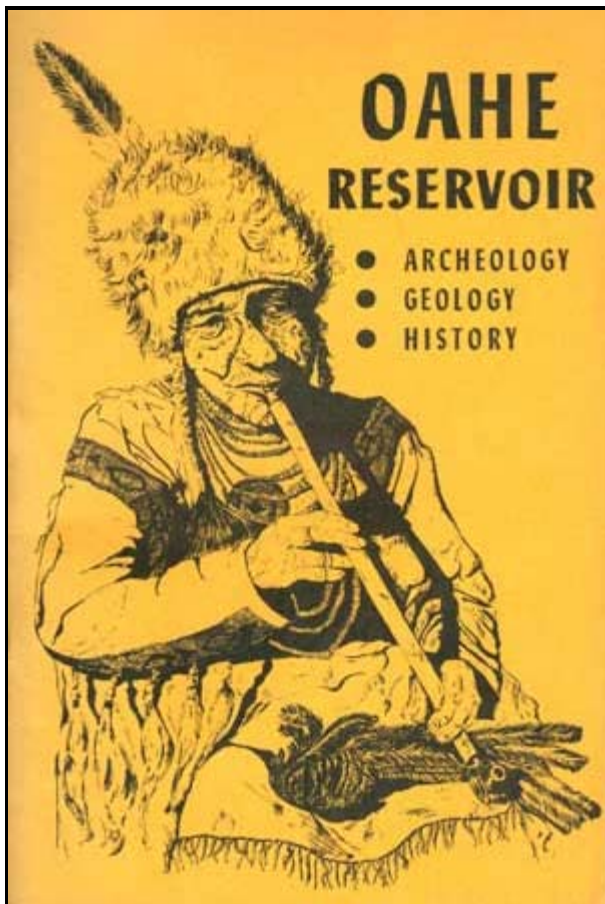


Oahe Reservoir

Archeology, Geology, History



OAHE RESERVOIR Archeology, Geology, History

By
Warren W. Caldwell
G. Hubert Smith

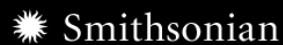
September, 1963



Prepared by the Missouri Basin Project of the
Smithsonian Institution in cooperation with the
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S.
National Park Service.

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Typical Presidential medal. Lewis and Clark were among the first representatives of the federal

government to use the Jefferson medal in the west.

THE INTER-AGENCY ARCHEOLOGICAL SALVAGE PROGRAM

COORDINATING AGENCIES

United States National Park Service, Department of the Interior
The Smithsonian Institution

COOPERATING FEDERAL AGENCIES

United States Army, Corps of Engineers, Department of the Army
United States Bureau of Reclamation, Department of the Interior
Federal Power Commission
International Boundary and Water Commission
United States Geological Survey, Department of the Interior

STATE AND LOCAL AGENCIES COOPERATING INSIDE THE MISSOURI BASIN

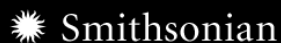
Kansas State Historical Society	University of Kansas
Nebraska State Historical Society	University of Minnesota
State Historical Society of North Dakota	University of Missouri
South Dakota Archaeological Commission	University of Montana
State University of Iowa	University of Nebraska
University of Denver	University of North Dakota
University of Idaho	University of South Dakota
	University of Wisconsin
	University of Wyoming

STATE AND LOCAL AGENCIES COOPERATING OUTSIDE THE MISSOURI BASIN

Amerind Foundation, Arizona	Southern Illinois University
Archaeological Society of North Carolina	State Historical Society of Wisconsin
Beloit College, Wisconsin	Temple University, Pennsylvania
California-Oregon Power Company	University of Alaska
Carnegie Museum of Pittsburgh	University of Arizona
Dallas Archaeological Society	University of Arkansas
Florida Historical Society	University of California at Berkeley
Florida State Parks Board	University of California at Los Angeles
Georgia Power Company	University of Colorado
Idaho Power Company	University of Florida
Idaho State College	University of Georgia
Indiana State Historical Society	University of Illinois
Missouri Archaeological Society	University of Kentucky
Museum of Northern Arizona	University of Michigan
New Jersey State Museum	University of Mississippi
New Mexico State Museum	University of Missouri
New York State Museum	University of New Mexico
Ohio State Historical Society	

Public Utility District #1 Chelan County, Washington	University of Oregon
Public Utility District #2 Grant County, Washington	University of Southern California
Roswell Museum, New Mexico	University of Texas
Sacramento State College, California	University of Utah
San Francisco State College	University of Washington
St. Paul Science Museum	Washington State University
	Western State College, Colorado

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THE INTER-AGENCY SALVAGE PROGRAM

Long before Europeans first arrived in the New World, the twisting course of the Missouri River was the home of a varied group of Indian farmers, a numerous people who lived in strong fortified towns, cultivated fields of corn in the well-watered bottomlands and hunted bison on the plains beyond. With the coming of the explorers and the inevitable expansion of the American frontier, the Indian cultures began the long decline that ended only with their near extinction. At first the Missouri served as a highway for fur traders, then for a growing number of trapping parties and explorers, and still later for a surge of gold seekers and settlers heading for the nearest northwest. At the same time, the main stem, as it has come to be called, formed part of a chain of military posts designed to protect and pacify the hostile frontier.

An important part of this long history is centered in the area that is now the Oahe Reservoir. The remains of Indian villages and camps, trading posts and military establishments were once to be found here in great numbers. Now most are submerged, gone forever except for stray fragments exposed by changing water levels of the reservoir. Before they disappeared many of the prehistoric sites and places of historical significance were carefully studied and excavated by archeologists and historians representing many federal, state and private agencies. This was accomplished as part of a unique program, a salvage effort, sponsored by the federal government, to sample, record, and document important parts of our national heritage before they are destroyed.

The construction of dams and reservoirs, the stabilizing of river banks, and a host of additional water control and hydroelectric projects are bringing great changes to many of our major river systems. Valleys have been transformed into lakes, and meandering streams brought into controlled channels. The river valleys hold a key to electric power, and the periodic floods that have inundated so many of our cities and towns must be prevented at all costs. Unfortunately, it is precisely along our rivers that much of the record of our Indian forerunners and of our own historic past is to be found.

The Inter-Agency Archeological Salvage Program was organized to preserve and to interpret the paleontological, archeological, and historic remains threatened with destruction by federal water control and hydroelectric projects. The program is administered by the U. S. National Park Service with the advice and active field participation of the Smithsonian Institution. Federal funds provide support for much of the work, but state, local, and even private contributions have been used.

The excavation and recording of historic and prehistoric sites is but one aspect of the program. The material objects recovered, *artifacts*, such as arrow points, pottery, military insignia, and the like are preserved in the U. S. National Museum, in specialized museums of the National Park Service, or in the repositories of the participating states. Here they are reminders of the past — public property, equally available to all.

There is still another consideration, and in the long run a more important one. Objects are not

gathered for their own sake. True, many of them, even the commonplace things, of a century past, are interesting in themselves, but the archeologist and the historian see them in a very different light. Artifacts are tools, tools which can be used to amplify the written history of books and records—tools which can be used to write history where no written history exists. This then is the ultimate purpose of the program, to extend man's knowledge of himself—to interpret the past, making it meaningful for today.

The Inter-Agency Archeological Salvage Program operates over the entire United States. The Oahe Dam and Reservoir are a part of the Missouri Basin, the largest single geographic unit within the program. The Missouri Basin includes approximately one-sixth of the land area of the United States, exclusive of Alaska. Ten states — Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana, fall partially or wholly within the boundaries of the basin. Six major dams have been built along the main stem, and innumerable smaller projects have affected tributary streams.

The basic stimulus for the Salvage Program is provided by the Committee for the Recovery of Archaeological Remains, an independent group of private citizens, composed of representatives of the Society for American Archaeology, the American Anthropological Association, and the American Council of Learned Societies. The committee was formed in response to the threatened destruction of important paleontological, archeological, and historic sites by public construction projects within the United States. The U. S. National Park Service, in conjunction with the Smithsonian Institution, agreed to administer the program on a national scale. Actual field investigations are carried out by units of the Smithsonian Institution and by a large group of state and private agencies. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation have provided support from the beginning. Without their recognition of the peculiar archeological and historical problems involved, the salvage effort would have been impossible.

Despite setbacks and temporary retrenchments the program has been highly successful. Paleontological, archeological, and historic sites have been destroyed by the construction of dams and the flooding of reservoirs, but this has not been a total disaster. Archeological research in particular has received an important stimulus. The construction programs have made possible a comprehensive, integrated program of archeological work, which would not have been practical under ordinary circumstances. No single institution or foundation could have borne the burden alone.

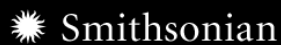
Although irreparable losses have occurred, this has been inevitable since even under ideal conditions it would never have been possible to excavate every site of importance. An effort has been made, however, to secure a sample from the remains represented in each endangered area. This has resulted in the accumulation of a vast amount of information helping to clarify the story of the aboriginal peoples of North America. The Salvage Program has been a particularly successful effort aimed at the reconstruction of important parts of the American past.



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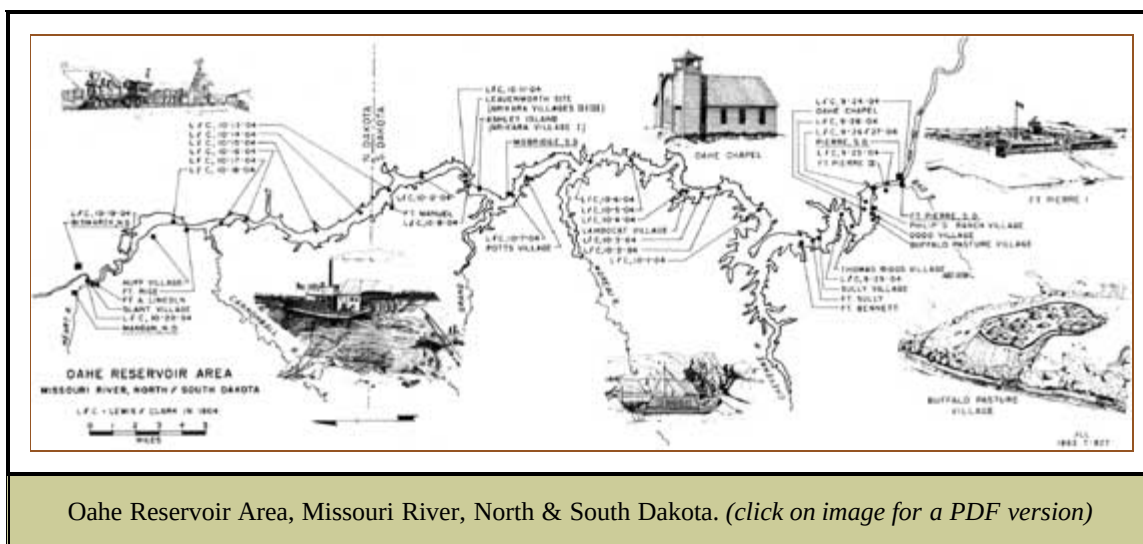


OAHE DAM AND OAHE RESERVOIR

OAHE DAM is located in central South Dakota 1,123 miles above the mouth of the Missouri River and 6 miles northwest of Pierre, the capital of the state. The reservoir created by the Dam extends approximately 250 river miles upstream, to within a short distance of Bismarck, North Dakota.

The dam and reservoir take their name from Oahe Mission, established among the Dakota (Sioux) Indians in 1874. In the Dakota language the name is said to signify "a place to stand on." The mission chapel was built in Peoria Bottom within view of the future site of the Oahe Dam.

The Missouri River valley in South and North Dakota sustained heavy glaciation during late geological times. The river is now deeply entrenched, in some areas flowing as much as 600 feet below the uplands it drains. East of the river abundant evidence can be seen of glacial action particularly in the form of extensive, undulating deposits of boulder till. West of the river the topography is even more broken as a result of extensive erosion of the underlying bedrock. Probably the most notable of these is the Pierre shale, the source of the troublesome gumbo soil that plagues so much of North and South Dakota. The only major tributaries of the Missouri in this part of the valley enter it from the west—the Bad, Cheyenne, Moreau, Grand and Cannonball Rivers.



The vast uplands bordering the Missouri River support hardy, nutritious native grasses, which once provided pasture for enormous herds of buffalo and other large game, as well as food for upland birds and waterfowl. Bottomlands, often heavily wooded, provided winter shelter. Today, the region west of the river is primarily cattle-range country, while the east side is chiefly a small-grain producing region.

The climate of the region is one of great extremes, with hot summers and cold winters, often

accompanied by severe winds and heavy rain or snow. Although the average annual precipitation is about 16 inches, there is wide variation from season to season.

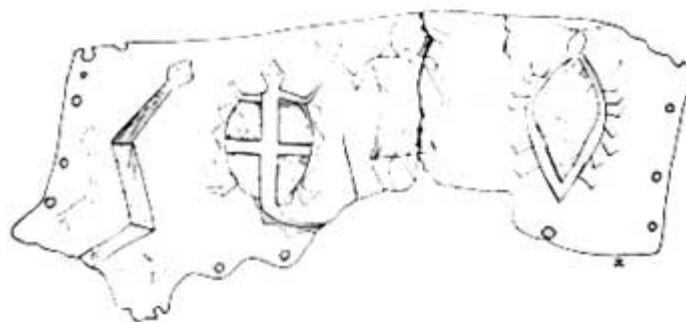


Oahe Indian Mission in Peoria Bottom, a short distance upstream from Pierre. The chapel, built in 1877 by Rev. Thomas L. Riggs, missionary to the Sioux, has now been removed to a new location overlooking the Oahe Dam, to which it gave its name. The Riggs home (left) was built of native boulders in 1902.

Photo: Courtesy of the U. S. National Park Service

The combination of soils, vegetation, and climate favored the occupation of the region by various native Indian peoples. Permanent earth-lodge villages were usually located on the lower terraces or "benches" in the immediate valley of the Missouri, though these early farmers frequently ranged far afield in pursuit of game. Along the river, timber and water were always available, as well as fertile sandy bottomlands that were suitable for gardening with simple tools.

Other less settled native peoples, who moved freely about the region following the migrating buffalo and other game, probably clung close to the Missouri and its tributaries for centuries. For both the settled villagers and the more venturesome buffalo-hunting tribes and bands, the introduction of the horse—through trade with other Indian groups to the south and west—and of the gun—through trade with Whites—were of major importance since they permitted still more extensive travel over the Plains as well as more efficient taking of game. Yet for these First Americans of the Northern Plains, as for the first Whites who followed them, the river was the chief geographic feature of the area.

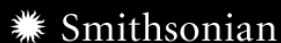


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EXPLORATION AND WHITE SETTLEMENT

The upper Missouri valley was first made known to the world by French colonials who entered it from present-day Canada during the mid-18th century and, a few years later, by French-speaking subjects of Spain, coming up the Missouri River from the southeast. For more than a century, travel into the northern Plains was chiefly by water—at first in dugout and bark canoes, and later in steamboats. By the 1850's, the steamboats had reached the head of navigation, the trading post of Ft. Benton, at the very gates of the Rockies and more than 2,000 miles from the mouth of the Missouri.

Many explorers and travelers were to pass up the Missouri into the northern Plains, among them the famous Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804-1806. Traders soon established themselves along the river, intent on profits to be made through supplying factory-made goods in exchange for fine furs, buffalo robes, hides, and other native products gathered by the Indians. Traders were followed by soldiers and later by ranchers, farmers and townsmen; before the end of the 19th century, the old life of the Indians had vanished.

The first White persons known to have visited this part of the Missouri valley were exploring parties from the western Great Lakes, led by la Verendrye and his sons, members of a noteworthy family of old Quebec. In 1738, seeking routes that would lead even farther west, they visited a people called the Mandan, who lived in earth-lodge villages near present Bismarck, capital of North Dakota. In 1743 they met other village peoples, probably the Arikara or Ree, in the vicinity of Ft. Pierre, South Dakota. Near the latter place they even buried a lead plate in token of their claim of the west for their king, Louis XV of France. The plate was rediscovered long afterward, and is now exhibited at the South Dakota State Historical Society Museum in Pierre.

Following these first known contacts with the Indians, more than half a century elapsed before trade into the region was reestablished, now chiefly from St. Louis, which had been founded in 1764. Such trade goods as had reached the Indians in the interval—and numerous trade objects have been found in excavations at native village sites—had probably passed from hand to hand between various tribes. This physical evidence of contact proves how attractive were the White men's goods.

By the year 1803, when the vast Louisiana Territory was purchased by the United States, several traders had established regular commerce in the region, operating from houses they had built at strategic points along the river. Lewis and Clark's party, ascending the Missouri in 1804, met several of these veteran traders. Knowing the region at first hand, these all but forgotten pioneers provided useful information of the sort that could be learned only by living among the Indians. None of the traders was more helpful than Pierre-Antoine Tabeau, who had lived with the Arikara, and whose entertaining recollections of his experiences have been preserved.

Another early journey through this part of the valley was that of the Wilson P. Hunt party sent out by John Jacob Astor. In 1811 they ascended the Missouri as far as the Grand River,

from which point they boldly struck westward, marching overland to reach the famous Pacific Fur Company post of Astoria, near the mouth of the Columbia River, early the next year.

Though these early explorers and travelers seldom tarried long in the Oahe area, their passage and repassage through it helped to make the region known. Further attempts were now made by traders to exploit its rich natural resources of furs and hides. An important early venture of the kind was that of the Missouri Fur Company, organized in 1809 by William Clark and other prominent citizens of St. Louis. In the fall of 1812, under the direction of a vigorous partner, Manuel Lisa, a post for trade with the Arikara was built near the present northern boundary of South Dakota. Fort Manuel, as the post was called, was probably established to keep the Indians from dealing with British traders to the north. The hope of keeping the Indians of the valley favorable to American interests failed, however, and the post was abandoned the following spring, after only one winter of use. The dislocations of the war of 1812-14 prevented successful trade in the region for several years.

At Fort Manuel, during the evening of December 20, 1812, according to the post journal, the wife of Toussaint Charbonneau, "a 'Snake' Indian woman died of a fever, aged about 25 years, leaving a 'fine infant girl'." Many historians believe that this was the famous Sakakawea (or Sacajawea), the "Bind Woman," who with her husband had been of great usefulness as a guide to the "Corps of Discovery" of Lewis and Clark. A monument commemorating Sakakawea's services stands today opposite the city of Mobridge, overlooking the broad Missouri valley.



View of Fort Sully as it appeared about 1890. A major military post, Fort Sully was used from 1866 until 1894, supplying troops for Indian campaigns until the frontier was pacified. Photo: Courtesy of the U. S. National Park Service

Trade prospects on the upper Missouri appeared more favorable during the 1820's. Andrew Henry of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, a new St. Louis firm, attempted to reopen the trade with a post at the mouth of the Yellowstone River, but with scant success. The following year, probably as a result of a misunderstanding, Henry's associate, William H. Ashley, and his party—which included the famous Hugh Glass and Jedidiah Smith—were attacked near the Arikara villages above the Grand River, with a loss of several men. This in turn led to an assault upon the Arikara by a combined force of soldiers, trappers and Sioux allies, but the action was indecisive.

During the decade following, control of the Indian trade in this region rapidly came into the hands of still another prominent St. Louis firm, that of Pierre Chouteau, Jr. and Company, which had acquired the western trading interests formerly controlled by Astor. In 1831 the Chouteau firm had two chief trading centers—Ft. Union, at the mouth of the Yellowstone,

and Ft. Pierre Chouteau, at the mouth of the Bad River—in addition to many lesser posts. From these bases the firm was usually able to outwit the various combinations of other traders who attempted from time to time to oppose it. The hey-day of the Indian trade in this areas was reached in the late 1830's and early 1840's. During these years various noteworthy visitors began systematic, serious studies of the Indians. Among the best known of these were George Catlin and Prince Maximilian of Wied-Neuweid.

In 1862, after some years of relative quiet, troubles with the Eastern (Santee) Sioux of Minnesota spread westward to the more numerous Teton tribes of the great Sioux nation. In 1863 Gen. Alfred Sully was sent to punish these tribes, in the first of several years of campaigns through the region. Several miles below present Pierre, opposite Farm Island, he established a post called Ft. Sully, which in 1866 was removed some 25 miles upstream, to a more satisfactory location. During the 1870's and 1880's, the new post grew to be one of the largest in the area. It provided troops for campaign and guard duties and was commanded for a number of years by Gen. David S. Stanley, whose name was given to the modern Stanley County, South Dakota. The site of the second Fort Sully will ultimately be flooded by the reservoir.



Fort Yates (Standing Rock Indian Reservation), North Dakota, as it appeared in 1952. Established in 1873 as a military post, it became one of the most important in the Dakotas during the 1880's. For several years, it was the home of the famous Sitting Bull, who was killed nearby in 1890. No longer needed for military purposes, the post was transferred to the Office of Indian Affairs in 1903. Photo: Courtesy of the U. S. National Park Service

Fort Rice, another early military post, was also established by Sully in 1864. The site is now a State Park and two of the log blockhouses have been reconstructed on their original locations. Soon afterward, near present Mandan, Ft. McKeen was added, shortly to be enlarged and renamed Ft. A. Lincoln, a post well remembered because of one of its commanders, Gen. George A. Custer. It was from here that Custer marched to defeat at the battle of the Little Bighorn in Montana.

The building of forts in the region, for both infantry and cavalry, coincided with the establishment of Indian reservations and agencies for the various divisions of the Sioux nation. The Cheyenne River Reservation in South Dakota and the Standing Rock Reservation in South and North Dakota, both west of the river, are the two that are still maintained. The military bases were abandoned long ago.

Religious missions were also established in the area by several Christian denominations. The first of these was the Oahe Mission itself, established in 1874 by Rev. Thomas L. Riggs for the American Board of Foreign Missions. The Oahe mission chapel, built in 1877, has been removed from its original location in the flooded area of the Peoria Bottoms just upstream from the Oahe Dam. It is to be relocated in the east overlook area of the dam and will be

landscaped and made available for church services in the near future. It will be under the administration of the South Dakota State Historical Society and the relocation is a cooperative project of the Corps of Engineers, the National Park Service, and the Historical Society.



Permanent White settlement, which had become a strong current in the 1870's, rose to a flood of immigration during the next decade, as large parts of the Sioux Indian Reservations were opened for legal settlement. The modern history of the region can be said to have begun in the year 1889 when, on November 2, the two parts of the former Territory of Dakota were simultaneously admitted to the Union as North and South Dakota.

During the era of steamboat transportation, which lasted until the 1880's, millions of pounds of freight were carried to and from the numerous tiny river towns and landings that had sprung up along the Missouri River. In 1873, the Northern Pacific Railroad reached Bismarck, and in 1882 continued beyond the Missouri toward the Pacific Northwest. In 1880 the Dakota Central, now the Northwestern Railroad, reached Pierre, and in 1906 was extended westward to the Black Hills. These rail lines soon replaced the steamboat and as a consequence, many thriving villages which had been dependent on river transportation rapidly declined, some of them to become ghost towns.

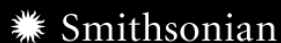
In 1906, a third railroad, the Milwaukee, crossed the Missouri, and the city of Mobridge, named for the crossing, came into being. These rail facilities were in time to be supplemented

by truck-freight lines, using modern hard-surface, year-round highways. Busses and airplanes came later, supplementing the ever-increasing number of private motor vehicles. In less than a century, the region was thus permanently settled, quickly passing from the era of the horse to that of the jet plane.

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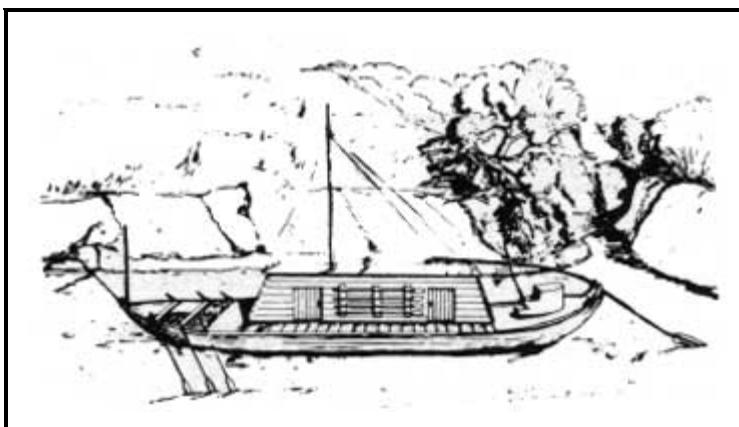
THE LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITIONS

The long and dangerous journey to the Pacific Ocean by Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark is one of the most striking episodes in the exploration of the west. The Lewis and Clark Expedition has become an important part of our national heritage, yet the significance of the journey, its purpose, its trials and successes, have not always been appreciated.

The assertion of American sovereignty over the vast area of Louisiana, purchased from France in 1803, was of great importance, but the contracts with the native peoples, the records, maps, and collections of objects made by the travelers were also of lasting significance. Traders and adventurers of various sorts had already covered much of the route up the Missouri, but their travels were little known. The Lewis and Clark Expedition, on the other hand, had a tremendous impact upon the public mind and has continued to be of importance to scientists and historians for more than one hundred and fifty years.

The expedition, following President Jefferson's orders, was to ascend the Missouri River to its headwaters and, moving westward, to determine whether the Columbia, the Colorado, or perhaps some other river might provide an economical feasible route to the Pacific coast. Further, the explorers were to study the Indian tribes, the topography and the flora and fauna of the country through which they traveled.

The "Corps of Discovery" sailed from Wood River, a short distance from St. Louis, on May 4, 1804. Keelboat travel up the Missouri, with its treacherous snags, shifting channel and dangerous sand bars was difficult and slow. It was not until late September that the party approached the section of river that was to become the Oahe Reservoir.



The keelboat or mackinaw, capable of carrying as much as 30 tons of freight, was the first important work boat on the Missouri. The Lewis and Clark Expedition used such a vessel in 1804 and, although it became less important after the appearance of the steamboat, in the 1830's, the keelboat continued in use for many years. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution

On the evening of Monday, September 24, the explorers anchored just off the mouth of a considerable river which they named the Teton (the modern Bad River) after the Teton Dakota peoples they met in the vicinity. The following morning, with a flagstaff and awning erected especially for the purpose, the party played host to a large group of the Teton who were camped nearby. At first all went well. A flag of the United States, a medal, a lace-trimmed uniform coat and other presents were distributed and the chiefs were invited on board the keelboat. There, a very powerful airgun owned by Captain Clark was demonstrated,

"and such curiosities as we thought might amuse them: in this we succeeded too well; for after giving them a quarter of a glass of whiskey, which they seemed to like very much, and sucked the bottle, it was with much difficulty that we could get rid of them. They at last accompanied Captain Clark on shore in a periogue (or dugout canoe) with five men; but it seems they had formed a design to stop us; for no sooner had the party landed than three of the Indians seized the cable of the periogue, and one of the soldiers of the chief put his arms round the mast: the second chief, who affected intoxication, then said, that we should not go on, that they had not received presents enough from us ...

(The Lewis and Clark Expedition, by Meriwether Lewis, edited by Archibald Hanna, Vol. I, pp. 72-73; J. B. Lippincott Co., 1961).

Captain Clark drew his sword, the swivel gun aboard the boat was manned, and the party prepared to defend itself. Apparently the determination to meet force with force had its effect. The leaders of the Teton had an immediate change of heart. Peaceful overtures were made and the next day the explorers were entertained by a dance and a feast which incidentally included dog meat stew, a favored dish among the Sioux. While Lewis has left us a colorful account of the celebration, one feels that the explorers were still ill at ease. The Teton had created an unfortunate impression, an impression shared by the sedentary farming peoples the travelers were soon to encounter in the north.

The explorers extricated themselves from the Teton with difficulty, and sailed on into the Oahe Reservoir area. The succeeding days were filled with problems—high winds, an unknown channel, and the trials of day to day existence—but there was no immediate threat from the Indians. By October 1, the party had passed the mouth of the Cheyenne River, not far from which they met a Mr. Valle and another young Frenchman who were trading with the Indians in the area. During the following week there were Indian alarms and the weather worsened but the party continued to make good progress toward their goal. The travelers were now in Arikara country. The remains of their abandoned villages were numerous along the river banks and even on some of the larger islands.

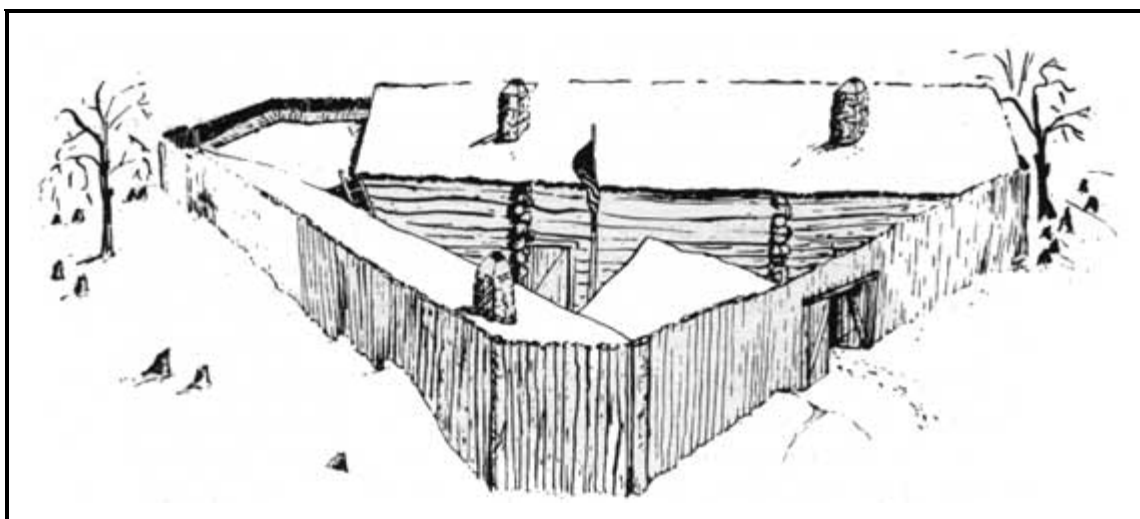
On Ashley Island, above the mouth of the Grand River, the party came to the first of the three inhabited Arikara towns:

"—we reached an island close to the southern shore, from which it is separated by a deep channel of sixty yards. About half way a number of Ricara Indians came out to see us. We stopped and took a Frenchman on board, who accompanied us past the island—. Captain Lewis then returned with four of the party to see the village; it is situated in the center of the island, near the southern shore, under the foot of some high, bald uneven hills, and contains about sixty lodges. The island itself is three miles long, and covered with fields in which the Indians raise corn, beans, and potatoes". (ibid., p. 88).

On Wednesday, October 10, following a day of bad weather, the Captains sent

"Mr. Gravelines, who with Mr. Tabeau, another French trader, had breakfasted with us, to invite the chiefs of the two upper villages to a conference. They all assembled at one o'clock, and after the usual ceremonies, we addressed them in the same way in which we had already spoken to the Ottoes and Sioux: we then made or acknowledged three chiefs, one for each of the three villages; giving to each a flag, a medal, a red coat, a cocked hat and feather, also some goods, paint and tobacco, which they divided among themselves: after this the airgun was exhibited, very much to their amusement—" (ibid., p. 89)

The next morning, the council again convened, the Arikara promised friendship, and following a further exchange of gifts the party moved northward to the other two villages. Again, there were predictable delays, for speeches, discussions, and the exchange of gifts, but by mid-afternoon of the following day the explorers were on their way northward. Their experiences among the Arikara were in sharp contrast to their visit among the Dakota. While it wasn't to last, the Arikara were left as firm friends of the White man.



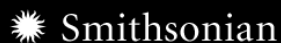
Artist's reconstruction of Fort Mandan, built by the Lewis and Clark party for winter quarters, 1804-1805. The reconstruction is based upon a description by Sgt. Patrick Gass, and a woodcut probably made from a picture drawn by him. The post was so strongly built that a trader from Canada thought it "almost cannon ball proof." Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution

The expedition continued on its way, hastening toward the Mandan country in the face of approaching winter. Game was abundant and, despite deteriorating weather, progress was rapid. By late October, the Mandan communities in the vicinity of modern Bismarck had, been reached, and by November 3 the first timbers were cut for the construction of Fort Mandan, the wintering house for the expedition. It had required six months to ascend the river this far; another year was to pass before the travelers reached the Pacific and most of another before they again returned to St. Louis and civilization, thus ending one of the epic journeys of the early west.

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Oahe Reservoir

Archeology, Geology, History



THE INDIANS OF THE OAHE RESERVOIR

HISTORIC BACKGROUNDS

During the last decades of the 18th century, the wide canyon of the Missouri River was the homeland of two, markedly contrasting cultures. The Arikara, the Mandan, the Hidatsa and their close relatives were old residents, or so the long archeological record implies. They built substantial fortified towns and, despite frequent hunting forays into the open plains, were dependent upon riverside fields of corn, squash and beans for their livelihood. The Dakota, on the other hand, were buffalo hunters who only recently had moved out of their traditional home in the woodlands to the east. The Siouan speaking Dakota were an aggressive people who put their faith in warfare. Their predatory ways often brought them into conflict with the sedentary villagers. This was not a question of building empires, or of territorial aggrandizement; rather the Dakota raided for food and sometimes merely for glory and scalps.

By the end of the 18th century, the village farmers were few. In 1795 the Caddoan speaking Arikara were living in two villages a short distance downstream from the mouth of the Cheyenne River. A generation earlier, their villages clustered in the vicinity of modern Pierre, 30 or 40 miles to the south. In 1743 the la Verendryes visited *les Gens de la petite cerise* (people of the Little Cherry), probably the Arikara, in this vicinity. A number of villages in the area seem to have been occupied at this time but we cannot identify the specific site in question. The meager historic sources agree that the Arikara were once much more numerous. The fur trader, Truteau, writing in the late 18th century, stated that they had once formed thirty-two distinct bands who may have lived in as many separate villages. Smallpox, introduced by the fur traders, and increasing pressures from the buffalo hunters, who by now possessed horses in substantial numbers, were forces that could not be resisted. By the time of Lewis and Clark, the Arikara had moved far to the north, settling in three villages a short distance above modern Mobridge, South Dakota.

The story of the Mandan and the Hidatsa, or Gros Ventres, is less clean. These people speak Siouan languages, allied to that of the Dakota, but they seem to have been in or near their historic home for a long period prior to contact by Europeans. When visited by la Verendrye in 1738, the Mandan were living near what is today the upper end of the Oahe Reservoir. The exact locations have not been precisely determined. In 1804 Lewis and Clark found the Hidatsa in three villages at the mouth of the Knife River, and the Mandan in several villages a short distance downstream. At the time, Big White, a famous Mandan chief, stated that he was born about 40 years previously in Slant Village, one of seven villages then held by his people. Here again it was the smallpox and raids of the Sioux that had reduced the population to the pitiful remnant found in 1804.

Unfortunately the villagers fared little better during the following years. In 1837, the Mandan and Hidatsa again suffered severely from smallpox, and raids by the Dakota continued. Shortly before mid-century the situation had so deteriorated that survivors moved to a point above the modern Garrison Dam, in North Dakota, where they built a single village, called

"Like-a-Fishhook" because it was situated near a sharp, hook-like bend of the Missouri.

The Arikara followed a more devious career. Despite their small numbers they controlled a strategic section of the Missouri River. As the fur trade increased in importance the villagers exacted their toll. By the 1820's the Arikara, now reduced to two adjacent villages, had earned an evil reputation and had made the journey up the Missouri a perilous venture for the traders and trappers. The climax came in 1823 when the Arikara clashed with a large trapping party commanded by William H. Ashley. The trappers were badly mauled and were forced to retire downstream in order to reorganize and to await reinforcements. A military force under the command of Col. Henry Leavenworth ascended the Missouri from Fort Atkinson, near modern Omaha, and attacked the villages. Despite the help of trapper volunteers and Dakota allies, the results were inconclusive. The villages were shelled, and ultimately the troops held the field, but the Arikara remained as pugnacious as before. Their subsequent history is one of roving, into the Plains as hunters, unwelcome visits among their Pawnee kinsmen in Nebraska, back to their old villages, then a period in the all but deserted Mandan towns, and finally, in 1862, to Like-a-Fishhook village, where they settled with the remnants of the Mandan and Hidatsa.

Despite their combined strength of numbers, the villagers were still not secure. Raiding parties of horsemen were a continuing menace; retaliatory raids and even the presence of military detachments failed to solve the problem. Only after the hunters were forced onto reservations, following the Indian wars of the 1870's, did the danger end. By this time the culture of the villagers was drastically changed. Except for bits and pieces, the old life was gone.

PREHISTORY IN THE OAHE RESERVOIR

There is good evidence that men have lived in the Great Plains for at least ten millenia, first as hunters and later as primitive farmers. The earliest hunters wandered over the western Plains following the giant bison and other "herd" animals. These were not the mounted hunters of a later day, the typical equestrian warrior made famous by the Indian wars of the 19th century. Instead, they were foot hunters, driving the bison into traps on spearing those that had become mired in waterholes. The mounted warrior came only in the 18th century when horses, introduced from the Spanish frontier in modern-day New Mexico and Texas, became common throughout the Plains.

Thus far no evidence of the early hunters has been found within the Oahe area. This is not to deny that they were here, but there are few exposures of sediments in which their remains might be found and the search so far has been fruitless.

The earliest peoples of the agricultural tradition did not appear in the northern and central Plains until several centuries after the birth of Christ. While they too were hunters, they appear to have cultivated small plots of corn and probably other crops as well. The name Plains Woodland has been applied to these people because they seem to be part of the widespread Woodland tradition that once flourished in the forested country to the east. The westward movement into a new and seemingly hostile environment must have brought many changes, yet the pottery and other artifacts found in the village sites suggest that the basic way of life probably did not differ markedly from that of their relatives in the northern Mississippi Valley.

The Plains Woodland people were never numerous and their villages were widely scattered. In the Oahe Reservoir only a few archeological sites have produced evidence of this early occupation. There is no suggestion of houses, or any real notion of the village plan, but from what is known elsewhere we can reason that dwellings were probably impermanent

structures, perhaps covered with cottonwood bark or hides. Similarly, villages, or more correctly hamlets, were small, consisting at most of five or six houses scattered over the river-cut benches or terraces which are usual features along the Missouri.

Strangely enough, we know much more about Woodland burial practices than we do about dwelling sites. The dead were interred beneath low mounds of earth. Usually a number of individuals are included, some as primary burials, and others as secondary burials—that is, reburials, or burials of the skeletal remains after the flesh had been removed, perhaps as a result of previous exposure to the elements. The bodies were placed in a timber-covered cist or pit, and the mound heaped over it. The burial pattern and the included funeral goods—atlatl or spear-thrower weights, cut and polished pieces of human jaw bones and the like—suggest a close relationship to certain remains in the Mississippi and Ohio Valleys.



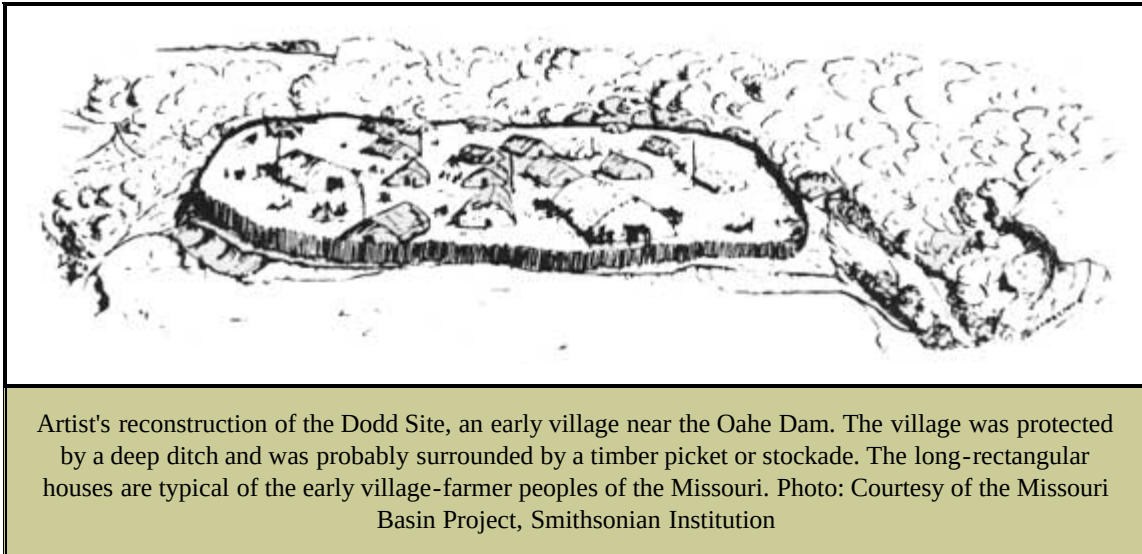
The central burial pit beneath Mound 1 at the Swift Bird Site, a group of low Woodland mounds in northern South Dakota. The remains of eight persons were found in the pit and a number of bison skeletons lay within the mound fill. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution

Sometime prior to the 1200's, a new and much more complex way of life emerged in the Middle Missouri country. A new stability and a larger population are apparent, probably resulting from an increased emphasis upon agriculture. Hunting was still of importance, particularly hunting of the bison, but the very size of the new towns argues for relatively large-scale farming.

The new villages were established on the lower alluvial terraces of the valley. The flood plain or "bottoms" may have been occupied seasonally and were certainly used for farm land but the periodic floods of the Missouri and its tributaries made them poor choices for permanent residence. The river bottoms were well suited to primitive agricultural techniques because they were easily cultivated with bone and wooden tools. The heavy sod of the uplands remained unbroken until the advent of the modern farmer and his steel plows.

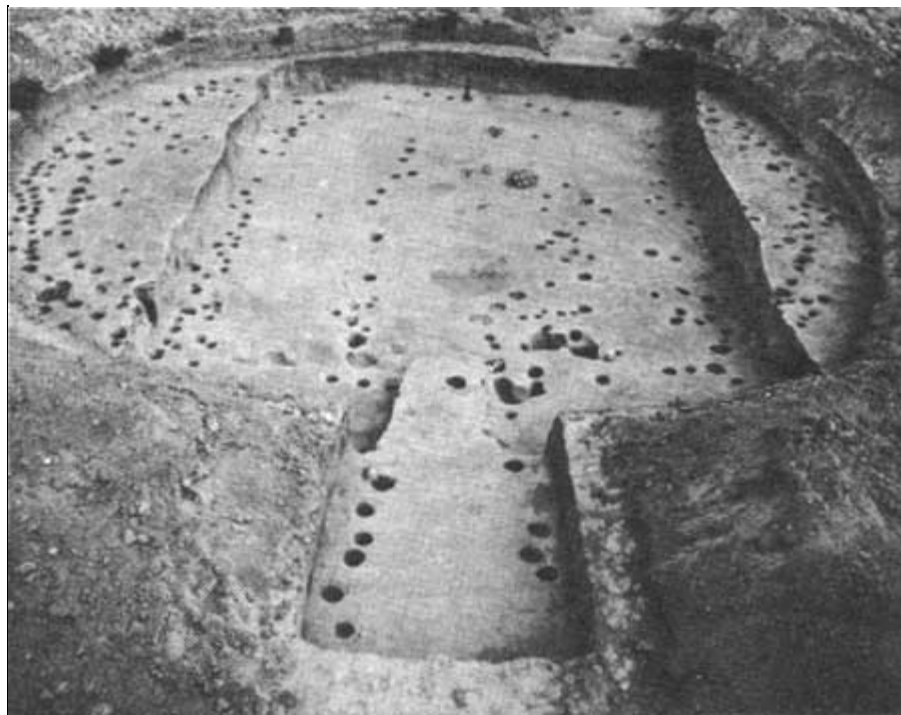
Many, and perhaps most, of the villages were fortified by a deep ditch or dry moat backed by a wall of timber. Evidently it was a time of troubles; possibly intertribal warfare was a continuing threat to security. At any rate, villages were protected by well engineered, well

built fortifications that imply a high degree of ability and organization. One might even guess that some sort of strong, centralized village authority was responsible for the planning and direction of the work. The situation is analagous to that found in the villages of the Middle Mississippi tradition of the central south—in fact, the fortifications and many other traits found in the Oahe Reservoir must have spread from there.



These early townsmen of the Dakotas constructed large rectangular houses framed with massive cedar timbers. The largest such structures were more than 65 feet long and 45 feet wide, sizable even by modern standards of house construction. The floor was usually excavated to a depth of one or two feet below the surrounding surface. Entrance was by means of a gently sloping ramp leading from a framed door at the middle of one of the narrow ends. Wall posts were set just inside the margin of the floor excavation, while other timbers on or near the center line supported the roof. A simple gabled roof was probably most usual, although variants such as the gambrel or double pitched type may have been used. What sort of material was utilized for sheathing the wall and roof is not known, but irregular burnt fragments of clay in certain houses destroyed by fire suggest that the walls may have been plastered with clay or daub. One or more fireplaces were usually found along the centerline of the house and a number of large storage pits were excavated into the floor. The size and interior arrangement of such houses suggest that they were occupied by more than one family. Perhaps this is an indication of lineages, or groups of related families of the sort found among many other primitive groups.

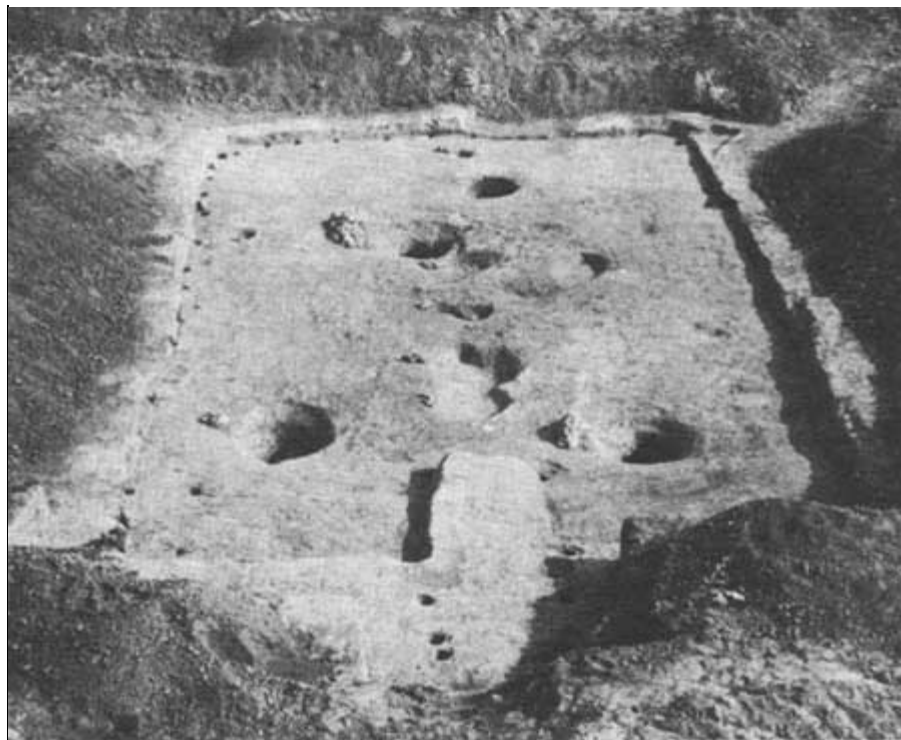




Remains of a long-rectangular house at the Dodd Site. The entrance passage, outlined by two rows of posts, is in the center foreground. The house lay beneath a circular house of the type still used by the Village Indians during the historic period. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution

The tools, pottery, weapons and ornaments made by the early villagers were remarkably varied. Pottery vessels, with surfaces roughened by means of a cord-wrapped paddle, digging tools made from frontal bones of bison skulls, bison scapula hoes, and a varied kit of projectile points and other stone tools were characteristic. Ornaments of copper and shell are relatively infrequent but are often present in small numbers. Many of the shells originated in the Gulf of Mexico, while others came from the coast of British Columbia, attesting to widely ranging trade contacts.



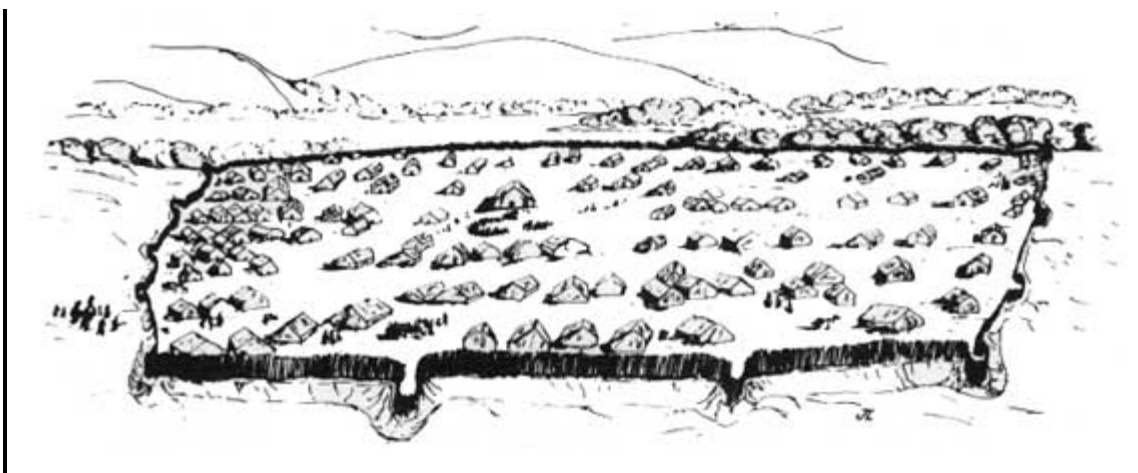


A long-rectangular house excavated at the Breeden Site near Pierre. The house is less complex than those at the Dodd village but the floor plan and other features are similar. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution

The last of the early villagers lived in the Oahe Reservoir as recently as 1500 A.D. One of their towns, the Huff Village, now a North Dakota State Park, was elaborately fortified with a wide moat and projecting bastions or strong points. The Corps of Engineers has recently protected the river frontage of the Huff Village Site by riprapping the bank for about a quarter of a mile so that rising waters of the Oahe Dam will not erode the river bank here. Other village sites lack defenses but they appear to reflect an essentially similar way of life. At the same time a new culture, carried by people from the south, was establishing itself along the Missouri in South Dakota. These people built circular and nearly square houses of quite different design, but these too were surrounded by strong fortifications. It is a fair guess that the older, long established population was contending with the intruders for dominance.

We do not know how many battles were won and lost, but it is apparent that neither group subdued the other. By the middle 1500's something new had emerged, which combined elements from both of the preceding cultures. The new villages were rambling and rural in nature—houses were sometimes scattered for miles along the river, with fortified centers here and there. The latter were small and lacked the complexities of the earlier defensive plans. This suggests that conditions were more settled; perhaps peace was the usual condition, rather than the implied warfare of the earlier period, but fortified strong points were built to serve as refuges during infrequent times of trouble.





Reconstruction of the Huff Village, a late example of the long-rectangular house tradition. The village was defended by a moat and stockade with projecting bastions. This village represents a high point of skill in the design and construction of fortifications within the Missouri area. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution



Aerial view of the Molstad Site, a small fortified village near Mobridge, South Dakota. The village, with a deep encircling moat and a single bastion, is a typical fortified center of the early circular house period. The depressions within the enclosure are the remains of earth-covered lodges. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution

Houses were now constructed on a circular plan, with a short, covered passage leading to the out-of-doors. Excavations for the floor were usually shallow; often only the sod was removed, or surface irregularities smoothed before house construction. The framework consisted of four or more large posts set about the central firepit and connected by sloping

rafters to a series of short vertical timbers set around the perimeter to form the wall. Except for a central smoke hole serving as a chimney, the entire framework was covered with layers of grass, twigs, and finally a thick mantle of earth. The resulting domed house was essentially the same as the earth lodge used by the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara during the historic period.

Accompanying the new houses were new styles of pottery and variations in tools and ornaments, but much of the old continued. By the early 18th century, larger fortified villages again became usual, perhaps in response to increasing depredations of the Dakota and their relatives. At this time we can begin to distinguish historic peoples and tentatively, to apply the names Arikara and Mandan to specific villages. Even the up-river movement of the Arikara is becoming apparent, although the details are far from clear.



Aerial view of the Potts Site, a fortified village of the early circular house period in the upper Oahe Reservoir. A bastion with its looped section of moat (right foreground) and the encircling stockade have been exposed and the archeologists are excavating an earth-lodge near the center of the village. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution





A section of the stockade at the Potts Village. Although most of the timber posts had decayed long ago, the postholes were readily traced and excavated. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution



Artist's reconstruction of the Potts Site. The loop bastion shown in the preceding photograph is at left center and the earth lodge is indicated by an arrow. The other bastion-like structures projecting from the stockade are fortified postern gates. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution

The villages of the 19th century are better known. It is abundantly clear from both historic sources and the archeological record that the village cultures were in sharp decline. The population had been decimated by disease—chiefly smallpox—and warfare, and the villagers were being thrust into the modern world. The last of the fortified towns, Like-a-Fishhook Village in present-day North Dakota, was progressively abandoned after the defeat of the mounted hunters, until by the 1880's the old life came to an end.

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Last Updated: 08-Sep-2008



ARCHEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS IN THE OAHÉ RESERVOIR

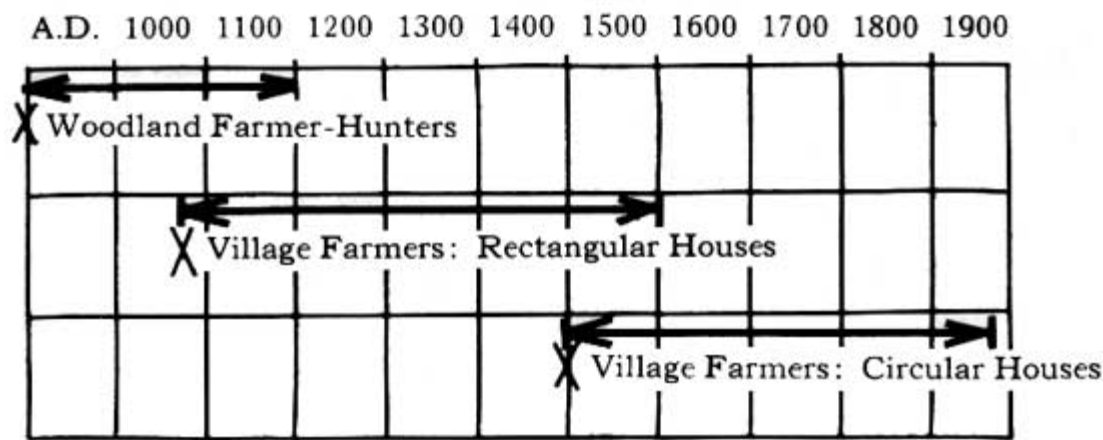
More than 350 archeological sites have been found within the Oahe Reservoir area. A great many of these are of major scientific importance. Some are significant because they represent new and hitherto unknown cultures; others are remarkable examples of their type or are illustrative of certain phases of prehistoric or historic development.

A great many of the sites, villages, burial areas, trading posts and others have been investigated by archeologists of the Smithsonian Institution, universities and other agencies. It has not been possible to excavate at all the locations of interest but enough has been accomplished to give a well-rounded picture of prehistoric life in the area.



PREHISTORIC SITES

The aboriginal cultures of the Oahe Reservoir and immediately adjacent areas are summarized in the following diagram:



The chronology, the beginning of new developments, and the end of old ones, is not exact. In all probability, no sharp lines can be drawn; the new overlaps and mingles with the old. Just as in our own culture, new ideas make themselves felt slowly and only occasionally do changes come abruptly or make themselves felt with such force that they come immediately to our attention.

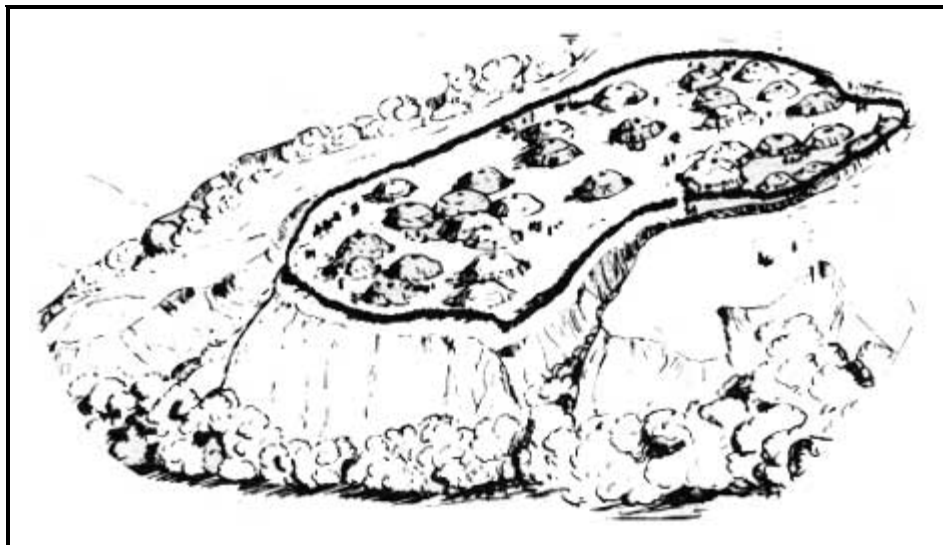
Each of these cultural phases is documented by the meticulous excavation of several village or burial sites and, in a few cases, a considerable group of sites is involved. It is not practical to describe this work in detail, but a number of sites, each typical of one or another aspect of development, are worthy of comment. WOODLAND FARMER-HUNTERS: Settlements of the earliest farmers are not abundant, and to date have not been particularly informative. In large part this is a result of the considerable depth of wind-blown silts that cover them, making discovery infrequent and excavation extremely difficult. Burials, on the other hand, usually occur within man-made mounds which, although low and eroded, are distinctive features on the otherwise even surfaces of the Missouri River terraces.



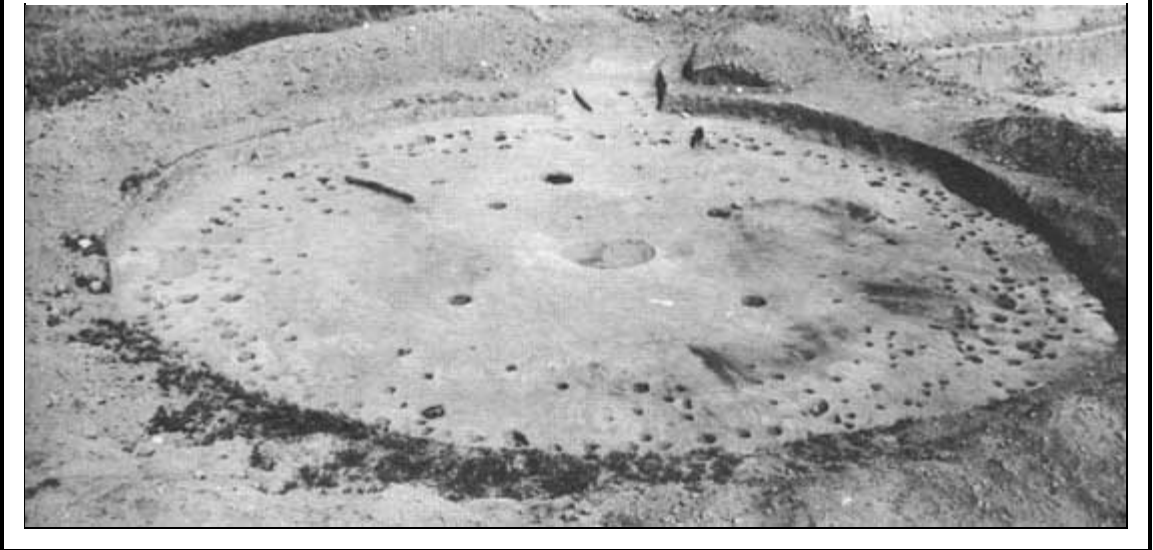
spots are lodge depressions marked by differences in vegetation. The village was unfortified, probably because it was so large that it was thought to be relatively safe from attack. Historic Fort Sully lay upon the high bluffs at the extreme upper left. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution



Aerial view of the Buffalo Pasture Site, a late village just above the Oahe Dam. Although a deep moat or ditch is evident, bastions are absent and the village outline is less regular than in earlier periods. The pits within the enclosure are earth-lodge remains excavated by Smithsonian Institution archeologists Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution



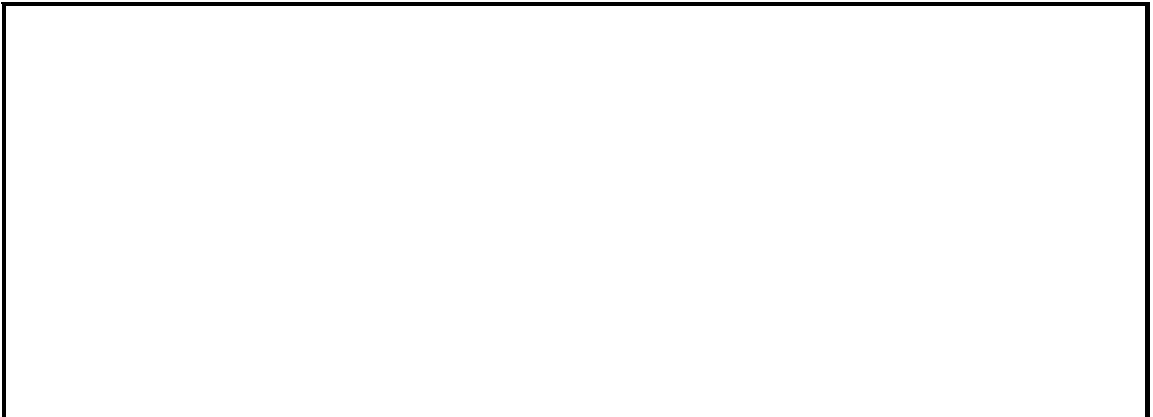
A reconstruction of the Buffalo Pasture Village as it probably appeared during the 18th century. Photo: courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution

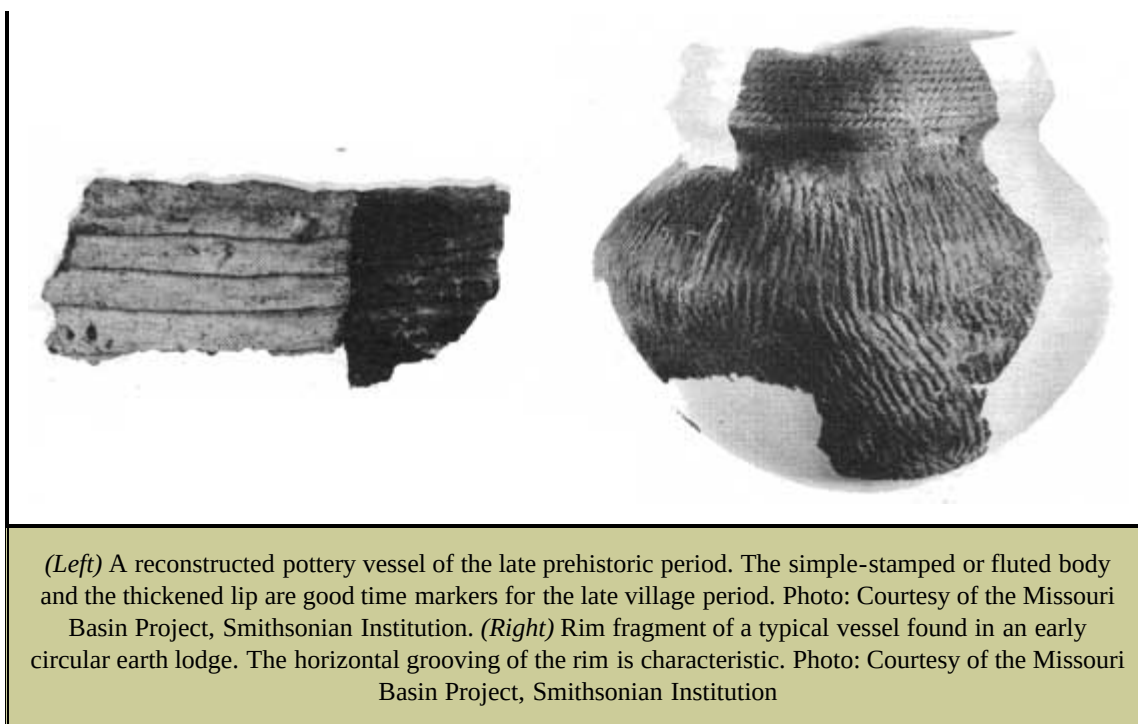


Remains of a typical circular house of the late prehistoric or early historic period. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution

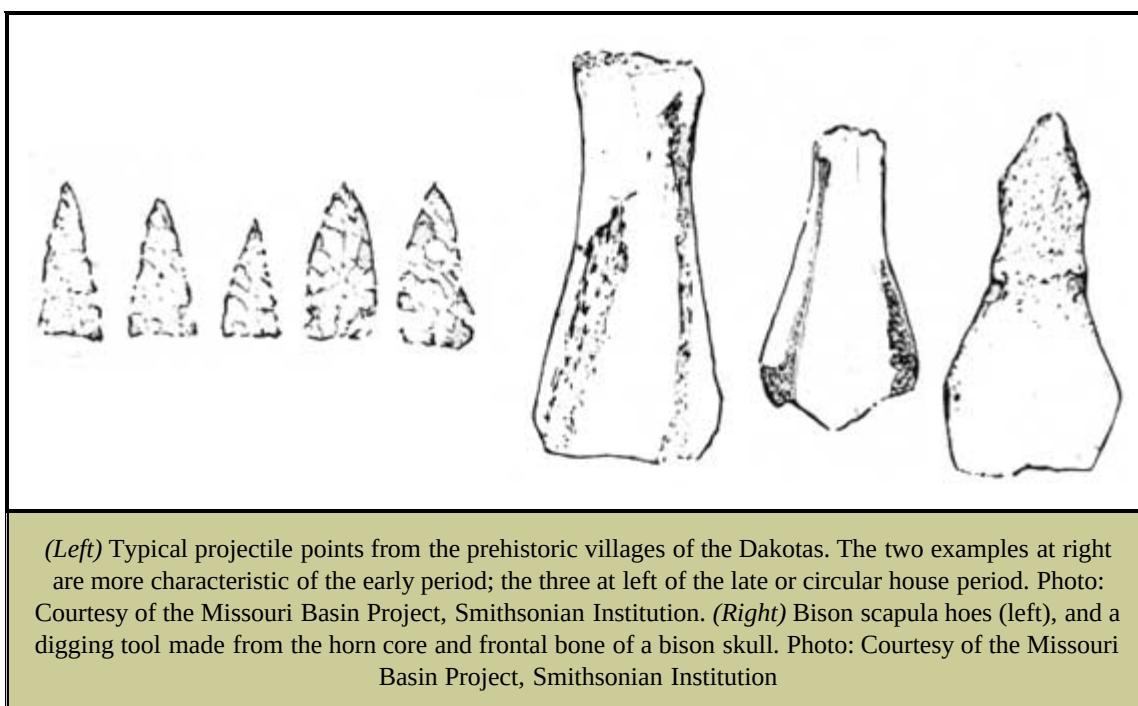


(Left) Reconstructed pottery vessel of the early village tradition. The body has been roughened by means of a cord-wrapped paddle and the "S"-shaped rim is decorated with horizontal cord impressions. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution. *(Right)* Rim fragment of a pottery vessel made by people of the late long-rectangular house tradition. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution





One such group of low dome-shaped mounds, the Swift Bird Site; was situated on the west shore of the Missouri midway between the Moreau and the Grand Rivers. During preliminary tests, an extended primary burial—that is, a body interred without previous exposure or without removal of the flesh, was found at the base of one of the mounds. Later excavation exposed a centrally located, sub-mound pit containing the partially articulated remains of at least eight persons. Marine shell beads, a shell pendant and a number of other artifacts were present and one of the burials, that of an infant, was covered with red ochre, a mineral pigment. Charred timbers were found around the opening of the burial pit and others were scattered throughout the fill. Articulated buffalo skeletons, a secondary human burial, and other mammal bones lay above the mound floor.

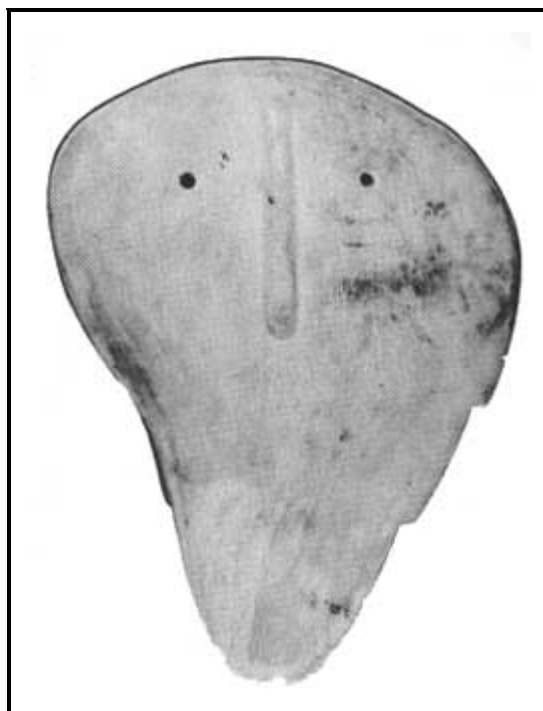


A second mound excavated at the site was essentially similar but lacked the primary burial.

Artifacts from one of several earth lodges in the immediate vicinity show no relationship with the mound; instead, they appear to be representative of the later village-farmers. Similarly, the buffalo skeletons, human burial, and other bones in the mound fill are probably intrusions from a later period. Indeed, such interments were being made in prehistoric mounds well into the historic period.



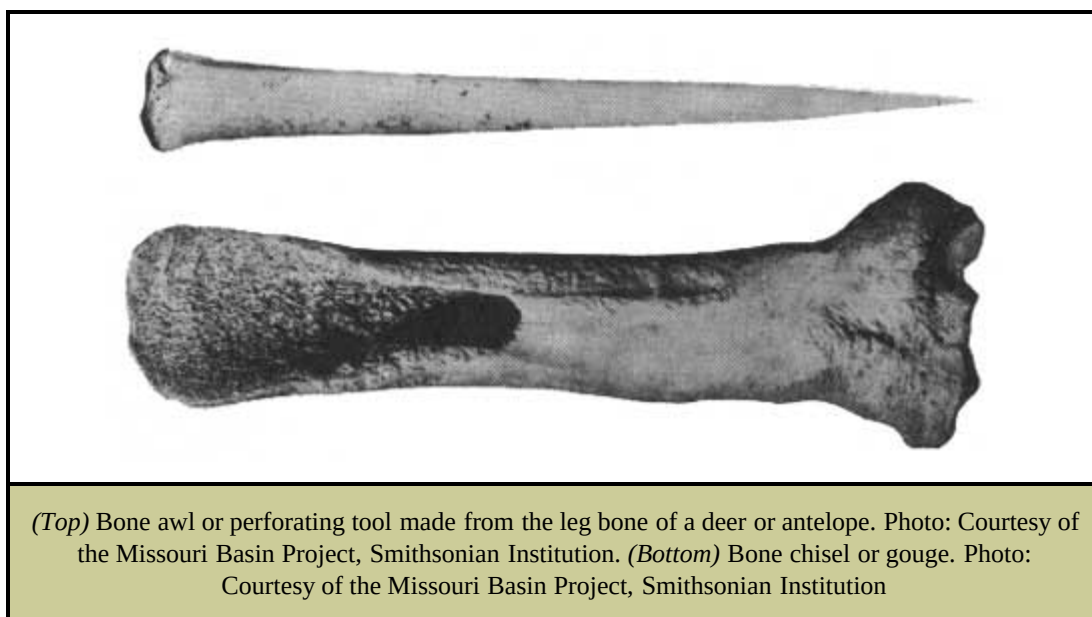
(Left) Stone knives from village sites in South Dakota. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution. *(Right)* Pipestone (catlinite) plaque found at the Sully Site, South Dakota. The many striations and scratches probably result from use as a tobacco cutting board. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution



A shell gorget or breast ornament in the form of a mask. Although possibly made at the Sully village, the shell was imported from the Gulf of Mexico. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution

VILLAGE FARMERS: RECTANGULAR HOUSES: Towns of the early villagers are not numerous, perhaps because they formed compact centers of population in contrast to the rambling villages of a later time.

One of the earliest of these villages, and one of the most important excavated in the Oahe Reservoir, is the Dodd Site, which lay in the channel leading to the discharge tunnels of the Oahe Dam. The site actually contained evidence of three distinct occupations by village farmers. The latest falls within the circular house tradition and may well be protohistoric Arikara. The earlier occupations, labeled *Monroe* and *Anderson*, are closely related developments of the rectangular house peoples. They differ somewhat in house type and in the proportions of certain distinctive types of artifacts, but otherwise they are not markedly different.



(Top) Bone awl or perforating tool made from the leg bone of a deer or antelope. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution. (Bottom) Bone chisel or gouge. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution

The village was roughly rectangular in plan, and lay upon a broken section of terrace that stood well above the river. The landward edge was defended by a deep ditch but lacked any evidence of a supporting palisade. Within the village, the long-rectangular houses appear to have been arranged in irregular rows, somewhat like streets in modern towns. In each case the long axis of the house excavation lay roughly in a north-to-south direction, with the entrance always at the south. A step inside the house pit led to an antechamber that projected outward from the wall. Firepits were basin-like and lay on the centerline but were offset toward the south end of the house.

Posts to support the ridge pole were found along the central axis. In a number of instances the postholes outlining the walls were confined to the sides of the structure, suggesting that the ends were open or were built of light materials which left no remains. It is possible that the houses were expandable, utilizing a movable wall to increase space when needed. Other houses contained posts around the entire margin. In two cases, such a house lay beneath a house of the open end type, thus providing evidence of change through time, an inference later substantiated by study of the artifacts associated with the various structures.



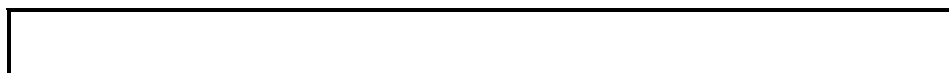


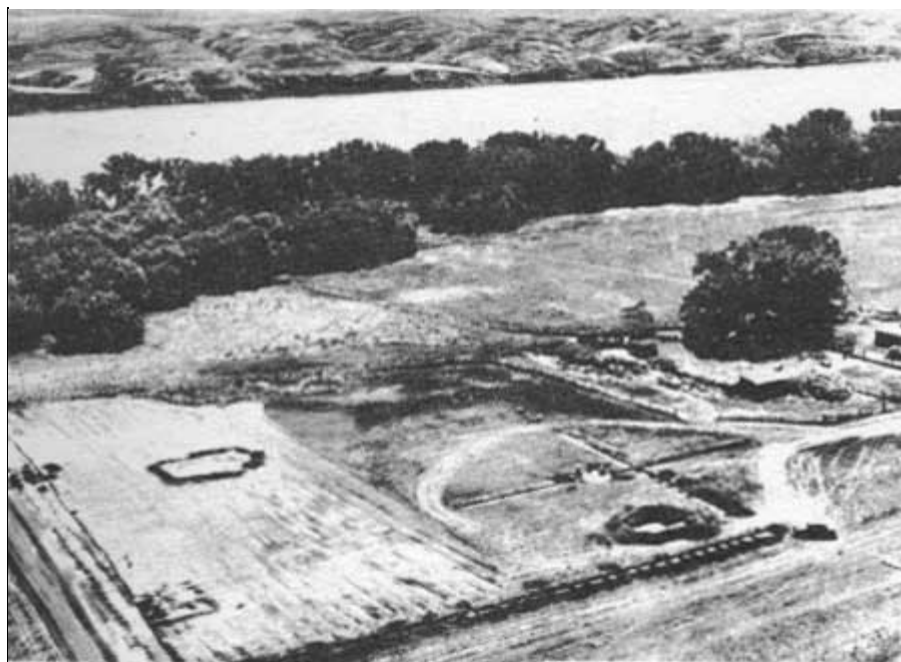
Aerial view (1956) of Fort Manuel, built by Manuel Lisa's trading party in the autumn of 1812 and abandoned the following spring. The timber enclosure is the remnant of a reconstruction made in the 1930's. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution

No great time separated the two occupations but exactly when they began, how they developed, or how long they lasted is not known. This much can be said: the early villagers, of which the Monroe and Anderson peoples were an integral part, held the Middle Missouri country during the 1200's, and they or their descendents continued in the area for several hundred years. The village peoples did not remain unchanged during this long period but later representatives seem to have followed most of the traditions of an earlier day.

The people of the Thomas Riggs Site, a village of the early 1500's situated a short distance upstream from Pierre, still lived in long-rectangular houses similar to those of the Anderson peoples. The village plan however was much less regular and fortifications were lacking. The Huff Site in North Dakota was still later in time, but here the village seems to have been more carefully planned, and was surrounded by an elaborate system of fortifications consisting of a ditch, bastions, and palisade.

The artifacts made and used by these later long-rectangular house builders differed little from those used by their ancestors. The principal change occurred in pottery, the cooking and storage vessels that were so important to an agricultural economy. The rim—that is the upper portion of the vessel—is still either "S" shaped or straight-to-flaring in profile, as was characteristic of the earlier period, but there is a marked change in the surface treatment of the vessel. In pottery manufactured by primitive methods, the vessel wall is usually pounded or paddled to compact the clay and thus increase strength. The Monroe and Anderson peoples used a paddle wrapped with twisted fibers, producing a cord-roughened surface in which the impressions of tightly wrapped twine are apparent. Among the Thomas Riggs people and their close relatives, the cord-wrapped paddle was replaced by a grooved paddle which left a deeply fluted impression on the clay. While this change in manufacturing techniques may appear to be unimportant in itself, it is of significance because all later pottery has the fluted or grooved-paddle surface. Thus the Thomas Riggs culture is a transitional one, the old ways continue but there is a first inkling of future developments.





Aerial view of the Smithsonian Institution excavations at Fort Pierre II. A motor road patrol was used to expose the plan of the fort after exploratory excavations had been carried out by hand methods. Photo: Courtesy of the U. S. Army, Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, Oahe area

VILLAGE FARMERS: CIRCULAR HOUSES: During the middle years of the 15th century, peoples from eastern Nebraska began to work their way up the Missouri. Their settlements were not numerous but they were large and well defended. The principal villages of these intruders, such as the Arzberger Site, the Black Partizan Site, Talking Crow, and a few others, are to be found in the Big Bend Reservoir, southeast of Pierre.

Although not numerous, the newcomers had a profound effect upon village life in the Middle Missouri country. They seem to have lived in relatively close contact with the Thomas Riggs people. From this contact, extending over many decades, came a new and markedly different way of life. Many things continued as before, but changes in village plan, a new type of house, and new emphases in pottery and other artifacts, and, we may infer, many new ideas, gave a renewed vigor to village life.

The Potts Site, situated a short distance downstream from Mobridge, is an excellent example of a village representative of the new tradition. The settlement consisted of at least thirty circular earth lodges grouped in an elongated oval area at the edge of the second terrace above the Missouri River. Eleven of the houses, including a large structure that apparently served as a ceremonial center, were surrounded by a defensive ditch and timber stockade. The ditch, ranging from 6 to 8 feet in depth and from 10 to 20 feet in width, was backed by a palisade of closely spaced, upright timbers. A single large loop-bastion projected from one side of the village and there were two fortified gates, each consisting of a pair of small bastions, one on each side of a narrow entrance passage that extended some 10 feet into the village area.

The houses were uniformly circular, with four central posts supporting the roof, widely spaced wall posts, and a short entrance passage.

Pottery found in the village consisted of globular vessels with constricted rims which were decorated with narrow bands of horizontal incisions. In addition, there was a varied collection

of stone, bone, and shell objects, including a number of the red stone (catlinite) pipes that became so characteristic of later periods.

Such rambling villages with fortified strong points are typical of the early part of the circular house period. By the 1600's a number of particularly large villages had developed, lacking, so far as is known, any sort of fortification. Perhaps defenses were not necessary because it was a time of peace, or perhaps such villages were too large for profitable attack.

The Sully Site, the largest single village along the Missouri, was first occupied at this time. The village was 4,000 feet long, 1,500 feet wide, and may have contained as many as 400 houses. These were placed without apparent pattern, but they do not intrude upon a large rectangular area, which must have served as a plaza or city center.

The houses were circular, with entrances oriented toward the southwest. At least two distinct structural patterns were found, suggesting that there had been two periods of occupation. Numerous artifacts were excavated from the houses, from deep storage pits, from an extensive cemetery and from a mantle of debris spread over much of the village. The pottery complex includes rims with "S" shaped, straight and flared profiles, elaborate thickened lips, and a diverse group of decorative treatments. Other groups of artifacts are equally varied. A catlinite plaque probably used for preparing tobacco is particularly noteworthy.

The most recent occupation at Sully Village probably ended about 1750. By this time relatively large fortified villages had again become common. The period of written history was dawning. The la Verendryes had already been in contact with the Mandan and probably with the Arikara. A great many villages are known for this period. The Philip Ranch Site near Pierre, the two Arikara villages (together called the Leavenworth Site) near Mobridge, and the several Mandan villages to the north are outstanding examples marking the last phase of village life within the Oahe country.

HISTORIC SITES

Numerous sites of White origin were known for the Oahe Reservoir area and, like the aboriginal villages, were given systematic attention by archeologists and historians. Records pertaining to the historic sites were compiled from sources of many kinds, including interviews with long-time residents. Such sites included trading posts, military forts, Indian agencies, former towns, and other remains of White residence. Most were relocated by field surveys and archeological excavations designed to provide evidence of the sort not found in the written record were made at selected places.

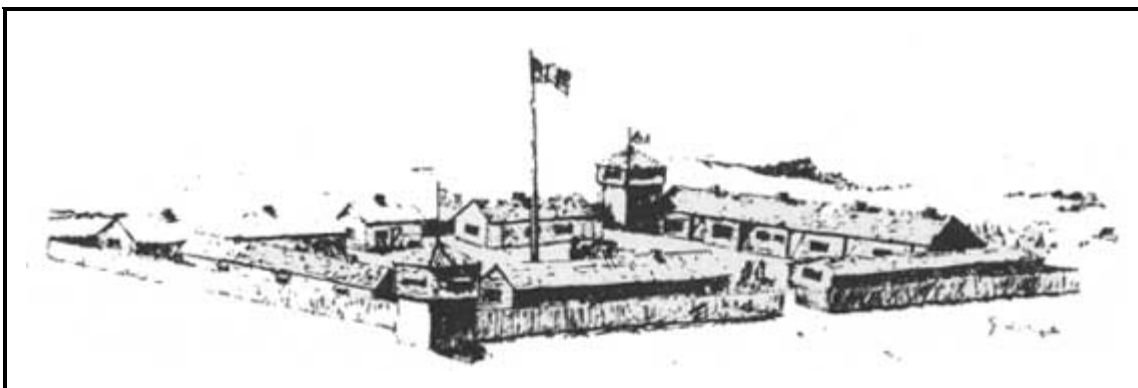
Sites of former trading posts were of special concern inasmuch as such business establishments were often poorly represented in surviving documents, chiefly because they were private ventures for which business records, if ever made, have been lost. Of special note among such sites are those of Fort Manuel, and Fort Pierre Chouteau.

Fort Manuel, used in 1812-13, was located on a prominent terrace overlooking the Missouri, in present Corson County, S. D., near the North Dakota—South Dakota boundary. Trial excavations at this site confirmed the location of the post, and further excavations, supplementing the brief post journal, should reveal details of the plan, construction and use of the station.

Fort Manuel is the oldest trading post in the immediate area. It is of special interest because Sakakawea, guide for Lewis and Clark across the Rockies, is believed to have died there in 1812. Perhaps she was also buried nearby.

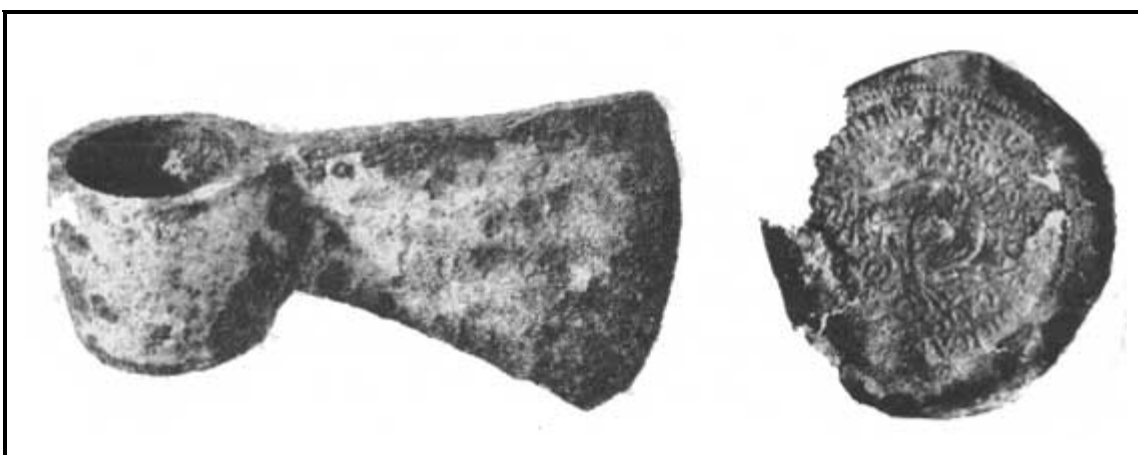
Only twenty years later, Fort Pierre Chouteau, regional headquarters of the most powerful

trading firm then operating in the area, was built on the Missouri near the mouth of the Bad River, but far enough above it to avoid the troublesome spring floods that had damaged its immediate predecessor, Fort Tecumseh. The site of this original Fort Pierre, as it was usually called, is marked today with a large native boulder carrying a bronze tablet telling the story of this most famous single trading post in the reservoir area. From this site, now owned by the State of South Dakota, the visitor can see the Oahe Dam, Fort Pierre, the city that took the full name of the former post, and Pierre, the capital of the state.



Fort Pierre Chouteau, departmental headquarters of P. Chouteau, Jr. & Co., for many years one of the most important trading posts on the Missouri. The artist's reconstruction is based upon a contemporary view and description. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution

When in 1855, after many busy years of service, Fort Pierre was taken over from the traders by Gen. William S. Harney as headquarters for his Sioux Expedition, its owners cast about for a new location. Several years passed before they finally rebuilt once more almost within view of the first Fort Pierre and even closer to the future dam. The old post by this time had nearly disappeared. Within a few more years, because of a severe decline in the trade resulting from the opening of the Civil War, the campaigns against the Sioux and, perhaps most important, the practical disappearance in the area of the buffalo, upon which the Indian tribes were chiefly dependent, the second Fort Pierre was also abandoned.



(Left) Wrought-iron half-ax found at the site of Fort Pierre II. Although poorly balanced for chopping, such tools were staples in the Indian trade. (Right) Brass cover for a box of percussion caps found at Fort Pierre II. The legend reads "Goldmark's Patent American Safety Percussion caps, metal lined, D 100 G, Warranted Water Proof." Goldmark of New York was a well-known manufacturer of ammunition components.



(Left) Traders were sometimes fortunate enough to have a few civilized comforts, as this glass seal from a wine bottle attests. It bears the mark of a well-known winery in Medoc, Gironde, France.
(Right) Fragment of a pipe bowl made of glazed clay from Fort Pierre, II.

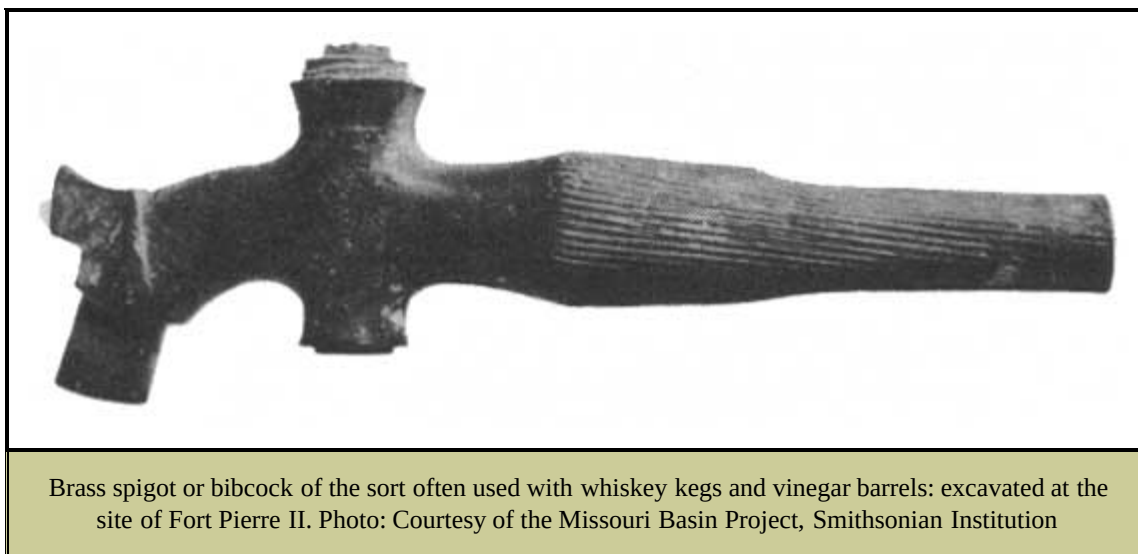


(Left) Roman Catholic medal of the Order of the Sacred Heart, founded in 1830. The appearance on the reverse of St Patrick, patron of Ireland, suggests that the medal may originally have been given to an Irish communicant who later visited Fort Pierre. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution. *(Right)* U.S. Army officer's dress hat ornament found at Fort Pierre II. Various volunteer regiments from Wisconsin, Iowa and Nebraska territory visited the post in 1863 during General Sully's campaign against the Sioux. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution

Though located below the Oahe Dam, the site of the second Fort Pierre was acquired by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers for construction purposes. Despite the fact that this site had long been plowed, excavations here added specific new information on the physical appearance of the trading post, supplementing the scanty surviving records. After the location had been confirmed by exploratory excavations, the site was exposed by a skillful machine operator, using a motor road-patrol. The machine work, followed by further excavations by hand, revealed the complete outline of the original timber stockade, surviving remains of which preserved abundant evidence of destruction by fire.

The area enclosed within the stockade was also carefully stripped, exposing the remains of

several of the original fire-damaged buildings. Numerous specimens and objects used during the relatively short life of the post were also found. Among these, none are more interesting than articles used at the time in the Indian trade, though many household objects and bits of equipment used by the traders themselves also afforded information of historical value.



Some miles above the site of the Oahe Dam, Fort Sully, the major military installation in the area, was also investigated by means of a series of test excavations. The post was begun in 1866 to replace an earlier fort of the same name. The previous post, a short distance downstream from Pierre, was exposed to spring floods and had proven to be unsatisfactory. At the new location good facilities for a steamboat landing were available, as well as ample forage and rough timber needed by the post. Here—within view of the Sully Indian Village Site—Fort Sully grew to be one of the largest military posts in the Dakotas. It was to be used for nearly 30 years, an unusually long occupation for western military installations of the last century.

Though all of the buildings once in use at Fort Sully had been removed following its abandonment in 1894, numerous informative records concerning their construction and varied purposes have been preserved in military archives. There are even several ground plans showing the composition and arrangement of the post at different periods of its career. Several pictures also show something of its appearance while in use. Thus a remarkably full record of the physical history has been preserved, and excavations at the site were therefore confined to verifying contemporary records and to obtaining representative specimens, which would illustrate the furnishings and equipment at this frontier military installation. These objects, many of them well preserved and little damaged, cover many aspects of the history of the fort. Among them are even pieces of printers' type used for printing official post orders.





White ironstone saucer with transfer decoration in black, bearing manufacturer's mark of Edward Challinor of present-day Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, England. Excavated at the site of Fort Pierre II. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution

The human story within the Oahe area is one of change—Woodland peoples, followed in turn by village farmers, by equestrian hunters, and finally by a tide of explorers, traders, soldiers and ranchers. Each brought something new and each played a part in the shaping of the region. This has been a continuing process. The construction of Oahe Dam and the creation of its great reservoir is just one more step, bringing new ideas, new technologies and new problems in its turn. Viewed in the context of what has gone before, it marks the beginning of another major phase in the long history of the Plains.



Ruins of the Post chapel (built in 1871) at Fort Sully. Religious services, a post library of some 2,000 volumes, and regimental band concerts (conducted by Achille La Guardia, father of the famous Fiorello, who lived here as a boy) including music by Verdi and Suppe provided relief from the monotony of military service at the post. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution



Excavation at the site of the Headquarters Building, Fort Sully. Photo: Courtesy of the Missouri Basin Project, Smithsonian Institution

Contrasting with the remains of the past cultures, unearthed during its construction, is Oahe Dam, built by the U. S. Army, Corps of Engineers, six miles upstream from Pierre. Oahe is the largest rolled earth dam in the world. Ninety million cubic yards of earth comprise its 242-foot high, 9,300-foot long embankment. Its 250-mile long reservoir can hold 23,000,000 acre-feet of water, and its seven power units have a generating capacity of 595,000 kilowatts.

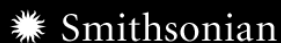
Of special interest, when viewing Oahe Dam in connection with the history of the area in which it is located, is that many of the descendants of the Indian tribes who once lived there helped to build the dam.



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Oahe Reservoir

Archeology, Geology, History



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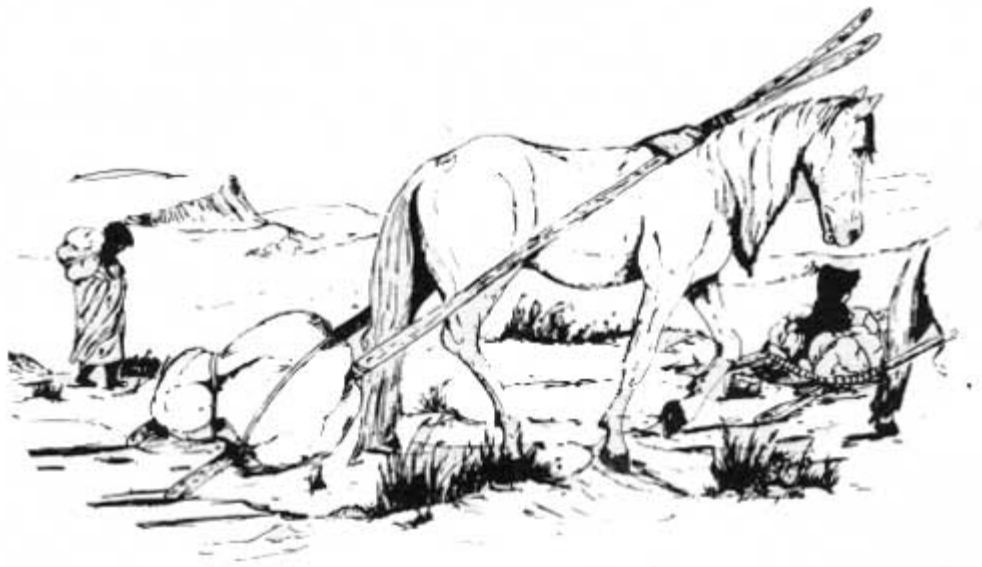
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Last Updated: 08-Sep-2008

