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NOTABLE MOUND GROUPS IN AND NEAR THE PROPOSED GOVERNMENT PARK AT MCGREGOR, IOWA.

ELLISON ORR.

Something over a year ago a move was started to ask Congress to set aside a tract of land lying along the Mississippi river south of McGregor in Clayton county of this state, and directly opposite the mouth of the Wisconsin river, as a National Forest Preserve or park.

Among the reasons given were that it is a region of great natural beauty. The broad river with its channels, lakes and islands, hemmed in on either side by mountainous wooded bluffs, make scenery that in all seasons and all weathers is surpassing fair.

It would preserve and make accessible to the people of the northern Mississippi River Valley a pleasure ground differing from any other in the country and surpassed in restful beauty by none.

It is a spot of great historical interest. Just across the river is Prairie Du Chien, settled by the French in 1737 and for years an outpost of civilization. It was the first land in Iowa seen by Father Marquette. The high point below the Pictured Rocks was recommended by Lieutenant Zebulon Pike in his report of his "Exploratory Expedition" as a suitable place for a fort.

In connection with Joliet Wisconsin State Park it would make an ideal summer bird preserve for waterfowl and the shy woodland birds.

As considerable land now in cultivation would be included, there would be abundant opportunity for experimental forestry with a view to solving forestry problems peculiar to this section of the country.

The numerous and fast disappearing aboriginal earthworks which are found along the bluff tops would be preserved from obliteration by cultivation which seems to be the fate awaiting them unless government or state aid is invoked for their protection.

It is these "Indian Mounds" in the proposed park area of 12,000 acres and on the bluff tops of the adjacent neighborhood that are to receive our attention in this brief paper.

To begin with there are four types of earthworks, the work of the aborigines, found in Iowa.

The most common type is the conical (so called) burial mound much like half an orange laid with the flat side down. They have an average diameter, measured at the base along the original surface of the ground, of twenty-five feet, and an average height of three to four feet. Some are found with a diameter of over sixty feet and a height of eight to ten feet. Others are not over fifteen feet in diameter with a height of about a foot.

For the most part all are built up on the same plan. First an inner mound of hard dry clay, over that flat rocks laid irregularly, then another foot of earth closely resembling the upper foot of the surrounding natural surface.

On the high islands or bordering terraces in the river valley, which are usually beds of pure sand with a foot or two of sandy soil on top, the mounds appear to be built of the surface soil.

The material seems to have been gathered from a considerable area as no pits from which it might have been taken are ever found.

All conical or round mounds are supposed to be burial mounds. But few of the Iowa mounds in or near the proposed park area contain any skeleton remains or artifacts of any kind, so far as the writer has had opportunity to excavate them or has been able to get information from those who have.

Personal experience leads the writer to believe that the accounts of the remarkable finds in these ancient earthworks, so far as they exist in northeastern Iowa, or southwestern Wisconsin, should be heard with a grave suspicion that they were very highly colored. In perhaps twenty-five mounds more or less thoroughly excavated by the writer there has been found but one arrow head and a small crude earthen vessel three inches high by two inches in diameter—nothing else.

Prehistoric pottery, and artifacts of flint and other material of which arrow points, knives, and other implements were made, and of diorite, granite and copper are very common. But this material is found scattered about the fields in greater or less abundance according to locality, or is found in the ordinary

burial places, which are very common on the river terraces but extremely rare so far as discovered on the uplands.

The next most abundant type is the long earthwork, twenty to twenty-five feet wide and about three feet high in cross section, and of all lengths from less than fifty feet to six hundred. This type is sometimes regarded as having been built for defensive purposes but a study of the location and surroundings will show that this is in no case the correct theory. Like the conical mounds little or nothing of relics or anything to indicate burials is ever found in them. The reason for the building of these mounds is problematic.

Following the long embankments in abundance are the effigy mounds. These are earthworks built in crude imitation of the forms of animals, birds and reptiles, in semi-relief. Near Ft. Atkinson in Wisconsin is one of a man. All are large and in most cases they are between one hundred and two hundred feet in length. It is now generally believed that these were intended to represent the totems of the family that made them. The reasons for their erection were perhaps analogous to those for the erection of the totem poles of the Indians of the northwest coast. It is usually hard to determine the particular animal, bird or reptile which they were intended to represent. Among those which have been identified with a reasonable certainty are the bear, panther, bison, wild cat, eagle, night hawk, wild goose and lizard.

Groups of all types were located on the bluff tops are always on the highest part or ridge of the divides between the gulches tributary to the great river. In such locations they are found in strings following the divide from the promontory next the river bank for considerable distances inland but never so far but that the river can be seen from each mound. A string may consist entirely of conical mounds or these may be interrupted by a long earthwork or effigy mound. Usually the conical mounds are nearest the river, the others farther away. Where groups occur on the terraces the mounds may be in rows or scattered about promiscuously with long and effigy mounds here and there among the more numerous conical types.

On Pike's Peak directly opposite the mouth of the Wisconsin river is a fine bear mound. Another occurs on Point Ann just south of McGregor, while on a point half way between is a group

of buffalo mounds. Conical types are associated with the effigies in all three groups. About two miles north of North McGregor on a high point of St. Peter sandstone, somewhat back from the river, lies Pleasant Ridge group, probably the finest group of effigy mounds west of the Mississippi river. This consists of ten mounds representing at least two different animals and two mounds representing birds. With these are two linear mounds but none of the conical type. At a high island at the southern end of the park area is a group of eighty-eight conical, four long and four effigy mounds.

In all there are probably nearly two hundred mounds within the proposed park and as many more within five miles north and south, making altogether a very interesting field for the study of the works of a race that is now gone from a land that to them, as to us, was "Iowa."

WAUKON.