

CHAPTERS IN NEBRASKA ARCHAEOLOGY

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A COMPARISON OF THE CULTURAL MANIFESTATIONS
OF THE BURKETT (NANCE COUNTY) AND THE
GRAY-WOLFE (COLFAX COUNTY) SITES

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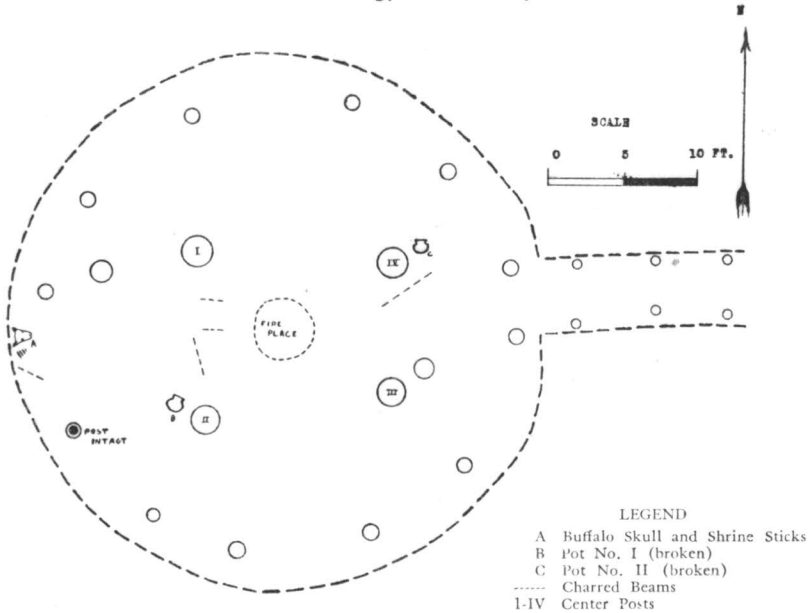


FIGURE 4
House No. 1, Burkett Site

Several features of special interest are to be noted here. On the west side of the floor, directly opposite the entrance, was an area of irregular, rather hard soil. On this, next to the wall, were the charred remains of a bison skull and horns. Fragments of sheet copper and a broken blue glass trade bead were in close association. Immediately on the left, but probably connected with these remains, was a bundle of charred sticks, each perhaps one-half inch or less in diameter. The bison skull probably marks this as the family shrine, and the charred sticks may represent some sort of ceremonial equipment. In regard to this point, Clayton's *Journal* mentions a similar interior element of the house in a description written in 1847 among the ruins of the Skidi village on the Loup at the mouth of Cedar Creek. He says:

At the farther side of the building exactly opposite the porch, is a projection of sod left about a foot from the outside of the circle which is said to have been the seat of the chief, and over which hung his medicine bag and other implements.¹⁰

Wedel claims such a feature common to nearly every Pawnee house, and notes, that due to the sacred nature of the objects, they are not often left behind, with the possible exception of the bison skull.¹¹

¹⁰ William Clayton, *William Clayton's Journal*, 1847, Salt Lake City, 1921, p. 98.

¹¹ Waldo Wedel, *An Introduction to Pawnee Archaeology*, Master's Thesis, University of Nebraska, 1931, p. 101.

BURKETT SITE

MOUND No. 1

- Bison bison* — 1 astragalus, 1 m.³
Odocoileus americanus — distal portion of
 a metapodial of a young individual.
Canis familiaris — 1 ramus.

MOUND No 2

- Bison bison* — 1 phalanx, astragalus, 1
 tarsal, distal end of tibia.

MOUND No. 4

- Canis familiaris* — 3 mandibles.
Canis nebrascensis — 1 ramus.
Canis nubilus — 2 rami.
Cervus canadensis — 1 maxilla with pm³
 having 3 lobes.
Odocoileus americanus — 1 ramus show-
 ing a pathologic condition.
Bison bison — 3 molars.

Shell.—There are twenty-one shells that have been identified by Dr. E. H. Barbour as *Unio*. None are perforated, but a few have been cut, and a number apparently were used as scrapers. They are well worn down.

EUROPEAN MATERIALS

The small amount of European material associated with these sites consists of three trade beads and a few small fragments of sheet copper from the Burkett site, and a gun flint, iron and sheet copper fragments from the Gray-Wolfe site. The association of one of the Burkett site blue glass beads and copper fragments with the sacred bison skull on the family shrine of House No. 1 suggests that these objects may have had some significance. Perhaps they were regarded as especially valuable due to their rarity.

Mr. Arthur Woodward, of the Los Angeles Museum, who is at present working with the National Park Service, studied trade beads found in several Nebraska sites. He made the following comments concerning the Burkett beads, and similar ones from the Hill site near Red Cloud, Nebraska:

The evidence of the beads bears out the early occupation of No. 418 (Hill site), 841 (Burkett site), and 427 (Hill site). By that I mean that the two white tubular beads from 418 seem to point rather definitely to the latter eighteenth century or say the first decade of the nineteenth century. Apparently these are the same opaque bugle beads so favored as a substitute for the familiar white wampum or shell beads, but from their slender diameters I would rather place them early in the nineteenth century and as being dispensed by traders to tribesmen to whom wampum was unimportant. Such imitation beads in the middle of the eighteenth century, made in purple and white glass (sometimes black and white), which were dispensed among those tribesmen who were using the genuine shell beads, were usually more nearly the diameter of the shell beads. Similarly the blue bead from House No. 2, Burkett site, No. 841, bearing the pitted, iridescent evidence of decay, is likewise a type bead associated with sites dating from the latter half of the eighteenth century to the first decade of the nineteenth century, say between 1750 and 1815. This is theoretical, based on the consistent occurrence of such beads in sites where dated medals have been found, and on sites known to have been occupied only until about 1815 and ranging from Alabama to California.

Half of blue glass bead 418 is also of a type found associated with 841.

Similarly the peculiar, light blue-grey opaque and white opaque glass paste beads No. 427 are of a different type than those which found such favor on the plains in 1830-1860. Opaque beads were used in the latter period but those were smaller and different in color and shape.¹⁴

In regard to the iron from the Gray-Wolfe site, one heavily incrustated piece appears to have been a nail approximately $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches long; another piece seems to have been an attachment on a gun, and the third is in the shape of a knife blade $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches long and three-fourths of an inch wide. Whether this was the original shape cannot be determined. The remaining iron fragments are mere scraps about 2 inches in length. The sheet copper may have been fragments of European kettles or utensils. One piece has several perforations, and another was rolled into a small tubular copper bead less than three-fourths of an inch in length.

TIME OF OCCUPATION OF THE BURKETT AND GRAY-WOLFE SITES

In regard to dating, the presence of European materials and the absence of horse remains are the two factors upon which a judgment must be made. Nothing concerning the fragments of iron and copper can be determined except the fact that they are of European manufacture, and are not the result of aboriginal industry. This proves a contact with the white man, but the rarity of the specimens and the possible sacred position of the beads as suggested by the association with the sacred bison skull and shrine indicate perhaps that the contact was only an indirect one. Woodward indicates that the European trade beads are like those made and circulated between about 1750 and 1815. The size of the middens indicates an occupation of considerable length, and the fact that the European materials are rare suggests the possibility that the trade articles were introduced into villages whose history dates much farther into the past.

. . . De Soto carried some of his horses across the Mississippi in 1541. At about the same time Coronado reached the present bounds of Oklahoma from Santa Fe. Onate is believed to have visited the Pawnee and Kansas, 1599-1601, and Penalosa conducted an expedition to the Mississippi in 1662. From Coronado's time on there was a growing trade with the Indians of the Gulf coast, and trade to the interior from Santa Fe as a base began about 1600. The pueblo village of Taos soon became the trade center for the Plains Indians. This trade seems to have reached its maximum about 1630. . . . In 1719 du Tisné, a Frenchman, visited two Pawnee villages in Oklahoma where he counted three hundred horses. As early as 1682 Henri de Tonty found horse-using Indians on the lower Missouri. La Salle also states (1682) that the Gattacka (Kiowa-Apache) and Manrhoat (Kiowa?) had many horses. . . . It seems, therefore, safe to conclude that some time during the interval 1600-1682, at least, the Caddoan tribes, the Tonkawa, and the Comanche, as well as the Kiowa, became fully equipped with horses. . . .

¹⁴ From a letter written by Mr. Arthur Woodward, dated April 16, 1935.