## Ancient Sites

A "site", in the language of archeology, is a place where prehistoric man is known to have lived, where he left his works, or where, as in the case of a trail or workshop, he unconsciously left his mark. Nearly all the Iowa counties have ancient sites of one kind or another; even the few counties in which definite archeological sites have not thus far been found produce scattered stone relics, which prove the existence of prehistoric man as a hunter, at least, if not as a settled resident. The number of known Iowa sites now runs well into four figures and a beginning only has been made in the search. Indeed, as the marginal areas of several different prehistoric cultures are to be found within Iowa, it seems likely that this State may become especially interesting as an archeological field. A brief annotated catalogue may have value, perhaps, in serving as a guide to the many varieties of our ancient sites.

*Village and camp sites.* The difference between the two is only in size and what appears to be permanency. The camp site shows enough evidence of occupation to make certain at least a temporary home: some fireplace stones, some kitchen refuse, and probably some chips of flint. The village site shows rich evidence of occupation through a consid-

erable period of time: generally a well-defined area covering from one to one hundred acres, sharply outlined, in some cases, by a moat-like ditch; plenty of refuse in the form of flint chips and other stone fragments indicating that stone implements were made there; numbers of finished flint arrowheads, spearheads, and knives, or ground-stone mortars, hand mullers, and axes, all lost during the day's work or abandoned at the desertion of the village; pottery fragments, clam shells, and broken bird and animal bones, the refuse of food preparation; sometimes circles or ellipses of small boulders used to hold down the edges of skin tipis; in other instances numbers of circular depressions a foot or two deep and from twenty-five to forty feet in diameter, showing where large, earth-covered lodges once stood. Continuous cultivation of the site will have obliterated some of the criteria, but the large amount of refuse over a considerable space will ordinarily tell the story.

Favorite locations of the villages were the second terraces of streams or, less commonly, the broad summits of hills overlooking streams. At least one good spring was a requirement, and nearly always there was near-by timber to furnish a shelter for game. A number of the old villages were situated in bur oak groves on the lake margins, but in no instance has a village site been found removed from an immediate supply of water. Permanent villages were apparently located on the smaller streams more

frequently than on the larger rivers, a number of the most prolific old sites having been found on small, but perennial, creeks some miles removed from the rivers. Thus far no Iowa stream is known to equal the Little Sioux in the number of its ancient villages. In all Iowa some seventy village sites are known, and so many of these are still above the plow line that it is not difficult to collect the evidence of the old community life. Strange to say, not one of the known village sites in Iowa is proven positively to have been occupied both before and down to historical times. There is a possibility, however, that an Algonkian site near the mouth of the Iowa River may be the remains of one of the Peoria villages visited by Marquette.

*Caves and rock shelters.* Over a large part of Delaware, Jones, and Jackson counties, where the country has been little ironed by glaciers and where, therefore, the river gorges and creek ravines are margined to a considerable extent by the abrupt and massive Silurian cliffs, primitive man is found to have made extensive use of the shelters afforded. In Linn County also a few congenial homes were found in the Devonian cliffs of the Cedar River. Topography of a generally similar nature in Dubuque County will probably show the same kind of occupation, but thus far no one seems to have searched out the evidence.

The abodes of Iowa cave and cliff dwellers are of five different types: (1) the level ground of the

valley floor beneath a cliff overhang where no talus slope exists, the cliff in this case standing far enough back from the stream to afford a dry, safe shelter; (2) a level space at the top of a talus slope, protected by the cliff overhang; (3) a level shelf on the face of a cliff, also protected by overhang; (4) wide-mouthed and well-lighted caverns at the top of talus slopes; (5) caverns in the cliff wall above the talus slopes and often rather difficult of access.

These shelters were evidently occupied for considerable periods of time, for in some cases the camp refuse has been found to extend downward to a depth of six feet. As the cliff overhangs are rarely over a hundred feet in length and the caverns from fifty to as small as fifteen feet in diameter, the evidences of occupation are found in even greater concentration than on most of the village sites. The cliff homes usually face southward, and their natural security, with the original forest protection, is apparent. Very warm and comfortable were these refuges, even when cold March winds whistled across the valley rim.

Up to this time over fifty occupied caves and rock shelters have been recorded; but, as diligent search has been made in only a part of the likely topography and as only a few of the shelters have been thoroughly examined, it is probable that the study of Iowa's cave men is only in its early stages. The material recovered from the shelters seems not to be greatly different, however, from that found on

village sites in the same general region and is probably but a part, therefore, of the culture of a wider area.

*Enclosures.* These are areas of various sizes and shapes enclosed by an earthen wall which is usually paralleled on the outside or the inside by a ditch. The reasons for their existence are not very clear. In some cases they appear to have served as fortifications; in other cases they were probably sacred enclosures devoted to tribal, clan, or society ceremonies. The circle is perhaps the commonest form, though the quadrangle and the octagon are also known. In size they vary from a diameter of about fifty feet to several hundred feet, in which case as much as five acres of ground may be enclosed. The wall of from two to five feet in height is pierced by one or more gateways. Some of these works are immediately connected with a village site; others are entirely detached, as on the summit of a high, dry ridge, where a village would have been out of the question. Most of the recorded enclosures stood on the terraces of the Upper Iowa River in Allamakee County and have disappeared through fifty years of cultivation. A few of the smaller specimens are still preserved.

*Agricultural plots and garden beds.* If any are still to be seen in Iowa, they must be in places where the soil has never been turned, as in timber or pastures near the streams — and of course near the old village sites. The Indian corn hills will persist in

undisturbed areas for centuries. People now living remember the old Indian garden beds of Muscatine Island, though it is possible that these were not all prehistoric. No examples seem to be known in Iowa at the present time, though many ancient agricultural plots can still be seen in Wisconsin and Michigan.

*Pits.* These were dug in or near the villages for purposes of both food storage and refuse disposal. As implements and utensils thrown into the pits generally remain below the plow line, they are apt to escape the deterioration suffered by articles left on the surface. It is a fact well known to archeological collectors that they may expect many of their best fragments of pottery and bone implements from the refuse pits. And surprisingly often the specimens are not broken at all! Indians, too, sometimes threw out perfectly good knives, spoons, and dishes with the kitchen refuse. Depressions in the ground commonly reveal the locations of pits. At other times their contents may come to light through the operation of steam shovels working in gravel pits on the river terraces. Such easy excavations have inured to the benefit of collectors in Correctionville.

*Shell heaps.* On the banks of some of the large rivers, and usually in or near a village site, are sometimes found deep accumulations of mussel shells removed from the near-by streams. They were apparently opened to obtain food or pearls, probably both. Shell heaps have been reported near Keosauqua and at Cedar Rapids, and considerable

remnants of the old accumulations are still to be seen at Bellevue on the Mississippi.

*Caches.* Nests of stone implements or other materials were often buried in the ground for safe keeping and, for reasons that can only be conjectured, never claimed by the original owner. A number of these buried hoards have come to light in Iowa through the operations of agriculture, the wash of rains, or the cutting of streams. They are perhaps most often found in or near village sites, but there is no definite rule as to their location. A number of the Iowa caches have consisted of a few score rough-chipped blades, all of the same variety of flint and apparently intended for later elaboration — doubtless some ancient flint worker's stock-in-trade. A few others have contained finished specimens, generally, but not always, of a single type. A good example of a mixed cache was recently found on the bluffs of the Mississippi three miles west of Guttenberg. It consisted of twenty-four small, well-finished blades of mottled flint, a single hammerstone of basaltic rock, and two greenstone gouges.

*Workshops.* In a variety of locations, both in the valleys and on the hilltops, are found large quantities of flint chips, and sometimes other stone refuse, which plainly tell the story of implement and weapon making, but which are frequently not connected at all with any village site. In many instances it seems as if the location of the site were determined by the beauty of the place or some such personal

consideration. In other States, though no instance is yet known in Iowa, workshops are often found close to the sources of the material used.

*Cemeteries.* The cemeteries vary greatly in location, and there is much variation also in the manner of burial. Sometimes the bodies were buried in an extended, sometimes in a flexed, position; again the bones were collected from an earlier tree or scaffold burial and either interred in a common mass along with many other skeletal remains, constituting thus an "ossuary", or deposited separately and compactly, constituting a "bundle burial". Generally speaking, cemeteries called for a loose soil, either within the village site itself or on some near-by knoll, terrace, or hilltop. The knolls, and especially the highest points and ridges, of the Missouri River hills, all the way from the southern boundary of Iowa to South Dakota, contain a great number of burials.

As the loess hills of our western border erode rather rapidly, skeletal remains may frequently be examined without the necessity of digging. Last summer, during a test excavation conducted at the great Blood Run village site on the Big Sioux, a burial of quite an opposite kind was encountered. This lay at the bottom of a pit eight feet in diameter and seven feet below the tough sod of a prairie terrace. And the instruments of excavation were the shoulder blades of the bison, many worn and broken specimens of which were found in the tough

humus, clay, and gravel with which the pit was filled. In the cave region of Iowa, great ossuaries have been found, hidden away in deep caverns far removed from light, heat, and frost. Flexed burials have also been found in some of the inhabited shelters. Horse Thief Cave in the Wapsipinicon State Park at Anamosa produced nine burials of men, women, and children ranged about the walls of the shelter four feet below the cavern floor.

*Mounds.* Originally Iowa possessed thousands of Indian mounds, the great majority built in prehistoric times. With the exception of some counties in the southwestern part of the State which appear to be barren of these monuments, they are everywhere fairly numerous. Many have disappeared through continued cultivation of the soil; others are being slowly reduced; still others occupy positions where they have escaped all destruction except that by relic hunters who, in hundreds of instances, have dug ugly holes in their tops. A few good specimens are now permanently preserved within the confines of State parks. The best mound groups in Iowa, however, are still privately owned and therefore liable to destruction at any time.

The great majority of mounds have a round base (though some are elliptical) of from twenty-five to seventy feet in diameter and a height of from two to seven feet. A few are considerably larger, the great Boone mound on a terrace of the Des Moines River having measured one hundred and thirty by one

hundred and sixty feet in diameter and fourteen feet high before its excavation about twenty years ago by T. Van Hyning of the Historical Department at Des Moines. Still larger mounds have been reported; but the evidence that these are entirely artificial is still lacking.

In northeastern Iowa along the Mississippi bluffs there are many mounds in the form of bird and animal effigies or long, straight embankments, described simply as "effigies" and "linears". The latter range from about sixty to two hundred feet in length and have a diameter of about twenty feet and a height of from two to four feet. The effigies are great cameos laid out on the ground, the birds with outstretched wings and the animals, generally representing the bear, though a few other forms occur, recumbent on their right sides and built up sharply to a height of from two to five feet. The birds measure from seventy to one hundred and seventy feet across the wings, while the animal effigies are from eighty feet to one hundred and forty feet in length from nose to tail. All the undisturbed mounds are so regular in form and so artificial in appearance that they need rarely be mistaken for anything else. They sometimes occur singly, but as a rule they stand either in groups on or near the old village sites or in rows along the ridges overlooking the dwelling place and the hunting grounds below.

All types of mounds have been found to contain burials, although it is altogether probable that the

great majority of prehistoric burials were in cemeteries rather than in mounds. The mounds were doubtless erected for a variety of reasons, some of which are none too clear.

*Boulder effigies.* In an earlier day a number of effigies of serpents, turtles, and perhaps other animals, were found outlined in boulders of from one hundred to two hundred pounds weight set firmly in the prairie soil of northwest Iowa and the Dakotas. If any specimens still exist in Iowa their location appears to be unknown.

*Trails.* The ancient trails, often worn to a considerable depth through generations of use, have nearly all disappeared and it is now a very difficult matter to find their exact location. The early historical accounts are generally indefinite, stating merely that a trail connected such and such points and ran in a certain general direction. Whether the trail followed the right bank or the left along a stream is seldom revealed. Probably the maps of the original surveys in the archives at Washington would furnish more information than can be found elsewhere. It is to be hoped that a careful investigation of the system of trails can sometime be made, for the tracing out of these highways does have a real bearing on questions of distribution of the different tribes and stocks.

Short remnants of the ancient trails can still be seen in a number of places: across an old pioneer cemetery in Clay County some three miles north-

east of Linn Grove; on a hillside in the Big Bend of the Little Sioux a few miles southwest of the lower end of West Okoboji Lake; along the west bank of the West Fork of the Des Moines River at Humboldt.

*Spirit places.* Prehistoric man often held sacred those places — hills, cliffs, trees, springs, boulders, and the like — that had become associated in his mind with some special phenomenon or some unusual event. Examples are probably numerous enough in Iowa, but thus far few have been recorded: the Painted Rock, formerly bearing paintings supposed to represent the water spirit, a great cliff overlooking the Mississippi River nine miles above McGregor; the great bur oak three miles south of Davis City in Decatur County, still used as a burial tree when the first settlers entered the region; mighty Pilot Rock near Cherokee, which formerly bore mystic symbols cut by the men of long ago. Boulders bearing cup-shaped depressions wrought out by blows of the stone hammer probably also belong to this category. Some of the best specimens are found in Lyon County along the Big Sioux.

*Rock carvings and paintings.* Quite a large number of these were formerly to be seen on the cliffs and on the walls of caves in northeastern Iowa. They have fared very badly; for, unfortunately, the white people have also desired to inscribe and decorate these same walls and cliffs with their names and bold initials. As these later inscriptions are usually

superimposed directly on the earlier ones, it is not always possible to read these palimpsests that should reveal so much concerning the centuries that have passed. A few inscriptions can still be made out, and a very few others are still intact. Fortunately, a man whose name is but little known in Iowa, Professor T. H. Lewis, working in the employ of Mr. Alfred J. Hill of St. Paul, made rubbings of many of these pictographs some forty years ago, which are preserved in the library of the State Historical Society of Minnesota. Along the streams of east central Iowa some stone slabs with pictographs have also been discovered. A good example is to be seen in the public library of Fairfield. Other specimens are in the museum of the Davenport Academy of Sciences.

*Stone dams or fish traps.* The stone dam in the Iowa River at Amana is one of the interesting additions to the catalogue of Iowa's antiquities. This great work was found in place by the first settlers at Amana, though its origin and purpose seem to have been recognized only recently. The dam is built of glacial boulders, those showing above the surface at low water being, apparently, of about two hundred pounds weight. The shape is that of a great V with the open point directed downstream, the south wing being nearly a hundred yards in length and the north wing somewhat shorter. The fish migrations took place perforce through the narrow opening and there, of course, the Indians set

their fish traps. The work has not, as yet, been given a detailed examination.

*Quarries.* The early Indians called the Burlington region "Flint Hills". This is suggestive, especially in view of the further fact that flint arrowheads, spearheads, and knives of a creamy-white flint, quite like that outcropping in the limestone cliffs from above Burlington down to Fort Madison, are scattered over a large part of eastern Iowa, western Illinois, and northern Missouri. As yet the ancient flint quarries have not been located — mainly for the reason, it would seem, that no one has seriously searched for them. Flint quarries and their immediate vicinity should be marked by flint and limestone refuse, partly-fashioned implements, and crude, massive hammerstones with battered surfaces. It is probable, of course, that much of the evidence is now covered by later deposits of earth and fallen rock and more or less overgrown with trees and shrubs. Nevertheless, it is likely that enough remains in view to attract the eye of the prying student or the keen boy scout who looks in the right place with the right objective in mind.

In the coal region of south central Iowa, where hematite abounds, quarries of this material so precious to primitive men have been reported. Many nodules of the red, reddish-black and bluish-black bloodstone wash from the hills into the ravines, and prehistoric man certainly used these for the making of implements and ornaments. The materials ga-

thered by local collectors make that fact clear enough. It is possible, indeed quite probable, that the early peoples sunk shafts, as they are known to have done in Missouri, for the purpose of obtaining hematite of special grades for either paint or implement making.

CHARLES REUBEN KEYES