

*Illinois State Archaeological Survey Research Reports*

# **The Egan Site: A Massey Phase and White Hall Phase Campsite in Western Illinois**

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*Steuben  
Projectile Point  
White Hall Phase*



*Egan Zoned  
White Hall Phase*

*Massey Cordmarked  
Massey Phase*



**ILLINOIS STATE  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY**  
PRAIRIE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

**ILLINOIS**  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

**Research Report 25**

# **The Egan Site: A Massey Phase and White Hall Phase Campsite in the Uplands of Western Illinois, Scott County**

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with contributions by  
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*For Realignment of Township Road 154 and  
construction of a new bridge over Brushy Creek*

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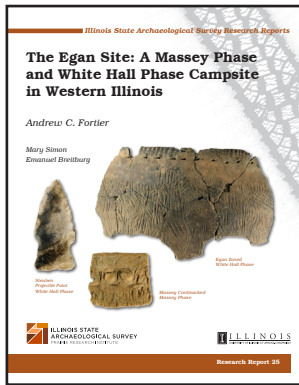
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## The Egan Site: A Massey Phase and White Hall Phase Campsite in Western Illinois

Andrew C. Fortier with contributions by Mary Simon and Emanuel Breitburg. 2013. Illinois State Archaeological Survey, Research Report 25, xiv+345 pp., 98 figures, 69 tables, 4 appendices, references. \$31.75 (Paper).

*Reviewed by Michael D. Conner, Dickson Mounds Museum–Illinois State Museum.*

This volume details excavations at a small, upland site about 20 km west of the Illinois River valley in west-central Illinois and is a significant addition to our knowledge of several Woodland cultural manifestations in the region. Egan is an excellent demonstration of the surprising things encountered at small sites with little surface expression, another example of how much we can lose by not investigating such sites.

The project was conducted in 1999 for construction of a new bridge over Brushy Fork Creek in Scott County and relocation of a county road accessing the bridge. The project area included both the Brushy Fork Creek floodplain and an upland spur about 8.5 m above the creek bottom. Surface survey and subsurface coring found no cultural material in the floodplain. The Egan site was defined on the upland landform based on shovel tests and surface survey; it covered an area of 8,640 m<sup>2</sup> on both sides of the road. Major excavations were limited to machine stripping a 45-x-15-m area west of the road. Sixty-five pit features and eight postmolds were found in this block.

Andrew C. Fortier has provided the bulk of the site analysis for the volume, writing the chapters covering background, feature form and content, ceramics, lithics, and overall interpretations. Mary Simon wrote the botanical analysis and Emanuel Breitburg contributed the faunal study. The basic analyses are thorough and provide extensive base data that can be used in future comparative and synthetic research.

Despite the small size of the excavated area, the site had a complex occupational history. Based on the ceramic assemblage, Fortier identifies two major components: a Middle Woodland occupation and a Late Woodland occupation. Twenty-five features are classed as Middle Woodland, 20 as Late Woodland, and 20 as unaffiliated.

The most common Middle Woodland ceramics at the site are Massey series vessels (Massey Cordmarked and Massey Fabric Impressed). There is also a variety of Hopewell, Havana, Pike, and Baehr vessels.

The Massey series was first identified at the Massey and Archie sites (also small upland sites about 10 km northeast of Egan) by Farnsworth and Koski (1985). The Massey pottery types are locally made versions of Crab Orchard ceramics from the Middle Woodland period in southern Illinois. At the Massey and Archie sites they are associated with Hopewell and Baehr vessels. Farnsworth and Koski posit that the sites represent homesteads of people with origins in southern Illinois who continued to make Crab Orchard-like culinary/utilitarian vessels but also had contacts with Illinois Valley groups, where they

obtained fine-ware Hopewell and Baehr vessels and other goods. There is sparse evidence for Crab Orchard ceramics at Illinois Valley Middle Woodland sites, so it is likely that these people were permanent inhabitants of the uplands.

Data from Egan do not present a straight-forward confirmation of the model presented by Farnsworth and Koski. Egan does show an overall assemblage of Massey series culinary ware with Hopewell and Baehr (including some Brangenburg bowls), but radiocarbon evidence leads Fortier to posit two periods of Middle Woodland occupation.

One Middle Woodland pit yielded a date of ca. cal A.D. 200, roughly coeval with dates from Massy and Archie. Three other features dated to the cal A.D. 400s to 500s. As Fortier notes, this is significantly later than would be commonly accepted for the presence of Hopewell pottery. Fortier reasonably proposes that the site had two Middle Woodland occupations, an earlier one with Hopewell and Baehr pottery and a later one in which only Massey pottery was utilized. Earlier pottery was mixed into some of the Massey pits.

However, Fortier's model produces its own conundrum. There is a dearth of culinary/utilitarian pottery in the earlier occupation; only about one-third or less of the vessels are Havana or Pike. An assemblage so dominated by Hopewell pottery is unusual at a habitation site.

The Late Woodland component at Egan dates to the early Late Woodland period, ca. cal A.D. 600–700. Fortier defines two ceramic types for the occupation: Egan Zoned and Egan Cordmarked. These are generally similar to contemporary White Hall ceramics in the lower Illinois Valley—although White Hall vessels are usually sand tempered while the Egan material exhibits a variety of tempers, primarily grit and grog.

Fortier observes that the amount of regional ceramic variation in the early Late Woodland of west-central Illinois is just beginning to be recognized, and this volume is an important addition to documenting this variation and its spatial patterning. Such research is essential to ultimately understanding the diachronic patterns of cultural interaction throughout the Woodland and Mississippian periods in the region.

Fortier discusses ways in which Egan may have fit into broader settlement systems at various times, but in reality the data from the site and the region are too limited to adequately address this question. It is intriguing, however, to ponder why this out-of-the-way spot was sporadically occupied over 400–500 years and yet there is no evidence for use at other times.

ISAS is to be congratulated for the effort and expense put into their research reports. However, the volume's professional appearance is marred, at least for nitpicky readers, by a veneer of inconsistencies and errors. A few examples: in both the faunal and floral tables, Latin binomial names are inconsistently italicized, sometimes formatted differently on different pages of the same table (e.g., Tables 13.3 and 14.6); in some tables family names are italicized; and throughout the report some tables use a comma in numbers greater than 999 while others do not. In the chapter on radiocarbon dates, the text gives them in the form "1580 B.P. or A.D. 370+70 (uncorrected)." The uncorrected calendar date is unnecessary (calibration information is given in a table), and the "±" symbol would have been easy to insert.



## References Cited

Farnsworth, Kenneth B., and Ann L. Koski

- 1985 *Massey and Archie: A Study of Two Hopewellian Homesteads in the Western Illinois Uplands*. Kampsville Archeological Center Research Series No. 3. Kampsville, Illinois.