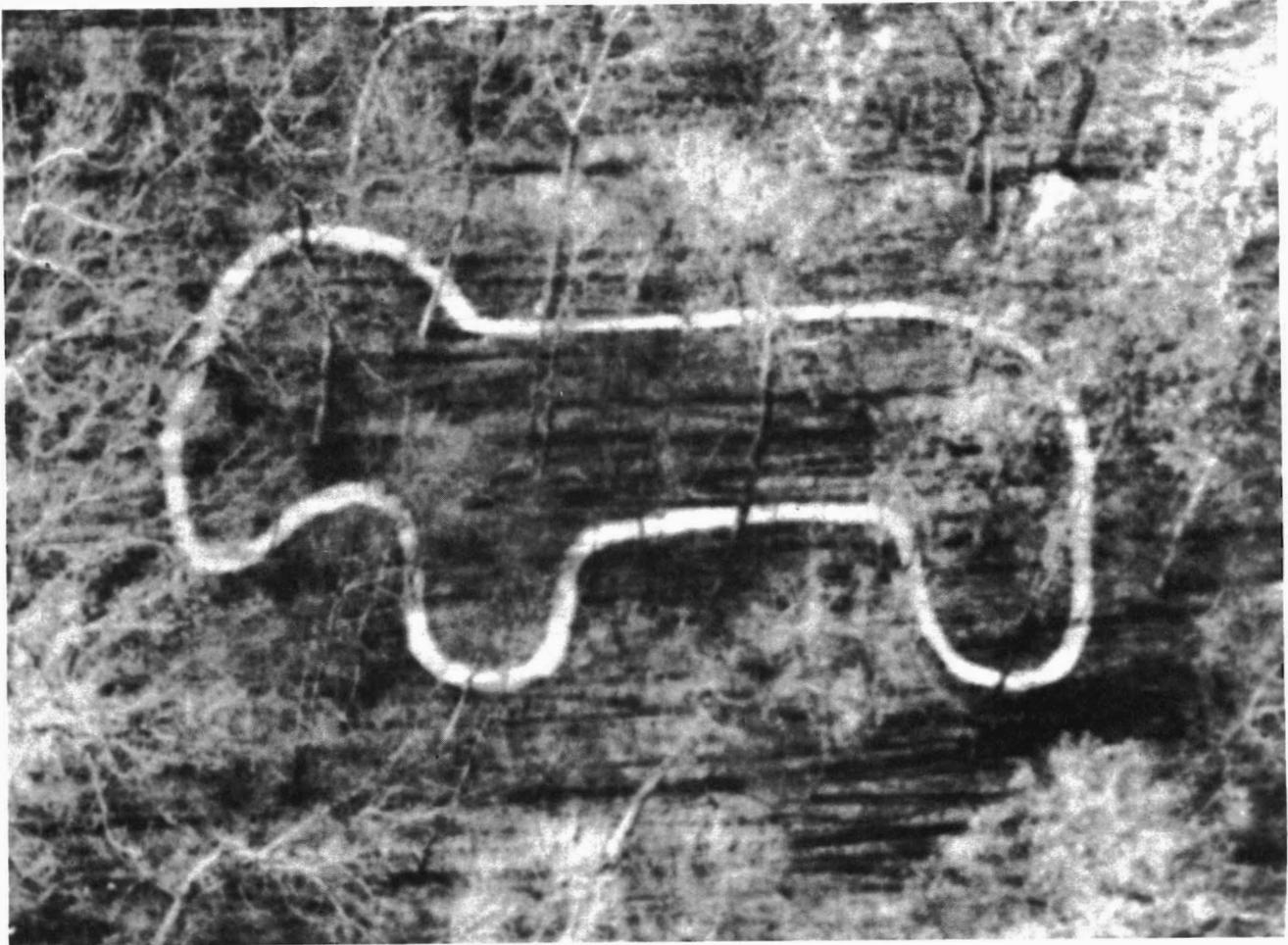


iowa archeological society

# newsletter



**"SACRED SPACE"**

The origins and interpretations of mounds have been the subject of great controversy among scholars for the past 200 years. Two separate views are offered in this issue that represent the wide difference between the "mound builder" myths of the 19th century and present research that is based on archaeological discovery and Native American tradition.

The 19th century position is represented by an 1872 **Galaxy** magazine article about a so-called superior race of "mound builders" who were believed to live in this country prior to the Native Americans. Luther College professor, R. Clark Mallam, has provided a good analysis of what a 19th century author believed to be the truth about the prehistoric inhabitation of our country. Incidentally, the discovery of the **Galaxy** article was somewhat of an archaeological project in itself.

"The Pikes Peak State Park Project: mounds and 'Sacred Space'" is an excellent contrast to the 1872 imaginations of a lost race of "civilized" mound builders. The placement of mounds on prominent ridges and Native American beliefs concerning "sacred space" are outlined in the brief report about the Pikes Peak mounds.

There can be little doubt that 19th century scholars denied the ability of native peoples to build the spectacular network of earthworks that are found in this country. One could not justify the genocide practices of the invading European peoples while at the same time acknowledge the high intellect that is demon-

strated by mound placement and construction.

Contemporary research has proven that Native Americans not only built the mounds, but also developed a sophisticated set of understandings and beliefs about their world. The mounds represent an outward manifestation of the Native American concept that man is an integral part of a living **space** that includes everything. A sacred space may have been marked by the mounds as a way to teach native peoples (and those of us who followed) about the oneness of a living universe and the interrelationship of human beings with their natural world. The beliefs and lifestyles of Native Americans have finally attracted the attention and admiration of a few scholars in the later decades of the 20th century. A full comprehension of the mounds will require continued research and thought by the scholars of the future.

It is not a subject of mere curiosity. The relationship between we humans and the rest of our environment is an important component of our survival as a species on this earth. If we could adopt our own sacred belief that people are a part of the living universe, we might create a lifestyle that integrates our lives with the environment that sustains us. Instead of exploiting our "resources" for the sake of immediate wealth, we would use methods that sought the long term existence of our peoples. This appears to be a belief of the native peoples who built the mounds and sustained a fairly long-term existence in their living space.

Special thanks to Clark Mallam for sharing the "Tammuz" article and his own research at Pikes Peak State Park. I want to encourage others to contribute their thoughts, discoveries, and experiences about mounds. The significance of the "sacred space" in Iowa's northeast corner should make this a special issue for members of the Iowa Archaeological Society.

I would also like to thank Jody Meyer and the Office of State Archaeologist for the publication of her site survey or examination. This is a good example of how our members can share their archaeological work with others and at the same time establish a permanent record of sites in Iowa.

Finally, I hope to encourage more of our members to submit material for publication in the **Newsletter**. I have adopted a scheme to remind some of you about publication deadlines and the need for articles. If you would like to be included on the mailing list, please contact me.

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### About the Cover

The aerial view of the effigy mound pictured on the cover was taken by Harlan Sanderson at Pikes Peak State park. The mound is one of several being studied by the Luther College Archaeological Research Center. See the article "The Pikes Peak State Park Project: Mounds and 'Sacred Space'" by R. Clark Mallam.

## Tammuz And The Mound Builders: An Odd Twist To An Old Myth

R. Clark Mallam

On an August morning in 1981, John Kjome of Decorah, Iowa, was engaged in insulating a portion of his nineteenth century home. While removing siding from an interior wall, he noticed some papers mortared into the brick. On closer inspection, they proved to be from an issue of an old magazine, the **Galaxy**.

By itself, this 1872 popular publication of literature and criticism would have been little more than an oddity, an interesting discovery, except for the inclusion of a distinctive 18 page article. Entitled, "Tammuz and the Mound Builders," its author, Alexaner McWhorter (1872), melds together virtually all of the then prominent beliefs concerning earthen and stone monuments in the western hemisphere. For the history of archaeology this article is especially significant; its appearance in a popular magazine not only sheds additional light on the pervasiveness of the Mound Builder myth - a nineteenth century belief that a master race of builders had preceded the Native Americans (see Silverberg 1968; Mallam 1976) - but also indicates the depth to which it was embedded in American thought.

The article is difficult to follow, primarily because the author attempts to weave a central theme from many disparate strands. In so doing, the entire narrative becomes progressively convoluted and contradictory, a jumble of unexplained and unrelated miscellany. Essentially, it begins with the discovery on October 16, 1869, of a large statue near the town of Lafayette, New York, "...on the banks

of the Onondaga river, near the present Indian reservation..." According to the author, "The statue is a colossal monolith, ten feet and one-half inches in length, and weighs 2,990 pounds. Upon the right arm, midway between the elbow and the shoulder, is the following inscription in Phoenician alphabetical characters: LORD TAMMUZ OF THE HEAVENS. THE BAAL." (Fig. 1). The antiquity of this object, manufactured from a "... pure or nearly pure sulphate of lime...", is supposedly verified by a Professor Moses C. White, M.D., who, following meticulous examination of its surface with an "...achromatic glass, magnifying fifteen diameters...", concludes cautiously, "Though not fully decided, I incline to the opinion that the Onondaga statue is of ancient origin."

Having provisionally established its authenticity as an ancient artifact, the author describes its basic features:

The statue is a complex, mythological figure, which we shall describe according to photographs impossible to introduce here, and then speak of the culture to which it belongs, by which alone it can be understood.

It is properly a statue, but appears on the sides as an alto-relievo, from having

been cut away from some original constituent parts. That it has been thus cut away is evident, for the lines of the cutting are distinctly seen upon the left side of the foreshortened figure. That it belongs to the winged or cherubim type, appears from the fact that from the shoulder down the whole length of the left side of the figure are seen outlines of folded wings, even the separate feathers being distinctly traceable down to the carefully cut triangular point on the heel. The back part of the head has also been cut away, probably from a second pair of smaller wings. There is upon the right side of the head, which originally lay buried in its right wing, a little budding horn folded flat against the head ...

The head has a dual character - the left side, or the one presented to the spectator, being inexpressibly noble and majestic, while the side upon which the horn is seen has the true satyr expression. In its high, round, cannonball shape, it conforms remarkably to the type head of the mound-builders as given by Professor Wilson of the University of Toronto (Smithsonian Report, 1862, "Physical Ethnology." p. 241 ...

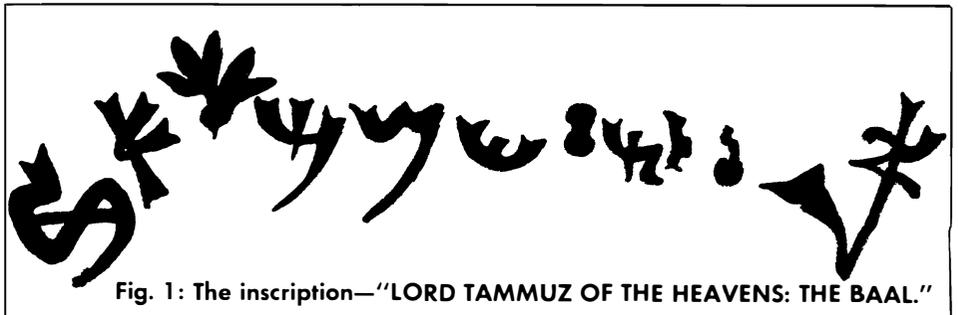


Fig. 1: The inscription—"LORD TAMMUZ OF THE HEAVENS: THE BAAL."

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The statue is wrought with wonderful anatomical accuracy, even where it varies from the outline of the human form with symbolic intent, the anatomy being adapted to the expression of such intent. The right hand of the statue, resting lightly upon the body\* ... (Footnote - \*Precisely in the position of the left hand of the statuette of Amoun-Ra, the living and the dead Osiris, or Sun God. Gallery of Antiquities, Egyptian, British Museum, Plate 3, Fig. 4.)... is finished with accurate and elaborate detail ...

There is in the head of this recumbent statue also a dual expression of death and life - divine repose in death on the divine side, and a satyr's leer upon the human side. In the wonderfully artistic mouth of the divine side we find a suggestion of the origin of that of the Greek Apollo ...

At this point, McWhorter takes the reader on a circuitous journey through the religion and history of the ancient Near East. Drawing variously on Assyrian, Phoenician, and Hebraic sources, along with early migration and exploring traditions, he argues for the settlement and influence of Phoenician seafarers in the western hemisphere. The statue is, then, he asserts, a Phoenician idol - Tammuz - removed from its temple mounting in Tyre and transported to one of their many colonies in the New World. And, this widespread colonization pattern is evidenced by the similarity of the statue's form and inscription to those observed in Peru, Copan, pal-

enque, and the Aztec Empire.

Expanding upon this explanation, he contends that the "colossal monuments" are the products of the "Mound Builders," superior cultures obviously stimulated by the Phoenicians whose center was "... the great pyramid of Cholula, the culminating point of the entire mound-building system of the two continents." The Mound Builders to the north, though, were constantly "... pressed upon by nomads." In order to survive, they constructed great earthworks which served "... the double purpose of teocalli (sacrifice) and fortifications." Continued harassment eventually forced them to consolidate:

In these circumstances they appear to have taken possession of a central point near the junction of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, which they held with great strength, throwing out their lines of fortifications along the affluents of these rivers. At the headwaters of the Ohio their lines of defence (sic) met a kindred system of fortifications, which held the affluents of the Chesapeake and the region south of Lake Ontario, from its military centre at Onondaga, thus covering and protecting the important agricultural civilization of central New York. Within these lines of defence (sic), between the Mississippi and the Atlantic, was embraced a region in which traces of a truly vast agricultural civilization are found, and which must have reckoned its inhabitants by millions. The defense system could not be maintained. Using Iroquois traditions, he specula-

tes about what happened in the northeastern area, the region to which the statue of Tammuz was brought:

It would appear from tradition that the mound-builders of the northeast, after remaining long enough to impress their civilization upon a confederacy, becoming outnumbered and reduced in power, withdrew toward the Mississippi. Afterward a branch of them called by the Iroquois "stone giants," having become "cannibals," returned, harassed and subdued the confederacy for a time, but in a great battle at Onondaga, being nearly exterminated, were finally expelled from the territory and driven north. The mound-builders of the lower Mississippi practices the Moloch form of sun worship and human sacrifices, at their golden city opposite St. Louis. This worship among their kindred in Mexico included the eating of flesh of captives, as a religious rite. From this centre, probably having adopted the inhuman worship of their relatives, the stone giants returned to harass and devour their old allies.

From here on the narrative becomes repetitive. Again and again, McWhorter affirms the statue's validity by linking it to Near Eastern traditions. Finally, seemingly assured that the point is driven home, he summarizes the demise of the Mound Builders in an American Gotterdammerung:

The increasing pressure of the nomads of the north, and probably internal dissensions, caused in the first and second centuries of the

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Christian era a series of movements toward the south along the whole line of the mound-building civilization, the first effect of which appears to have been to carry the Moluch cultus into Mexico, and to produce changes in the populations of Central America and along the Cordilleras of the Andes to the headwaters of the Amazon as far as the southern line of Peru. About the time of the descent of the barbarians of the north upon Rome, the parallel mound-building civilization in America was broken through and trampled down by Tartar nomads of the northwest. They appear to have followed in successive waves beating against the fortified line of the Ohio, which they finally forced through and fought their battle of Chalons on the dark and bloody ground of Kentucky. There these Huns of the northwest rolled the mound-building civilization southward and into the sea ...

Whether this final battle at Onondaga, which determined the fate of the northeastern mound-builders, occurred before or after this event, we cannot tell. We only know that at some distant period the great statue brought in a ship of Tarsish across the Sea of Atl, lying in its resting-place, was lightly covered with twigs and flowers and then with gravel. The tree under whose shadow it has reposed was caused to fall with branches extending over and protecting the slightly raised mound. Here it was probably left for its winter burial, looking toward a ressurec-

tion in the spring ...

When examined in historical perspective, there can be little doubt that the "colossal monolith" - a representation of the "Phoenician deity, Tammuz" - was actually the famed Cardiff Giant. This American hoax, rivalling in notoriety its twentieth century counterpart - the Piltdown Man - quickly became a public sensation. The fervor did not endure. In a few years the stone giant was discredited and discounted (see White 1902; Kimball 1940:453).

To the modern reader, nonetheless, it is especially interesting to note the ease with which this "discovery" was integrated into the Mound Builder thesis. McWhorter obviously viewed it as additional evidence corroborating the existence of a master race of builders and then linked their -origins - based on his translation of an apocryphal "inscription" - to the Phoenicians. Even more persuasive is the article's acceptance and appearance in a relatively prominent publication. Mott, in his study of American magazines, notes that the **Galaxy** achieved a circulation of 23,000 in 1871 and "...touched popular life at more points and more directly than most other important magazines have (Mott 1938:374, 378).

The impression gained from the article's theme and publication is how something as unusual as the stone monument was so readily assimilated into the usual - the belief in the existence of a "vanished race" unrelated, antecedent, and superior to the Native Americans. In other words, it assumes that the Mound Builder thesis was not only common knowledge in

nineteenth century America but also an integral component of the national world view.

The basis for this belief must be sought in a correlative nineteenth century belief, the presumed inferiority of the Native Americans. To a large degree, the theme of the "savage," a being incapable of adapting to civilization or producing monumental works, recurred consistently in both literature and history (see Pearce 1967; Larson 1978). This presupposition also constituted a significant aspect of the American world view. Together, these beliefs mutually complemented and reinforced each other. In fact, it would not be an exaggeration to state that one could not exist without the other. Belief in the Mound Builder myth coupled with denigrating assumptions about America's indigent people conspired to distort interpretations about other antiquities and native inhabitants.

The impact of these dual beliefs upon American social behavior and institutions remains unexamined and unassessed. It has been suggested that they were instrumental in structuring certain American bereavement patterns, principally the interring of some Euroamericans in Native American mounds (Mallam and Hovde 1976). No doubt many similar examples exist. The cataloging or listing of these behaviors, though, is not the point. What needs to be undertaken is a comprehensive socio-historical analysis of the myth. That process might define its role in nineteenth century society and help explain its persistence today, not only in popular literature but also

public school materials. Such a study would probably reveal that the myth's function is deeply rooted in the history of Native American - Euro-american relationships, the process by which one society simultaneously displaced and derogated another. If so, the Mound Builder myth could be classified under the rubric of nation justificatory literature.

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## Book Review

*Indians and Archaeology of Missouri*, revised edition, by Carl H. Chapman and Eleanor F. Chapman, 1984, 168 pp., ill., \$9.95. Available from: University of Missouri Press, P.O. Box 7088, Columbia, Missouri 65205-7088.

Carl and Eleanor Chapman have revised and expanded their fine 1964 introduction to the prehistory and history of Native Americans in Missouri. The book should be of special interest to members of the Iowa Archaeology Society. It makes a good companion piece to Lynn Alex's **Exploring Iowa's Past**.

As usual, the Chapman's have produced a book that is written with a clean style, good organization, and fine illustrations. They present a picture of the Native American lifestyle for each period. The lay reader will understand the text and yet there is enough cultural material to satisfy the advanced student of archaeology.

**Indians and Archaeology of Missouri** presents a record of the earliest Americans through the various cultures that passed through Missouri in historical times. It also discusses the role of the archaeologist including lay people in the study of Missouri's past.

I recommend this book to school and public libraries, introductory courses in archaeology, anthropology, and Native American history, and the general public. It is especially interesting to the armchair archaeologist who enjoys learning about the past in a delightful and informative manner. Even if you own a copy of the earlier edition, you will want to obtain **Indians and Archaeology of Missouri**. The illustrations alone are worth the price.

# The Pikes Peak State Park Project: Mounds And "Sacred Space"

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R. Clark Mallam

Since spring, 1971, members of the Luther College Archaeological Research Center have been engaged in an ongoing study project of prehistoric earthen mounds in northeastern Iowa. One aspect of this research focuses on the Effigy Mound culture. In particular, a major effort has been made to record the remaining mound groups of this culture through aerial photographs (see Mallam 1980).

Beginning with the Capoli Bluff Mound Group, the project has moved steadily from the largest groupings to the smallest. The most intensive effort occurred in April, 1981, when 28 volunteers participated in liming the 95 mounds within the Sny Magill group. Currently, following twelve years of fieldwork, only eight effigy mound groups remain unphotographed. Of these, the most complex is the extensive grouping falling within the main boundaries of Pikes Peak State park, adjacent to McGregor, Iowa. Comprised of 11 distinct mound groups totalling 41 conical, 9 linear, and 4 effigy mounds, their broad distribution along interior ridge crests and Mississippi River bluffline present a formidable logistical challenge. In the first place, access can be achieved only through a circuitous system of trails and maintenance roads. Second, more than half of the earthen features are covered with dense stands of brush.

Despite these difficulties, we began discussing a possible liming-photography project for the park scheduled in the fall of 1983. Initially, we planned to divide the park into three units on a north/south axis and concentrate on each of

them over the next several years. This seemed extremely cumbersome. After ensuing discussions, we concluded that it would be easier to organize and carry out a single large-scale project. Moreover, we elected to include several mound groups outside the park boundaries, those occurring between McGregor and a portion of Effigy Mounds National Monument.

Due to the project's scope and cost, far exceeding our capabilities, we submitted a proposal for funding to the Iowa Conservation Commission. They generously granted approval in August, 1983. Shortly thereafter, final planning began. James Farnsworth, Pikes Peak Park Ranger, and the Assistant Ranger, Roger Thompson, lent invaluable cooperation and aid. They offered to supply us with the much needed ground support. For a period of two weeks in late October they provided either a tractor and trailer or a truck to facilitate transportation of personnel and equipment to the mounds. Then, following brushclearing, they obtained use of a work crew from the Luster Heights Facility. Under the supervision of Larry Anderson, Forestry Leader, these men were responsible for raking leaves and distributing lime sacks, perhaps the most onerous chores of the entire project. In the meantime, Robert Petersen, a seasonal Park Ranger at Effigy Mounds National Monument, organized a separate liming work force to prepare those mound groups that were located beyond the park boundaries.

Finally, after several weeks of labor, the liming began on

Nov. 5th at 8:00 AM. A 41 member volunteer crew, comprised of people from the Garnavillo Historical Society, Garnavillo Explorer Troop, Highland Cultural Research Center, Committee to Save Bloody Run, Clayton County Conservation Commission, and Luther College faculty and students, spent over four hours liming the mounds. Divided into three groups, each supported by trucks for rapid deployment, the crews defined each of the 54 mounds within the park and those 6 outside with 30 inch bands of biodegradable lime. By 1:00 PM nearly 3000 pounds of lime had been distributed.

At that point, two single engine planes arrived from Decorah. Carrying Harland Sanderson, Director of the Luther College Audio-Visual Center, and Marilyn Bridges, a free-lance photographer from New York, they began circling the bluffline and ridges. For three hours these two specialists photographed the mounds. By 4:30 PM they had taken nearly 500 photographs. The project was completed.

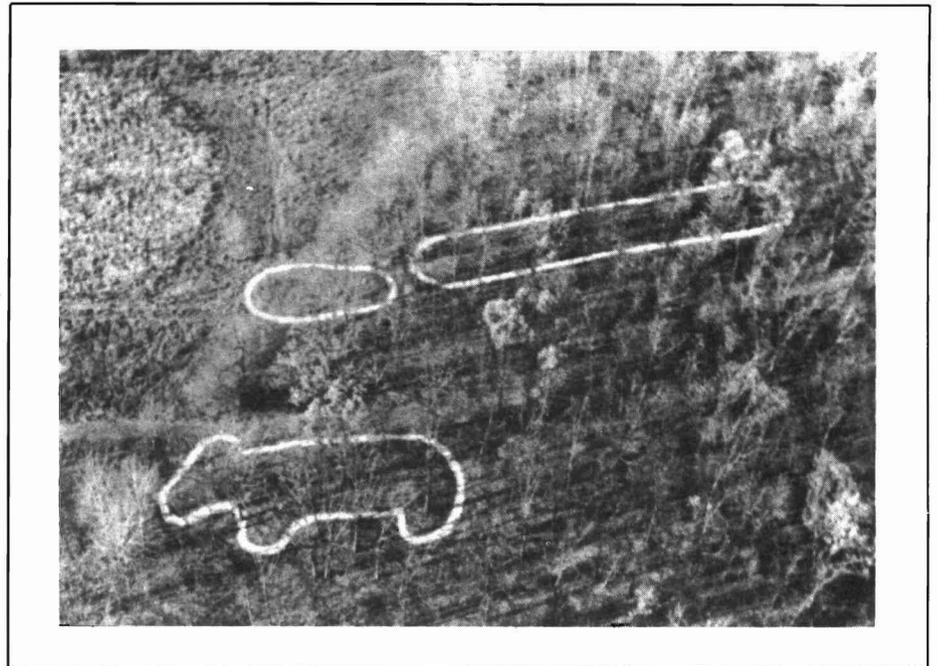
The photographs are still being studied. However, even at this point they suggest some interesting possibilities for interpretation, particularly when viewed from the historical and religious perspective. Previously, I have suggested that we need to view the effigy and associated mounds as more than interment features (Mallam 1982, 1983). It is possible, I think, to consider them as metaphorical expressions - symbolic statements about human/environmental relationships. This "conception" is almost inescapable, especially when one flies over the

bluffs and ridges. Virtually every prominent crest and point contains a mound grouping. In this particular case, the environment, replete with earthen symbols, extending along a seven mile segment of the Mississippi, appears to be "invested" with cosmic significance.

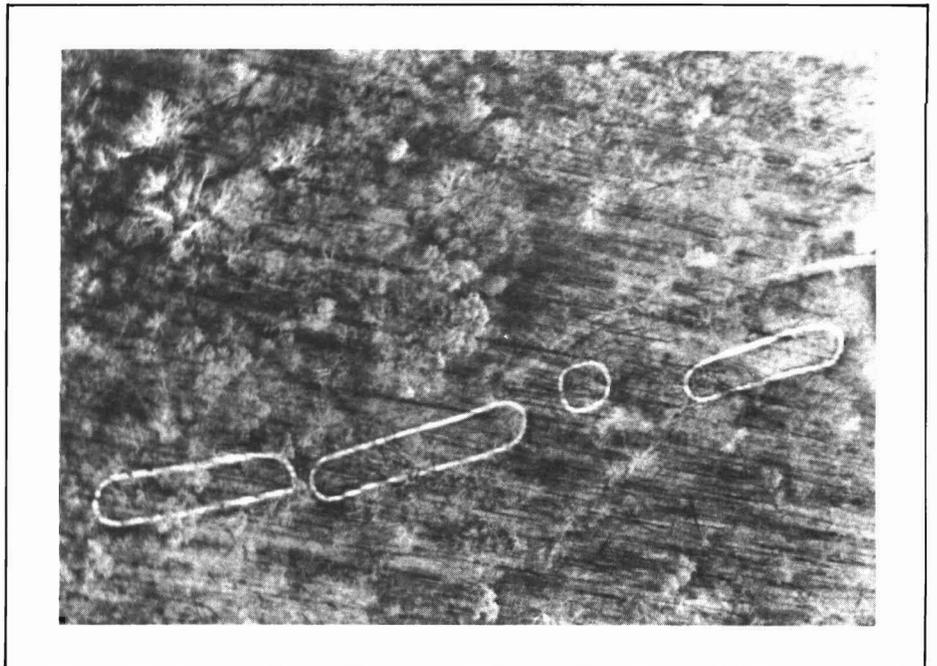
This investment possibly pertains to a prehistoric cosmological conviction, a belief that the sacred had manifested itself in this region, a landscape "... gashed and furrowed in every direction by an intricate system of ramifying channels" (Calvin 1895:42). It is as if heaven, earth, and the underworld met and coalesced to create and to manifest a special kind of order. Perhaps the function of mound building within this hierophanous landscape (see Eliade 1961:11) was to bring the human community into association and integration with the sacred order. We might even say, then, that mound building was a ritual act of world renewal and regeneration. As Eliade notes (1961:12):

The man of the archaic societies tends to live as much as possible in the sacred or in close proximity to consecrated objects. The tendency is perfectly understandable, because ... for the man of all pre-modern societies, the sacred is equivalent to a power, and, in the last analysis, to reality. The sacred is saturated with being.

When the distribution of former mound groups is examined in conjunction with those presently existing, the entire bluff area along the Mississippi in northeastern Iowa appears to be "saturated with being." This legacy for



Mound Group #4: Pikes Peak State Park. Photo by Harlan Sanderson.



Mound Group #4: Pikes Peak State Park. Photo by Harlan Sanderson.

northeastern Iowa and, perhaps, the entire Driftless Area as well, may constitute a prehistoric definition of sacred space and a world center - a place where the Native Americans believed structure and

consistency prevailed.

The aerial perspective provides us with a provocative focus of the mounds within this environment, perhaps one as compelling as the vision which urged their location in

space through time. It encourages us to perceive ... "An architectural order ... the disciplined relationship of elements in a composition" (Morgan 1980:xxi); that provocative recognition wherein the natural and cultural environments were so carefully balanced and integrated as the mounds which so persuasively harmonize with their bluff locations.

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Subscriptions to the **Newsletter** may be obtained by joining the society. Memberships are available from Ruth Thornton, 326 Otsego Street, Storm Lake, IA 50588. (\$10.00 active, \$17.00 household, \$7.00 student, \$10.00 institution).

Questions about the distribution of the **Newsletter** including a change of address should be sent to the Office of State Archaeologist, Eastlawn, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242.

by Jody Meyer

The ten sites covered in this essay are all from Keokuk County in southeast Iowa. United State Geological Survey topographic maps were used to record the site locations. For my personal files, I used Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service county maps obtained in Sigourney, Iowa.

All the sites are on upland terraces or ridge tops with the exception of 13KK271 which is on a lowland terrace. The nine upland sites probably had multiple use through time. The lowland terrace site, 13KK271, may have been a seasonal habitation site used as a base for tool making, plant gathering and possibly hunting and fishing. The nine upland sites lie above the North Skunk River and were probably used year around. These interpretations are based on surficial chipping debris, artifacts recovered, and elevation of the sites in question being 710 to 770. The Skunk River is elevation 660.

It is difficult to count or gather all the flakes, chips, cores, hammerstones, and nodules and other artifacts encountered on these sites, especially 13KK263 -13KK269 and 13KK272. Site 13KK272, for example has yielded ¾ grooved axes, projectile points, scrapers, nodules, cores, flakes, and hammerstones. Based on this debris there apparently was extensive tool manufacturing at this site. Some of the artifacts from the sites in the study show wear while others do not. This indicates that the people were living on these sites year around, manufacturing and discarding tools, hunting and gathering in the area, and raising and harvesting crops.

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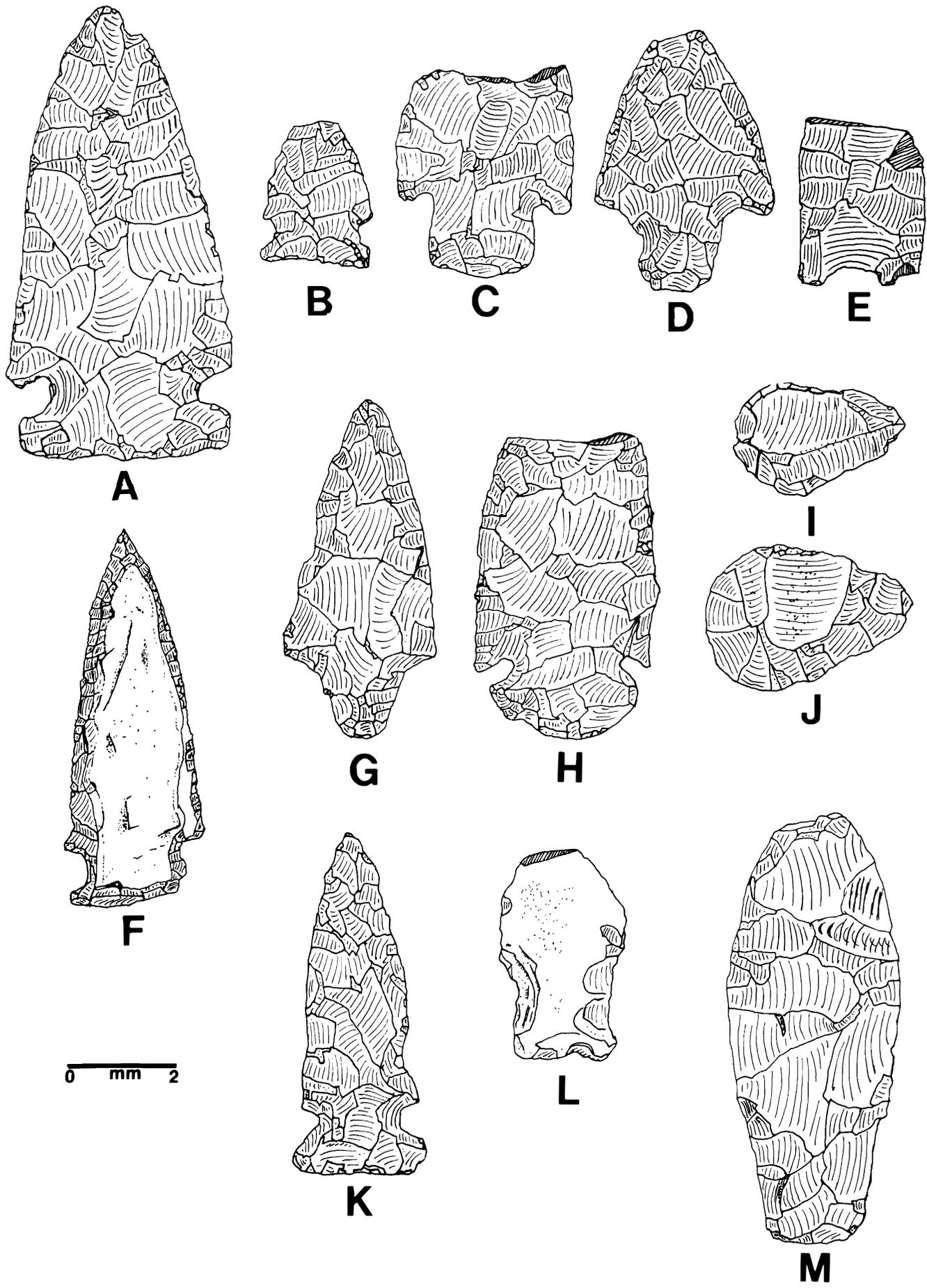


Figure 1. Keokuk County artifacts. A-B, 13KK264, C, 13KK266; D-F, 13KK267; G-H, 13KK268; I, 13KK271; J-M, 13KK273

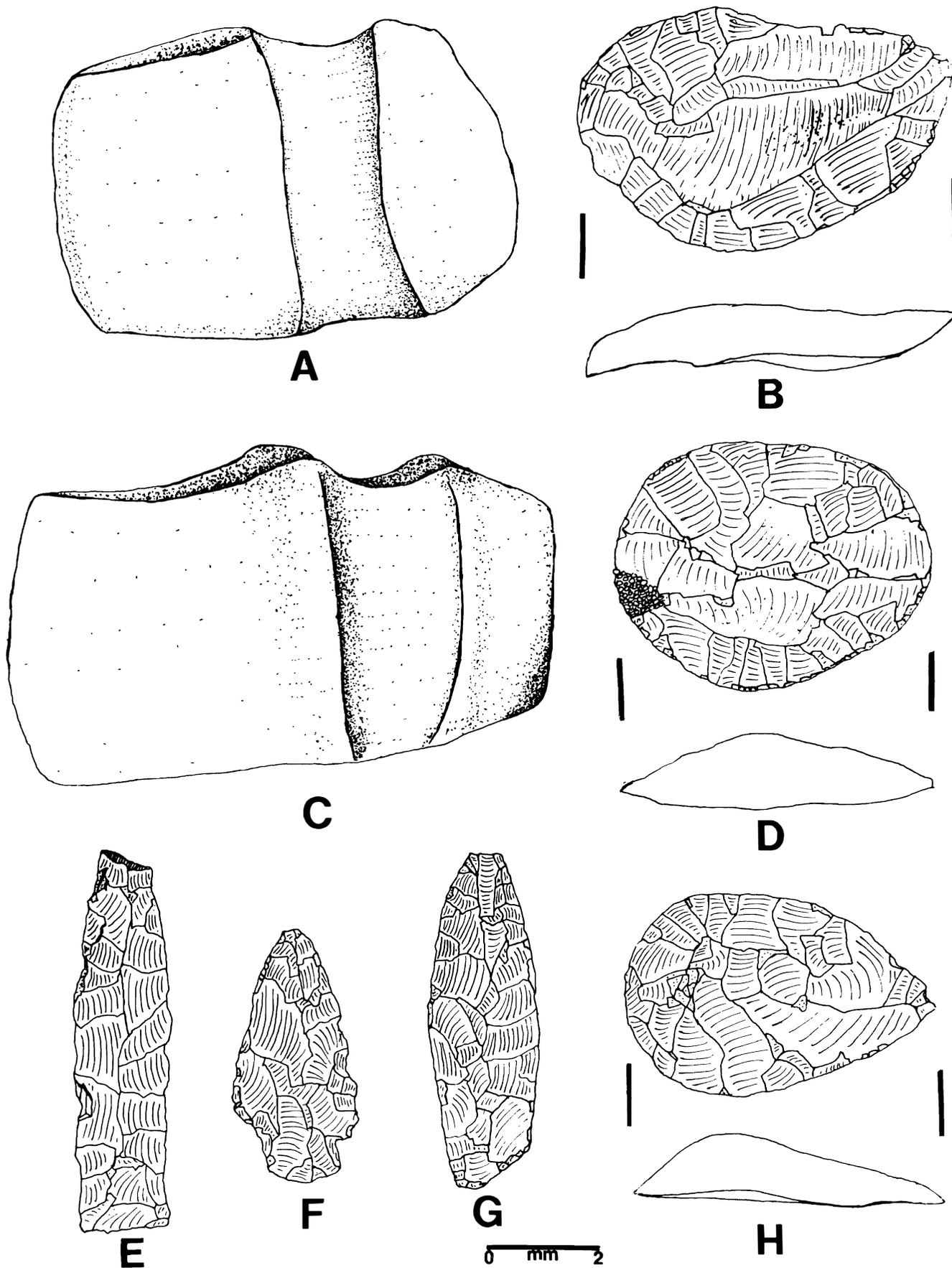


Figure 2. Artifacts from 13KK272. A,C, Axes; B, D, H, Scrapers; E-G, Projectile Points.

# ANNUAL SPRING MEETING — APRIL 28 & 29, — OTTUMWA

Con't. From Page 9

The ten sites range in age from late Archaic to Early and maybe Middle Woodland. This is based on the projectile points and  $\frac{3}{4}$  grooved axes found on the sites, along with a partial hoe, potsherds, and mica found on nearby sites. A flake of Knife River chalcodony found on still another site and the mica just mentioned indicates that prehistoric peoples utilizing these sites were involved in a trading system with other groups. Some of this trade material may have come from the infamous "donut" mounds reported from this area. The donut mounds are conical mounds that have been potted. The result is a circular mound with a hole in the middle.

The majority of the chert used in the manufacture of stone tools from the ten study sites was derived from the Skunk Valley in the form of nodules. These nodules, along with some tabular chert also found on the sites, may originate from the till locally, but the sources have yet to be identified.

## CHAPTER NEWS

The Southeastern Chapter held an all day workshop-meeting Sunday, April 8th at the INDIAN HILLS COMMUNITY COLLEGE in Ottumwa. A good turnout shows that this type of meeting is of great interest by our general membership - despite stormy weather. Future meets will be held periodically. All I A S members and friends are welcome to attend these sessions. If you wish to learn of future meetings please send your name to: E.J. FABYAN, DEPT. OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, I H C College, Ottumwa, IA 52501.

## New Members

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Des Moines  
Dennis Kellogg  
Des Moines  
Clayton County Conservation Board  
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Mt. Ayr  
Mike Hunter  
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