

## Preliminary Investigations at Kuester Site

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### *Abstract*

The Kuester Site is located in Vanderburgh County, Indiana, within 600 feet of the Ohio River. The site has revealed two separate levels of habitation, with the lower level suggesting affiliations with the Mann Site in Posey County, Indiana (1), and with Allison sites throughout the Wabash River Valley (7). These affiliations are suggested by the prevalence of the Lowe Flared Base projectile point, and general inventory of archaeological materials present. Overlying this component is a Late Woodland-Mississippian transitional habitation level. The diagnostic artifacts for this level are small triangular points, plain buff colored pottery with clay tempering, and shell tempered pottery.

### Introduction

This report describes the archaeological excavations conducted during the summer of 1971 at the Kuester Site, 12-Vg-71, in Vanderburgh County, Indiana. A previous survey by Robert Henn (personal communication, 1970) revealed that the site was rapidly eroding away due to seasonal flooding so the problem was one of salvage. There has been limited prior archaeological study reported for prehistoric sites of similar culture components in this area. Thanks are due to Paul A. Kuester, tenant owner of the land excavated.

### Site Description

The site is located on the first terrace of the Ohio River in Vanderburgh County, about 10 miles southwest of Evansville, and directly across the river from Henderson, Kentucky. To the north, south, and east of the site there is a wide cut that is formed by seasonal high waters from two drainage plains that empty into the Ohio River. The site area is located within a small woods containing hickory, locust and sycamore trees, grape vines, and briars.

### Field Techniques

After the site grid was staked off in 2-meter squares, arbitrary levels of 5 cm were used during excavation of the first test unit to become familiar with the natural stratigraphy. When study of the exposed stratigraphy indicated that the original site was located on indistinct rolling terrain, excavation was continued at arbitrary levels rather than following the indistinct stratigraphy.

### Excavations

Forty square meters of excavation surface were opened, revealing three features. Feature 1, a pit, was located in the upper level in SO-W12. The cultural debris present in this feature included 47 pottery sherds, all of which are shell or cell tempered, and pieces of identifiable deer bone. There was a scattering of charcoal throughout the pit.

Feature 2 was located in Unit N10-W16 on the lower level. It contained 152 split long bones and 23 cracked stones. Nearby were parts of occipital bones from four deer skulls. Feature 3, a shallow fire basin, located in the opposite corner of the same unit, was slightly deeper. It contained large amounts of fish bone, fish scales, and charred plant material.

The upper level began 0 to 8 cm below the surface and continued to 32 to 40 cm deep; the second level ranged from 38-54 cm to 93-131 cm deep. Between the two levels, a layer of silty clay ranging in thickness from 5 to 13 cm was evident. Highly concentrated floral remains on the second level provided samples for a carbon dating. The sample (RL-144, Radiocarbon, Ltd.) was taken from a depth of 90 cm in unit SO-W8, and revealed a date of  $1480 \pm 120$  years B.P. or 470 A.D. (6).

### Discussion of Catalogued Artifacts

#### The First Level

Artifacts recovered on this level were of two general types: chipped stone (54 pieces) and ceramics (528 sherds and two clay objects). The bulk of the stone pieces were crude scrapers and shredders made from local river gravels (Table 1). There were 10 triangular projectile points, and 2 perforators of an expanded base form. Many of the stone tools were made of the Caolin flint from Illinois (G. Perino, personal communication).

The most common type of surface treatment for the ceramics was plain, and the most common type of rim treatment was rounded, with the majority of the sherds having a sandy paste with clay tempering, which compares closely to the Duffy Ceramic Series in the Wabash River Valley. Also, there appears to be a possible relationship between this ceramic style and the type defined as Baytown below the Ohio River. Approximately 8% of the pottery recovered was shell tempered. There were 27 sherds that have a similar type of incising to a group collected at the Yankeetown Site in Warrick County, Indiana (3). Other ceramic decorations included are stick punctate, applique, bar stamp, textile marked, and node design. Other midden material found on this level included a half of a crinoid bead, and one identifiable deer mandible (*Odocoileus virginianus*).

#### The Second Level

The ceramics for this earlier level are predominately clay tempered and less frequently occur with sandy paste. In general the sherds have a smooth chalky texture. Cordmarking, the predominant surface treatment, usually runs vertical to the rims of vessels. Cord impressions vary from loosely to tightly twisted strands and range from closely spaced to 3 mm apart.

Of the simple stamped sherds found, most contained clay temper, a few have clay tempering in a sandy paste, or clay and grit tempering mixed. The rim form of this ceramic style is rounded with an exterior notch, with the simple stamping parallel to the rim.

TABLE 1. *Catalog of archaeological materials recovered, 1971.*

First Level	Second Level
<b>CERAMICS</b>	
326 plain	698 cordmarked
152 cordmarked	122 plain
27 "Yankeetown"	20 simple stamped
7 bar stamped	12 other
6 applique	
5 stick punctate	
4 incised	
3 other	
<b>CHIPPED STONE</b>	
10 triangular projectile points	146 lamellar blades
21 scrapers	6 Lowe Flare Projectile Points
10 shredders	6 projectile point fragments
3 gravers	2 triangular blades
2 flake knives	1 stemmed projectile point
2 expanded base perforators	1 lamellar perforator
1 leaf-shaped blade	1 Lowe Flare perforator
1 burin	1 thumb scraper
	1 backed blade
<b>STONE</b>	
	1 sandstone abrader
	1 sandstone hammerstone
<b>BONE</b>	
fragments	6 awls
	3 fish bone needles
	1 modified deer phalanx bone fragments
<b>OTHER</b>	
2 clay objects	147 carbonized nut hulls
1 crinoid bead	9 carbonized seeds
	5 mica pieces
	3 miniature vessel sherds
	2 clay objects
	2 clay elbow pipes
	1 clay ball
	1 copper piece
	2 galena cubes

Other sherds, although few in number, exhibit some degree of affinity to the Hopewellian culture. A type of surface decoration reminiscent of Marksville Incised and the Marksville Zoned by the deep U-shaped incisions in a curving pattern with "pseudo-dentate rocker stamped" (4) was found associated with some sherds similar to those described by Phillips (4) as Evansville Punctate. Adams (1) identifies Marksville ware at the Mann Site in Posey County, Indiana. There were also three miniature vessels found that were clay tempered in a sandy paste with rounded rims.

The Lowe Flared Base projectile point described by Winters (7) was the most common type recovered from this component. Of the 6 found, 5 are of the typical blue-gray Harrison County Flint commonly used during this culture period (2). Also two triangular blades, one stemmed projectile point and 6 point fragments were found. One perforator was a reworked Lowe Flared Base projectile point.

Bone artifacts included a cut and perforated deer phalanx. The proximal end was cut off and ground smooth, while the distal end of the bone had a groove worn into it deep enough to reach the hollow center. This object may have been worn or it could have been used in the "cup and pin game." Six bone awls and three fish bone needles were found on this level. Preliminary identification of the animal bone associated with the lower level includes deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), bob cat (*Lynx rufus*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), catfish (*Ameihrus nabalosus*), drum fish (*Aplodinotus grunniens*), and several remains from other small mammals, reptiles, fish, and birds. An initial analysis of carbonized flora specimens includes hickory shells, walnut shells, acorns, persimmon, and *Chenopodium*.

### Discussion

Two separate levels of habitation were exposed during the excavation of 1971 at the Kuester Site. The earlier component suggests a diffusion of cultural elements from areas to the south and north of this site. From the south comes Marksville-like zoned and the Evansville-like punctated pottery sherds with such commonly associated minerals as mica, copper and galena, all of which are noted from the Hopewellian culture. From the north the material assemblages for the Allison culture described by Winters (7) and by Clouse (2), match closely the overall assemblage of artifacts recovered from this excavation. The location and the flora material suggest a late summer or early fall camp site.

The upper level was likely a late Woodland-Mississippian transitional site, retaining clay material as a source for ceramic temper. The pottery type compares more closely to the Duffy Ceramic Series as described by Winters (7), although a relationship occurs with the Baytown ceramics, as described by Thorne (5). Further excavations are needed to determine definite affinities and whether this is a seasonal camp or a permanent village site.

### Literature Cited

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