

# The Radiocarbon Date from the Lyman Earthworks (33La2): A Correction and Discussion

By James L. Murphy\*

## ABSTRACT

The previously reported Lyman Site (33La2) radiocarbon date of 2090 B.C. is corrected to 2090 B.P. Likewise, in view of the corrected date, the site's position in the Late Prehistoric period is examined.

---

THE radiocarbon date obtained from the inner earthen embankment at the Lyman (Indian Point) Site, 33La2, Lake County, Ohio, is 2090 B.P. or 140 B.C.  $\pm$  150 years (Crane and Griffin 1970). It was previously incorrectly reported (Murphy 1971) as 2090 B.C. The correct date better fits the suggestion that the earthworks represent an Early Woodland component at the Lyman Site, essentially unrelated to the Late Prehistoric "Whittlesey" component.

Since completion of the Lyman Site report, Brose (1971) has described a small Early Woodland component, considered a hunting camp, a few miles southwest of the Lyman Site. Of the 2 points recovered by Brose, one quite closely resembles Drago's Cresap Point type; the other is a rather undiagnostic point that might be classified as Archaic if found in a surface collection but could as easily be Early Woodland.

Further evidence of Adena-like Early Woodland components in this part of northeastern Ohio is noted by Shane (1967), particularly at the Mohawk Park Rock Shelter, a "lost" site in Geauga County, and the Chagrin Falls Mound I. Distinctive Adena material also turns up in surface collections (Kalmert 1968). Shane has placed these various components in his Leimbach Phase of the ubiquitous "Scioto Tradition," which might better be termed an Ohio Woodland tradition.

Nomenclature aside, the radiocarbon date from the Lyman earthworks is particularly interesting because it compares favorably with the dates available from the Leimbach Site (Shane 1967; Ogden and Hay 1969). The Leimbach Site has yielded radiocarbon dates of 520 B.C., 510 B.C., and A.D. 15. Shane regards all 3 dates as falling within his Leimbach Phase and does not seem to regard 500 years as a rather long term occupation of a single component site.

The interesting fact is that both Leimbach and Lyman occupy fortified hilltops which have always been considered typical Late Prehistoric

---

\*James L. Murphy, Research Assistant, Department of Geology, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio 44106.

"Whittlesey Focus" components. The Leimbach earthworks have disappeared entirely, and the Lyman radiocarbon date, based upon charcoal from the inner earthwork, is the first substantial proof that at least some of the "Whittlesey" hilltop forts are Early Woodland in age. Although Shane (1967) rejects the possibility that the northern Ohio forts are Early Woodland, all of those studied by him have yielded major Early Woodland Leimbach components. Further, Shane does emphasize the occurrence of Leimbach Phase sites on inaccessible, easily fortified hilltops, in contrast with sites of the Adena Phase in southern Ohio.

Shane (1967) suggests that the earthworks or fortified hilltops are Late Woodland in age, dating around A.D. 600-800. The only evidence for this conclusion is the reported occurrence of Late Woodland midden incorporated in the inner earthwork at Burrell Fort, Lorain County. Specifically, Shane reports the discovery of a "Burrell Phase 'Fish Spear'" and 2 Mixer Cordmarked rim sherds, along with an unreported number of thin, grit-tempered, cord-marked body sherds, and a broken, parallel-sided blade. Shane notes that his tentative types Mixer Cordmarked and Leimbach Cordmarked are generally distinguishable only on the basis of rim sherds. The former type seems to be the same as his "Burrell Phase" pottery, which he considers a derivative of his Early Woodland Leimbach Cordmarked. Even these rim sherd types, however, seem to be based on rather minute and variable distinctions which are not confined to one type or the other. Without denying the validity of these 2 rim sherd types, and

certainly without any wish to disparage attempts at refinement in Woodland ceramic typology, it does seem hazardous to "type" a sample consisting of only 2 sherds. Shane himself remarks of the Burrell Fort sherds "although these sherds can be classified in the Scioto series, their precise typology is in question." Nor does the broken, crude, weakly side-notched "Burrell Phase 'Fish Spear'" seem to be particularly convincing evidence of a Late Woodland date for the earthwork at Burrell Fort.

It is curious that Shane specifically assigns all of the hilltop forts studied to his Late Woodland "Burrell Phase," with the notable exception of the earthworks that stood on the Leimbach site. This may be due in part to his obvious desire to regard Leimbach as a pure Early Woodland component. Although Shane recognizes the presence of a Late Woodland component at Leimbach, he is able to write that "The midden represents deposition during a single cultural phase. With the exception of a small number of obviously intrusive items such as triangular projectile points and late prehistoric sherds, the midden contained only artifacts of early Scioto Tradition affiliation." This statement is contradictory, for an Early Woodland midden cannot contain intrusive Late Prehistoric material and still represent a single cultural phase. The thought occurs that if the midden contains "obviously intrusive" articles, it may well contain intrusive material that is not so obvious.

In any case, Leimbach—like all of the hilltop forts studied, with the notable exception of Lyman—contains both an Early Woodland and a Late Woodland component. Lyman has an Early Woodland and a

Late Prehistoric component and has yielded the only reliable radiocarbon date based upon material from an earthwork, strongly suggesting that at least this one "Whittlesey fort" is part of the Early Woodland component at the Lyman site. This in turn suggests that at least some of the other "Whittlesey forts" are also Early Woodland.

There is no reason construction of such earthworks could not have continued throughout the Woodland time span, but there has never been sufficient reason for lumping all of the earthworks into the "Whittlesey Focus." Neither is there reason to place them all in the Late Woodland "Burrell Phase" of the so-called Scioto Tradition. There is, on the other hand, considerable evidence to support the possibility that many of them are a part of the Early Woodland components which so frequently are found on this type of site in northern Ohio.

## REFERENCES

- Brose, David S.  
1971 The Girdled Road Site, an Early Woodland Hunting Station in Lake County, Ohio. *Kirtlandia*, No. 13.
- Crane, H. R., and J. B. Griffin.  
1970 University of Michigan Radiocarbon Dates XIII. *Radiocarbon*, 12(1):161-80.
- Kalmert, Vince  
1968 Adena Gorgets. *Ohio Archaeologist*, 18(2):59.
- Murphy, James L.  
1971 The Lyman Site (33-La-2), Lake County, Ohio. *Pennsylvania Archaeologist*, 41(3):12-25.
- Ogden, J. Gordon III, and Ruth J. Hay  
1969 Ohio Wesleyan University Natural Radiocarbon Measurements IV. *Radiocarbon*, 11(1):137-49.
- Shane, Orrin C.  
1967 *The Leimbach Phase and its Position in Eastern North American Prehistory*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Case Institute of Technology, Cleveland.