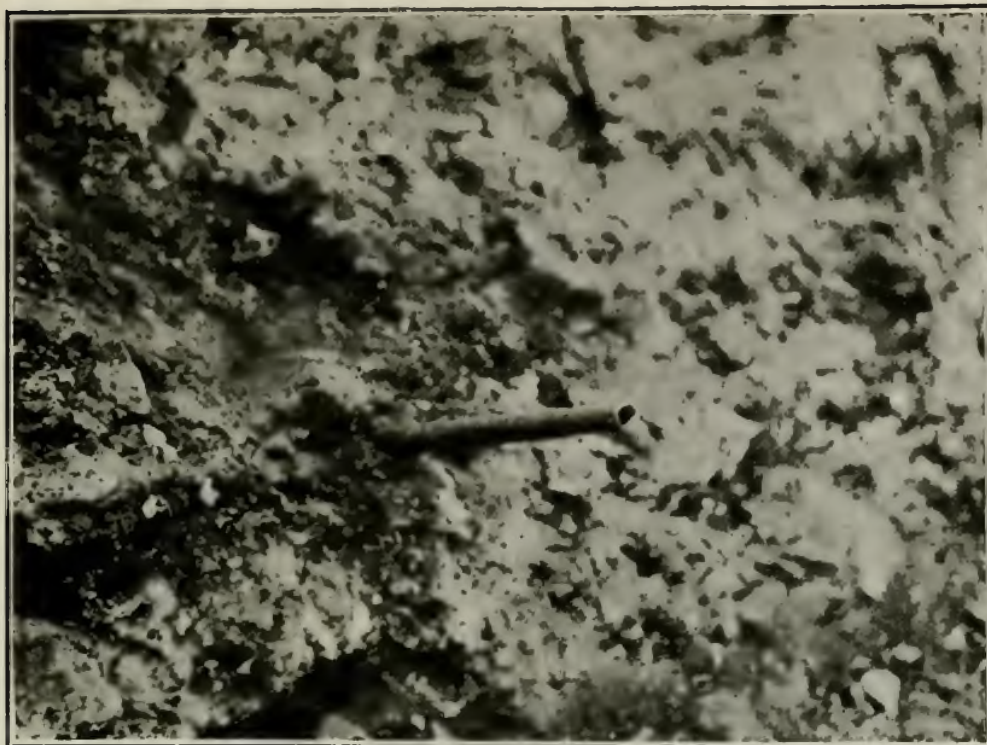
Since this first discovery, others have been made. On March 4, this year, a spear point was dug out in the presence and under the direction of scientists. Among these were Dr. Thomas S. Lovering of the geological department of the University; Dr. C. Sarle, A. Douglass, Mr. Bent and others. The spear point was 8 or 9 inches long and 2½ wide.

It was the opinion of those present that this object was not put in recently, but that it had been there a long period of years. It was

hard to explain the fresh scratches on the under side of the spear-head. Those scratches were not made in the last few minutes of excavation. The surface of the implement shows oxidation far older than these fresh scratches. The scratches seem to have been made by movement upon the little stones underneath. It was thought possible



Top: Imprint left in the ground after the spear was taken out
Bottom: The last spear found.



Spear point just before it was completely uncovered. This is the first one found, referred to in Dr. Douglas' statement as the "pipe."

that this might have been done by an accidental blow just before the object was discovered. It is possible that it could have been done by slipping of the layers of earth overhead, perhaps at the time of building of the lime kilns.

"My original opinion last September," says Mr. Douglass, "of the first cross was that it had been put there in recent years, perhaps with a view to supporting some religious claims. I had not then seen one taken from its original location in undisturbed ground. The excavation of March 4th, in the presence of so many witnesses and with so many photographs and with all the care that all the various persons present could suggest makes it extraordinarily difficult for me to see any modern origin for these lead articles.

"The articles now obtained from this locality comprise:

One large lead double cross.

Three small lead crosses, two of them double.

Two small crosses obtained the day Mr. Ruppert was assisting.

A sword obtained a few weeks ago. 17 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches long.

The spear found March 4th, 18 inches long."

Since the foregoing was written, two more swords and two spear points have been unearthed. Mr. Abegg, who sends this report to President Ivins, adds: "If I were called upon to make a statement as to whether or not they were genuine, I should certainly say that they were."

Still later, Mr. Abegg writes: "There seems to be no end to the articles being found by Messrs. Bent and Manier. On Sunday, April 5, another sword and an article shown in the picture (an object resembling a spade) were found."