

Archaeology in Southern Illinois

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In previous meetings of the Illinois Academy of Science, the writer has discussed various prehistoric remains in southern Illinois and pointed out possibilities for archaeological research. The present paper makes a suggestion for a possible means of coordinating the various men and agencies interested in the field of archaeology so that the entire field can be more thoroughly covered and made available for scientific study.

There is a large number of persons in southern Illinois actively engaged in making collections of Indian artifacts. Many of these men have in turn a considerable following of farmers, schoolboys, hard-road workers, etc., who keep them informed on specimens that may have been found and on sites that have been visited or discovered. Of course the collector has to pay small amounts for this service, but it seems worth while. Some of these men are thus enabled to have such a wide acquaintance that they are kept in very close touch with archaeological discoveries.

The question comes up as to whether it would not be desirable for some organization such as the State Historical Society, the Forestry Service, State Parks, or the Department of Archaeology at the University of Chicago, to organize a clearing house in which permanent records of the findings of these men in the field could be assembled.

There are, to be sure, many objections to overcome in a plan of this sort. In the first place the collectors themselves will object. Many of them feel that the professional scientists have not been especially scientific in their work nor friendly in their attitude, and so hesitate to divulge the location of promising sites. For instance it is claimed the scientist does not remain in touch with areas studied after he has completed his field-work and hence sometimes fails to note some of the most interesting and valuable finds.

On the other hand the scientific organizations have a contempt for the research ability of the layman and feel that they should not work with the "Pot-Hunters". Still, since the local collectors will continue to excavate, explore, and collect, even if the work is done merely to secure specimens, an interview will frequently give much information regarding the occurrence of various artifacts. Again, many of the local collectors have had good training. For instance one man worked for some time with Dr. Moorhead, while others have collected in the local area and have really become specialists in the local field. In fact some of these men have been able to draw interesting, tentative conclusions and, from their reading and actual finds, produce considerable supporting evidence.

Another objection is the cost of clerk hire, postage, traveling expenses, etc., but here also the cost would be less than that of maintaining a few students in the field. Federal funds might even be secured to carry on this work as a part of the Forestry Preserve movement, or in connection with some other form of public work.

All of these obstacles would serve to hinder the successful carrying through of this scheme for cooperative research; and yet it would seem that

the State Historical Society or other central agency could recognize in some way the work of these private collectors through a journal such as that of the Academy of Science if not through money. A small sum expended for travel, photographs, and carefully written records would result in a vast amount of information, from which the research men could generalize and draw conclusions supplementing and verifying the interpretation of actual scientific exploration.

The larger and more interesting sites might be secured by the state for public parks and excavated like the sites at Wyckliff, Kentucky, and Lewis town, Illinois. These new parks would possess a far greater drawing power than that of the Forest Preserves and State Parks whose main attraction is their unusual scenery.

While there may be other means for securing the cooperation and support of the local collectors, the writer feels keenly the need for some integrating agency that will in a mutually helpful and friendly manner unify the work of the scientific specialist, and the local collector. After that is accomplished the joint results should be made available to the general public.