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Reevaluating the Rosewood Phase in the Initial Late Woodland Period in the American Bottom

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This report is divided into two primary parts. The first part represents the first attempt at providing information about the Rosewood site, the type site for the Initial Late Woodland Rosewood phase. This site is located in the American Bottom uplands, not far from the northern limits of the city of Belleville. In the early 1980s the then unanalyzed materials from this site, and others excavated as part of the FAI-270 Project, formed the basis of the Rosewood phase that denoted the first phase in the American Bottom Late Woodland sequence, circa cal A.D. 400–550. The second part of this report represents a reevaluation of the ceramics, lithics, feature types and subsistence recovered from 19 Rosewood phase sites. Errors of identification of ceramic types and their associated phases and/or pit clusters have been identified and rectified in this report. The second part of this report, in fact, should be utilized as the baseline for future research associated with the Rosewood phase.

The Rosewood site itself is the most extensive Rosewood phase settlement in the American Bottom, consisting of 124 pit features, four post structures, a structural compound, six post screens, three post pits, three paired large posts, and 116 isolated posts. It was excavated as part of a housing project and was unfunded and excavated by volunteers, mostly, but not all, associated with the FAI-270 Project. Because it was unfunded, excavated materials were unanalyzed and curated at the University of Tennessee where the primary excavation leader at Rosewood, Charles Bentz, later resided. For some twenty years the materials lay untouched in boxes at the University of Tennessee. In 2006 Bentz donated the excavation material to ISAS who several years later started the analysis process, involving eight primary analysts, including the editors of this volume.

Normally, phases in the American Bottom are based on published reports detailing all of the ceramics, lithics, subsistence, etc. That was not the case for the Rosewood phase. This report is therefore significant because it finally brings all of these assemblages, including other Rosewood assemblages, collectively to light for the first time. This report really provides the most complete basis for defining the entire Initial Late Woodland sequence, including information about the Mund and Cunningham phases that denote the end of the Initial Late Woodland period. This report is also a testament to the perseverance of a team of researchers and administers in keeping Rosewood in our collective memories. It also supports the notion that old collections can have significant value, and reinforces the importance of reviving older unanalyzed collections from this area.

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Appendices

To facilitate the production process, long appendices tables are available online in their original Excel format and are not included in the paper copy of this report. Copy the URLs below and paste them into a Web browser to download the data. Excel or a similar program that can open .xlsx files is required.

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Back: (Left, top to bottom) Node decorated jar rim sherd, zoned-decorated rim, and zoned-decorated body sherd. (Right) Undecorated jar from the Rosewood site.

Front: Plain-cordmarked jar fragment and examples of Initial Late Woodland projectile points.

Photography by Linda Alexander.

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