

A PRELIMINARY SURVEY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE WABASH VALLEY

BY

VERNE KINIETZ

University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois

In the summer of 1930, the University of Illinois, through the department of the Illinois Archaeological Explorations and with additional funds from the Smithsonian Institution, began a preliminary survey of the archaeological remains of the Illinois side of the Wabash valley. Dr. F. M. Vreeland of De Pauw University conducted the survey. He was assisted throughout the summer by F. M. Williams and for a short time by the writer.

The aim of the project was to make a rapid reconnaissance of the archaeological remains of the region with a view to future excavation and for a groundwork for a complete survey to be made later.

In thirteen counties the survey located 710 mounds, 71 camp or village sites and 39 collections. Many of the mounds had been demolished either by vandals or by cultivation of the fields in which they were located. Not accounted for in this total are 19 doubtful areas that were reputed to be mounds by local tradition, a few of which may be mounds but whose exteriors are so changed that only excavation will reveal what they are.

These thirteen counties were in two tiers, one fronting on Wabash River and the other the next line of counties to the west and through most of which flows Little Wabash River, a tributary of the Wabash. The larger portion of the mounds was found in the first tier of counties, usually on the ridge or line of hills which marks the boundary of the river flood-plain.

The Chenoweth group in Clark County, composed of sixty-two mounds, was the largest and most impressive. It is possible that the group was larger at one time, as the whole group is under cultivation. A small group of only ten mounds is located in the Dogtown hills near the town of Dogtown in White County, overlooking Wabash River half a mile away. Three of the group have been plowed over but are otherwise untouched. Two of the group are in a cemetery and have been opened in digging graves for recent burials. It is from these that we learn what we may expect to find in the others. Although no scientific observer was present, Dr. Sibley of Carmi obtained from one of the men who dug the grave some pipes and some sheets of mica with which the grave was lined. The other five mounds are in a wooded patch across the road and are untouched except for some small holes, dug by vandals, that damaged nothing more than the symmetry of the mound. One is seldom so fortunate as to see small mounds like these with their original contours.

Lawrence County is the location of a group of twenty-six mounds with a well-defined village site. All of the mounds are small and have either been plowed over considerably or have been tampered with by pothunters, who have left no record of what the mounds contained. Seven of the group are arranged in a horse-shoe formation on a bluff overlooking a stream.

Another noteworthy group of forty-four mounds and a village site was found on a ridge overlooking Embarrass River in Jasper County. The ridge is approximately a mile long and from a quarter to a third of a mile wide.

Conclusions as to the contents of the mounds cannot be made as the survey was solely exploratory, but there can be no question of the wealth of archaeological material in the region.