

*EDITOR'S NOTE

The following articles by William Gilbert are bibliographies. The first bibliography lists various references to the early Mound Builders in the Midwest. The second bibliography refers to ethnohistorical studies of various midwestern Indian tribes. We are delighted with this partial index and hope to receive other such listings in the future. For anyone interested in midwestern ecological-ethnohistorical studies, these bibliographies will be quite useful.

L. Richardson

THE MIDWEST MOUND BUILDERS AND THEIR FATE*

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Introduction

In the summers of 1928 and 1929, I had the good fortune to be associated with Illinois River Valley surveys and mound exploration on the Mississippi River. The work was intensely interesting and I felt that it was just what I wanted to do with my life.

In contrast with the preceding summer, this work related to the prehistoric inhabitants of the Midwest and the Eastern Woodlands. In the summer of 1927, fresh out of college, I was studying scales, time clocks and tabulating machinery with a large corporation which was interested in training young men to be salesmen of its products. This work dealt with the technology of the United States in the late 1920's while my studies in the two later summers related to prehistory, possibly dating back over 3,000 years.

Later years have suggested that the conjunction of these two experiences might be usefully developed in the form of bibliographic thinking which would link the Prehistoric Mound Builder Culture with our own. Perhaps this might be done most easily with the use of technological developments,

first with flint and second with steel. The symbol of the Mound-Builder appears in Flint Ridge, Ohio, while that of the present day culture appears in the Mesabi, Vermillion and Cuyuna Ranges in Minnesota, and the Gogebic, Marguette, and Menominee Ranges of Upper Michigan.

Travel in the Mound-Builder culture becomes associated with streams, lakes, birch bark canoes, portages, and ridges between streams. By these means products might be conveyed over immense distances from various parts of North America into the area between the Great Lakes and the Ohio-Mississippi Drainage.

Travel in the present-day culture of the Midwest becomes associated with canals in place of portages, railroads, automobiles and trucks on highways and, ultimately, by airplanes. Almost all of these new developments had their points of origin in the Midwest. The Indian paths, founded on big game trails', ultimately become the walk ways of today, while the canoe remains a favorite vehicle for small stream and lake navigation.

The fate of the Mound-Builders remains as enigmatic as the question of their origins. Various explanations as wandering Chinese, Lost Tribes, Siberian natives, etc., we can only remain in a speculative mood on the subject of origins. What ultimately removed them from the scene is likewise subject to debate; devastating winters, attacks by foes, disease, and reductions of the birth rate alike offer possibilities of explanation.

In contrast with the Mound-Builders, our own culture has abundant sources of written documentation for its origins which fill libraries and museums with their evidence. Like the individual human being, we cannot write the ultimate fate of cultures like ours while they are still living. The best we can do is to compare technologies and ecologies between the Mound-Builders and ourselves and hope for explanations in that way.

In order to stimulate thinking along these lines bibliographies are prepared dealing with the two types of culture and their common ecological framework in the Midwest.

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