

# NEWSLETTER

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IOWA CITY, IOWA

NOVEMBER, 1958

## ARCHAEOLOGY AT SUI

During the fall semester we have had seven students working in the archaeology laboratory at SUI. Their projects consisted of washing, analysing, and cataloguing the material collected during the summer session dig at Toolesboro. We had excavated more material than we realized last summer, so that final analysis will probably not be completed until sometime in the spring semester. As the projects are completed, we hope to present brief reports in the Newsletter. One such report, that of Jim Scholtz on the pottery from the burial mound, is included in this issue. We are grateful to Miss Bonnie Rasmussen for her excellent illustrations of the vessels.

The semester started on a hectic and crowded note. We had serious storage problems and not enough space for the students to work. To our great delight, our pleas to the University administration for more space were answered, and we will be involved for the rest of the semester with workmen altering a new room next to our present quarters.

In addition to the bustle of ordinary laboratory procedure, we installed an archaeological exhibit in the Student Union for the annual Homecoming Program. We thought the exhibit was a success and were very pleased at the number of people who viewed it with considerable interest. Of course, we had some potent competition in the satellite exhibit of Professor Van Allen. It did represent an interesting contrast between the very old and the very new.

Visitors to the lab have included Mr. Paul Kline, the Conservation Officer from Vinton, and Mr. Orlandes Ross from Mt. Pleasant.

## NEWS FROM MEMBERS

Our President, Jim Pilgrim from Clinton, writes that he is continuing his salvage operations at the Albany Mound group and has recovered part of another conch shell vessel.

Former President, Dr. H. P. Field of Decorah, has written about an Oneota burial site that is reported upon later in this Newsletter.

#### WEEKEND EXCAVATIONS DURING THE FALL OF 1958

Hester A. Davis

During the fall, the students in the archaeology laboratory course at the University were able to make three week-end field trips - one to Allamakee County, and two to Louisa County.

Oneota Burial site: 13AM43

On the week-end of October 18, we were all prepared to go down to Louisa County to dig at Sand Run, when a letter was received from Darrell Henning in Decorah. He reported that Mr. Jim Loy, Resident Engineer of the Highway Department had informed him that the week-end would probably be our last opportunity to excavate the Oneota burials along the bluffs near Bear Creek. Road construction crews were about to scrape away more of the spurs of land on which some 18 burials had been unearthed by the machinery and excavated by Robert Bray and local amateurs in September. We couldn't miss the opportunity. We telephoned Darrell Friday noon, sending him scurrying around the countryside getting permission for us to dig the site, and for us to camp at an old barn near by. Late Friday afternoon, five of us took off from Iowa City for Allamakee County. It was very dark and very cold when we met Darrell, Gavin Sampson, and George Kjome (whom we had kept waiting three hours!) at our rendezvous point. They escorted us to the old barn. The air was chilly, but after a hastily brewed cup of Bear Creek coffee, we were ready to put our bed rolls on the hay and sleep.

Saturday morning we - Dr. Ruppe, Charlie Keller, Jim Scholtz, Jim Anderson, and Hester Davis - started excavation in the area where the burials had previously been uncovered. We were soon augmented by the arrival from Iowa City of three more students - John Vincent, Pat Bryan, and Judy Glezen. Darrell Henning and a friend arrived to help on Sunday, and Gavin Sampson, George Kjome, and Jim Loy visited most of the week-end. Before Sunday was over we had many visitors clambering up the steep slope to watch the excavations.

The 18 burials previously excavated had a good deal of copper material, trade goods, and Oneota pottery accompanying them. During the two days of this week-end, we uncovered 10 more burials, three of which were almost complete skeletons; the remaining seven only partial. No pottery, stone or bone artifacts were uncovered. A few blue glass trade beads were found, and one of the nearly complete skeletons was found to be lying on some kind of a "burial mat" and had a good many copper beads associated with it. One skeleton was that of a child.

Saturday afternoon Gavin Sampson took Dr. Ruppe to what turned out to be an Oneota village site in the same farmstead where a crew of students from the University had camped last year. Twelve cache pits had been uncovered by the earth moving machinery and six were excavated during the week-end. There were small amounts of broken pottery and some stone and bone in the pits.

The burials are an extremely important addition to our knowledge of Oneota culture. In addition to the information they yield as to mortuary practices, a study of the skeletons themselves will give us some clues as to the physical appearance of these people who developed the Oneota culture which flourished sometime between 1600 and 1750, and which is found in Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Nebraska.

By Sunday evening, after having worked almost until dark and packed the equipment into the cars, we thankfully accepted Mrs. Bert Henning's invitation for supper in Decorah. Mrs. Henning has had her house invaded by archaeology students on field trips before - we are eternally grateful for her courage and generosity!

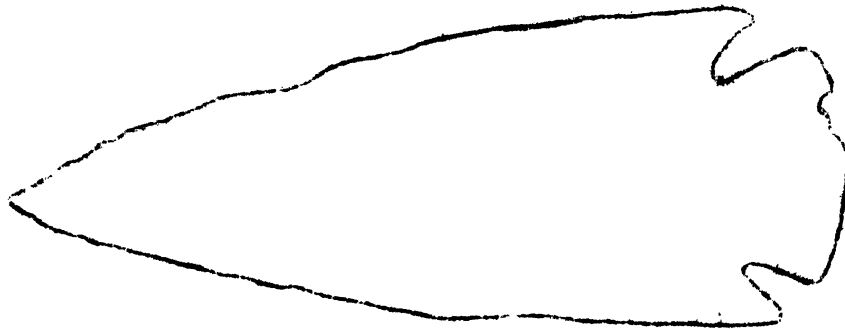
Sand Run site: 13LA3

On the week-end of October 31-Nov. 2 a large group of students went down to Louisa County to test a site along the banks of Lake Odessa at Sand Run. Carl Koltner's uncle and aunt, Mrs. and Mrs. Guy Hardman, graciously offered us their cabin on the Lake for the week-end. It seemed luxurious to have a fire place, beds, electricity, and a real stove, when the last field trip we had slept in a barn.

Early Man and Archaic points, and pottery had been found over a period of years eroding out of the bank close to the water's edge at Sand Run. During the summer we made a number of surface collections there, including some "underwater" diving for pottery fragments. Five test pits were put down at intervals of about 20-30 feet along the edge of the water. Very little material was found. A few sherds and a few stone tools were confined to the upper-most levels. The water level of the lake had been raised for the duck hunting season, and water covered much of the beach and excluded our going very deep with the pits. It seems probable from the evidence of the excavation that the material along the water's edge has all been washed from the bluffs and flood plain which are directly south of the lake at this point.

It was a chilly week-end, but good duck-hunting weather. It was most enjoyable to have the fireplace to eat popcorn by, but both mornings we were awakened by the simultaneous roar of the hunter's guns at six o'clock. By Sunday noon most of the pits were down to the water level. Don Parsons appeared with some points he had picked up at a Hopewell site near Kingston and this prompted us to go there for a surface survey in the afternoon. We had collected

from the site during the summer when it had been planted in beans, but now they had been harvested and the ground plowed. We spread out across the fields and it was not long before there was a loud shout of joy from Paul Hooks. He had found a beautiful complete Hopewell blade, his "Hopewellian baby" as he fondly calls it. (Fig. 1.) Other less spectacular scrapers and broken projectile points were found. On the basis of the collection that afternoon, and the previous ones made by Don Parsons at the site, it was decided to obtain permission to dig one or two of the low mounds which are located in the field.



(Actual size)

Fig. 1

Kingston site: 13DML

During the following week with the aid of Don Parsons, we obtained permission from Mrs. Albert Poisel, owner of the farm, to excavate two of the mounds in her field. On Nov. 6-8, eight students again invaded the old school house in Toolesboro, using it as headquarters for the week-end digging at the Kingston site. The school house looked empty, but it had been used during elections the week previously and the old pot-bellied stove worked beautifully. We had anticipated being cold, but as it turned out we were able to keep the big room comfortably warm. With Jim Scholtz's trusty popcorn-popper, and an interesting demonstration of the art of "water witching" by John Vincent, the evening hours passed quickly.

As Dr. Ruppe did not go with us for the week-end, this was Charlie Keller's dig, and he and Jim Scholtz were "co-directors." John Vincent accompanied them to the site early Friday afternoon in order to get some of the preliminary mapping done. The rest of us followed by supper time.

Saturday morning, and a cold and windy one it was, we put in a trench half way across the largest of the mounds. Five squares were opened in this trench: Squares A, B, and C were dug to 36 inches in six inch levels; Square D to 30 inches; and Square H to 30

inches with a small section down to 42 inches. Another test pit was put down in one of the mounds north of the main mound trenched; this pit was dug to the 30 inch level below datum. Although none of these pits seemed to hit sterile soil, disappointingly little cultural material was found in any of them; just a few small pieces of pottery and a few stone tools. No evidence was found to indicate that these were house mounds as we had anticipated. We found more artifacts on the surface of the field than in the excavations. We had such high hopes of finding evidences of a Hopewell village that it was disappointing to have to fill in our trenches Sunday evening with so little material to show for our work.

#### FURTHER NOTES ON THE ONEOTA BURIALS

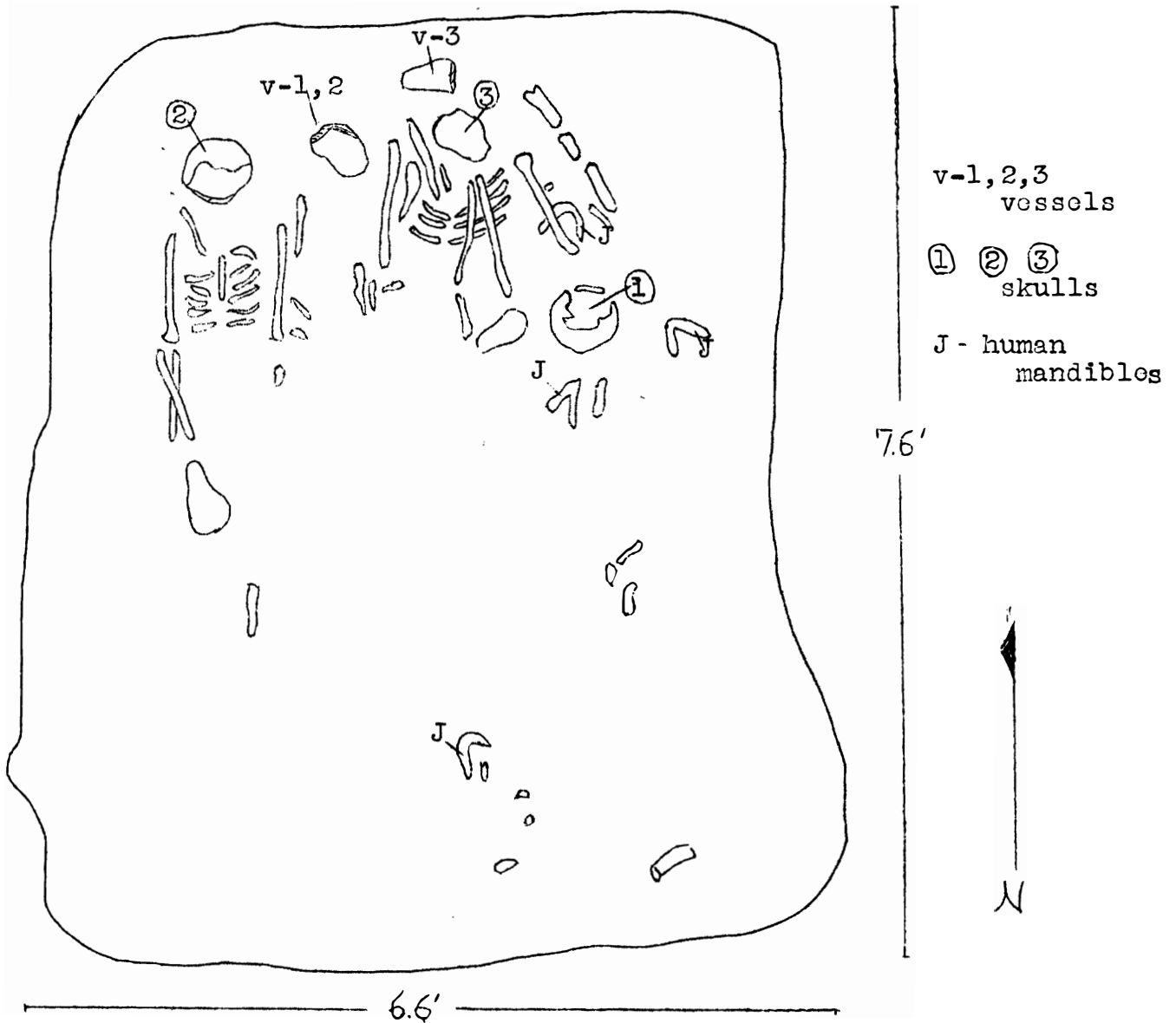
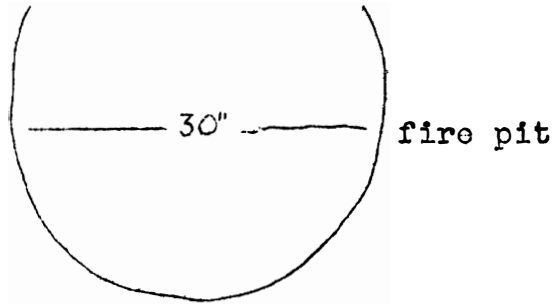
After the field trip to site 13AM43 reported by Miss Hester Davis, we received a newspaper clipping from the Public-Opinion newspaper in Decorah describing further finds at the site. The work was conducted by Robert Bray, National Park Service Archaeologist, Darrel Henning, Dr. H.P. Field, Mr. Gavin Sampson, Mr. Cliff Chaso, all of Decorah, and Dr. Warren Hayes of Waukon. The group discovered five more skeletons, four of which were, as the newspaper put it, "within inches" of our test pits. Our usual luck was again apparent since the group found a number of important artifacts associated with their burials. Among the finds was an arrow shaft wrench made of a bison rib. According to Bob Bray, the wrench is a new trait for the Oneota culture. The group also found numbers of blue glass trade beads and copper beads.

We have also received a letter from Mr. Charles Ryan of Waukon who reported finding a burial at 13AM43 which contained, in addition to a complete skeleton, blue glass trade beads and copper beads, an iron knife with a five inch blade, a copper ring on one finger, but no pottery or stone tools.

We hope to be able to bring all of the information on the various burials together and publish it as one report either in the Newsletter or the Journal.

#### PRELIMINARY REPORT ON 13LA15, A MIDDLE WOODLAND BURIAL MOUND

During the 1958 summer field session one of a group of four burial mounds was excavated on the Smith farm at Toollesboro. The September 1958 Newsletter contains a brief introductory statement about the mound and its contents. (Fig. 2) The material recovered has been subjected to analysis in the laboratory and the following is a brief description of the results by two students in the archaeology lab at SUI.



Burial Chamber - 13LA15

Fig. 2

## SUGGESTED MANNER OF MOUND CONSTRUCTION

Adrian D. Anderson

It is assumed that the mound was constructed in the following manner: First, the sod and top-soil was stripped from a circular area approximately fifty feet in diameter, until the underlying yellow clay was reached. The central burial chamber,  $7\frac{1}{2}$  feet long and  $6\frac{1}{2}$  feet wide, was then excavated in the center of this area. The chamber was oriented north and south. The pit was approximately twenty inches deep. The dead were interred and three small pottery vessels placed with them. A fire pit, thirty inches in diameter, was dug at the north end of the burial chamber. There was an indication that a leather bag, or some such container had been placed in the fire pit. If so, it had been filled with ash and buried in the ashes of the pit.

The burial chamber was then filled and packed hard. The primary mound was then built by piling loads of clay and ash and packing them hard. This soil was so hard that it might have been "puddled," or put down when very wet, packed, and then allowed to bake in the sun. The secondary mound had been erected by piling another eighteen inches of common clay over the primary mound. This clay probably came from the land to the west of the mound.

### DESCRIPTION OF POTTERY VESSELS RECOVERED FROM BURIAL CHAMBER OF A MIDDLE WOODLAND BURIAL MOUND

James A. Scholtz

The three vessels described herein were recovered during the excavation of a Middle Woodland burial mound (13LA15) during the 1958 archaeological summer field session of the State University of Iowa. The vessels were found in association with the skeletal remains in the burial chamber and are regarded as grave offerings. Upon reconstruction each of the vessels was found to have been "killed" prior to deposition in the mound. The vessels were subsequently crushed in situ either purposely or through the pressure of the earth fill. Tree roots further disturbed the position of these artifactual remains as the result of a large oak growing almost directly above the burial chamber.

#### Vessel #1. (Fig. 3)

This vessel was placed just above (north) the left shoulder of the extended burial designated skeleton #2. Approximately one-fourth of the body was lost in the "killing" process. The form of the vessel may be described by area as follows: beveled lip (inward), mildly flaring rim, semi-carinated shoulder, squat ovoid body, flat base-bottom.

Dimensions:

Height:	7.4 cm.
Outside diameter at lip.....	10.7 cm.
neck.....	9.9 cm.
shoulder....	10.7 cm.
base.....	6.3 cm.
Thickness of paste at lip.....	5.5 mm. (at bottom
neck.....	4.5 mm. of bevel)
shoulder....	5.0 mm.
body.....	5.0 mm.
base-bottom.	7.0 mm.

This may be described as a broad, squat vessel, rather high-rimmed with a point of maximum constriction 2.8 cm. below the lip.

Aplastic inclusions include sand and fine gravel ranging up to 4 mm. in diameter. The surface both inside and out is pitted with small pock-marks as though crushed limestone had been utilized as a tempering element and subsequently leached out. However, no limestone was observed in fresh breaks in the pottery nor were there any open pockets in these breaks to indicate the original use of this medium.

The paste was well smoothed over the entire exterior and as far down as the neck on the inside prior to firing. Firing clouds are present inside and out but are rather faint for the most part. The color of the vessel is a yellowish-brown while the core of the paste, flaky in texture, is a dark gray.

A description of the decorative elements and their placement on this vessel follows: A shallow trailing line encircles the pot 11 mm. below the lip. Extending from this line to the lip are fine vertical dentate stampings spaced 2.5 mm. apart around the rim. At the neck is another trailing line encircling the vessel. Between these two incised lines on the rim are a continuous series of simple tool impressions spaced approximately 1 cm. apart. These impressions appear in sets of two, one above the other, and were formed by pressing the tool into the wet paste at a very low angle and trailing the tool off to the left. From the neck on down to the base (base not decorated) the vessel is entirely covered with curvilinear designs formed by broad shallow incised lines. The field between these incised lines is sometimes left blank, but more often filled with dentate stamping which has been applied in a manner so that the dentate lines follow the curvature of the incised lines. The only markings on the interior of the vessel are the fine horizontal striations caused by brushing to smooth the paste prior to firing.

Vessel #2. (Fig. 4)

This vessel was located just above (north) of the skull of skeleton #3. The structural characteristics of this vessel may be described as follows: flattened lip, mildly flaring rim, shoulder tending toward carinate form. As the base and two-thirds of the body are



missing their original shapes cannot be positively identified but the reconstructed portion of the vessel would indicate an ovoid body and conoidal base-bottom. Dimensions:

Height: 10.5 cm. (estimated)  
Outside diameter at lip..... 7.6 cm.  
                                  neck..... 7.0 cm.  
                                  shoulder.... 8.4 cm. (esti.)  
Thickness of paste at lip..... 3.0 mm.  
                                  neck..... 4.5 mm.  
                                  shoulder.... 6.0 mm.  
                                  body..... 6.0 mm.

This vessel may be described as being rather "long-necked" as the distance from the lip to the point of maximum diameter is 5.5 cm. or slightly more than half the estimated overall height.

Tempering material consists of sand and grit and includes mica flakes. None of the observable temper particles is larger than 2 mm. and the surface of the vessel both inside and out is well smoothed so that none of the aplastic inclusions protrude. Firing clouds are present on both interior and exterior and there is rudimentary crazing on the inner surface as well. The core of the paste is laminated and black in color.

Decoration appears as follows: The rim is decorated with fine dentate stamping over its entire exterior surface. This was done with a comb-like tool apparently, the lines of dentate stamping spaced one to three mm. apart, primarily on a left diagonal but with an occasional right diagonal line crossing the others. At the neck (2.5 cm. below the lip) the vessel is encircled with a series of trail marks. These broad shallow impressions were formed by placing the tool against the clay and trailing it (the tool) off to the left. The initial tool marks are spaced approximately 8 mm. apart. Nineteen mm. down the shoulder from the neck these same trailed impressions are repeated, again encircling the vessel. Between these two lines appear a series of "half-moon" outlines in shallow medium width incisions. The half-moons occur alternately with flat side against the neck line and the shoulder line. These half-circles are filled with the same fine dentate stamping that occurs on the neck but applied in a random fashion. The body is decorated quite heavily from the shoulder line downward 4.8 cm. As no more than one-third of the body area is present, it is impossible to determine whether or not there is a design pattern worked out around the circumference of the vessel. The design was probably asymmetrical. Motives present are random geometric figures including diamonds, triangles, and parallel lines formed by shallow trailing with occasional spaces filled with dentate stamping. The body decoration is restricted at its lower limited by an incised line encircling the pot. No decoration occurs on the interior surface of this vessel.

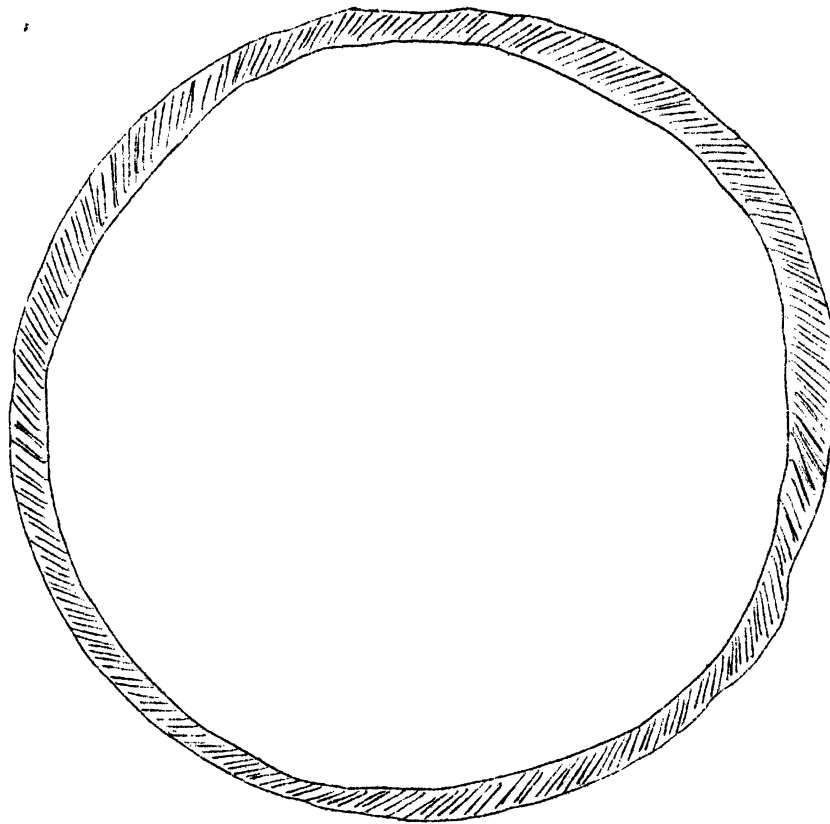
Vessel #3. (Fig. 5)

This vessel was placed above the left shoulder of skeleton #3, an extended burial, and was found in association with vessel #1. Although both were badly crushed and disturbed by tree roots, vessel #3 apparently had been placed within the other, larger pot. Workmanship is relatively rude both in manufacture and decoration when compared with the other two vessels found in the burial pit of this mound. This is a broad-mouthed pot with only a very mild curvature representing the neck or point of maximum constriction. The lip is flattened. The body is globular with a rounded base-bottom.

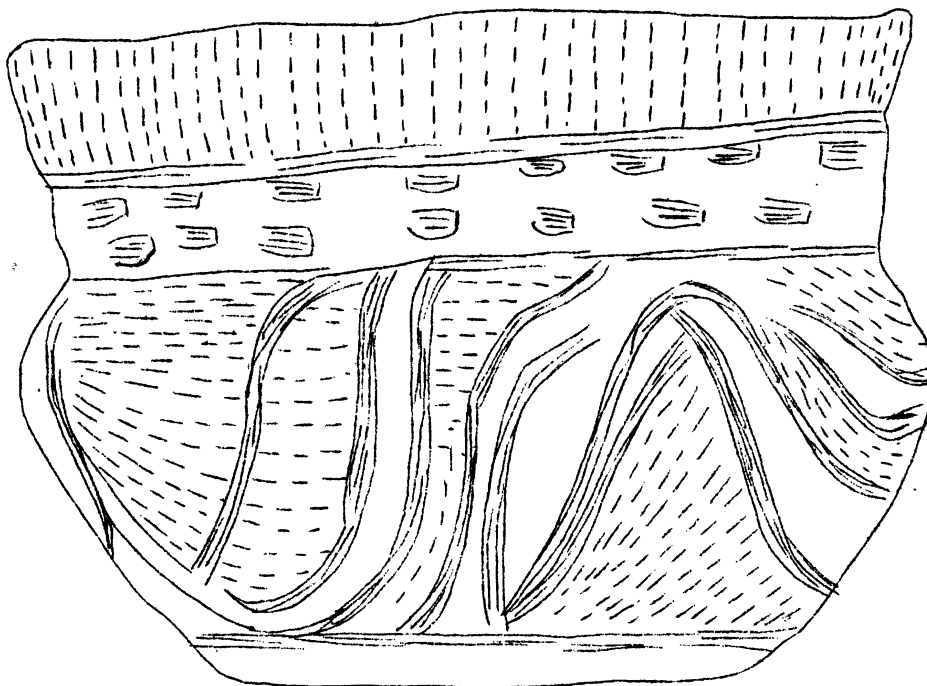
Dimensions:	Height:	6.5 cm.
	Outside diameter at lip.....	6.1 cm.
	neck.....	5.9 cm.
	shoulder....	6.4 cm.
	Thickness of paste at lip.....	3.0 mm.
	neck.....	5.0 mm.
	shoulder....	8.0 mm.
	body.....	7.0 mm.
	base-bottom.	6.0 mm.

The tempering element is grit, including mica flakes and has inclusions ranging as large as 4 mm. in diameter. The temper protrudes on both inner and outer surfaces making them rough both visually and tactually. Firing clouds are present over the entire exterior surface and on the interior of the rim. Decoration is restricted to the exterior of the vessel although fine horizontal striations on the interior indicate brushing there.

A description of the decorative elements and their area of appearance follows: From the lip to the neck (approximately 9 mm.), i.e., the rim, is a continuous series of oblique incised lines. These incisions are straight, running from lower left to upper right but vary from 30° to 60° from vertical and irregularly spaced from 1.5 to 4.5 mm. apart. At the neck is a broad shallow incised line encircling the vessel. Between the neck and the top of the shoulder (approximately 13 mm.) are eight sets of simple tool impressions equally spaced around the circumference of the pot. These impressions are in pairs, one above the other, but with the upper indentations slightly offset to the right of the lower. The marking tool was applied at an angle, the impressions trailing off shallowly to the left. At the top of the shoulder is another broad shallow incised line similar to the one at the neck. The decorative motives on the body of this vessel consist of four crude circles, 2.5 to 3cm. in diameter, formed by narrow incised lines and approximately equidistant around the pot. These circles are located just beneath the shoulder and contain irregular cross-hatchings of roughly vertical and horizontal narrow incised lines. The paste is homogenous in texture but in firing both inner and outer surfaces have changed to a yellowish-buff color while the core of the paste is dark gray in color.



Top view

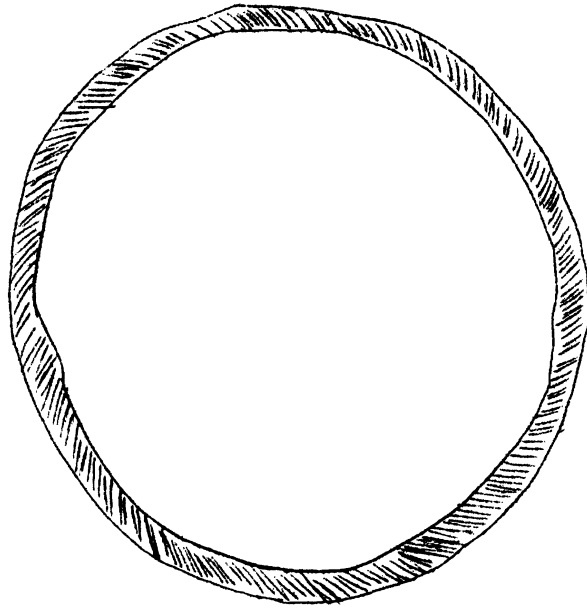


Side view

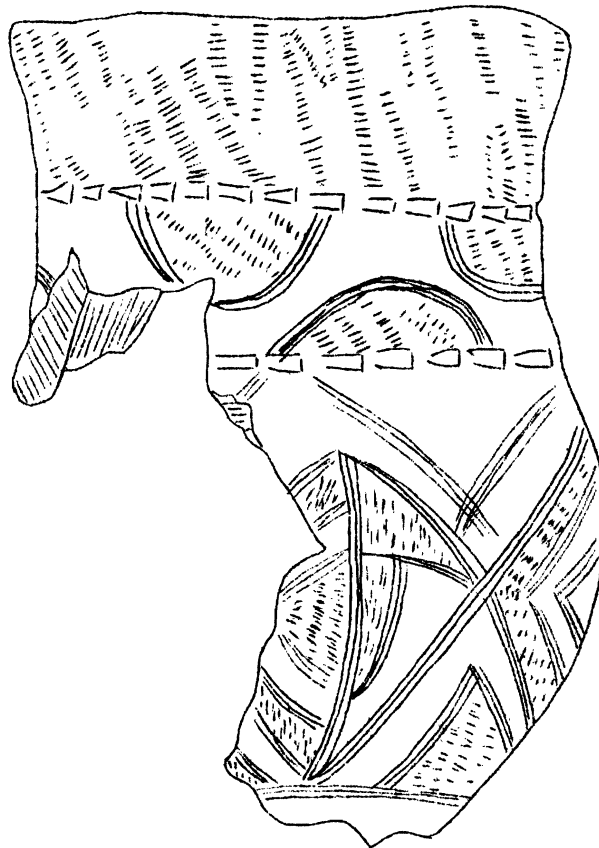
Vessel #1

Fig. 3

Full scale drawing by  
Bonnie Rasmussen, 3/59



Top view

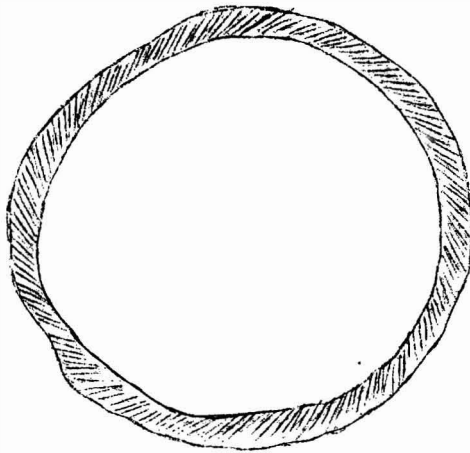


Side view

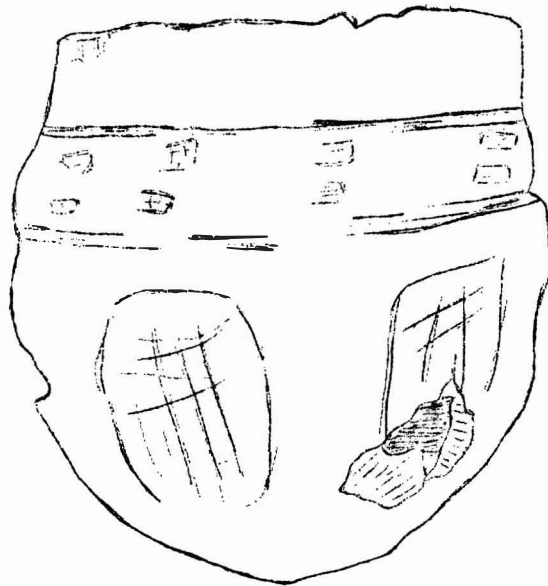
Vessel #2

Fig. 4

Full scale drawing by  
Bonnie Rasmussen, 3/59



Top view



Side view

Vessel #3

Fig. 5

Full scale drawing by  
Bonnie Rasmussen, 3/59