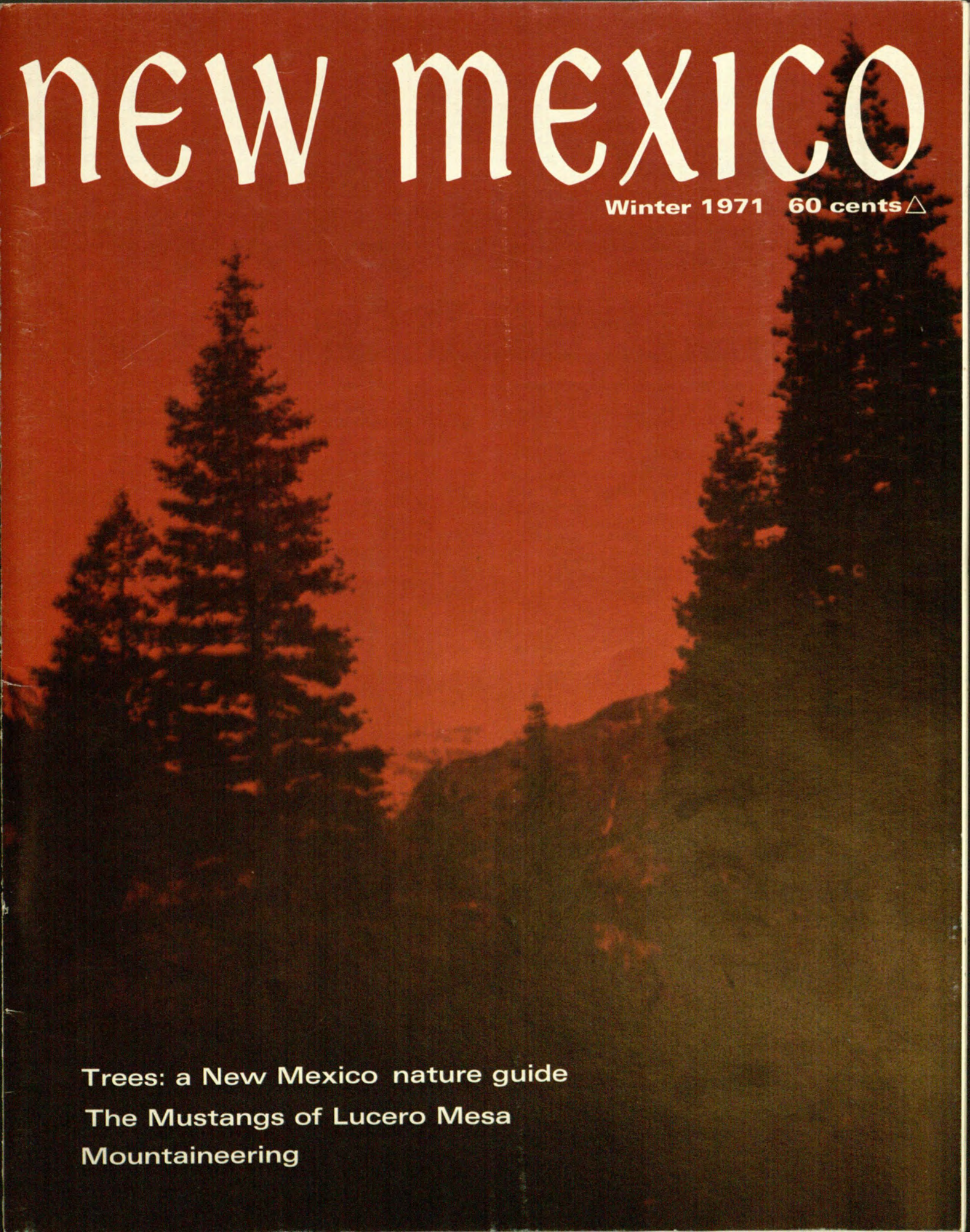


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Trees: a New Mexico nature guide
The Mustangs of Lucero Mesa
Mountaineering

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Cover—Albuquerque **Tribune** photographer Buddy Mays caught this dramatic canyon shot in New Mexico's north country. A red filter accentuates the already brilliant sunset silhouetting stately conifers.

From your editors . . .



Jaxon Hewett

Your editor was threatened with expulsion by the British for his reporting of the massive Bengal-Bihar famine of 1943, was declared *persona non grata* by the French of Indo-China in 1948 and was branded a capitalist spy and told to scram by the late Indonesian President Sukarno's kept press in 1965. Except for such matters of moment, no story in which we have been involved has caused such a stir as *The Bookish Black at Wild Horse Arroyo* in this issue. And this—even in advance of publication.

It seems that a lot of people care a lot about Negro cowboy George McJunkin, whose discernment led to the discovery of the Folsom Man.

When a manuscript arrived from Jaxon Hewett early last year, we found it eminently readable. As is our wont, we sent it for review to a qualified historian, in this case a University of New Mexico Press official. He raised research questions that sent Hewett scurrying for more documentation, including more interviews with friends of the late McJunkin.

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As Hewett's interest became known, dissent arose. One friend of McJunkin's wrote us that Hewett was indulging in a pack of lies. A scholar from a university in a neighboring state declared that Hewett's case was a house of cards. But anthropologists at the Museum of New Mexico found in Hewett's final manuscript nothing to quibble with. And Dr. George Agogino, chairman of Eastern New Mexico University's anthropology department, adjudged:

I find Jaxon Hewett's report an excellent opening round in the battle to bring recognition to amateur scientist George McJunkin. The leader in anything invites criticism, and some researchers and informants may feel some displeasure with the selection of material. Mr. Hewett worked hard and wrote well, but must also accept the penalty that often goes with being first in print.

We learn from Dr. Agogino and others that at least half a dozen scholars have been working on McJunkin for months and years, several with a view toward book publication. Among points at issue with Hewett: McJunkin did not "borrow" that mule. McJunkin did not go through fourth grade, but picked up his literacy later in life at Amarillo. It's Dead Horse Gulch, not Wild Horse Arroyo. McJunkin indeed found projectile points, but not in association with the extinct bison.

Should they care to, dissenters will receive their day in court on these pages in subsequent issues.

As for contributor Hewett, he was born in a log house in the shadow of the Manzanos forty-one years ago, studied by kerosene lamp and walked a mile to a country school. He attended Mountain-air High School, served with the Army Engineers in the Philippines shortly after World War II, was a Santa Fe Railway conductor, ranched, studied anthropology at the University of New Mexico. He now conducts the Old Southwest Museum and Handcraft Shop in Mountainair.

Walter Briggs

IT'S NOTHING.... JUST
SOME BISON BONES
SOME CAMPER LEFT BEHIND.

THAT HRDLICKA - WHAT
A CZECHERED CAREER!

YOU KNOW, ALES, US FOLSOM
FOLK ARE DANGED HAPPY YOU
DIDN'T TAKE UP RAILROADIN! YOU'D
A RUN US RIGHT OFF THE TRACK.

The Czech that bounced

Or: How Folsom was saved to history

FOR those who like to tinker mentally with the might-have-beens of history, the dying village of Folsom offers unusual material for the game. As fate decided it, this quiet little cow-country community has two enduring claims to fame. It was the place where Thomas (Black Jack) Ketchum finally ran out of rope. And it was the place where the world of anthropology was taught a lesson in intellectual humility.

I propose, for the sake of an exercise in what-might-have-been, that if Dr. Ales Hrdlicka had been fated to be security director of the Colorado & Southern Railroad, instead of curator of physical anthropology of the

by Tony Hillerman

Smithsonian Institution, Folsom might have been denied both its immortal distinctions. It would have been left only Mrs. Sarah Rooke, whose legend probably won't outlive the Bell Telephone Company's need for a heroine.

As students of Western Americana don't need to be reminded, Ketchum was one of the West's most ruthless badmen—though not among its brightest. Mr. Ketchum and his gang liked to rob trains. Ketchum learned that, just southeast of Folsom, the C&S passenger train was slowed to a relative crawl by the steep grade of a horseshoe curve. Here, one could jump aboard without sweating his horse. Ketchum tried it. It was easy. He robbed the train.

The C&S had been operating said

train on the premise that it wasn't likely to be robbed. Ketchum's dastardly deed caused the C&S to reconsider this premise. Maybe this train should carry guards. Ketchum promptly robbed the very same train at the very same spot. This added evidence caused the C&S to abandon its original premise. Guards were put on the train. Shortly thereafter (August 16, 1899, to be exact), Ketchum tried to rob the very same

TONY HILLERMAN, though a native of Oklahoma, is firmly rooted in New Mexico. A long-time editor, Hillerman now is chairman of the University of New Mexico's journalism department.

HALT! NO FOLSOM
MAN GOES HERE!

FOR A MAN WHO'S
BEEN SO WRONG SO LONG,
THE HUXLEY MEDAL.

train in the very same spot. This time, he was shot through the arm, captured and subsequently hanged with such enthusiasm that his head came off.

HAD Ales Hrdlicka been in a position with the C&S to apply the sort of thinking to the Ketchum problem that his division of physical anthropology applied to "early man in America," the outcome might have been happier for Black Jack. Ketchum might well have robbed his pet train at his pet Horseshoe Bend a fourth, fifth and sixth time, then wandered off to be captured elsewhere (or, perhaps, elected to the Territorial Legislature)—thus denying Folsom its place among the footnotes of Americana.

The first premise was, after all, that the train needed no guards—and Ales Hrdlicka was not a fast man to abandon a premise. Therein lies the reason why the discovery made in an arroyo eight miles northwest of Folsom had such an immense and worldwide impact on the study of early man in North America. Had it not been for Hrdlicka, America's most famous Stone-Age citizen might well have been named Melbourne Man or Vero Beach Man (or even La Brea Tar Pit Man) instead of Folsom Man.

Ales Hrdlicka was a remarkable person, as single-minded as Black Jack Ketchum, much more respectable and immeasurably brighter. He was a Czech who migrated to America as a boy, studied medicine and went to work in New York in a job something like that of today's public coroner-medical examiner. He was a brilliant young man, and a curious one.

Curiosity led him to wonder whether he could find any physiological connection linking the poor souls who died in public prisons, mental hospitals, etc., and thus came to him for post-mortem attention. Young Hrdlicka hit upon the idea of collecting the skulls of these losers, making careful and detailed cranial measurements, compiling statistics, and then comparing these characteristics with the skulls of more normal citizens. Hrdlicka seems to have collected

about 2,000 skulls of deceased jail-birds and mental cases—a gargantuan job and a mind-boggling storage problem—and made his detailed measurements. Unfortunately, he then learned that no one had ever bothered to collect statistics on the characteristics of the skulls of normal people. Thus, no base for comparison.

BUT young Hrdlicka's efforts had been noticed by the right people at the Smithsonian Institution. About the time Ketchum was discovering how easy it was to board the C&S train laboring up the grade near Folsom, Hrdlicka was being hired by the Smithsonian's American Museum to found its division of physical anthropology. The institution rarely has made a wiser choice.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the science of anthropology was chaos. Only fifty years had passed since Boucher de Perthes had collected the "fist axes" from French glacial gravels and given science its first dim hint that man had been around many thousand years longer than the 6,000 allowed by popular Calvinistic philosophy. In those fifty years, scattered evidence had been found to link man's evolution to the primates and to suggest he had been in Europe, Africa and parts of Asia for several hundred thousand years. American anthropologists hadn't given up completely their patriotic efforts to prove that the human race started in the U.S.A. and the halls of science buzzed with theories—most of them humbug.

As curator of physical anthropology and founding editor of the *Journal of Physical Anthropology*, Hrdlicka was the right man in the right place at the right time. Hrdlicka wanted hard (preferably bony) evidence, not speculation. He was a difficult man to convince. As the years passed, Hrdlicka emerged as America's pre-eminent authority on the nature and antiquity of human bones.

By the early 1920s, he was one of the world's most famous and respected anthropologists. Out of the chaos and wild speculation of turn-of-the-century American anthropology,

Hrdlicka and the majority of his fellow scientists and scholars had evolved an orderly premise. There had been no humans in the Western Hemisphere until very recent times—probably no earlier than 3,000 years ago. The American Indian of North and South America had developed from a series of migrations of Mongoloid peoples across the Bering Straits. These migrations had come long after the end of the Pleistocene Age—and after the melting of the last Ice-Age glaciers had opened a path through Siberia, Alaska and Canada.

It was a good, sensible premise, supported by a large amount of solid evidence. Hrdlicka was in a superb position to defend it because—as the foremost authority on the antiquity of human bones—he was the man who ultimately judged most of the important evidence which contested it.

Hrdlicka had probably examined the bony remains of more Ice-Age folks than any man alive. If the skull didn't have a suitably low brow, and other "cave man" characteristics, Hrdlicka wrote him off as "modern." The only flaw in this operation was that scientists of that era thought that men had been wearing "modern" skulls just 5,000 or 6,000 years. Scientists now believe "modern" skulls have been in fashion 40,000—perhaps much longer.

Thanks to the stubbornness of the academicians, the museum which the villagers now maintain in the old Doherty Mercantile Store offers a special—if perverse—satisfaction to anyone sporting a decent amount of anti-intellectualism. One can look at the immense old wood stove in the rear of the store and enjoy the thought that for about eighteen years ranchhands and C&S gandy dancers who sat around it thawing their boots had a clearer insight into the prehistory of America than did the certified brains of the National Museum.

FOLSOM got this jump on organized science the hard way. A storm front stalled over Johnson Mesa on August 27, 1908, and dumped a torrential thirteen inches of rain on the drainage area of the

FOLSOM? WHAT IF WE'D A
NAMED IT PIE TOWN, LIKE THAT
PLACE OVER YONDER. THINK OF
THAT, THE PIE TOWN MAN!

Dry Cimarron above town. Someone called a warning to Mrs. Rooke at her Folsom telephone switchboard, and she won a lasting place among Bell heroines by staying at her post, calling alerts to her customers until she was swept away by a wall of water. The flood drowned seventeen of Folsom's 700 citizens and washed away most of its buildings.

(A bartender at nearby Raton once assured me that the other sixteen who drowned were saloonkeepers who, like Mrs. Rooke, manned their duty stations until the bitter end. I believe the story is true, which isn't easy since history tells us Folsom had only seven saloons at the time, one for each 100 residents. But if you really try, you can believe each saloon had two or three barkeeps.)

The same flood slashed deep erosion up the valley, and when survivors in the village tired of talking of the cataclysm, they began talking about the deposit of fossilized animal bones which "Nigger George" McJunkin had found in that arroyo up on the Crowfoot and of the strange and beautiful lance points he had found among them. Folsomites, with some help from this unusually well-read ranch foreman, promptly jumped to the conclusion that science would get around to in 1926. The bones weren't those of a modern species. They were fossilized. They were buried under the sort of earth stratifications which take thousands of years to build up. Therefore, the animals were thousands of years old. Since they had been killed by manmade lance points, man's occupancy of the country must also date back many thousands of years.

As it happened, some scientists were finding evidence elsewhere which was leading them to the same conclusion. Eight years after the Folsom flood, in 1916, E. H. Sellards found human bones and stone artifacts with mammoth and mastadon bones in strata deep under the beach at Vero Beach, Florida. Later, a crushed human skull and artifacts were dug up with more mastadon bones on the Melbourne, Florida, golf course. There were other such finds, including one made on the plains in

1923 by, significantly, J. D. Figgins of what is now the Denver Museum.

In each case, and a good many others, scientists of the Hrdlicka school managed to prevail. The bones were ruled to be modern and the circumstances explained in various ways. Perhaps, it was said, they had been dumped into a grave dug down among the fossil bones, or perhaps erosion had mixed in the artifacts, or perhaps roots growing downward had caused the mixing. The evidence seems to have been inspected with the same sort of enthusiasm with which a modern biologist would hear arguments that toads cause warts. At any rate, Hrdlicka managed to keep Early Man officially out of the Western Hemisphere until 1926—when the find at Folsom proved too much even for him.

There's a nice irony in the timing. At the very moment when Figgins' crew from the Denver Museum was digging the grave for Hrdlicka's theory, eight miles northwest of Folsom, the Smithsonian scientist was formally reaffirming it to the world in the *Scientific American*.

This distinguished journal devoted much of its edition to a long and profusely-illustrated article by Hrdlicka, which bore this subtitle:

There Is No Valid Evidence that the Indian Has Long Been in the New World.

IN it, Hrdlicka demolished—once and for all—the idea that man had reached North and South America more than a couple of thousand years before the time of Christ. Then Hrdlicka serenely sailed away to London, where the Royal Anthropological Institute presented him the coveted Huxley Medal and convened a special meeting to hear him lecture. As the *Scientific American* reported, the medal was in recognition of his years of service in demolishing "unwarranted claims for the extreme antiquity of man in America."

J. D. Figgins, having had one of his own "unwarranted claims" so demolished, wasn't going to let that happen twice. While the primary purpose of the dig above Folsom was to recover skeletons of Ice-Age bison

species, those digging were instructed to watch carefully for artifacts and to preserve them in place in the clay. To make what deserves to be a long story short, the diggers not only found an assortment of lance points in the clay amid the fossil bones, they found one point jammed into the backbone of long-horned bison of a sort extinct for about 11,000 years. The bones were still connected in their original skeletal form—which meant the lance points couldn't have been washed in by erosion. The strata of earth were undisturbed, which ruled out the possibility of arguing the artifacts had been buried. And there's no way a root can imbed a spearhead into a backbone.

Besides, all of the bison tail bones were missing. Then, as now, "the tail goes with the hide." The animals had been skinned and butchered. Marks of stone knives were found on some of the bones. Luckily, an anthropological seminar was being held at Pecos that summer. Figgins summoned some of these distinguished scientists to the scene. They believed their eyes.

SKEPTICISM lingered on for years, but Folsom broke the dam. An Ice-Age hunter was accepted and called "Folsom Man." (The village, fortunately, had changed its name from "Ragtown" early in its history.) By 1934, the Smithsonian itself was excavating the great Folsom hunting site on Lindenmeier Ranch in Colorado, and evidence of other ancient and "pre-Indian" hunting cultures were being found near Clovis and elsewhere around the nation.

Had Ales Hrdlicka been a less brilliant man—thus less influential—Folsom would have been anticlimatic—just another discovery which confirmed what a dozen earlier finds in Florida, California and Oklahoma had already formally revealed. Thanks to Hrdlicka, Folsom is listed in the textbooks as the find which had "the most far-reaching effects on the course of American Archeology."

We think we've a right to argue that if young Ales Hrdlicka had been intrigued by C&S trains instead of by skulls, Folsom would be much sooner forgotten.