EXCAVATIONS IN HAMPSHIRE COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

The largest mound in Hampshire county is in the cemetery at Romney; it measures 35 by 40 feet (the longer axis trending nearly east and west,) and is nearly 5 feet high, being made of stone and earth in about equal proportions.

Two mounds on the Parson farm, a mile north of Romney, one 35 feet in diameter and 2i feet high, the other somewhat smaller, have been thoroughly examined and reported to contain nothing.

Two mounds, mostly of earth, are on the farm of Joseph Wirgman, a mile south of Romney. In one, about 25 feet in diameter, a small pot was found entire. The other is 22 by 34 feet and 2 feet high, the longer axis east and west. It covered a grave larger than any other that has been disclosed in this region, being 7 by 8 feet, not regular in outline, and extending 18 inches to the hard-packed, dis­integrated shale that could scarcely be dug with a pick. It had been refilled with earth to the depth of a foot, and then large stones, some of them as heavy as a man could lift, piled on until they reached slightly beyond the margin of the grave on every side and to the top of the mound as it now exists. No relics were found in it.

A small cairn stood half a mile south of the cemetery on the same level as those just described.

On the bottom lands, between the cemetery and the bridge, many village site relics as well as human bones have been picked up after Hoods, or when the ground was freshly plowed.

In making excavations for the railway along the foot of Hanging Rock, miles below Romney, many human bones wore unearthed. Such quantities of stone have fallen from the cliff above, however, that it is impossible to ascertain whether there was a mound. According to tradition a great battle was here waged between the Catawba and the. Delaware. The same claim is made for various points on the Potomac from the mouth of Antietam creek almost to Cumberland, and along South branch from its source to its mouth1 in every locality, in fact, where a few skeletons have been found.

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1 Kercheval, History of the Valley, 1833, pp. 47-50.

An extensive village and cemetery site exist on the Herriott farm, opposite and below Hanging rock. Fireplaces are numerous and many skeletons have been exhumed. Besides the ordinary Indian relics are found iron hatchets, glass beads, and ornaments of brass. An Indian town stood at this point when the whites first came into the valley, and the natives continued to occupy it for a number of years after the early settlers had taken up land, as shown by the character of some of the relics found. Persons well versed in the history of the region assert that the Indians occupying this town were a branch of the Seneca.

There were formerly many stone mounds along the toot of the hill back of this village, but all of them have now been removed. Some of them were along the hillside a few feet above the margin of the level bottom; others were on the level, but nowhere more than 50 or 00 feet from the foot of the hill. They varied in height from 2 to 8 feet, in diameter from 12 or 15 to 40 or 50 feet and were composed entirely of stone. All except the smallest ones had a depression at the top as if they had contained a vault or pen of logs whose decay had allowed the rocks to settle. Fragmentary bones were found in many of them lying on the original surface. Very few art relics were found. In one was a pipe with a wolf head carved on it. A cairn on the hillside near the schoolhouse on the Herriott farm contained some decayed bones.

On the western slope of Mill Creek mountain, on the farm of William Hamilton, directly west of Romney, is the site of an arrowhead factory. Flint is abundant along the mountain side and was carried to a knoll near the loot of the slope to be worked.

Three considerable village sites are located above Romney. One is on Murphy’s farm, 9 miles from town; a second on John Pancake’s

place. 2 miles below the former. Both are on the right bank. The third is on the left bank, at what is known as Pancake island. Many fireplaces and graves have been examined. In them arrowheads, bone fishhooks, celts, pipes (including many of the platform type), iron hatchets, brass ornaments, and glass beads (among the latter some of the Venetian polychrome variety) were found intermingled. Pottery fragments are abundant and of two distinct kinds; one, thin, smooth, well worked, of nearly pure clay, kneaded or paddled as compactly as possible, the other formed of pounded flint and quartz mixed with shale from the hill crushed like the other ingredients, pieces as large as a grain of wheat being common.

On Joseph A. Pancake's place, at the mouth of Trout or Mill run, 4 miles above Romney, are 2 stone mounds, one of which has been nearly leveled. It contained some relics, among them a celt and a steatite pipe with a hawk head carved on it. The other mound was formerly 3 feet above the surrounding level, but the soil had been washed away from around it by freshets until its top is 6 feet above the present sur­face. It is now on the riverbank, but the terrace formerly extended fully 100 yards farther than at present. At the center was a grave dug to the underlying gravel, at this point only a few inches below the old surface, and tilled with flat stones, some of them 200 pounds in weight. They were inclined at various angles as if they had been placed over a pen or other covering for the body. Nothing in the way of relics was found.

“Indian Rock” 3 miles above the mouth of South branch, takes its name from an incised image, supposed to represent an Indian, carved on the protected portion of an overhanging rock. The lines are filled with a red substance which persons have tried unsuccessfully to remove. Of course, “a great battle” is reported to account for it.

On a point overlooking Cacapon river, half a mile north of the Hardy county line, on the Rudolph farm, are 3 or 4 small cairns, one of which has been opened and found to contain bones tolerably well preserved.

A small cairn on a hilltop just above the residence of Captain Pugh, 44 miles south of Cacapon bridge, has also been opened; and two others on the opposite side of the river, half a mile farther down, have been removed. Nothing of note was found in any of them.

An undisturbed cairn stands on a narrow ridge just west of Cacapon Bridge.

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This is from James and Potomac Valleys, Archeological Investigations by Gerald Fowke, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of Ethnology, 1894.

The entire book can be viewed online at: <https://repository.si.edu/bitstream/handle/10088/34576/bae_bulletin_23_JamesandPotomac.pdf> or purchased on Amazon.com.