

THE NECESSITY OF PRESERVING FOR POSTERITY AND EDUCATION THE ANCIENT MOUNDS, FORTIFICATIONS AND REMAINS OF THE ABORIGINES OF THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY

WICKLIFFE, KENTUCKY

The science of anthropology and its allied subjects, archaeology and ethnology, are young cultural sciences in this country. The



Fig. 1. The Painted Owl, a Water Bottle found at Wickliffe. The symmetry of this vessel indicates an artistic people. Two other noteworthy pieces are a bowl with a plumed eagle head projecting from the rim and a vessel wrought in the shape of a seated human figure. There is here an abnormally large proportion of the effigy type of vessel.

<sup>1</sup>Read before the Tennessee Academy of Science at the Reelfoot Lake meeting, April 29, 1933.

first serious effort dates back only about eighty years or more; The classic work of Squier and Davis, published in 1847, one year after the United States had accepted the bequest and formed the Smithsonian Institution. But only in the last twenty years has real determined, scientific effort been put forth to unravel the story of the early races on this hemisphere, enlisting the aid of biology, chemistry and other sciences. The science of anthropology is not an exact one like mathematics where given quantities can be proven. There are many opinions which are often conflicting, but only by considering and weighing each theory in comparison with the others can progress be made. There are many questions and problems to be solved and many that will always remain a mystery, but with the cooperation and help of all scientists, many of the questions today unanswered will be solved.

In almost any science, except the archæology of the Mississippi Valley, facts can be proven in an orderly, leisurely manner as soon as the funds, equipment and personnel are available. This is not the case in regard to the ancient mounds, earthworks and fortifications of the Southern States as each year the plow is rapidly devastating and destroying these important remains. In addition to this factor has been added the havoc that is being caused by the indiscriminate digging of relic hunters, who in attempting to find pottery and other artifacts, are destroying and disturbing the most valuable and important part of the available data. Unfortunately, too, a number of men of means, having the possessive spirit, have encouraged the indiscriminate opening and excavating of mounds and burials by inexperienced people in order to secure only the artifacts contained therein, thereby losing for posterity and science the most important part of history and in so doing, placing an artificial value on artifacts.

Many of the states north of the Ohio River have recognized the importance of forming parks of these ancient remains, enlisting science, public spirited organizations and individuals in preserving them. This can be done by individuals, towns, cities, counties and the state. You gentlemen represent many different sections of Tennessee, and by your cooperation and help it will be possible to build and create interest and aid this very necessary and paramount need confronting all the Southern States today. I beg of you in your many contacts to stress the importance of having experts do all work of this nature in your state. By saving this very valuable and interesting material the story will, as time goes on, become more complete, and even now the story of the people who constructed the mounds along the Mississippi River and its tributaries should be as interesting as the story of the Middle Ages.

No find on the Western Hemisphere dates back to the Piltdown Man or Heidleburg discovery; no available material yet uncovered has indicated any habitation of Paleolithic age; no fossilized human skeletal remains are very old. It has been estimated by scientists that this continent has been inhabited eight thousand to fifteen thou-

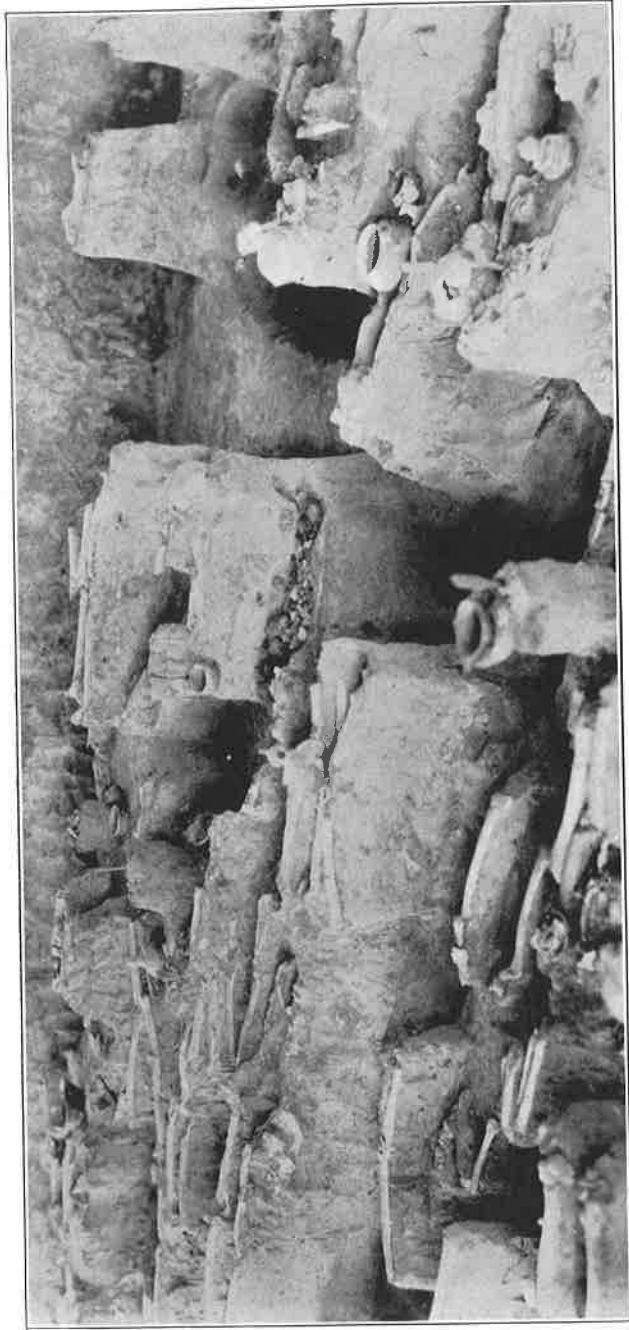


Fig. 2. A section of Burial Tombs showing crematory pit and pottery. In the crematory pit but a few remains of charred human bones accompanied by much charcoal are to be seen. Photographs used in this and the following half-tones used through the courtesy of the Murray State Teachers College.

Fig. 3. A close-up of one of the many interesting burial groups. Mother and her child.



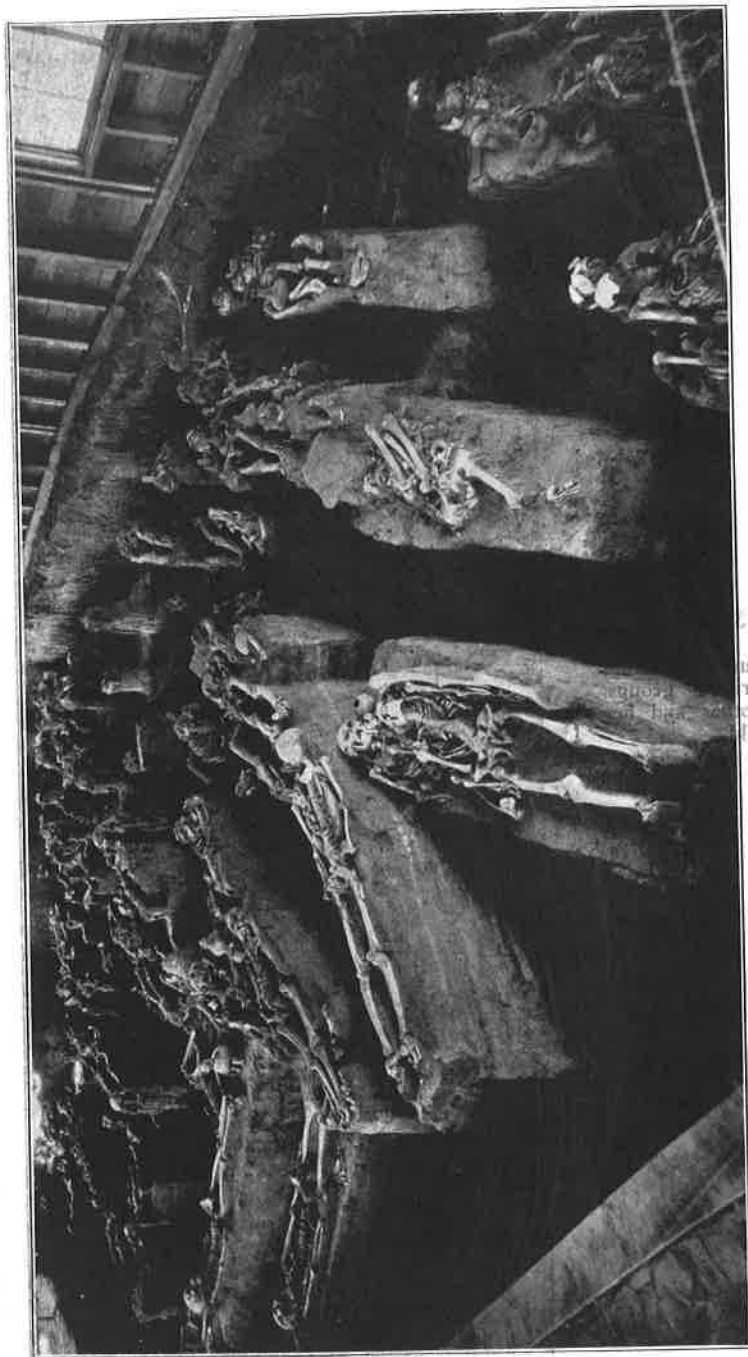


Fig. 4. Section of burial tombs showing burials with pottery, ornaments, and implements. The charcoal from the fires accompanying the burial rites has helped to preserve the skeletons by neutralizing the acids produced by decay.

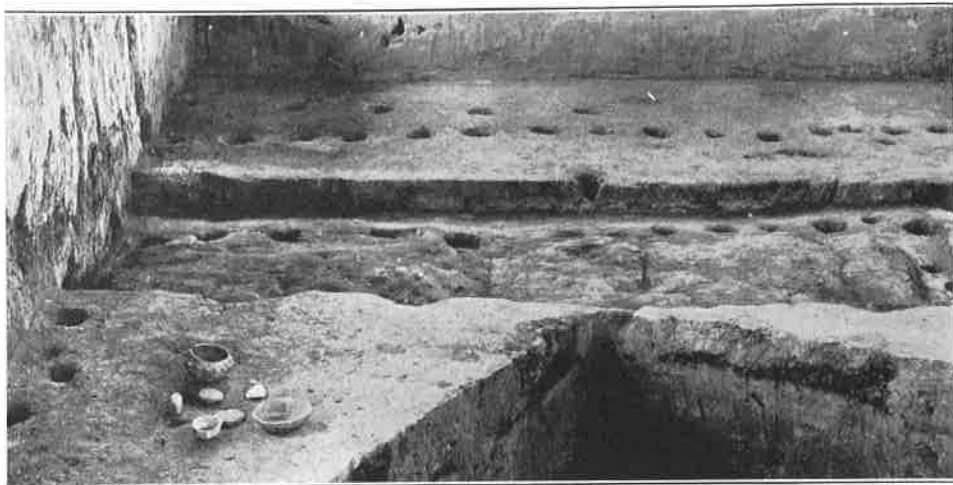
sand years; different students making various estimates within this range. However, at Folsom, New Mexico, a certain type of projectile point has been found in association with extinct bison bones. Also, at Bishops Cap, human bones intermixed with bones of extinct horse and camel have been found. In the last few months in Nebraska another find of this character has been uncovered by erosion. In Europe much work has been done, and each of the four glacial periods have been identified. By these identifications and stratifications the archaeologists have been able to determine fairly well what animals and type of man inhabited Europe at each period. As each sheet of ice was formed and receded certain characteristic animals existed, leaving remains which have been identified and classified. It has been estimated that man has inhabited Europe from one hundred thousand to four hundred thousand years. Man seems to have originated in Asia. The oldest or earliest known type of Dawn Man was found in Java by Dubois, a Dutch surgeon, in 1891, under fifty feet of strata. From this find, which embraced the top part of the skull, a thigh bone and two molar teeth, this Dawn type of man is called *Pithecanthropus erectus*. The stratum in association with these remains is considered early Pleistocene, and has been estimated as old as a million years. Java was at that time a part of Asia.

From this information the deduction that man's habitation on this continent is rather recent is evident from the anthropologist's viewpoint. Yet, the study of man of the prehistoric period becomes vastly intriguing when the student begins to analyze and discover the vast material available and contrasts the cultural qualities displayed in the various sections of this country; the Maya being the most complex and highly developed. Others of interest are the Toltec, Mixtec and Cliff-dwellers. In the Mississippi Valley the Mound Builders should be the most interesting to us, since the material is close at hand and available in great quantities. There are in the state of Kentucky alone about fifteen thousand remains, and in other states in the Mississippi Valley and its tributaries a corresponding number, all similar in type except the Serpent Mound in Ohio and the Effigy Mounds in Wisconsin. These mounds were built to represent birds and animals instead of having been constructed along geometric lines.

In discussing the importance of taking steps at once to save for posterity and science these ancient remains, little time has been left to report the work at Wickliffe, Kentucky. Much credit should be given Dr. Walter B. Jones, director in charge of the Alabama Museum of Natural History, and his expert staff for their aid, help and efficient work in handling the development of the Wickliffe Mounds. Their splendid work at Moundville, Ala., and elsewhere, enabled them to begin the development of this work with the experience and skill of long training in handling excavations in a highly technical and scientific way. Their love of archaeology and interest in preserving in every possible way the records contained therein prompted them to undertake this task. The exactness of execution speaks for

Fig. 4. Section of burial tombs showing burials with pottery, ornaments, and implements. The skeletons are being treated with acids produced by decay. The acids are being neutralized by the skeletons.

Fig. 5. Temple showing three religious altars. The holes where posts have decayed are shown in the clay floor.



itself and further emphasizes the fact that experts of long training should alone do this character of work.

The purpose and intent is for the preservation of these earthworks, the advancement of science and education. These remains have been willed to the state and will belong to posterity as a part of the State Park System administered by proper authorities capable of handling them in the best possible way.

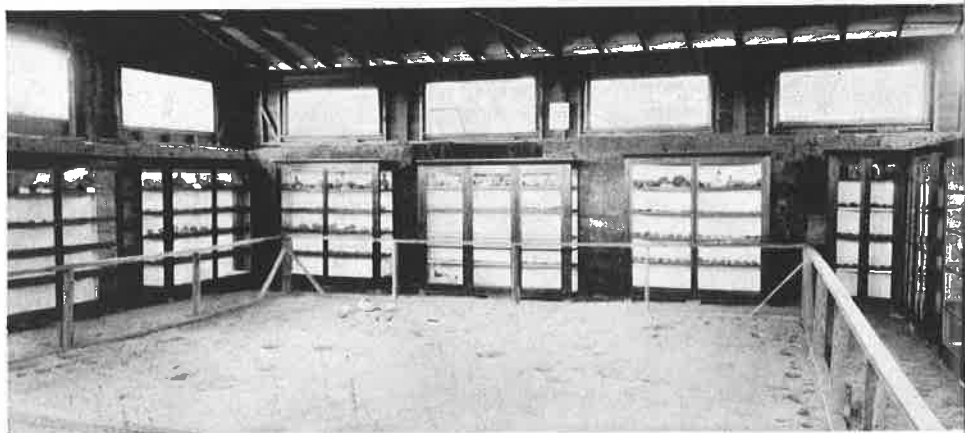


Fig. 6. Council House floor showing post molds and fireplaces. In the wall cases are part of a very extensive collection of artifacts.

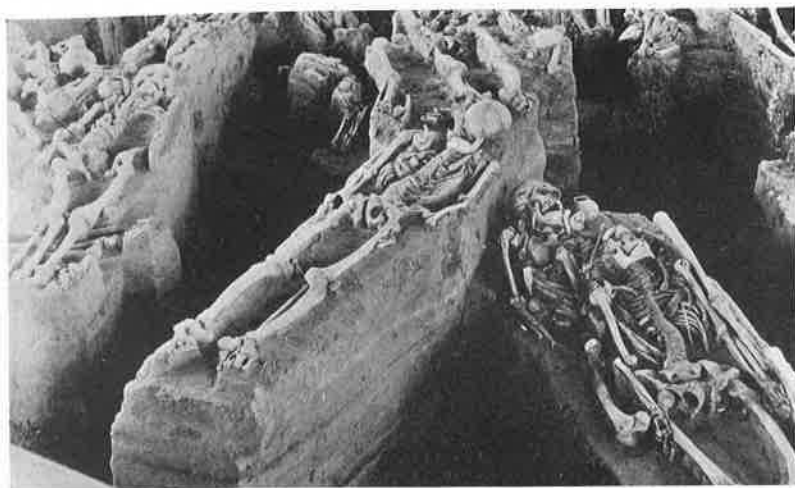


Fig. 7. Burial Tomb showing both the extended and bundle type of burials.

The work completed to date embraces three mounds which have been partially excavated. The excavations have been covered by three buildings each about forty feet square. In one building known as the Burial Mound is more than one hundred forty burials in situ with all their artifacts as found with them. These embrace pottery—plain and effigy in type—chipped flint implements, arrow points, ceremonial spears, copper on wood ornaments, the copper originating in Wis-

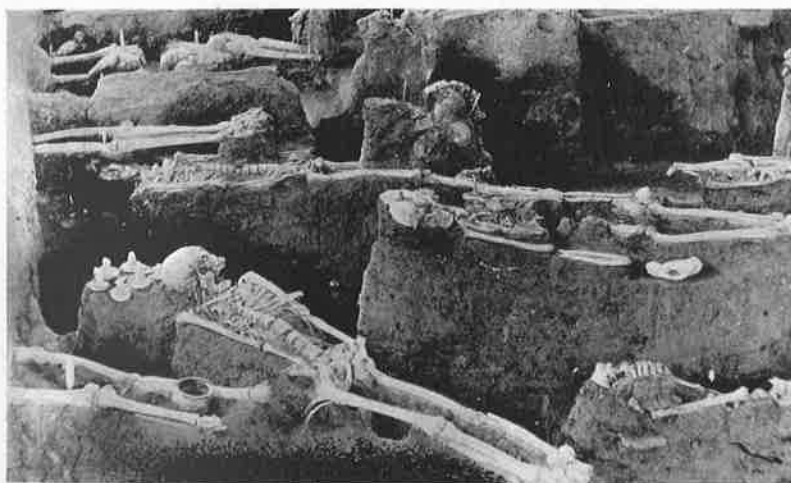


Fig. 8. A Woman Pottery Maker with her tools at her head. Some of the pieces of oddly-shaped pottery associated with the burials may, perhaps, have been this woman's handwork.





Fig. 9. Burial Tombs. Five burials superimposed on one another are to be seen.

consin, flake mica originating perhaps in North Carolina. Fluorspar ornaments from the Rosiclairie, Illinois, district, marine shell ornaments and implements, lead and hematite ore from distant places.

The burials embrace a cross section of the population that once lived, worshiped and worked in this place. Mere infants are to be seen. All ages are represented, including a female who had lost all of her teeth before death. A potter of short stature and with her six pottery trowels and other tools. This mound is about one-tenth excavated and contains three types of burials, intermixed and not intrusive: The prone or extended, the bundle or basket, and, almost in the center of the mound, a crematory basin containing charred human bones. Tests made elsewhere indicate there should be a total of eight hundred to one thousand burials in this mound.

The second mound contained at the base void post molds, denoting the complete outline of a building with doorway, and drainage ditch outside the four walls as indicated by post molds. It is rectangular in shape and approximately twenty-one by twenty-three feet. In this building are other post molds where stakes had been driven to support the roof, furniture or benches; three fireplaces, two alongside each other and one set apart, charred corncobs of primitive type, a bone turkey caller and nine pieces of plain pottery, two painted red inside. In this building is housed a collection of stone and pottery artifacts collected within a radius of one hundred and fifty miles over a period of thirty years.

The third building covers a portion of the largest mound in the group. This mound was constructed by carrying earth in baskets from nearby at the rate of thirty to thirty-five pounds per load. It is called "The Temple Mound," and was devoted to religion. There

are many names designating this type of mound, such as ceremonial, altar, fire, or religious, all meaning about the same thing. In this mound at the base a portion of a burned temple building has been uncovered. When this burning building collapsed earth was piled on it, thus reducing it to charcoal. There may be seen the thatched roof, composed of split cane and grass which composed the outer roof material. The charred roof timbers are intact and also the side wall timbers that originally supported that portion of the building. These are the same diameter as the nearby post molds. About midway from base to top another temple building was encountered. A part of this was removed to show portions of both buildings at different levels. A thin layer of earth was left on the second building to show the effects of the heat, from the burning building, on the earth which was heaped on it while burning. In this building three altars were found, one alongside the other, each rectangular in shape, about four by five feet. The cross section of two fire pits at different levels may be seen. These pits are at the same levels as the two buildings.

The area described embraces twenty-five acres in the city limits of Wickliffe, Kentucky. It is on a natural bluff or fortification overlooking the river at the point where the Ohio River joins the Mississippi River.

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### MORE CHILDREN—FEWER TEACHERS

Approximately 200,000 certificated teachers are unemployed; 18,600 fewer teachers, it is estimated, are employed in city schools today than in 1931. Thousands more have been dismissed from private schools and colleges. Small percentages of graduates of teacher-training institutions are finding positions.

If we decided to operate city schools today with the same number of pupils to a teacher that we had in 1930, it would be necessary to hire more than 26,000 additional teachers.

If we decided to provide education for the 2,280,000 children 6 to 15 years of age not now in school, it would be necessary to add 76,000 teachers.

Thus, if the United States were really determined to give all of its children the minimum essentials of a modern education, it would be necessary to engage one-half of all certificated teachers now unemployed. Businesses that increase take on more help. School enrollment has increased more than a million since 1930—but the number of teachers, city and rural, decreased more than 30,000. Teachers are unemployed, but classes grow larger. One State has 44 pupils per teacher. The average for five States is more than 40. Teachers are unemployed despite the fact that more than 1,500,000 children will this year be taught six months or less.—*School Science and Mathematics*.