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Ocheyedan Mound, Osceola County, Iowa

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OCHEYEDAN MOUND, OSCEOLA COUNTY, IOWA.

GEORGE F. KAY.

Among the many interesting surface features of Iowa, there are few, if any, that have attracted more attention or have excited more wonder than Ocheyedan mound, which is thought by many persons to be the most remarkable and beautiful hill in all northwestern Iowa. It lies within a region of varied topographic features, including lakes, ponds and marshes, level prairies with fine farms, and precipitous hills, some of which are in groups with no distinctive arrangement, while others, perhaps best illustrated by Ocheyedan mound, are isolated and rise somewhat abruptly above their level surroundings.

The mound is about one and one-third miles southeast of the town of Ocheyedan, in Osceola county; its summit is about one hundred and seventy feet above the flood plain of Ocheyedan river, which is a short distance to the west of the mound. It is, moreover, one of the high points in Iowa, its elevation being about 1,670 feet above sea level. The general trend of the mound is northeast-southwest, in which direction its extreme length is about one-third of a mile. Its width is narrow compared with its length; in places along its summit it is only a few yards wide. The material of the mound is chiefly sand and gravel, and on its surface lie bowlders of various sizes, including rocks of many kinds, among them being granites, Sioux quartzites, and limestones. From its summit there may be seen in all directions a beautiful landscape, dotted here and there with prosperous homes.

Ocheyedan mound has historic interest and has long been recognized as a conspicuous landmark in northwestern Iowa. Nicollet, who explored this region as early as 1838-1839, refers to this mound and states that the name "Ocheyedan" means "the spot where they cry", which alludes to the custom of the Indians to repair to elevated situations to weep over their dead relatives. Dr. Thomas H. Macbride, President Emeritus of the University of Iowa, in a report on the geology of Osceola county, published by the Iowa Geological Survey, describes the hills of the region and refers to Ocheyedan mound as follows: "The most remarkable of all these hills, a beautiful object in itself, and by far the most elegant illustration of its type, is the long time famous Ocheyedan mound."

The mound is a kame, which signifies that it is of glacial origin. Kames are hills and ridges of stratified drift deposited in connection with glaciers at the mouths of ice tunnels or ice channels and in the re-entrant angles of the edge of the ice. They are associated in many places with unstratified drift deposited at the terminus of a glacier, or at its edge, while it was retreating. Ocheyedan mound was formed during the recession of the Wisconsin ice sheet, which invaded our state many thousands of years ago.

The esthetic value of such beautiful and interesting geological phenomena as Ocheyedan mound should be fully appreciated by

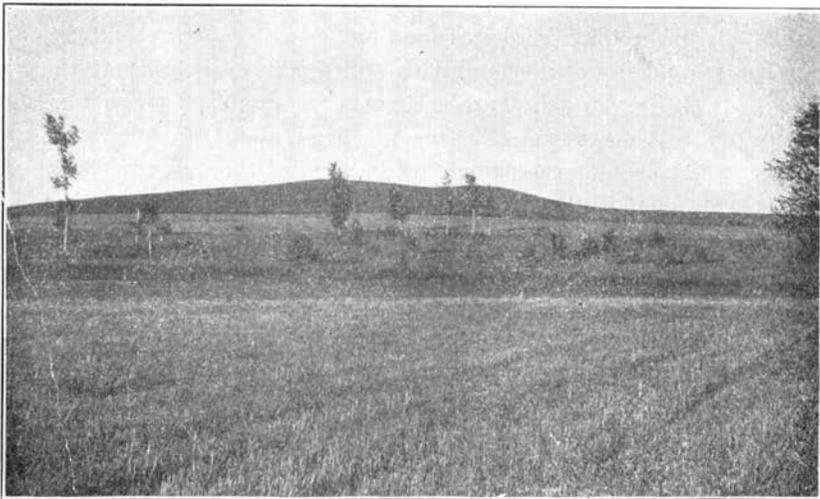


FIG. 2a. View of Ocheyedan Mound from the southwest.

the citizens of the state, and every effort should be made to prevent their destruction. Already Ocheyedan mound has been somewhat marred by the removal at its summit of sand and gravel which was used for commercial purposes. To be sure, the mound is valuable for the many thousands of tons of material that might be taken from it to be used for roadmaking or other purposes, but of far greater value is it to the state as a beauty spot, a landmark, which should be conserved for future generations just as zealously as we are wont to conserve our material resources.

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