



# NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 19

IOWA CITY, IOWA

JANUARY, 1957

The first order of business in this first Newsletter of the new year is to wish everyone a happy and prosperous New Year.

Since the last Newsletter was written a great deal has been accomplished archeologically. The State-wide field trip held at the Phipps site was a distinct success and approximately 150 members and friends visited the site despite the 100 plus degree temperature. An exhibit of diagnostic tools and pottery was set up at the site and everyone appeared to enjoy the display. One of the visitors was Mr. Erwin Sias, Editor of the Sioux City Journal. As a result of the visit he wrote an editorial that was reprinted extensively in Iowa newspapers. The editorial is enclosed in this issue for the perusal of anyone who might not have had a chance to see it.

The State University-Sanford Museum field trip was concluded on August 12, 1956 but we left an enormous amount of unfinished work at the Museum. The volunteers from the Northwest Chapter who did so much after the 1955 season again did the lion's share of the washing and sorting of the excavated artifacts. We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to all the people who helped us. Cherokee is a nice place to work because of the friendliness and helpfulness of the residents, particularly the members of the Northwest Chapter.

## NORTHWEST CHAPTER NOTES

New officers were elected at the Nov. 18, 1956 meeting and include Mr. Harold Evans, Sheldon, President; Mr. Clifford Chapman, Cherokee, Vice President; and Mrs. Phil Thornton, Storm Lake, Sec'y-Treas. The Northwest Chapter holds monthly meetings and always has an interesting calendar. The 1957 program includes seven field trips, a film and a slide lecture. The Northwest Chapter also is host at the annual field trip to the Phipps site.

## MEETINGS

There have been several important meetings in the past few months. The author in company with students Adrian Anderson and Charles O'Neal traveled to the University of Illinois in October to attend the Midwestern Archeological Conference. The meeting was profitable and interesting. The first day was spent in reviewing what is known about the prehistory of the Middle West and what should be stressed in future work. As usual, I found myself in the position of having to say "we don't know" about much of the archeology of Iowa. The second day was spent discussing the problems faced by American Archeology as a result of the Federal Highway Bill which will necessitate an enormous amount of salvage archeology. The Federal Act provides a large sum of money that will be used to pay up to 90% of the cost of the archeological work but the states must supply the rest. Up to the time of the meeting in October, only Illinois and New Mexico had programs in operation but as of this date there are programs in eleven states. We are presently preparing documents to present our case to the Highway Department.

We attended another meeting in November, this time at Lincoln, Nebraska at the University of Nebraska. The occasion was the annual Plains Conference. Many IAS members attended. Among these were D. D. Davis and Paul Rowe of Glenwood, W. D. Frankforter, our Secretary-Treasurer from Cherokee, Henry Hamilton from Marshall, Missouri, Adrian Anderson and Dale Henning of SUI, a number of professional archeologists who are members of the society and your editor. A report on the excavations at the Phipps site was given by the author. As usual, the meeting was a chance to discuss problems with archeologists from the states surrounding Iowa.

As if all the above mentioned travel was not enough, your editor was appointed a member of the Committee for the Recovery of Archeological Remains and had to travel to Washington, D. C. for the annual meeting. The committee is national in scope and is composed of three members, each a delegate from the American Anthropological Association, the Society for American Archeology or the American Council of Learned Societies. The committee acts as an advisory agent to the National Park Service, The Corps of Engineers, the Reclamation Bureau and other government agencies in the matter of salvage of archeological sites that will be destroyed by construction of dams, conservation practices and highway building. The problem of destruction of sites has become critical in the past few years and promises to get much worse in the future. Fortunately, sites on government land fall under the federal Antiquities Act and when construction threatens to destroy them they must first be excavated under the terms of the law. Much of the extensive dam building and conservation work in the Missouri River valley is thus covered by the Antiquities Act. The same will apply to highway projects under the new federal highway act and consequently a large amount of archeological work will have to be accomplished. Even gravel pits used as a source for fill material will be covered so that we have, for the first time, an opportunity to study archeological and paleontological sites over a wide area.

The final item of interest concerning meetings is one which your editor just attended at Southern Illinois University. The topic of the meeting was the problem of contacts between the Southwest and Meso-America. The important point of our trip was a visit to the famous Cahokia Mounds in East St. Louis, Illinois.

The great Monks Mound, 1080 feet long, 710 feet wide and 110 feet high is a site calculated to thrill even a hardened archeologist. The happy accident that Professor James B. Griffen of the University of Michigan and one of the leading archeologists in the country needed a ride to the St. Louis airport made it possible to have the advantage of a guided tour of the Cahokia Mound Group. We spent about two hours tramping over the mounds, taking a surface collection and climbing to the top of Monks Mound. I was particularly desirous of obtaining a collection of sherds because the ceramics from the lower levels of the Mill Creek sites we have been excavating are almost identical to those of the Cahokia Mounds.

#### STATE ACTIVITIES

As usual the editor must voice an appeal for letters from members to let the Society know what is being done in various sections of the state. To date, Glenwood and Mt. Pleasant are the only areas that have reported activities.

A letter from Paul R. Rowe, Glenwood, informs us that the members there have excavated a house site. The house is one of a group of three or four which is unusual for that area. As might be expected, their work was done when the weather permitted.

Mr. Pat Ross, Mr. Warren Holland and Mr. Allan Shook of Mt. Pleasant recently visited the Lab. Mr. Ross brought a large beveled blade and Mr. Holland brought a large Clovis fluted point and a Hopewell blade for our inspection. All were found near Mt. Pleasant in Henry County. They left the blades with us for study and we will make casts of them and photograph them before they are returned. Drawings and descriptions of the blades will appear in the March Newsletter.

#### PUBLICATION NOTES

The next issue of the Journal should be in the hands of the members in less than a month. It will be a whole volume and contains a reprint of the four articles on Iowa archeology that appeared in The Iowan magazine last year. Original plans called for a complete revision of the articles but the pressure of time and financial considerations forced us to reproduce the articles as they appeared.

After several years of pleading for manuscripts we now find ourselves with several on hand, but all are so large that we will have to obtain extra money from some outside source if we are to publish the papers. An editor is indeed buffeted by fate!

## REPORT ON TURIN SKELETON NO. 3

Adrian D. Anderson

One of the three Turin skeletons found in September, 1955 has now been completely excavated. Its removal from the plaster and burlap sheath surrounding the grave itself was finally accomplished Jan. 1, 1957. The skeleton has been boxed and sent to Dr. Georg Neumann, a physical anthropologist at the University of Indiana, for examination. From there it will be sent to the University of Michigan where it will be used in a Carbon-14 dating test.

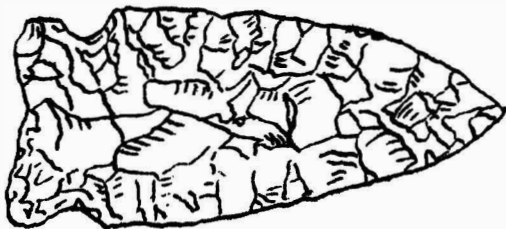
Skeleton No. 3 was that of an adolescent. Dr. Alton K. Fisher, head of the Dept. of Oral Pathology, State University of Iowa, examined the teeth of the individual and judged it to have been between ten and fourteen years of age at the time of death. A second indication of the youth of the individual was the fact that none of the epiphysial caps had fused to the other bones of the skeleton. This process usually occurs between the ages of 16-20.

The burial pit was approximately 18 inches wide and 26 inches long. The depth of the burial pit is not known, but was shallow. The skeleton lay in a flexed burial position on its left side. The left elbow touched the drawn-up knees, the hand lay across the chest. The right arm lay along the right side, the forearm crossing the abdomen, the right hand between the ankles.

There was some evidence that the body had been forced into the burial pit. The skull was tilted down and to the right at an extremely sharp angle. The metatarsals of the left foot stuck upward along the edge of the pit which was marked by limey deposits.

Grave goods deposited with the skeleton consisted of a necklace of 18 shell beads which were found in the area around the skull indicating that the individual was wearing them at the time of burial. No indication of a string or cord was found between the beads.

The other object associated with the burial was a projectile point of brown chalcedony (Knife River flint) that lay between the feet. Photographs were taken with the projectile point in situ after the right talus was removed from above it. The epiphysial cap of the calcaneous and the talus had been grooved slightly by the edge of the projectile point, apparently because of earth pressure. The projectile point appears to be of an early Archaic type.



X-section

During excavation it was noted that the greatest amount of red ochre lay in the area of the left elbow, chest and to a lesser degree over the spinal column and head. There was little in the area of the pelvis and feet. Small flecks of what appeared to be charred wood appeared below the feet. It was possible to save a small amount of this material. The distribution of the ochre seems to indicate that it was sprinkled on in great quantities after the individual had been placed in the burial pit. The only explanation for the carbon flecks is purely conjectural. Ashes may have been sprinkled in the pit or blown in from a nearby fire. It is also possible that something had been burned in the burial pit.

Although great care was exercised during the excavation of this skeleton almost all long bones and ribs were so badly broken that no precise measurements could be taken. The tools utilized consisted of small picks from a dissection kit, 1-inch soft bristled paint brushes and small scraping tools.

#### WORK AT THE ARCHEOLOGY LABORATORY AT S.U.I.

Dale R. Henning

Since commencement of the fall semester, we here at Iowa City have been quite active in visiting sites in the State. The first venture was to a Woodland rock-shelter excavated by a crew headed by Dr. Warren G. Caldwell of the Smithsonian Institution who has now completed a salvage survey of sites to be inundated by the Coralville reservoir. The shelter is approximately twenty-five feet across the mouth by ten feet from front to rear. When visited, the depth attained was eight feet from the present surface. All material was Woodland but no more precise classification is available as yet. Other small sites were tested by Dr. Caldwell but very little material suitable for study was unearthed.

In October we attended a meeting at Champaign, Illinois, at which time Dr. Georg Neumann of Indiana University expressed a desire to obtain Oneota skeletal material suitable for studies of physical type. It was for purposes of locating and excavating some Oneota burial sites that an expedition headed by Dr. R. J. Ruppe of the Dept. of Sociology-Anthropology was formed. Members of the expedition which left the evening of October 13 were Dr. Ruppe, Mr. and Mrs. Adrian Anderson, Mr. and Mrs. Charles O'Neil, and Dale Henning. Headquarters was established at the home of Mr. and Mrs. B. T. Henning of Decorah.

Saturday morning was spent digging test pits over the O'Reagan terrace on the Beardmore farm along the Upper Iowa River. Several artifacts were unearthed, including a muller, a triangular projectile point, a few fragments of pottery and some broken human bone. It was easy to assume that the site had been combed thoroughly by Ellison's expedition of 1938 as well as by numerous amateur collectors. In the afternoon the group moved to a site upstream and across the river and dug more test pits to no avail.

Sunday, joined by Dr. H. P. Field, Mr. C. E. Chase, Mr. George Kjome, Darrell Henning, Jim Lange, James Ylvisaker, and David Dunlavy, the group again returned to the O'Reagan terrace in hopes of discovering a few untouched burials. Several thoroughly disturbed burials were discovered but the bones had been mistreated by previous excavation and were of little value. One interesting find was that of a dog's skull, buried and rocked over as was the custom of the Oneota in

burying their dead. Two of the rocks were fragments of a large sandstone mortar used in grinding corn. Red ochre, several kernels of charred corn and fragments of shell-tempered pottery were discovered in conjunction with the skull.

Late Sunday afternoon, guided by Dr. Field, Mr. Chase, Mr. Kjome, and Mr. Ed Wilde, a local farmer and owner of a large collection of Indian artifacts, the group was given a tour of the Upper Iowa valley. Many burial sites which had been exposed during road cutting were pointed out as well as numerous village sites attributed to both Oneota and Woodland cultures. However, no full skeletons were discovered much to the disappointment of all concerned.

The following weekend, Adrian Anderson and Dale Henning returned to Decorah and tested several more sites along the Upper Iowa. Dr. H. P. Field, who knows the Winneshiek and Allamakee County area very well and is always willing to be of assistance, was of great help in locating sites. Darrell Henning and Norman Jenson completed the crew. No undisturbed burials were discovered. Mr. Ed Wilde again met the group and was very helpful in pointing out sites. We hope the search can be continued again in the spring since a series of Oneota skeletons could be of great archeological importance if properly excavated and recorded. Any information from society members would be greatly appreciated.

On January 5, 1957, Darrell and Dale Henning were shown a small sand cave on Bear Creek in Allamakee County by C. E. Chase, and Darrell Henning returned to make plaster casts of several of the outstanding motives, as well as to do more photographing and sketching. It is hoped that these designs can be related to a known group by studies of drawings and photos to be made in the S.U.I. Archeology lab this coming semester.

#### LET'S STUDY IOWA'S ARCHEOLOGICAL PAST

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Long neglected by the state of Iowa is the study of its archeological past. Some work has been done, and is being done, but it is only scratching the surface of the secrets that lie locked in the soil. The reason for the slow progress seems to be two-fold - (1) a lack of interest on the part of the state legislature, and (2) a lack of adequate funds to carry out even the preliminary investigations when new "finds" are reported.

A fascinating history of Iowa's "first citizens" - the Indians who roamed the plains, hunted buffalo, planted corn and fought their enemies - is ready to be unfolded. This is readily apparent from the progress made at the Phipps site near Cherokee where the University of Iowa and the Sanford museum at Cherokee have, with limited funds, been studying the Mill Creek culture which flourished in this area somewhere in the period from 1200 to 1550.

The Phipps site is one of many in the state where Indian artifacts are known to exist. From the remains of those ancient civilizations, trained scientists can put together the story of how the Indians lived. At the Phipps site just north of Cherokee, for example, the pottery types uncovered show that the workmen were highly skilled. That in turn leads scientists to believe that the Indians who did the work had a high standard of living, with plenty of food and ample time to devote to their crafts.

Similar sites, rich in artifacts but undeveloped, are known to exist elsewhere in the state. There are many near Glenwood, another near Stratford and many more. But unless the excavation work is done scientifically by trained personnel there is no assurance that the arrowheads, stone knives, scrapers, grinding utensils, and so on, will be properly catalogued. And if they are not, they will mean little from the standpoint of historical fact. Also, careful excavation work reveals information about the type of house, its structure and the arrangement of the houses in the village which otherwise would be lost.

In most states, such archeological work is handled by the state universities. The same course could be followed in Iowa.

The Iowa legislature, meanwhile, would do well to study the need for archeological research in the Hawkeye state and at least come up with enough funds to permit scientists to make a spot check of new locations and determine whether they warrant closer scrutiny.

The people of Iowa are entitled to know more about the original inhabitants of their state. It is a part of the history of our land which must not be neglected.