LSU Scientists Find Artifacts

AVERY ISLAND, La. (AP) — Louisiana State University scientists have discovered basketry and woven cords pickled in the brinery water of this salt deposit area they say may be the oldest such finds in North America.

Chipped stone tools and “remarkable” artifacts of perishable organic materials preserved by the brine, including pieces of woven cords, possibly fragments of sandals or bags; a fragment of cane matting, and a bone projectile point were discovered as mounds of earth from salt mine expansion were carefully sifted.

12,000 Years Old

Radiocarbon dating methods put the age of the materials at 11,000 to 12,000 years, and suggested that a primitive people roamed south Louisiana at that time in a level of development similar to that of the Australian aborigine.

In announcing the find, LSU scientists said this key importance was in establishing a direct association between objects of human workmanship and the remains of such extinct Pleistocene animals as the mastodon, saber tooth tiger and ground sloth.

‘Clovis Hunters’

Indications are these primitive people predate the “Clovis hunters” who developed a specialized big-game hunting culture over North America about 10,000 years ago, Dr. Sherwood M. Gagliano said.

The hunters took their name from the distinctive chipped stone projectile, the clovis point.

“It is significant that the artifacts from Salt Mine Valley suggest a more primitive stone technology than that associated with the Clovis hunters,” said Gagliano. “The site may have been occupied by an earlier, more primitive people.”

The scientists speculate that animals and humans were attracted to the area because of its available salt.