



# NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 17

IOWA CITY, IOWA

MARCH 1956

## 13TH ANNUAL PLAINS CONFERENCE

The 13th Annual Plains Conference was held at the University of Nebraska Lincoln, on Nov. 24-26, 1955. Members of the Iowa Archeological Society who attended were our Secretary-Treasurer, W. D. Frankforter, Cherokee; Prof. David B. Stout, anthronologist at SUI; John Ives, Iowa City; Paul Rowe, Glenwood; Donald D. Davis, Glenwood; and your editor. We had a fine time renewing old friendships and learning at first hand about the field work conducted in the Plains region last summer. A report on the excavations at the Phipps Site (Mill Creek) was presented by me and a panel discussion on the Turin find was conducted by Mr. Frankforter and and me. Joining us in the panel discussion were Dr. Marie Wormington, Colorado Museum of Natural History; Dr. E. Mott Davis, University of Nebraska; and Dr. Franklin Fenanga, Museum of the Nebraska State Historical Society. We discussed the find mainly in term of the geology of the site and did not report any new developments.

The Turin find is extremely important to American archaeology and geology but no definitive statements can be made at the present time. The age of the skeletons is still unknown and both Mr. Frankforter and I have been notified seperately that bone is no longer considered an accurate substance for procuring dates. This means that we will probably not be able to obtain any carbon 14 dates unless we are lucky enough to find a fireplace with charcoal in it. This seems unlikely and we

most likely will have to content ourselves with a relative date obtained by geological means from the loess deposit. The region of Turin is not well known geologically and Mr. Frankforter has many months of study ahead of him. The bones must be studied in detail and this too will take many months. The discovery exemplifies the fact that in archaeology, paleontology and geology there are many months of laboratory analysis and study involved for the short time one spends in the field collecting the material.

#### SITE SURVEY IN THE MT. PLEASANT AREA

One Tuesday last October, Dr. R. J. Ruppe, John C. Ives, and Adrian Anderson, all from the Dept. of Anthropology, State University of Iowa, made an excursion to Mt. Pleasant, Iowa at the invitation of Lester (Dave) Foster. There we were joined by Allen D. Shook, Orlandes Ross, George Cranz, and A. M. Patterson. After a brief consultation and a look at some potsherds, the party took to the field.

Two sites were examined in Henry County. The first, now 13HN-1, was situated on a hill adjacent to the flood plain of the Skunk River. The hillside had been graded away but evidence of aboriginal occupation was found about halfway up the slope. The crew set up sifters and began a small test pit which proved relatively sterile as did subsequent tests. The surface survey yielded flint chips, stone tools, sherds, clam shell and fire cracked rocks but none of these were in any abundance.

13HN-2, better known as the Snake Den Mound Group, consists of some twenty mounds strung out along the crest of a ridge overlooking the Little Cedar River in Salem Township. Some of the mounds had been graded flat and a roadway cut through a portion of the only linear mound in the group. A surface survey netted only a handful of stone tools and sherds but a considerable quantity of flint chips. The mounds which remain intact are of considerable interest to the archaeologist as they indicate a possibility of finding a Hopewellian or immediately post-Hopewellian village site among the many remains in the vicinity. The mounds themselves, of course, might yield more than a little information.

Our next move was to Jefferson County where we found time to examine three sites. 13JN-1 is apparently a large village site which stretches for about a mile along the east bank of the Skunk River. The site is about one fourth mile wide. An abundance of sherds, stone tools, milling stones, etc. have been found scattered over the surface although collectors had done a good job before we arrived. One large vessel is reported from this site. Our party found enough evidence to satisfy ourselves that we were on the site of an Early to Middle Woodland village with perhaps some depth of deposit. A collection of sherds from the site previously picked up by the Mt. Pleasant members of our group and donated to the S.U.I. laboratory only intensified our conclusions. No evidence of houses was found but such is normally the case for Woodland village sites. If the houses were of a wickiup nature there

would be no depressions or other indications on the surface and it would indeed be difficult to find post molds in an excavation.

In the adjacent township we examined 13JN-2 on the west bank of Walnut Creek. A slim amount of cultural material was picked up from the surface including a few sherds and projectile points. The site is much smaller than JN-1 but may also be a village site.

Nearby on the east bank of Walnut Creek we visited 13JN-3. The site consists of a mound some five feet in elevation set in the middle of what is now a large cornfield. We scoured the surface but found no tool or sherds. Many stones which are geologically out of place indicate the work of man. The darkness admittedly dimmed our project a great deal. Cultural remains have been reported from the mound.

All in all our junket was a success even though the day was not long enough. All four pottery bearing sites were in the Woodland tradition. The exact placement of these sites in time and a description of the people who once inhabited them will have to await thorough excavations. The material collected by the survey party will be studied in the laboratory and reported in a future issue of the Journal or Newsletter. Other studies have been in progress but reports on them are now being written so an analysis of the Mt. Pleasant survey material this Spring is feasible.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY AT THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Archaeology continues to expand at S.U.I. We now have six students enrolled in laboratory courses who are working up material from several parts of the state. The Mill Creek Material excavated last summer has been almost completely analyzed and John Ives and Eugene Fugle, who are doing the work for their Masters degrees, will soon be writing reports which will be published in the Journal. Adrian Anderson is currently a report on the Glenwood material loaned to us by Paul Rowe and Donald D. Davis of Glenwood. We will soon be in a position to publish at least three reports in the Journal. Dick Flanders and Charles O'Neal are writing a report on polished stone tools from Chelsea, Iowa and Frank Magid is doing a study of Stearns Creek material found near Glenwood and supplied by Donald D. Davis. We wish to take this opportunity to thank Rowe and Davis for their great cooperation in lending their material to us. James Pilgrim also sent us material on loan for study. This material is from the Albany Mounds in Illinois just across the river from Clinton and is mostly Honewell material. We have not yet started working up this material.

Your editor introduced a new course at the University this semester entitled "New World Archaeology" and was pleased to have thirteen students sign up for it. An interest in archaeology is on the upswing in Iowa and we will soon be able to put a large amount of material in published form.



One of the students (Frank Magid) currently doing lab work has a strong background in chemistry and is interested in doing nitrogen analysis of bone as a method of dating remains. One of the tests that are possible on archaeological specimens of bone is a nitrogen content analysis which will give some indication of the age of that bone compared to other bones. According to Mr. Magid the longer the time elapsed since the creature died, the more nitrogen there will be in the bone. Two pieces of bone from the same area but from different depths should have different amounts of nitrogen and the one with the most nitrogen should be the older. In order, however, to determine the practicability of the test we need samples of bone of several ages. Society members are asked to be on the lookout for skeletons or bones of animals in their vicinity. Fifty or one hundred years ago it was common practice for farmers to bury their dead animals behind the barn or out in the field. If anyone learns of such an occurrence or such bones are dug up we would appreciate having you send a small piece of bone weighing about one fourth pound and an equally small sample of the soil from which the bone was taken. If we can build up a collection of bone samples and run them for nitrogen content we may be able to discover some regularities concerning the disappearance or increase of nitrogen and perhaps use the rate of change as a measure of age. The problem is complicated and in order to keep the problem under control we must remove as many variables as possible. For that reason the date when the cows or horses were buried would be of great help.

#### ANNUAL MEETING OF THE IOWA ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The annual meeting will be held at Sanford Museum in Cherokee on April 15, 1956. From past dealings with the Northwest Chapter who are the hosts, I can promise that we will have a fine meeting.

Registration:	10:00
Smorgasbord Dinner	12:30
Meeting	2:00

Welcoming Address R. W. Breckenridge

Report on the Analysis of Mill Creek Artifacts  
John C. Ives

The Turin Finds W. D. Frankforter and R. J. Ruppe

Summary of the Research Currently Under Way at SUI  
Adrian D. Anderson

Discussion and Question and Answer Session by Members

The last page of this newsletter contains a news release which members are urged to bring to their local newspaper editors. We need the publicity! The meeting is open to the public and members are asked to invite their friends.

# NEWS RELEASE

THE SIXTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE IOWA ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY WILL BE HELD AT THE SANFORD MUSEUM, CHEROKEE, IOWA ON SUNDAY, APRIL 15, 1956 at 2:00 P.M. THE MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND WILL FEATURE REPORTS ON CURRENT ARCHEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN IOWA. RESULTS OF ANALYSIS OF ARTIFACT EXCAVATED AT A MILL CREEK SITE LAST SUMMER WILL BE PRESENTED BY JOHN C. IVES, A GRADUATE STUDENT IN ANTHROPOLOGY AT THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA. A REPORT ON THE IMPORTANT FIND OF HUMAN BONES AT TURIN, IOWA WILL BE GIVEN BY W. D. FRANKFORTER, DIRECTOR OF THE SANFORD MUSEUM AND REYNOLD J. RUPPE, ARCHAEOLOGIST AT THE STATE UNIVERSITY. THE TALKS WILL BE FOLLOWED BY A GENERAL MEETING AT WHICH TIME PROBLEMS FACING THE STUDY OF IOWA ARCHEOLOGY WILL BE DISCUSSED.