

## ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE ROCK RIVER VALLEY

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The Rock River area surveyed by the University of Chicago in 1927-28 consists of Winnebago, Stephenson, and Ogle counties and includes principally the shores of Rock River and its affluents, the Pecatonica, Leaf River, Kyte and Pine creeks, Stillman Run, and two branches of the Pecatonica, Silver and Richland creeks.

In Ogle County there were more than a hundred mounds, the majority of which were small conical and the minority linear mounds, distributed in some thirteen groups, mostly within sight of each other along the west banks of Rock River. Most of the mounds were on fairly high ground and seemed to follow the topography of ridges. The mounds were of medium size, the longest linear one being 330 feet long, 26 feet wide, and approximately 3 feet high. The largest conical mound stood 10 feet high and was 54 feet wide. Pitting, erosion, and cultivation make many of them almost unrecognizable.

<sup>1</sup> The terminology of culture classification employed here is that suggested by the Committee on State Archaeological Surveys, National Research Council, Circular Letter, April 4, 1933.

<sup>2</sup> Tentative term suggested by Dr. Thorne Deuel in unpublished Ms.

Mounds in Winnebago County occur principally along Rock River; some effigy mounds are found at Rockford. Some score of mounds found in Stephenson County resembled the Ogle County types in size, shape, and condition.

Some nine village sites were located in Ogle and three in Stephenson County. They have been under cultivation for so long and have been so thoroughly searched for relics that the value of further excavation is questionable. No official excavations are recorded in either county.

Data on artifacts for the upper Rock River Valley in Illinois are more extensive than records on earth-works. Reports on seven collections in Winnebago County show arrowpoints, bunts, drills, spears, scrapers, stone axes, celts, pipes, s. s. gorgets, discoids, rubbing stones, mortars and pestles, bone tools, grooved plummetts, pendants, slate and stone gorgets, red and green soapstone pipes, pottery pipes, paint plaques, triangular points, a frog effigy, a pebble carved into a human face, grooved hammers, copper implements of various kinds (chiefly knives), points, spears, axes, and pottery—mostly grit- and shell-tempered (a few sand-tempered) with decoration plain, striated, textile, incised, antler point, cord, punctuate, stamped, "roulette" and finger trailed.

A survey of some sixty collections in Stephenson County shows a similar collocation of artifacts but with less variety. Flints had been retouched by bevelling of larger and serration of smaller specimens. Celts and axes were of the heavier ferro-magnesian minerals. There were some peculiar copper awls, galena turtle effigies, butterfly bannerstones, hematite peccolite, catlinite beads, stone awls, pipes, gorgets, a chalcedony pendant, mortar, and pestle, plummetts, pipes, drills, and truncate barbs. Pottery was rare and that found was grit-tempered with a decoration consisting of rope paddle, cord, incised line, punctuate, and fillet molding.

Some twenty-seven collections in Ogle County yielded material not strikingly different. Serrated and bevelled flints are somewhat more common and truncate barbs are slightly less numerous than in Stephenson County, and bunts are characteristic. Drills are numerous and the ratio of ferro-magnesian axes and celts to flint implements is relatively larger than in Stephenson County. Copper pieces, which are few, include a bead. Difficulty was encountered in locating sites of artifact finds as collections were large and old. One fluted axe, an arrow straightener, net sinkers, gouges, an effigy steatite pipe, a catlinite pipe, butterfly banners, gorgets, paint-cups, hammerstones, picks, and some large flint hoes and spades were notable. The pottery was mostly grit-tempered and red and black in color. The pieces were generally bossed by punching. The decoration consisted of straight lines, incised semi-circular, rope paddle, punctuate, incised angle, bark and cross-hatched types. One bone drill and eight quartzite arrow or spear points were found.

A statistical survey of types of arrow and spear points in Ogle County (classification based on a modification of Fowke's system) seemed to indicate a consistent preponderance of shapes for collections in closely adjoining areas. Moreover, the larger collections of the county showed consistent relative numbers of common types. In plotting the relative frequency of types, going from up-river to down-river collections, two types of gradation in frequency were noticed, (1) a simple rise and fall like a normal frequency curve, and (2) a specific decline. The results are vitiated by the inclusion in the tabulations of the large collections of doubtful etiology, so far as location is concerned.

The affiliations of the prehistoric cultures of the upper Rock River Valley in Illinois seem to lie mainly with the Algonkian-speaking peoples.

The earliest historical movements in this region show that the Illinois Indians were first displaced (1605) by the Kickapoo and Pottawatomie who came from east of Rock River, and later by the Sac and Fox (1765) who came down the west side of the river. A little later the Siouan Winnebago intruded into Winnebago County and the Pecatonica Valley at Freeport. This happened simultaneously with the entrance of the white man. Thus all of the known movements of population have been down Rock River from the eastern Wisconsin region. In fact, Wisconsin traits are apparent in fluted axes, gouges, truncate barbs, hematite spuds or paddles, and in the scattered effigy mounds at Rockford, Oregon, and Freeport.

Considering that most of the artifacts are found along the stream banks which were thickly wooded in contrast to the dry prairie inter-fluvial areas, an Eastern Woodlands culture is indicated. Whether the cultural movement was up or down river is important in determining the pathways and the position of the nuclei of cultural activity in this region in prehistoric times.

The testimony of the artifacts, if considered by itself, is often deceptive. Southern influences from the Middle Mississippi or Cahokia region are doubtless apparent in the large flint hoes and spades of one Ogle County collection and in early reports on stone graves in Oregon and further down Rock River in Whiteside County.

Resemblances to the so-called Fort Ancient culture are seen in the numerous small triangular points, in the mixture of grit and shell tempering in the potsherds, and in a bell-shaped pestle of quartz found in Stephenson County.

Affinities with McKern's Lake Michigan culture of Wisconsin are seen in the embellishment of pottery by punching embossments from the inside out, by the punctuate, stamped rectangular indented impressions, incised lines, antler-point decoration, bark marked, cord marked decoration, and grit tempering. Similarly, gouges, truncate barbs, and a hematite spud or paddle seem indicative of Lake Michigan types.

The occurrence of shell tempering in pottery harks back, in some respects, to the Upper Mississippi culture. (One gray colored shell-tempered sherd found near Grand Detour in Ogle County which possesses trailed or incised chevron and straight parallel uncombined line decoration resembles pieces taken from the Fisher site near Channahan.) One chalcidony pendant appears to have originated in the Lake Superior region as none of this material is available in the Rock River region. Other Upper Mississippi or Siouan affinities seem indicated by a catlinite pipe.

Possible resemblances to Hopewell culture consist only of a copper bead, an effigy pipe of doubtful authenticity, crescentic form of pottery decoration, and perhaps some finely worked flint implements.

Resemblances to western New York Algonkian culture as reported by Skinner are noted in the polished ceremonial forms, slate gorgets often perforated, bannerstones of el and winged types, pendants, a long pestle from Stephenson County, two micmac pipes, grooved stone axes, adzes, and celts, scrapers which are plain chips or arrow points reworked and often showing the original notches on the stem bases and which resemble also the snub-nosed points of the Upper Mississippi culture.

As some sixty types of arrow and spear points, eight knife types, and ten scraper types occur, it seems fairly certain that more than one culture is indicated for this region. The cruder types of scrapers may be remnants of earlier cultures, as they appear as the most important types at greater distances from the river banks on the east and west borders of Ogle County. (This was also found true by Keyes in the Oneota culture of Iowa.) A

definite type of artifact industry seemed to dominate limited areas such as the Pine Creek Valley of Ogle County. If late horizons may be regarded as synonymous with (Wisconsin) influences from the north, the relatively greater predominance of certain types of flints in that direction may indicate an age subsequent to other localized types that seem to center in Ogle County at Oregon.

So far as our comparative notes go, resemblances in artifacts are noted to (1) lower Mississippi, (2) Ft. Ancient, (3) Lake Michigan, (4) Upper Mississippi, (5) Hopewell, and (6) western New York Algonkian cultures.