

PROGRESS OF THE ARCHEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF IOWA

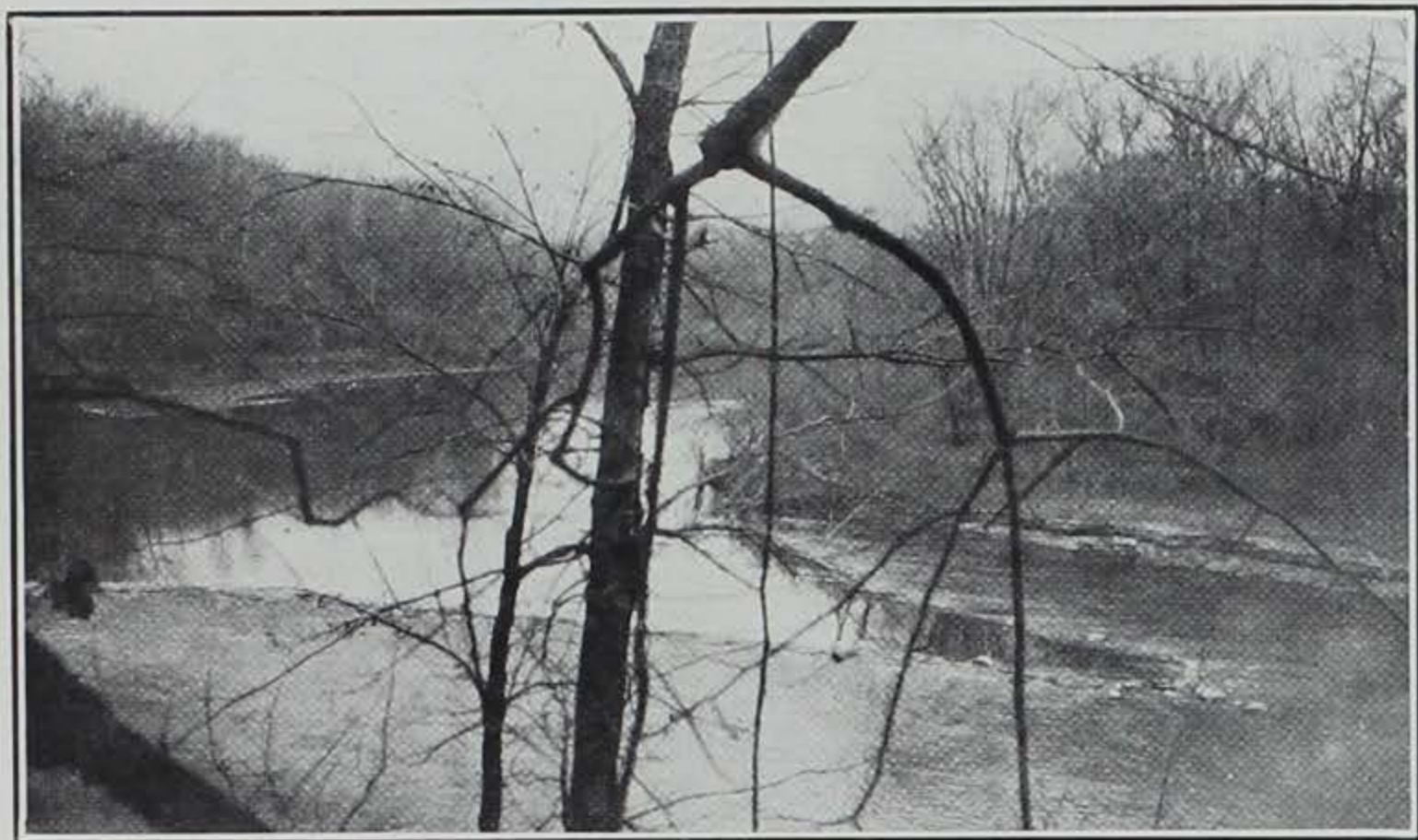
The survey of the antiquities of Iowa begun by the State Historical Society of Iowa in 1922 is preliminary in nature. That is to say, the survey aims primarily to bring together existing information, rather than to conduct intensive explorations of particular sites for the purpose of acquiring facts that are entirely new. The intention is to take as complete account as possible of information now obtainable, that a guide may be furnished for any intensive work that may later be undertaken. A preliminary survey that does not contemplate detailed field work at any one point, but only a summary of past work, a catalog of archeological sites, and an appraisal of the numerous collected materials can not do more than furnish a general view of the field. On the other hand, a piece of intensive work on a single site can not have its full meaning except as a part of this general view. It is believed that a rapid survey will provide the best starting point for the more complete future knowledge of the archeology of Iowa. The field is vast, and thus far very little real scientific work has been done within it. Since the publication five years ago of the writer's sketch of the Iowa archeological field,¹ the work of each successive season has made more clear the practically unlimited extent of this field.

In part the existing information is in published form in a large number of items and articles in books, magazines, and newspapers; in part it is held in the minds and notebooks of

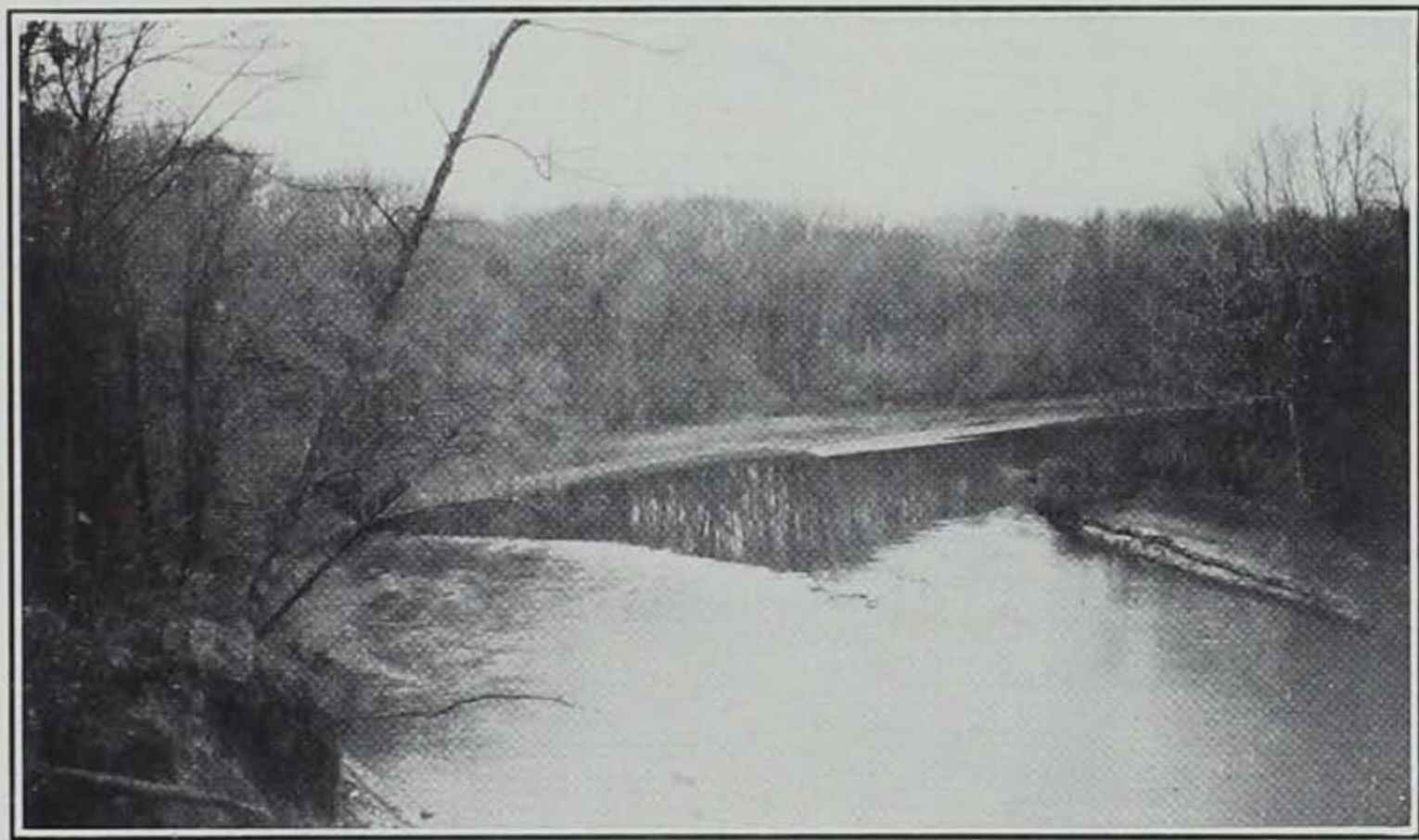
¹ *Some Materials for the Study of Iowa Archeology* in THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XVIII, pp. 357-370.

hundreds, indeed thousands, of persons who have had some conscious contact with the Iowa archeological field. Everyone who knows definitely of the location of an Indian mound, or of the finding of a stone arrowhead or stone ax, has in his possession an item which, if contributed, would help foot up the sum total of the knowledge which is being sought. A preliminary survey of the archeology of Iowa will involve, then, two distinct lines of effort: (1) the preparation of a bibliography and summary of the literature, and (2) an attempt to assemble, county by county, the large amount of unpublished information held by many persons. In the nature of the case neither of these lines of inquiry can ever attain complete and perfect results, but it is hoped that a faithful examination of archeological literature and of the history of Iowa, combined with a hearty response from those who have a definite fact to contribute, may result in a study which will reflect with reasonable accuracy and completeness the status of knowledge at the time of publication.

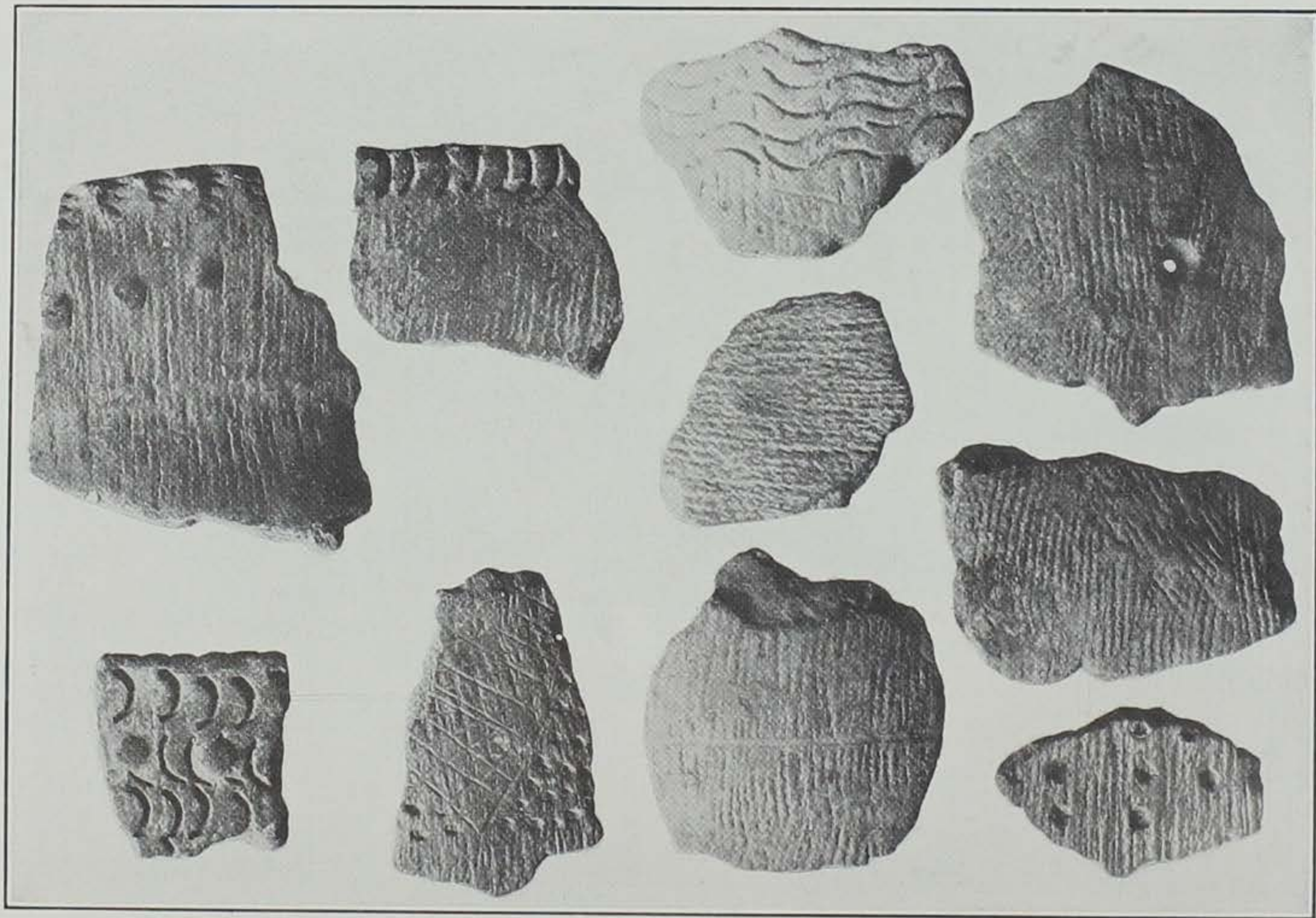
The first line of inquiry, a survey of the literature, has led far afield and has already called for two and a half summers work, for the most part in the extensive library of the State Historical Society at Iowa City, though the resources of a number of other libraries, both in and outside of the State, have been utilized. Some five hundred titles have thus far been collected, and this part of the survey now seems measurably near to completion. In this connection the importance of newspaper items should be noted. It has frequently happened that an important find, say of ancient human burials or a cache of stone implements, first chronicled in the local paper, has failed, for lack of any agency charged with assembling such information, to find its proper place in the more permanent literature. During recent years the various clipping bureaus have gone far toward salvaging these local items, though undoubtedly



NEAR VIEW OF STONE DAM OR FISH TRAP IN IOWA RIVER AT AMANA LOOKING NORTH



VIEW OF STONE DAM OR FISH TRAP IN IOWA RIVER AT AMANA LOOKING NORTHWEST



POTSHERDS OF ALGONKIAN TYPE FROM VILLAGE SITE AT AMANA; GENERALLY BROWN OR RED; FOUND THROUGHOUT IOWA, BUT ESPECIALLY IN THE SOUTHERN HALF OF THE STATE; THE FOUR SPECIMENS TO THE LEFT ARE RIMSHERDS

many finds will remain in obscurity unless the facts about them are sought out and forwarded by some friend with a good memory or with a well kept scrapbook.

Various efforts have been made and are being made to collect the large body of unpublished information held by people living both within the State and outside of it: correspondence has been carried on; a number of lectures, with requests for information, have been given; a considerable part of the State has been personally visited; finally, use has been made of radio broadcasting. Real information has been secured by all of these methods.

The first method mentioned, that of correspondence, was sponsored initially by Dr. Benj. F. Shambaugh, Superintendent of the State Historical Society of Iowa, who caused to be sent out, on January 25, 1924, some fifteen hundred letters to members of the Society and other persons known to be interested, who were made acquainted with the fact and purposes of the survey and asked for any information that they might possess. The results secured from this letter went much beyond expectations. About one hundred returns were received, giving information from nearly half of the ninety-nine counties. Many hitherto unrecorded mound groups, village sites, ancient trails, and other antiquities were reported, and many collections of archeological materials were for the first time made known. The fact that the State itself was showing an interest in its antiquities also gave courage and inspiration to many a lonely collector, and the first letter of inquiry proved in many cases to be only the starting point of a continued and profitable correspondence.

Lectures on the archeology of Iowa have been delivered at Ames, Grinnell, Nevada, Blairstown, West Branch, Mt. Vernon, Cedar Rapids, and McGregor, and papers have been presented at science meetings in Milwaukee, Wiscon-

sin, Springfield, Illinois, and Iowa City, Iowa. At each place items new to the survey have been secured, and available information has been imparted. At McGregor, especially, where membership on the staff of lecturers of the School of Wild Life Protection brought contact with people from all parts of the State, it has been possible to assemble a considerable amount of data, or at least to obtain leads that resulted in the securing of data. While people can not always supply definite information and statistics, the fact that they know of the approximate location of mounds and other antiquities, or the name of an interested collector, is of importance and often the lead given traces out to a very happy and profitable conclusion.

Rapid field work has been carried on for a total of about nine weeks up to the present time, more or less contact being established in forty-five of the counties in eastern and southern Iowa. The results attained have generally been quite satisfactory, considering the rapid nature of this field survey. Many collections of material were studied, their owners interviewed, and wherever possible known sites were visited and given a superficial examination. In a number of cases, also, assistance was rendered to persons who desired an opinion as to the nature of some of their finds. On the average this personal contact with the field, slight as it was, about doubled the available information for the counties visited. For 1925 the field work will be carried on for several weeks in central and west central Iowa and, if time permits, also in some of the counties in northwestern Iowa. While information is wanted at this time from every part of the State, and the sooner this is in hand the better for the survey, it is especially desired, for purposes of this summer's work, to secure reports that may serve as further starting points in the following counties: Poweshiek, Jasper, Polk, Dallas, Boone, Greene, Carroll, Crawford, Harri-

son, Monona, Woodbury, Plymouth, Sioux, Lyon, Osceola, O'Brien, Buena Vista, Ida, Sac, Calhoun, Webster, Hamilton, Hardin, and Grundy. Sufficient address for letters is —The State Historical Society of Iowa at Iowa City. When one is working so largely in unknown quantities, it is not possible to make an entirely definite itinerary, nor is it possible for a preliminary survey, without an undue expenditure of time and money, to reach every point that one would like to visit. An attempt will be made, nevertheless, to reach all promising sites and to interview and assist all those who have an interest in the furtherance of the survey.

The fact should again be emphasized that the making of a successful survey of the State's antiquities involves of necessity a large amount of coöperative effort. This fact is recognized in all the States now trying to assemble archeological data. In some States, as Wisconsin, Michigan, Alabama, and Tennessee, archeological societies, holding regular meetings and, in the case of Alabama and Wisconsin, publishing a small magazine, are successfully gathering and disseminating information. In other States, as Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, and the Dakotas, some State institution, usually the University or the State Historical Society, has taken the lead in an attempt to make an archeological survey. There seems to be no reason why both a State institution and a society of interested workers, organized for social contact and inspiration as well as for scientific research, should not coöperate in a common aim. Various inquiries have been made in the Iowa field and, while the number of seriously interested students thus far discovered seems hardly to call for a new society as yet, it is to be expected that the number will increase and that eventually a desire will be felt for a closer exchange of information and ideas. There is certainly a growing realization in Iowa as elsewhere, of the importance of the ancient monuments,

of the fact that these are disappearing rapidly, and of the need of general coöperative effort if the story of prehistoric man is to be read before the writing becomes too dim. This is all very encouraging, and indeed the response has been, in the field as well as to written appeals, much heartier than was anticipated.

When the collected facts are finally published, an attempt will be made, of course, to give due credit to the many contributors. It would also be most pleasant, though perhaps not so easily practicable, to express appreciation of the almost numberless favors shown to the writer on his field trips: transportation by most of the known methods, to places that are sometimes hard to reach — over good roads, by automobile; through deep mud or over rocky hillsides, on or behind good Iowa horses; and in the river bluffs, by row boat or motor boat; guidance on foot to some hidden creek ravine, where even yet white men seldom go, but where the red man established his little village in the long ago; the willingness of some rural collector to come to town in response to a phone call, in order to bring in for inspection a boxful of relics picked up on the home farm; personal favors, frequently within the home itself, where public accommodations for transients were not available.

The farmers of the State are naturally in closest touch with the archeological situation, though the town collector is sometimes also a diligent searcher of the fields and ravines. From both groups many an item of information has been received and to both the survey is indebted for many a favor. Notwithstanding the generous response to appeals for information, however, it is to be presumed that the large majority of Iowa archeological sites still remain undiscovered. When a site once becomes buried beneath the plow line, only the wash of a stream, the digging of a cellar, cistern, or foundation, the grading of a road, the

opening of a gravel pit, or some similar operation, can again bring it to the light. But just such operations are uncovering the works of ancient man each year, and if it were only possible to assemble the facts concerning such finds, the essential characteristics of the archeology of Iowa would soon appear. It is hoped that a knowledge of the State's efforts to record its antiquities will soon become general and that as a matter of course all finds will be promptly reported. It will not be easy to create this ideal condition, but, as above remarked, progress in this direction is most gratifying.

Many persons unacquainted with the signs of ancient human life in Iowa will naturally want to know what the evidences actually are. Roughly speaking, the categories of our antiquities are about as follows:

1. *Village sites.* Favorite locations were the somewhat sandy second terraces of streams, especially the tributaries of the longer streams, where a good spring furnished water and the timber furnished game. A few sites only have been found on the tops of broad ridges overlooking streams. The light wigwams of the Algonkian tribes have left little or no trace, and apparently the village was not surrounded by a ditch; but the earth lodges of the Siouan and Caddoan tribes (it is not entirely certain that we have the latter in Iowa) are marked by circular depressions some twenty-five feet in diameter, and the whole village is frequently surrounded by a moat-like ditch. Many of the old sites are still above the plow line and after each washing rain the refuse of the men's flint working operations and the pottery fragments of the women's activities become visible. Frequently the sites produce also both finished and unfinished flint and groundstone implements, as well as stone mortars, hand mullers, and kitchen refuse in the form of clam shells, and bird and animal bones. The potsherds are the best index to

a culture and are therefore highly important. Even small fragments should be saved. The Iowa field produces at least three very different types of Indian pottery, the women of the different stocks or cultures (Algonkian, Siouan, and others), having had, as a rule, quite divergent views in matters of texture, form, and decoration. It follows that specimens from all parts of the State would go far toward solving problems of cultural distribution. To help in the study of pottery fragments several photographs are herewith reproduced.

2. *Caves and rock shelters.* In parts of the State where cliff overhangs stand far enough back from the streams to afford a dry shelter, and where wide-mouthed caverns abound, these refuges were used as places of permanent abode and produce, in even greater concentration than the village sites, the camp refuse of ancient man.

3. *Shell heaps.* These are accumulations, sometimes quite deep, of fresh water mussel shells, opened to obtain food or pearls, or both, and are naturally found along the banks of the larger streams and usually in or near a village site.

4. *Mounds.* Groups of mounds are generally near a village site and may stand either on a stream terrace or, more frequently, in a row along a high ridge. They occur in most parts of Iowa in considerable numbers and on account of their regular form and artificial appearance are generally recognized. In northeast Iowa along the Mississippi bluffs they often take the form of animal or bird effigies or long straight embankments; elsewhere in the State the mounds usually have a round base. Their size varies greatly.

5. *Cemeteries.* Sometimes the mounds appear to have been the principal cemeteries. They vary greatly in location, and there is great variation also in the manner of

burial. Sometimes the bodies were buried in an extended, sometimes in a flexed position; again the bones only were collected from an earlier tree or scaffold burial. The earth burial outside of a mound called for a loose soil, either within the village itself or on some nearby knoll, terrace, or hilltop. In a few cases deep caves are known to have been used.

6. *Trails.* It is highly desirable that the trails connecting the numerous villages, often worn to a considerable depth through generations of use, should be located. This is a difficult matter, as nearly all the old pathways have been obliterated. The memories of the living white pioneer should here be called upon.

7. *Spirit places.* The early Indians often held as sacred those places — hills, trees, springs, boulders, and the like — that had become associated in their minds with some special phenomenon or some unusual event. Examples are the great bur oak three miles south of Davis City, Decatur County, used as a burial tree when the first settlers entered the region, and the Painted Rock, a great cliff overlooking the Mississippi nine miles above McGregor.

8. *Rock carvings and paintings.* A few of these are found on the cliffs and in the caves of northeastern Iowa. A few stone slabs with pictographs have also been discovered along the streams of east central Iowa. A good example is preserved in the Fairfield public library.

9. *Stone dams or fish traps.* Only one example is known, which will be described later in this article. Very likely others exist.

10. *Flint or hematite quarries.* No ancient quarries are thus far known to the survey, though it seems probable that such exist. Great numbers of flint implements of a creamy-white color are scattered over the State, quite similar to the material of the flint beds of southeastern Iowa, especially

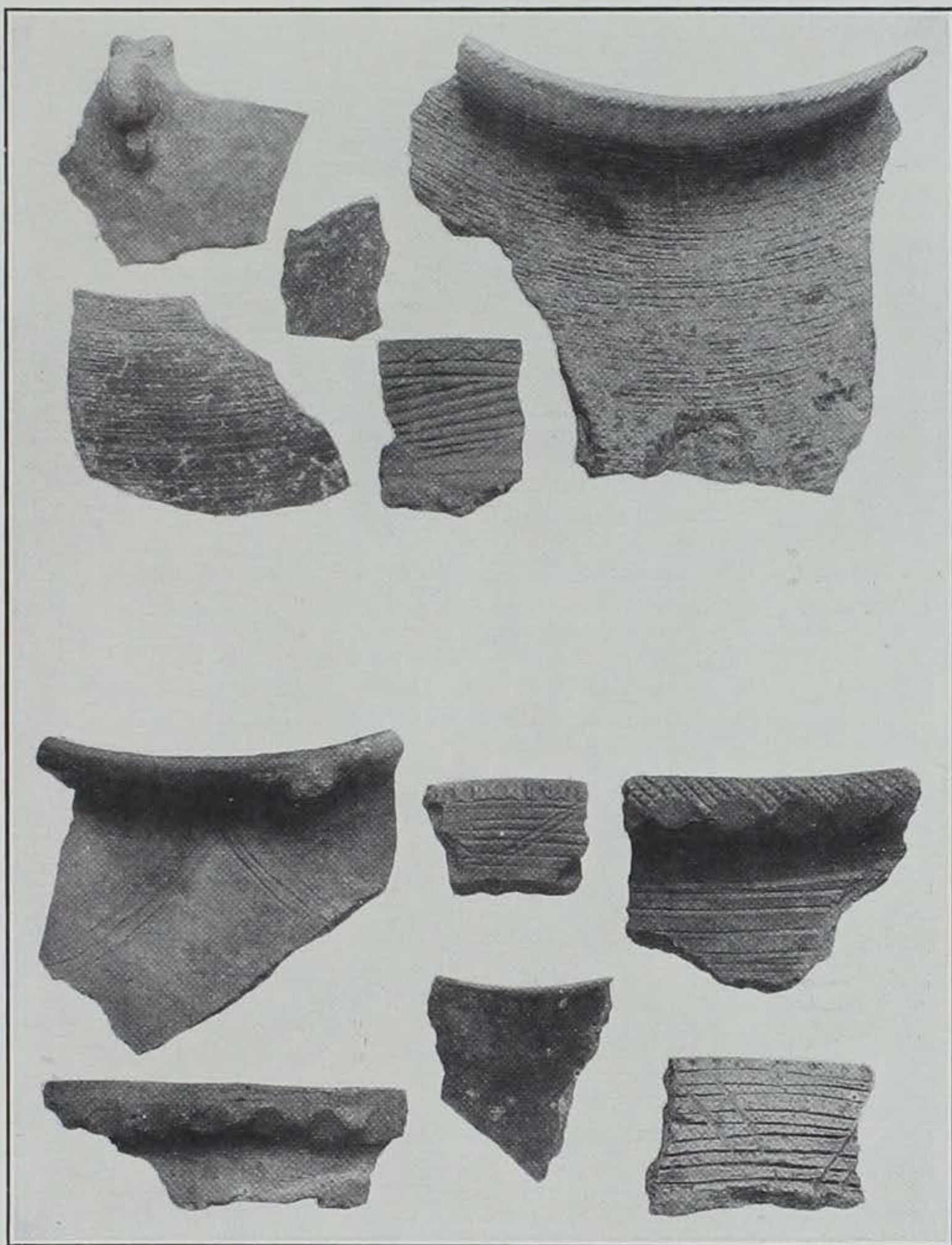
in the vicinity of Burlington. No flint workings have been identified, but Burlington and Ft. Madison students should be on the lookout. The place, or places, should be marked by flint refuse, partly fashioned implements, and crude, massive hammerstones. In south central Iowa, in the coal measures region, many nodules of red, reddish-black, and bluish-black hematite are found, especially in the ravines, and these the early inhabitants used for the making of implements and ornaments. It is possible also that they may have sunk shafts, as they sometimes did in Missouri, for the purpose of obtaining hematite of special grades for either paint or implement making.

By this time some minds doubtless contain the query, what is the real promise of the Iowa archeological field? It can only be said here, in brief, that Iowa promises to be as rich archeologically as any other State and that, as evidence already in hand shows the State to have been a meeting point of tribes belonging to several different stocks, our field may also become known for the variety of its phenomena. Marginal areas are always interesting, as well as scientifically important, and it is an alluring prospect that contemplates the tracing out of the lines of contact between the woods Indians from the north and east with the plains tribes from the west and the possible reading of the story that these contacts have to tell.

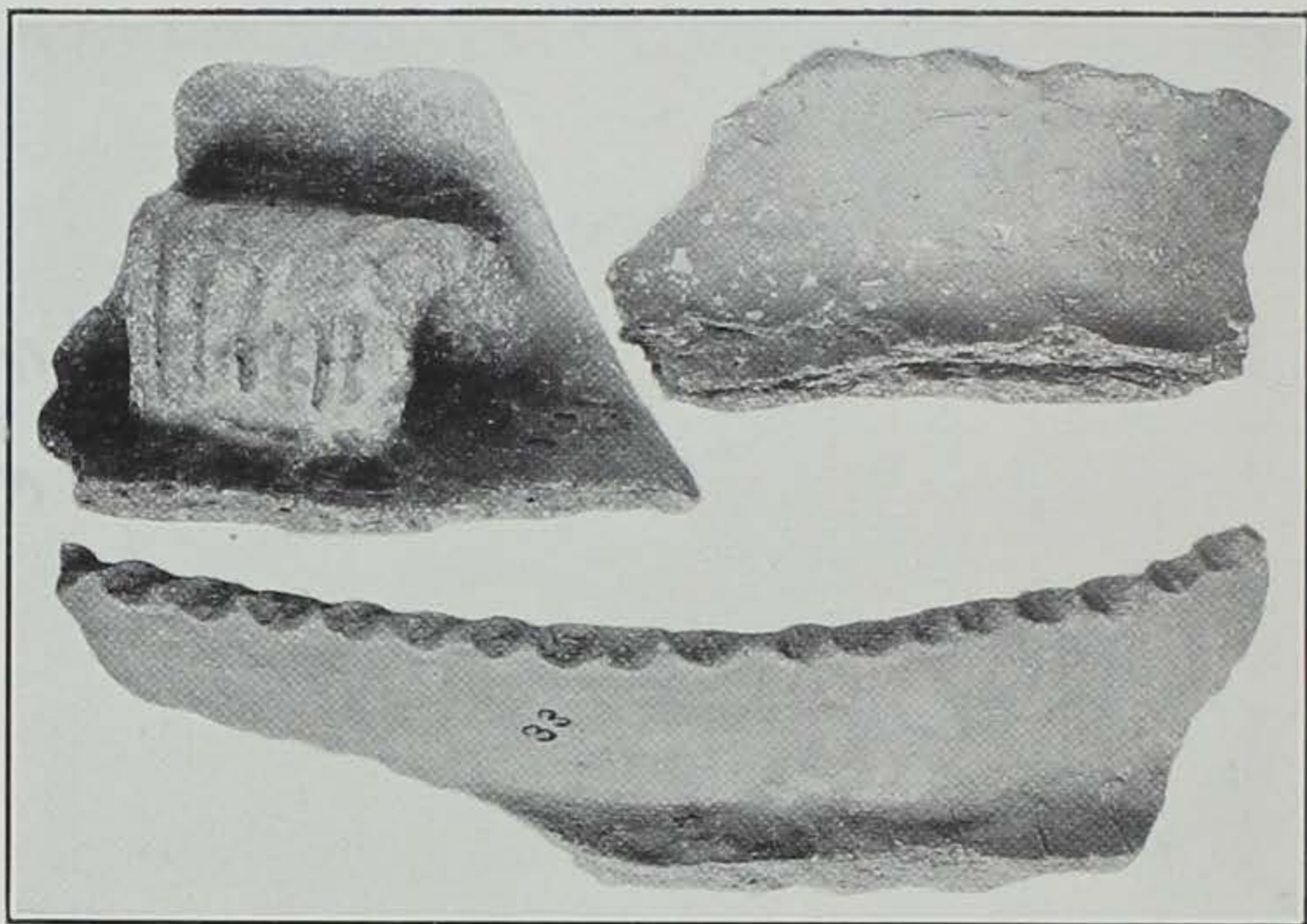
That the present account may gain something in concreteness and that further hints may be offered to the increasing number of observers, a few of the results of the survey may be enumerated here, more or less at random:

1. The Hopewell, or "mound builder" culture, characterized by its lavish use of copper implements and ornaments, fresh water pearls, and curved-base effigy pipes,²

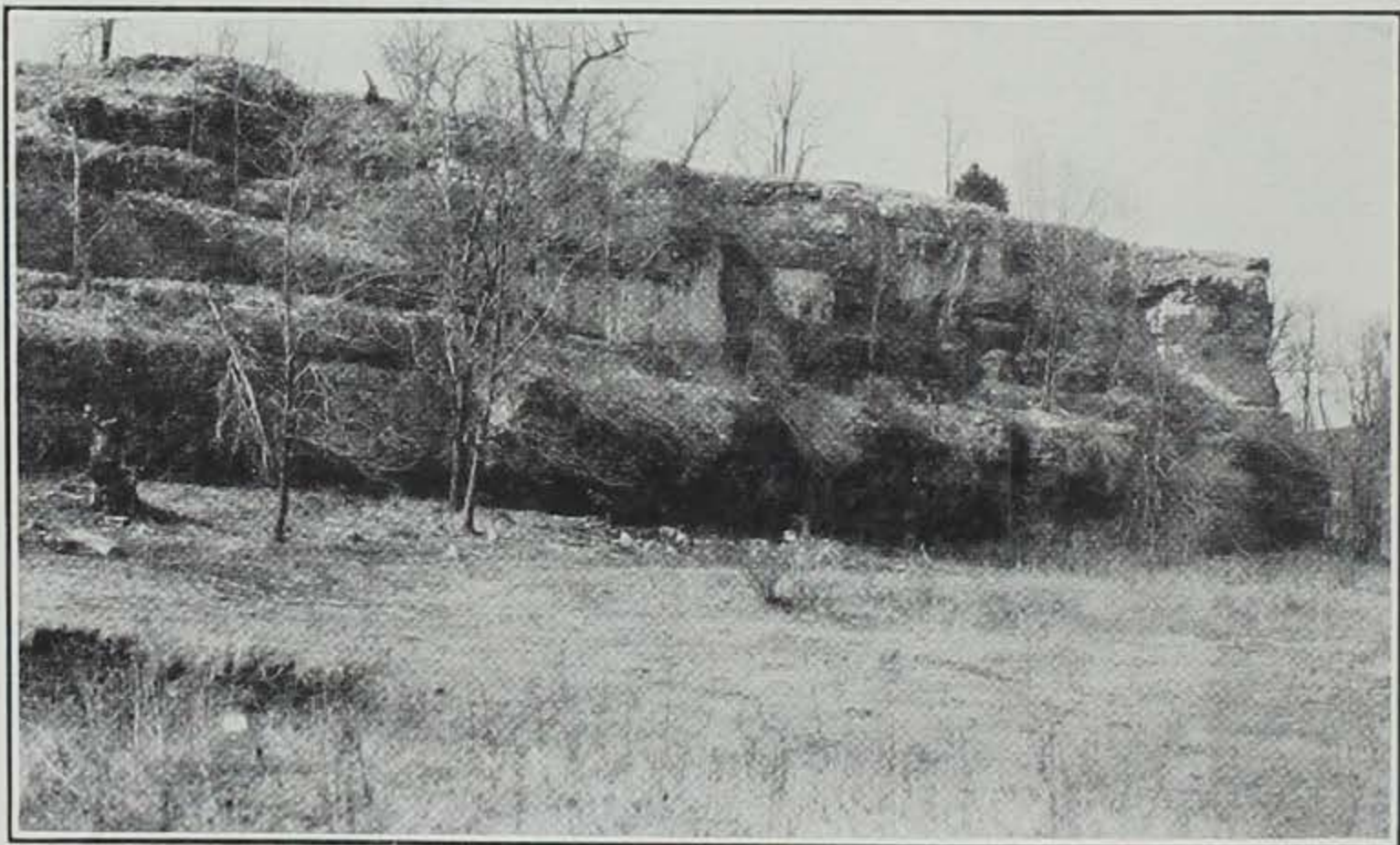
² For illustrations of typical objects see *Proceedings of the Davenport Academy of Sciences*, Vol. I, 1876, plates I-X, XXXIII, XXXIV.



POTSHERDS OF NORTHWEST IOWA TYPE, THE FIVE UPPER FROM THE BROKEN KETTLE SITE IN PLYMOUTH COUNTY, THE SIX LOWER FROM VILLAGE SITES NEAR CHEROKEE; GENERALLY GRAY OR BLACK, WITH TEMPERING OF FINELY-CRUSHED GRANITE



POTSHERDS OF NORTHEAST IOWA TYPE FROM UPPER IOWA RIVER VILLAGE SITES; GENERALLY LIGHT BROWN, WITH TEMPERING OF CRUSHED MUSSEL SHELLS; FOUND ALONG THE UPPER IOWA AND ON SCATTERED SITES ELSEWHERE IN THE STATE



MOUSE HOLLOW ROCK SHELTER, EIGHT MILES NORTHWEST OF MAQUOKETA; DEEP CAMP REFUSE FOR ABOUT ONE HUNDRED FEET ALONG CLIFF BENEATH OVERHANG

the culture that more than any other, following the Ohio excavations of eighty years ago, made American archeology famous, is found to occupy a greater range in Iowa than was formerly supposed. Forty-five years ago the Davenport Academy of Sciences uncovered the Hopewell along the Mississippi between Toolesboro in Louisa County and Clinton. Recent discoveries at Bellevue on the Mississippi and near Clermont on the upper Turkey extend the range of this culture over one hundred miles to the northwest.

2. Over a large area in northeast Iowa, where the country is but little or not at all ironed out by glacial action and where, therefore, the river gorges and creek ravines are margined by limestone cliffs and bluffs, primitive man is found to have made extensive use of the numerous caves and rock shelters. Some twenty-five such sites are known and, as they have been found within this topography wherever diligent search has been made, it seems probable that the study of Iowa's cave men has made only a beginning.

3. The northwestern part of Iowa, though comparatively treeless and, in its primitive condition, offering little protection from the rigors of winter, proves to be exceptionally rich in antiquities. The compact villages of earth lodges provided protection in any weather and, judging by the great accumulations of refuse, must have been occupied for long periods of time. The artificial deposits of the Broken Kettle site, twelve miles northwest of Sioux City, in Plymouth County, were eleven feet in depth when trenched through some twenty years ago. According to recent reports, the deposits on certain other sites promise to be even more extensive. A material culture based largely on the region's resources in the way of the larger mammals is plainly indicated: the bones of deer, elk, and especially bison, cracked open to obtain the precious marrow; heavy stone hammers with which the cracking was accomplished;

digging implements made from the great shoulder blades; bone awls and needles with which to sew the skins — all mingled together with the fragments of the pottery cooking vessels, the stone and bone weapons and utensils, and the ashes and charcoal of the ancient fires.

4. A remarkable example of natural excavation of a village site occurred in Washington County near Coppock during the flood season of last July. An old Algonkian site, situated in a bend of Main Creek at the foot of a long slope, lay below the plow line and unknown, until one day the creek rose eight or ten feet higher than any previous record, and, with its vicious current, carried away from three to five feet of the loose, sandy soil, in places down to hard pan. The work of excavation was most thorough, but from the archeologist's viewpoint, not exactly scientific: probably most of the village remains went on down the creek. However, some twenty grooved stone axes, about three hundred flint implements, a large stone mortar, various hammerstones, much debris from the flint workers' operations, and fragments of pottery unnumbered were left scattered about the creek terrace. These various objects, from what will be known as the Cochran site, are now in the hands of different persons in the vicinity.

5. An interesting recent addition to the State's catalog of antiquities is the stone dam in the Iowa River at Amana. This great work was found in place by the pioneers of Iowa County, though its purpose and origin seem to have been recognized only recently. The dam is built of glacial boulders, the uppermost of which show above the surface during low water. The shape is that of a great V with the open point directed downstream. The south wing is nearly one hundred yards in length, the north wing somewhat shorter. The Indians' fish traps were set, of course, in the narrow opening to which the fish were confined. The work has not,

as yet, been given a careful examination, though it lies in an area rich in antiquities. On the river terrace to the north are two village sites, at least, and on the hills round about are many groups of mounds.

Throughout the whole extent of Iowa, apparently, filling in the spaces between the abodes of the different tribes, the weapons of primitive man, lost in war or the chase and subsequently covered by the accumulation of soil, are constantly being brought to light again by the operations of men and of nature. Through the mingling of these flint arrowpoints and spearheads, stone war club heads, celts, and axes the different cultures acquire a continuity that is so lacking on their home sites. Hundreds of collections, big and little, of these field finds exist in Iowa, in addition to the smaller number of collections made mainly on the village sites. The specimens are generally found in newly plowed cornfields following spring and early summer rains and are therefore largely in the hands of the farmers of the State. All these collections, however small, would help to tell the story of prehistoric man in Iowa, provided the simple facts concerning them were preserved. It is particularly important that the exact locality where each specimen is found should be known. If time can not be found to number and catalog each object, those from different farms or along different creeks can easily be kept in separate labeled boxes. Where the relics tend to concentrate on a given small area, it is especially desirable to keep these by themselves. The most distressing experiences thus far encountered by the survey have been the finding of a number of large collections whose owners had passed away without leaving a particle of information as to where the materials were collected. This lack of data was especially unfortunate where it was known that the collector had gathered his specimens from various parts of the State, and even from different

States. Such collections may have a certain amount of interest as mere curiosities, but are worthless, of course, as study materials on which valid conclusions might be based.

On the other hand, it has been a great satisfaction during the progress of the survey to find so many collectors and students who know and record the history of their specimens and who, in many cases, are making an intensive study of their own particular localities. One collector has concentrated his efforts for thirty years on a single township, another does not care for anything found outside of his own county; the former has over seventeen hundred specimens gleaned from a few hillsides of south central Iowa, the latter, at last accounts, had over fourteen thousand specimens from some fields and rich village sites of northwestern Iowa.

It certainly must be true that many persons in contact with the Iowa archeological field have not, as yet, had any touch with the proposed survey of our antiquities. It is hoped that they will not only keep their collections available for study, but that they will make themselves known to the survey and help to build up a body of information that will eventually tell, to a considerable degree at least, the story of those peoples whose cornfields were already waving here before the ships of Columbus were pointed westward. The State Historical Society of Iowa at Iowa City desires to assemble all possible information; to classify it; to interpret it, so far as may be; and finally, through publication, to make it accessible to all who care to know.

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