The time in pre-history of the basketry and the giant sloth bones is linked with that of the “Natchez Man,” so called for a human pelvis find in Mississippi, dating back to the Lithic period from 6,000 to 10,000 B.C., the researcher said.

The find, although an old one, is unique in that it tied together the co-existence of the long-extinct animals with man-made artifacts. The basketry and the bones were discovered during the Civil War in the course of strip-mining operations. Up to now, they had never been analyzed, Gagliano said.

Gagliano said the Paleo-Indians followed a semi-nomadic pattern of hunting, fishing, and food gathering. They made a variety of chipped and ground stone implements as well as tools and ornaments of bone and shell. These early Indians and animals took refuge and confronted

ARCHEOLOGISTS from Louisiana State University scrape out artifacts from a dragline bucket during excavations on Avery Island. Radiocarbon dating of bones of a “giant ground sloth” show that Paleo-Indians were there 8,500 years ago.

**Artifacts on Avery Island Reveal Ancient History**

**Indians Gathered Salt in Baskets**

**BATON ROUGE, La. —** Louisiana State University archaeologists here say they have definite proof from tests of Avery Island artifacts that early man and mastodon roamed the Pleistocene prairie plains and marshes of Southwest Louisiana about 8,500 years ago.

Sherwood M. Gagliano, researcher with the Coastal Studies Institute at LSU, said that radio-carbon dating of bones of long-extinct animals, unearthed atop rock salt in a fossil-rich “valley” on Avery Island, proved that Paleo-Indians knew about the salt and were gathering it in baskets about 6,500 B.C.

Bones of a giant ground sloth, a contemporary of the mastodon and located in the same sediment strata where a cane weave basket was found, tested out to be 8,500 years old, he said. The dating supports previous assumptions that the artifacts represent the oldest culture thus far recognized in Louisiana, he said.

The valley first attracted attention in the 1860s, when mining crews turned up the curious fragments of a basket mingled with some animal remains.

Other prehistoric human artifacts were found in a depression appropriately called “Salt Mine Valley.” The valley, surrounded by gently rolling sandy hills in the southern part of the island, receives the drainage of the major stream system, Gagliano said.

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