

## Hopewell Traits in Certain Bluff Mounds of Fulton County

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The site described in this paper is composed of a group of 18 mounds, a cemetery, and at least one village, which are strung along the north bluff of the Illinois River for a quarter of a mile in the southeast corner of Fulton County. In a wooded tract behind the mound are 5 house pits which have never been disturbed by cultivation or by excavators. The village and cemetery have yielded interesting material of the Middle Mississippian culture and will be dealt with in a later paper. In this report I shall give the results of our investigations of the mound group.

All of the 18 mounds are low and circular, the smallest being 11 feet in diameter and 15 inches high, while the largest is 62 feet across and 7 feet high. Most of them are arranged in a single line paralleling the edge of the bluff for a distance of a thousand feet. Four are irregularly placed outside of the general line. They are composed of light yellow clay which forms the sub-soil in this region. All of the prominent mounds have had pits dug into their centers many years ago, but there is no record as to what was found. Trenches dug into several of them yielded no evidence of burials or of any artifacts.

The three mounds at the east end of the group are a few hundred feet removed from the next in the line and are low and inconspicuous. For these reasons they escaped the notice of the persons who opened the other members of the group. The first mound which was opened was the third mound from the east end of the group. It was roughly thirty-four feet in diameter and in most places the artificial deposit was only eighteen inches thick, although the curve of the bluff added to the apparent height of the mound.

The first burial which we encountered was flexed on the left side and lay on the base of the mound 18 inches below the surface. A few feet away on the same level were the disturbed bones of a child. Beside this burial were fragments of grit tempered pottery. When reconstructed they formed a globular pot with a slightly constricted neck and a plain almost vertical rim. The body of the vessel was roughened with narrow parallel incised lines drawn vertically from the rim. Two other fragments of grit tempered pottery were found apart from any burial.

A little to the south of the exact center of the mound lay a confused mass of bones which represented at least three individuals. The bones were only 18 inches below the surface and may have been disturbed by the pick of some previous digger. However we feel that the bones were undisturbed and represent a bundle type burial. In this group of bones was what appears to be a trophy skull. It consists of the occipital and parietal bones with the edges left rough. It exhibits two scars and a depressed area which might have been caused by a severe blow.

Directly below the bundle burial was a pit which was roughly eight feet square and extended 2½ feet below the base line of the mound. This pit contained the remains of twenty individuals, of which seven were represented by the skulls only. The complete burials were all extended, face up with the exception of one partly disturbed body which lay face down. In this case the skull exhibits a number of long scratches across the back.

Three adult burials were laid one above the other, and on the chest of the lowest burial lay five skulls. Seven of the burials were of children and infants. The only artifact recovered from the pit was a pearl bead which was found with a child.

The next mound which we opened was second from the east end of the group. This was 28 feet long and 23 feet wide, with an average height of 15 inches. In the center of the mound was a circular area 12 feet in diameter which was covered with small flat pieces of limestone. Beneath the stones were the skeletons of two infants and traces of an adult. With the adult burial was an elaborate grave offering consisting of the following objects: A mica reflector 7 inches across and roughly circular; a 3 inch square-based obsidian knife or spear head; a beaver tooth and a necklace of 57 rolled copper beads. Pendant from this were two bear teeth which were grooved at the end for suspension. Between the bear teeth was the leg bone of a dog, five inches long which had been polished and cut at one end. Although it is neither grooved nor drilled, its position indicated that it might have been hung between the two teeth. Part of the original necklace cord was preserved inside the copper beads. It was made of two threads twisted together. Each of these threads was composed of a number of coarse hairs.

The traits displayed in these two mounds do not fit into the middle Mississippi culture of the adjacent village. They do however correspond to the Hopewell pattern as it is defined by Cole and Deuel.<sup>1</sup> The central subfloor pit containing extended burials, the use of pearl beads, grit tempered pottery, copper beads, bear teeth pendants, mica sheets and obsidian, point unmistakably to the Hopewell culture. Most of these traits have been reported from other sites in Fulton County, but as far as we know this is the first discovery of obsidian. Another unusual feature in the second mound was the covering or pavement of small stone slabs over the central burials. Construction of a series of small mounds along the bluff is contrary to usual Hopewell practice, which was to build rather large mounds in the bottom lands.

Possibly the variation here was forced by the narrowness of the strip of land bordering the lake at the foot of the bluff. Local informants say that village material was found during construction of a road along the base of the hill, and this may possibly be the site of the Hopewell village which is otherwise unknown.

<sup>1</sup> Cole, F. C., and Deuel, Thomas, "Rediscovering Illinois."