



MOUND CITY GROUP
National Monument • Ohio

THE HOPEWELL PEOPLE

By about 500 B.C. the prehistoric Indians we now call Hopewell had developed a distinctive culture in the Middle West. For perhaps 1,000 years these people flourished; their cultural zenith being here in the Scioto Valley of southern Ohio. But by about A.D. 500 the Hopewell culture had faded. Hundreds of years later European settlers found only deserted burial mounds and ceremonial earthworks to hint at this vanished culture.

EFFIGY PIPE OF STONE WITH INLAID SHELL



AN OUTSTANDING PREHISTORIC INDIAN CULTURE

The Hopewell are best known for their high artistic achievements and for their practice of erecting earth mounds 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 excellent artists and craftsmen and worked with a great variety of material foreign to Ohio. Copper from the Lake Superior region was used for earspools, headdresses, breastplates, ornaments, ceremonial objects, and tools. Stone tobacco pipes were beautifully carved to represent the bird and animal life around them. From obsidian they made delicately chipped ceremonial blades. Fresh-water pearls from local streams, quartz and mica from the Blue Ridge Mountains, ocean shells from the Gulf of Mexico, grizzly bear teeth from the West—all were used in making the beautiful and elaborate offerings 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 have been important in the manufacture of implements and utensils. The Hopewell Indians apparently lived in small villages near rivers and streams. Some of their villages may have been some distance from their mounds; sites such as Mound City served chiefly as ceremonial centers. It is believed that they knew how to raise corn and probably had simple gardens. Their diet was augmented by hunting animals and gathering wild fruits and vegetables. Though their culture was widespread, and they made use of materials obtained by trade and travel 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 peaceful and sedentary existence was one of the reasons for the disappearance of their culture. Perhaps they were harassed by more warlike tribes. It is possible their cultural pattern changed in emphasis, allowing them to abandon these religious centers. But whether the end of this colorful way of life was due to conquest, disintegration from within, or a combination of factors, the Hopewell culture flowered for many years before passing from the scene.



COPPER BREASTPLATE

EXPLORATION AND EXCAVATION OF MOUND CITY

The Mound City Group lies within a rectangular earth enclosure of approximately 13 acres, 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 of the group was described by early explorers as 17½ feet high and 90 feet in diameter, but today it is somewhat smaller. All the mounds are dome-shaped with the exception of one which is elongated and one which is nearly conical. Just outside the enclosure are two additional mounds and several depressions from which the Indians removed material for the construction of the wall and mounds. The site was mapped and partially excavated in 1846 by two pioneer archeologists, 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 then newly founded Smithsonian Institution. Although many of the mounds had been noticed by early 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 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 were realistically carved in the images of birds, animals, and human heads. These objects, first acquired by the Blackmore Museum in England, were later transferred to the British Museum, London, where they remain today. During the First World War the area comprising Mound City was incorporated into Camp Sherman, a large training center. In 1920 and 1921, after Camp Sherman had been razed, the Ohio Historical Society conducted extensive excavations at the site. These supplemented the information secured by Squier and Davis. A few years later the society restored the earthworks according to the best information available and developed the tract into a State memorial. The 1920-21 excavation 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 objects now on display in the Ohio State Museum at Columbus are shown in the accompanying illustrations. Recent excavations have revealed further information about the mounds and their ancient builders. A more accurate restoration of many parts of the site has been made possible under the new program of archeological research. The work proves that Mound City is still a great storehouse of information about the long vanished Hopewell people.

MOUND CITY — 1800 YEARS AGO

Since Mound City was primarily a ceremonial center for the dead, much of the information obtained from it concerns the burial customs of the people. The site of each mound was originally occupied by a wooden structure which was the scene of the last rites. After a period of use, this structure, a mortuary temple, was burned. Perhaps this burning was an attempt at purification, or perhaps it was to allow the spirit of the dead to escape to the spirit world. Afterward, a mound was erected over the separately cremated bones, and "killed" or broken offerings of precious objects were left with the dead. 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, the Indians scraped up the earth, carried it in baskets or skins, and dumped it, load by load, on the slowly growing mound. Only a small percentage of the Hopewell dead were buried in mounds, an honor possibly accorded only to priests or 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 intrusive burials of a later people were found, accompanied by artifacts distinct from those of the Hopewellians. This group of Indians had found the mounds a convenient and suitable place for the burial of their dead. Again no connection between these Indians and tribes living in historic times can yet be made.

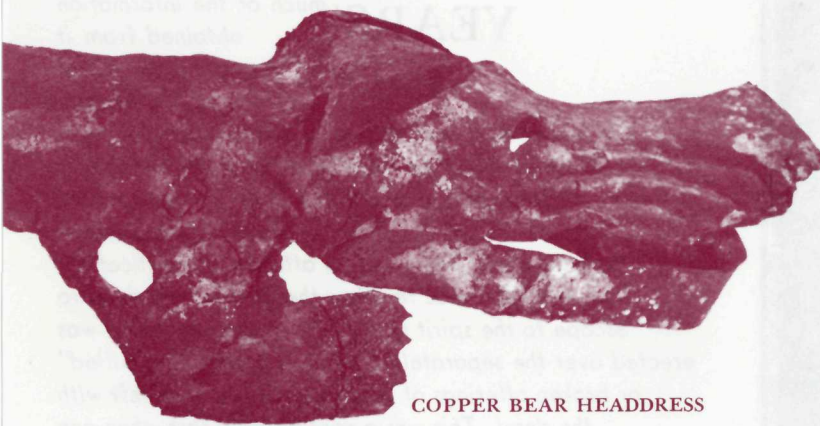


MICA EAGLE CLAW

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

The National Monument is located on the west bank of the Scioto River, 3 miles north of Chillicothe on Ohio 104. All highways passing through Chillicothe junction with this route. The monument is open all year except Christmas Day. There are no entrance or use fees charged. Organized groups may receive special services; advance arrangements should be made with the superintendent.

From Labor Day until June 1 the visitor center is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; from June 1 to Labor Day, from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. There are no facilities for overnight stays at the monument. Lodging and camping facilities are available in Chillicothe and in nearby State parks. Pets must be on a leash while in the monument and are not permitted inside the visitor center.



COPPER BEAR HEADDRESS

Fires are not permitted in the area.

Before touring the mound group be sure to stop at the visitor center where exhibits will help you understand Mound City and the people who built it. From the building, a walk leads to the embankment surrounding the mounds. Just before entering this enclosure, which may once have supported a wooden fence, you will pass between two "borrow pits." The Indians removed thousands of basketloads of earth from these and other pits to build the mounds. Inside the enclosure you will see 24 mounds which covered the evidence of elaborate burial rites. Beyond the opposite embankment, the walk leads to the historic Scioto River.

NEARBY POINTS OF INTEREST

Southern Ohio is very rich in prehistoric Indian sites. Among those set aside as State memorials under the custody of the Ohio Historical Society are Fort Ancient, Fort Hill, Miamisburg Mound, Newark Earthworks, Seip Mound, and Serpent Mound. You can see historical and archeological exhibits in the Ross County Historical Society Museum in Chillicothe. Many objects excavated at Mound City are at the Ohio State Museum in Columbus.

ADMINISTRATION

On March 2, 1923, the 13-acre mound area, with the surrounding property, was established by Presidential proclamation as Mound City Group National Monument. It now contains 67.50 acres. The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and inspiration of its people. A superintendent, whose address is Box 327, Chillicothe, Ohio 45601, is in immediate charge of the monument.

SELF-GUIDING TOUR

1. MOUND CITY This prehistoric Indian burial area consists of 24 mounds and a square enclosure whose earthen walls may once have been surmounted by a wooden fence. Depressions outside the walls are "borrow pits" from which the Indians obtained material for building the earthworks.

2. MICA GRAVE In this mound was a square clay platform covered with sheets of mica on which were placed the cremated remains of four individuals accompanied by a copper headdress and a mica mirror.

3. CREMATORY The individuals in the Mica Grave were burned on a platform in this mound.

4. MOUND OF THE PIPES Here, in 1846, E. G. Squier and E. H. Davis found many stone pipes which they described as follows: "The bowls of most of the pipes are carved in miniature figures of animals, birds, reptiles, etc. All of them are executed with . . . exquisite skill." Casts of some of these pipes are exhibited in the visitor center.

5. CREMATORY This mound contained the crematory for the Mound of the Pipes.

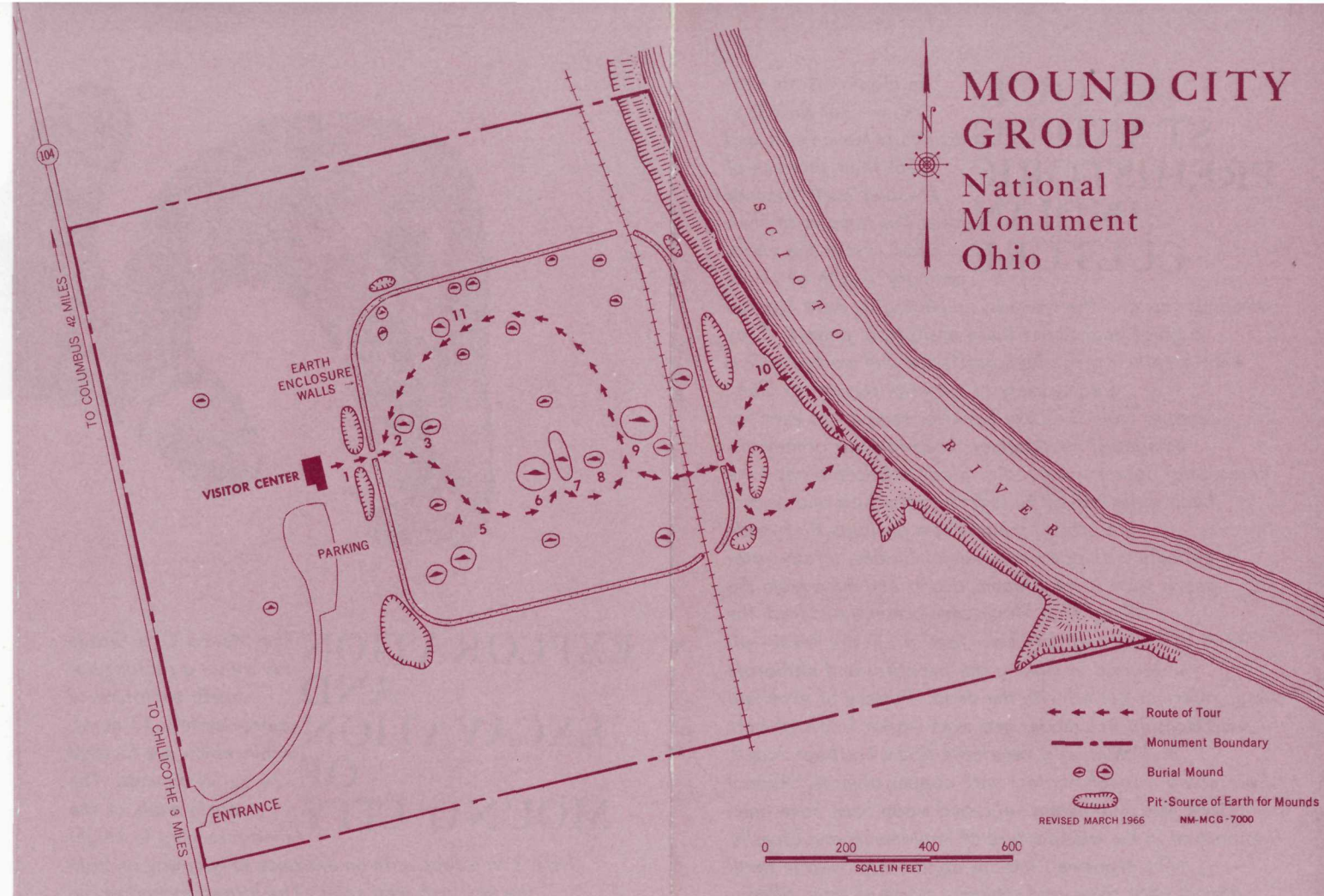
6. DEATH MASK MOUND This was described by early explorers as being 17 1/2 feet in height and 90 feet in diameter. W. C. Mills and H. C. Shetrone here discovered an unusual feature—a sunken room containing a crematory basin with 13 burials. Many years later, R. F. Baby, of the Ohio State Museum, put together the fragments of one of the skulls and found that they were the upper part of a mask possibly worn by a shaman, or priest, to personify Death. The mound may be ascended on the north side by a modern stairway.

7. ELLIPTICAL MOUND and 8. CONICAL MOUND These mounds contained crematory basins for the Death Mask Mound.

9. MOUND OF THE POTTERY From this mound came the decorated vessel shown at the right. It exemplifies the highly developed ceramic art of the Hopewell culture.

10. SCIOTO RIVER The location of Mound City and other earlier ceremonial earth structures of the Hopewell culture on river banks was no accident. The Scioto and other large rivers provided easy access to many villages and were a dependable source of food in the form of fish and clams. The Hopeton Site, now largely destroyed by plowing, is across the river from Mound City. Later Hopewell sites occur on hilltops and inaccessible promontories.

11. MOUND OF THE FOSSILS Mills and Shetrone uncovered a large crematory basin and six cremation burials in this mound, which was partly demolished in the construction of Camp Sherman. Among the burial offerings were fragments of mastodon or mammoth tusks.



CEREMONIAL POTTERY VESSEL

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR—the Nation's principal natural resource agency—bears a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that our renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.



**U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service**



COVER: EFFIGY PIPE OF STONE
(PHOTOS COURTESY OF OHIO STATE MUSEUM)

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