



NEWSLETTER

Number 16

Iowa City, Iowa

October 1955

This issue of the Newsletter has been prepared by Mr. John Ives, a graduate student in Anthropology at the State University of Iowa. Mr. Ives is Graduate Assistant in the Archaeology Laboratory and as such has been busily engaged in working up the material from the Phipps site which we collected this past summer. In addition, he and Mr. Adrian Anderson, Jewell, Iowa, another student in anthropology, have been studying a collection of Glenwood material submitted by Mr. Paul Rowe and Mr. Donald D. Davis, both of Glenwood. Our lab is a place of great activity these days. We now have five students in anthropology working on the archaeological material in the laboratory.

In addition to the above students, Mr. Eugene Fugle is studying material from the Phipps site for data which will appear in his thesis for the M. A. degree. Mr. Fugle's thesis will be published in the Journal early in 1956. Mr. Charles O'Neal, Chicago, Illinois and Mr. Richard Flanders, Waterloo, are currently engaged in studying a collection of stone tools from Chelsea, Iowa. As soon as they have finished that work they will also work on the Phipps site material. We are bound and determined to have all of the material from last summer finished and published before we go into the field again.

Reynold J. Ruppe
Editor
Iowa Archeological Society

MORE ON THE PHIPPS SITE EXCAVATION

In the last Newsletter, which was written in the field, we reported the progress of the "dig" as of the Fourth of July. At that time we thought that we were about to uncover a house floor as we had then uncovered what appeared to be a post mold about 60 inches deep. As the mold appeared in the corner of one square, we dug down the adjacent square and although we found much material, no post molds appeared until a depth of 81 inches was reached. On the last day of digging, at 90 inches, a row of molds showed up in that square and the adjoining square opposite the one in which the first mold was found.

Another trench, three squares long, was started on July 17 with the help of members of the Iowa Archeological Society who attended the meeting and field trip held in Cherokee on that date. Although fired clay, charred logs and other suspicious formations were found at two levels, nothing of a floor-like nature was found until a depth of about 60 inches was reached. At that level a row of small post molds was uncovered. As the line of "posts" appeared along the south wall of the east-west trench with a slight curve in towards the north of the southwest corner, we were faced with a problem. The above mentioned curve was slight enough to be part of an irregular line. Not knowing whether the floor lay to the north or to the south and realizing that our time was too limited in either case to be able to lay bare the outline of the structure with our small crew, we started to dig the square at the west end in hopes of quickly reaching our level in order to determine which direction the row curved, if at all. In order to accomplish our task in the two or three days left, we decided to sacrifice some of the caution and thoroughness which characterizes good field work and dig down in one foot levels with a spade. Few scoops of dirt were taken before we were into the largest cache of bison bones found at the site. The remainder of our time was consumed with trowel in hand as we filled numerous large sacks with bones, large pot sherds, and stone tools. Needless to say, we did not reach our level. Nor were we able to reveal the outline or nature of Mill Creek houses as manifested at the Phipps site.

The latter may be a bit of vinegar for us to swallow, but it is considerably sweetened by the knowledge that we have good stratigraphic control and recovered an immense amount of artifacts. Moreover, each member of the crew learned important lessons in archaeological techniques and theory as the summer progressed. Our director, Dr. Ruppe, confided that this also applies to him.

On July 21, we became so obsessed by the desire to find a house outline that work was temporarily halted in the pits and all hands joined in behind a Jeep-pulled slip in a southward extension of the trench where the first post mold had been found. Some of us had already gone down 36 inches in the square adjacent to the south and so a trench four squares long and a bit over 40 inches in depth at the north end was cut out with the slip. Apparently we cut through two house floors to judge from the profile on the trench wall, and by the time we cut into a fireplace below both, work with the slip was abandoned. Above what appeared to be the level of the upper house, a line of clay casts showed on the wall profile. Since this cast level was only about 18 inches below the ground surface at the highest point, two of the crew began to clear a section at that depth. The area uncovered appears to have been a "living surface", a level area, probably between houses, where much of the village life occurred. A grooved maul, a celt, two pots broken in places, a grinding slab, several combination grinding and hammer

stones, and other artifacts dotted the surface. From such an appearance we inferred that the site had been abandoned at that point. The only tools, other than one or two scrapers, which lay about were of such nature that they would have been a burden to carry in pre-horse times.

From a purely aesthetic standpoint, perhaps the finest artifact to be recovered was an engraved bone arm band. A piece of a second such armband was found nearby. Also of mention were the delicate seven notched arrow points, few in number but rather striking in appearance. Stone tools of any sort were not overly abundant. The small, unnotched triangular point, so common on most Oneota sites, was present but not in any quantity. Notched points, as are found in Glenwood sites, were probably just as prevalent but again not overly abundant. The large unnotched triangular points, which appear to be rather common at Glenwood, represent a rare type at the Phipps site. On the other hand, pot sherds number in the thousands.

A much more complete and detailed report of the dig will appear in the Journal at a later date. Analysis of the material has begun but many hours of laboratory work lie ahead before any comprehensive report can be published.

In the meantime, members of the Northwest Chapter of the Iowa Archeological Society have placed tar-paper over the floor of the pits and have filled them in order to prevent wall slump and whatever damage might be done by curiosity seekers. Before the crew finished in August, sand was poured in the post molds so that they might be readily discernible when the overburden is again removed. Thus last summer's dig is finished and preparations to return next summer have already begun.

TURIN MAN

Since W. D. Frankforter was the only member of the Society to have been in actual contact with all the Turin finds and since "Frank" has written such a fine account of the happenings, we are reprinting his article from the Newsletter of the Northwest Chapter of the Iowa Archeological Society.

"On August 5 the University of Iowa was notified of the discovery of a human skeleton in a gravel pit at Turin, Iowa. Mr. Asa Johnston, owner and operator of the pit, had uncovered it while removing earth which was being removed for fill in other points in that area. Dr. Stout, Professor of Anthropology at S.U.I., called Dr. R. J. Ruppe who was conducting the Summer Session in Archaeological Field Research here at Cherokee. Dr. Ruppe invited W. D. Frankforter to investigate the find with him the following day, when, along with students, John Davis, Eugene Fugle, and Adrian Anderson accompanied by Joe Beals of Cherokee, we went to Turin and Chawar. The skeleton had been removed and cleaned and was in the office of Dr. S. R. Anderson, Monona County Coroner.

"The skeleton was examined and obtained for the State University of Iowa. The group then visited the pit from which the skeleton had been recovered and there met Mr. Johnson who had made the find. It was discovered that the skeleton had come from a vertical bank of silty loess and had been approximately 20 feet below the original modern surface. No sign of a recent natural fill or of a man-made pit was seen. The removal of the skeleton had been accomplished in such a

manner as to leave a section of the deposit directly over the area from which the foot are reported to have been removed. Since no evidence of disturbance was noted in this area and because of the considerable depth of the skeleton in the deposit it was concluded that it had been incorporated contemporaneously with the sediments at the level of the body or very shortly thereafter.

"Three more trips were made in the following week to begin geologic work and to collect bison bones which were found at a lower level in the deposit containing the human remains and, also to collect fossils from an older gravel which predates the upper deposit by an unknown number of years.

"Later in August, after the field course had ended and the crew had departed, Frankforter made several trips to Turin continuing geologic investigations. On August 26 he received a phone call from Mr. Johnston saying that another skull had been found in a large block of earth which had dropped from the face of the quarry the previous evening. A hurried trip to Turin revealed that, except for a few fragments, the top of the skull was intact and still in the block which in all probability contained the entire skeleton. The exposed bone was covered with a cloth and moist dirt to prevent its drying and cracking. Since Dr. Ruppe and Dr. Stout were both out of the state, the University of Nebraska was contacted and on the following few days the site was visited by Dr. C. B. Schultz, Director, and Lloyd Tanner, Curator, of the Nebraska State Museum, Lincoln, Dr. Gilbert C. Lueninghouser, Professor of Geology, Midland College, Fremont, Nebraska, Dr. Mott Davis and Franklin Fenenga of the Department of Anthropology, U. of Nebraska., and David Bradwohl and Tom Newman, students. They were accompanied by Hubert Smith from the Smithsonian Institution, Missouri River Survey Office, Lincoln. The skeleton was carefully exposed and evidence of pit outlines or burial goods was watched for without success. The matrix was left around the skeleton and the whole encased in a plaster cast and brought to Sanford Museum.

"With the discovery of another individual a few days later and this still in situ, the time had come to make the finds generally known to anthropologists and geologists who might be interested and, therefore, calls were made to Dr. Frank Roberts, Jr., Head of the Smithsonian Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution, and to Dr. Marie Wormington, Curator of Anthropology, Denver Museum of Natural History, both experts in the field of Early Man in America. Telegrams were sent to others in nearby universities and museums and the response was good. Several professionals visited the site and assisted in the work --- and the general public, along with television crews, news reporters, and what seemed like most of northwest Iowa, arrived daily.

"Among the geologists and anthropologists who came were Dr. Ruppe (who made a special trip back from the Southwest where car trouble detained him) and Dr. Sherwood Fittle, Department of Geology, and Iowa Geologic Survey, Iowa City; Dr. Wormington from Denver; Smithsonian representatives were Dr. Waldo Wedel, Curator of Archaeology, Hubert Smith, Larry Tomsyak, and Dean Clark from the Lincoln office; University of Nebraska visitors, in addition to those mentioned before, were Dr. John Champe, Chairman of the Department of Anthropology, U. of N., Hugh, Professor of Geology, and Eugene C. Reed, Head of the Nebraska Geologic Survey; Mervin F. Kivett, Director, and William Grange, Nebraska State Historical Society Museum, Lincoln.

"The third and fourth human skeletons were unearthed and collected during the presence of many of these individuals. Geologic observations and mapping of the area along with plotting the positions of all the human and bison remains con-

tinued through the whole period and much still remains to be done.

"LIFE carried a brief story on the find which was good publicity except for the unfortunate omission of any reference to the institutions involved in the study and the failure to recognize the individuals who helped in the documentation of the find. The oldest probable date on the find was used instead of a more conservative figure which would have been more desirable from a scientific point of view. The statement was qualified in the text but this was probably read by only a few. The last three skeletons are still at Sanford and #2 is on display. They will be taken to Iowa City where they will be carefully exposed for study. The bison and other fossils will remain at Sanford for study and preservation. The final, accurate date must await radioactive carbon tests and further paleontologic and geologic studies.

"Special mention and credit must be given Mr. Asa Johnston, who not only discovered most of the material, but, even more important, cooperated so completely in the recovery of these specimens while still trying to conduct his business. We are indebted to him for his help and interest which permitted the study and collection."

MORE SKELETONS--BOONE COUNTY

On Sept. 18, Dr. David B. Stout, Professor of Anthropology at the State University of Iowa, and John C. Ives, graduate student investigated a skeletal find reported by Mr. Sidney Stumbo, owner and operator of the Stumbo Gravel Service, Boone, Iowa, on Mr. Stumbo's property northwest of Ridgeport. Gravel operations had uncovered remains of two or three skeletons on a hilltop along the upper edge of the gravel pit. The site is located about 1/4 mile east of the Des Moines River and 1/8 mile west of a creek. The bones were fragmentary and in a poorer state of preservation than the much older remains found at Turin. Stains in the earth allowed the outlines of the burial pits to be roughly traced. There were two burials each approximately two feet below the surface of the ground. One pit contained, among many bone fragments, parts of two skulls. The second pit contained long bones, toe bones, pelvis etc. but no trace of a skull. Since the bones have not been thoroughly studied as yet, it is difficult to say just how many individuals are represented at this time.

One projectile point was found in one burial pit by Mr. Stumbo. A second point was found at the same level within six feet of either burial. The first point was of a type one might expect to find in any cultural context from the Archaic through the Middle Woodland periods. The other point is reminiscent of the Lunenburg points in form, but more slender.

Above the burials on the hilltop are three mounds 50 to 65 feet in diameter. Mr. Stumbo stated that he could not recall a mound or a rise of any sort above the spot where the burials were unearthed. Dr. Ruppe plans to make an investigation of these mounds this fall or in the spring if time permits.

LETTERS, SITES, AND ARTIFACTS

Many letters have come to the attention of your editor since the last news-

letter was published. Some pertained to sites known to the letter writer, others noted that particular artifacts in their collections were similar to artifacts depicted in the series of articles by Dr. R. J. Ruppe published in the Iowan Magazine. Of great value were the artifacts sent to us for analysis. T. D. Davis and Paul Rowe, both of Glenwood, each shipped several crates of Glenwood Culture material to us for study. This writer is currently engaged in a typological analysis of the Glenwood pottery.

The artifacts illustrated in this issue are some sent by both members and non-members. A brief description of each follows:

Illustration A is that of a granite maul found at Lake View by Ivan Rhode and donated to the laboratory by Mr. Rhode. The poll end has been used as a maul, the blade end may have been used as an axe at one time but now presents a very blunted appearance. Dimensions: length-139 mm.; width at groove-82.5 mm.; thickness-86mm.; poll-65.5 mm.; blade-84 mm.

The projectile point, figure B, was sent by Mr. Shelby L. Nelson of Fort Dodge. Mr. Nelson and Dr. L. H. Jacques of Lone Tree recovered it from a previously opened mound, the location of which was not disclosed in the letter. The point is made of grey flint and is a product of fine workmanship. It is a generalized type usually associated with Early Woodland through Middle Woodland cultures. Its inclusion in a mound allows us to say that it is most likely "Woodland" in origin but beyond this broad classification we cannot go, without more specific information concerning other items in the culture. Dimensions: length-47.5 mm.; width-22.5 mm.; thickness-6 mm.; width of notches-7.5 mm. and 6.5 mm.; depth of notches-6 mm.; width of base-13 mm.

Figure C shows a butt fragment of a large projectile point most likely used to tip a spear. The artifact was sent by Mrs. W. G. MacMartin of Tama. Mrs. MacMartin informs us that it was picked up over fifty years ago by Mr. Frank Barrett of Tama County from a creek bed adjoining the Mesquakie settlement. Dimensions: length-67 mm.; width-44.5 mm.; thickness-10 mm.

The last two artifacts were sent by Mr. Jacob Samson, Route 1, Newton. Figure D shows a butt fragment of a large projectile point of impure white chert. Unlike the fragment in the previous illustration, it has been worked on only one side. Moreover, most of the flaking on the worked side is along the edges. In addition to the fracture at the upper end of the point, there appears to be a small crack along the base. Neither of these probable spear points can be assigned to an archaeological culture with any degree of certainty. Such tool types persisted for thousands of years. Dimensions: length-74.5 mm.; width-37.5 mm.; thickness-9 mm. Figure E shows a grey chert projectile point, triangular with a rounded base. One edge appears to have been broken and subsequently rechipped along one side with flakes. Dimensions: length-31 mm.; width-19 mm.; thickness-24 mm.

John C. Ives
Graduate Assistant
Archaeological Laboratory
State University of Iowa

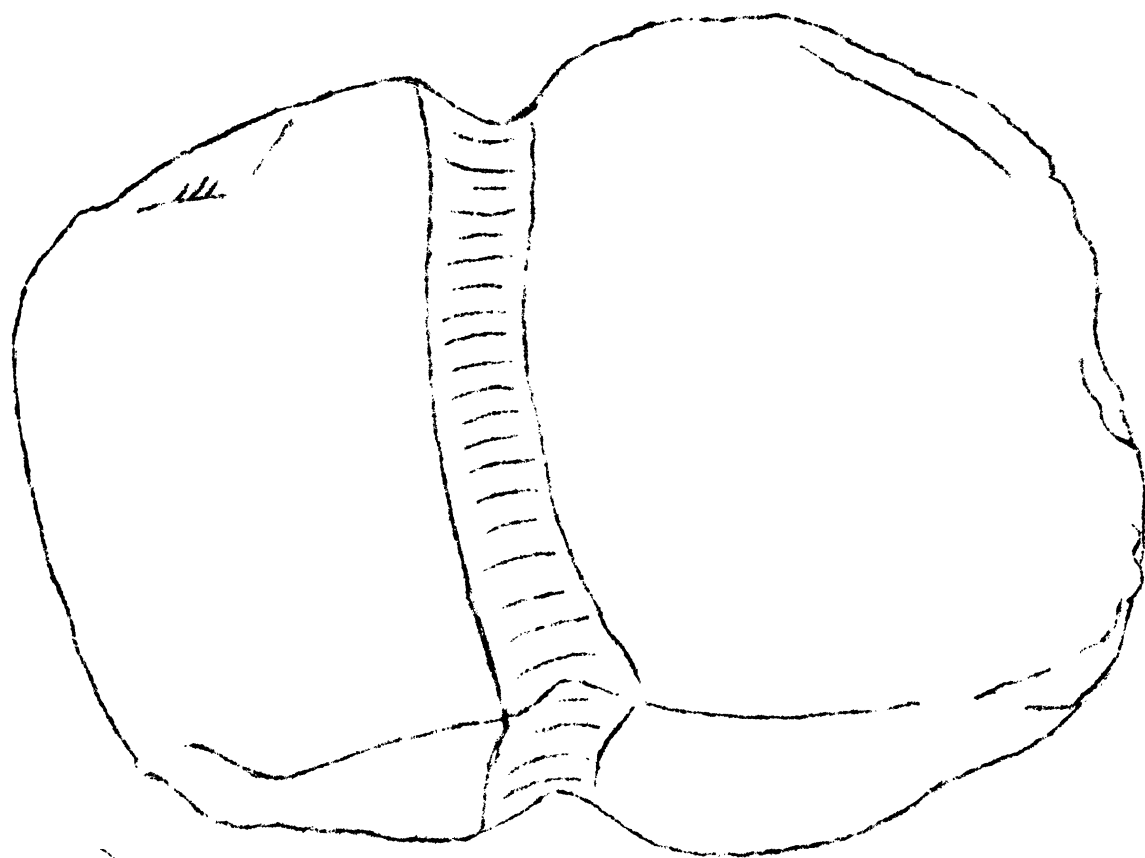


Fig. A

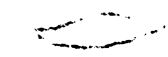


Fig. B

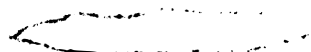


Fig. C

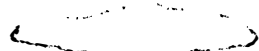
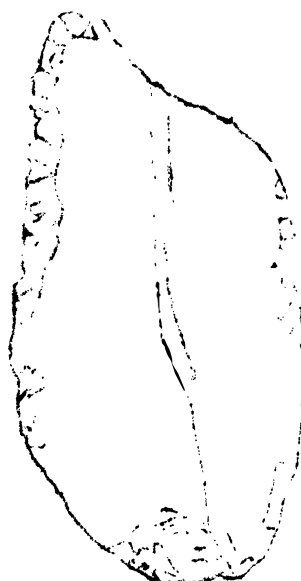


Fig. D



Fig. E