

A Possible Early Woodland Cache Discovery in Northern Indiana

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In the spring of 1947, Russell A. Quillen of Plymouth, Indiana, an ardent collector of Indian artifacts, noticed that several blades of a distinctive type had been exposed in a relatively small area on a sand ridge in Green Township, Marshall County, Indiana. Obtaining permission from the owner to excavate on the ridge, Mr. Quillen and his son troweled and brushed away the sand in the area where the blades were being unearthed by wind and cultivation. In an area not more than five feet wide and ten or twelve feet long, over 300 whole and broken ovate-triangular cache blades were discovered. The ridge had been cultivated in an east-west direction, and the scattering of the blades in this direction provides ample evidence that the upper layers of the cache had been disturbed by the plow, probably for many years. Repeated cultivation of the site can also be held accountable for the many broken blades included in the discovery. In one area Mr. Quillen stated that, "not more than 18 inches in diameter, the points lay in a circle pointing in and for several layers." The cache blades were found to a depth of 18 inches below the surface, and below this point nothing was found. No associated artifacts or skeletal material was noted with the cache blades, nor was the soil around them discolored by artificial means (i.e. red ocher). Photographs and color movies were taken during the excavation, but nothing significant is revealed in either medium.

In the summer of 1959, the writer became acquainted with Mr. Quillen during an archaeological survey of Marshall County. Mr. Quillen proved to be most co-operative and allowed the writer to examine and photograph the cache blades in his possession. An immediate visit to the site by the author disclosed the following aspects of the natural setting.

The locus of the cache discovery is a sand knoll which is a part of an undulating sand ridge that traverses the countryside in a general east-west direction. This fine "ginger sand", of dune origin, was carried here by westerly Pleistocene winds from the shores of former glacial Lake Chicago. These sandy ridges were favorite camping sites for the earliest inhabitants (Paleo-Indian) of Marshall County, as well as the historic Miami and Potawatomi. The underbrush was probably not rank on this acid sand, and oak trees undoubtedly dominated the larger flora on the site. Several hundred yards south and below the ridge is Eddy Lake, a small pond with an outlet creek meandering to the east. Here was an ideal location for a camp or village; water was nearby and the small pond probably teemed with waterfowl and fish. The unbroken forest was the larder for game of all kinds. The unbroken forest is gone; the ridge is now cultivated and planted in corn. Wind erosion has blown away the sand between the corn rows leaving behind the lithic evidence of aboriginal occupation.

The cultivated portion of the ridge boasts of two knolls on which occurs evidence of habitation. The "saddle" between these two natural mounds displays a gravelly subsoil and no evidence of occupation. A country road cuts through the ridge just east of the knoll on which the cache

was found. On the east side of this road is a knoll which appears to be the highest point on the ridge, but this area was in pasture, thus making a surface survey impossible.

The surface survey on the cultivated portion revealed fire-cracked rock and chips and spalls of flint and chert in profusion. Few artifacts were found on these habitation areas which have been designated 12Mr^v-215, the county site number. Several projectile points of a generalized Woodland type were found, plus scrapers and other crude tools. The only possible diagnostic evidence discovered on the cache knoll were two fragments of grit-tempered, cord-marked pottery. Although minute, the fragments appear to represent a thin-walled vessel of a later time period; however, considering the size of the site (several acres), the portion surveyed appears primarily non-ceramic. In any case, it is probably safe to assume that this site was utilized as a camping ground for several thousand years. Sometime during the earlier periods of the sites' occupancy, the cache blades were buried here, as we shall presently see.

Mr. Quillen claims 463 whole and broken specimens were found on the site during the spring of 1947. This number includes a few blades that were picked up on subsequent visits to the site. His son received at least 50 whole blades according to Mr. Quillen; and the writer has examined the specimens remaining in Mr. Quillen's possession. This sample of the cache contains 114 whole blades plus 58 partially broken ones. Badly damaged specimens include 77 bases and 43 points. Twenty blade fragments round out the number of artifacts available for study. One disc-like scraper of the same lithic material as the blades; a side scraper of a different chert medium; and a small, broken notched projectile point were found included with the blades. These artifacts are probably strays from the habitation debris which abounded in the sand around the cache deposit.

The blades are all fabricated from a material that strikingly varies in color and texture, but undoubtedly stems from a common source. The medium of construction is basically a fossiliferous chert which ranges from a dark, highly compact variety through lighter greys and tans, to a very friable brown material. These blades exhibit various combinations of these varieties, revealing either a glacial chert nodule or a bedrock chert vein or nodule was utilized. Seymour Greenberg, industrial geologist at Indiana University, examined some of the artifacts and stated that the white to grey colored blades contain a chert that is compact, and the brownish, sandy-textured artifacts contain chert that is loose and friable. Small amounts of quartz and feldspar are present in the brownish-colored specimens. The white and grey chert probably came from a carbonate rock such as limestone or dolomite, but since these rocks are not exposed in the Marshall County area because of a great depth of the glacial drift, Mr. Greenberg believes the source was a nodule in the drift itself. The brownish, friable chert may represent glacial dust that was carried down by the glacier and later compacted to some degree in association with the denser chert. The fact that some flint and chert utilized in the northern Indiana area appears to have its origins in the Illinois River Valley indicates the prehistoric artisans traveled far to obtain their raw materials. In sum, the raw material for this cache probably came from the Illinois River Valley, and was obtained from either glacial or bedrock deposits.

This source becomes plausible when the origin of the cultural bearers of these artifacts is discussed later in the paper.

Because no diagnostic material was found with this cache, the overall size and shape of the blades must be used for a comparison to similar caches found in the eastern United States. In length, the blades are distributed from 44mm to 78mm, with approximately 66% of the artifacts falling between the lengths of 55mm to 63mm. The most common length was 59mm. The range of width sizes varies from 22mm to 36mm; 28mm proved to be the prevailing width. Thickness of the blades ranged from 5mm to 12mm and the most frequent measurement recorded was 7mm. In overall shape the blades exhibit a slight variance, but this is not of typological significance since the artifacts were not measured with a micrometer or machine produced by the Indian artisan. This variance in shape can be noted in Figure 1. The writer refers to the general shape

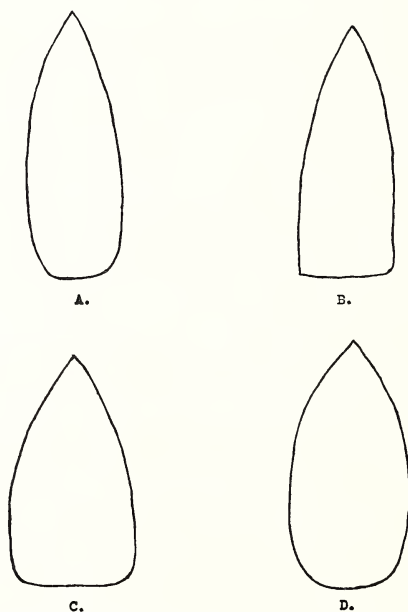


FIGURE 1. Outlines demonstrating the variance in shape of the Marshall County cache blades. A. Elongate blade, base slightly rounded B. Elongate blade, straight base (pentagonal) C. Wide blade, straight base (pentagonal) D. Wide blade, base rounded.

as ovate-triangular. The term pentagonal could be used in some instances, but on many of the specimens the edges near the base are incurvate. A true triangular shape cannot be applied, for although many of the bases are straight, others are slightly convex. The term "leaf-shaped" is avoided here, as it should have been in the past. Unfortunately, the contents of many caches have been described in this vague manner.

Intergrades of workmanship occur in the sample, and the following observational conclusion may be drawn without hesitancy. These blades are

not finished tools or weapons. Some specimens have slight secondary flaking along the edges, and nicks along the edges from the initial flaking process have been retouched to preserve the symmetry of the finished product; however, the widespread feeling now prevails that caches such as this represent a storehouse of needed material for finished tools and weapons.

Although the variety of sizes and shapes has no real significance within the Marshall County series itself, a previous statement revealed that a comparison to similar cache blades of other cultural groups could demonstrate cultural parallels. At first glance, the similarity of the Marshall County blades to those found with an early Point Peninsula burial complex was striking (Ritchie, 1955). At the Red Lake Site, 243 thin, trianguloid cache blades were found in association with a bundle burial and cremated remains (Ritchie, 1955). According to Dr. William A. Ritchie the Red Lake interments represent the endeavors of an Early Woodland (Carbon 14 date—2500 B. C. $\pm$ 260 years) burial cult in the Northeast (Ritchie, 1955). Because the most common length and width figures for the Marshall County blades were so similar to those of the Red Lake Site, two typical blades were sent to Dr. Ritchie for examination. Dr. Ritchie stated by correspondence: "Although the overall shape and size of the blades could be matched within the Red Lake series, these (Marshall County specimens) are much too thick to be considered similar to early Point Peninsula mortuary blades." Concerning possible cultural affiliations for the Marshall County specimens, Dr. Ritchie commented thusly: "I have seen blades of approximately this size, shape, and thickness from New York Middlesex sites, but I suggest that the closest similarity to your blades may be found in the Red Ocher Focus."

The Middlesex Focus of the northeastern United States shows definite relationships to the Adena Phase in the Ohio area which in turn shares many traits with the Red Ocher Focus of Illinois (Ritchie, 1944). To the authors' knowledge, no definite Adena or Red Ocher sites have been reported in northern Indiana, but the probable Early Woodland Glacial Kame Focus is well represented by burials found in our northeastern counties (Cunningham, 1948). Ritchie places the Glacial Kame Focus into the same horizon as Middlesex and Red Ocher (Ritchie, 1944 and 1955), and Martin, Quimby, and Collier feel that this culture was contemporaneous with late Adena (Martin, Quimby, and Collier, 1947). A Glacial Kame origin for the Indiana cache blades appears most logical because of adequate representation in the area, but cache blades are not a mortuary trait in Glacial Kame as they are in the other Early Woodland manifestations under discussion (Cunningham, 1948). This focus is still poorly defined, but the frequent occurrence of this trait in other related groups seems to rule out Glacial Kame manufacture.

Caches of "leaf-shaped or lanceolate blades" have been found with cremations, flexed inhumations, and possible bundle burials in Red Ocher mounds in Fulton County, Illinois (Cole and Deuel, 1937). Recent excavations at the Morse Site, Fulton County, Illinois, have produced 60+ blades of the ovate-trianguloid type in association with a flexed Red Ocher burial (Morse, 1959). Although no actual comparisons have been made between the Marshall County specimens and the Morse blades, a photograph of the latter reveals the size, shape, and color varies as do

the Indiana specimens, although the ovate type dominates in shape (Morse, 1959). Some of these Red Ocher blades have a tendency to be more incurvate toward the base, thus differing from our Indiana blades in being more Adena-like in form.

Adena cache blades appear to be more ovate than the Marshall County blades; excurvate bases in lieu of straight ones, and blunter ends tend to differentiate these blades from the Indiana specimens. This comparison was made from a photograph of the 75 ovate blades from the Fisher Site, an Adena mound in Fayette County, Kentucky (Webb and Haag, 1947b). In *The Adena People*, Webb and Snow discuss the Adena cache blades as follows:

"This has occurred with sufficient frequency to indicate some special reason for it. It may be that in some instances when these caches accompanied the dead, these flint knives were regarded as somewhat unfinished, possibly to be completed in the world of spirits, and therefore, represented potential value, since being unspecialized they still could be made into knives, scrapers, projectile points, drills, reamers, or gravers, at pleasure." (Webb and Snow, 1945)

Conclusions

A lack of apparent details and associations plus the disturbed nature of the Marshall County cache deposit make a precise correlation with an Early Woodland group almost impossible; however, a probable choice would be the Red Ocher Focus. Although cache blades of the Illinois focus are found as part of a mortuary assemblage, an absence of skeletal material with the Marshall County cache could be explained as follows. The sand ridges of northern Indiana are subject to intense wind erosion. Some of the blades were found on the surface, indicating an unknown amount of top soil and sand have been blown away since the ridge was initially cleared. When the continual cultivation of the ridge is also taken into consideration, a cremation, or even a flesh burial could have been scattered and destroyed. Other poorly documented cache deposits with no mention of burial association have been found in the Great Lakes region, notably in Saginaw County, Michigan (Dustin, 1941). There is every possibility that the isolated Marshall County cache represents a hidden store of unfinished "blanks," to be later used on the habitation site to make tools and weapons as needed. The continued quotation from *The Adena People* reveals:

"While such caches are found as burial offerings, they are also found apart from burial association. Caches have been found in villages and in mounds out of association with burials, and in mounds, and under rock shelters in burial association." (Webb and Snow, 1945)

Because the Red Ocher Focus appears to be very similar to Early Adena (Webb and Snow, 1945), isolated storage caches of ovate-trianguloid blades may be an undiscovered trait on Red Ocher habitation sites.

A movement of an Early Woodland, Red Ocher people up the Illinois and Kankakee Rivers into northern Indiana is the best argument for the presence of these blades in Marshall County. The Middle Woodland Goodall Focus found along the Kankakee and its drainage (Yellow River in Marshall County) has its origins in the Illinois River Valley (Quimby,

1941b). There is no reason to doubt a preceding Early Woodland migration up these streams into northern Indiana.

The Red Ocher people made a thick, grit-tempered, cord-marked pottery (Cole and Deuel, 1937), and the writers' discovery of a similar type of pottery in Marshall County could be interpreted as additional evidence for their presence. The Early Woodland cultural pattern in northern Indiana does not appear homogeneous, however. Surface finds of cigar-shaped, stone tubular pipes and bar-type birdstones attest to the presence of the Glacial Kame Focus, the burial complex now generally regarded as Early Woodland (Ritchie, 1949b). Glacial Kame in this area could have its origins to the north and east, and the physical type differs markedly from that of the Red Ocher Focus. The Red Ocher people were a very dolichocephalic type of the Paleo-Amerind or Otamid variety (Personal communication with Georg Neumann, 1959), whereas the Glacial Kame is a dolichocephalic Lenapid entity (Neumann, 1949). The question of which came first is like that concerning the chicken and the egg. The similarities of the burial ceremonialism of certain eastern Glacial Kame sites to the Red and Muskalonge Lake burials and cremations could indicate a greater antiquity for Glacial Kame because of the Carbon 14 date of 2500 B. C. $\pm$ 260 years for the Red Lake Site (Ritchie, 1955). An absence of pottery also indicates a great age for this focus, although the eventual excavation of a Glacial Kame habitation site may reveal Early Woodland ceramics. On the other hand, Neumann maintains a greater age for the Red Ocher Focus because the Otamid physical type appeared early in North America, and was later pushed into marginal areas (Personal communication with Georg Neumann, 1959). A Carbon 14 date for a Red Ocher site would help solve this problem. The Morse Site has not been Carbon 14 dated, but Griffin postulates a date around 1500 B. C. (Personal correspondence with James B. Griffin, 1959).

The author feels that Red Ocher and Glacial Kame were contemporaneous in northern Indiana for at least part of their existence, and the Early Woodland horizon in northern Indiana represents an overlap of both cultural traits and physical type of the two entities. If future Carbon 14 dates for both foci do not demonstrate a great discrepancy, and future excavation reveals an early ceramic art on Glacial Kame habitation sites, this conjecture will be validated. This amalgamation would boast of early Point Peninsula-like cultural traits which through modifications and new additions would provide the basis for the later Woodland cultures in the Great Lakes region.

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