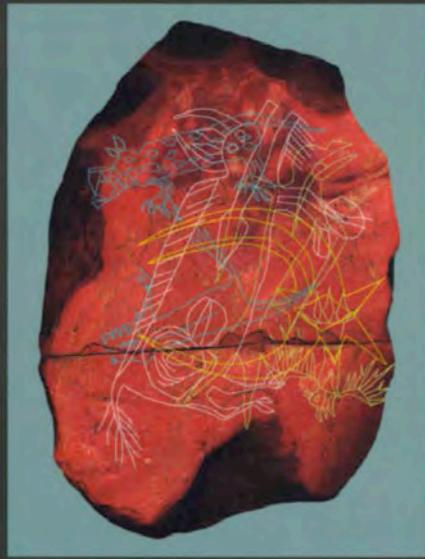




The Archaeological GUIDE TO IOWA



WILLIAM E. WHITTAKER | LYNN M. ALEX | MARY C. DE LA GARZA

Iowa has the reputation of being one big corn field, so you may be surprised to learn it boasts a rich crop of recorded archaeological sites as well—approximately 27,000 at last count. Some are spectacular, such as the one hundred mounds at Sny Magill in Effigy Mounds National Monument, while others consist of old abandoned farmsteads or small scatters of prehistoric flakes and heated rocks.

For people who want to experience Iowa's archaeological heritage first hand, this one-of-a-kind guidebook shows the way to sixty-eight important sites. Many are open to visitors or can be seen from a public location; others, on private land or no longer visible on the landscape, live on through artifact displays. The guide also includes a few important sites that are not open to visitors because these places have unique stories to tell. Sites of every type, from every time period, and in every corner of the state are featured. Whether you have a few hours to indulge your curiosity or are planning a road trip across the state, this guide will take you to places where Iowa's deep history comes to life.

"This authoritative guide is a must for all professional and amateur archaeologists and every layperson interested in Iowa's prehistory and history. Between these covers are succinct, authoritative essays on sites ranging from post-glacial Native American mammoth hunters, mound builders, and farmers, to twentieth-century Euro-Americans and African Americans."

— DAVID MAYER GRADWOHL, professor emeritus and founding director,
Iowa State University Archaeological Laboratory

"As Frances H. Kennedy's *American Indian Places* does for the United States, *The Archaeological Guide to Iowa* directs people to sites and places exhibiting the artifacts that tell the story of almost 12,000 years of human habitation in the state."

— JEROME THOMPSON, State Curator, State Historical Society of Iowa

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgments xv

Introduction 1

Cultural Periods in Iowa Archaeology 3

Visiting Sites 10

1. Gitchie Manitou—Indian Mounds or Rebuilt Mounds?

Woodland or Late Prehistoric

13

2. Blood Run/Rock Island:

A National Historic Landmark without Equal

Late Prehistoric and Protohistoric

17

3. Kimball Village

Late Prehistoric

22

4. The Cowan Site and the Origins of
the Middle Missouri Tradition

Late Prehistoric

27

5. Sergeant Floyd's Grave—

America's First National Monument

Historic

30

6. Double Ditch:

Uncovering a 12th-Century Iowa Community

with 21st-Century Technology

Late Prehistoric

33

7. The Litka Ridged Field Site:
One of a Kind in Iowa
Late Prehistoric
37
8. Wittrock Indian Village:
Quintessential Mill Creek
Late Prehistoric
41
9. Ancient Bison Hunting at the Cherokee Sewer Site
Archaic
46
10. Dixon: Bison!
Late Prehistoric
50
11. Turin: Poodle Skirts and *Life* Magazine
Archaic
55
12. The Earthlodge Beneath Your Feet:
Davis-Oriole
Late Prehistoric
59
13. Glenwood Archaeological State Preserve
Late Prehistoric
64
14. Old Pacific City Cemetery (Kuhl Site):
Equal Treatment in Death
Historic
70
15. The Hitchcock House—
A Stop on the Underground Railroad
Historic
75

16. Five Island Lake:
What Lies Beneath?
Paleoindian–Historic
78
17. Fort Dodge Military Post—
Not a Trace
Historic
81
18. Mounds, Gravestones, and Murders:
Vegors Cemetery
Woodland and Historic
85
19. Boone Mound:
Early Public Archaeology in Iowa
Woodland
88
20. A Very Late Historical Bone Bed:
The Iowa State Veterinary Carcass Pit
Historic
92
21. West Des Moines Burial Site
Late Prehistoric
95
22. Terrace Hill:
Garden of the Governors
Historic
99
23. Urban Archaeology in Downtown Des Moines
Archaic–Historic
103

24. The Palace Site:
Did People Live in Basin Houses 7,000 Years Ago?
Archaic
107
25. Woodland Mounds Preserve:
“Irreplaceable Vestiges of the Past”
Woodland
111
26. Buxton: Faces of the Past
Historic
115
27. Iowaville: Village of the Ioway
Protohistoric and Historic
119
28. Bonaparte Pottery:
Industrial Archaeology in Iowa
Historic
123
29. The Not-So-Empty North
Archaic–Late Prehistoric
126
30. Enigmatic Alignments at the Folkert Mound Group
Woodland
129
31. Wanampito:
A Possible Ioway Site from the 1600s
Late Prehistoric and Protohistoric
133
32. Black Medicine Site, Hartman Reserve Nature Center:
Conservation for the Sake of the Past
Woodland
136

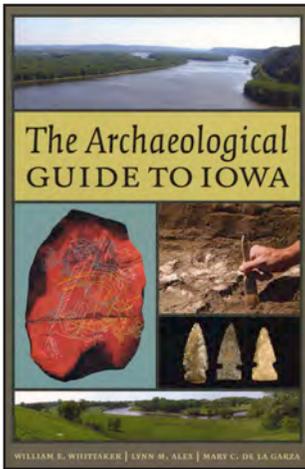
Book Review

33. Was There a Walled Prehistoric Village
along the Cedar Valley Nature Trail?
Late Prehistoric
139
34. Wickiup Hill:
Public Understanding and Preservation
Archaic–Historic
141
35. Patterson Trading Post
Historic
145
36. Easy Fishing on the Iowa River
Late Prehistoric or Historic
149
37. Excavating the Excavations at Ginger Stairs
Archaic and Woodland
152
38. Woodpecker Cave
Archaic–Historic
157
39. Edgewater Park Site
Archaic
161
40. Plum Grove—Where the Rich Left the Least
Historic
164
41. Jack Musgrove, Dee Norton, and Hickory Hill Park
Woodland
168
42. Jesse Hoover—Blacksmith and First Father
Historic
171

43. Enclosures Along the Upper Iowa
Late Prehistoric
174
44. Fish Farm Mounds
Woodland
177
45. Nine Hundred Mounds Gone:
The Great Harpers Ferry Mound Group Disappears
Woodland
180
46. Paint Rock and the Lost Monolith
Protohistoric and Historic
183
47. The Beauty of Effigy Mounds
Archaic–Late Prehistoric
188
48. Pike’s Peak— Mounds and the Unconstructed Fort
Woodland
191
49. Sny Magill— A Glimpse of What May Have Been
Archaic and Woodland
193
50. Dragoon Life at Fort Atkinson
Historic
197
51. The Hewitt-Olmstead Trading Post
Historic
200
52. The Elgin Brewery
Historic
202

53. The Ruins of Motor Town
Historic
206
54. Death and the Turkey River Mound Group
Archaic and Woodland
208
55. Four Mounds Survive the Odds
Woodland
212
56. Mines of Spain
Archaic–Historic
215
57. Oneida Cheese Factory at Bowen's Prairie
Historic
218
58. Hadfields Cave: Refuge inside the Cliffs
Woodland
223
59. Jackson County Rockshelters:
Mouse Hollow and Levsen
Archaic–Historic
226
60. Hurstville Lime Kilns
Historic
232
61. Antoine LeClaire House
Historic
235
62. Weed Park Mounds:
"Forever Undisturbed"
Woodland
238

63. Ancient Village Life at McNeal Fan
Archaic and Woodland
243
64. McKinney Site:
Does "X" Mark the Site?
Late Prehistoric–Protohistoric
246
65. Toolesboro Mounds National Historic Landmark
Woodland
251
66. Mounds and More Mounds at Malchow
Woodland
255
67. Is There an Adena or Hopewell Ring Enclosure
at the Poisel Mounds?
Woodland
259
68. Fort Madison —
Under Siege Again
Historic
262
- Index 267



The Archaeological Guide to Iowa

William E. Wittaker, Lynn M. Alex, and Mary C. De La Garza, Eds. University of Iowa Press, 2015. 271 pp., 92 B&W images, 51 color plates, 39 maps, references. \$29.95 (Paper).

Reviewed by Thomas Loebel, Illinois State Archaeological Society, Prairie Research Institute, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

I have to admit, I'm a sucker for regional archaeological overviews. One shelf of my library is crowded with these kind of state or regional level reviews. I use them as a personal "Dummies Guide" to quickly get up to speed on the archaeology of a region or time period I don't

know much about. Thus, I was more than happy to see a new archaeological guide to the neighboring state of Iowa.

This new entry, *The Archaeological Guide to Iowa*, edited by three long-time Iowa Office of the State Archaeologists, is indeed just that, a guide. It's somewhat similar to the popular Roadside Geology series guides that have been around for quite a while. Descriptions and history on sixty-eight significant or noteworthy sites are contained within the covers, and unlike most state-level overviews, directions on how to visit each site or associated interpretive display are also provided. Included for each site are a short 1–5 page summary, photos, directions, and additional references for those interested in more information. These quick summaries can be read and digested within even the shortest of attention spans. While both the professional and amateur alike will find something of interest, the book is squarely aimed at the general public, but may find some additional use by those teaching high school or undergraduate level classes on Native Americans or local Iowa history. While the brief summaries of each site make the information easily accessible, for those interested in a bit of more "meat on the bone," the extra references provided will need to be mined. A great companion volume that could be used in conjunction with this guide is another more traditional review, *Iowa's Archaeological Past*, also by Lynn Alex (2010).

The volume is organized in a unique, yet relevant way. Rather than following the traditional presentation of cultural sequences from oldest to youngest, sites are presented in relation to Iowa's rather unique watershed. The dominant flow of Iowa's largely north-west/southeast-oriented rivers affected both prehistoric and historic settlement patterns across the state. From west to east, and north to south, sites are presented in an order that follows the natural watershed of the state. While it initially makes the overall organization a bit confusing, in reality I *like* the presentation of sites in a manner that relates their location and significance to their position within a larger landscape.

The Introduction contains the familiar presentation of cultural periods, with brief description/overview of prehistoric periods, along with a listing of sites falling within each period of prehistory or history. A map and key to sites included in the book is also presented. The map could have been larger, but this is a minor shortcoming. The book is

Book Review

well illustrated with numerous black and white photos, plus an additional 51 color photographs of various artifacts and sites. Rounding out the introduction is a quick primer on the etiquette of visiting sites, laws protecting archaeological resources, and the importance of preservation.

The body of the book is composed of descriptions of and directions to sixty-eight sites ranging from the well-known and visible (*Double Ditch* and *Malchow Mound Group*), to the invisible (*McNeal Fan site*), the unusual (*Iowa State Veterinary Carcass Pit*), and the disappeared, disinterred, and destroyed (*Pacific City Cemetery* and *Fort Dodge Military Post*), together with a tour of the Urban Archaeology of Downtown Des Moines. Sites discussed run the gamut from the earliest known (Paleoindian—*Five Island Lake*) to the Protohistoric (*Blood Run*) and the Historic (*Elgin Brewery*), as well as those connected to historic events (*Hitchcock House*—underground railroad, and *Sgt. Floyd's burial*—Lewis and Clark expedition), providing a broad and appealing range of sites, settings, and history. Some sites on the list, like most open-air archaeological sites, will require a bit of imagination and an understanding of the landscape to gain the full appreciation of their significance, while others direct the reader to the more obvious and visible end of the archaeological spectrum. The majority of the sites (both existing and destroyed) and interpretive exhibits described can be visited by the public, although a select few are on private property or are sensitive in nature and cannot be directly accessed.

All in all, I find the volume an interesting departure from the usual, and for those who want to take a drive and experience archaeology firsthand, a great resource.