

Museum Notes

"Do you have the right to disturb Indian burials?" "Why would you want to?" "Why don't you excavate other known Indian sites?" These questions have frequently been asked as a result of the work your Iowa State Museum has done in excavating an important Indian Burial site in West Des Moines. The Code of Iowa (303.6-2) states that it is the *duty* of this department to *collect* and preserve materials illustrative of the traditions of the Indian tribes of this region. The collection and preservation of these materials is very important in order that we may gain knowledge that cannot be gained in *any* other way.

To excavate a site properly requires trained personnel using the most advanced scientific methods. This is very expensive and the funds provided us for this work are grossly inadequate. Even if it were financially possible to excavate the many hundreds of known Iowa sites, it would be wrong to do so. The excavation of a site necessitates its complete destruction. Advanced scientific techniques of tomorrow will be useless on a mound that was destroyed today.

A few collectors of Indian artifacts in their zeal for collecting dig indiscriminately in Indian sites. Their object is to find the spectacular objects, stone axes; arrowheads, whole pots, but by digging in a site they effectively destroy forever the story of its people. This can be read only in the stratigraphy of the soil, the special relationship of artifacts, broken bits of bone and pottery, chips of flint, charred seeds and other obscure evidences of culture. Modern farming methods have leveled countless Indian mounds for the gain of a few extra bushels of corn. So little would be lost by voluntarily setting aside and preserving them for future generations. These remains of early Iowa life are a part of our heritage.

Iowans be proud of your state, its resources, its beauty, its history. Be proud of your heritage. Hold it dear and preserve it from those who would diminish it through greed or ignorance.

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.