

The McKinley Site

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Abstract

The McKinley Site is located just south of Noblesville, Hamilton County, Indiana. It was first discovered in 1937 when a road was widened. It was excavated by Downey Raibourn and Jack Householder, as a salvage operation, starting in 1953 under the direction of the late Glenn Black.

The site had three periods of occupation from Late Archaic to Early Woodland and finally during the contact period of 200 years ago. In the Late Archaic there was evidence for hot-rock cooking plus an emphasis on small animal hunting and gathering. The tool inventory was more sophisticated than for later occupations. The Early Woodland period emphasized larger animal hunting and there was evidence for pole structures. The surface and near-surface occupation included stone artifacts and tools as well as historical objects. Eighteen burials recovered showed associations with Indian Knoll.

Introduction

The McKinley Site, located just south of Noblesville in southeast Hamilton County, was a salvage operation, excavated as a result of Indiana State Highway operations.

In 1937 the road leading to Noblesville from the south was a very narrow, paved highway. When the highway was widened, the road scrapers cut into the east bank of the river terrace just south of a house owned by Mr. and Mrs. McKinley. Bone fragments and flint chips were noticed by the highway crew, and Dr. Glenn A. Black, Indiana University, was notified. He and Jack Householder examined the site and noted the situation. Householder visited the site a number of times as the years passed and collected samples from the surface.

Downey Raibourn and Jack Householder began excavation of the McKinley Site on June 7, 1953. Of the total area dug, approximately half of the work (750 square feet) was finished in the first season to sterile soil, which in some cases went over 3 feet deep. In the next 2 seasons approximately 775 square feet of surface was excavated to sterile soil.

The author wrote up the McKinley Site excavation as a thesis at the suggestion of Dr. James Kellar, as part of the program to finish the work of the late Dr. Glenn Black.

Site Description

The McKinley Site overlooks to the west, what is known as Horse Shoe Prairie which is a fertile, flat land formed by several sharp bends in the west fork of White River. In all probability during Late Archaic-Early Woodland times, the river bank came up to the terrace that is contiguous to the site. It has apparently been an ideal location for occupation since post-glacial times.

The area of the site had, in the immediate past, been in garden, but at the time excavation began, it was covered with broom grass, wild lettuce and weeds. The plow zone penetrated to at least the 0.4 foot level, but there was still much material on and near the surface. In this level were found bones of domesticated animals such as sheep and hog, glass and other artifacts of both modern man and of early settlers.

The area of occupation extended for 60 feet along a northeast-southwest line and roughly paralleled what had been the original bank of the river as it made its sharp bend forming the prairie. The road cut doubtless destroyed much of the site, but there is no estimate of how much. Unsuccessful attempts were made to locate material west of the right-of-way. The 60 lineal feet previously mentioned applied to the surface and to the layer down to the 1.6 foot level. The third occupational area was primarily limited to a more circular area of about 30 feet in diameter at the north end of the 60-foot line.

Methods

The site was laid out in 40 squares, each 10 feet by 10 feet. During the first season, excavation was continued to sterile soil on a 10 foot block plan as originally intended. In addition, two 5-foot blocks were opened 50 feet north and 30 feet east of the center lines to establish the perimeter of the site. However, at the start of the second season the expedition was constantly hampered by after-hour pot hunters. For this reason, 5-foot squares were excavated and every effort was made to complete a square before opening another. This was not an ideal technique, and has led to many problems in studying the field notes, but was necessary procedure under the circumstances.

In the laboratory, the author analyzed the projectile points for their discrete attributes under a formula worked out at the University of Michigan (1), as follows: outline of the blade, outline of the base, junctures of the haft element, presence or absence of a shoulder or a barb, outline of the shoulder element, tang form, tang outline-proximal segment.

Of the 157 total selected points, 69 were complete enough for metric measurements.

Results

The stratigraphy of the site was not apparent at the time of the excavation, but analysis clearly indicated three occupations. On the surface, along with the modern debris, a few sherds of grit tempered cord marked pottery of Late Woodland variety were found. However, many of the projectile points in the same context were Archiac. Under this modern debris area which can be classified with the surface as Zone C,

a continuous black layer was noted over the entire site and was variously referred to in the field notes as black soil, black debris, black disturbed and mottled. It varied in thickness from several inches to 2 feet, and averaged about 1 foot. This fact seems to correlate well with the second occupation, or what was called Zone B. The extreme blackness of the second layer indicated an intense occupation.

Under Zone B in discontinuous patches of about the same thickness was a lighter-colored occupation that was called yellow-disturbed by the excavators. This first occupation of the site was called Zone A. It is not as wide-spread as Zone B and was similar except for the presence of many shell fragments and a change in the style of the projectile points. Other artifacts of stone and bone also indicate a change of style. Below Zone A was a sterile yellow Miami silt loam soil.

The chipped stone projectile points recovered at the McKinley Site were well distributed over the area. In all, some 363 points and fragments of points were recovered, but only 149 were complete enough for the discrete attribute analysis. The raw material was for the most part chert. Eight bone points were added to this analysis for a total under consideration of 157. Of this total, 64% were found on the surface, 24% in Zone B and 16% in Zone A, including the bone points.

TABLE 1, *Stone and bone implement inventory.*

	Zones		
	A	B	C
Stone Tools			
Anvils	0	3	16
Hammers	25	24	3
Axes:			
$\frac{3}{4}$ grooved	0	2	0
full grooved	0	0	4
Net Sinkers	0	4	0
Pestles:			
elongated	2	0	0
bell shaped	4	0	0
Knives	1	5	10
Scrapers (4 types)	3	6	23
Drills	0	13	20
Smoothing stone	0	1	0
Bone Tools			
Awls	29	43	—
Bodkins	9	0	—
Needles	2	11	—
Atlatl hook	1	0	—
Fish hook	1		
Ornaments and Problem Forms			
Banner stone fragments	0	0	3
Stone tube	0	0	1
Stone beads	1	0	0
Shell beads	3	0	0
Perforated turtle shell rattle	1	0	0
Bone tubes	0	2	0

My analysis revealed at least one new type of projectile point for each Zone. In Zone A, two distinct types were noted. All bone projectile points were found in this lowest zone, and were similar to those found at Indian Knoll (4). In the classification, they were described as having an ovate blade and a lateral-lateral haft element (also known as side-notched). A type originating (3) in Zone B was described as having an excurvate blade and straight shoulders. Only Zone C revealed triangle points with subconcave bases.

The tool inventory was very extensive and was divided into two general categories, stone and bone (Table 1). Of special interest was the fragment of an atlatl hook, which was found at the lowest level. Atlatl hooks were known to have been used in the area during Late Archaic times (2). The bone material recovered was, for the most part, in good condition and quite extensive (Table 2). The bones and bone fragments from animals used for food. Included were disarticulated dog bone fragments found scattered throughout the site.

TABLE 2. *Subsistence patterns.*

Bone	Number of pieces	
	Zone A	Zone B
Deer— <i>Odocoileus virginianus</i> ¹	765	1,625
Turtle— <i>Amyda spinifers</i> ,	226	72
<i>Chelydra serpentine</i> and		
<i>Terrepene carolinensis</i>		
Ground Hog— <i>Marmota monax</i>	43	11
Squirrel:		
Fox— <i>Sciurus niger</i>	—	9
Gray— <i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>	—	41
Raccoon— <i>Procyon lotor</i>	11	22
Beaver— <i>Castor canadensis</i>	8	—
Rabbit— <i>Sylvilagus floridanus</i>	5	5
Opossum— <i>Didelphis virginianus</i>	—	1
Muskrat— <i>Ondatra zibethica</i>	47	3
Rodent misc.	—	10
Shell	60+	—
Bird:		
Small	38	—
Large	8	—
Dog— <i>Canis familiaris</i>	3	3
Unidentified (28 burned fragments)		

¹ Representing an animal count of 84, using the Dick Adams method, Indiana University.

Of the 18 burials recovered, 8 were probably related to the Zone B occupation and the remaining 10 were from the deepest level of occupation. All heads were oriented facing south except one which faced north and

showed evidence for red ocher in the pelvic region. There was one male-female double burial.

Most of the burials were on their back with flexed lower limbs. Exceptions included two fully extended burials, and one unusual burial which was on its back, fully extended to the knees, then with the lower legs flexed back under the body. Probably the most important burial was a male, found at the lowest level, tightly flexed and buried face down. Associated with it was a perforated carapace rattle very similar to those found at Indian Knoll in Kentucky (4).

TABLE 3. *Age comparisons between McKinley and Indian Knoll.*

Classification	Percentage	
	Indian Knoll	McKinley
Newborn to one year	6.11	11.00
1 to 3 years	19.80	6.00
Children 4-12 years	14.13	0
Youths 13-17	6.64	6.00
Near Adults 18-20 years	.28	0
Young Adults 21-35 years	31.64	22.00
Middle Age 36-55 years	4.32	39.00
Old Adults 55 + years	.02	11.00
Unidentifiable	9.10	0

Of the 18 burials, there were 10 males, 5 females, and 3 infants. The age at time of death ranged from 13 to 51 for the males and from 30 to 68 for the females. The final skull measurements were made by the late Dr. Georg Neumann, and are very similar to Indian Knoll. However, the McKinley population lived longer on an average than the Indian Knoll population and were 1 to 4 inches taller. (Tables 3 and 4).

TABLE 4. *Comparison of stature between Indian Knoll and McKinley.*

Zone	Burial No.	Age	Sex	Manouvrier	Pearson	Neumann
A	12H1-13	13	M	1580	1569	1622
A	12H1-11	29	M	1689	1667	1682
A	12H1- 7	30	F	1575	1557	1591
A	12H1-12	40	M	1738	1730	1722
A	12H1- 9	45	F	1673	—	1640
A	12H1-18	46	M	1630	1618	1652
A	12H1-10	46	F	1568	—	—
A	12H1- 6	67	F	1575	1557	—
B	12H1- 3	32	F	1548	1527	1562
B	12H1- 5	44	M	1693	1693	1698
McKinley Average			F	1588	1542	1588
McKinley Average			M	1688	1677	1688
Indian Knoll Average			F	1569	1532	—
Indian Knoll Average			M	1656	1640	—

Discussion

Other interesting features, in addition to burials, included pits and post holes. There appeared to be no consistency in the size and shape of the pits. There was no evidence for bark or rock lining for storage purposes although several small pits were found containing charred nuts. Other small pits contained charcoal and red burned clay.

One special pattern found in the lowest level of occupation was noted by the excavators. At least six pits were uncovered with concentrations of rocks in the center. These pits ranged from 1 to 2 feet in diameter, and averaged a foot deep. In many instances these pits showed a possible flanged rim. The excavators indicated that this was evidence for "hot rock" cooking by the earliest occupants of the site.

Because of the density of the occupation it was difficult to identify all of the post holes that were present. Some organization was present, *e.g.*, a suggestion of a straight line in the southwest quadrant of the excavation. The most intensive occupation appeared to be in the lowest strata of Zone B. The organization that was present in the post holes can probably be associated with the housing used primarily by the Zone B occupation.

Conclusions

It is obvious that hunting and gathering was the life style throughout the occupations of the site, and that the availability of the fauna was reasonably constant. However, there seemed to be an emphasis on small animals at the lowest level, and a corresponding emphasis on larger animal hunting in the middle occupational level.

There seems little doubt that the earliest village in Hamilton County, Indiana, may well have been a small band of people, who left their home at Indian Knoll, Kentucky, and worked their way up the White River to settle at Horse Shoe Prairie sometime before 1000 B.C.

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