

COMMITTEE ON INTERRELATIONS OF PLEISTOCENE RESEARCH

(National Research Council, U.S.A.)

THE story of the Pleistocene Epoch is in the broadest sense the geological study of an established unit of Earth history. The wealth of information preserved for study is so large, and the various fields of science concerned with its interpretation so apparently divergent, that the main goal is obscured in a welter of uncorrelated detail.

In order fully to understand and interpret the history of the Earth during this time it is necessary that the findings in the various fields be correlated. Each thread of information must be woven into the main fabric. So, for example, the archeologist and anthropologist, primarily concerned with early man and his industry, are also concerned with his environment, the climate, the soils, the terrain and the animal and plant associations. The interrelationship of these scattered fields of endeavor is readily apparent, but the specialization and segregating influence of science tends to isolate the data.

This synthesis has long been inhibited by the relative isolation of the workers in the many fields concerned. This isolation permeates the universities, the museums and the research institutions. Even within the realm of geology, workers in the Pleistocene are segregated in the confines of their particular interests and means of approach to the problems. The glacial geologist, the geomorphologist, the stratigrapher, the paleontologist, the structural geologist together with the oceanographer and the sea-floor geologist, are separated by artificial barriers of administration as well as by skills and techniques. Thus free communication is poor between workers whose immediate aims may differ, but whose ultimate goal is a unified picture of the Earth during the Pleistocene Epoch. Close co-operation and co-ordinated studies are all too frequently made difficult by the method of allocation of research funds and the means of publication. So scattered are the published studies concerned with the Pleistocene that it is physically impossible for workers to keep abreast of the data available. Thus, the worker is often unaware of the existence of much valuable supporting and corroborative information in fields outside his particular sphere of interest.

Such great activity is displayed in Pleistocene research that data are accumulating at an ever increasing tempo and it is impossible to await summary studies which will ultimately be produced for each field, or those generalized treatises which will cut across boundaries of the several fields. It is therefore desirable to have a means of communication and correlation established across these artificial boundaries and, to achieve this end, the Division of Geology and Geography of the National Research Council in June 1947 established a "Committee on Interrelations of Pleistocene Research." This Committee is charged with the task of furnishing the desired correlation between the various Pleistocene fields of interest. Most of the fields are represented on the Committee and it is hoped that representatives of others will be added later.

The members are: Edward S. Deevey, Yale University (biogeography); Loren C. Eisle, Department of Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania (anthropology and new-world archeology); Richard Foster Flint, Department of Geology, Yale University, Chairman of the Committee; Claude W. Hibbard, Museum of Paleontology, University of Michigan (vertebrate paleontology); Chauncey D. Holmes, Department of Geology, University of Missouri (glacial erosion and sedimentation); Helmut E. Landsberg, Committee on Geophysical Sciences, Research and Development Board, Washington, D.C. (meteorology and climatology); Hallam L. Movius, Jr., Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University (old-world archeology); Fred B. Phleger, Jr., Department of Geology, Amherst College (oceanography and sea-floor geology); Louis L. Ray, U. S. Geological Survey, Washington, D.C. (glacial stratigraphy; alpine glacial geology); H. T. U. Smith, Department of Geology, University of Kansas (eolian features; frozen ground; stream terraces); and James Thorp, Division of Soil Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Lincoln, Nebraska (soil science).

On 5-6 April 1948, the Committee met in New Haven, Connecticut, to discuss the problems with which they are charged and to formulate ways and means of initiating a definite program. Committee members are preparing reports for later publication which will indicate the present status, recent publications, problems and active or anticipated research projects of their various fields of interest. Each member will welcome aid and suggestions from students in their fields. Reprints, names of research workers and investigation now being undertaken will be most helpful for the preparation of reports.

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