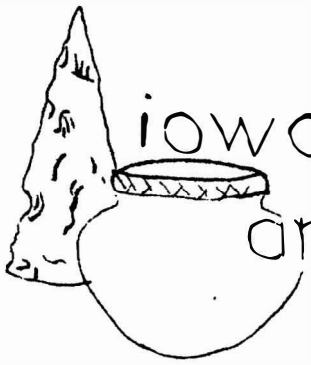


NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 29 IOWA CITY, IOWA JANUARY, 1959

ARCHAEOLOGY AT SUI

Our new laboratory is finished and the increased working space is a delightful sensation. We now have enough room to handle ten students with space left over for our own research. The new storage space has made for much more efficient organization of the material. As soon as we can sort the Mill Creek material from 1955 and 1956, we can give Sanford Museum its half of the material. That will free more space and we should be able to operate for a number of years on the existing storage space. We also have space to store our large display panels for the first time; but stored in such a way that they can still be seen by persons visiting the lab.

Several of us at SUI have attended meetings of archaeological interest. The annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association was held in Washington, D. C., at the end of November and nine students and faculty members attended. The program was varied and everyone managed to attend the session in which he was most interested. One session of particular interest was a program devoted to the role of archaeology in historical research.

The annual Plains Conference was held at Lincoln, Nebraska the following week and again a number of us were in attendance. Papers were presented by several members of the Iowa Archaeological Society. Gene Fugle gave a paper on the Four Bears site in South Dakota, and Dale Henning gave a paper on his salvage archaeology project for the University of Missouri, in Missouri. Of interest to Iowans was a report by Dr. George Agogino on the research he carried out with W. D. Frankforter at the Simonson site near Quimby, Iowa.

Early in January the Editor attended the annual meeting of the Committee for the Recovery of Archaeological Remains at Washington, D.C. The work of the Committee consists of advisory action to the

National Park Service and the Smithsonian Institution on matters concerned with salvage archaeology. Over the years, the Committee has been responsible for the establishment of federal support for archaeological salvage in areas where dams are being built and other government construction is taking place. We are concerned this year with the future of archaeological salvage programs because of the economy drive in Congress. We are faced with a serious curtailment of operations unless some of the budget cuts are restored. We are concerned about the possibility of losing some of the personnel of the Smithsonian Institution's River Basins Survey due to the cuts. In addition, there is a distinct possibility that funds to cooperating institutions (universities and museums in the Middle West) may be cut. Interested persons are urged to contact their federal Congressmen and make known their attitudes on this matter. On the credit side, the meeting highlighted the very real contribution that has been made by the salvage archaeology program to our knowledge of Middle West archaeology.

NEWS FROM MEMBERS

Up to the end of January, with one exception, we had not received any news from members concerning their activities. That exception is the very fine article written by D. D. Davis concerning his excavation, along with his friends, of a site in Mills County. That article is published in this Newsletter. In addition, D. D. enclosed a large and detailed map of site locations in Mills County. We are eternally grateful for this cooperation, and information. We hope that his report will stimulate other members to report on their activities.

The first article in this Newsletter is a brief sketch of the experiences of Adrian Anderson in Yucatan, written by Hester Davis, our Research Associate at the University, from letters Adrain has written to us. When he returns, we plan to coerce him into writing an article of his experiences at Dzibilchaltun.

The second article is a brief statement by another member, Mr. Richard Flanders, concerning the research he did on Mill Creek ceramics for his masters degree at SUI.

Reynold J. Ruppé
Editor

ARCHAEOLOGY CAN BE FUN

Hester A. Davis

The September Newsletter made note of the fact that Adrian Anderson, a graduate student here at SUI, was about to embark on six months field work in Yucatan with the Middle American Research Institute of Tulane University. Adrian and his wife, Barbara, left for Merida, Yucatan, about the first of October and since then we have been getting reports about Middle American archaeology which make us very envious. A National Geographic article in January (1959) shows colored pictures of the site at which Adrian is working - Dzibilchaltun. Looking at these pictures while the blizzards raged outside our windows, made us even more envious.

Dzibilchaltun may well be the largest site in the New World - - - imagine for yourself the change for Adrian from working in the Glenwood area where he would find post molds, broken pots, and a few hundred artifacts, to working at a site measured in MILES, with literally hundreds of buildings and temples covered by the jungle; burials with Mayan pottery, and stelae (large carved stone pillars). It is enough to turn a poor midwest archaeologist's head.

Adrian, who has spent many a hot summer day digging cache pits or sterile trenches, now is in charge of a small crew of Mayan laborers, who greet him each morning with "Buenos dias, Patron." They do the digging while Adrian takes notes, at least that is how he describes it. These men have had experience digging in ruins before, and when they talk to each other in their native Mayan language, Adrian is sure they are telling each other that this red-bearded American doesn't really know what he is doing. But Adrian knows, for he says, "The same field techniques useful in Iowa are applicable here, with only a little variation."

Barb, too, is involved with work at the site. Being an artist, she had hoped to do a lot of sketching in Merida. Much to her distress she found that the people were interested in what she was sketching and wanted to talk to her about it, and she could not understand their Spanish. Now she is learning the gentle art of photography from the National Geographic photographer who is with the crew.

But, in addition to the work (which begins by getting up at 4:30 am) Barb and Adrian will return in May with great stories to tell. They have seen a genuine Mexican bull fight; have visited most of the large and famous Mayan sites; Adrian has gone diving with an aqualung in the cenote (a large, water-filled sinkhole in the limestone) at the site; they sleep in hammocks in their small Mayan house, and have a part-time maid; and they are both learning to play the guitar. But Adrian is true to his home land, for he ends one of his last letters, saying: "Classical archaeology or not, I still like the idea of doing good old-fashioned dirt-archaeology. You can get the archaeologist out of the dirt, but you can't get the dirt out of the archaeologist!"

SITE O-32-5

Donald D. Davis

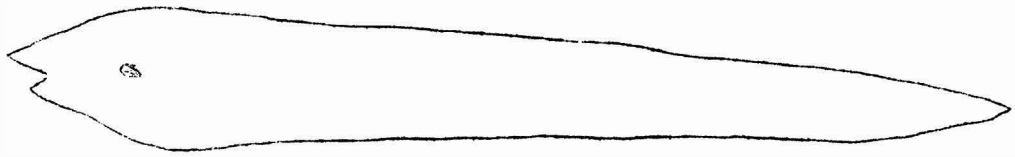
Site O-32-5 is a single unit pit house located on a terrace on a side hill which overlooks the Missouri River bottom-lands in southwestern Mills County. More precisely, it is located in the NE¼ of the SW¼ in Sec. 32, Oak Township. The house was built on a natural terrace about 35 feet above the Missouri River flood plain. The river at that time probably ran closer to the Iowa side of the bluff. Fish and clam were apparently abundant, as huge quantities of shell and fish bone were found in pits under the floor level.

The pit house was excavated in June, July, and August on Sundays and holidays by N. W. Gamble, Roy Hammer, Paul Rowe, Dallas Moore, Leonard Kullbom, and D. D. Davis. The site was visited by W. D. Frankforter and Earl Brewster of Cherokee.

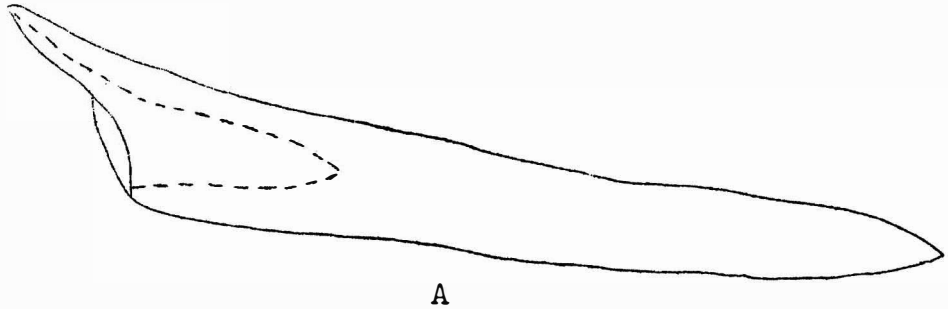
The house is rectangular in shape with the entrance to the South. From East to West the house is twenty eight feet wide. The North-South dimensions are unknown due to the erosion of the terrace. The floor level at the back side (north) of the house is five feet deep from ground level and completely runs out of the ground on the South side. Post molds are not too clear around the walls although they are present. Two possible center posts were found; both contained pit material, but they had evidence of burned posts in them. There were four small cache pits in the house. They were straight sided, from twelve to eighteen inches deep and from eight to fourteen inches wide. There were three larger pits in three corners of the house.

The pit in the northwest quarter of the house was the largest and deepest, being four feet deep and thirty-seven inches across at the opening. It was also straight sided, as were all other pits in the house. This pit also contained the most artifacts, including stone points and knives, five bone needles, and two antler projectile points (Fig. 1, A and B) which have been drilled out at the basal end with a cone-shaped projection on the same end with a hole drilled in it, possibly for hafting. A few charred corn kernels and a fish scale which had been rubbed and polished were also found in the pit.

Several broken bone shaft wrenches were found in this section of the house. Several deer scapulae, one with a hole drilled in the bit end came from the northwest corner. Much bone work was in this corner. Where artifacts were found along the floor of the house, they were in groups as if they were left in place by the owners. It is believed the house burned, although no layer of charred timber was found. Two whole and unbroken pots were found in the excavation. Both were small; one is an unusual effigy, probably representing a duck (Fig. 2), the other is a plain pot with two lug handles. Both are about nine inches in circumference.



A



A

B

Fig. 1

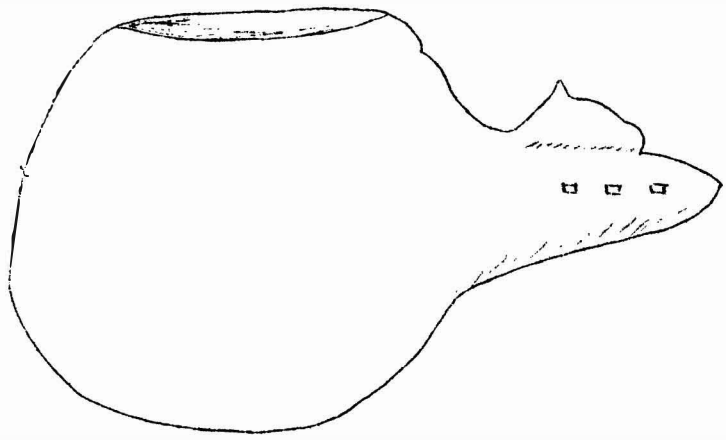


Fig. 2

I should mention also the pottery beads or weights which ever they might be. Some are round and others are cone-shaped. They are about one-half inch thick and the cone-shaped specimens are one-half inch long. There are also several nice shell pendants and shell beads. One large shell with a thunderbird effigy carved on it was excavated by W. D. Frankforter of Cherokee. In pit I in the northwest corner, a drilled calcite bead was found along with a teardrop-shaped shell pendant. A bone fishhook, one and one eighth inches long, was found above the pit in the northwest corner of the house, and was associated with a bone awl, five inches long. The bone work in this part of the house was very well preserved due to the depth of fill above it. Several large broken pots were found at about the floor level of the house. A great variety of design is seen in the pots. Some are shell tempered with an Oneota-like design which has been found in the Kullbom village site a few miles North. Also found were the typical Glenwood type pots and one pot which has combed side decoration. Among the points found there is a great deal of variety. The majority are triangles; there is the two side notch point, the three notch triangle, and the five notch Glenwood point. One Dalton point and two Woodland type points were found. They were probably collected points as they do not belong to the Glenwood catagory. One drilled toe bone ornament was also found which is unusual in this type of house. Two buffalo scapulae were found in pit III. Only one fragment of a clay pipe was found in this house. It is shell tempered and of black paste. No design can be determined from the sherd. One small celt was found. This is three inches long with the bit end polished.

Summary: The people who built this house were evidently peaceful people. There is no sign of fortification around the house. They no doubt enjoyed trading with people up and down the river and the people up the Platte River which empties into the Missouri River just a few miles South of the site. While some of the bone work seems unusual in this house, it is probably individual as each house contained something just a little different than another. As for the time period of this house, it is probably safe to say that it was occupied about the same time as the Kullbom village to the north, where the University crew worked in 1957. The majority of the pottery is the same type as in that site. The curious thing is the absence of pipes in this site. They were abundant at the Kullbom site; also the pits are smaller and more shallow. One small storage pit was found twenty-five feet from the house site. It contained only a few rocks and clam shells, a few food bones and one triangular point. Further investigation will probably result in the finding of another house nearby, as the surface material indicates as much.

CHRONOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS AT MILL CREEK

Richard E. Flanders

The archaeological entity known as "Mill Creek" has been the recipient of quite a large amount of attention and study during the last few years. The 1955 and 1956 Summer Field Sessions from the State University of Iowa, under the direction of Professor R. J. Ruppé, undertook to excavate as completely as possible one of the sites included in this designation, the Phipps Site, 13CK21, near Cherokee, Iowa. Numerous surface collections from other sites in Northwest Iowa have been added to the material from the Phipps Site and have made possible a more comprehensive view of Mill Creek. Ives' definitive thesis, A Study of Mill Creek Ceramics (n.d.) was based on analysis of 45,497 pottery sherds from these sites. A total of more than 100,000 Mill Creek sherds have been catalogued and analysed up to the present time.

Because the large amounts of material made analysis by the visual inspection method difficult, a technique was sought which would render interpretations of inter-site and intra-site relationships simpler and more objective. The technique settled upon was the Robinson technique (Robinson, 1951), the result of a problem posed to W. S. Robinson, a sociological statistician, by G. W. Brainerd of the University of California. The technique consists of a relatively simple method of comparing archaeological deposits on the basis of the similarity of percentage distributions of artifact types and the arrangement of these comparisons into a table which purports to show chronological relationships between the deposits. Interpretive techniques dealing with the results of the chronological ordering are proposed by Brainerd in a companion article (Brainerd, 1951).

Results of the analysis of ceramics from Ives' Little Sioux Phase by means of the Robinson technique (Flanders, n.d.) showed that the sites under consideration seemed to break into two "divisions," an early and a late, which corresponded to the lower and upper portions of the Phipps Site. The early division included 13CK15 (the Brewster Site), 13OB3 (the Waterman Crossing Site), and 13CK1 (the Jones Site) The late division included 13OB2 (the Waterman Site), 13BV2 (the Bultman Site), 13CK3 (the Webb Akers Site), 13OB7 (the Lang Site), and probably 13BV1 (Chan-Ya-Ta) (Fig. 3). It would seem that there is some kind of genetic relationship between early sites along the western Lille Sioux River and Mill Creek, and the later sites such as the Lang Site and the Bultman Site on the eastern Little Sioux River and along Waterman Creek. The analytic technique mentioned before is, of course, limited to relationships among sites from which we have materials. The need now is for thorough surface collections from other sites in the area (particularly from Waterman Creek and the eastern Little Sioux) with the objective of making more complete our picture of the culture history of Northwest Iowa.

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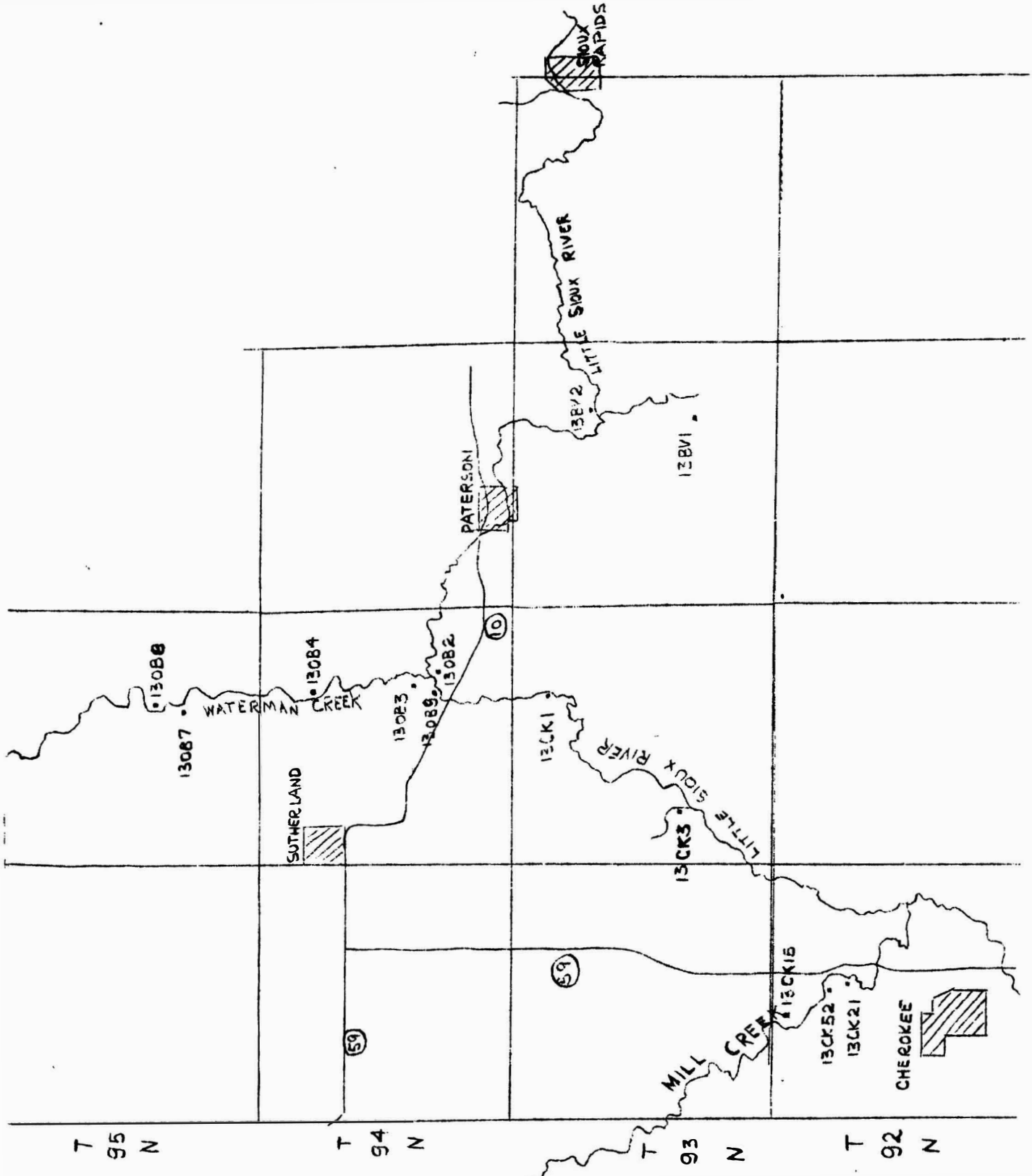

Area of Mill Creek Sites, Northwest Iowa

Fig. 3

BOOK REVIEW

A Short Introduction to Archaeology, by V. Gordon Childe. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958. $2.50.

This little book, printed in England, is one of the last publication of the noted British archaeologist. In the "Man and Society" series it is of interest to both the amateur and the professional. Dr. Childe, in simple language but with the use of technical archaeological terms and concepts, outlines the basic knowledge essential for the study of archaeology, (Chapter 1, Archaeology and History); methods of classification and systems of chronology (Chapter 2, Classification; Chapter 3, Archaeological Sites and Their Stratigraphy); means of recognizing sites (Chapter 4, Hints of the Recognition of Monuments in the Field); and methods for interpretation and reconstruction of archaeological data (Chapter 5, Interpreting Archaeological Data: Elementary Technology; Chapter 6, Interpreting Archaeological Data: Completing the Bits.). All this is covered concisely in 130 pages of text and a few illustrations.

A word of warning: this is a book by a British anthropologist and deals almost exclusively with British and European archaeology. No mention is made of problems of American archaeology. Childe, for example, describes methods for recognizing house sites or burials of Paleolithic or Neolithic cultures, Roman structures, and the like which have no relevance to American archaeologists. The two chapter on the interpretation of archaeological data however, are of a more general character and will be of interest and use particularly to amateur archaeologists, for Childe gives some basic descriptions of methods of manufacture of flint and stone tools, metal, and pottery. The examples given are usually European oriented, but the basic principals described are the same as those used by American Indians in the manufacture of their artifacts.

However, a number of other features make this book of the utmost value. All technical terms are indexed in the back of the book, and in the text are written in italics for each reference. At the end of each chapter is a short bibliography of books covering the subject discussed in that particular chapter.

But over and above these points of interest, the book will make fascinating reading for those who are acquainted with problems of discovering and excavating sites in the Middle West, for it will give insights into how a European archaeologist, trained with essentially the same knowledge and using the same techniques of excavation, goes about his work of uncovering past cultures and interpreting human behavior from the remains which he finds.

Hester A. Davis