

THE ANNALS OF IOWA

Koster: Americans in Search of Their Prehistoric Past, by Stuart Struever and Felicia Antonelli Holton. New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1979. pp. vi, 282. Illustrations, appendix, bibliography, index. \$12.95.

Archaeology buffs will enjoy *Koster*. The authors, an eminent archaeologist and a prize-winning freelance journalist, have teamed up to lay out the culture history of the area they call "Lowilva" (Lower Illinois River Valley). Modern methods and innovative new approaches are discussed in a matter-of-fact easy-to-read manner. Too often, the human side of the story goes untold—not so with *Koster*. Individual personalities of people like Teed Koster, Greg Perino, and Alec Helton are woven into the book along with many anecdotes about various people involved in the project. The reader comes to know everyone in time—even the "Arkies" (crew members) and Gypsy (Koster's dog).

While the presentation is light and quite readable, hard facts and important information are constantly being driven home throughout Part I. The chapter entitled "The Kingdom of Lowilva" is one of the most useful, as it lays out the sequence of occupation and provides dates for the site.

A heavier dose of archaeology, specifically the "new" archaeology, comes in Part II. Bishop Usser, Sir Charles Lyell, Charles Darwin, and many more contemporary scholars find their way into the discussion as the stage is set. Then the paleoenvironment and cultural ecology of the area are traced in a series of intriguing chapters. Throughout the book, the reader is provided with numerous good illustrations, including nine color photographs that tend to tell it all. One excellent block diagram placed at the end of Chapter 15 provides a cutaway view that will be of special value in orienting the lay reader.

A serious problem with *Koster* lies in its somewhat insensitive handling of human burials, which are treated like artifacts, and possibly the subtitle of the book. Contemporary Indians would no doubt question whose past the subject and the book encompasses! One thing no one should complain about is the price. The book is truly a bargain and it should do much to bring the practice of modern archaeology to the lay public.

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