

STEUBEN VILLAGE SITE, A HOPEWELLIAN VILLAGE OF CENTRAL ILLINOIS

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The Steuben Village site is reported here as known from explorations and collections made by the George Schoenbecks, members of the Peoria Academy of Science, since 1939 during which time about fifty collecting trips were recorded.

The site, listed as site 22 of the Peoria Academy of Science Survey and recorded also among the sites of the state in the Illinois State Museum Survey, is located on the west bank of the Illinois River about three miles north of Chillicothe, in Marshall County, Steuben township, section 34, T. 12 N, R. 9 E. It is a flat gravelly area of about five acres, lying between the river and

the bluff. The C. R. I. & P. railroad and route 29 cut through its west side and a small creek runs through the south end.

There are eight mounds on the bluff, one of them about 114 feet long, but it is not known whether or not these belong to the village.

Material is known from the plowed surfaces of several slight ridges, from post-holes and shallow excavations, and from a lower level exposed in the bed and banks of the creek. The buried occupation level lay immediately under a layer of gravel several inches thick, and at one place was 7 feet below the present surface.



Photograph by E. Schoenbeck.

FIG. 1.—The largest of the eight mounds on the bluff above Steuben village site measures about 84 by 114 feet. It has not yet been determined whether or not these mounds belong to the village.

Much excellent material is said to have been obtained by earlier collectors.

Material collected is Hopewellian, with the exception of a small amount of cord-decorated pottery, and includes chert items, bone refuse and bone tools, stone items, mica, red ochre, shell articles and refuse, and pottery.

Items of particular interest are the stone human head effigy¹ and a pink chert bird effigy. Another bird effigy is in the Leroy P. Elliott collection. Conspicuous in the chert artifacts are the large number of medium-sized notched points and narrow flake knives. Of interest in the pottery is the 3 to 1 proportion of punctate to dentate stamp, with both decorations of the simplest types, and some red-painted and thickened-rim ware.

About 950 rims and some thousands of body sherds are in the pottery collections. Types included are Woodland plain (or smoothed); Woodland cord-roughened; Sister Creeks punctated; Naples dentate stamped; fine limestone-tempered Hopewell with cross-hatched incised and rocker-stamped rims; red-painted thickened-rim ware from the lower Mississippi Valley; incised; brushed; bar-stamped; Clear Lake cord-wrapped-paddle-edge stamped; and Maple Mills or Gooden cord-decorated.

A light colored wash shows on some of the sherds and there are two examples of the bored hole in the vessel wall.

The punctated sherds include 525 rims and 66 lower rims; 73 are punctated on the lip; 8 bear disk or circle punctates. All others are simple two to three punctates in arrangements on the rim.

The dentate-stamped sherds include 157 rims and 83 lower rims. Only 8 have any but the simplest stamp, placed vertically and singly without elaboration.

There are 103 Woodland cord-roughened and 68 Woodland plain; 13 others are bossed. The cord-wrapped-paddle-edge stamped include 10 rims, some thin, others heavier. The cord-decorated includes one lower rim of the usual decoration and 17 body sherds; there is also a rim showing cord punctates on a plain surface. A colored rim may or may not be of this type.

The finer Hopewell and imitations have 31 cross-hatched incised rims, rocker stamp, etc. There are three red-painted and three of the thickened rim, one of which is red filmed and one of which bears incised designs on the wide rim. There are 50 rockered or zoned, limestone-tempered or leached body sherds and one portion of lobed body.

A part of the "brushed" ware is limestone tempered.

Chert items number in the hundreds, and considering the other known and reported collectors, must have been very abundant. Points, knives, scrapers and spuds are the principal items. Points, many of them crude, are mostly notched, some are stemmed and some are lanceolate, and they total about 500. Flake knives are plentiful. Scrapers are of several types. The bird effigy is two inches long.

Collections made in earlier years must have contained many fine pieces because the casual collector generally picks up only perfect items and chert was so plentiful on the site. Large specimens of the fine Hopewellian blades are among items reported.

Bone tools comprise only four awls and one cut antler, but refuse animal bones and teeth are present

¹ Described in 1947 Transactions, Illinois State Academy of Science under title, "A Seven-pound Copper Axe Among 1946 Hopewell Discoveries."

in some quantity. Many are rotten and deteriorate quickly. Fish otoliths are numerous.

Two shell hoes are among the shell remains; each shows the round hole in the center.

The stone material includes portions of 15 pendants; all seem to be oblong, none are reel-shaped. Other items are many pitted hammer stones; a few celts and axe portions; ball-shaped chert pecking stones; a few shaped disks and several grooved mauls.

The finely executed sandstone human head effigy, reported in 1947 *Transactions*, has since been compared closely with one found at the Twenhafel site in Jackson County of southern Illinois and it was the unanimous opinion of Thorne Deuel, Director of the Illinois State Museum, George K. Neumann of Indiana University, and Mr. and Mrs. George Schoenbeck, that the two heads might have been made by the same hand. The Twenhafel head differs by having a headdress, but both have the same highly stylized ear and show similar workmanship. James B. Griffin, Curator of the Ceramic Repository, University of Michigan, states that a similar one has been found in Oklahoma.

A brief comparison of the Steuben material with that from the Hopewellian Clear Lake village might be of interest here. The Steuben site has much more chert and more pendants. Few bone tools have been found at Steuben, but collecting mostly from the surface rather than from excavations must be taken into consideration.

A comparison of pottery brings out the predominance of punctate over dentate stamped at Steuben and the reverse at Clear Lake; a scarcity of cord-wrapped-paddle-edge at Steuben and an abundance at Clear Lake; a complete lack of the black sands incised ware and a mere representation of the cord-decorated at Steuben, while Clear Lake has a good showing of the first and the largest amount of cord-decorated ware known from any Illinois site. Steuben dentate-stamp lacks the elaborated arrangements and variations and shows no bossing, whereas Clear Lake has an abundance of such. The heavy crushed rock or Fayette thick ware is lacking at Steuben but is also rare at Clear Lake.

Neither site had a Mississippian occupation; Clear Lake had but a few sherds of Mississippian pottery and Steuben had none.