

“ . . . it’s turtles all the way down”  
Prefederal Upper Republican Site Archaeology  
at Medicine Creek

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The story is told of the anthropologist, studying origin traditions, whose informant stated that the world stands on the back of a giant turtle. He asked what the turtle stood on and learned that it stands on the back of another turtle. He then asked what that turtle stands on, to which the informant replied, “Ah, don’t you see—it’s turtles all the way down.” The story is an apt parable for many scientific disciplines, including archaeology, for when we acknowledge our intellectual debt to those before us—the turtle on whose back we stand—we usually find them also acknowledging an intellectual debt to predecessors, that those predecessors in turn had predecessors, and so forth, “all the way down.” This certainly is the case with research on the Upper Republican occupation of the Medicine Creek valley. Even though the results of the extensive River Basin Surveys work of 1947 and 1948 were only recently published (Kivett and Metcalf 1997), a contemporary journal article (Kivett 1949) outlined the essentials of Upper Republican culture, and much other data and information—the radio-carbon age determinations, for example—have been a part of Central Plains archaeologists’ working knowledge for years. We think of this work as formative and influential, and it certainly was extensive; but actually its foundations were laid over a decade earlier, and that work too had acknowledged predecessors. To put the River Basin Surveys work and all subsequent work in context, therefore, we must first understand the status of Upper Republican site archaeology in the valley and, to an extent, beyond it, prior to 1947.

## Investigations

Upper Republican site archaeology in the Medicine Creek valley predates the federally sponsored programs by at least two decades. We can trace its origins to A. T. Hill's long-standing interest in Pawnee archaeology and ethnology. By his own account Hill was present at the 1906 unveiling of the monument to Pike's visit (or lack thereof) at the Pawnee village site in Republic County, Kansas, at which time he already had an interest in and some knowledge of historical events and the places where they occurred (Hill 1927:162). It seems, though, that he soon concluded that the wrong site had been marked. By the early 1920s he was living in Hastings, Nebraska, and looking for the real Pike-Pawnee village site. He found it in 1923 near Red Cloud (Hill 1927:163-165)—in Nebraska, of course, to the eternal consternation of Kansans.

Hill soon expanded his investigations to other Pawnee and Lower Loup phase sites and to earlier sites as well. Wedel, in an obituary of Hill, noted that Hill recognized early on the distinctiveness from one another of what we have come to call historic Pawnee, Lower Loup, Upper Republican, Dismal River, and Woodland cultures (Wedel 1953a: 74; a 1926 letter from Hill to Floyd Schultz, quoted in Hawley [1993:78] also reflects this). Pertinent to our case is the December 6, 1929, letter in which Hill introduced himself to W. D. Strong, who at that time was in the first of his two years at the University of Nebraska. In this letter Hill informed Strong:

As a hobby, I have spent several years locating and excavating in historic and prehistoric Indian villages in the Republican and Loup River valleys, the ancestral home of the Pawnees. In the Republican valley in Webster, Franklin, Harlan and Furnas counties *and in Frontier County on Medicine Creek* I have found Indian villages and graves that I cannot make myself believe are Pawnee [A. T. Hill to W. D. Strong, December 6, 1929, W. D. Strong Papers, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; emphasis added].

Clearly, therefore, Hill had learned of the valley's Upper Republican sites by sometime in the late 1920s. How he learned of them, what he knew about them, and what he had done with them is a matter I will return to.

Given the importance of the Medicine Creek sites to our knowledge of the Upper Republican culture and the fact that some of those sites were known to archaeologists by the late 1920s, it seems almost perverse that the first professional excavation of an Upper Republican site was not at a site in the Medicine Creek valley, but it wasn't—the Upper Republican type site is the Lost Creek or Dooley site (25FR3), between Bloomington and Franklin in the Republican River valley proper. Strong excavated this site in July 1930 and reported it a few years later (Strong 1935:69–103). The results of this work were vital to the definition of the Upper Republican culture (Strong 1933a:278–279; 1935:245–250).

The summer of 1930 was Strong's only summer fieldwork under University of Nebraska auspices (Wedel 1982:esp. 15–17). By mid-1931 he was with the Bureau of American Ethnology, under whose banner he made "a rapid survey trip" (Strong 1932:151) through parts of Nebraska and the Dakotas in August and September 1931. This trip included several days in the Medicine Creek valley, guided by A. T. Hill (Strong 1932:152, 155; see also Strong 1935:242; Strong et al. 1932:494). Whether Strong had any thoughts of working in the Medicine Creek valley is not certain, but what is recorded is that the next trip stop was at Signal Butte, where he conducted both reconnaissance and testing. He then undertook a major excavation in the summer of 1932 (Strong 1933b), an excavation that was to be Strong's last fieldwork in the Central Plains. He worked in the Dakotas in 1938 and 1939, by which time he was with Columbia University (Wedel 1982:25), then turned his attention to Central and South America (Willey 1988:79–81). He apparently never returned to Medicine Creek, and certainly he did no work in the valley.

Hill, meanwhile, became director of the Nebraska State Historical Society museum in 1933. This appointment put him in a position to expand and intensify his archaeological investigations (Wedel 1953a:74–75). His first work for this institution was in Upper Republican sites at Medicine Creek, excavations that represent the first professional archaeological investigations of these sites (Hill 1933:174). Hill directed the work, and Waldo Wedel was the field assistant. Excavations were conducted at the Gammill-Phillips (25FT1), Thompson Farm (25FT2), and Owens (25FT3) sites, all of which are within less than 10 km of one another southeast of Stockville. One complete house was excavated at each site; two additional house remnants and one "summer work shelter" feature also were excavated at the Owens site. Wedel promptly published a descriptive report of this work (Wedel

1933). He gave particular attention to details of the houses, including photographs and floor plans (Wedel 1933:148-157); artifacts were treated in far less detail (Wedel 1933:157-163), although photographs of pottery, chipped stone tools, and bone tools were presented (Wedel 1933:Plates III and IV). Inasmuch as Strong's report of the Lost Creek site excavations, although complete, was as yet unpublished, Wedel's 1933 paper is the first published description of not only Medicine Creek Upper Republican remains but Upper Republican phase remains in general.

The 1934 Nebraska State Historical Society investigations were even broader. This year, in fact, saw the excavation of more Upper Republican houses in southwest Nebraska than any other single field season except for the 1948 season of the River Basin Surveys. A total of eight houses were excavated at sites in the Republican River valley near Superior, Red Cloud, and Bloomington; one house was excavated in the lower Red Willow Creek valley near McCook; and two houses were excavated at 25FT4, in the Medicine Creek valley near Stockville. As in 1933 Hill directed the work, with Waldo Wedel as the field assistant. Wedel again promptly reported the work (Wedel 1934), this time giving detailed descriptive attention not only to the features excavated but also to the collections resulting from those excavations. Synthetic material also appears in this paper.

The summer of 1934 was Wedel's last major field season in Nebraska. He completed his Ph.D. at Berkeley in 1936 and later that year joined the staff of the National Museum of Natural History. When invited to submit a proposal for a field project to begin in 1937, he chose to apply the lessons gained from his five seasons in Nebraska to the largely unworked field of his native Kansas (Wedel 1959:1). Hill and the Nebraska State Historical Society turned their attention elsewhere, as well, particularly to the eastern part of the state and the Nebraska phase sites, among others. This work, of course, continued only through 1940, after which the country entered World War II, and archaeological research was put on hold until the war was over. When research resumed, much of the archaeology throughout the huge Missouri River basin was conducted by or in cooperation with the River Basin Surveys. Marvin Kivett—who worked with Hill in Nebraska in 1935 and 1936 and assisted Wedel in his 1937-1940 fieldwork in Kansas (Gradwohl 1994:465)—and J. Mett Shippee conducted some reconnaissance in the Medicine Creek valley in 1946 in anticipation of the eventual construction of the reservoir. They recorded 15 sites, most of them of Upper Republican affiliation (Kivett 1947; see also Wedel

1948:15). When the construction of Medicine Creek Dam was put on the fast track following the June 22, 1947, flood, the Nebraska State Historical Society returned to the valley after a 13-year absence and from July 25 to September 10, 1947, began excavations on sites near the dam axis. Work during the remainder of September, as well as through October and into November, however, was directly under River Basin Surveys auspices (Kivett and Hill 1949; Wedel 1948:15–16, 41). Federally sponsored archaeology in the valley had begun.

### Accomplishments

The glory years of pre-federally sponsored archaeology in the Medicine Creek valley clearly were 1933 and 1934. These were enormously productive years, undoubtedly in part because the stage had been set during the previous few years for Hill and Wedel to get right to the point when they were finally able to work in the valley. Hill, as I have mentioned, learned of the Upper Republican sites in the 1920s and soon had some idea of what they represented. He also knew of many other sites in other valleys and, appearances in the literature perhaps to the contrary, clearly had been excavating on various sites for a number of years. Whether these excavations included any at the Medicine Creek sites is not recorded, although for two reasons I am inclined to think they did not. First, Wedel made no mention of earlier excavations in his 1933 paper, and it would seem proper for him to have done so if there had been any. Wedel's University of Nebraska master's thesis—published in 1936 as *An Introduction to Pawnee Archaeology*—was based in large part on a study of Hill's collections from Pawnee and Lower Loup village sites, and because Hill was directing the 1933 Medicine Creek work, it hardly seems likely that he would have been unwilling to have Wedel work with materials from earlier excavations in the valley if there had been any. Second, there are no known collections or records of earlier work by Hill in the valley. Wedel (1953a:73) mentioned that Hill's first field notebook "was unfortunately dropped overboard during a fishing trip." The date of this loss was not noted, but even if the lost notebook included notes from Medicine Creek valley sites, collections should be extant. The Hill collection at the Nebraska State Historical Society, however, contains no Medicine Creek valley material, and the Hill collection at the Hastings Museum contains only one object—a metate—from the Medicine Creek valley (letter from Theresa Kreutzer, Curator, Hastings Museum, March 30, 1998). My conclusion, admittedly derived entirely from circumstantial

evidence, is that Hill did not test, much less excavate, on any Medicine Creek valley sites prior to 1933. He did excavate house sites elsewhere, though (e.g., Hill 1932), and these experiences undoubtedly helped him prepare for the Medicine Creek valley excavations.

Wedel's earlier preparations also were beneficial to the Medicine Creek work. He had been on Strong's 1930 crew that excavated the Lost Creek site, as well as at several Nebraska phase sites (Strong 1935); in 1931 he excavated at Lower Loup phase village sites and at the Sweet-water site (Champe 1936:253) and was with Strong on the postexcavation trip that reconnoitered in the Medicine Creek valley; and in 1932 he worked with Strong at Signal Butte (Gradwohl 1996:319), a site with an Upper Republican component. So he had already gained extensive experience with house site excavations, with Upper Republican material, and with comparative material of other archaeological cultures by the time he went to Medicine Creek in July 1933.

Also, of course, Upper Republican had been formally defined as a distinct archaeological culture prior to the first professional Medicine Creek valley excavations. Strong had accomplished this task in *An Introduction to Nebraska Archaeology* (Strong 1935:245–250), which was completed in spring of 1932 but delayed in publication (Strong 1935:1). He had also briefly reviewed Upper Republican culture in his classic 1933 *American Anthropologist* paper (Strong 1933a:278–279).

It would seem fair and accurate, therefore, to say that the 1933 and 1934 excavations near Stockville were not explorations that, if you will, "discovered" an archaeological culture but rather were excavations that filled out the definition of an already recognized material culture complex that, although obviously distinct, was as yet studied at a limited number of localities. I would submit, in fact, that by mid-1935—by which time both Wedel's second paper and Strong's monograph had appeared—the basic outline of Upper Republican culture and of its specific expression in the Medicine Creek valley was solidly established. The River Basin Surveys work, and all work conducted since, rests on this foundation.

What are its elements then? What do we learn from reviewing Strong's and Wedel's reports? I would highlight the following six points.

1. The major feature classes and their configurations were generally understood. This would include house form, pits, post molds, and hearths. Wedel's statement that "[t]he typical form of dwelling among the prehistoric horticultural peoples of the upper Republican valley was the rectangular semisubterranean earth-

covered lodge, supported by four central posts, and varying from twenty to forty feet in diameter" (Wedel 1934:172) remains basically a valid summary, although we no longer would call the houses semisubterranean. The central hearth, long entry, "four-post central foundation," and presence of cache pits were explicitly noted by Strong (1935:249). More recent work has added to the list of known feature types and has shown that there is more variation within feature classes than was initially apparent, but the basic definitions remain unaltered.

2. The consistent stratigraphic position of the Medicine Creek sites was recognized from the beginning. This was never particularly highlighted in summary or synthetic statements, but it is unmistakable in Wedel's report of the 1933 work. Referring to the house excavation at 25FT1—and this is the first house excavated at Medicine Creek—he reported:

The upper eleven inches of the soil cover consists of light gray aeolian deposit, unmixed with any remains, and showing no break in character at the edge of the house. A black humous [*sic*] layer, into which the house pit was dug, underlies this deposit, and appears to be fairly continuous over the entire terrace. This we believe to have been the village surface at time of occupancy. Sherds, flints, charcoal, and other village detritus occur on and in this horizon, but are virtually absent in the gray soil above and on the present surface. In other words at least ten inches of dust and sand have been carried by the wind onto the village site and deposited since its abandonment [Wedel 1933:149].

His description of the first house at 25FT2, the second Upper Republican house excavated at Medicine Creek is similar: "As previously [i.e., at 25FT1], so here, the house had evidently stood on an old surface, since covered by a foot or so of clean wind-deposited sand" (Wedel 1933:150). And so forth through the other house descriptions.

This general stratigraphic position actually had been recognized during earlier investigations at sites in the Republican River valley (Blackman 1930:357; Strong 1935:75–76), so the 1933 excavations at Medicine Creek showed the conformity of the valley's remains with the regional lithostratigraphy. Any subsequent excavations at Medicine Creek valley Upper Republican sites of

any type have shown this same sequence, and we now can state it in more formal terms. The Upper Republican occupation is associated with the A horizon of a soil formed in the upper sediments of usually the Stockville (T-2), occasionally the Wellfleet (T-3), terrace. A post-Upper Republican eolian deposit 15 to 45 cm thick mantles all landforms in the valley (Brice 1966:281). The only detail concerning this formation that Wedel and earlier excavators did not note is that a soil often is formed in it too—a fact of no consequence to their reading of the archaeological context.

3. The Upper Republican artifact complex also was defined, that is, the form, style, and associated attributes of the pottery were understood, as were the recurrent forms and styles of chipped stone, ground stone, and bone tools.

Wedel's (1934:185–188) characterization of the pottery is particularly useful for that class. The largely globular, cord-roughened jar, without handles or lugs, was easily recognized as characteristic. Rims were divided into two classes: collared and direct. It also was observed that “[r]im ornamentation goes hand in hand with form as a diagnostic. . . . [Collared rims] were most elaborately decorated. . . . Less than 10% of collared rims remain undecorated. . . . [Direct rims] were left plain in 50% of our series. The remainder bear small diagnostic incisions or punctate units on the lip” (Wedel 1934:188).

Sigstad's (1969) typology of Upper Republican pottery formalized the four types thus formed: collared with decoration on the collar panel (Frontier incised), collared without decoration on the collar panel (Frontier plain), direct with decoration on the lip (Cambridge tool-impressed), and direct without decoration on the lip (Cambridge plain); the types were, however, for all practical purposes defined in 1934. Kivett and Metcalf (1997:96) added another class to represent a small minority of vessels. I have recently suggested (Roper 1996a:362–364) that we need to revise and expand the typology, but most revisions will start with the basic distinctions that Wedel recognized in 1934.

The chipped stone classification covers the gamut of function with a low number of defined classes and well-organized, within-class formal variability. Strong characterized the tool assemblage thus: “Two main type of arrowpoints, a large (NBa) triangular point of rather rough workmanship and a small (NBa, 1–4) type; very delicately chipped and often notched; small planoconvex end scrapers; small ovoid side scrapers; oval, triangular, and diamond-



shaped knives, the latter type beveled and unbeveled in about equal proportions; chipped celts . . . " (Strong 1935:249). Wedel's (1934:205) list was essentially identical, except that he added "T-shaped flint drills"—an addition I have always found rather curious given that the collections he was working with contained only two drills, and neither, as near as I can tell, was T-shaped; nor are drills of any form particularly notable in the collections from the 1947–1948 work (Kivett and Metcalf 1997) or at Mowry Bluff (Klippel 1969) or in any site I have excavated in recent years. In any event Strong's exposition, in particular, laid out formal criteria for identifying new specimens to these defined classes. Although we can subdivide some of the major classes into morphologically distinct variants and must add retouched flakes and, of course, debitage to the list, the Strong classification has continuing utility for ordering Upper Republican site collections (Roper 1996a:99–140).

Another characteristic of the chipped stone assemblages that was explicitly noted was the predominant use of local raw material (Strong 1935:87; Wedel 1933:160, 1934:194). The formations now have names, we have specific source formations and general source localities for many of the nonlocal raw materials, and we understand more about how the differential use of the various raw materials was patterned (Hill 1997), but again, the basic understanding was there in the mid-1930s.

4. Some attempt was made to understand subsistence, although it really was only a beginning. With generally excellent bone preservation conditions prevailing throughout the area of Upper Republican culture, both Strong (1935:100–101) and Wedel (1934:185) recovered and reported a fair diversity of animal remains. Neither of them recognized the implications of this diversity and perhaps not surprisingly, for they had essentially nothing to compare the remains with and no way, as yet, to place the Upper Republican material in broader context. Interestingly, though, both men recognized that the Upper Republican people practiced horticulture. This was a radical conclusion, especially for a culture this far west of the agricultural area of the historic period villagers. It was a remarkable one too, for Strong (1935:101) reported of the Lost Creek site that "no vegetal remains of any sort were recovered" and inferred the practice of horticulture from other lines of evidence. The inference was soon supported when Wedel (1934:185) found remains of cultigens in 1934. Strong's use

of all this information in the conclusions to *Introduction* (Strong 1935:294–300) and in his *American Anthropologist* article (Strong 1933a), specifically his interpretation of a prehistoric Plains horticultural horizon, challenged established orthodoxy regarding the prehorse occupation of the region. He was entirely correct in this interpretation, however, and this is regarded as one of the important and enduring conclusions to his work on the Central Plains (e.g., Trigger 1989:335).

5. A basic understanding of the settlement pattern is evident, also from the beginning. As Wedel (1933:164) noted, the people of the Upper Republican phase “dwelt in small, scattered villages of permanent dome-shaped pole and mud lodges. These habitations stood on convenient terraces overlooking the valley.” Now we question the identification of house aggregates as villages and suggest they probably are accumulations of noncontemporaneously occupied houses. Their association with terrace edges, however, is strong, and surveys on all landforms in the government holdings for Harry Strunk Lake show that the fact that the River Basin Surveys sites, Mowry Bluff, and later excavated sites are similarly perched on the terrace edge is not the result of a self-fulfilling prophecy operating when sites are selected for investigation. Rather, it *is* the Upper Republican settlement pattern in the valley.

6. The question was raised as to the ethnic identity of the people of the Upper Republican phase, particularly the relationship of Upper Republican to the Pawnee. Hill and others in the 1920s certainly worked with a keen awareness of the recent Pawnee presence in the Republican River valley and at a time when the Plains chronology was still thought to be very short. Hill’s writings, however, do not reflect his conclusions about the relationship of the Upper Republican phase and the Pawnee.

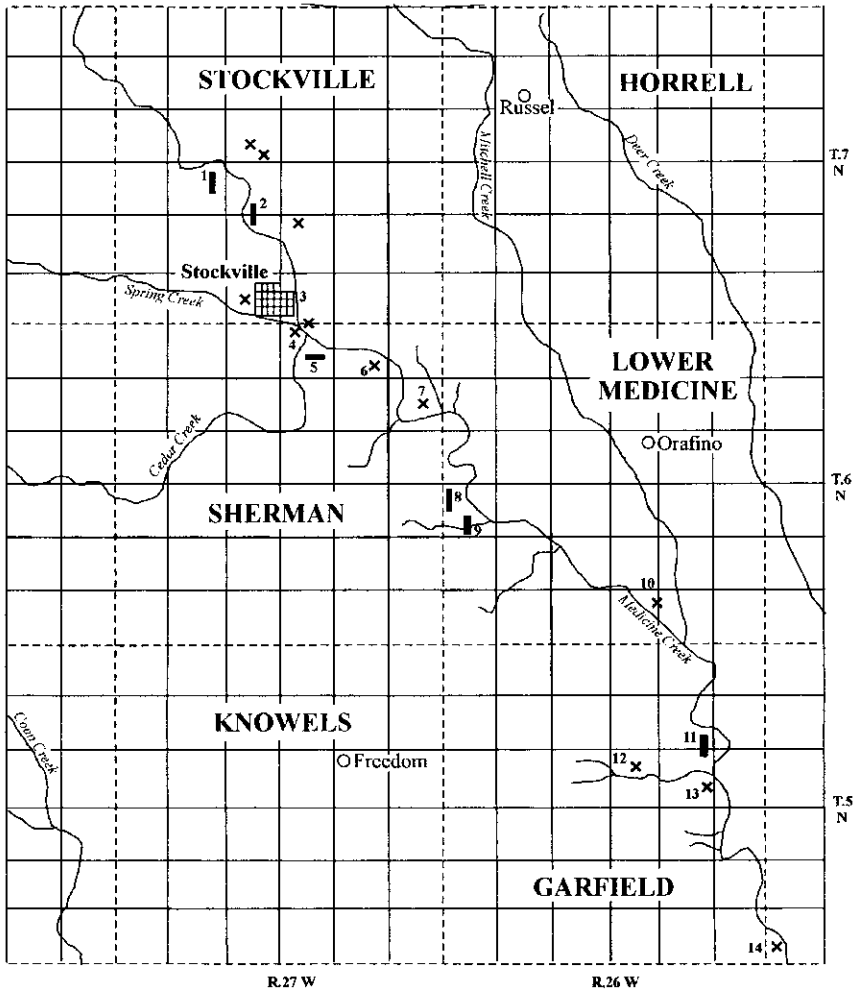
Strong did draw conclusions. In his earliest published notice of investigations in Nebraska, Strong referred to Upper Republican sites as “Prehistoric Pawnee” (Strong 1932:152). He soon dropped the term, substituting the geographical—and therefore ethnically noncommittal—designation by which this culture is still known.<sup>1</sup> He did, however, retain the belief in a connection between Upper Republican and the Pawnee, suggesting that “a clear, unbroken line of ceramic and other development will become evident” as more sites were excavated and that it would eventually “be permissible to change the term Upper Republican

to Prehistoric Pawnee" (Strong 1935:277). Actually, because he already had made limited use of this latter designation in the published literature, the change would represent a reversion to an earlier, and at that time unsupported, term. In fact, though, the question of Pawnee ancestry and the role of the Upper Republican culture in that ancestry remains highly controversial (Roper [1993b:65–84] reviews and critiques various of the arguments and conclusions in some detail). That it is a matter that has come to have enormous significance in the last decade or so, as we deal with repatriation issues on the state and national level, is a real-world extension of the once-academic matter that has, in some form, been a part of Central Plains archaeology since the 1920s.

### A. T. Hill's Predecessors

A. T. Hill clearly initiated serious, professional Upper Republican site archaeology in the Medicine Creek valley. Hill, however, did not invent it *ab initio*. In the December 1929 letter to Strong, quoted earlier, Hill said that he had "found" Upper Republican sites in the Medicine Creek valley, but this almost certainly is not a completely accurate statement. It is considerably more likely that Hill was *shown* the sites by local collectors. In fact, Wedel's reports of the 1933 and 1934 work both acknowledged John Howe of Stockville for showing them the sites excavated (Wedel 1933:146; 1934:166). A chapter in Bayard H. Paine's 1935 history of Frontier County (Paine 1935) summarized and apparently was stimulated by Wedel's 1933 report. It also discussed Howe's collections and his archaeological activities from about 1934 on.

Howe clearly had been active for some time prior to 1934, however. The archives of the Nebraska State Historical Society hold a map he assembled, showing the locations of 14 sites in the Medicine Creek valley (Figure 8.1). From two or three miles north of Stockville these sites spread southeast, nearly to the southern Frontier County line. Typed notes accompanying the map describe briefly what was found at each site and sometimes indicate that some digging was done (actually, sometimes that lots of digging was done). Notations of decorated pottery, bone needles, "shoulder blades that had been used as spades," and corncobs, among other objects, clearly show that some of the plotted locations are Upper Republican sites. My correlations of Howe's sites with sites as they presently are designated suggest that plotted sites include 25FT1, 25FT2, 25FT3, and 25FT4, in addition to several other Upper Republican sites "found" by River Basin Surveys and later in-



8.1. A portion of the 1929 John Howe map. Redrawn. Courtesy of the Nebraska State Historical Society.

investigators, plus, I would suggest, the Red Smoke site (no. 12). The map is dated January 3, 1929 (“1-3-29” presumably indicating January 3 and not March 1).

Wedel (1953a:72-73) tells us that Hill “was constantly on the look-out for archaeological sites and collections” while on business trips “to all parts of central and western Nebraska and into northern Kansas.” It is not hard, therefore, to imagine that Hill probably had business somewhere in or near Stockville in early 1929 and that while there he

obtained site information and a site map from John Howe; or perhaps he had learned of these sites slightly earlier, and in early January 1929 Howe drew up and transmitted to him a map. Either way, this presumably is how Hill was able to tell Strong at the end of the same year that he had “found” in the Medicine Creek valley the sites he could not make himself believe were Pawnee—that is, that he had learned of the presence in that valley of what Strong four years later would designate Upper Republican sites.

## Conclusion

Upper Republican site archaeology in the Medicine Creek valley is thus rooted in 1920s local knowledge of the valley’s resources. In this case this knowledge was conveyed to an active amateur archaeologist, who soon was in a position to facilitate professional investigations of the resources. The early professional investigations—those conducted in 1933 and 1934—were a part of the active and intensive 1930s archaeological campaigns in Nebraska by the Nebraska State Historical Society and the University of Nebraska. They were conducted by investigators who were young but already experienced with the types of remains they were excavating. Their two seasons at Medicine Creek, therefore, resulted in a basic understanding of the valley’s Upper Republican sites and their remains and, to an extent, of how they related to remains elsewhere in the Central Plains.

All this, of course, was only a beginning. The development of radiocarbon dating, for example, was nearly two decades away when Hill, Strong, and Wedel were recognizing and defining Upper Republican culture, screen recovery was little used, flotation had not even been conceived, and the overall paradigm of North American archaeology did not yet formulate many of the kinds of questions we now ask of the archaeological record. That we now have a suite of radiocarbon dates to place the Upper Republican phase in time and that we can begin to address—indeed, even dare to ask—certain questions about life-ways and culture process in the valley and beyond is owing in part to the greatly increased sample of sites and features resulting from later work in the valley, to advances in field and recovery techniques that have come about in the last seven decades, and to the theoretical reorientation of the discipline in the last three decades. The old text-book dictum is to leave something for future workers to investigate using new approaches and techniques, and this has been done at Medicine Creek. There is still much to do in the valley and much to learn

by doing it, as I reiterate elsewhere in this volume. But as I work with Medicine Creek valley Upper Republican sites, my copies of Wedel's reports of the 1933 and 1934 work, and Strong's 1935 volume, are as heavily consulted and as well worn as my copies of reports of later work. All federally sponsored archaeology conducted on Upper Republican sites from 1947 to the present could be as productive as it has been because of the solid foundation laid in the 1930s.

*Acknowledgments.* As a professional archaeologist with ongoing research on Upper Republican sites in the Medicine Creek valley, I must first recognize the work of two men I never met—A. T. Hill and William Duncan Strong—and that of one I did meet but never really had the chance to discuss Medicine Creek with—Waldo R. Wedel. I truly believe it was the combination of the unique and I would guess complementary talents of Hill, Strong, and Wedel that made the whole of Medicine Creek valley Upper Republican site archaeology greater than the sum of these three parts. I must also acknowledge the support of the Bureau of Reclamation, which, through contracts and an ongoing cooperative agreement with Kansas State University, has made my work in the valley possible and brought me to try to understand the intellectual roots of what we know about the valley's prehistory. For some of the information incorporated in this paper I am indebted to John Ludwickson of the Nebraska State Historical Society for ascertaining whether any Medicine Creek valley material currently resides in the Hill Collection at that institution and, even more so, for sending me the 1929 Howe map. Theresa Kreutzer of the Hastings Museum in Hastings, Nebraska, efficiently responded to my inquiry about the possibility of Medicine Creek valley material in that museum's Hill Collection. Librarians at the Curtis, Nebraska, Public Library directed me to some of the literature on Frontier County history.

## Note

1. James Gunnerson told me at the Medicine Creek conference that Wedel had convinced Strong that the designation was wrong and talked him into dropping the term.