

# MOUND CITY GROUP

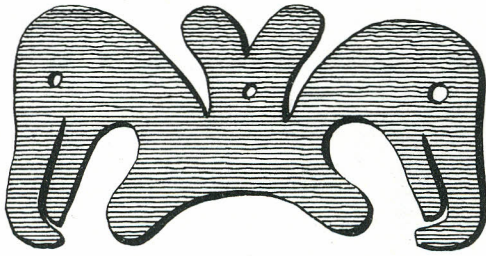


NATIONAL MONUMENT

O H I O



# MOUND CITY GROUP



*(Cover) Copper Breastplate—Eagle Design.  
Excavated at Mound City and now  
on display at the Ohio State Museum*

## NATIONAL MONUMENT

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT  
OF THE INTERIOR

J. A. KRUG, *Secretary*

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NEWTON B. DRURY, *Director*

*A prehistoric group of Indian mounds in southern Ohio*

### *The Hopewell People*

Before the first white man set foot upon the Western Hemisphere, over 450 years ago, an Indian civilization, scattered over the region of the Mississippi River and its tributaries and now referred to as the Hopewell culture, had flourished and disappeared. The term "Hopewell", which archeologists have assigned to these prehistoric Indians, comes from the Hopewell mound group, located in Ross County, Ohio, not far from Mound City Group National Monument. Being the first remains of its kind to be explored, the name of this site came to be applied to all other remains of the same prehistoric culture. The origin of the Hopewell people, one of the most advanced prehistoric societies north of Mexico, is not known, but probably as early as 1000 A. D. they had developed their highly specialized civilization in the area of southern Ohio.

The Hopewell people are best known for their high artistic achievements and for their practice of erecting mounds of earth over the remains of their dead. From the extraordinary wealth of burial offerings found in the mounds, archeologists have learned a great deal about these prehistoric people. They were outstanding among the American Indians as artists and

craftsmen, and worked with a great variety of material foreign to Ohio. Copper from the Lake Superior region was used for breastplates, head-dresses, earspools, and other ornaments and ceremonial objects. Stone tobacco pipes were beautifully carved to represent the bird and animal life around them. From obsidian, a volcanic glass brought from the Rocky Mountain region, they made delicately chipped ceremonial blades. Fresh water pearls from local streams, quartz and mica from the Allegheny Mountains, ocean shells from the Gulf of Mexico, grizzly bear teeth from the West, all were used in making the beautiful and elaborate pieces buried with the dead. Pottery of excellent workmanship was made, and even woven fabric of bark and other wild vegetable fibers has been found, preserved through contact with copper objects. Animal bone was used extensively, and wood must also have been important in the manufacture of implements and utensils.

The Hopewell people apparently lived in small villages near rivers and streams, often some distance from their mounds, which must have been used chiefly as ceremonial centers. Though it is believed that they knew how to raise corn and may have had simple gardens, their diet was augmented by the hunting of wild animals and the gathering of wild fruits and



vegetables. Though their culture was widespread, and made use of materials obtained by travel and trade in distant parts of North America, the evidence of their remains suggests that they were a peaceful and more or less sedentary people. Possibly this was one of the reasons for the disappearance of their culture. But whether it was due to conquest by more warlike tribes, or disintegration from within, or a combination of various factors, the Hopewell culture flowered for a period and then passed away.

### *Exploration and Excavation of Mound City*

The Mound City group consists of a rectangular earth enclosure approximately 13 acres in extent, within which are located 24 burial mounds. The earth walls of the enclosure vary in height from 3 to 4 feet, with an entrance or gateway on both the east and west sides. The largest mound in the group was described by early observers as 17½ feet high and 90 feet in diameter, but it is somewhat smaller today. All the mounds are conical in shape, with the exception of one which is elongated. Just outside the enclosure are two additional mounds, and several depressions from which material was taken for constructing the wall and mounds.

The site was mapped and partially excavated in 1846 by two explorers, E. G. Squier and E. H. Davis. The results of their extensive survey of

prehistoric earthworks, *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley*, appeared in 1848 in the first publication of the newly founded Smithsonian Institution. Although many of the mounds had been noticed by earlier explorers, the work of Squier and Davis was the first detailed study of the prehistoric structures in the Mississippi Valley, and is a milestone in American archeology.

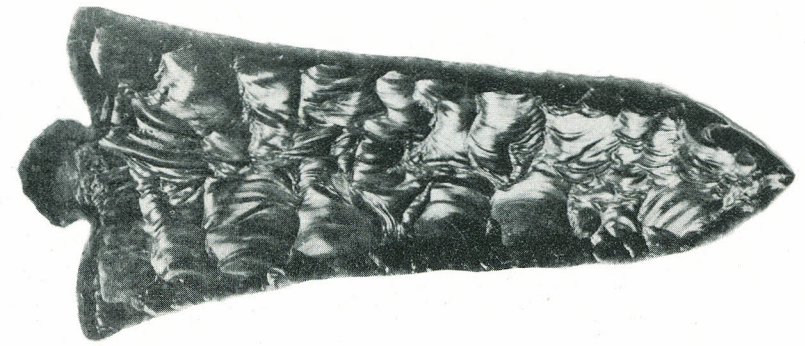
The excavations at Mound City by Squier and Davis produced a great many spectacular objects, most interesting of which were a large number of stone tobacco pipes, many being realistically carved in the images of birds, animals, and the human head. These objects, first acquired by the Blackmore Museum in England, were later transferred to the British Museum, London.

During the First World War the area comprising Mound City was occupied by Camp Sherman. At the close of the war, the Ohio State Archeological and Historical Society, in 1920 and 1921, conducted extensive excavations at the site, supplementing the information secured by Squier and Davis. A few years later the Society restored the earthworks to their present appearance and developed the tract into a State memorial. The final excavation of the site by the society brought to light many interesting details of the construction and purpose of the mounds, and yielded many fine artifacts typical of the Hopewell culture. Examples of these objects, now on exhibit in the Ohio State Museum at

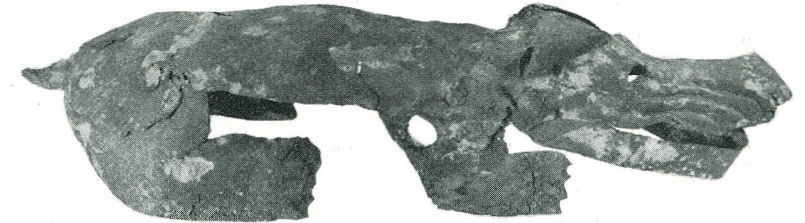
*View of mounds and earthen enclosure wall at Mound City Group National Monument*



*Obsidian Blade.*



*Copper Headdress.*



*Excavated at Mound City and now on display at the Ohio State Museum*

Columbus, are shown in the accompanying illustrations.

Since Mound City was primarily a ceremonial center for the disposal of the dead, much of the information obtained from its excavation concerns the burial customs of the people. The site of each mound was originally occupied by a wooden structure, which was probably the scene of the last rites for the body. It is believed that after a suitable period of use, this structure, probably a mortuary temple, was intentionally burned, perhaps with the idea of purification, or of allowing the spirit of the dead to escape to the spirit world. Then over the bones and the offerings left with the dead, the mound was erected. This was a considerable task when one remembers the simple tools and equipment used by the Indians. Using only digging sticks, or hoes of shell or animal shoulder blades, they scraped up the earth, carried it in baskets or skins, and dumped it, load by load, on the slowly growing mound. It is obvious that only a small percentage of the Hopewell dead were buried in mounds, an honor pos-

sibly accorded only to persons of high rank.

Archeologists discovered, in excavating Mound City, that they were not the first to disturb these ancient remains. In many of the mounds were found intrusive burials of another prehistoric people, accompanied by artifacts quite distinct from those of the Hopewellians. Another group of Indians had found the mounds a convenient and suitable place for the burial of their dead, and then they too left the region well before the white man came.

### *Mound City Group National Monument*

The 13-acre mound area and surrounding property, including 57 acres in all, was established as Mound City Group National Monument on March 2, 1923, by Presidential proclamation. Although Federal jurisdiction was transferred from the War Department to the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior in 1933, the Ohio State Archeological and Historical Society continued to administer the area until August 1, 1946.





*Effigy Tobacco Pipe of Stone (Left). Pottery Vessel (Right). Excavated at Mound City and now on display at the Ohio State Museum*

It is now one of the many areas of the National Park System, part of our national heritage, owned by the people of the United States and administered for them by the National Park Service. These outstanding scenic, historic, and scientific areas are to be found in all sections of the country, and are protected and preserved for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.

Among the sites of prehistoric remains included in the National Park System are Ocmulgee National Monument at Macon, Ga., another great mound-builder site, and a number of outstanding ruins in the Southwest, most famous of which is Mesa Verde National Park, Colo.

### *How to Reach the Monument*

Mound City Group National Monument is situated on the west bank of the Scioto River, 4 miles north of Chillicothe, Ohio. In leaving Chillicothe, the monument is reached by following United States Highway 35 and State Highway 104.

### *Nearby Points of Interest*

Southern Ohio is very rich in prehistoric Indian sites, some of the Hopewell culture and some of other mound-builder cultures. A number of the most interesting of these have been set aside as State memorials under the custody of the Ohio State Archeological and Historical Society, including Fort Ancient, Fort Hill,

Miamisburg Mound, Newark Earthworks, Seip Mound, and Serpent Mound.

Interesting historical and archeological exhibits are contained in the museum of the Ross County Historical Society in Chillicothe. At the Ohio State Museum, Columbus, many of the objects excavated at Mound City and other Hopewell sites are on display.

In the former Camp Sherman reservation, near Mound City, are two interesting Federal institutions. One, the United States Industrial Reformatory, is a model correctional institution; the other, the United States Veterans' Hospital No. 97, has been in operation since World War I. This area has a long military history, Camp Sherman being preceded by Camp Logan of the Civil War and Camp Bull of the War of 1812.

### *Service to the Public*

Mound City is open to the public, free of charge, throughout the year, from 9 a. m. until dark. Information and literature relating to the area may be secured without charge at the monument office. Organizations and groups will be given special service if arrangements are made in advance with the custodian. Archeological exhibits and other interpretive facilities are being planned for the benefit of the visitor.

Communications or inquiries concerning the monument should be addressed to the Custodian, Mound City Group National Monument, Chillicothe, Ohio.

