Indian History

SACRIFICES TO PROGRESS

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Although the archeologist is often thought to live entirely in the past, oblivious to all around him and preoccupied solely with long-dead cultures, there is at least one aspect of today’s world which he cannot ignore. The much-publicized “population explosion” is fraught with significance for the archeologist, for housing developments and industrial expansion have destroyed many of the best archeological sites in America, and this destruction is spiraling upward at an ever-increasing rate. Unless matters take a turn for the better—which seems extremely unlikely—the archeologist may become as extinct as the alchemist.

Always consigned to picking up the pieces, the archeologist may soon find that there are no more pieces to pick up. In Ohio alone, probably a week does not pass without a significant site being destroyed. In many cases, such destruction is accidental for the people responsible do not realize that excavation for a new home or for the new shopping center down the street is obliterating an important aboriginal site. In other cases, particularly where industry is concerned, those responsible may know but seldom care.

The result is the same in either case: each year there are fewer pieces of the puzzle left, less and less of the past that can be recaptured. Ohio, undoubtedly one of the richest archeological areas in North America, is particularly hard hit in this respect. Archeologically, it remains more exploited than explored so that what has chanced to remain is all the more important to the scientist. It is particularly regrettable, therefore, that what has accidentally been preserved in Ohio is being destroyed at a faster and faster rate with only minimal efforts to preserve or even to study these vanishing sites.

For example, a very important Fort Ancient site lay on the outskirts of Middleport, Ohio, on the bank of the Ohio River in Meigs County, until the summer of 1965. For over ten years, the city of Middleport had planned to build a sewage disposal plant on the site, but not until the very day that construction began was a qualified archeologist notified. By that time, all that could be done at the site was literally to pick up the pieces. With mixed emotions, amateur archeologists and sight-seers alike watched huge earth-moving equipment slice through a prehistoric Indian cemetery and village site.

A murdered or executed male was discovered in a salvage excavation at the Hobson Site, Middleport, Meigs County, Ohio. Circles indicate location of arrow points.

drawing by William E. Scheele
In an out-of-the-way corner of the site a single burial could be excavated, that of a young man who had been executed or murdered. Rarely are such burials met with, particularly one in which the evidence is so overwhelming: two triangular flint points imbedded in the vertebrae, another flint point in the neck, and a flint and an antler tip point in the rib cage. One can only speculate about the nature of the other dozen or so graves which were destroyed. A single burial in an out-of-the-way portion of the site could be excavated, potsherds and arrowheads could be retrieved from the path of the bulldozer, but only a fraction of the valuable information which this site offered could be recovered. Even this modicum of information would have been lost if a member of the surveying crew had not possessed the intelligence to recognize an Indian site and had the interest to notify an archeologist. A report on the salvage archeology conducted at this site will be published by Cleveland's Natural Science Museum in the Kirtlandia series.

At Athens, Ohio, home of Ohio University, where one might expect a more enlightened attitude, conditions are much the same. A private landowner, Mr. Ralph Daines, anxious to have two mounds on his property properly excavated, had a difficult time finding anyone qualified to do the work; when one of the Daines Mounds was partly excavated, the findings included the oldest known occurrence of corn in eastern North America. What might have been found in an adjoining mound will never be known: a construction firm, intent upon building university housing, destroyed the thousand-year-old mound in a single morning. When the author asked one construction worker to dump the mound's primary burial to one side so that it might be examined, the reply was "We're using this for fill, buddy," whenupon the mound and its contents were evenly distributed over the entire working area and subsequently buried. Ironically, the mound site was actually out of the path of the construction work proper; but all that is left today are a few flint chips and human bones littering the earthen slope behind a new apartment complex.

The story is much the same—even worse in fact—when one enters the northern half of the state. Here, along the shores of Lake Erie, archeologists have been primarily concerned with identifying the remains of the historic Erie Indians and relating the Erie culture to older, prehistoric remains. The Tuttle Hill site at Independence, the hilltop fortification most likely to have provided the key to many of the archeologist's questions about the Eries, was partly excavated in 1930; before further, more refined excavations and interpretations could be made, the entire site was carted away for garden soil and a large industrial plant erected on the site. The Cary site near Bedford has been virtually destroyed by gravel operations, a fate in store for many a site yet remaining in northern Ohio. The Reeves site at Wil-

**ARCHEOLOGICAL FINDS from the Hobson Site, Middleport, Meigs County, Ohio**

Fort Ancient triangular flint points lodged in the centra of the lumbar vertebrae.

Decorated and plain Fort Ancient potsherds; note the large, crude strap handles.

Stone artifacts including a small hematite celt (upper left corner), Archaic stemmed and notched points, and Fort Ancient triangular points.
loughby is now largely covered by a residential area. Super-highways and reservoirs have taken their toll as well. Were the proposed Grand River Reservoir to be built, Ohio archaeology would suffer an incalculable loss, for dozens of sites as yet untouched by trained personnel would be flooded.

In the immediate Cleveland area, most sites have already been engulfed by the expanding city. A few have been preserved, almost inadvertently, in the park system, but housing projects and industrial development have destroyed most known sites. Destruction began as early as 1820 when, it is recorded, Dr. Theodatus Garlick salvaged a few Indian relics from a mound at the corner of Euclid Avenue and East Ninth Street. The destruction has continued unabated to the present, with no relief in sight.

Under such circumstances, the archeologist considers himself lucky to reach a site before it is totally obliterated. If he has time to excavate the site as thoroughly as it deserves, he is indeed fortunate. In the face of oncoming bulldozers, toothbrush and trowel must often be replaced by shovel and spade in an attempt to save as much material as possible. Field techniques that would normally make the archeologist shudder because of their crudity must sometimes be accepted, for any sample is better than none at all.

Such an attitude does not justify careless excavation techniques when there is time for more careful methods to be used. An unfortunate phenomenon, not peculiar to Ohio archeology, is the fact that many important sites are destroyed or badly damaged by amateur archeologists who either do not know proper excavation techniques or else are interested only in adding showy artifacts to their personal collections.

Those sites which have survived are usually badly "potholed" by amateur relic collectors, riddled with irregular pits and disturbed areas, virtually useless to the archeologist. Small wonder then that the amateur is often held in contempt by the professional archeologist, for many such amateur archeologists reduce the science to the level of grave robbing. Occasionally, however, amateur archeologists display a concern for accuracy and a care in excavating that rival the attitude of a trained archeologist. The late Arthur George Smith of Norwalk, Ohio, was an outstanding example of a man whose painstaking and careful work rendered the distinction between amateur and professional practically nonexistent. More recently, the Sugar Creek Chapter of the Archaeological Society of Ohio has undertaken a major excavation of an important Whittlesey-like site near Newcomerstown, Tuscarawas County, Ohio. Some of the members have shown much patience and zeal in the less exciting aspects of digging. Even more outstanding is the remarkable work done by the Aboriginal Explorers’ Club of Wellsville, Ohio, spearheaded by Harry Cline, which culminated in the establishment of the finest private archeological museum in Ohio.

In an attempt to salvage as much as possible from the fast-disappearing sites of northeastern Ohio, the Natural Science Museum has revived an archeological survey program begun in the 1950’s. The aim of the survey is two-fold, for it is attempting both to locate new archeological sites and to excavate previously known sites that are in danger of destruction.

The past summer has been spent in excavating part of a Late Prehistoric “Erie” site at Fairport Harbor, Lake County, Ohio, which will, when analyzed, yield considerable new information about the prehistoric Erie who inhabited this region around 1300 A.D. The Museum also plans to continue excavation of known Erie sites in the hope of delineating their history before all of the remaining shreds of evidence have disappeared.

Without regard for archeology, I-90 slices through Waite Hill, a 4000-year-old hilltop fortification, Lake County, Ohio.