

REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE IOWA
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

June 19, 1939

To The State Historical Society of Iowa:

The following is a brief statement of the work of the Iowa archaeological survey for the fiscal year 1938-1939.

The year's field work was the most extensive ever undertaken in Iowa. In the summer of 1938, a party of from three to four workers, directed by Mildred Mott and assisted by MacKinlay Kantor, put in nearly two months of labor in and near Webster City on two mounds and a village site. Evidence of Woodland occupation was secured in both cases, the materials from the habitation site being of especial interest as a little-known aspect of the Woodland culture pattern.

Ellison Orr was supervisor of a W.P.A. project which employed ten men and was in steady operation from April 11 to December 5, 1938, the entire season being spent on the Missouri River bluffs north and south of Glenwood. Two quite distinct archaeologies were encountered here: the Woodland of the habitation sites buried deeply in the ravines and of the mounds built in rows on high ridges; and the Mississippi of the numerous large earth lodges set into the sides and summits of the more gently rounded hills. Ten mounds and twelve earth lodges were excavated and trenches were run in several village sites.

In addition, Mr. Orr made a careful surface survey of some thirty square miles of territory north and south of Glenwood in order to make a final record of all the lodge sites and other antiquities still recognizable in this area of concentrated prehistoric occupation. He platted a total of

seventy-one lodge sites, including the twelve excavated. In addition to the photographic results and the rich survey and excavation data, about ten thousand specimens illustrating the industries of the earth-lodge people and the Woodland builders of the mounds were sent in to the laboratory. Most of these are from the lodges and they reveal at least sixty different traits of their one-time inhabitants. Neither the Woodland nor the Mississippi materials showed any contact with recorded history.

In addition to the materials sent in by Mr. Orr, about one thousand specimens from Mills County were contributed by Lee Swearingen and Francis McDowell of the State Institution at Glenwood and Paul Rowe, a farmer living three miles north. The materials collected by Mr. Swearingen and Mr. McDowell were from house sites; those from Mr. Rowe were collected mostly from the deep ditches in the ravines, a mixture, therefore, of Woodland and Mississippi culture artifacts. During the year some ten smaller collections were made by the writer or received from friends of the survey in Iowa, Nebraska, and the Dakotas.

The field work of the writer consisted of three visits to each of the excavation parties in Iowa and a study of excavations in progress in the Dakotas and along the Missouri River in Nebraska. The notes made and the collections obtained will help determine the relations between the archaeologies of Iowa and those of our neighbors to the west and northwest. In July, 1938, an emergency trip was made to Jackson County, on call of State Senator Frank E. Ellis, to preserve the record of certain "hominid holes" cut in a limestone ledge near a Woodland village site north of Maquoketa. The ledge was being destroyed by quarry operations. Notes and photographs were secured.

As in 1937-1938, Gertrude Ann Holmgren, a senior in Cornell College, was my laboratory assistant and brought

up to date the lettering and numbering of specimens. She also painted the restored parts of pottery vessels so as to make the contrast between the restored portions and the original less glaring.

Correspondence, the preparation and delivery of some seven lectures, the filing of materials preparatory to cataloging, the study of these looking toward publication have all required a considerable amount of time and effort. A partially prepared documented paper on the Woodland culture of Iowa has, on the suggestion of Dr. Shambaugh, been temporarily laid aside in favor of the preparation of a volume more popular in style for the Iowa Centennial Series to cover the whole range (in a general way of course) of Iowa archaeology.

On June 5, 1939, Mr. Orr again took the field with ten W. P. A. workers from Sioux City, and with these he is now (June, 1939) directing work on the Broken Kettle village site in the southwestern corner of Plymouth County. This general area will probably call for an entire season's work.

After Mr. Orr came in from his work in the field on December 6, 1938, he began work on a detailed report of the season's activities and results, an effort that took most of his time until he again went into the field early in June, 1939. The result is a typewritten report of two hundred and twelve pages, in addition to maps, drawings, plats, and profiles covering all phases of the excavations made. This was a matter-of-course contribution on his part in 1934, 1935, and 1936, as well as in 1938, for he has not expected financial remuneration, and no W. P. A. supervisor receives any salary except when working with his men. The matter is mentioned only with the thought that it may be possible some time to give Mr. Orr some kind of recognition.

CHARLES R. KEYES