

The Coming of the White Man

Louis Joliet and Father Marquette were the first white men to reach the northeast Iowa region while exploring the Wisconsin and Mississippi rivers in 1673. Other Frenchmen followed over the Joliet-Marquette route — exploring, building forts, and developing Indian trade. William Delisle's map of 1718 shows the *Chemin des Voyageurs* or "Road of the Traders" crossing northern Iowa from the mouth of the Wisconsin River to the Big Sioux. Some of these traders and voyageurs may have camped and hunted in what is now Effigy Mounds National Monument, but there were no settlements, and the area is not mentioned in early literature. Pierre Paul Marin may have built a fort at the mouth of Sny-Magill Creek as early as 1738 near the site of the great Sny-Magill Mound Group but the exact location is a matter of doubt.

The main events of this period went on around Effigy Mounds National Monument, but not within it. Geography decreed that the area around the mouth of the Yellow River should play a minor role in early historic times. On the Iowa side of the Mississippi, the terrain is slashed by a series of steep-sided, narrow ravines, dropping

into the Mississippi River from the west. These have very small terraces at their mouths, and the land between them along the Mississippi River bank provides no better sites for settlement. On the other hand, the flat, open river terrace on the east bank of the river, extending north from the mouth of the Wisconsin River, was the obvious spot for a settlement. This terrace, called *Prairie du Chien* by the French, was occupied by prehistoric Indians at an early date. In historic times it became a rendezvous point for Indians and traders, and, as the permanent location of forts and trading posts, it was the focal point of historic events pertaining to a considerable territory on both sides of the river.

At this time, the land now included in the State of Iowa was exploited economically, but not inhabited permanently, by whites. Before extensive settlement, the territory changed hands many times, as European nations struggled to secure colonial advantage. Northeast Iowa was successively part of New France, New Spain, New France again, and finally, part of the infant United States of America as included in the Louisiana Purchase. The first permanent settler in the eastern part of Iowa was Julien Dubuque, a French Canadian who arrived in 1785 on the site of the city which bears his name, and who operated lead mines which he called "The Mines of Spain." Another early northeast Iowa settlement of this

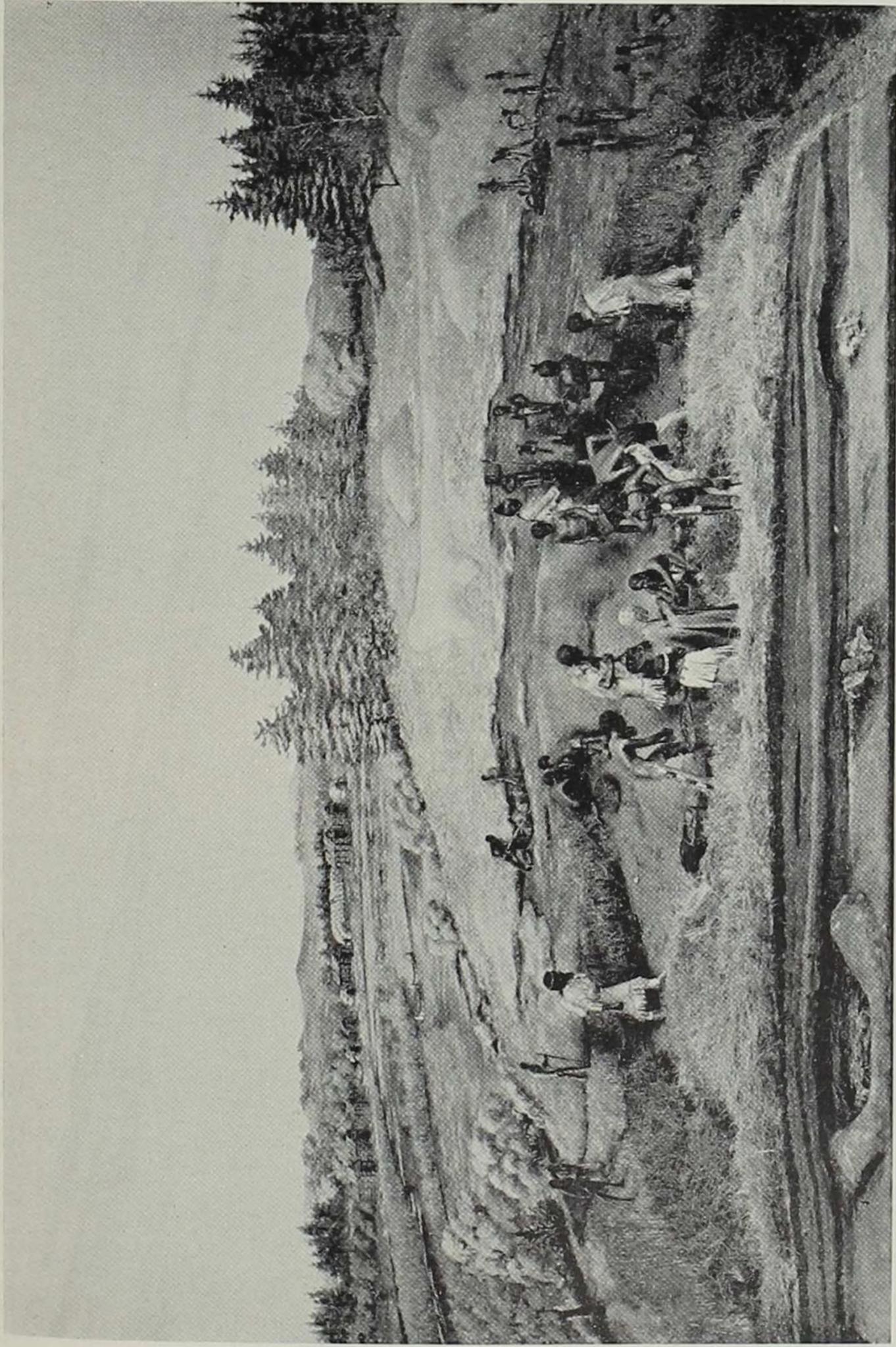


Photo Courtesy Milwaukee Public Museum

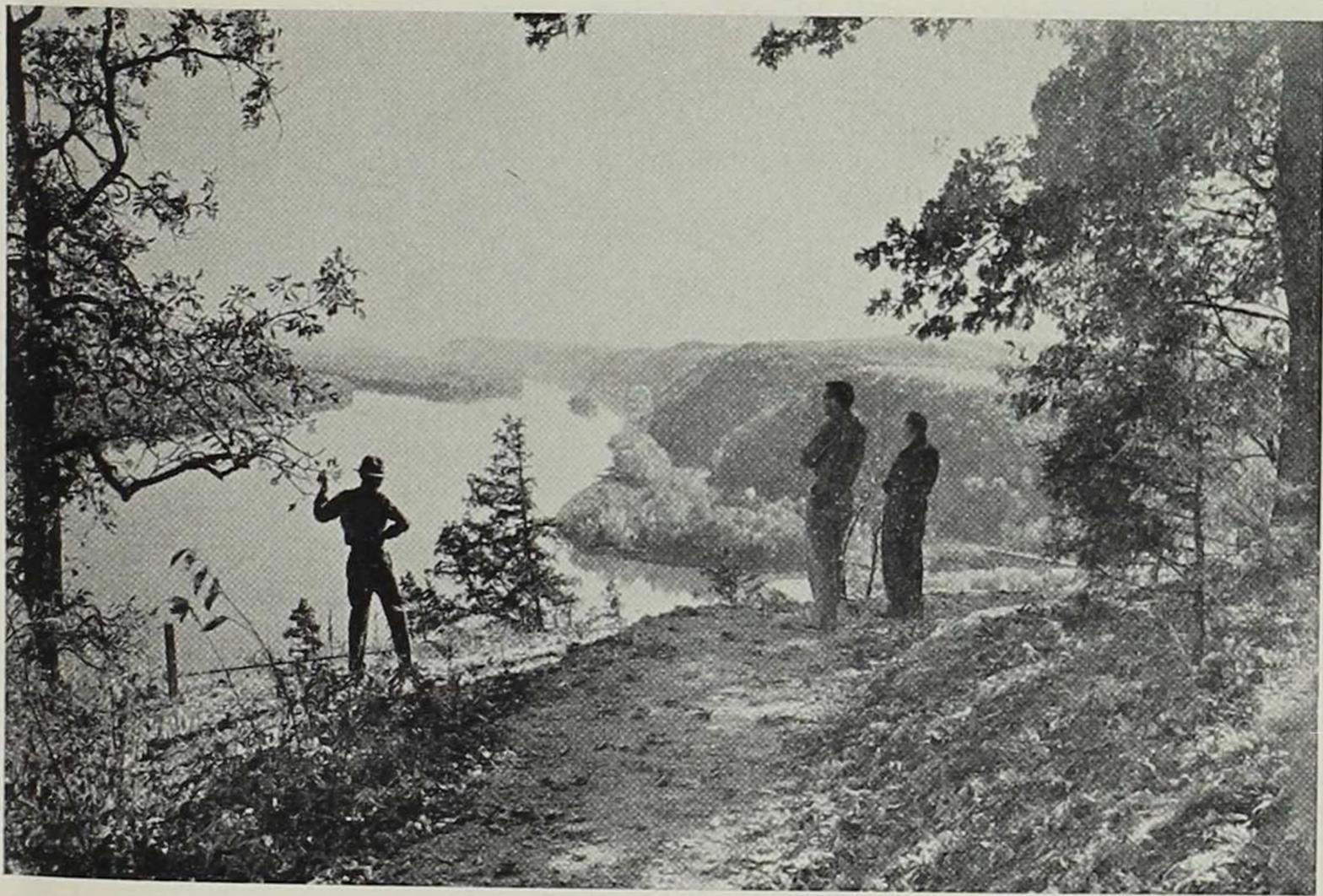
Diorama Showing Indians Constructing Effigy Mound



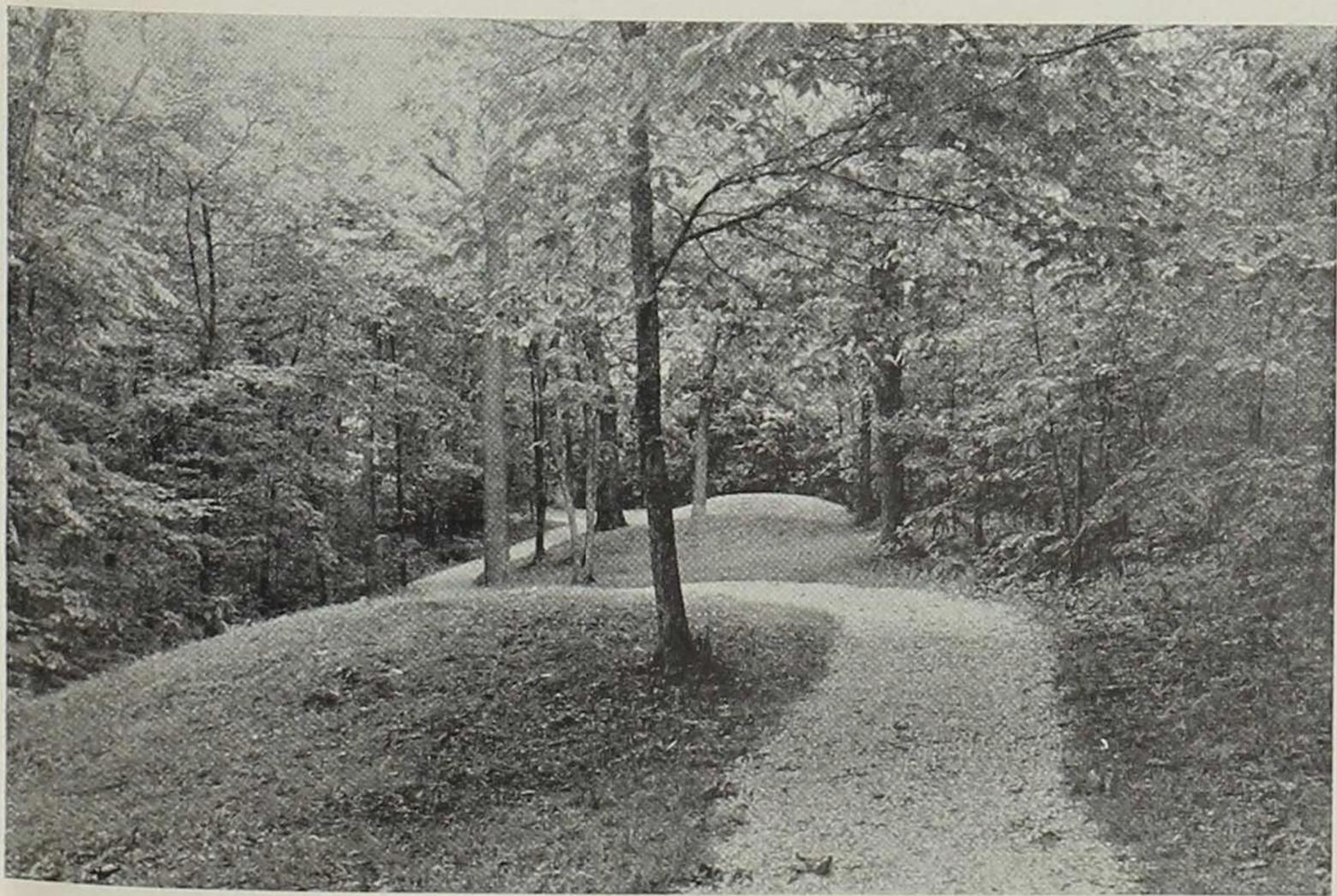
Buildings on Site of Effigy Mounds National Monument — Spring, 1950



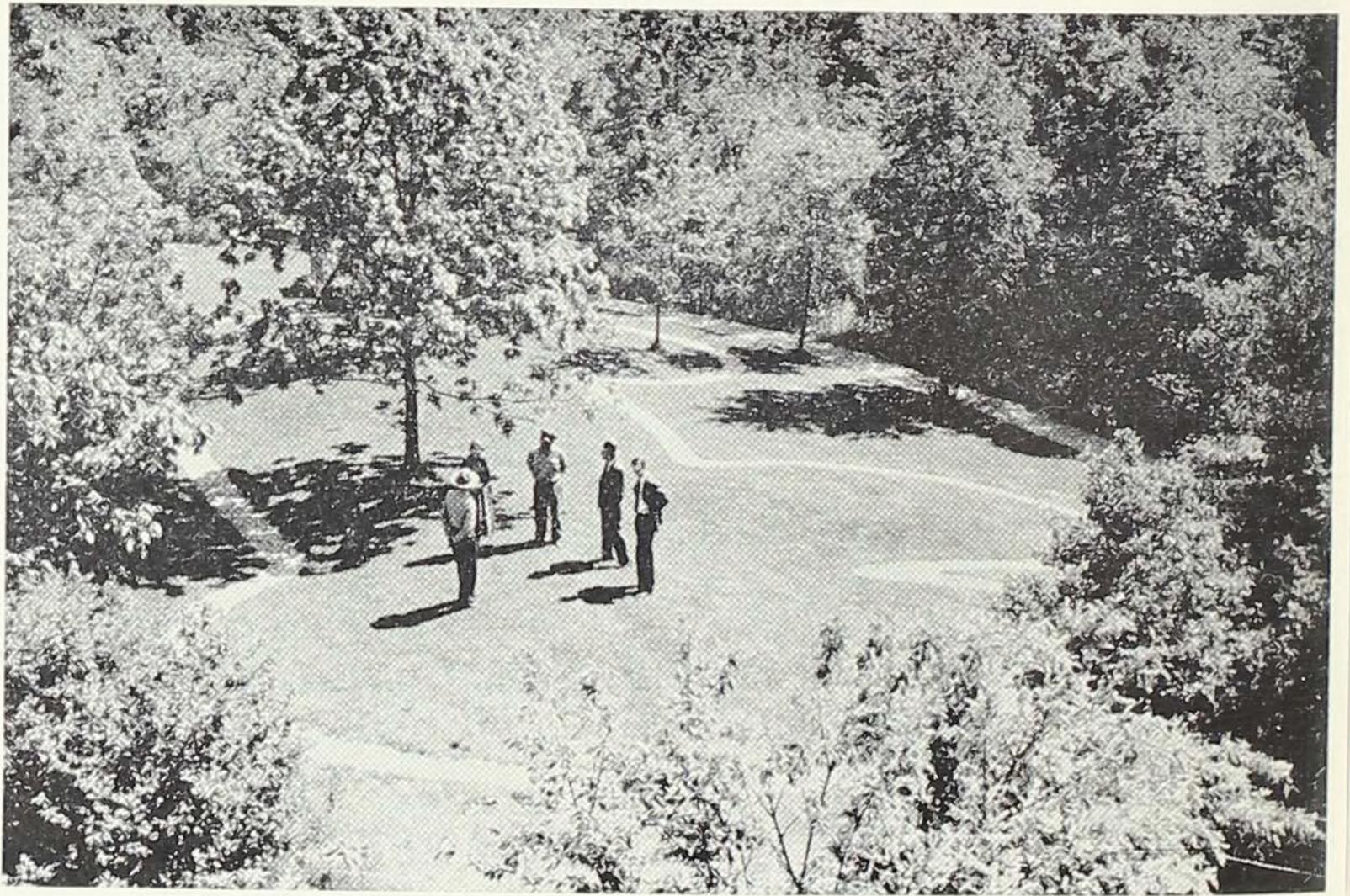
Same Site with Buildings Remodeled for Park Service



Overlooking the Mississippi River from Fire Point



Picturesque Path Along Trail to Fire Point



Visitors Receiving Information from Ranger at Little Bear Mound



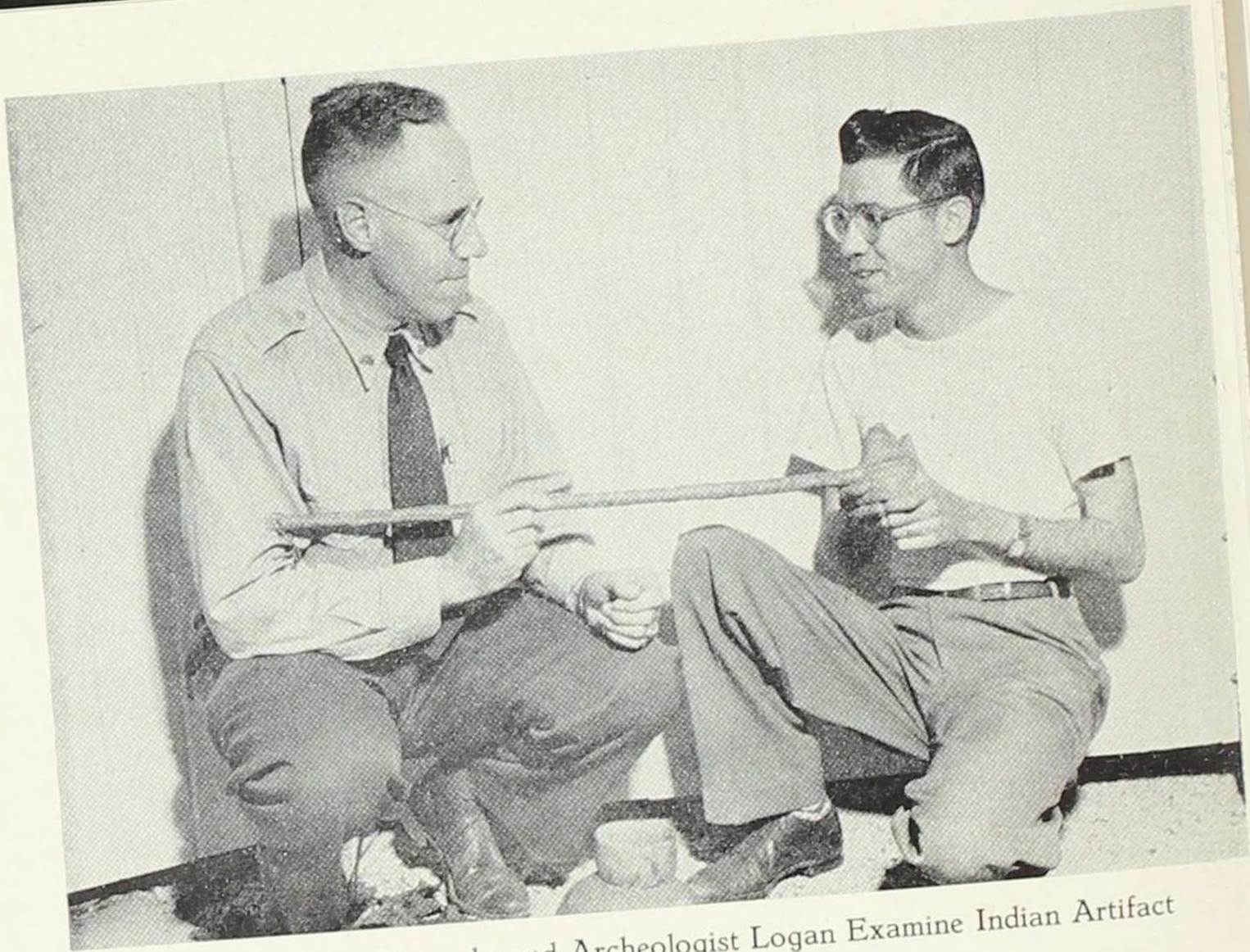
Conical Mounds in North Area



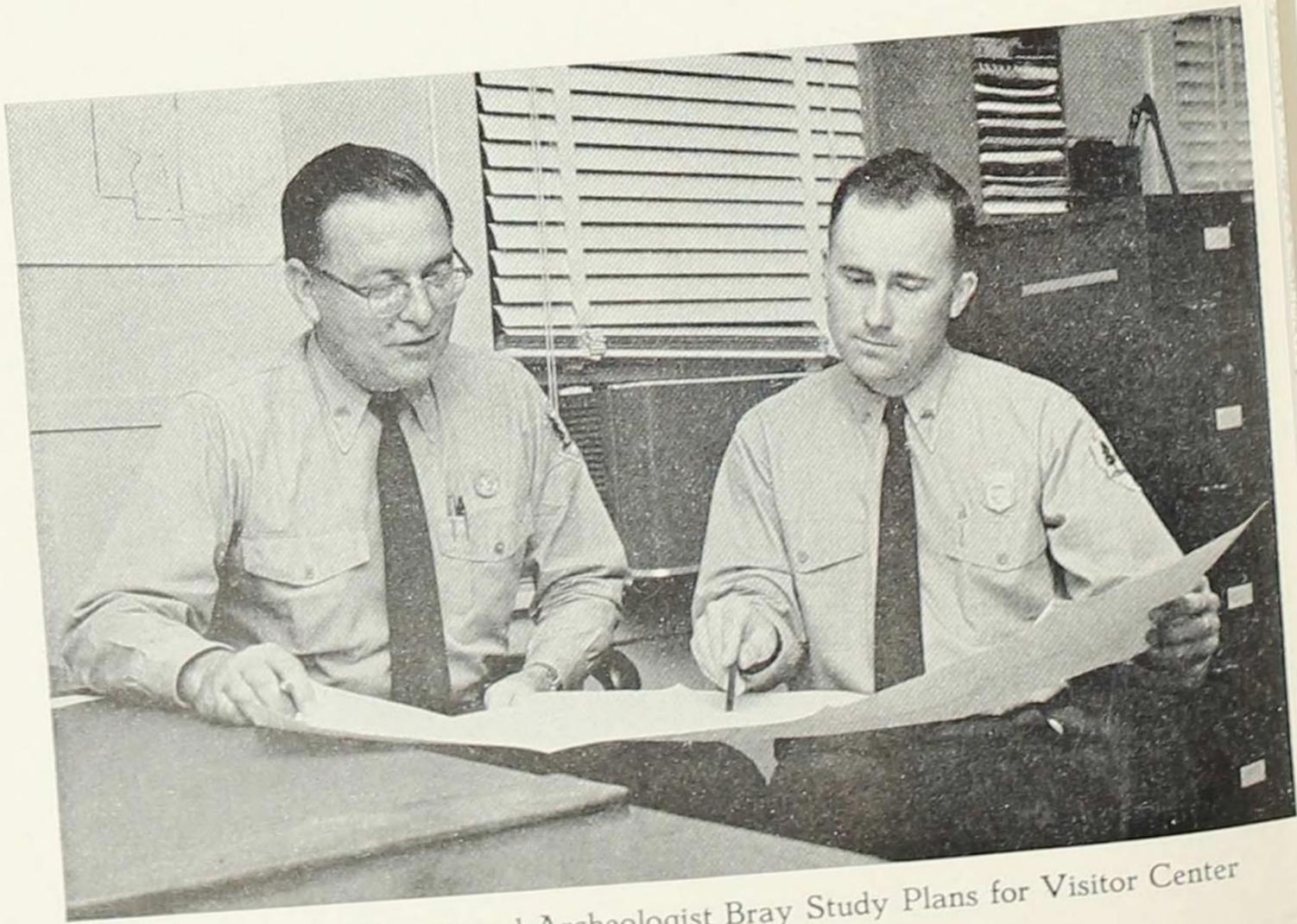
Bird Mound in South Area Outlined After a Light Snow



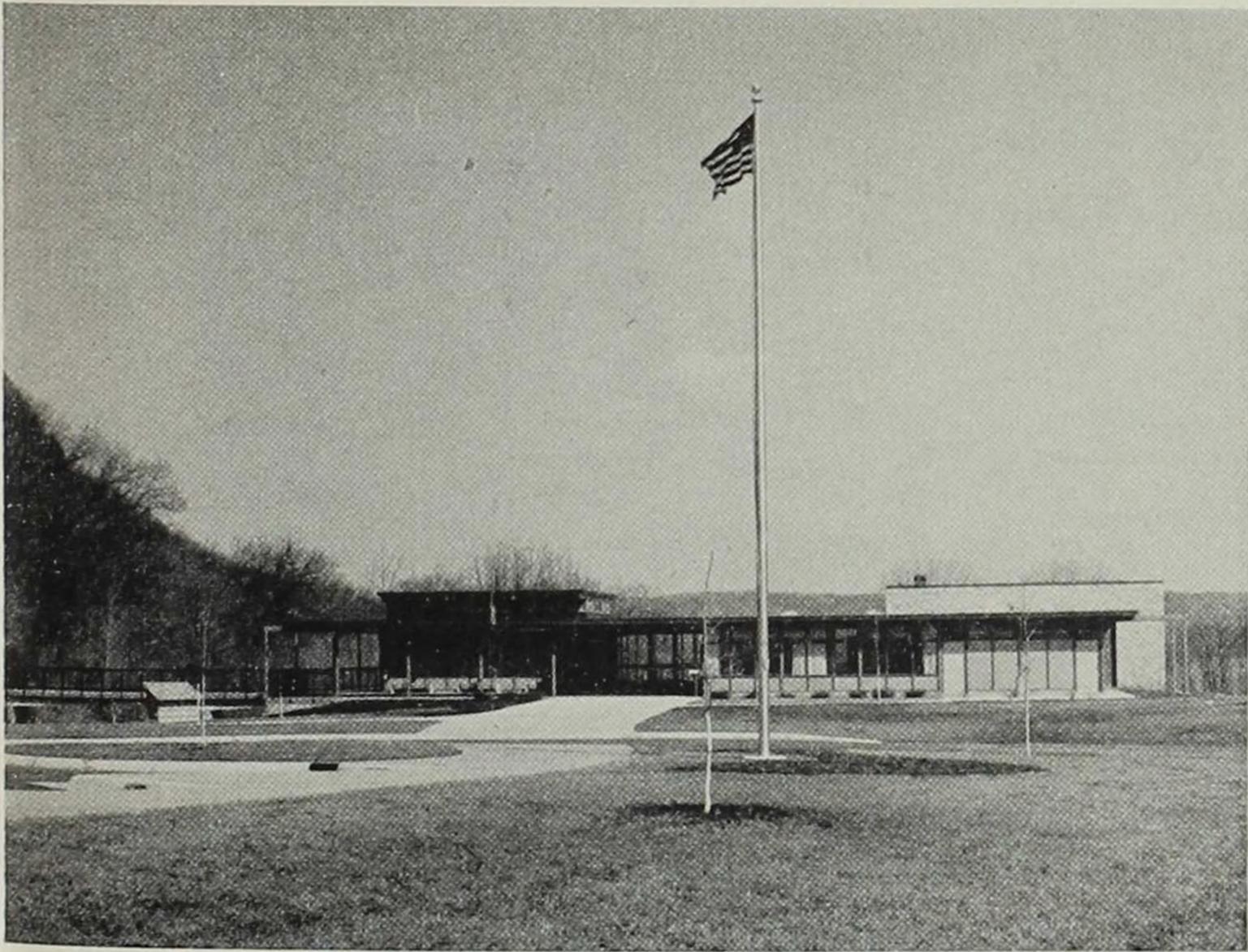
Bird Mound in South Area Outlined After a Light Snow



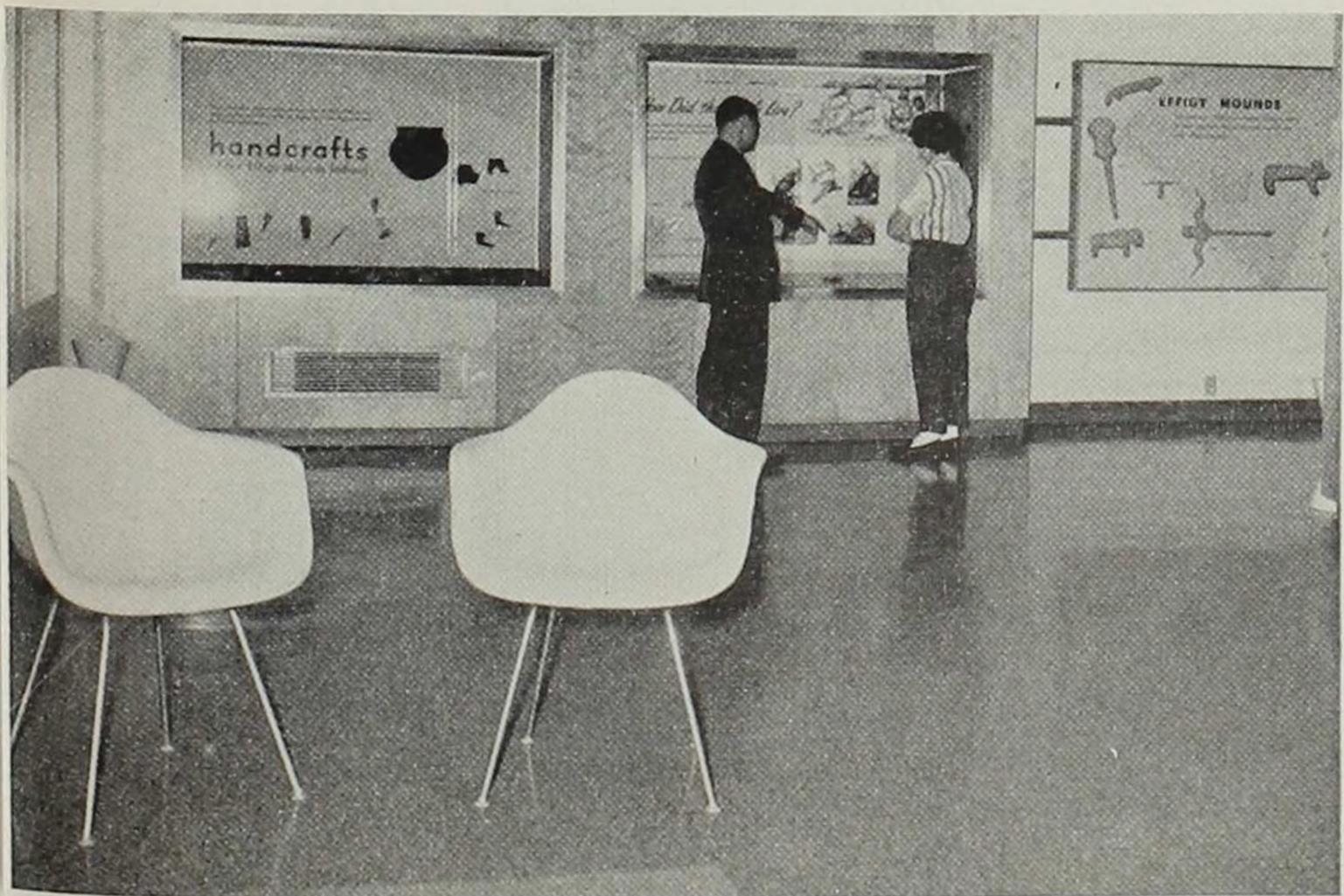
Superintendent Kennedy and Archeologist Logan Examine Indian Artifact



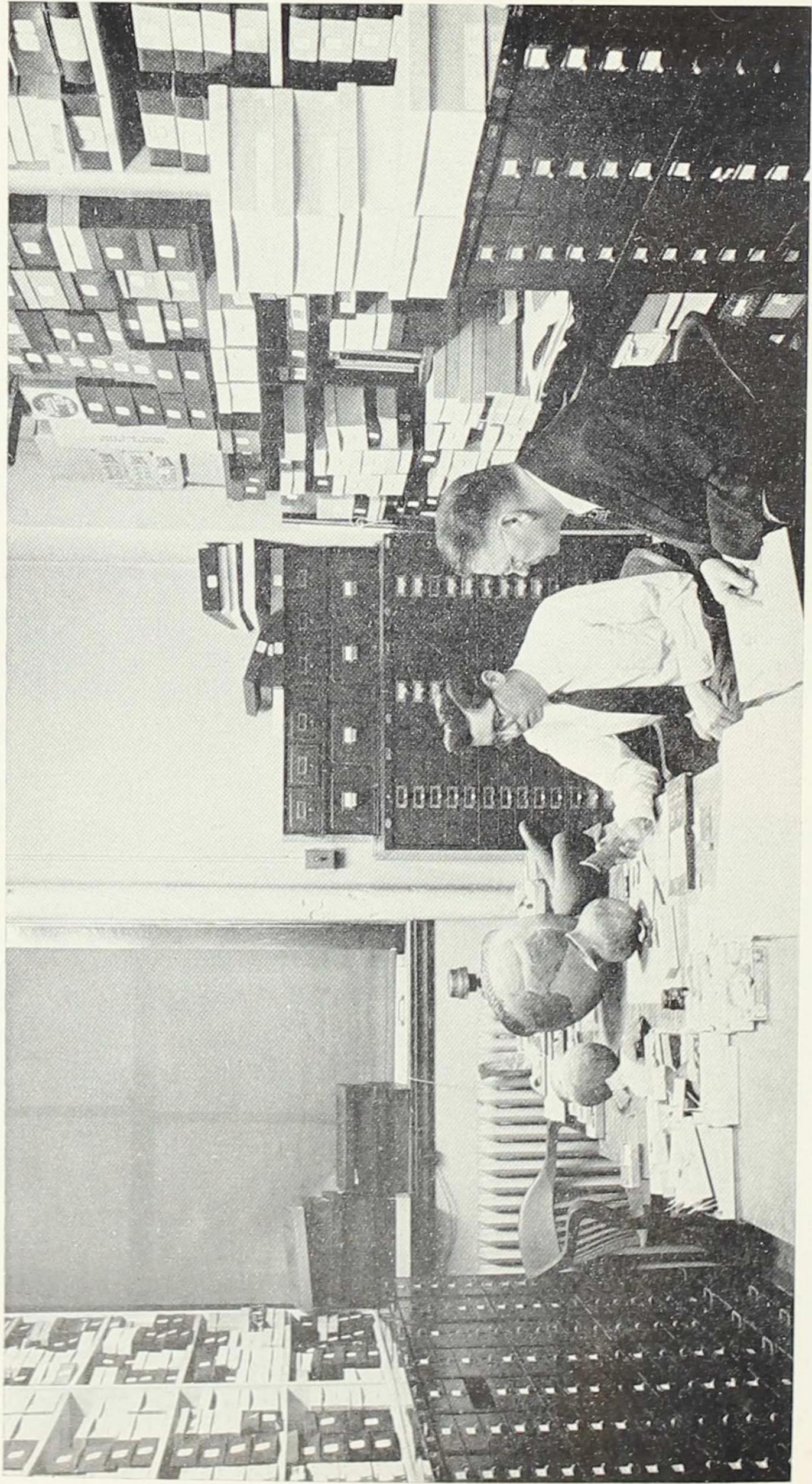
Superintendent Berrett and Archeologist Bray Study Plans for Visitor Center



New Visitor Center — Dedicated May 20, 1961



Interior View of New Visitor Center



Archeologist Wilfred D. Logan Shows Early Woodland Pottery to Dr. William J. Petersen

During the years 1953-1954 Archeologist Wilfred D. Logan spent many days studying the Archeology Collection of the State Historical Society which had been arranged and classified by Dr. Charles Reuben Keyes, and which contained among other collections the artifacts and records amassed by Ellison Orr. The Archeology Collection, containing approximately 250,000 specimens, is arranged and catalogued for study and research by qualified archeologists and graduate students. Members of the Society will enjoy the fruits of these researches in the Society's publication program from time to time.

period was that of Basil Giard, who received a grant of land in present-day Clayton County in 1800 from Spanish Lieutenant Governor Don Carlos Dehault Delassus. Giard's grant was a tract located immediately south of the land which later became the Fort Crawford Military Reservation, part of which is now included in the south unit of Effigy Mounds National Monument. None of the Giard land, however, is included in the National Monument.

The first mention of the area now within Effigy Mounds National Monument appears in Jonathan Carver's *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America in the Years 1766, 1767, 1768*, in which he tells of leaving his traders at the mouth of the Yellow River while he himself ascended the Mississippi. The next mention of it implies that a few habitation sites had appeared at the mouth of the Yellow River. In 1826, Francis Methode of Prairie du Chien, crossed the river and went up a small ravine north of the Yellow River to make maple sugar. Sometime during the month of March, Methode and his family were murdered, presumably by Winnebago Indians who lived near the mouth of the ravine.

Peter L. Scanlan, in his book *Prairie du Chien: French, British, American* has placed the site of this murder at Hanging Rock within the present National Monument. Inspection of photostats of the testimony, however, indicates that it probably

occurred near the mouth of Paint Creek, somewhat north of the National Park Service boundaries. In the testimony before Colonel Willoughby Morgan of Fort Crawford regarding this incident, people living on Yellow River are mentioned. These were one Sioux and one Menominee woman, Desilie (a man in the employ of the Indian Agent, Nicholas Boilvin), the wife of a Mr. Reed, and Prudent Langlois. Since the area at the mouth of the Yellow River is the only spot for a number of miles where good living quarters might be built, it is probable that these people were living within what is now Effigy Mounds National Monument.

During the construction of the new Visitor Center at Effigy Mounds National Monument, further evidence of early historic habitation here came to light. The remains of an earthen house floor were discovered just to the west of the newly constructed building. Apparently there was once a small cabin or similar type building standing here which had a central Indian-type fire pit. On the floor itself, however, were fragments of window glass and square nails. Such combination of culture traits seems to reflect appropriately the blending of European and Indian traditions on the frontier.

In 1829, when the United States Army began to build the new Fort Crawford on the upper terrace at Prairie du Chien, a sawmill was established on the Yellow River. The site of this mill

has been variously placed at the mouth, and at the end of the back water, about three miles above the mouth. The latter location seems most logical, and has the further authority of having been marked by a United States Geological Survey marker which was rediscovered, along with the remains of a dam, by Ellison Orr during the 1930's. Lt. Jefferson Davis, who later was President of the Confederacy, managed this sawmill for the Army, and oak logs were cut on the surrounding hillsides and sawed into lumber, whereupon they were floated down the Yellow River and across the Mississippi to Prairie du Chien.

The Army had two other connections with the land now within Effigy Mounds National Monument. The south unit of the area was part of the Fort Crawford Military Reservation, locally called the "Post Garden Tract." This land was drawn upon for timber, for firewood, and as a garden plot. Through a portion of this tract, near the extreme south boundary of the present National Monument, ran the military road from the ferry landing at the mouth of the "Military Trail Ravine" to Fort Atkinson, which was built in present-day Winneshiek County between the years 1840 and 1842.

These government lots, along with the other land now within Effigy Mounds National Monument, passed into the hands of private owners between the years 1841 and 1869. The first such

transfer was one in which the United States Government conveyed Lot No. 4 of this tract to Hercules L. Dousman of Prairie du Chien. Dousman was the wealthiest citizen of Prairie du Chien, and was an agent of the American Fur Company. Other lots seem to have been sold to Frederick J. Miller, J. C. Vanpel, and Bernard W. Brisbois, who in turn sold them to others. These men were all land speculators. Brisbois was a somewhat unscrupulous speculator of the period. A member of a well known Prairie du Chien family, he carried out his land schemes in partnership with Ira Brunson, who also acquired land within the present monument boundaries.

The land these men bought, or acquired by other means, gradually passed into the hands of farmers, and the tract was converted into pioneer farms, from which the timber was cut for lumber and firewood. Farm houses were located within the area at the site of the present headquarters; in the south unit on the west side of Rattlesnake Knoll, and in the so-called Sawvelle Hollow, which opens into the Yellow River bottoms at the west end of Nezeka Bluff. Nezeka Bluff, or Nezeka Point, takes its name from the grist mill and proposed townsite at the base of the east end of the bluff. This mill and prospective settlement was called Nezeka by the men who laid out the town lots. A post office was established at Nezeka in 1858 and discontinued in 1862.