

INDIAN CHILDREN'S BURIAL PLACE IN WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

WHILE at Waynesburg to deliver a Fourth of July address, I took advantage of the opportunity to spend a few days in archaeological investigation.

Several years ago a farmer, while plowing on a hilltop, uncovered a large flat stone which excited his curiosity. Upon lifting the stone he found, in an excavation in the yellow clay, a human skeleton and some shell beads. As the grave was less than three feet in length he came to the conclusion that the skeleton was that of a dwarf. In later years other burials were unearthed in the same field and in other fields a few miles away. All were exactly alike; the graves were short and the bones were short, hence it was concluded that the region had been inhabited by a race of dwarfs.

On a former visit to Waynesburg, I examined some of the bones from these graves and found them to be the bones of children, six or eight years of age. The interest in the "children's cemetery" increased. Professor A. J. Waychoff, of Waynesburg College, visited the place and discovered that the burials were in an ancient village site. He examined other places where similar graves had been reported and found numerous village sites in the region.

In company with Professors Waychoff and Stewart, I visited a number of these sites and excavated in one of them. It was located on a connecting ridge between two higher hills. The black earth, which marked the site, covered some three acres to the depth of ten inches. Near the centre of the site was a depression seventy-five feet in diameter and ten inches deep. During the winter, the depression stands full of water. We dug a trench and discovered a layer of potter's clay eight inches thick without any overlying black earth. We were unable to make a thorough investigation because of a growing crop and hence could not determine whether the clay was native or transported, whether the depression had been a reservoir, a manufacturing place or the location of a wigwam.

About two hundred feet from the depression we unearthed one of the flat stone burials. The grave, one and a half by two feet, had been dug a foot deep in the yellow clay; the body, laid on its left side in an embryonic position, and a rough stone, two by three

feet, laid over it so as to rest on the yellow clay. No beads or other ornaments were found in this grave, but shell beads and copper pendants were found in some of the earlier excavations. From the reports of farmers who have plowed up some thirty burials, this one would seem to be the typical child's grave.

No burial place for adults had been discovered and we were puzzled to know what disposition had been made of the grown ups. While digging for a child's grave, we found a hole with straight sides dug two feet in diameter and four feet deep into the clay. The bottom, which had been lined with bark, contained a small quantity of carbonized corn and beans. Over this was a layer of bark and directly on top of it was about three inches of what appeared to be cremated human remains. The next layer was composed of refuse or floor sweepings which had been covered with the common black earth from the surface. The hole was originally dug for a granary and afterwards used as a burial place. This is the first of the type to be found, but no doubt there are others which will shed more light upon their use. We hope to return and continue the work when conditions are favorable.

Village sites are now seen to be quite numerous in Greene County, but mounds are very rare. We excavated the largest one so far reported in the county. It was located on the left bank of the Monongahela River near Mapletown, on top of a former flood plain of the river about fifty feet above the present valley. The original height was five and a half feet and the diameter, forty. Two burials were found, one on the original surface near the edge and the other, half way up near the centre of the mound. The bodies had been placed in the graves on their backs with their knees drawn up about half way. The bones were badly decomposed. Nothing was found with the skeletons and not even a flint chip in the whole mound.

This, the first scientific work to be done in the southwestern corner of the State, opens a new and interesting field for further research.

W. C. F.