

WARREN KING MOOREHEAD—HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO ARCHAEOLOGY IN ILLINOIS

By C. C. BURFORD
Urbana

One of our greatest American archaeologists, Warren King Moorehead, was born of American missionary parents in Sienna, Italy, March 10, 1868. When he was four, his parents returned to the United States, to Xenia, Ohio, where his father served many years as a professor in the theological seminary. Ohio became in reality the home state of Moorehead, and Xenia, his home town.

Moorehead attended Denison University, at Granville, Ohio, as a member of the class of 1886. Denison granted him the honorary degree of Doctor of Science in 1930; in 1901, he received an honorary Master of Arts from Dartmouth College, and in 1927, an honorary Doctorate of Science from Oglethorpe University.

He became a field man, as we say, in the study of American Indian archaeology. He took to the field. He was not a trained, professional archaeologist, as we know them today, with earned doctorates from leading universities.

Moorehead became infatuated as a young man with Indian remains in Ohio, especially the Serpent Mound, Fort Ancient in Warren County, and many other notable earthworks across central and southern Ohio. When only 21, he had undertaken on his own initiative excavations at Fort

Ancient and had published an article on that great work of prehistoric man.

"Fort Ancient was probably the first of a number of causes for which Moorehead worked. It was largely due to his ceaseless efforts that the site was preserved as an Ohio State Park. He undertook excavations in Ohio for four years."¹

Moorehead served through 1890 as an assistant under Dr. Thomas Wilson in the Smithsonian Institution. He investigated Sioux uprisings in Minnesota, being especially interested in the Ghost Dance and in the "Messiah Craze," as the latter was known. He was interested in the American Indian, as a man and as a group, as well as in American Indian artifacts.

He was early in the field of archaeology in the United States. He was 22 years old when the University of Chicago was chartered in 1880, still older when its Department of Anthropology was opened. He was too early to become a professional archaeologist, as we know scholarly, trained men in the work today. Moorehead worked and studied for the most part on his own. He was self-taught; he studied as he worked and learned in the field.

¹ Douglas S. Byers, Biography of Moorehead, *American Anthropologist*, vol. 41, no. 2, April-June, 1939.

He was 35 years old when the Robert S. Peabody Foundation for Archaeology was founded at Phillips Academy, Andover, Mass. Phillips Academy is one of the few secondary schools, possibly the only one, in the United States with a Department of Archaeology, with staff, museum, and library. Moorehead became Director of this work in 1907.

In 1892, at the age of 24, Moorehead led an expedition into southwestern Ohio to collect material for the World's Fair (Columbian Exposition), in Chicago. One assignment was to open a mound on the farm of M. C. Hopewell. This work first uncovered the remarkable Hopewell culture, as we have known it.²

Moorehead was continually occupied with surveys. In his eagerness to explore new areas, he often found sites, then left to others the solutions to the problems which he had raised. He constantly went forward, starting many new studies, but leaving many unfinished, which may be regarded as one of his major defects. Yet his bibliography, in small type, fills five pages. He wrote seven volumes, scores of articles and reports.

Moorehead was attracted to the Cahokia Mounds, northwest of East St. Louis, Ill., and began a scientific study of these mounds in 1922. He carried on the studies in 1923, 1924, 1927, and 1928, for the most part in the summers, as he was also busy with his duties as Director of the Peabody Museum at Andover.

The work on the Cahokia Mounds was done under the direction of the University of Illinois, although at no time was Moorehead a member of the faculty of the University. President David Kinley, aware of the need for the scientific study of the Cahokia Mounds, designated funds for this study. It is believed that Moorehead never lectured on the campus of the University of Illinois.

Mound technique at the Cahokia area was under the direction of Jay L. B. Taylor. Moorehead and Taylor also made surveys of the Illinois River area, in which the University of Illinois has since done notable work.

The University was generous in publishing the work of Moorehead and Taylor at Cahokia Mounds.³ And well the University could be liberal, as the work of Moorehead at Cahokia Mounds led to the acquisition by the State of Illinois of the area as a state park in 1925.

Monk's Mound, without question the stand-out eminence in this large area, with possibly 80 mounds, large and small, is one of the great remains of the American Indians in the United States. Few other mounds—or even any other man-made mound—can compare with it.

We owe to Warren King Moorehead, in large part, the preservation of the Cahokia Mounds area and the continued study of American Indian life and artifacts in that region—one of the most important in the United States. Had he done nothing else he would still have made a tremendous contribution to the study of archaeology in Illinois.

² Thorne Deuel, Director, Illinois State Museum, gives Moorehead full credit for the first report on Hopewell as follows:—"The term . . . derives from the name of M. C. Hopewell, owner of the farm which was located and reported upon by the late Dr. Warren King Moorehead in 1892." (Thorne Deuel, *Scientific Papers*, edited for the Illinois State Museum, vol. 5, page 253, 1952.)

³ Univ. of Ill. Bull., vol. 19, no. 35; vol. 26, no. 4, pp. 9-106, an unusually long report by Moorehead, and *Mound Technique*, Jay L. B. Taylor.

He served, across the years, in a wide variety of assignments. President Theodore Roosevelt in 1909 made him a member of the Board of Indian Commissioners. He remained a member—eventually becoming its senior member—for 24 years, until its dissolution in 1933. Moorehead was interested in the welfare of contemporary American Indians, especially in their property rights, which he believed had been abused.

Moorehead rendered continued notable service as Director of the Peabody Museum at Phillips Academy until he retired in 1938, one year before he died. Its work attained high recognition in the field of American Indian archaeology.

Moorehead was a dynamic figure in the development of archaeology in the United States. He investigated hundreds of village sites, camp sites,

and mounds. He studied the Cliff Dwellers ruins in the San Juan Valley, an investigation sponsored jointly by the Peabody Museum of Harvard University, the American Museum of Natural History, and the Smithsonian Institution; the Lake Champlain region; and sites in Connecticut, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania.

Warren King Moorehead was always an eager worker, never sparing of himself. He was frequently, usually, a pioneer, yet his work was scientific. Some professional archaeologists have criticized, even attacked, Moorehead upon certain aspects of his pioneer undertakings, yet Moorehead's attainments rank high in the development of American Indian archaeology. But of all his work, we in Illinois cherish most his study of the Cahokia Mounds.