

# Recent Land Acquisition and Archaeological Field Work at Hopewell Culture National Historical Park

Contributed by Jennifer Pederson and Jarrod Burks  
Friday, 17 November 2000  
Last Updated Monday, 06 March 2006

RECENT LAND ACQUISITION AND ARCHEOLOGICAL FIELD WORK AT HOPEWELL CULTURE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK, ROSS COUNTY, OHIO Jennifer Pederson and Jarrod Burks Hopewell Culture National Historical Park Ohio Archaeological Council © 2001

President Warren G. Harding established Mound City National Monument in 1923. In 1980 Congress expanded the Mound City National Monument to include portions of Hopeton Earthworks. Legislation passed in 1992 renamed the monument Hopewell Culture National Historical Park and authorized the acquisition of land at three additional Hopewell earthwork complexes: Hopewell Mound Group, Seip Earthworks, and High Bank Works. This brief summary provides information on the status of land acquisition at each of the park units and a short overview of the year 2000 archeological research at Hopewell Mound Group. Mound City Group and Hopeton Works

Land acquisitions at the Mound City Group and the Hopeton Works were completed as of December 2000. Degradation of extant earthworks at these two sites has now been minimized through the cessation of agricultural plowing and the stabilization of earthworks threatened by erosion. Mound City continues to serve as the primary interpretive unit for the park while the archaeological resources at the Hopeton Works are still under investigation. Hopewell Mound Group

During the year 2000 the National Park Service (NPS) boundary at Hopewell Mound Group was extended to include another large tract of the earthwork. The NPS now manages the entire earthwork complex located on the second terrace of the North Fork north of Sulphur Lick Road, as well as a sizeable tract along the northwest edge of the main enclosure. The most recent acquisition includes the entire western third of the main enclosure, Moorehead's western "Village Site," Moorehead Mounds 15 and 16, and a concentration of artifacts just west of the main embankment known as the Tavern site (Seeman 1981). Negotiations are underway to purchase the remaining portions of the earthwork complex and land containing a relatively dense accumulation of Woodland period occupation debris (Datum H: Dancey 1996) to the northeast of the square enclosure. High Bank Works and Seip Earthworks

Negotiations are currently in progress for land acquisition at these two earthwork complexes. Once land acquisition is completed in approximately two years, the main enclosures at High Bank Works will be entirely owned and managed by the NPS and at Seip Earthworks by the NPS and the Ohio Historical Society. As the various tracts are purchased, agricultural plowing will be stopped and all areas threatened by erosion will be stabilized. Current Archaeological Research at Hopewell Mound Group

Archaeological investigations at Hopewell Mound Group in 2000 focused on finishing the "East Village Project," begun by Bret Ruby in 1998 (Figure 1). Shovel tests covering the entire northeast corner of the main enclosure failed to locate significant amounts of debris that could be used as evidence of a "village site." While a very low-density scatter of debris was present across the survey area, the only concentration found was in the area formerly occupied by Mound 1.

Aside from falsifying the old idea of a village having been located within the main enclosure at Hopewell, a number of intact cultural features were found in 1998 and 2000. During the 1998 shovel test survey, an artifact rich Hopewell pit feature was uncovered and excavated just south of the Mound 1 area. In 2000 a shovel test uncovered a lone posthole in the general vicinity of the Mound 1 area. A close interval magnetic survey covering a 20x30 meter area around the posthole revealed the presence of small, equally-spaced anomalies. Test excavations over three of these anomalies confirmed the presence of additional postholes and suggests that the remains of a series of overlapping structures are still intact below the plowzone in the area formerly covered by Mound 1. Continued magnetic survey is planned.

Additional shovel tests, later expanded to 1x1 or 1x2 meter units, were excavated along the inside and outside edges of the main embankment just east of the Mound 1 area. These test units confirmed the presence of intact embankment fill and pre-embankment surface. In 1998 one of these test units uncovered a large pit feature beneath the embankment. Due to a lack of time, this test unit was backfilled in 1998. In 2000 this pit feature was re-exposed and a 1x2 meter test unit was excavated through its southeastern edge. Numerous layers of FCR, a layer of carbonized timbers, and a discrete layer of Hopewell debris (including faunal remains, pottery, and lithic debris) were excavated. Twenty meters north of this large pit feature a series of postholes were uncovered beneath the inner embankment edge. Carbon, bladelets, pottery, and small bits of mica and burned bone were recovered from the postholes. These features beneath the embankment strongly support the idea of a long-term construction process and represent an excellent opportunity for building a temporal model of earthwork use and construction.

As we have found at Hopewell Mound Group, a wealth of information on Hopewell life ways still awaits within and just below the plowzone. Remote sensing, as a non-invasive and relatively rapid surveying tool, represents a way to combine preservation and research without the complete destruction of the rapidly disappearing Hopewell record. Our success last summer suggests that more architectural remains are present at Hopewell Mound Group. Therefore, further work in the upcoming field season will emphasize close interval remote sensing in conjunction with limited subsurface testing rather than extensive excavation. Our ultimate goal is to use the remote sensing to pinpoint the location of the many mounds that are now invisible on the ground's surface. This project will also allow us to study variability in the use of ceremonial space at Hopewell Mound Group.                      References Cited

Dancey, William S.

1996 Hopewell Earthwork Catchment Survey: Interim Report. Report submitted to the National Park Service, Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, Chillicothe, Ohio.

Seeman, Mark F.

1981 An Archaeological Survey of the Hopewell Site (33Ro27) and Vicinity, Ross County, Ohio. Report submitted to the Ohio Historic Preservation Office in partial fulfillment of a Survey and Planning grant.