

Hopewell Culture

Hopewell Culture
National Historical Park
Ohio

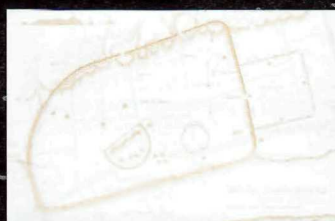
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



ILLUSTRATION © LOUIS GLANZMAN



The national historical park includes High Bank Works (below), Hopeton Earthworks, Hopewell Mound Group (right), Mound City Group, and Seip Earthworks.



Hopewell earth structures like those at Mound City were likely used for community rituals and ceremonies, such as the cremation ceremony (above). Some earthworks

appear to have been built on certain alignments between the Earth, Sun, moon, and stars, and may have been used to predict celestial events.



The Hopewell world spanned much of the eastern United States. Present-day Ohio (left) had a concentration of sites. At right is one of the mounds preserved at Mound City Group.



DAVID MUEY

Finely crafted copper headdresses, a crystal quartz projectile point (above), shell bead necklaces (below), and other objects found during excavations at Mound City provided the basis for the illustration of a Hopewell cremation ceremony (top) that might have occurred 2,000 years ago.

Besides shedding light on some of the activity at the earthwork sites, these objects, made of exotic materials, indicate that the Hopewell took part in a widespread trade network. (See reverse side of this brochure.)



Mounds and earthworks along the Scioto River, no doubt the work of many human hands, make us wonder. Who made them? How long have they stood? What role did they play in the lives of their builders?

Beginning in the late 1700s, settlers from the eastern states migrating to the Ohio Valley found hundreds of mounds and earthworks. The Shawnee and other American Indian peoples of the region apparently knew little of the builders. Many tried to solve the mystery of the mounds. Some thought that the moundbuilders must be a "lost race" who vanished before the Indians of historic times arrived.

In the 1840s Ephraim G. Squier, a Chillicothe newspaper editor, and Edwin H. Davis, a Chillicothe physician, systematically mapped the mounds and documented what was found inside them. The Smithsonian Institution published Squier and Davis's findings in the 1848 *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley*. Through later scientific studies, the "lost race" notion was

laid to rest. The Hopewell peoples—American Indians who lived between 2,200 and 1,500 years ago—were recognized as the architects and builders of the mounds.

The Hopewell were named for Capt. Mordecai Hopewell, who owned the farm where part of an extensive earthwork site was excavated in 1891. The Hopewell settled along riverbanks in present-day Ohio and in other regions between the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico (see map on the reverse side). Excavations of dwelling sites show that they made their living by hunting, gathering, gardening, and trading.

No one lived at the earthworks; artifacts found inside reveal that some of the mounds were built primarily to cover burials. A mound was typically built in stages: A wooden structure containing a clay platform was probably the scene of funeral ceremonies and other gatherings. The dead were either cremated or buried on-site. Objects of copper, stone, shell, and bone were placed near the remains. After many such ceremonies the struc-

ture was burned or dismantled, and the entire site was covered with a large mound of earth. Wall-like earthworks sometimes surrounded groups of mounds. Squier and Davis named one site Mound City because of its unusual concentration of mounds, at least 23, encircled by a low earthen wall. During World War I Mound City was covered by part of an army training facility, Camp Sherman, and many of the mounds were destroyed. The Ohio Historical and Archaeological Society conducted excavation and restoration work in 1920–21. In 1923 the Mound City Group was declared a national monument.

The National Park Service conducted additional excavations in the 1960s and '70s. In 1992 Mound City Group became Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, which also includes four other sites in the region: High Bank Works, Hopeton Earthworks, Hopewell Mound Group, and Seip Earthworks. As you walk the grounds of Mound City, remember that although we know of the Hopewell peoples primarily through the way they memorialized their dead, their world was very much alive.

ARTIFACT PHOTOGRAPHS: NPS
MOUND DIAGRAMS: © ARTHUR W. MCGRAW, FROM
ANCIENT MONUMENTS OF THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY

The Hopewell World

Imagine Mound City 2,000 years ago: On a midsummer day, young men spear fish while women and children scoop mussels from the riverbank and pick berries. A toolmaker sharpens new flint bladelets. Nearby a potter mixes grit into clay in order to strengthen it for forming into a bowl. An elderly man secures a deerskin cover over a bent-pole structure that serves as a dwelling. Nettle fibers are drying in the sun; they will be twisted into fiber for fabric. Artisans, using copper and mica newly obtained in trade, fashion ornaments for use in a ceremony at the earthworks under construction on the bluffs overhead.

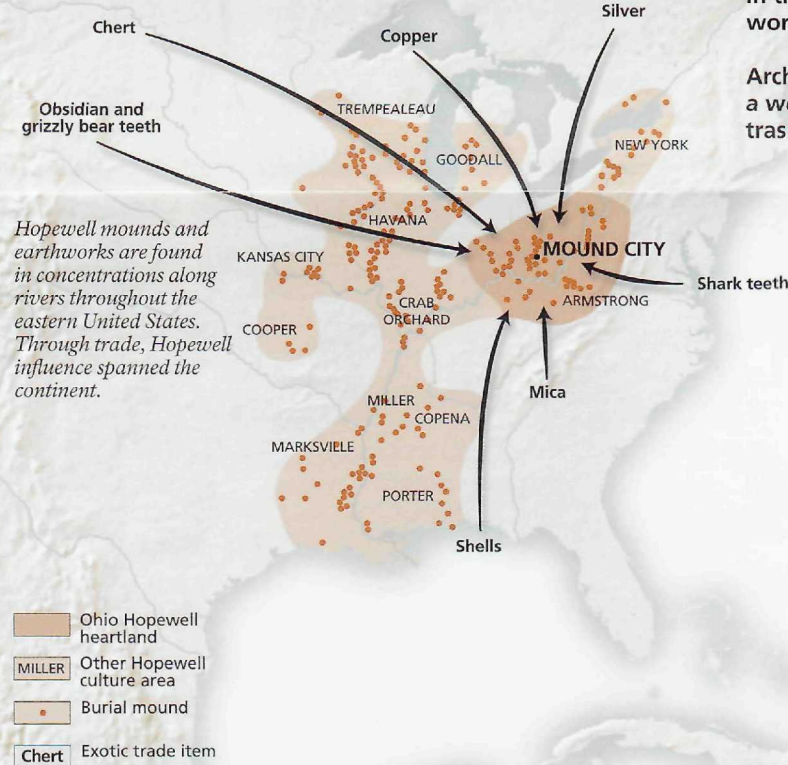
Archeological excavations at Hopewell habitation sites provide a wealth of information about daily life long ago. Middens and trash sites indicate that Hopewell peoples hunted, fished, and

gathered wild foods, supplementing their diet with cultivated plants. Patterns of small holes outline the sites of dwellings constructed of bent poles and covered with skins, mats, or bark. Food processing areas marked by large, deep storage pits, earth ovens, and shallow basins are often found outside these structures. Many habitation sites were probably occupied year-round for several years before being vacated when firewood and other local resources ran out.

Scattered groups probably gathered at the major earthwork centers seasonally and for important occasions: feasting, trading, presenting gifts, marriages, competitions, mourning ceremonies, and of course, mound construction. Tools and ornaments used in and worn for these occasions were often made of materials

obtained in trade: copper and silver from near the Great Lakes, obsidian (volcanic glass) from a site in present-day Yellowstone National Park, sharks' teeth and seashells from the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico, and mica from the southern Appalachian Mountains. Artisans fashioned these raw materials into fine objects that have been found under the mounds.

By about 1,500 years ago the Hopewell way of life had ended. Within a few hundred years new societies emerged along the Mississippi River and its tributaries. These groups were more fully agricultural and politically more structured. Only the great mounds and earthworks remained as monuments to the once-flourishing Hopewell world.



Moundbuilders Timeline

The Hopewell were one of several cultural groups who constructed mounds and earthworks in the Mississippi Valley. Rough timespans are given here, along with selected dates in world history.

• 2800 B.C.E.—Egyptian pyramids built. (B.C.E.—Before the Common Era)

• 2000–1800 B.C.E.—Stonehenge built.

• 438 B.C.E.—Parthenon built at Acropolis in Athens, Greece.

• 300 C.E.—Mayan temples built in Mexico.

• 986—Leif Erikson sights North America.

• 1492—Columbus's first voyage.

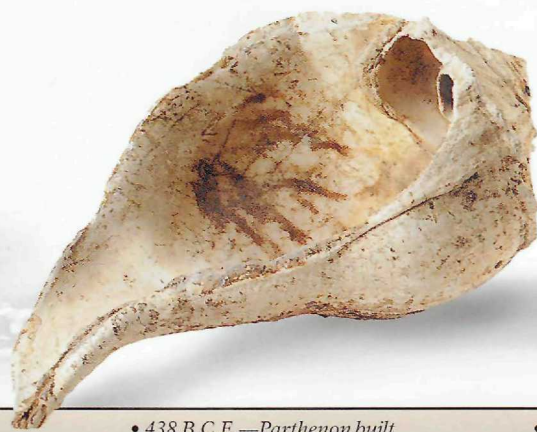
• Late 1700s—U.S. settlers begin to migrate to Ohio Valley.

4000 3000 2000 1000 BCE 0 CE 200 400 600 800 1000 1200 1400 1600 1800



Left: Sharks' teeth (Atlantic Ocean) adorned ceremonial clothing and jewelry.

Below: A conch shell (Gulf of Mexico) was gouged out to form a drinking vessel.



Left: Copper (Great Lakes) was hammered into thin sheets, then cut into a bird-head design to form a breast plate. Right: A copper turtle effigy containing pebbles forms a rattle. Rattles were attached to leather belts.

Below: Bear teeth (Idaho, Wyoming) were pierced and strung on necklaces.



Below: Obsidian (Idaho, Wyoming) was highly prized for projectile points. Several hundred pounds of obsidian were found in one mound.



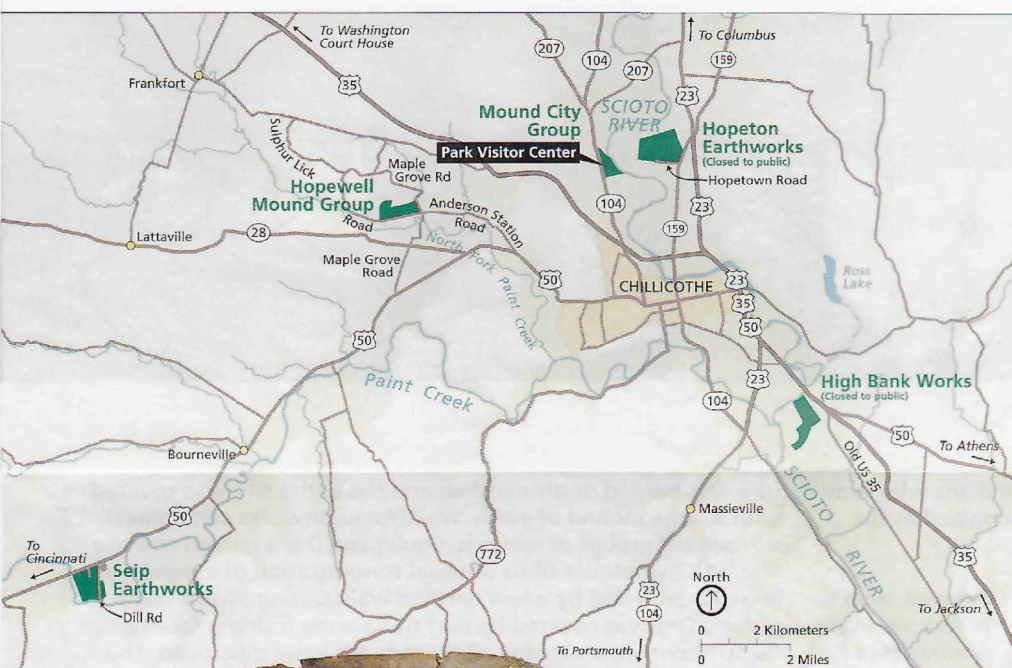
Below: Shells (Gulf of Mexico), fashioned into beads, were abundant in Hopewell burials. Strings of shells and freshwater pearls have been found covering entire human skeletons.



Right: Mica sheets (North Carolina) lined burial pits found within some mounds. Like the hammered copper, mica sheets were also cut into familiar and abstract shapes.



ARTIFACT PHOTOGRAPHS: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



The Sites of Hopewell Culture National Historical Park

Mound City Group
This ceremonial center consists of 23 mounds that cover the remains of ceremonial buildings. A low earthen embankment encloses the dense concentration of mounds. The embankment is ringed by eight sizeable borrow pits, from which earth was taken for the mounds. A museum inside the visitor center contains objects recovered from the mounds during two major archeological digs at the site, including objects made of copper, flint, mica, and pipestone. An interactive computer kiosk also provides virtual tours of a wide range of Hopewell sites and topics.

Location: Three miles north of Chillicothe on State Route 104.
Site Acreage: 120

Hopewell Mound Group
This site includes about three miles of earthen embankments (four to six feet high in the 1840s); at least 40 mounds, including the largest known Hopewell mound; and two smaller interior earthworks. It is one of the largest and most complex Hopewell earthwork centers.

The site was named after the Mordecai Hopewell family, which owned the site in the 1890s when Warren K. Moorehead conducted excavations here. Sulphur Lick Road and the Tri-County Triangle bike trail cross this park unit. It is open year-round.

Location: A few miles west of Chillicothe along Sulphur Lick Road, near the intersection with Maple Grove Road. It lies along the north fork of Paint Creek.
Site Acreage: 316

Seip Earthworks
Seip Earthworks, one of five distinctive tripartite Hopewell earthwork complexes in the Ross County area, is made up of a large circular embankment connected to a smaller circle and a square embankment. At least 18 mounds are found within and around the earthworks, with as many as 19 interspersed borrow pits. Two mounds, one near the center of the earthwork, cover the remains of large ceremonial buildings. Nearby are exhibits and a picnic area. The site is managed in

conjunction with the Ohio Historical Society. It is open year-round.

Location: On U.S. Route 50, 17 miles west of Chillicothe, between Bourneville and Bainbridge.
Site Acreage: 168

Hopeton Earthworks
Low parallel embankments of earth nearly 2,500 feet long led up to a set of joined enclosures in the shape of a large circle and a square. The walls of the square enclosure were 12 feet tall in the 1840s. Four mounds and several borrow pits are found along



A 20-acre circular enclosure is attached to the northern edge of the octagon by a narrow opening. Large borrow pits line the edges of the octagon and low, elaborate embankments extend to the south. This important site is one of the least understood Hopewell earthworks in Ross County. Site is closed to the public, except by permit or for special events. Site Acreage: 190

MOUND DIAGRAM: BARTHER W. MCGRAW, FROM EXPLORATION OF THE MOUND CITY GROUP (OHIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY)

General Information

Hours and Activities The park visitor center, located at Mound City Group, is on State Route 104, two miles north of U.S. 35 and three miles north of Chillicothe. The visitor center is open seven days a week. It is closed on Thanksgiving, December 25, and January 1. Hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. with extended hours in summer. The grounds close at dark.

Mound City has a small picnic area. Food, campgrounds, and lodging are available nearby. Regularly scheduled programs are held throughout the year. For a calendar of events or to receive the park's newsletter, please write to the park or visit our website at www.nps.gov/hocu. Please arrange group tours and school tours in advance of your visit.

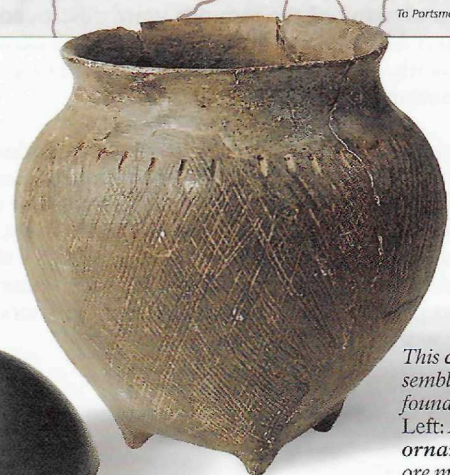
For a Safe Visit Watch your children. The Scioto River is swift and deep, so please remain behind the railing. • Poison ivy is plentiful along the trails and in wooded areas. • Watch your footing in grassy areas and do not run. Ground squirrels dig holes that can trip the unwary. • Be alert to changing weather. Thunderstorms are common in spring and summer.

Hopewell Culture National Historical Park is one of more than 390 parks in the National Park System. The National Park Service cares for these special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage. Visit www.nps.gov to learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities.

Other Hopewell Sites in Ohio: Mound City is just one of many Hopewell earthwork centers in the Scioto Valley. The Ohio Historical Society maintains a number of these sites. For more information about Ohio Historical Society sites, call 1-800-686-6124 or visit www.ohiohistory.org.

More Information
Hopewell Culture National Historical Park
16062 State Route 104
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www.nps.gov/hocu

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This clay pot was reassembled from shards found at Mound City. Left: A cone-shaped ornament made of iron ore mimics a mound.