

A miracle, 1C.



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'Priceless' Caddo pots stolen

By **JEN BRADY**
For the Sunday News

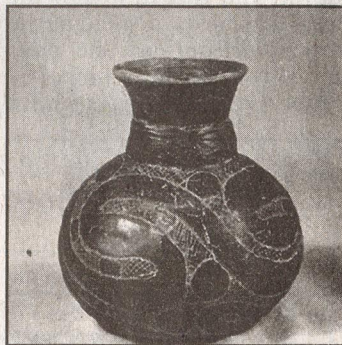
MAGNOLIA — Twenty-six "priceless" Caddo Indian pots dating back to the 1600s have been stolen from the Arkansas Archaeological Survey station at Southern Arkansas University.

Jamie Brandon, the station's archaeologist, said Friday afternoon that the pieces were taken sometime between May and July, but were likely taken in the past few weeks.

Brandon, who assumed his new position Tuesday, said he and research archaeologist David Jeane had been doing a walk-through of the facility on Thursday. They were talking about modifications to create an archaeology museum at SAU when they noticed a piece of pottery on the floor of a locked storage room near the a lab.

After further investigation, they discovered all of the complete vessels missing.

"The reason this one collection was off (in storage) is because it belongs to the (U.S. Army) Corps of Engineers, so it's federal property and it was destined to be given back to the Caddo Indians,"



Contributed Photo

Hodges Engraved bottles, from the Cedar Grove site.

Brandon said.

Brandon said the pieces were excavated from the Cedar Grove site in Lafayette County in 1980 and are estimated to be around 350-400 years old.

"The Corps of Engineers was shoring up Red River," he said. "They hit a historic cemetery first and called in the archaeologists. While we were excavating this historic cemetery we found there was a prehistoric village underneath the cemetery."

The pots were from burials and are therefore sacred to the Caddo. The pieces were destined to be shipped back to



Contributed Photo

Cabaness Engraved bowl, from the Cedar Grove site.

the Archaeological Survey's main office in Fayetteville, then given back to the Caddo.

Brandon said he couldn't place a value on the vessels.

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SAU

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"We see them as priceless," he said. "They tell us a lot about the past. We see them more as information, the Caddo see them as sacred and other people see them as money." SAU Police Chief Rebecca Chiles said there were no signs of forced entry,

which points to the suspect having access to a key.

In a press release Friday, the Arkansas Archaeological Survey said that photographs and documentation for each pottery vessel exist so they will be very difficult to sell on the open market.

"The vessels are from Indian graves subject to the Native

American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act," the release said.

"If the vessels were transported across state lines, they are also subject to the federal Archeological Resource Protection Act. Hence, the thieves can be prosecuted under two separate federal laws as well as state law."

For these reasons the SAU Police Department is working with the El Dorado office of the FBI in the investigation.

A reward has been offered for information leading to the recovery of the pottery vessels and prosecution of the perpetrators.

Contact Tom Green at 479-575-3556 or 479-442-0261.