

TOOLESBORO: A FINAL LINK TO PREHISTORY

by Matt Gallo

When Ron Cross was a schoolboy, he and his fellow students were taught that the only good Indian was a dead Indian.

Like many school children sixty years ago, he assumed that Indians were ruthless savages in dire need of European style "civilization."

Time and his interest in archaeology have proved the fallacy of that notion.

Far from being savage, the Indians who inhabited southeast Iowa and western Illinois maintained an advanced, civilized culture thousands of years before the French explorers Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet first canoed into the upper Mississippi River valley in 1673.

Most of what constituted the early Indians' culture disappeared long ago, but a few historical remnants can still be found, primarily in the Indian burial mounds that dot the Mississippi valley, often perched on bluffs overlooking the river. Through the years, most mounds have been plowed under by farmers. A few mounds remain, protected by state and federal laws in an effort to preserve pre-European history in Iowa.

As a member of the board of directors of the Iowa Archeological Society, Cross, now 70, has maintained an interest in Louisa County's past by learning about the tribes known as Woodland Indians.



Photo by Tony Miller

Ron Cross of Wapello points toward the Toolesboro Indian Mounds along Iowa 99 in Louisa County.

It was the Woodland Indians who built Louisa County's biggest tourist attraction, the Hopewell burial mounds at Toolesboro, a few miles east of Wapello on Iowa 99. The mounds, which could easily be mistaken for rolling Iowa hills, were constructed between 1,500 and 3,000 years ago as burial sites for honored citizens.

Through the centuries, early Indians and their modern descendants have considered the burial grounds as a religious place. "There are many parallels between the mounds and our cemeteries," Cross said. "But there was more to it than just a burial place."

A more correct parallel could be drawn between the Hopewell mounds of eastern Iowa and the Egyptian pyramids which were built as shrines to fallen leaders, resting places where valuables were placed alongside the body so that the dead could enjoy them in their afterlife.

If the remaining Indian mounds could be excavated today, one might find evidence of multiple burials, many with stone slabs covering the bodies and others entombed in crypts. But digging into burial mounds is illegal, carrying a penalty of a \$1,000 fine and up to 30 days in jail.

According to an educational

pamphlet issued by the Office of the State Archaeologist, "elaborate artifacts which frequently incorporated exotic raw materials" from throughout the continent could be found in the mounds. Those items which have been recovered from earlier digs suggest that various early American Indian tribes possessed a sophisticated trading network which stretched over a large part of the North American continent.

Among the artifacts which can be expected to have been buried beneath the Hopewell mounds are pottery, human and animal figurines, finely carved stone pipes, axes, and finely honed arrow heads and spear points.

Early archaeologists thought nothing of excavating the mounds, extracting as many artifacts as they could. That practice has been stopped. Today, visitors are asked to not walk on the mounds in honor of those who still hold the mounds sacred.

The Woodland Indians who built the mounds, far from being savages, were "without question our intellectual equals, despite what many of us were taught," Cross said. "They sought, like us, that which is good, that which is true and that which is beautiful."

Characterized by their use of pottery, burial mounds and cultivated plants, the Woodland Indians were among the first to stay for extended periods in one place. Prior to the rise of Woodland culture, Indians were nomadic hunters and gatherers, always moving to their next meal.

According to Cross, Iowa represented a sort of meeting ground. It was the westernmost range of the Woodland Indians, who tended to stay in one place and lived primarily in the eastern half of the continent. This same area was where the

Woodland and the nomadic western Plains Indians met.

The Toolesboro mounds are significant because they are believed to have been constructed by an Indian group, now called Hopewell, which was more common to the east. It is believed that only two identified Hopewell mound sites remain west of the Mississippi, at Toolesboro and at Davenport.

The Hopewell culture, named after an Ohio farmer who owned the land where the first such mounds were excavated, were traders and probably had an intricate network which connected different villages.

The mounds, archaeologists surmise, were probably among the first indications of territorial declaration, although Indians rejected the European philosophy that people could own land.

The mounds were the sacred ground of the Indians who lived nearby. Most often they were built on bluffs overlooking rivers, which served Indians as

highways for trade and travel and provided them with an abundance of wildlife that provided food and clothing.

"Wherever you find a higher elevation around here, you're going to find rock chips which indicate Indian habitation," Cross said.

A closer inspection of those areas will often turn up Indian artifacts such as axes, hammers, deer antlers, and rocks which were chipped to provide weapons that were used in hunting and to make other tools. "Any time you see a rock that is oddly formed, chances are good it was the hand of man that shaped it," Cross said.

Wherever there were early Indians, there were Indian mounds. They can be found "up and down all of Iowa's rivers," Cross said. "There were mounds pretty much continuous along the Mississippi but most of them have been defaced."

On a tour of the Lake Odessa region near Wapello, Cross pointed to the remains of several In-



Photo by Tony Miller

Cross displays an axe head, arrow and spear points, and a yellow pottery fragment.

dian mounds, most of which had recently yielded another season's corn crop. The average citizen would have no idea that at one time those hills were important to a culture which inhabited the region long before Columbus voyaged to the New World.

Other mounds which have been preserved include the Malchow Mounds. They are located atop the bluff just west of present-day Iowa 99 near Kingston. Those mounds are more recent, are smaller, and "lack most of the exotic trade items found in the Hopewellian mounds," the State Archaeologist writes.

Cross, who says he is not an expert on the mounds, is fascinated by them and the Indian cultures which they memorialize. "I don't get too involved in the terminology," he said. "I just want to find out more about myself through the past."

The editors would like to thank the Burlington Hawk Eye for permission to reprint the above feature which first appeared in the Sunday, November 24, 1985 edition of the Hawk Eye. We are grateful to Matt Gallo, author of the story, and Tony Miller, photographer, for their cooperation and assistance.

SPRING MEETING TO BE HELD IN IOWA CITY

The Annual Meeting will be held at the Iowa Memorial Union on April 12-13, 1986. Every effort has been made to avoid conflicts with other organizations. Please mark your calendar. If you have any suggestions for the program, please send them care of the *Newsletter* editors.

Northwest Chapter Investigates Archaic Site

Members of the Northwest Chapter tested a newly discovered Archaic site (13OB27) at their July, 1985, meeting, and got some exciting results. Chapter President Mike Hosbein and his coworkers, Linda Burkhart and Chris Courtright, were not coming up with much in their unit, so they joined Paul and Donny Williams and immediately Paul found a point. Terry Walker, Sanford Museum, and Dawn Jaminet came over to take a look and Dawn found another point. Terry then reached for a specimen bag and found a third point--all within one minute's time! Later in the day Chris found yet another point--his first. All are comparable with "Little Sioux Points" found on Horizon II at the Cherokee Sewer site dating ca. 5,000 B.C.

News note from Northwest Chapter Newsletter, August, 1985.

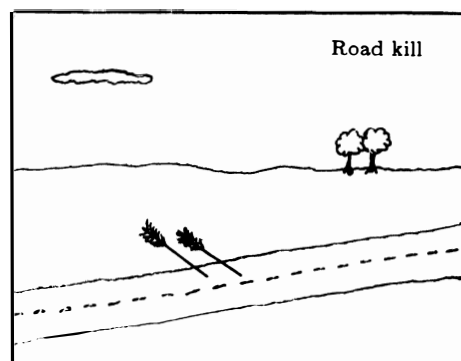
NEW MEMBERS

Ben Colby, Jr., Rock Rapids
James Elliott, Cedar Falls
Rick Janssen, Madison, South Dakota
Mississippi State University,
Mississippi State, Mississippi
Thomas Murphy, Albia
Richard Rasmussen, Green Mountain
Samuel Streyffeler, Des Moines
Ginalie Swaim, Iowa City
Simon Taylor, Bettendorf
United Community Schools,
Boone
University of Kentucky,
Lexington, Kentucky
Judith Ann Whetstine, Iowa City
Woodward Public Library

Plains Conference Held in Iowa City

The 43rd Plains Conference was held in Iowa City, October 23-25, 1985. Over 300 individuals were registered for the event which was sponsored by thirteen organizations including the Iowa Archeological Society. Symposia were held on the following topics: Fort Riley (Kansas) excavations, Museums on the Plains, Bison Studies, Oneota, St. Helena, Lower Loup/Sand Hills, and Geoarchaeology. Eight general sessions were also held featuring groups of papers on Plains archaeology, physical anthropology, historical archaeology, field reports, Southern plains, Northwestern plains, artifact technology, and Wyoming archaeology. Abstract booklets are still available for \$3.00 through Larry Tomsyck, Treasurer, Plains Anthropological Society, 410 Wedgewood Drive, Lincoln, Nebraska 68510. The highlight of the conference was a banquet address by Dr. John C. Ewers of the Smithsonian Institution, who spoke on "Rediscovering Plains Indian Sculpture." His book on the subject, the result of 23 years of research, is expected to be available in the spring of 1986. The Plains Conference doubled as the IAS Fall meeting, and a number of IAS members were present.

INCITES



MESQUAKIE CHIEF POWESHIEK'S FEATHERED CAPE

by Duane C. Anderson

INTRODUCTION

A unique feathered cape came to light recently while curating objects for an exhibit at The University of Iowa Museum of Natural History (Figure 1). According to the handwritten documentation with the specimen, the object was made for Mesquakie (Fox) Chief Poweshiek by his youngest daughter in the winter of 1839. It was subsequently given to Dr. Henry Murray of Iowa City by Poweshiek in payment for medical bills. The cape was later donated to the State Historical Society by Dr. Murray's granddaughter (Shambaugh 1934:374). The specimen was subsequently transferred to The University of Iowa Museum of Natural History where it is permanently reposed. The cape represents one of the few examples of featherwork for the period in the Midwest (Nancy Lurie, personal communication 1985) and is the only such specimen attributable to the Mesquakie. Little is recorded regarding the manufacture and use of capes among Great Lakes Indians during the early 1800s, although they appear to have been common items of apparel worn on special occasions (cf. Horan 1972:171, 187, 191). Most of the capes illustrated in the literature appear to have been made of animal skins, with an emphasis on dog or wolf.

HISTORY

Poweshiek was born on the Rock River in Illinois ca. 1790. He moved to an area south of Iowa City after the Treaty of 1836 and resided in what is now Pleasant Valley Township (John-

son County) until 1839 (History of Johnson County 1883:291-292). In the spring of 1839 Poweshiek moved to the Dupont Settlement in Monroe Township, and in the following year he relocated to an area 8 km east of the town of Marengo (History of Johnson County 1883:291). In 1842 the Sauk and Mesquakie chiefs signed a treaty in which they relinquished their land and

agreed to move to a reservation in Kansas (Kappler 1904). It is not known exactly when Poweshiek moved from the Marengo area, but he left under provisions of the treaty by 1843.

Dr. Henry Murray arrived in Iowa City, the capital of Iowa Territory, in August of 1838 (Aurner 1912:29). He was well liked by the Indians, who called him "Little Medicine" because of

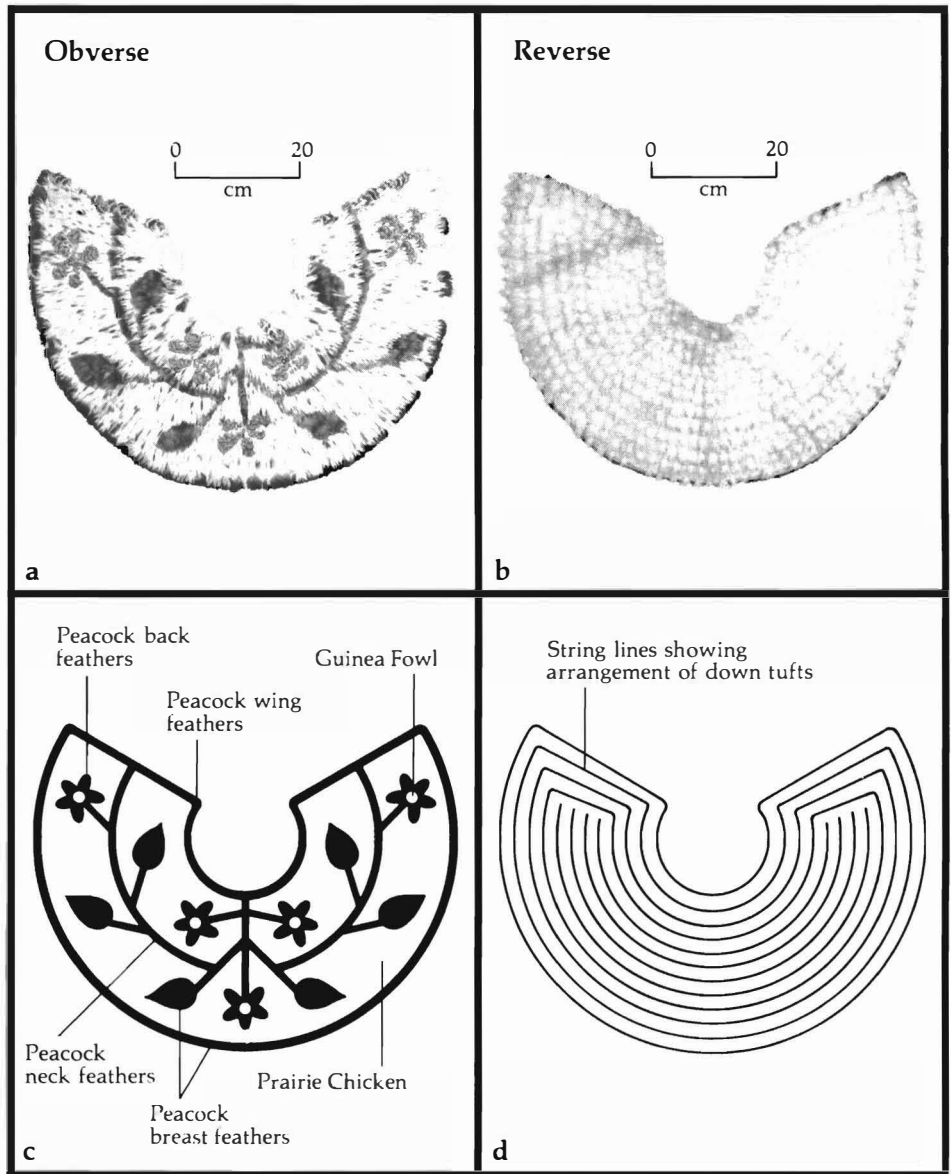


Fig. 1 Poweshiek's cape: (a) obverse, showing floral design; (b) reverse, showing rows of down feathers stitched to cotton lining; (c) obverse, showing feather identification; (d) reverse, showing pattern of down feather application.

his slight build. County records mention that he traveled up to 80 km to treat patients (Aurner 1912:30). It was apparently on one of these trips that Dr. Murray treated Poweshiek's family as "many of his people were sick that fall and winter [1839] with ague, and some died" (History of Johnson County 1883:291) [ague in this case appears to have been smallpox (Beach 1841)]. On the basis of the evidence at hand, Poweshiek probably gave the cape to Dr. Murray sometime between late 1839 and the time of Poweshiek's departure from the area by 1843.

DETAILS OF MANUFACTURE

The cape (specimen number 33984, University of Iowa Museum of Natural History) is constructed of two pieces of undyed cotton cloth made of single-ply Z-twist yarns believed to be homespun. The feathers are stitched with two loops of thread over the base of each vein, affixing them to the outer piece of cotton cloth (45 x 45 fibers per 25 mm²). The edges of the cloth are turned under and hand stitched to the backing. An estimated 1000 feathers are incorporated into the design on the obverse of the specimen (Fig.1). The background field is composed of the breast feathers of prairie chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido*), while the leaves, flowers, and stems in the floral design are made of breast, back, and neck feathers of a male peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*). The center of each flower contains spotted feathers, apparently from Guinea Fowl (*Numida meleagris*). The outside border is made up of a dark band of peacock breast feathers, while the portion worn nearest the neck, now badly deteriorated, and the squared

front piece are composed of male peafowl feathers from the anterior portion of the wing (Fig. 1c). Exotic feathers appear periodically on lists of trade goods supplied to the Sauk and Mesquakie in the 1830s (Royce Kurtz, personal communication 1984). "Cock feathers," for example, sold for approximately twenty-five cents each (Senate Documents 1832:49, 68).

The backing of the cape is made of coarser cotton cloth (25 x 25 fibers per 25 mm²) with the edges turned under and hand stitched with the stitches one-quarter inch apart. The inside of the cape is decorated with 599 tufts made of white duck or goose down feathers fastened approximately 20 mm apart and arranged in 13 rows paralleling the curvature of the piece (Fig. 1b, d). The outside three rows are continuous with the ends, connecting the inner and outer circumferences of the cape. Each of the down tufts is attached with three stitches along strands of four-ply Z-twist cotton yarns as shown in Figure 1d. Feather tufts in the neck area appear to be soiled as a result of the cape being worn. In this respect, it is noteworthy that there are no strings or other mechanisms present to facilitate fastening the cape to the body.

Dimensions of the specimen are as follows: outside circumference, 147 cm; inside (neck) circumference, 41 cm; square edge seam (where the two halves join), 25 cm. It seems likely that Poweshiek's daughter obtained the cotton cloth and exotic feathers for the cape from the trader at the Dupont Settlement where Poweshiek's group had resided since the spring of 1839. Such materials were probably available through the Gilbert and Chase trading houses near Poweshiek's former settlement

south of Iowa City as well. Homespun is one of 150 varieties of cloth available to the Indian trade early in the nineteenth century (Peak 1954).

GLIMPSES OF POWESHIEK

Poweshiek was an influential leader among the Mesquakie. He visited Washington, D.C., in 1837 along with Keokuk, Black Hawk, Wapello, and Appanoose (Johnson County History 1883:292). At that time George Cooke painted his portrait (see Horan 1972:181). Colonel T.L. McKinney, Superintendent of Indian Trade, Washington, D.C., called Poweshiek "a daring warrior ... [with] respectable standing in the council, as a man of prudence and capacity." Back in Iowa Territory, Colonel S. C. Trowbridge, (History of Johnson County 1833:292) a good friend of Poweshiek's, described him as "a large, fat, lazy man, weighing about 250 pounds, and fond of whiskey." He added that Poweshiek

had a strong sense of justice, and was brave, true to his word and faithful to a friend; his word was sacred; and any gift from a friend was kept with a sacred reverence bordering on superstition. He was rather slow to be aroused, but when fairly aroused to action, showed a great deal of energy and force of character, combined with a fair degree of executive talent and judicial faculty. His word was law in two villages [his village and that of his subordinate, Wapshashiek, 1832-1839] [History of Johnson County 1833:292].

Poweshiek's cape is on permanent exhibition in IOWA HALL at The University of Iowa Museum of Natural History, Iowa City.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks are extended to George D. Schrimper for assistance with feather identification, Nancy M. Osborn for comments on fabrics, Royce Kurtz for information on trading posts of the period, and Nancy Lurie for comments on the uniqueness of the specimen. Robert Burchfield provided editorial assistance.

REFERENCES CITED

Aurner, C. R.

1912 Leading Events in Johnson County Iowa History. Western Historical Press, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Beach, J.

1841 Letter dated April 29, 1841, in Letterbook. Undated ms. on file, Oklahoma State Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

History of Johnson County, Iowa

1883 History of Johnson County, Iowa. No publisher listed, Iowa City.

Horan, J. D.

1972 The McKenney-Hall Portrait Gallery of American

Indians. Crown Publishers.

Kappler, C. J.

1904 Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, vol. 2. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.

Peak, O.B.

1954 A History of the United States Indian Factory System 1795-1822. Sage Books, Denver.

Senate Documents

1832 Message on the Fur Trade and Trade to Mexico, Senate Document 90, 22nd Congress, 1st Session, Vol. 2. Washington, D.C.

Shambaugh, B. F. (editor)

1934 Historical Archives. Iowa Journal of History and Politics 32(4):374.

The editors would like to thank the Plains Anthropological Society for permission to reprint the article on Poweshiek from Plains Anthropologist 1985(30):161-164. Research on feathered capes is on-going on the part of the author and Nancy Lurie of the Milwaukee Public Museum. If readers know of similar specimens they are asked to contact the author c/o the IAS.

Annual membership dues are as follows:

VOTING	NON-VOTING
1. Active - \$10	1. Student (under 18) \$7
2. Household - \$17	2. Institution - \$10
3. Sustaining - \$25	
4. Benefactor - \$250 minimum	

Dues should be sent to:

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

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

At the 35th Annual Meeting held in Cherokee in April we discussed the importance of increasing our membership in order to continue to support our publications, field schools, and other society activities. Each of us is encouraged to recruit at least five new members during the coming year. Let Ruth Thornton know which newcomers you are responsible for, and the individual with the most recruits will be recognized at the Annual Meeting to be held in Iowa City next spring.

This issue of the Newsletter has been computer typeset by Laura Hudson.

IOWA ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
Eastlawn
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa 52242



Contents: Printed Material

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 303
Iowa City, Iowa

000005250 6291 85 A1
DR JOSEPH A TIFFANY
1606 MORNINGSIDE DR
IOWA CITY IA 52240