

Archaeological Dig Ends At King's Hill Trash Dump

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St. Joseph—A University of Nebraska archaeological team ended its excavation yesterday of a "trash dump" used about 270 years ago by Indians on King's Hill and found the remains of animals and plants they ate and tools they used.

The 5-man team, which dug at the site for five weeks, discovered bones of bear, beaver, fox, bison, elk, raccoon, dog and deer and seeds of fruits and kernels and cobs of corn. They also dug up tools such as scrapers, needles, projectile points and pottery.

The excavation is only the second conducted by professional archaeologists on King's Hill in southwest St. Joseph. The first, sponsored in 1966 by the University of Missouri, determined that the trash dump, called a midden by archaeologists, was rich in artifacts.

This year, the archaeologists, financed by the National Science Foundation, burrowed a trench 20 feet long and about 4 to 12 feet deep. It is deeper and lower on the hill than the 1966 excavation.

"The main purpose of the excavation is to obtain microdata—small material less than 1/4 inch wide," Mike Ruppert, team director, said. "The floral and faunal material will define what the Indians ate, what they grew, what the climate was like."

The artifacts, tools, soil samples and plant and animal materials gleaned from the site will be taken to the University of Nebraska at Lincoln to be analyzed, he said.

Ruppert said artifacts recovered by the 1966 excavation indicated that the Indians on King's Hill were of the Oneota culture or possibly of Kansa Indians. Archaeologists believe that the Indians inhabited King's Hill for a maximum of 50 years between 1650 and 1725.

"If they were Kansa, they left because of pressure from other tribes," Ruppert said. "It could



**Digger's
Delight**

Animal bones, tools and projectile points found during an excavation of an Indian dump in St. Joseph are displayed by Mike Ruppert, who headed a team of University of Nebraska archaeologists. The team finished its digging on King's Hill yesterday.

have been population pressure or anger of one tribe toward another."

He said no guns or horse remains were found during the excavation. This would mean that the King's Hill Indians apparently had no direct contact with white men, he said. However, they did have indirect contact with white men.

"Most of the pottery and stone materials from this site and the Kansas site (across the Missouri River from St. Joseph)

reflect shoddy workmanship when compared with the classic Oneota sites in Northeast Iowa," Ruppert said. "I think this was the result of the beginning of social breakdown caused by the influence of whites.

"They introduced disease, moved the Indians from their homelands, killed the game and instituted rivalry between the tribes," he said. "They (the King's Hill Indians) were affected by white men even though they were not face to face with them."

Ever since white men came to the St. Joseph area in the 19th century, King's Hill has been known as a site of Indian habitation. Over the years artifact hunters have found projectile points, pottery and bones on it. Much of this was unearthed during construction of houses and a school.

The "midden" is directly