

Illinois State Archaeological Survey Research Reports

A Late Woodland Procurement and Ceremonial Complex at the Reilley and Husted Sites in the Northern American Bottom

Andrew C. Fortier

with contributions by

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Reilley Site



Husted Site



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The Reilley and Husted sites are situated in the northern American Bottom uplands in the Vaughn Branch Upland Locality about 500 meters east of the Mississippi River floodplain. Husted is about 300 meters downslope from Reilley. The two settlements really form a contemporaneous single-settlement complex. Both sites appear to have been occupied by the same people, but utilized for different purposes. The Reilley site yielded 491 prehistoric features, including five structures, all dating to the Late Woodland, early Sponemann phase, circa cal A.D. 650–750. Only a portion of this site actually fell within the FAP-310 ROW. The smaller Husted site contained 110 features, including two houses, and again all of the features are associated with the early Sponemann phase. The entire occupation fell within the ROW.

Both sites are unique in that they occur during the early Sponemann phase when the Sponemann identity was being forged in the northern American Bottom. This new identity occurred as a result of interaction between the local Patrick culture and outside migrants from the more northerly Mississippi River Valley, i.e., most probably people associated with the Fall Creek phase in the Sny Bottom. This occurred at the same time as the introduction of the bow and arrow. At Reilley over one hundred arrow points, including 17 Jack's Reef cluster types were recovered. A smaller number of arrow points were also recovered from the Husted site. Arrow points do not occur in the preceding Initial Late Woodland period, but were introduced at the same time as the Reilley/Husted complex.

Reilley appears to represent a large multi-season procurement camp as evidenced by subsistence activities primarily focused on deer hunting and nut harvesting and processing. Husted, on the other hand, has a more limited subsistence focus, but produced a number of clay zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figurines that are not commonly found at other Sponemann sites in this region. A number of the human figurines appear to have been purposively broken. This occupation appears to have been a special purpose encampment, perhaps related to propitiation, to gain favor for future hunting and/or harvesting ventures or thanks for successful hunts or harvests. Another possibility is that this complex served as a gathering point for two cultural entities that came together to commemorate the creation of the new Sponemann identity. Perhaps a communal hunting venture(s) associated with the new bow and arrow technology was the primary catalyst that drove the creation of this unique economic/ritual complex, a complex that has not heretofore been documented in the Midwest during this time period.

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