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THE CAIRNS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA AND WASHINGTON. BY HARLAN I.
SMITH, American Museum of Natural History, New York, N. Y.

One of the kinds of burial, on southeastern Vancouver Island in British Columbia, on the San Juan group, and on Whidbey Island in Washington, was in stone cairns. This method of burial is known to have antedated contact with the whites by a considerable period. The stone structures are usually located on slopes, with a gravelly soil, which are strewn with angular boulders, and near the sea. So far as we know they are always within a mile of shell-heaps.

In general the cairns consist of irregular piles of boulders, from three to twenty feet in diameter. One is found over each body, which in some cases, are found surrounded by a more or less rectangular cyst formed by placing the straightest sides of several boulders towards it, and covering the opening thus formed with one, two or more slab-shaped rocks of like character. In some cases there are the slab-like stones over the grave but the vault is not well-formed, if present at all, and in other cases the cover stones are so small that they do not form a protecting roof over the body. Over the cyst the rough pile of the cairn was reared. It is frequently bounded by a single row of large stones while the filling between this wall and the vault is of small fragments, boulders, and in some cases largely of soil or mixtures of these materials. Rectangular cairns have been found where the outer row had been carried up so as to form a retaining wall making the whole structure similar to a truncated pyramid. Cairns were also found in which the body was placed at the side of a large boulder and covered with small boulders piled up against the large rock.

The skeleton, which was placed on the side in the usual flexed position, is found on the original surface of the soil, sunken into it or in a shallow

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hole dug down into the surface soil or in some cases even into the gravel below. It is often much decayed, especially in the cairns near Victoria, where complete skulls are rarely obtained. In forty-two cairns excavated there no entire bones were secured. At North Saanich, and near Coupeville, however, complete skeletons have been collected.

A few copper ornaments have been found buried with the skeletons and a stone object was secured from among the top stones of one cairn.

The cairn building culture, so far as recorded in this area, seems to be practically a unit. The cairns are perhaps most highly developed in the vicinity of Victoria which is near the centre of their present known distribution. The slight variations in the different localities seem likely to be due to carelessness, poverty of the builders or lack of preferable materials, rather than to a different culture. The cairn building culture is extinct. None of the present Indians build cairns or know of any people who have.

The skeletons are sometimes burned, but the evidences of fire in the cairns do not seem sufficient to conclude that the bodies were burned in the vaults. The skulls show a variety of types and deformations, both post- and ante-mortem, and are not considered in this paper. The scarcity of specimens of any kind in the graves is remarkable, and its counterpart is found with the skeletons in the shell-heaps, especially of the Lower Fraser, where objects, save for a few pieces of copper, were seldom found associated with the skeleton, except by accident.

The burial mounds of the region present similarities of structure to the cairns and one may be derived from the other. On the other hand some cairns seem to have degenerated until they are no more than a stone-heap over a grave.

The cairns are always near the coast shell-heaps, in which few skeletons are found and those are often in disorder. Possibly the cairns are the burials of some of the people who made the shell-heaps.

[NOTE: To be published in full as Part II, Vol. IV. of Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History].

ARCHEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS ON THE NORTH PACIFIC COAST IN
1899.¹ BY HARLAN I. SMITH.

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