

The site is on the east end of a low ridge which extends east and west for about three hundred feet. This ridge is located on a farm originally belonging to a Mr. Henry Bisterfeldt, formerly of Gering, Nebraska, and now living in Oregon; but now it belongs to a Dr. H. O. Jones of Gering, Nebraska. The site is about five hundred feet north of the Scotts Bluff Country Club road, immediately east of the golf course, about one-half mile south of the North Platte river, and about one-half mile east and a little north of Scotts Bluff itself. The legal description of the site is as follows: $N\frac{1}{2}$, $NE\frac{1}{4}$, Section 34, T22N, R55W, 6th PM. Photo I shows the relationship of the site to Scotts Bluff.

Discovery

In July, 1932, Mr. Henry Bisterfeldt, intending to excavate for a potato cellar, chose the site above-mentioned, because of a certain amount of protection the hill offered, and because of a slight depression which appeared at this point. He proceeded to excavate with hand labor, team and scraper. At a depth of about two and one-half feet he encountered human bones and the

discovery was reported to a newspaper in Scottsbluff. He did not realize the importance of such a discovery and, because he had hired several men to excavate the cellar, the work continued without interruption. Mr. Moore heard of the discovery and, upon examining the site and seeing the destruction of archaeological evidence, secured permission from Mr. Bisterfeldt to remove what material he could without interfering too much with the excavation of the cellar. Since the site was very near the cities of Scottsbluff and Gering, crowds of people visited the site out of curiosity and carried away much valuable material.

Casualty Contents

This description is based on a paper prepared by Mr. Moore summarizing the results of his investigations. The casualty material was apparently limited to four burial pits within the cellar excavation. The remainder of the cellar space was barren. The accompanying sketch, by Mr. Moore, shows the location of these pits. The remains of thirty-two adults and five infants had been deposited in the pits that were uncovered. Many of the skeletons were disarticulated and fragments of several were charred.

Pit No. 1 was approximately three and one-half feet wide,

eight feet long and five feet deep. This contained one flexed burial (Photo II), fragments of two charred skeletons, and disarticulated parts of four other adults. The flexed skeleton was found in a sitting position facing toward the east. The shell ornaments (Photo III, Nos. 6, 7 and 9) were found with this skeleton. This was the first burial discovered. Mr. Moore applied a plaster covering, but when this was later removed, the remains were found to be in such condition as to make reconstruction impossible, due to the mishandling by Bisterfeldt's workmen. No stone artifacts were definitely associated with this pit. All of Pit No. 1 material was found at a depth of three to five feet.

Pit No. 2 was approximately five feet wide and nine feet long. This pit contained one flexed burial (Photo IV) and the remains of nineteen other adults and three infants. It seems likely that the flexed burial was originally deposited by itself, being placed in a sitting posture facing to the east or southeast. The west side of the hole used for this one burial appears to have been disturbed in the subsequent digging of the main pit, causing it to shift into the position in which it was found, head toward the south, pelvis to the north. A shell pendant (Photo IV)

had been suspended from around the neck and was found near the sternum, this being the only object definitely associated with this burial. Other artifacts found in this pit, but not definitely associated with any one burial, consisted of a projectile point and a polished stone artifact (Photo III, Nos. 2 and 11). All of the material in this pit was found at depths of from three to seven feet.

Pit No. 3 was approximately four and one-half feet wide and six feet long and contained eight adults and one infant. A chalcedony tool and a bone awl were found in this pit (Photo III, Nos. 1 and 10). The depth varied from four to seven feet.

Pit No. 4 was five feet deep and contained an infant burial (Photo V). This was disturbed with the scraper and fell apart, so that it was impossible to determine its exact position. It was wrapped with large and small bone beads.

Artifacts Nos. 3, 4, 5, 8 and 11 (Photo III) were found in the soil that was moved from the general cellar excavation. Some charcoal and hematite were found in each of the large pits and a fireplace was reported found near the surface, in the southwest corner of the cellar, but there was nothing to identify it with

the burials.

According to both Mr. Moore and Mr. Green, most of the remains, with the exception of the three described in some detail, had apparently been deposited without particular care and may have been only fragmentary skeletons at the time. The bones were mainly in a fair state of preservation, but most soon went to pieces upon exposure. The five skulls, one flexed burial and other disarticulated bones removed by Mr. Moore, and loaned by him to the Scotts Bluff museum, are excellently preserved; and apparently this skeletal material now constitutes the only identifiable remains from the entire ossuary. A few of the skulls and other bones appropriated by Mr. Bisterfeldt were left in the barnyard where they rapidly disintegrated. Other skulls and bone fragments placed on the banks by the cellar workmen were destroyed by a heavy rain.

Two of the skulls taken out by Mr. Moore were sent to Dr. E. B. Renaud of the University of Denver, and he reported that one male skull was Paleo-Alpine, with some Mongoloid influence shown in the low height of the head, and a possible Alpine trace. The other he reported as being probably a female, belonging to

the Proto-Australoid type with possibly a slight Mediterranean factor. Mr. Green states that a large proportion of the skulls appeared to be of rather aged individuals.

The artifactual material recovered and reported at the time was very limited and consisted of the pieces shown in Photo III, IV, and V. Three of the stone artifacts are now in the Scotts Bluff museum, and the remainder are presumably yet in the possession of Mr. Henry Bisterfeldt, who refused to sell them to Mr. Moore who was anxious to keep the entire collection together. With the infant burials over seven hundred bird-bone beads were recovered, measuring from one-half to one inch in length. Many of these beads are with the exhibit now in the Scotts Bluff museum, while Mr. Green has a few and it is thought that Mr. Bisterfeldt may have taken some at the time of excavation. It is known that a considerable number of artifacts were found and carried away by the crowd of visitors, but it is believed that there was no pottery of any description.

Conclusion

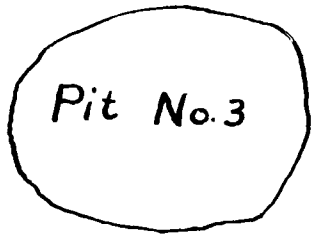
At the time of this discovery, Mr. Green noticed another

slight depression above and to the west of the cellar excavation and thought that it might be another burial site. However, in 1934 test holes were drilled over most of this ground by workers under Harold J. Cook, then leader of the CWA reconnaissance project at Scotts Bluff National Monument, but no indication of other burials was discovered. In some of the test holes, slight traces of charcoal appeared but no further suggestion of a human culture.

In the area excavated for the cellar, Mr. Moore feels that it is not likely there is any material below the six to seven foot level. However, it may be that Pit No. 1, which was located at the extreme south wall of the cellar, might extend some distance farther, since Mr. Moore and Mr. Green agree that some bones were found in the walls of this part of the excavation at the time the cellar was covered over.

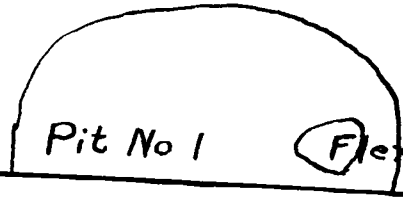
The artifact material recovered is similar to the generalized types found throughout the state of Nebraska. However, except for the lack of pottery, this natural mound burial would seem to have affinities with cultures normally confined to eastern Nebraska. Everything indicates that the Bisterfeldt site might have held

valuable evidence as to the westward extension of prehistoric natural mound cultures; and it is to be regretted that all those concerned with the find were not as conscious of the scientific implications as were Mr. Moore and Mr. Green.



Flexed burial

Infant burial (4)



Flexed burial



I
Relationship of Bisterfeldt site
to Scotts Bluff (note white arrow).
Aerial photograph, looking south-
west.



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Relationship of Bisterfeldt site
to Scotts Bluff (note white arrow).
Aerial photograph, looking south-
west.

II Flexed burial, Pit No. 1



II Flexed burial, Pit No. 1 .

III Collection of recorded artifacts from the Bisterfeldt Site



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



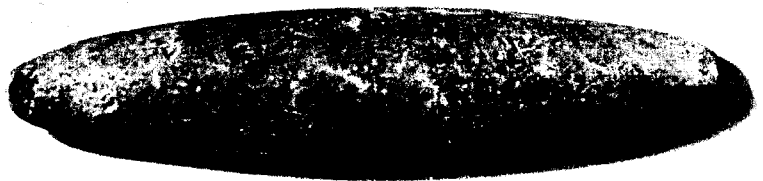
9



10



11



12

III Collection of recorded artifacts from the Bisterfeldt Site

IV
Flexed burial and shell pendant
from Pit No. 2

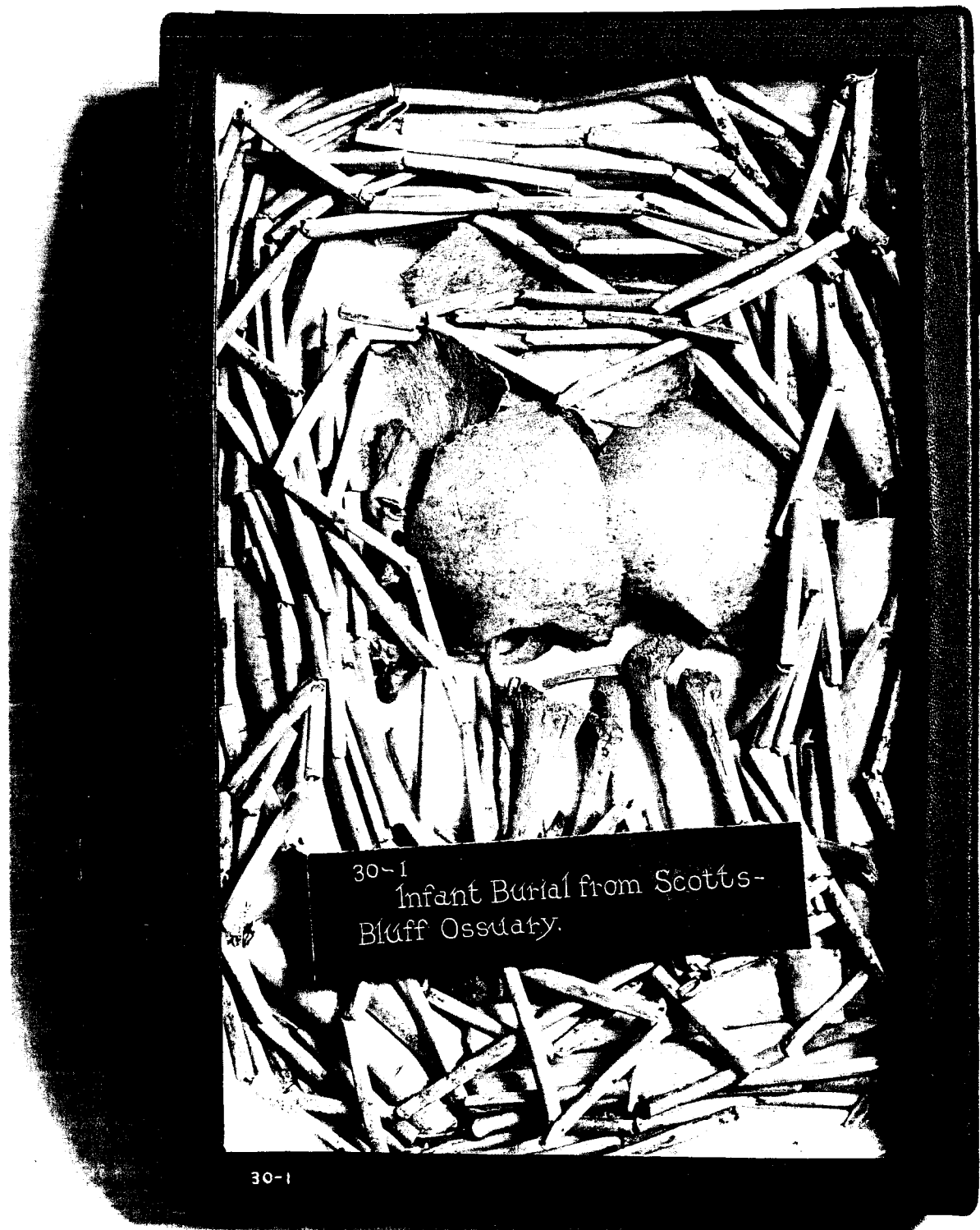


30-2
Bundle Burial
Adult in flexed position as found.

Shell pendant - only
object found with burial
30-2

IV
Flexed burial and shell pendant
from Pit No. 2

V Infant burial



30-1
Infant Burial from Scotts-
Bluff Ossuary.

30-1