

Round Lake: Remnants of a Late Woodland Site in Starke County, Indiana

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Abstract

In 1931 amateur archeologists excavated two mounds on the periphery of Round Lake in the Kankakee River Valley. A recent interview with one of the participants and newspaper accounts are the only descriptions available. These are not sufficient for cultural identification. A recent surface survey of the general area suggests that the major cultural component was early Late Woodland.

Introduction

Personal communications with A. L. Jonas, an amateur archeologist who participated in the initial phase of the 1931 excavations, combined with newspaper accounts contemporary to the diggings, provide the foundation for a discussion of the Round Lake site. These descriptions have been supplemented by a surface survey conducted since 1969. More than 400 artifacts were recovered from what have been designated Areas 1, 2 and Rest of Site (Fig. 1).

Site Description

The Round Lake site is located in the E 1/2, Sec. 8 and the W edge, Sec. 9, T32N, R2W in Starke County, Indiana. In a 1959 survey of the county, De Paepe (4) recorded the mound group as St-50 and observed the most prominent earthwork "is called by local people the 'moon' or crescent mound because of its distinctive shape. It is probable that the mound was originally circular, but due to natural causes or human activities it has become crescent shaped". Measurements made of the mound have supported the De Paepe argument. Surrounding Mound A (Fig. 1) and particularly on its south side was a halo of earth, possibly formed as refuse from holes dug by late 19th century curio hunters¹. Excavations were also suggested by the presence of a depression located midway between the points of the crescent. There was a slight rise farther outward from the center of the mound. The rise could have been the edge of a circular structure 5 feet high and 30 feet in diameter. De Paepe (4) reported several pits in the top of the mound but these have since been filled.

One of the mounds was damaged during the construction of a gravel road. One account indicated that not far from Mound A and "across the road to the northwest is a sun mound" (1). Along the north side of the road and about 90 feet northwest of Mound A, there is a semi-circular ridge which has been designated Mound B. If the ridge is what

¹ After viewing the site, James Bellis of the University of Notre Dame suggested curio hunters may have dug into the mound and placed the earth from their diggings in a wheelbarrow. The earth might then have been moved a few feet and dumped.

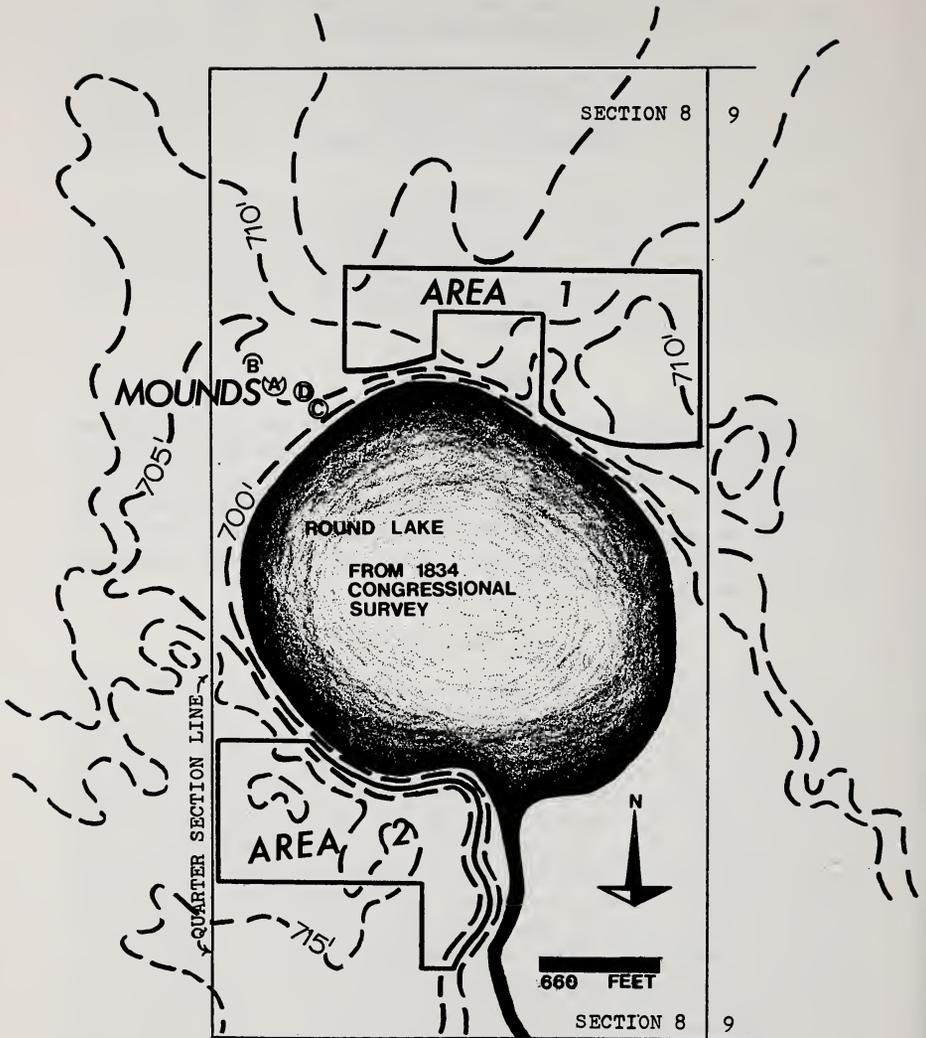


FIGURE 1. Round Lake Site.

remains of the "sun" mound, then at least 60% of the structure has been destroyed.

A third mound was located southeast of Mound A and "nearer the edge of the lake" (2). Two roughly circular structures are still present at that location. One was 32 feet in diameter and slightly less than 2 feet high.² The structure was subject to neither wind nor water

² Bellis suggested the mound might have been flattened by the Dalbey excavation.

erosion and has been termed Mound C. The other was barely perceptible and may well have been a natural hill or refuse from the excavation of Mound C. It tentatively has been designated Mound D. No other mounds were located, although in 1931 there were reportedly 5 present at the site (2).

One newspaper account described a series of "long narrow mounds of earth" which were positioned "along the shore of the lake in shallow water" (2). Since the partial draining of the lake several years ago, organic debris has accumulated on the structure so that they are now barely discernible. The structures are similar to a series of parallel ridges located by McAllister at St-33 in Porter County (8).

The surface survey was focused upon cultivated fields on either side of Round Lake. Area 1 is north of the lake and corresponds to De Paepe's St-49 (4) (Fig. 1). South of the lake is Area 2. Other artifacts located at the site, most notably those from regions northeast and immediately west of the lake, were included within the category Rest of Site.

Excavations

In the autumn of 1931, A. L. Jonas and another amateur archaeologist located and dug into a small circular mound. A geographical description made of the structure indicated that it was probably Mound C. After encountering a skull "three or four feet" below the surface, Dalbey was notified of the discovery (A. L. Jonas, personal communication, 1972). Several days later the three men unearthed the "articulated, flexed skeleton" of a single individual (2). The burial was "wrapped in White Oak bark, lay on left side facing north". The skull was "pillowed on firestone" and had a "flint amulet on top". In the base of the skull was imbedded a "poorly made" projectile point (2) with its tip broken (1). A 6-inch pottery pipe was encountered slightly below the skull level (2).

The Dalbey group later excavated Mound A. "A conglomerate burial" consisting of "three adult skeletons" was discovered "1 1/2 feet below the surface just to the north of the center." Recovered in association with the burial were "picked stones, a stone hammer and anvil" and several pieces of charcoal (1). "[A]t a depth of 3 1/2 feet under baked clay," the skeleton of a single individual was encountered. Found with the burial were "a spud or stone spade, some hammerstones," a 16-pound "stone anvil," and the "upper half of a tortoise shell" (2).

Cache blades were accidentally discovered near the mounds earlier in the century. A local resident uncovered "67 from 4 to 6 inches long" while digging the hole for a fence-post (1).

Discussion of Surface Collection

The ceramics (Table 1) recovered from the site are grit tempered and generally thick. Six of seven sherds discovered were in Area 2. Two rim sherds are cord-marked and collared with lip indentations. Similar

varieties, such as Starved Rock Collared and Albee Cord-marked, have been located by Faulkner at other sites in the Kankakee Valley (5). Cord-marked collared ceramics are associated with a fairly widespread horizon in the early Late Woodland period. One of the other rims exhibits what appears to be a finger indentation and another is plain with a large punctuation 25 mm below the lip.

TABLE 1. *Archeological materials from surface survey, 1969-1972.*

Area 1	Area 2	Rest of Site
CERAMIC		
12 cordmarked	43 cordmarked 31 plain	
CHIPPED STONE		
54 scrapers and blades	47 scrapers and blades	3 scrapers and blades
7 stemmed points	11 stemmed points	1 stemmed points
30 notched points	25 notched points	2 notched points
3 triangular points	6 triangular points	2 triangular points
3 lanceolate points	4 lanceolate points	
3 drills	4 drills	
56 broken and other	26 broken and other	
GROUND STONE		
2 hammer stones	2 hammer stones	1 gorget ¹
3 gorgets		2 axes ¹
1 shaft straightener		
1 bannerstone		
OTHER		
2 kaolin pipes	1 red ochre ball	
1 copper fragment		

¹ Recovered several years earlier by Theodore Drews

Substantial variations in the sizes and shapes of points have suggested multiple cultural affiliations (Fig. 2). Faulkner indicated that although the typical Late Woodland projectile point in the Kankakee Valley had not been established, "a small equilateral triangular type might be common in this period" (5). Triangular points were encountered infrequently at the site and most were isosceles rather than equilateral (Fig. 2, #11-13). Many of the Round Lake points were reminiscent of those pictured by McAllister at Weise, a Late Woodland site in Porter County (8). Snyders Corner Notched points, like those found at Havana sites in the Kankakee Valley, were absent (3). A statistical analysis of point lengths indicated no significant difference between those found in Area 1 and those found in Area 2. Other chipped stone artifacts located at the site included both plain and expanding stem drills, several blanks and one blank or cache blade covered with red ochre (Fig. 2, #21).

Three slate gorget fragments were recovered from Area 2 (Table 1). Two exhibit single perforations drilled from both sides and

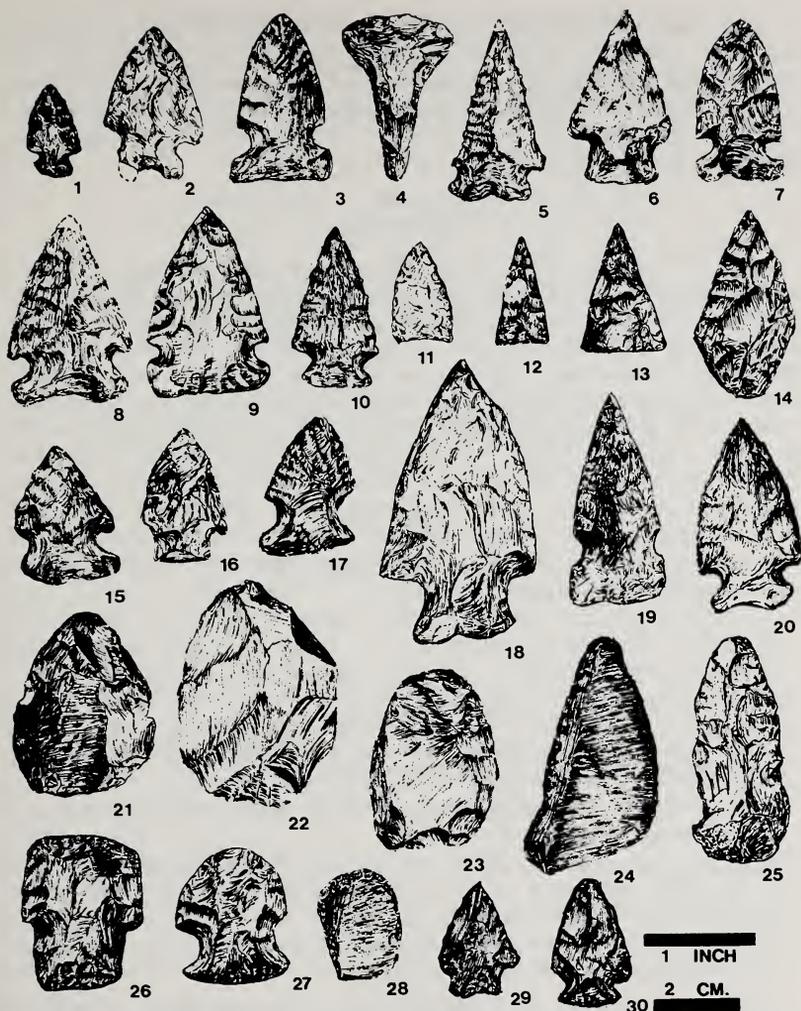


FIGURE 2. Chipped stone from surface survey.

the third is unperforated. A fourth broken gorget was discovered north-east of the lake by an amateur collector, Theodore Drews. It also exhibits a single perforation and is decorated with parallel grooves along the perimeter. Single-holed slate gorgets have been found with Late Woodland burials at other sites in the Kankakee River Valley (5).

Located in Area 1 was a broken geniculate bannerstone constructed of banded slate. Bannerstones are believed to have been atlatl weights and are associated with the Late Archaic period. The geniculate variety is fairly common from Ohio to Missouri and is most frequently constructed of banded slate (7).

Two kaolin pipes were recovered from Area 1. One is glazed and has been molded into the form of a human head. The other is unglazed and fragmentary but appears to be identical to forms found at Fort Ridgely in Minnesota and at Riviere au Vase in Michigan. The type bears the initials T. D. enclosed by 13 stars and was popular from the War of 1812 until the 1870s (6).

Conclusions

Accounts of the Dalbey excavations were not sufficient to permit the placement of the Round Lake burials within any cultural context, although a broad Woodland affiliation was indicated by the unearthing of a pottery pipe. The surface survey resulted in the recovery of a bannerstone indicating occupation at least as early as Late Archaic times. Grit-tempered collared rim sherds located at the site have indicated a Late Woodland occupation. Many of the points were reminiscent of those found at Weise, a Late Woodland site in the Kankakee Valley. The apparent absence of equilateral triangular points and the inadequacy of accounts of the excavations must temper any conclusion as to the origin of the mounds. Still the most obvious hypothesis is that they were constructed during Late Woodland times and share a cultural affinity with the Weise site.

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