Although Willard H. Davis (1843-1920) published only three brief notes on archaeology, he was recognized as the leading authority on the prehistory of the lower Muskingum Valley during the latter part of the nineteenth century, so much so, in fact, that Warren K. Moorehead relied almost entirely upon Davis' work in writing the chapter on the lower Muskingum in his PRIMITIVE MAN IN OHIO (1892) and again in 1897.

Biographical data on Davis, who never married, has proven elusive, and it is not known how his interest in archaeology began. One of five children of Willard and Caroline Shephard Davis, Willard H. Davis was born in Lowell, Washington Co., Ohio, August 7, 1841, according to his death certificate, although other sources give 1843, which agrees with census information, and is believed to be the correct date. His great grandfather, Capt. Daniel Davis, was one of the original forty-eight emigrants to Marietta in 1788 and settled on land in the Bear Run Allotment on the site of Lowell (Marietta Daily REGISTER-LEADER, June 17, 1920; Williams 1881).

When Willard's father died, probably around 1869, his widow and son Willard moved to the town of Harmar, opposite Marietta, at the mouth of the Muskingum, where they lived with Catherine Davis' son-in-law, George W. Reed, a druggist, and her daughter, Mary C. (Davis) Reed. Willard clerked in his brother-in-law's drug store "for a brief time," according to his obituary, before moving back to Lowell. He is listed as a photographer in the 1880 U.S. population schedules, living with his mother. The 1900 schedule lists him as a druggist, living alone.

Deeds records suggest that Davis left the area around 1908, and this is confirmed by his obituary notice, which states that he moved to Florida about that time. There he managed the Winterhaven farm of his nephew, Jesse D. Snyder (son of George and Elizabeth Davis Snyder) until his death on June 11, 1920. He is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery, in Winterhaven (Polk Co., Fla. death certificate 7061).

Davis' published archaeological contributions can only be described as meager at best. The earliest of these is an 1893 letter to the editor of the AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN correcting a misstatement by Warren K. Moorehead in his PRIMITIVE MAN IN OHIO. Moorehead, in his chapter on the lower Muskingum Valley, relied heavily upon correspondence with Davis (letter dated December 14, 1891, not found in Moorehead's papers at the Ohio
WILLARD H. DAVIS, 1843-1920
(Norris Schneider collection)

Historical Society) but for some reason insisted that all of the skeletons which Davis had found represented dolichocephalic ("long headed") individuals. Davis' letter to the editor indicated that this was the exact opposite of the facts, all of his skeletal material being from brachycephalic ("short headed") individuals. In his report of 1896 field work in the Muskingum, Scioto, and Ohio valleys (Moorehead 1897), heavy reliance is again placed upon "the testimony of Mr. Willard H. Davis, of Lowell, Washington County, who is better posted than any one else" on the archaeology between McCon-
nelsville and Marietta. Although nothing really new is added to the 1897 account, Moorehead did excise references to the dolichocephalic nature of skulls found in the Mrs. Henry Hall mound and other Muskingum Valley sites.

In 1895 Davis published a brief note in THE ARCHAEOLOGIST, describing with considerable precision a pottery vessel washed out of the Muskingum River near the southwest end of the Lowell Bridge. The pot is clearly a shell-tempered Fort Ancient vessel with two punctate strap handles, a punctate rim border, and zig-zag incising around the rim. The present whereabouts of this vessel is unknown.

Davis' only other published archaeological contribution is a brief description of a knobbed crescent bannerstone found near DeVola, Washington Co., Ohio. This was published in POPULAR SCIENCE (Davis 1900), where Davis speculates that the crescent may have been "worn on the head by some medicine man or other dignitary," not his happiest scientific conclusion.

Undoubtedly Davis' most valuable contribution is the two diaries reproduced herein. The originals are in the Washington Co. file in the Department of Archaeology at the Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, and we greatly appreciate the oppor-
tunity to publish them here. It is unclear precisely when or how the Ohio Historical Society acquired these diaries. At some point, H. Holmes Ellis produced a typescript of the second diary, adding a number of annotations and assigning site numbers to Davis' various excavations. Ellis' annotations are reproduced herein in parentheses, with the notation "HHE." Several relevant photographs, apparently acquired with the diaries, are also reproduced herein. The help of Norris Schneider, Zanesville, Ohio, is gratefully acknowledged, as he provided a number of additional valuable photographs of Davis and his excavations, photographs acquired from Davis' nephew Jesse Snyder.

It remains unknown how many mounds and other sites Davis explored. Moorehead (1892:27) notes that Davis mentions some twenty more mounds than those described in PRIMITIVE MAN IN OHIO, and Davis doubtless examined many more than this. The limitations of his excavation technique and general archaeological knowledge are obvious, though not atypical of his time. It should also be noted that the Davis "diaries" were written some time after the fact, as indicated by his uncertainty regarding various dates.

Willard Davis excavating a mound, possibly on Lowell Hill (Norris Schneider collection).
In the latter part of August or the first of September 1879 Frank (Davis) and I opened the middle mound of the three on Walts hill (probably Walter Davis, Willard's elder brother - J.L.M.). Commenced digging E & W through the middle of the mound which was full of flat stones. Found that we had struck directly over the skeleton which laid with its head to the East - feet West the head being about the centre of the mound. Found the skeleton was surrounded with flat stones set up edgeways - those at the feet reaching the surface. There was but one large stone about from one and two inches thick which covered the skeleton and there was another under it. The top stone had settled to within an inch or two of the lower stone the skeleton being between them and about 2 1/2 feet from the top of the mound and apparently onto original surface of the ground. The stones set up around was somewhat coffin shaped. Before taking the top stone off it was cut through with the mattock and pieces of the skull bone first attracted our notice. It then being noon we went to dinner - after which we cleaned the top stone and raised it up whole (or what was left after breaking a small portion over the head off) exposing almost the entire skeleton - for the feet extended beyond the foot stone and the head lacked about as much of reaching the head stones.

Around the wrists we found ornaments consisting of copper beads (which seemed to have been hammered thru and then rolled around the strings - some of which was preserved by the rust of the copper consisting of three strands of doubled string which looked like flax or hemp) and two kinds of teeth - one kind I suppose to be bear (Davis had originally written "beaver" but crossed it out - J.L.M.) - the others (Elk) I have never seen or heard of any like them. The latter were very soft and difficult to handle without breaking before they were dry. There was also a piece of rolled copper about an inch long which seemed to be in the hand. The bones were in a better condition around the beads the copper rust seems to have preserved them. The most of the bones were very soft and it was almost impossible to get any up without breaking them. Found 27 teeth in pretty good preservation. We found no flints nor arrows or hatchets of any kind. I kept a few pieces of the skull, the teeth, some of the bones of the thumb & fingers and a few other pieces of the bones and a piece of bone supposed to be from the leg of a deer. The balance we put back into the mound and recovered them.
Will Longley assisted us in the P.M. Mother & Mrs. Cassel also came up. Several boys were up too.

We also dug part way into the east mound and found a few large stones - but night coming on we left and did not finish it for two or three days - and failed to find any thing and filled the hole up again during March 1880.

Frank & I went there one Sunday and found some fragments of teeth and bones which were so decayed that we did not discover them when we dug for them.

During the latter part of Feb. or first of March, Frank and I went up on the hill and commenced digging the largest (or West) mound of the three (group) on Walts hill.

We dug around the layers of the stone in the mound which we found to be 7 or 8 feet broad and 10 or more long, all sitting leaning with the top towards the center. We dug around the western side to the original surface and part way down on the N.E. & S.E. sides - the first day. The weather turned cold & windy and night coming on we went to supper & then went back in the Eve - but it was so cold & windy that we could not do anything but as we had plenty of company we managed to roast a chicken by a tree we had set fire to.

The next day (Sunday) several of the boys insisted on going up and completing the excavation which we did. After taking out a great many flagstones we came to the coffin shaped place in the center - it was five or six feet long and 2 or 3' broad - in which we found a skeleton which was covered with several flat stones.

The stones were piled all over it almost to the top of the ground - the skeleton was about 3 feet from the top of the mound and very near the surface of the ground, and was apparently put into the ground very roughly and was considerably bent up, the head to the east. I saved some of the bones - the lower jaw, also some pieces of the skull & most of the upper jaw, and the thigh bone of one leg.

(Marginal note: Found a stone that had 17 rough holes in it. 9 on one & 8 on the other side. Showed it had been in fire. Was near the heads on E. side.)

There were no ornaments or implements of any kind found. While digging on the S. E. side of the opening before coming to the coffin part we found a skull & pieces of jaw and teeth but could not trace the skeleton - (on cleaning the bones some time after the latter was found to have been a child which must have been not more than six or seven months of age for the teeth were still under the bone of the jaw.)

Near the surface of the mound we found a leg bone but
couldn't tell the kind as it was badly broken by the mattock before we saw it. Piece of femur.

(Marginal note: Uncle Jesse told me that he & Geo. & Barnum Buell once dug there & found a skeleton. The mound showed it had been disturbed.)

On or about Tuesday, April 27, 1880 I was on the hill and met Mr. Watkins. We were coming down to town and when we come to the mounds we were looking about & found some bones under the stones the skeleton was on. Upon examination we found there was another skeleton under them. In P. M. Frank & I went up & got Mr. W. and went to work. We found a complete skeleton immediately under where the one taken out last winter laid. The skull was whole and was separated from the balance of the body by a stone having the appearance of being cut off at the time of death or burial, as it was several inches above the head of the body & was turned with the crown towards the body. The skull was whole but cracked - the jaw had dropped three or four inches and was turned over.

The head was between two flag stones set up so as to keep the pressure off and not break it. Near the head was found a land turtle's shell which had been smoothed out on the inside supposed to have been used for a drinking cup - also around the head & body were found seven or eight small tomahawk or stone ornaments composed of dark grey colored slaty looking sandstone - also two arrow heads. We did not complete the job the first day because it got dark, so Frank, Herman Becker and I went back the next day and finished it. We also dug into the connection between the middle & east mounds and found a small ball of brown hematite iron ore. It was not round 'but flattened at the ends making it more like a cylinder than a ball. We also found traces of a skeleton some fragments of teeth and a large bone of the leg - could not trace any connection between them - think they may have belonged to two skeletons - think there may be several more there. There were not many stones around them, so they were not very well preserved. The stones seem to protect them.

Upon clearing the bones & skull the latter came to pieces and I found an arrow in the center of it which had gone through the right temple as there was a hole there. The face bones were very much decayed and some small pieces missing (nose, etc.) the upper jaw was entirely toothless and had been so long before death - only one tooth was missing from the lower jaw before death.

I put the skull together all but some of the face bones - upper jaw etc. & will put them in place as soon as I can get hold of a skull to see where they belong. The turtle skull was pretty badly broken but I put it into place as near as I could.
that afternoon. I'll write on a subject which
will come. My poor old country, our
friendship is firm, solid, sound - in
the whole. Your love, long live, long
life, birthday of Christ. The
Hall of the picture. The picture
was not. The picture was not.
When I look on a picture of a
picture, I am too sad. The
picture was not. The picture
was not.
May 13th Frank and I went up on the plains and dug into the Mound in the road by the grave yard (Greenlawn Cemetery, in upper Lowell - J.L.M.). The road track has worn it pretty nearly to the original center of the mound & it has been more or less dug into by different parties, but I never heard of anything but charcoal being found.

We commenced as near the center as we could guess about on a level with the road, and dug off some of the highest part too - that is where it sloped next the track.

We cut the side so as to see the layers of earth & charcoal. (The highest part of the mound is now is about 7 or 8 feet perpendicular above the surrounding ground) about 3 feet from the bottom we found a bed of pitch or yellow pine charcoal on a bed slightly hollowing. In it we found a flint spear about 5 inches long, a gorget (oval) about 4 in. long by one & a half by 1-1/2 with two holes - of greenish & striped slate - also a flat one of same material (point broken off) which had apparently been a broken one remodeled - with two holes (drawing here) and a square piece of one broken at the hole. A sandstone tablet about 3 x 4 x 1/2 inches, also a tablet about 1-1/2 x 4 x 1 in. sandstone (burned till red) also one 1 x 3 x 3/4 in. (broken) sandstone. One tablet diamond shaped about 2-1/2 or 3 in. sides 1/2 thick shaped (drawing here) sandstone. Also some sandstones partly dressed out and three small pieces of copper. (The fragmentary "shovel-shaped" or "anchor" gorget described and illustrated by Davis is a distinctive Middle Woodland artifact that has been described from the Muskingum Valley by Converse, 1981, and Patterson, 1970 - J.L.M.)

About six inches below the firebed or altar of very compact sandy earth - (the whole mound being composed of same material as the surrounding soil) we came to a bed of charcoal composed of big wood of all sizes up to a foot in diameter the largest being on the under side. Much or most of it being about 6 in. in diameter. All pitch pine - a few small knots of partly burned wood was found. The big logs were thoroughly charred. Beneath the charcoal was another compact firebed about 18 inches from the bottom of the mound. There was two more layers of very fine charcoal - the lower, thin and on the original surface, the next about 3 in. thick. There were layers of coal & earth clear to the top of the mound. At the bottom of the big bed was found a burnt piece of a skull bone of some animal supposed to have been a dog.

Also found pieces of a tube made of clay & sand but it had been burned so we could only pick some small pieces. The above was found with the other articles.

During the fall of 1879 in company with O. L. Anderson and the Mason boys we dug into the mound on the point above Mrs. Henretta Stacy's house - it had been opened before consequently we found nothing. I afterwards learned that Col.
Mason's uncle excavated it and found a large skeleton buried in a sitting posture - the stones having been so snugly placed around it that but little dirt was on the bones. There were some stone implements and ornaments but I could not learn the particulars.

Marion Longley, Charlie Cassel and I dug into the mound on the hill just back of J. J. Stacy's house (last fall) - did not find anything - it had been opened before - do not know who opened it. May 22, 1880.

On Sunday May 16, 1880 Albert Stacy, Wm. Barnhart & I went down on the high porch just opposite Dad Stowe's and dug into the mound there. It had been partly opened before & had a couple of trees on it. There were lots of flag stones there - we found nothing in it. We did not dig much. Near the mound we found a nearly round pebble stone of about a lb. weight.

Sunday December 5, 1880 Frank and I dug some in the mound on the point on Walt's hill above Mrs. Halls house and took out the skull and nearly all the bones of the skeleton. They were taken out about 60 years ago and replaced in a pile. We had partly opened the mound early in the fall - but the ground being so dry and hard that we waited until the fall rains should soften it a little. We had dug down about 3 feet and came to a bed of bone ashes about 2 or 3 inches thickness beneath which we found the earth burned to a brick red. We found several fragments of bones scattered through the earth where they had been left when the mound was first opened. We had missed the bones (*) as they had been piled up. The freezing and thawing had loosened the earth so the bones were exposed so we soon took out the skull & larger bones - they were in a remarkably good state of preservation. Night adjourned.

(* W.H.D. footnote: We had dug as near the center as we could & they had been piled to one side of the hole so we dug to one side of & below them.)

Sunday, December 19, 1880 Albert S. and I went up to the above mentioned mound and continued the excavation. We found a few more of the bones and a small hatchet or tomahawk about 1-1/2 inches long also an arrow and a piece of a dark bluish or blackish sandstone whetstone shaped piece. The day being rather cold & the ground frozen we did not dig very much - found that the burnt earth extended to a considerable depth and that the bone ashes extended over the whole of the space we had excavated - about 3 x 6 feet. Night coming on we adjourned. WHD.

End of Vol. 1

(Further excavations on the Hall farm were conducted by Davis in December, 1888 (Moorehead 1897:205) J.L.M.)
Willard Davis excavating a mound burial. Clearly an Early Woodland (Adena) mound, as indicated by the expanded center bar gorget and Robbins stemmed blade, this site cannot be identified with any of those described in Moorehead (1892) or Davis' diaries. (Norris Schneider Collection)
On Sunday, May 29, 1881, I went down to George's (George Snyder - H.H.E.) and got his mattock and scoop spade and went up to the oval mound on Wilking's point above Bear Creek (Adams township, Washington County, T.4 N., R.9 W., just W. of mouth of Bear Creek and about 1/2 mi. E. of Lowell, Wn7 - H.H. E.) and began digging just north of the tree near the center. There has been an excavation just south of the tree, the mound is longest N & S. I soon found there was no earth mixed with the shelly stones the mound was built of. About 18 inches from the surface I found a pair of copper wristlets or bracelets lying together: Also fragments of bones, a few pieces of skull, a tooth too. There were pieces of bones all the way down which seemed to have been broken by the stones and had worked down through the crevices. At the bottom I came to a bed of blue clay in which there were fragments of charcoal. Albert Stacy and Frank D. (Frank Davis - H.H.E.) came a short time before I quit and helped a little. I think I shall go there again. The blue clay is about 3 or 4 feet from the top of the mound. I afterwards continued the excavation but found nothing but some fragments of bones and a few bits of fine charcoal in the blue clay at the bottom.

One day early last spring (1880) Leslie Anderson and I went up on Williamson's place (A. E. Williamson on W. side of Cat Creek at Lowell, just N. of mouth of creek, Wn5 - H.H.E.) to a mound I had dug some in last fall and finished the job. We found a skeleton in a sitting posture. With it we found an iron tomahawk about 1-1/2 x 3 inches, very perfect, and an arrow about 4 inches long, very perfect but of very poor quality of flint. All about 3 feet from the top. At another time we went up there and excavated another near the former. Found traces of fire near the surface and a fragment of skull bone but the earth was so wet and muddy that we could not do much and a storm coming on. We had to fill the hole up and quit -- don't think we went far enough.

One day in the latter part of April (1881) or first of May I went over the river and just below the bridge (bridge at Lowell, just E. of bridge and S. side of Muskingum River, Caldwell quad, Wn16 - H.H.E.) I found a burnt place and on digging found pieces of pottery, clam shells, fragments of bones etc. and the skeleton of a child apparently 8 or 10 years old. It was about 6 or 7 feet below the top of the bank. Had been buried in a sitting posture with the face to the
East. There was a flat bone which was rounded at one end and sharpened to a point at the other with the skeleton. The appearance of the earth indicated that there had been a mound built over the skeleton -- that the earth composing it had been taken from the surface of the ground in their camp. The annual deposit from the river had entirely obliterated all traces of the mound on the surface.

I dug in a very small mound on the point below Bear Creek (on Daniel Wilking farm on E. side of mouth of Bear Creek, Mackburg quad., Wn2 - H.H.E.) one day last fall (1880). Found a skeleton and perhaps two about 15 or 18 inches below the surface. Bones hard but all broken up by the limestones piled on them. Found nothing but a small piece of sharpened bone or awl. It got dark and I had to quit -- the day was very windy and disagreeable so I could not do much.

Last summer or fall (1880) Frank (Frank Davis - H.H.E.) and I dug into the big mound on Mrs. Hall's hill (Wn9, T.4 N., R.9 W., on Mrs. Henry Hall's farm, 3/4 mi. WNW of mouth of Bear Creek - H.H.E.). It had been opened by someone and filled up the winter before -- Rumner, I think. We examined it pretty thoroughly but found nothing but stray fragments of burnt bone and little bits of charcoal and what looked like ashes. I think it was a crematory. Frank and I continued our excavation in the mound back of Mrs. Hall's house but only found more bone ashes which must cover the whole extent of the mound. June 8, 1881.

On Monday P.M., July 25, 1881, Frank and I went up the hill (on) Walt's lower place (Walter Davis farm Mackburg quad., about half way between Lowell and mouth of Bear Creek, Wn17 - H.H.E.) and opened the very small mound SE. and near the Walnut tree. The mound was only 10 or 12 feet in diameter and about a foot or 15 inches high and full of stones. Near the surface we found burnt bone, pieces of the skull, part of the jawbone, a tooth or two, and some pieces of the larger bones, but they seemed to have been scattered. A little charcoal was scattered through the mound. Found one very fine small arrow and two pieces of arrows and a piece of very clear flint.

Sunday PM, July 31, 1881, Albert Stacy and I went down to George's (George Snyder's farm 1/2 mi. W. of mouth of Bear Creek, Wn18 - H.H.E.) and dug into the semicircle in the field at the head of the lane and found a sandstone tablet about 2 x 4 inches and half in thickness, rough; also a piece of tomahawk and part of an arrow -- charcoal all through it -- dug a hole about 3 feet square and 2-1/2 or 3 feet deep and came to a skeleton so decayed that we could only trace the large leg bones. Filled the hole up and quit as it got too late to dig more. Aug. 21, 1881.

August 7th (1881) Walt (Walter Davis - H.H.E.) and I had a birthday party at the old spring in PM. We opened the

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largest mound near the head of the lane and found nothing -- don't think we dug enough -- it was too hot to dig.

On Friday, Sept. 30, 1881, Frank and I went up on the hill in AM and dug a little in the bottom of the old mound a little between it and the one next to it but found nothing.

The same day we went up to open the one on Dan Owen's point on the Fair grounds (just W. of Upper Lowell on N. side of Muskingum River, Caldwell quad., between 2 small streams, Wn19 - H.H.E.). Found someone had been there ahead of us but hadn't dug much. We dug considerable more but found nothing -- went to the one on point back of Owen's house but it had been thoroughly opened.

On Sunday Oct. 2, (1881) Frank, Herman Becker, and I went down to the point (on Franz Wilking farm, Macksburg quad., 1/4 mi. W. of the mouth of Bear Creek, Wn7 - H.H.E.) this side of Bear Creek and dug into the next NW mound -- it had been dug into on one side -- the mound had been built of yellow clay and then covered with stones. We found some parts of a skeleton just under the stones. Also found a large perfect arrow with the bones. It was shaped (drawing here).

The same day, Oct. 2 (1881) in PM Frank and I dug in the connection between the middle and eastern mound on Walt's hill (Walter Davis farm, Macksburg quad., Wn8 - H.H.E.). We found a skeleton with the head lying south, feet north. The head was in nearly whole but very much decayed (condition). Near the head I struck a (drawing here) shaped striped slate gorget and broke it in two. Near the waist we found four arrows -- three of them very fine (drawing here) shaped, all alike except the color: 1 white, 1 dirty brownish, and 1 mottled bluish and rusty color, from 4 to 6 inches long, the small one about 1 1/2 inches long. (Davis' sketches indicate a Middle Woodland "shovel-shaped" gorget and corner-notched blades. See reproduction of diary pages - J.L.M.)

The next day, Oct. 3 (1881) Frank, Philip Spies, and I went up and dug some on the N. side of the NE mound. Found the stone placed as if they had the skeleton under them but we found none, nor anything else.

On Sunday, Oct. 9 (1881), Frank and Herman Becker dug some more in the same mound but found nothing -- I was at Relton's that day.

On Sunday, Oct. 16 (1881) Frank, Warren Vaughn, and I went up to dig down in the connection between the middle and NE mound, and found a skeleton about 18 inches from the one we found on the 2nd inst. It was badly decayed. We could not trace it very far. The skull was the soundest part of it. We found no implements of any kind with it.
Top photo - Burial in a mound near Lowell, excavated by Willard Davis. (Norris Schneider collection.

Bottom photo - The same burial reconstructed in the basement of Davis' house. This skeleton reportedly washed down the Muskingum during the 1913 flood. (Ohio Historical Society collection)
On Sunday, Oct. 23 (1881) Frank and I went up and dug further but found nothing.

End of Vol. 2

Acknowledgements

Vivien Marshall, Bradenton, Florida, located Davis' place of burial and determined his date of death. Without her help we would have significantly less information on Davis. As noted in the text, Norris Schneider, Zanesville, Ohio, and Martha Potter Otto, The Ohio Historical Society, permitted us to copy photographs related to Davis' work, as well as the original diaries.

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Local residents look on as bones are uncovered during one of Willard Davis' mound excavations near Lowell. (Norris Schneider collection)