

## **New York Times**

### **Prehistoric Wisconsin**

#### **Ancient Mounds and Earth Works Lately Discovered**

#### **Any Number of Effigy Mounds, Some of Them Artistic – A Modern Indian's Bones-Finds of Pottery, Arrows and Stone Implements**

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Some thirty miles west of Milwaukee, on the banks of the Fox River, are interesting earthworks. The high bluffs on the banks of the river command excellent views of the surround country for miles around. At the site of an ancient village a long neck of land extends into a marsh containing vast quantities of wild rice. Through warriors holding this place might be cut off from obtaining any supplies of wild game from the surround prairies extending for miles southward, still means of subsistence were no doubt obtainable from the river side. Thus showing the natural advantages of the place when used as a fortification. As warfare among savages and semi-civilized tribes partakes mostly of strategy, commanding situations were generally sought out. Along this high neck of land are found many observation and sacrificial mounds, also a few effigy mounds.

One of the most prominent and imposing of the effigy mounds represents a panther. Near the head of this mound a number of quite remarkable depressions were discovered, having evidently been used for the purpose of storing away whatever valuables the inhabitants of this village may have possessed in case of any threatened danger.

Nearly one mile inland from this village the remains of an ancient cemetery was discovered. A number of cone-shaped mounds of earth were scattered promiscuously over an area of several acres. Two of the most promising in appearance of these were next opened. Strata of earth, sand, and cinders were removed to a depth of over ten feet before any remains were found. Underneath the lowest layer of cinders a large number of bones were found and, judging from the different jawbones, at least eight bodies must have been interred in this mound. The bones were badly decayed, somewhat resembling decayed wood in appearance. Fragments of very rudely-made

pottery were found in great abundance. In the second mound excavated the remains of a modern Indian were unearthed at the depth of about three feet. These remains were evidently interred at a very recent date, and were in a fair state of preservation. An iron tomahawk and an iron gun-lock from one of the old-fashioned flint-lock guns in use some fifty years ago, both deeply covered with rust were also discovered. From the appearance of the layers of earth, stone and sand composing this mound, it was apparent that it had been opened many centuries after its erection to make place for the recent burial.

The excavation was continued through alternate layers of clay, sand, and pebbles, until a depth of about ten feet was reached, when a large number of bones and pottery were brought to light. The pottery was highly ornamented. The bones were badly decomposed and appeared to have been deposited in this mound at about the same time as those found in the first one. These mounds may have been used for any number of burials, as the presence of so many bones at different depths would naturally tend to prove. The fortifications in this vicinity are few in number, as it has so many natural advantages as a point of defense.

On the summit of one of the high hills overlooking this ancient village, is an altar mound surrounded by groups of effigies. One of its peculiarities is that it is composed of two large burial mounds connected by an oblong mound. The massive burial mounds on the lowlands nearby, upon being excavated, yielded up large quantities of bones and numerous fragments of rudely ornamented pottery. A number of long narrow mounds are placed in such a position as to enclose a large area of land, and this enclosure, it would seem, was used as a game drive. The game was driven from the plateau, down between the two lines of long mounds and into this inclosure, where it became an easy prey for the hunter. The mounds at that distant date was quite high, and the openings between them may have been palisaded. Thus, the inhabitants of this village were amply supplied with food from the forest, the prairie and river.

Near the city of Waukesha, another village has been identified by the late Dr. Lapham, and this place was next visited. It is situated on the high bluffs overlooking an immense swamp. This swamp is even at the present day almost completely grown over with wild rice. It is worthy of note that a tribe of Indians is encamped upon the site of this ancient village at the present time, thus showing the desirability of the location. The place is guarded by observation and effigy mounds. At the southern extremity of the line of outwork is an interesting effigy mound of imposing appearance, evidently intended to represent a bird with the wings spread in the act of flying. The head is directed to the south. The wings are long and narrow, and measure 112 feet each way from the centre of the body to their extremities. The body and neck are small, and the length of the tail is seventy-two feet. It is quite a large and well-formed effigy, and is different from the other bird mounds in having an angle in the wings. On the high bluffs many beautiful

effigies were discovered, a large majority of them being in the shape of squirrels. The squirrels, some of them of large size, were in every conceivable attitude. One very interesting effigy mound represented a fox running, with his head turned around and looking behind him. The groups on the bottom lands and on the bluffs adjoining seem to form connecting links. There are three or four lines of effigies on the bluffs, and three or four groups of parallel mounds on the bottom lands. These mounds were arranged in a large circle inclosing an area of twenty or thirty acres.

In the town of Westport a strange departure from the usual method of building mounds was noticed. The mounds referred to are of the usual conical or "sugar loaf" form. They are six in number, and are situated on the level prairie, surrounded by the river and marshes. Near the base of each a large, perfectly circular pit was excavated and the soil thus obtained was used in the construction of the mound next to it. It was noticeable that great care had been taken to have the base of the mounds of the same size as the circular pits. Upon excavating one of these mounds the remains of a skeleton that had been apparently cremated was discovered. All the bones which had not been burned by the fire had kept their original position, standing upright and apparently quite undisturbed, in a kind of grayish colored clay, whereas those portions which had been partially extended above the clay were consumed by the fire, and the surface of the clay was, as far as the fire had extended, covered by a layer of wood ashes, mingled with a layer of small pieces of charred wood and burned bones, together with bones belong to the spine, ribs and other parts of the body which had been more or less injured by the fire.

There were also found, mingled with the ashes and bones, and partially protruding out of them, a large number of broken pieces of rock, which had evidently been carried thither from the shore of the river, for the layer of clay mentioned was entirely void even of the smallest pebbles. The layer of ashes, etc, varied in thickness from 2 to 6 inches, from which it may be inferred that the fire had been kept up for some time. Among the ashes, bones, and rocks, several arrowheads, a stone spearhead, and stone axes were found. The layer of ashes, etc, was covered by a stratum of alluvial deposits, consisting of clay, sand, and soil from 8 to 9 feet thick.

Some of the arrow points were evidently manufactured for the purpose of shooting fish. These points show great ingenuity in their construction and are finely finished. They are barbed, and from a straight base the point inclines at an angle of exactly forty-five degrees, which angle would, when the point was shot in the ordinary manner, cause it to deviate the distance required to strike any object under the water.

In the tangled woods near the shore was discovered a mound, which, though small, gave evidence of its great age from the fact that across its centre lay a giant of the forest, prostrated by the elements which for ages it had defied. The work in question

was conical in shape and very difficult to excavate. On removing the outer layer, which was composed of a black vegetable mold, a layer of stones entirely covered the top was found. Under this came a layer of yellowish dirt 6 inches in thickness. In this a finely finished groove stone axe was unearthed. About a foot below this axe was a large flat stone, which, upon being removed, disclosed a cavity. In this cavity was found the skeleton of an adult mound-builder, seated upon a floor of clay, baked very hard. Around it were ashes and fragments of pottery, many of which displayed great artistic skill, in their various patterns. Several arrowheads, together with a number of small disks group from fresh-water clam shells and a number of perfectly round polished stones, some of which have small grooves running complexly around both ways, thus quartering the spheres, were discovered. The grooves were so slight as to be used on with a small cord.

A small conical mound was about 6 feet in diameter and 8 feet in height was next excavated. After removing the leaves and brush from the top a trench about 3 feet wide running across the mound from north to south was sunk. The soil was composed of black loam, and had evidently been taken from the surrounding surface. At a depth of 3 feet several pieces of charcoal near the centre of the mound were dug up. Six feet down was a new strata composed of a mixture of sand and clay which, however, showed no signs of having been burned or packed. Digging into this strata 1 foot a number of humans bones lying close together were uncovered. They were very much decayed, and their position was determined only by exercising the utmost care. The skeleton extended straight north and south with the skull facing east. It had evidently been placed on its back. Near the skull was found a small urn composed of clay, which was so badly decayed that was almost impossible to determine the shape. It had been about 6 inches high and 4 inches in diameter. In the urn was a black, greasy substance which resembled animal mold, but which was too much decayed to be determined. A beautiful spearhead measuring 8 inches in length and 2 inches in width, and of a brownish tint, was also found.

From a small conical mound in the immediate vicinity was obtained a finely ornamented vase of pottery of unique design. Around the rim of the vase is a narrow band, divided into triangular spaces, which are filled with parallel lines running vertically and horizontally in the alternate triangles. The vase measures about six inches in height and nearly three inches in diameter, and contained a peculiar black substance resembling charred bones.

About one mile up the river from this place we discovered what appeared to be the remains of an entrenched camp on the west bank of the stream. The northern or upper portion is at the present time in the best state of preservation. It also lies higher, the ground sloping, both eastward toward the river bank which forms the fourth side of the camp, and toward the south. The north embankment starting from the river, at a

distance of 600 feet, reaches the end of the western embankment, which as a length of 1,500 feet, and, at its southern extremity, meets another embankment which runs 700 feet to the river, the enclosure has no wall on the water side, as the river is a sufficient protection. The bank is steep, and rises at once twenty or thirty feet. The observation or looks out towers are thirty-six in number. The area of this enclosure is nearly twenty acres. The thickness of the wall is about 15 feet, and its height varies from 3 to 8 feet, but has been plowed down in many places. A large number of mounds are found without the walls, and residents of the neighborhood say that many within have been plowed down.

One curious feature is that the walls are made of a kind of brick. After building and shaping the walls of clay, they were then burned into brick by means of wood piled up on each side of the structures. These bricks are of a red color and are quite hard and of irregular forms. The soil is still full of brick fragments, many of them of large size. In the middle of one there was a stick an inch thick, burned to charcoal. In nearly all of them were holes where the sedge from the river bank had been mixed with the clay, and the shape of each stalk and blade were plainly visible. It seemed clear that the soil- a sort of loam- had been thrown up into a rampart, that the whole was coated with clay, matted and massed together with bushes and sedge; that over all was heaped a vast quantity of prairie grass, with perhaps huge trees and the whole set on fire. Yet it would not have been necessary to burn trees for turning clay to brick. That transformation is still wrought in Nebraska, where wood is scarce, with prairie grass alone.

One of the large conical mounds on the outer side of the fortification was next opened. After digging through a number of strata of sand, loam, and small pebbles, a solid and compact layer of very hard clay was reached. Underneath this layer were a number of human bones and fragments of pottery, but no ashes nor anything to show that any fired had been used. Near the centre of this bone depository were several rolls of textile fabric, preserved in shape by the moisture of the earth, but on coming in contact with the air, they were wafer away by the slightest breeze. Several stone axes, a spearhead and numerous arrowheads of various types were unearthed. The excavation was continued for several feet through a kind of hard sandy soil, but nothing further of interest was discovered.