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HOPEWELLIAN REMAINS NEAR KANSAS CITY,
MISSOURI

By WALDO R. WEDEL

EARLY in February 1937, the Bureau of American Ethnology was notified of an Indian village site in Platte County, Mo., about 5 miles northwest of Kansas City. The information was shortly communicated to me, since at the time I was formulating plans for field work in nearby northeastern Kansas as the initial step in a projected State-wide archeological survey. According to the correspondent, J. M. Shippee, of North Kansas City, the site was located on Line Creek, a small formerly perennial stream falling into the Missouri from the north about midway between Kansas City and Parkville. Though long known to local collectors of surface relics, its possibilities were not realized until recent pipe-line and highway construction had revealed cultural material to a depth of 2 feet or more. Aside from the fact that no village sites in this locality had ever been systematically excavated and described, it was also noted that on the wooded bluffs just east of the village were located the Brenner, Klamm, and Keller mound groups. Excavated many years ago and described by Fowke and others,¹ some of these mounds have been found to contain stone-walled burial chambers, but their cultural identity has never been established. Upon request, sketches and descriptions of the pottery fragments and other remains on the nearby village site were furnished us, and it was at once suspected that the complex represented therein was

¹ Fowke, Gerard, *Antiquities of central and southeastern Missouri*. Bur. Amer. Ethnol. Bull. 37, pp. 65-73 and references, 1910.

very unlike any heretofore described from the Plains or the Missouri Valley.

This suspicion was confirmed in May 1937, when I proceeded to Kansas City and made a personal examination of the remains in company with Mr. Shippee. It was found that the most promising undestroyed portions of the site were occupied by the owner's residence, garage, poultry yard, and garden. Permission to excavate was nevertheless unhesitatingly granted by the owners, Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Renner, who had previously and have since protected the site against vandalism, besides extending to us at all times the utmost courtesy and cooperation despite the inconvenience to which they were put. Investigations, in which I was assisted by four students, subsequently covered the entire month of June. Through the good services of Ralph Henneman, another interested collector, and the kindness of Transcontinental Western Air and United States Bureau of Air Commerce officials, we were enabled to supplement our records with an aerial reconnaissance of the site and its surroundings.

The Renner site, so named after the owners, is situated on a small terrace on the right bank of Line Creek about a mile north of the Missouri River. It covers an area of about 5 acres, immediately below the junction of Juntin Branch and Line Creek, just before the latter emerges from the bluffs zone to cross the alluvial river bottoms. Riverside Racetrack is nearby to the south. The bluffs east and west of the site rise to heights of 150 feet or more and are still partially covered with oak, ash, elm, walnut, hickory, and other hardwood species. To the north is the attractive and fertile Line Creek Valley, in which are other old villages as yet unexplored.

The new road, on U. S. Highway 169 between U. S. 71 and Missouri State Highway 45, cut a strip nearly 100 feet wide across the center of the site. In the roadside cross sections there had been revealed a dark soil zone extending from the ground surface to a depth varying from 13 to 30 inches. Below and usually sharply separated from this dark stratum was bright yellow clay subsoil. Numerous potsherds, burnt limestone boulders, animal bones, and flints occurred throughout the upper layer and appeared to be especially plentiful in and near pits that extended to depths as much as 6 feet below the present ground surface. Unquestionably, great quantities of cultural material were destroyed in building the highway, but through courtesy of the superintendent of construction, H. M. Kleifeld, most of what had been rescued was presented to us for the national collections.

Up to the present, no detailed studies of our findings have been made. Since further investigations in the locality are now under consideration, it is likely that the full report will be delayed for some time. Meanwhile, a preliminary notice of the remains may be of interest, especially to those concerned with determining the relationship between early Plains cultures and the archeological complexes found in the Eastern United States. Such generalizations as may be suggested here are subject to revision in the light of more intensive analyses and further field investigations.

Our excavations were confined to the remaining part of the site lying east of the new road, between it and the creek bottoms. Here over an area of about 3,000 square feet the cultural layer was stripped off by troweling until subsoil was reached, at which level the pits showed as dark trash-filled circular spots. Thirty-six of these were opened, averaging about 3 feet in diameter and $2\frac{1}{2}$ to more than 5 feet in depth. Originally these were probably used for storage of foodstuffs, but most of them yielded only refuse and a few artifacts. Noteworthy among their contents, aside from artifact materials, were charred maize, beans, pawpaw seeds, and several species of nuts, as well as quantities of mammal, bird, and fish bones. Bulk of the mammalian remains were apparently of the deer, but there is evidence also of the bison. No postholes, firepits, or other traces of houses were noted, although there were numerous large and small chunks of baked brick-red clay of unknown purpose. It is inferred that the habitations must have been entirely of perishable materials rather than of the substantial earthlodge type used by many tribes and peoples of the Missouri Valley. There is some slight evidence for the former existence of refuse mounds, but mostly the detritus now occurs either in the pits or as admixture in the old living surface of the village.

Potsherds were found in great abundance everywhere on the site. It was at first thought that these represented two distinct types, but more careful scrutiny suggests the presence of intergrading specimens. At one extreme are coarse, thick, gravel-tempered sherds with cord-roughened exteriors. These apparently are from large pointed-base jars, none of which have yet been actually reconstructed. Below the squared lip is usually a row of embossed nodes, punched outward from the interior, and above these may or may not be found the vertical or diagonal imprints of a small cord-wrapped stick or a dentate implement (pl. 3, *G*). Other large similarly shaped vessels, also bearing the bosses but with plain neck and rocker-roughened body decoration, are indicated (pl. 3, *F*, *H*, *I*). The heavy gravel-tempered pointed-base jars, with cord-roughening and punched bosses, are strikingly reminiscent of sherds found at sev-

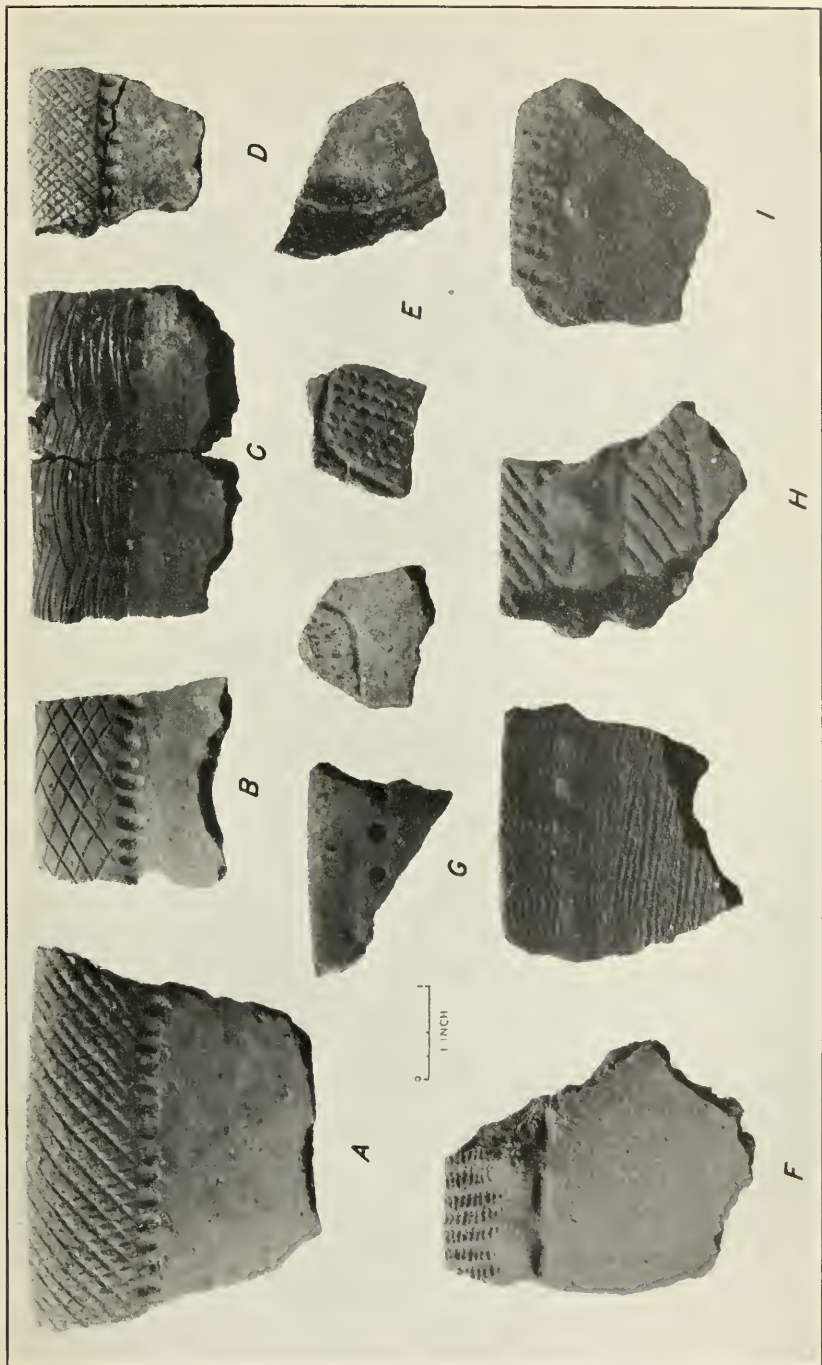
eral deeply buried sites in eastern Nebraska, where they apparently represent the earliest known ceramic horizon.

Greatly superior in quality and decorative technique are many sherds of a type heretofore unrecorded this far west. Here gravel or grit tempering is again universal, but it is more sparingly used and of finer texture. Vessels were small to medium in size (up to 1 or possibly 2 gallons capacity), with thin walls and slightly constricted necks. Rim profiles show a more or less pronounced channel or groove on the inside, an inward-beveled lip, with cross-hatched (or rocker-marked) and punctate decoration on the outer surface (pl. 3, *A-D*). This ornamentation also occurs on some fragments of the larger, rougher jars of the preceding type, where the zones of cross hatching and punctates are occasionally separated by a row of embossed nodes. From the restorable vessels and larger sherds it is evident that the neck in this second type of ware was usually a plain smoothed band, separated by a wide incised line or groove from the ornamented body. Decoration on the body usually consisted of rocker-roughening, sometimes with scroll or other curvilinear designs worked out in alternate smooth and roughened bands separated by narrow to wide shallow grooves (pl. 6, *B*). One incomplete jar was evidently square with rounded corners, each of the latter being rocker-roughened (pl. 5, *H*). A few sherds suggest use of a dentate tool such as the roulette (pl. 3, *E*), but the majority were impressed with a smooth rocker. Many body sherds bear no decoration whatever. In most respects this ware closely approaches the so-called Hopewellian type, but the body ornamentation is somewhat less intricate and the roulette or dentate stamp technique apparently less common than on pottery from the classic sites farther east.²

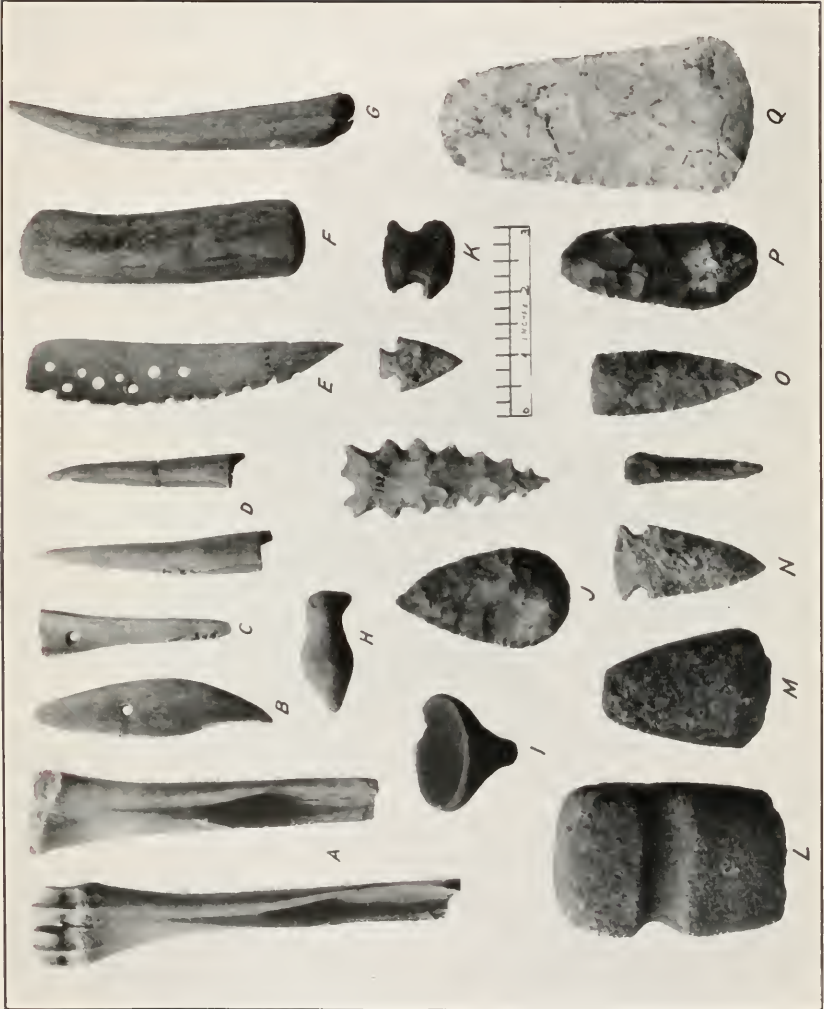
It is possible that detailed counts of the several thousand potsherds recovered will reveal some variation in the relative frequency of the several sherd types at different depths. Such variation, if it exists, is not now apparent, and it was definitely noted that the various types occurred together in a number of the pits as well as side by side throughout the culture stratum.

Of unusual interest is a portion of a smoothed bowl bearing rocker-roughened designs suggestive of a conventionalized hand (pl. 6, *A*). Originally there were apparently four of these decorative units encircling the vessel, each inclosed by a broad incised line. Miniature pottery, including the bowl of a tiny ladle, a crude bird effigy (pl. 4, *H*), and a few pieces possibly representing human or animal heads were found.

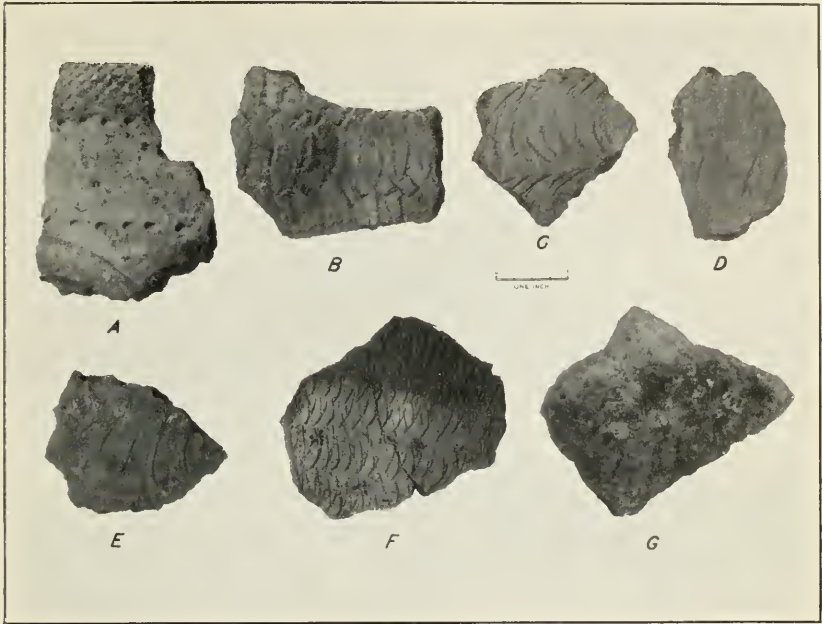
²Setzler, Frank M., Pottery of the Hopewell type from Louisiana. Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., vol. 82, art. 22, pp. 1-21 and references under footnote 1, 1933.



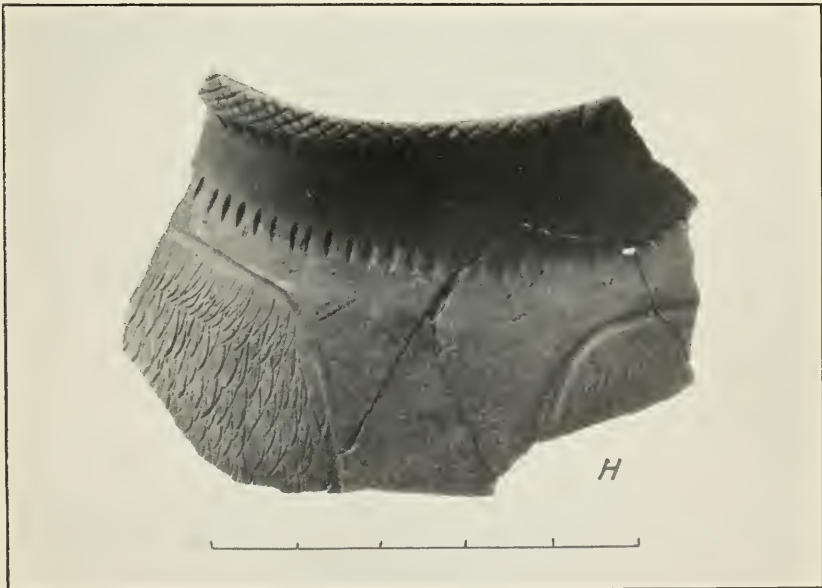
RIM AND BODY SHERDS FROM THE RENNER VILLAGE SITE.



MISCELLANEOUS STONE, BONE, HORN, AND CLAY ARTIFACTS FROM THE BENNER SITE



POTSHERDS FROM THE RENNER SITE.



PORTION OF SQUARE VESSEL WITH ROUNDED CORNERS FROM THE RENNER SITE.

(Scale: 5 inches.)



PORTION OF DECORATED BOWL FROM THE RENNER SITE.

(Scale: 6 inches.)



RESTORED VESSEL FROM THE RENNER SITE.

(Height, $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches; diameter, $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches.)



VESSEL FROM EARTH MOUND NEAR THE RENNER SITE.

(Height, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches; diameter, $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Courtesy of J. M. Shippee.)



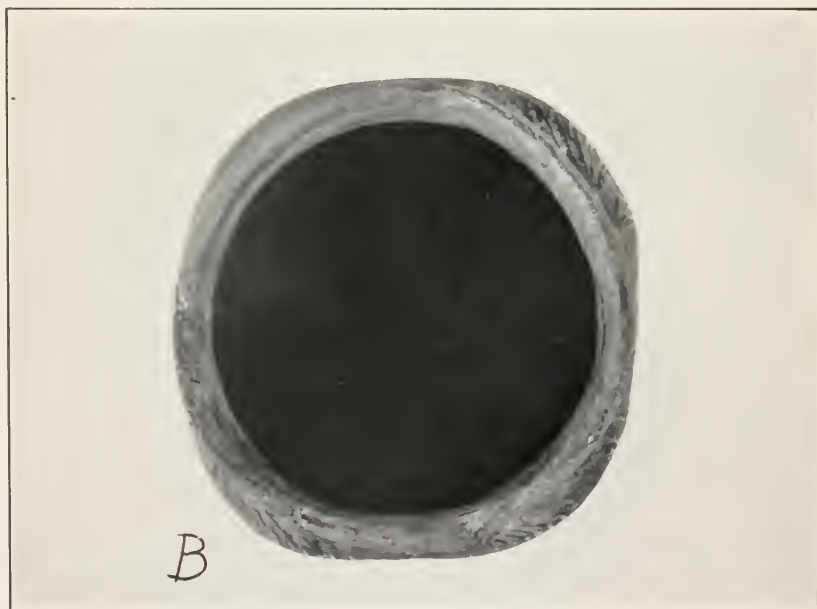
RESTORED VESSEL FROM STONE-Vault BURIAL MOUND NEAR WALDRON, MO.

(Height, $4\frac{3}{8}$ inches; diameter, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Courtesy of A. H. Hansen.)



SQUARE VESSEL WITH ROUNDED CORNERS FROM STONE-VAULT MOUND
NEAR WALDRON, MO.

(Height, $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches; maximum diameter, $5\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Courtesy of A. H. Hansen.)



VERTICAL VIEW OF A.

The associated traits in stone, bone, horn, and other materials represent a somewhat greater variety than occurs in most of the known Plains archeological complexes. Work in chipped stone includes numerous heavy stemmed and a few triangular projectile points (pl. 4, *N*, *O*), medium to large end scrapers (pl. 4, *P*), a variety of knives and side scrapers, drills of straight and expanded-base types, stemmed "snub-nose" scrapers (pl. 4, *K*), and various heavier agricultural, skinning, and other tools (pl. 4, *Q*). The largest chipped specimen was a well-made brown chert or jasper blade with rounded ends measuring 10½ by 3 inches. Ground stone objects included diorite and hematite celts (pl. 4, *M*), large and small three-quarter grooved axes (pl. 4, *L*), quartzite balls and mullers, and cone-shaped or mammiform objects whose use is unknown (pl. 4, *I*). The unquestionably inclusive presence of grooved axes, including one unfinished specimen, is of interest. Implements of this type are not unknown in surface collections throughout the Plains, but so far as I am aware, the archeological complex in which they belong has never before been definitely established by excavation. Several lumps of pumice were evidently used as abrasants. No pipes or pipe fragments were found.

Among the artifacts in bone are deer metapodial beamers of "draw-shave" type (pl. 4, *A*), various forms of awls, needles, a dressed deer-toe bone perforated lengthwise for cup and pin game, a long thin mat-weaving needle, imitation perforated bear teeth (pl. 4, *B*), a small carving of a bird head evidently broken from a larger object, and several unidentified forms. Conspicuously absent from the Renner site was the otherwise highly typical Plains digging tool or hoe made from the scapula of the bison, though the type occurs commonly in nearby sites of different cultural affinities and probably of later date. Socketed conical projectile points with characteristic single basal tangs (pl. 4, *D*), curved "cylinders" or tapping tools (pl. 4, *F*), flakers (pl. 4, *G*), and strainers (?) (pl. 4, *E*) were made of deer horn, while from various caches were taken several more or less complete sets of antlers. Shell was scarce; the only worked fragment found was small and nondescript, with a single perforation.

One small worked piece of probable native copper was recovered. There was no metal, glass, or other material in any way suggesting contact with Europeans.

No burials were found during the course of our excavations, but some years ago an earth mound was partially dug over by Shippee and Henneman on the bluffs overlooking the village site from the west. Interments included four stone-covered bundle and two full-length burials, as well as four unattached skulls. Scattered about through the mound dirt were pieces of red and yellow ochre and

chipped flints, the latter including a very fine 10½-inch white chert blade. There were also a few grit-tempered sherds and one small roulette decorated vase (pl. 7, A), but the latter was not directly associated with any of the skeletal remains. An extended infant burial yielded a few scraps of copper. The bluff north of this mound is littered with worked and unworked stone, and a large polished biperforate gorget of altered diorite is said to have been picked up on the surface here.

More recently, since our work, I have been informed that another burial mound was opened in a group on the bluffs some 12 miles upriver from the Renner site, also on the left bank of the Missouri.³ Full details are lacking, but it appears that remains of a number of skeletons were found here in an oval chamber of coursed stones with a walled opening toward the south. There was no satisfactory evidence of a specially prepared floor or burial surface. Two incomplete male skulls and two frontal bones, including that of one infant, have been submitted to the National Museum for examination. The frontal bones in all cases are extremely narrow, and three exhibit a slight flattening above the middle on each side of the median line. Both of the crania show simple occipital deformity of moderate degree. One is evidently abnormal; the other is of dolichocephalic type. The latter, it may be noted here, strikingly resembles one from the Brenner mound no. 2, described by Hrdlička and now in the national collections.⁴ Marks of rodent teeth occur on the bones, suggesting that they were originally placed in an open vault. In support of this view Shippee reports that "the mounds all appear to be flat topped over the vault enclosure. I presume they once had a roof of logs and stones." Associated cultural remains included a small stone knife and two Hopewellian vessels strongly reminiscent of certain pieces from the Renner village site (pls. 7, B, and 8). This association, if correct, is of great interest since it would indicate a direct connection between at least one stone-vault mound and a village artifact complex similar to that described in this paper. It would be tempting to go a step further and view the Brenner, Klamm, and Keller mounds as burial places for the dead of the nearby Renner site, but in the present state of our information such a relationship can not be conclusively demonstrated. With the single apparent exception just noted, it is still impossible to identify with certainty the builders of this

³ Excavated by Albert Hansen, who kindly forwarded the pottery and part of the skeletal material found to the U. S. National Museum for study. Information that follows was furnished by Mr. Shippee (letters of Nov. 3 and 14, 1937), who visited the mound at my request.

⁴ Fowke, G., *Op. cit.*, p. 109. There is no record of pottery or other artifacts associated with this last find, made within 900 yards to the east of the Renner village site.

type of mound, which has so long puzzled students of prehistory in the Kansas City region.

Viewed in the light of Plains archeology, the complex briefly inventoried above presents a number of totally new features combined with others that have been known to workers in that area for some time.⁵ Widespread throughout Nebraska and apparently also in Kansas are small often deeply buried sites distinguished by thick coarsely tempered cord-roughened sherds, with or without the rim bosses, which are much like the first type described above. These have heretofore generally been classed as Woodland, and as already stated stratigraphically they are believed to represent the earliest known ceramic horizon in the region. Little is known of the associated artifact types except that heavy stemmed projectile points are usually present. On several occasions three-quarter grooved axes have also been found on these camp sites. The relation between these small widely distributed sites with their single distinctive pottery type and such large and comparatively rich manifestations as the Renner site is still obscure. Otherwise the sherds previously described in this paper are of types not yet found in Nebraska, although our work in the Kansas valley disclosed at least one camp site with similar sherds near Manhattan, Kans., 120 miles west of Kansas City. Metapodial beaming tools have been reported sporadically from the Plains, but so far only in the precontact Upper Republican or a related context. Antler projectile points are scarce otherwise from the region save in the protohistoric Oneota and Lower Loup (Pawnee) complexes. Besides the generally more elaborate ceramic tradition, traits at the Renner site that are either rare or unknown in other described Plains archeological complexes include stemmed scrapers, an unusual variety of chipped stone objects, cone-shaped stone and clay artifacts, imitation bear teeth, and "strainers." There is little resemblance to known protohistoric and historic remains in this portion of the Missouri Valley, and in fact the complexion of the material is generally non-Plains.

Despite the absence of a detailed tabular analysis by depths of the Renner site materials, it seems evident that all these various artifact types represent the remains of a single occupancy. Possibility of a mechanical mixing of vestiges from distinct culture strata is ruled

⁵ See: Wedel, W. R., Reports on fieldwork by the Archeological Survey of the Nebraska State Historical Society, May 1-July 23, 1934, Nebraska Hist. Mag., vol. 15, pp. 132-255, 1934.—Strong, W. D., An introduction to Nebraska archeology, Smithsonian Misc. Coll., vol. 93, no. 10, 1935.—Hill, A. T., and Wedel, W. R., Excavations at the Leary Indian village and burial site, Richardson County, Nebraska, Nebraska Hist. Mag., vol. 17, pp. 3-73, 1936.—Wedel, W. R., An introduction to Pawnee archeology, Bur. Amer. Ethnol. Bull. 112, 1936.—Bell, E. H., et al., Chapters in Nebraska archeology, vol. 1, University of Nebraska, 1936.—Hill, A. T., and Cooper, Paul, papers in Nebraska Hist. Mag., vol. 17, pp. 222-292, 1937.

out by the fact that the great bulk of the material came from a relatively homogeneous and unstratified deposit below plow sole and out of the old trash pits. Furthermore, the Renner site is not unique in the Kansas City area. Five or six miles to the west on a small unnamed creek about a mile south of the Missouri, in Wyandotte County, Kans., nearly identical remains have been unearthed by H. M. Trowbridge, of Bethel. Practically every artifact and pottery type enumerated above from the Renner site can be duplicated in the Trowbridge collection. Surface finds have revealed good evidence for recurrence of the complex at five or six other smaller sites recorded in and below Kansas City, and it is quite likely that still others will eventually be found both up and down the Missouri River from this known area of occurrence.

A brief survey of the more recent literature on the archeology of the upper Mississippi drainage suggests that the Renner site and similar remains in the vicinity may prove to be rather closely related to certain Hopewellian manifestations in parts of Illinois and Wisconsin.⁶ From the limited studies so far made, it is not yet clear to which, if any, of the currently recognized aspects of the Hopewellian phase the newly identified Missouri Valley variant is assignable. It apparently lacks among other things many of the practices connected with disposal of the dead farther east and south, although the evidence hints at a basic similarity even here. Possibly further work will show that these remains comprise the Kansas City focus of an as yet unnamed westerly aspect of the Hopewellian. This point, as well as the exact position of the complex in Missouri Valley archeology temporally and otherwise, must remain problematic until systematic investigations have been made in additional related sites and in some of the fast-vanishing burial mounds of the Kansas City area.

⁶ McKern, W. C., A Wisconsin variant of the Hopewell culture, *Milwaukee Public Mus. Bull.*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1931.—Cole, F. C., and Deuel, T., *Rediscovering Illinois*, Chicago, 1937.