

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge-1861

Prehistoric People of the Little Miami Valley

Local Physican Salvages Relics

Paleo-Indians. When archeologists studied the mounds and sites of these people, stories of ancient human culture emerged. Native Americans, who predated the Shawnee, were present in the area from prehistoric times (c. 7000-2000 B.C.) until about 1625.

Dr. Charles Metz (1847- 1926), a Madisonville physician verified the existence of Fort Ancient Indians in southwestern Ohio. He became interested in the earthworks he observed while making house calls to see patients in the small hamlets of Hamilton and Clermont counties. Local people told him about a “Potter’s Field” in present day Mariemont, where he unearthed bones and vessels. Dr. Metz formed the Madisonville Literary and Scientific Society, whose members conducted archeological excavations and surveys of various sites. They developed a Chart of the Prehistoric Monuments of the Little Miami Valley through the 1870s and 1880s. The Cincinnati Society of Natural History offered support, with the understanding that the excavators would donate some artifacts to The Society. These amateur archeologists attracted the attention of Dr. Frederick Putnam of Harvard University. In 1882, the Peabody Museum of Harvard began sponsoring and funding excavations at one of Metz’s digs—the Madisonville Site.



Indian Mound

The Madisonville Site alone contained 1450 human burials and more than 1300 storage pits. Digs yielded the remains of Native Americans and their culture: tools, vessels, and religious effigies. Wooden implements had decayed, but bone and stone remnants were salvaged, including axes, tillers, ceramic jars, arm bands, spades, scrapers, combs, knives, pipes, beads, rasps, and even bird bone flutes. The Madisonville people commonly used an “x” symbol on many of their artifacts. Their site is considered one of the most important in the history of indigenous peoples of Ohio River Valley. Though many of the excavated pieces can be found in national or international museums, the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History has in its collection a prehistoric grooved axe head (c. 2000 B.C.) found in Indian Hill.

In 1878 Dr. Metz found a pair of burial mounds on Drake Road near Armstrong Chapel. He described each as “a circular embankment about 3 feet high and about 400 feet in circumference, enclosing a tumulus about 4 feet high.” More sites were discovered where Indian Hill Road descended to Terrace Park. Walton Creek Road was said to have had a mound also. Flint flakes were found on Remington Road, and a burial site was observed on the east side of Miami Road.

Many earthworks once visible have been destroyed or altered to make way for roads, houses, and barns. Sometimes artifacts were removed from sites by amateurs who never registered their findings. Other pieces were lost over time. A 1958 Hamilton County Survey listed 295 known prehistoric sites, of which half had been excavated or destroyed – a huge loss to archeologists and researchers.

Artifacts left behind have provided clues to a vanished way of life. The ancient inhabitants of this area were industrious people who adapted to their surroundings. Dr. Metz and others were instrumental in preserving part of their legacy for future generations.

The records of the Madisonville Society, while not as precise as those of modern day excavations, list thousands of artifacts and the location of many sites. The Madisonville Site alone contained 1450 human burials and more than 1300 storage pits. Digs yielded the remains of Native Americans and their culture: tools, vessels, and religious effigies. Wooden implements had decayed, but bone and stone remnants were salvaged, including axes, tillers, ceramic jars, arm bands, spades, scrapers, combs, knives, pipes, beads, rasps, and even bird bone flutes. The Madisonville people commonly used an “x” symbol on many of their artifacts. Their site is considered one of the most important in the history of indigenous peoples of Ohio River Valley. Though many of the excavated pieces can be found in national or international museums, the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History has in its collection a prehistoric grooved axe head (c. 2000 B.C.) found in Indian Hill.



Artifacts