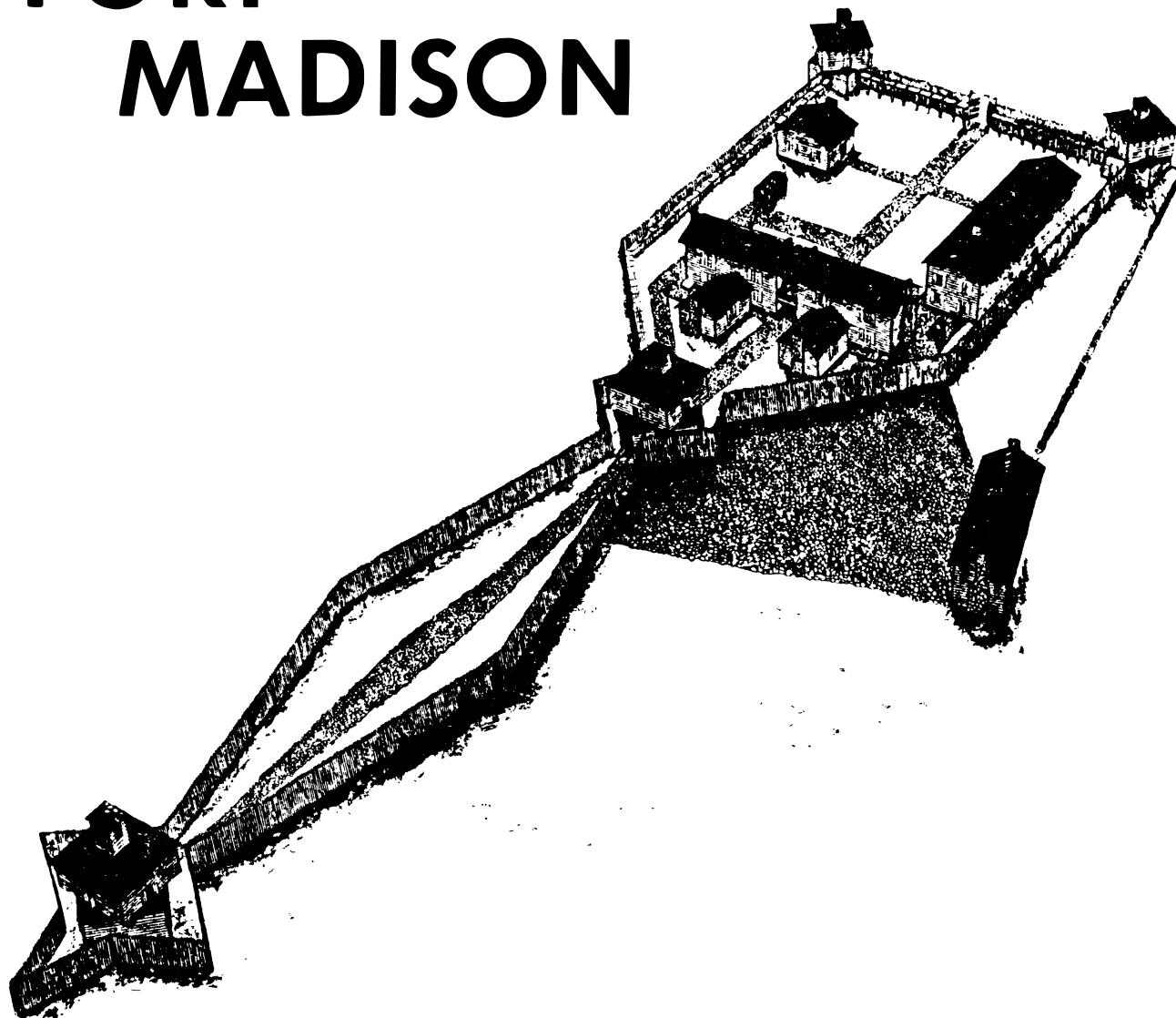


iowa archeological society

# newsletter

## FORT MADISON



1808 - 1813

PLAN TO ATTEND

# THE I.A.S. ANNUAL SPRING MEETING

## April 28 & 29, 1984

Indian Hills Community College  
Grandview and North Elm Campus  
Ottumwa

Don Spears, Chairman

*Direct all inquiries to Don Spears, 536 South Davis Street, Ottumwa, Iowa 52501*

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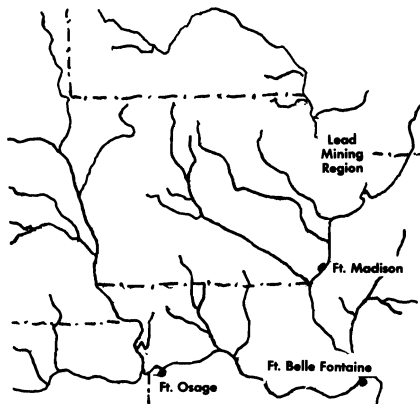
Terry Walker (1983-1986)  
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Cherokee, Iowa 51012

The Newsletter is published four times a year. Questions about your subscription should be addressed to the Office of State Archaeologist, Eastlawn, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242. All materials for publication should be sent to the editor.

**"The 1982 Journal (Vol. 29) was sent out last June. If you were a member of the IAS in 1982 and you did not receive your journal, please contact Ruth Thornton, Treasurer, 326 Otsego Street, Storm Lake, Iowa 50888.**

Bradley B. Williams

The Louisiana Purchase in 1803 gave the United States title to a vast area of land west of the Mississippi River, but title did not necessarily mean control. The United States government had used a system of trading posts called "factories" since 1795 east of the Mississippi to maintain control over the frontier by establishing economic ties with the Indians. In 1805, the factory system was extended into the newly acquired territory with the opening of the Belle Fontaine factory near St. Louis. Belle Fontaine, however, was too far from Indian tribes to be effective so in 1808 it was closed. In its place two new factories were established. Fort Osage was established on the Missouri River near the present-day site of Independence, Missouri, and Fort Madison was built on the Mississippi about ten miles above the Des Moines Rapids.



Indians traded lead and furs at U.S. government "factories" or trading posts at Ft. Belle Fontaine, Ft. Osage, and Ft. Madison.

The United States government hoped these new factories, protected by military posts, would encourage trade with Indians, secure their allegiance, and diminish the influence of the British on the frontier. At Fort Madison, however, many things went wrong. The fur trade was mishandled. Although an 1804 treaty between the United States and the Sauk and Fox provided for the establishment of a trading house for



Black Hawk and other Sauk and Fox Indians opposed the fortified trading post at Fort Madison.

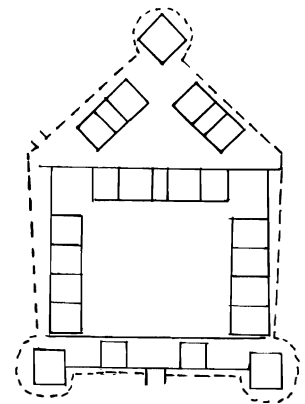
the Indians, some of the Sauk and Fox, including Black Hawk, were suspicious of the presence of American troops at the post. Their suspicions were fanned by British traders. In 1812, the conflict between England and the United States was renewed. For a time, Indians led by the British swept over the frontier attacking and capturing American outposts. The garrison at Fort Madison suffered numerous attacks by Indians. The poor location of the post made it next to impossible to defend. Finally, in 1813, under cover of darkness, the post was abandoned and the buildings burned as the soldiers retreated to St. Louis.

Traces of the old fort gradually disappeared. Travelers on the river occasionally mentioned the stone chimneys standing at the abandoned site. In 1833, the land around the site of Fort Madison was opened to white settlement. Fields were planted and cabins were built on the old fort site. The village of Fort Madison was granted a charter in 1842, and a busy river town grew up where once the fort stood. The face of the landscape changed. Dams on the Mississippi raised the level of the river. The location of the fort and trading post became uncertain.

In 1965, construction workers were cutting deep trenches for utility

lines in an industrial section of town. Local tradition placed the charred remains of Fort Madison near the construction site, a parking lot that had been occupied by a succession of manufacturing concerns. When construction began, an archaeologist was there to see if any traces of the fort were uncovered. About five feet below the surface, workers encountered a limestone foundation, the stones laid up with clay instead of mortar. With construction temporarily halted, archaeologists uncovered the rest of the foundation. The stones formed a cellar for a small, but substantial building about twenty feet square. It was not clear whether the foundation was from an early settler's cabin or from one of two blockhouses of the fort.

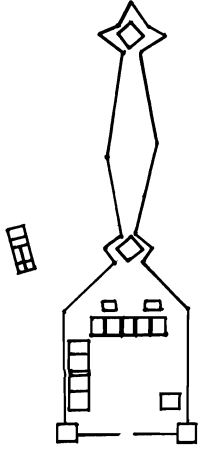
Historical records made no mention of cellars in the blockhouses, but two documents were important for identifying the remains of the fort. In 1808, Lieutenant Alpha Kingsley, commander of the expedition establishing the fort, drew a plan for a five sided fort with three blockhouses. In



Lt. Alpha Kingsley drew this preliminary plan of Ft. Madison in 1808.

planning the fort, however, Lieutenant Kingsley had overlooked a low ridge which would permit an attacker to fire into the interior of the stockade. Two years later, John Johnson, the "factor" or trader at Fort Madison, sent a plan of the fort to his superiors in Washington that showed this oversight had been corrected by

building a blockhouse on the ridge and connecting it to the main fort by a narrow stockade. Johnson's plan,



**Archaeological investigation showed John Johnson's 1810 map to be an accurate drawing of Ft. Madison.**

drawn after the fort was completed, was the more accurate of the two, and showed the location of the principal buildings of the post in 1810 (see cover drawing).

Artifacts confirmed that the foundation uncovered was part of the original fort. Crockery uncovered among the rubble was identified as a type made before 1830. A bronze button confirmed the presence of the United States Army. It was embossed with the insignia of the First Infantry, the regiment that garrisoned Fort Madison. The artifacts indicated that this was a building from the fort and the measurements indicated it was a blockhouse. But other evidence was needed to determine which one it was.

When construction trenches uncovered the stockade line in several places, it became possible to orient Johnson's map to the site. A foundation for a fireplace was discovered where the factor had indicated the enlisted men's barracks was located. Another button, this one embossed with a small cannon, the insignia of an artillery unit, again confirmed the identity of a building. The location of the barracks made it clear that the blockhouse uncovered was Blockhouse Three and not the blockhouse

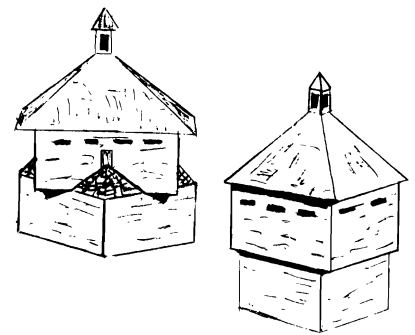
erected later on the ridge.

The identification of the blockhouse and the barracks made it possible to fix the relative positions of the other buildings at the fort. When the construction excavation reached where the officers' quarters should be, another cellar was discovered. On the outside of the cellar foundation, a cobblestone sidewalk was uncovered. Contemporary accounts stated that this feature of the fort was still visible when the town of Fort Madison was settled. A visitor of the site must have strolled across the cobblestones and lost a penny because one bearing an 1830 date was found wedged between two cobblestones. The two blockhouses at the front of the fort were explored, but little remains of either were found except for a few foundation stones.

The subsurface remains of Fort Madison can tell us much about this nineteenth century outpost. Sometimes, the artifacts confirm what we know from the historical record. Inventories tell us that the Indians traded beaver pelts, deerskins, and lead they mined near present-day Dubuque, Iowa, and Galena, Illinois, for beads, muskets, blankets, and other trade goods. We know, for example, that in 1810 John Johnson collected some 80,000 pounds of lead. Excavations in Blockhouse Three uncovered trade beads and solid puddles of lead that must have melted in the intense heat of the fire that consumed the fort.

Archaeology can also elaborate the historical record. In the case of Blockhouse Three, the documents state that the first story was used for storage. Excavation revealed that the building had a cellar, a feature apparently not mentioned in the records. Because the cellar door faced a wicket gate in the stockade that led to the factory and because of the presence of trade goods in the cellar, we may assume that the "first story" used for storage was probably the cellar.

Archaeology can tell us things the documents do not reveal. John Johnson's map and written descriptions of the fort buildings give only a partial picture of the fort architecture. The subsurface remains suggest details these documents omit. The twelve foot high stockade enclosed the fort, including the blockhouses. Although window glass was fragile and difficult to obtain on the frontier, fragments of window glass found in the protected lower stories of the blockhouses may have had glass windows to keep out the cold winds of Iowa winters. Two patterns of charred log beams were found on the cellar floor of Blockhouse Three. The lower beams lay parallel to the cellar walls while those above lay diagonally. If these diagonal beams were from the second story floor, it is possible that the second story of the blockhouse



**It is likely that blockhouses at Ft. Madison were the rotated type (left), but it is possible they were the projected type (right).**

was rotated. The documents do not tell us. It is possible, too, that the building twisted as it burned causing the second story beams to fall diagonally. Hardware found in the cellar suggests architectural details too. The cellar door was probably hung from pintle hinges; one was uncovered with wood still adhering to it. Strap hinges were used on storm doors to protect the cellar entry. Clinched nails in the holes of the

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hinges show that these doors were two inches thick.

Other artifacts found at the site shed light on the quality of life at the post. Despite Fort Madison's location as an outpost on the frontier, officers and enlisted men dined off fine china. Sherds of transfer ware and a "Gaudy Dutch" ware, a pattern characterized by large leaves and flowers, were found. Both patterns were products of the potteries in Staffordshire, England. Officers and soldiers ate with silver utensils, some with bone handles. A ceramic inkwell, inscribed with the pun "present for writing well," may have been a gift to encourage a soldier to write home. Some leisure time may have been spent smoking; fragments of clay tobacco pipes were uncovered in both the enlisted men's barracks and the officers' quarters. A marble, found in the officers' quarters, may have been lost by one of the children at the post.

Fort Madison was the first United States Army post in the Upper Mississippi Valley. Archaeology rediscovered what the passing of time had covered and almost forgotten. While we may never know all that happened in the five years Fort Madison was garrisoned, the study of the remains of the fort adds to our knowledge about this once distant outpost on the American frontier.

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### Further Reading

Donald Jackson, ed., "A Critic Views Iowa's First Military Post," **Iowa Journal of History and Politics** 58 (January 1960), pp. 31-36

\_\_\_\_\_, "Old Fort Madison 1808 - 1813" **Palimpsest** 39 (January 1958), pp. 1 - 64.

Marshall McKusick, "Exploring Old Fort Madison," **Iowan** 15 (Fall, 1966), pp. 10 - 13, 50 - 51.

Ora B. Peake, **A History of the United States Factory System 1795-1822**. Denver: Sage Books, 1954.

Francis Paul Prucha, **The Sword of the Republic: The United States Army on the Frontier 1783-1846**. New York: Macmillan Company 1968.

Jacob Van der Zee, "Fur Trade Operations in the Eastern Iowa Country from 1800 to 1833," **Iowa Journal of History and Politics** 12 (October 1914), pp. 479-567.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Old Fort Madison: Some Source Materials," **Iowa Journal of History and Politics** 11 (October 1913), pp. 517-545.

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### Cover

The drawing of Ft. Madison on the cover is based on John Johnson's 1810 plan and archaeological investigations conducted in 1965. The large building outside the stockade is the factory.

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## Editor's Note

Issue 108 is devoted to an area of archaeology that is attracting more attention each year, historic archaeology. Historians use documents, personal accounts, and other sources to validate and interpret events that have had an impact on the development of our society. There are times, however, that an accurate record is impossible due to the lack of primary materials or conflicting recollections by the people who were there. Archaeology provides a way to validate and supplement the historical record. Fort Madison is a good example.

Imagine this situation. A fort is established in the "wilderness" on the Mississippi River by a regiment of the First Infantry, United States Army in 1808. Their mission is to protect the merchants of a factory system that has been established to win the support and trade with the Native Americans. At stake is a rich area that is being contested by the young United States and its former colonial authority, Great Britain. Everything goes wrong including the relations with the Native Americans who are upset by the presence of troops and the poor defensive position of the fort itself. The fort remains active for only five years and then is abandoned leaving a few burned buildings and little else.

One hundred fifty two years later, construction workers uncover the remains of the fort. There is an investigation to establish an accurate historical record of a series of events and a place that is an important part of the heritage surrounding the development of the State of Iowa. Since the historical record is sketchy, it is necessary to excavate the site.

Fort Madison, located on the Mississippi River in S.E. Iowa is the subject of such an investigation. The following article submitted by the Office of State Archaeologist combines both archaeological and historic documentation to provide a glimpse of what happened between 1808 and 1813 at the site of the first United States Army Post in the Upper Mississippi Valley. I recommend that you study the text, pour over the drawings and let your mind imagine the scene, the events, and the people of this small bit of our history.

In the perspective of at least 12,000 years of Native American history, 152 years is a small amount of time. On the other hand, a great amount of historic information has been lost and will require the use of archaeology to understand the development of our state.

The creased-top celt is characterized by a flat top with a slight narrow groove across it, generally to one side of center. Some have been found with the groove near the edge.

It appears the primary area of concentration is in the Mississippi Valley from Hannibal, Missouri, to Quincy, Illinois, to Keokuk, Iowa.

Archaeologists have observed this type celt for a number of years. The creases in these artifacts have probably gone unnoticed in most cases and ignored in others because of the problematical aspect involved.

It is readily apparent that these "cuts" might have been mistaken for plow marks, however upon closer examination it is noted that the grooves are at right angles to the cutting edge. Always showing considerable evidence of friction, perhaps they are intended for functional purpose.

These celts are usually rectangular and in a few instances exhibit the flared bit. The predominant material type is a close grained granite, always exhibiting excellent meticulous workmanship.

Some of the most probable functions of the creases are:

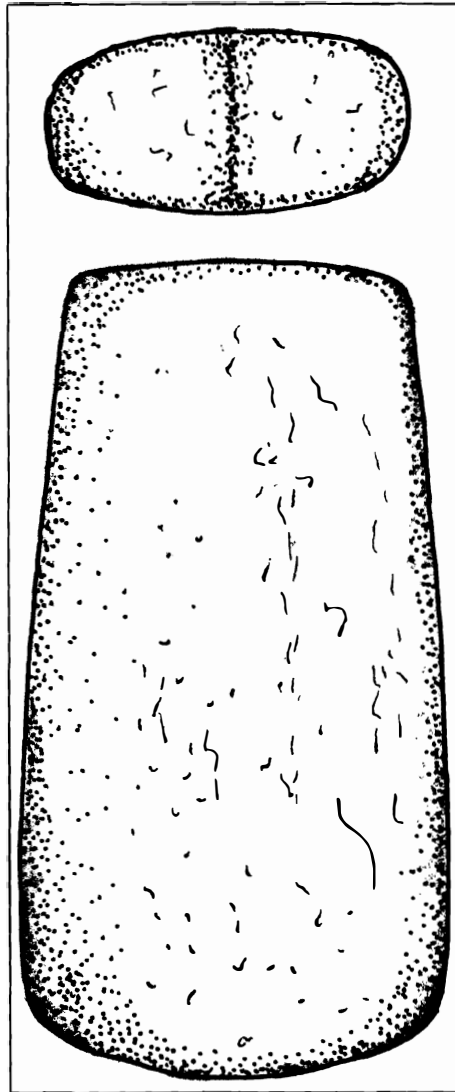
1. Some sort of ceremonial tally or trademark of a group.
2. A mark denoting a certain individual within a group since this type does not appear in any great numbers.
3. The most logical solution advanced by Ray Johnson of Durham, Missouri; since the celt is shaped similar to the head of a monolithic axe and doubtless hafted in a like manner, the groove probably would act as an aid to hold the sinew in place as it dried.

After thoroughly examining my own collection and several others in this area, eleven of this type have been discovered in the Richard C. Murray collection of Quincy, Illinois.

This is the largest single concentration found to date. The cultural association of these celts is not certain, but several have been found on late Woodland sites, in the Quincy, Ill. area.

by Paul V. Sellers, Lewiston, Mo.

Reprint from C.S. Jnl 1, Jan. '68



### ACTUAL SIZE

From #13 - 90 . . . Bacon Site

Sketched by A. Till 2/20/83

This type celt is sometimes found in the lower Des Moines river drainage. Most are made by the "peck" & polish method. They are nearly always found in an excellent condition and do not show any sign of wear by usage. . . .

D. Spears

February 8—Science Building, Iowa Central Community College Ft. Dodge: 7 p.m. "In Search of Ancient Peoples in Iowa" by Gary Valen.

February 19—Sanford Museum in Cherokee: 2 p.m. "Land is a Feeling" by Robert Bunge

February 25—Anthropology Lab, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls: 7 p.m. "Field Work in a Foreign Land: An Archaeological Project in East Africa" by Tom Chadderdon.

February 28—Putnam Museum in Davenport 7:30 p.m. "Archaeology of the Southwest: The Anasazi" by Duane Anderson

March 18—Sanford Museum in Cherokee: 2:00 p.m. "Exploring Buried Buxton: The Archaeology of an Abandoned Iowa Coal Mining Town with a Large Black Population" by David M. Gradwohl

March 20—Osborne Conservation Center, Osborne: 7:30 p.m. "Uncovering the Past in Clayton County" by Clark Mallam

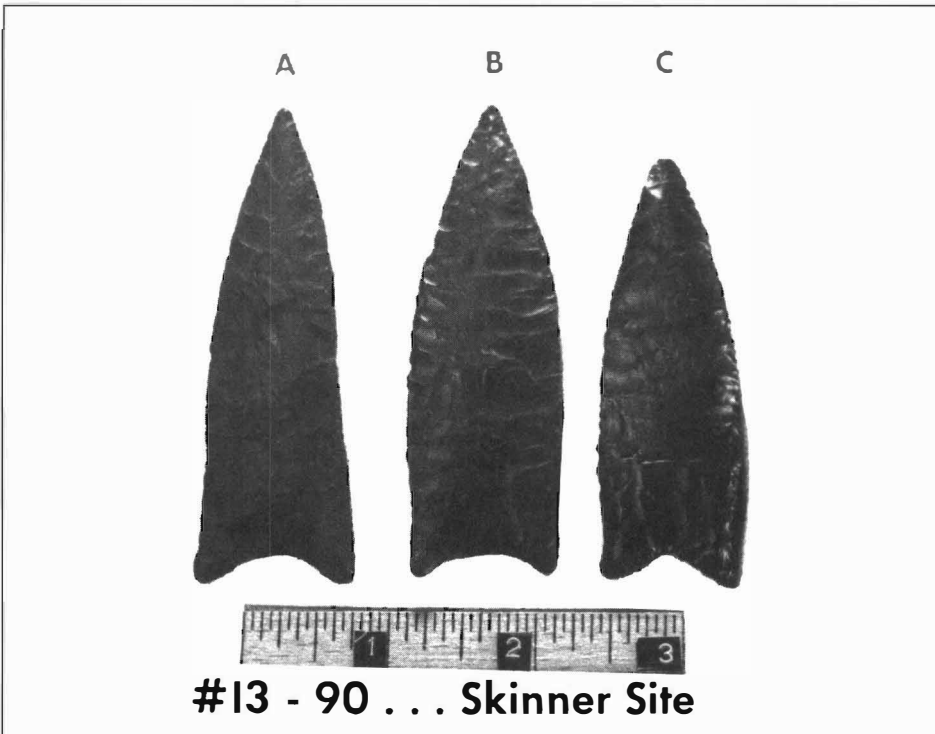
March 24—Anthropology Lab, University of Northern, Iowa, Cedar Falls: 7:00 p.m. "The Cherokee Sewer Site: The Archaeological Investigation of one of the Earliest Indian Sites in Iowa" by Dick Slattery

March 27—Putnam Museum in Davenport: 7:30 p.m. "Geology and Man: The Geology of the Quad-Cities Area" By Richard Anderson

April 24—Putnam Museum in Davenport: 7:30 p.m. "The Charles W. Cooper site: an Oneota Outpost in the Central Illinois River Valley" by Duane Esarey

May 29 — Putnam Museum in Davenport: 7:30 p.m. "Cahokia: Ancient Capital of the World" by Melvin Fowler

# Recent Paleo Finds In S/E Iowa



The two lanceolate points A & B were found by Bob Skinner on a sandbar in a stream in Wapello Co., early last year. Point C is the Paarman point reported in an earlier N/L. This point was used for comparative purposes and has been designated as being an Eastern Clovis by Marie Wormington (personal communication).

In a paper being prepared by Jack H. Ray, it is noted that this black chert (flint) has been named "EXCELLO" by several persons in Central Missouri. Jack notes that the probable source of the Excello chert used in making these three points came from a site on a tributary to the Chariton river approximately 100 miles from Ottumwa.

This black chert is variegated in color and has different types of inclusions. It is in a nodular form and is related to the Pennsylvanian coal and shale beds within the Cherokee group of the Desmoinesian series. Dean Thompson came here last fall and took carbon samples for R C dating. The dates came back and they were too "new."

Bob has found other unnamed points and several more that resemble Scotts Bluff types. Another point also could be called an Alberta.

A display of these and other paleo and early archaic material will be shown during the spring meeting here.

The search for the actual site will continue.

Submitted by D.G. Spears

## New Members

- James Cummings  
Sioux Falls
- Rex McKee  
Traer, Iowa
- L. Adrien Hannus  
Sioux Falls, S.D.
- Dr. John C. Kolesar  
Fort Dodge
- Michael Delaney  
Des Moines
- Barney Uchytel  
Cedar Rapids
- Marian Beimfohr  
Farmersburg, Ia.
- Kare Kay Juhl  
Sioux City
- Cherie Marie Beeler  
Des Moines

- Edward Marshall  
Silver City, Ia.
- Thomas Whitehead  
New Sharon
- Chad Crews  
Sperry, Ia.
- Kenneth Huesmann  
Stockton, Ia.
- Don Tiedman  
Lake Mills, Ia.
- Karnese Novak  
Cedar Rapids
- Paul Naumann  
Iowa City
- Mrs. Jackie Erbe  
Boone
- Dr. John Doran  
Ames
- Barbara Nordahl  
Indianola
- Jean Niemann  
Sumner, Ia.
- William & Ruth Mott  
Council Bluffs

## I.A.S. Members Recognized By State Historical Society

Five IAS members received recognition at the 1983 banquet of the State Historical Society of Iowa in Ames on June 25.

Dick Slattery and Roger Natte each received the Certificate of Merit for overall achievement. Betsy Lyman and Gary Valen received a Certificate of Merit in the area of publications and Ruth Thornton received a Certificate of Recognition for service.

"The purpose of the awards program is both to recognize contributions to state and local history in Iowa, which has been somewhat neglected in the past, and also to encourage future work in these areas by individuals and groups around the state," stated William Cochran, an administrator at the Society.

Besides receiving certificates, copies of the most recent Society publication, **Time Like a Furrow** by James Hearst, were awarded.

# I.A.S. Members Recognized by State Historical Society

Past winners of recognition include IAS members LeRoy and Louise Pratt, Eugene Newhouse, and Dan Zwiener.

Congratulations!

submitted by Debby Ziegrowsky  
Iowa City

## Old Ft. Madison

Robert Alex reported on the re-discovery of Old Fort Madison last summer. The State Archeologist was approached by interested people in Fort Madison to inspect an excavation to construct an underground water reservoir at the Schaeffer Pen Company plant. Bob was sent down to determine the possibility of documenting the location of the first fort to be built in Iowa. Because this was also the site of the Morrison Plow Works, the area was criss-crossed with trenches, foundations and pipes and over two feet of industrial debris. This proved to be quite discouraging until an archaeologist working at Nauvoo, Illinois identified some ceramics as having a pre-1830 glaze. At the end of the second day an area of set stones and burned timbers was found that proved to be the remains of one of the block-houses. The timbers were lying at a 45 degree angle to the walls of the foundation, which indicated that the upper level was built so the loopholes

on the second floor would have a different field of fire. In the officers quarters a set of steps was found leading into the basement. Here a sump had been dug to collect water. There were cobblestone walks in the fort and among the stones were found uniform buttons. The outline of the post holes for the stockade were found and the edges of the trench dug to place them could also be seen. A small part of the enlisted barracks was found including the base of one of the fireplaces. Dr. McKusick expressed his hopes that the area would be established as a State Historical Preserve.

Newsletter No. 40, Sept., 1966 Reprint

## DUES NOTICE

dues should be sent to:

Mrs. Ruth Thornton  
326 Otsego Street  
Storm Lake, IA 50588

### Voting

1. Active - \$10.00
2. Household - \$17.00
3. Sustaining - \$25.00
4. Benefactor  
Minimum - \$250.00

### Non-voting

1. Student - \$7.00  
(under 18)
2. Institution - \$10.00

## I.A.S Members Who Have Recorded Sites in 1983

Jody Meyer	15 Sites
M. J. Hatfield	14 Sites
Tom Whitehead	2 Sites
Toby Morrow	19 Sites
Duane Miller	6 Sites
John Palmquist	13 Sites
D. E. Pidcock	7 Sites
Robert Peterson	2 Sites

John Yenger, 1923—1983.  
Longtime S/E Chapter—IAS member  
passed from this life November 28,  
1983.

Dorothy Skewis, Storm Lake, a  
member of the Society since 1956  
recently died. Dorothy was a very  
talented artist, having taught art in  
Detroit and Buena Vista College for  
many years. She was much interested  
in history and archaeology—was a  
graduate of Morningside College  
and Wayne State College.

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