TOWNER MOUND: CREATING CONTENT AND SPARKING CURIOSITY FOR THE PORTAGE COUNTY PARKS

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By

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Project

Towner Mound (33-Po-1), or the Lake Pippen Mound, is a Hopewell burial mound located in Towner’s Woods in Kent, Ohio. The mound is ten meters in diameter (Bush 1976), and was approximately six feet high in 1932 (Greber 1974). Towner’s Woods is currently owned by the Portage Park District. The only information that the Portage Park District lists on their website about Towner Mound is a brief, one sentence summary; “Historically, 2,000 years ago the Hopewell Indians created a burial mound, located overlooking Lake Pippen which was excavated in the early 1900’s” (Portage Parks District 2015). There is no additional information or photographs of the burial mound on the website.

For my Senior Honors Thesis project, I have decided to create a webpage for the Portage Park District to better document the archaeological site of Towner Mound and to make this information readily accessible to the interested public. To do this, I spent a lot of time researching the mound and gathering pictures before creating a wordpress site, townermound.wordpress.com, which the Portage Park District will use as a template for adding a page to their website about Towner Mound. Screenshots of the webpage that I have created are included in this paper along with my methods and challenges I faced in creating it. This project was important to me in terms of creating access to the public
history of Portage County, Ohio. I hope that by documenting this site will help the Portage Parks District in protecting and preserving this site for future generations.

Another reason that I wanted to do this project is because I am interested in researchers having knowledge of the site, which will make it possible for Towner Mound to be included in studies of Hopewell culture in northeastern Ohio. The last time this site was discussed academically was 1982, so it is important to update what is known about Towner Mound for it to be used in research. The reason that Towner Mound is not well documented is because the information and artifacts of this site are incredibly scattered or hard to find. Because of the difficulty I had in piecing all of this information together, I have included much of my research in this paper along with the methods and proceedings of creating the webpage. The site of Towner Mound is not only important for Portage County, Ohio, but this site can help give a better understanding of how Hopewell sites appear in the Hopewell periphery, namely in northern and northeastern Ohio.
CHAPTER II: BACKGROUND OF TOWNER MOUND

I wanted the website that I was creating to inform the public about the site of Towner Mound and also about the culture that created the site. However, it is important to understand archaeological phases in context, so I expanded my research from Ohio Hopewell to the entire Woodland period in Ohio. The Woodland period in North America began 3,000 years ago and ended in Ohio around 1,000 years ago. This period is subdivided into Early Woodland, Middle Woodland, and Late Woodland. The Woodland period is characterized by “mound building” cultures, with the Adena appearing in Ohio during Early Woodland and Hopewell appearing during Middle Woodland (Woodward and McDonald 2002). The Late Woodland period also has associated mound building cultures that are more regional than either the Adena or the Hopewell (Seeman and Dancey 2001). I thought it was important for people who would view the webpage to understand the spectacular expression of Hopewell culture that is most prevalent in the core area near Chillicothe, Ohio and to also understand why Towner Mound is different because it is in an area far north of the core, considered the “Hopewell periphery.”

Hopewell Cultural Core

Archaeologists have been studying the Hopewell culture for at least 150 years, but there is still much that is unknown or not well understood about the fascinating Hopewell culture (Pacheco 1997). Because of this, I had to spend a lot of time researching what was currently accepted about the Hopewell culture and then figure out how to make this
information accessible to the general public. The Hopewell period in southern Ohio lasted from 100 BC to 550 AD (Prufer 1964). At the simplest definition, the Hopewell culture is defined as having “extravagant burial ceremonials, diversified craft arts, and inter-regional exchange” (Dancey 2005, 110). Many scholars do not refer to the Hopewell as a “culture” because what is best understood about Hopewell is that the people who participated in this shared a mortuary ceremonials and some elements of material culture (Prufer 1970). Instead, some prefer to refer to the Hopewell as an “interaction sphere” (Caldwell 1970; Dancey 2005; Seeman 2004; Woodward and McDonald 2002). Hopewell can be differentiated from the earlier Adena by its increasingly exaggerated expression of cultural elements, specifically in regard to mortuary customs (Woodward and McDonald 2002, 48).

Hopewell rituals, especially mound building, are significantly different from Adena rituals (Seeman and Branch 2006, 108). Hopewell burial mounds are no bigger than Adena burial mounds. Adena mounds are also distinctively cone shaped while Hopewell mounds come in a wider variety of shapes (Shriver 1957). Hopewell burial mounds also differ from Adena mounds in terms of construction. Hopewell mounds are built in only one or two building phases and no additional burials are added after the mound is completed. This differs from Adena mounds that were built by accretion, with additional burials being added to the same mound over a longer period of time (Woodward and McDonald 2002, 66). Hopewell burial mounds generally begin with a large wooden structure, a charnel house, built on a prepared floor of cleared ground. These structures were probably not covered with a roof based on how large they can be.
The structure would be filled with burials and then set on fire and burned down. The mound would be built by piling large amounts of earth and stone over the remains of the structure (Prufer 1964). Hopewell burial mounds are often found in groups that are enclosed in geometric earthworks. Often these earthworks are circular but they can also be square, octagonal, or parallel lines. These earthwork enclosures are incredibly large, the largest of which is the Newark Earthworks in southern Ohio that covers four square miles (Prufer 1964). Hopewell burial mounds include a variety of different types of burials, with cremations in shallow basins of baked earth and extended inhumations on earthen platforms surrounded by log cribs being most common (Prufer 1964). Cremation burials appear to be the most common style of Hopewell burial, followed by extended burials where the skeleton is laid flat on its back (Greber 1979). The most common burial types are similar to the Adena period were extended burials followed by cremations (Dragoo 1963). Flexed burials, where the skeleton would be in a fetal position on its side, are characteristic of the Late Archaic period but still sometimes appear in Adena contexts; while flexed burials in Hopewell contexts are relatively rare (Woodward and McDonald 2002).

Researchers generally agree that people were living near the ceremonial centers of burial mounds and earthworks, but they are not living on or in these sites (Prufer 1964). So it is clear that the people who built Towner Mound did not live there. In terms of material culture, there are certain specific artifacts that are diagnostic for Hopewell and indicate Hopewell presence. These artifacts are often items that are found in mortuary contexts as grave goods and include platform effigy pipes, metal panpipes, breastplates,
copper earspools, pottery, mica cutouts, canine teeth of grizzly bears inlaid with freshwater pearls, conch shells, and ritual knives made of obsidian (Seeman 2004, 58; Seeman 1995, 138; Woodward and McDonald 2002, 66; Caldwell 1970, 137; Prufer 1964). In addition to these mortuary artifacts, bladelets and Snyder’s projectile points made of flint from Flint Ridge, a quarry site in Heath County Ohio, are also diagnostic of Hopewell (Woodward and McDonald 2002). Much of the raw material required to make Hopewell artifacts was acquired from long-distance trade networks (Seeman 2004, 62). Flint Ridge flint obviously comes from Flint Ridge in Licking County Ohio, but other sources come from even farther away from the Hopewell core. Copper would have been obtained from Lake Superior and other Great Lakes regions, conch and other marine shells were obtained from the Gulf Coast, obsidian and grizzly bear teeth were probably imported from the Rocky Mountains, while mica came from the southern Appalachian Mountains (Woodward and McDonald 2002, 66; Prufer 1964).

Even when there are local sources of raw material available, precious and unusual resources are preferred over local. This can be seen in the use of Flint Ridge flint which is one of the most important and diagnostic raw materials for the Hopewell. In many areas, there are plentiful local flint or chert deposits available, but there is almost always a clear preference for Flint Ridge flint which is also a considerable distance farther than local sources. Hopewell bladelets and projectile points are often made out of Flint Ridge flint (Carskadden and Morton 1997, 380; Prufer 1964).
Hopewell Periphery

A major problem with understanding Hopewell, specifically in northern Ohio, is that most research focuses on the Hopewell “core area”, in southern Ohio near Chillicothe, and there is much less research done on the Hopewell “periphery.” Participation in Hopewell mortuary rituals and material culture spanned much of the riverine and Great Lakes areas of the Midwest, the Mid-South region, and the Gulf Coast (Seeman 2004, 59; Prufer 1964). Hopewell traits do not extend evenly across this wide region; perhaps areas farther from the core participated less actively in some of the same ceremonialism (Seeman 2005, 304). Hopewell periphery sites may have fewer artifacts that are considered to be diagnostic for Hopewell. Some periphery sites do not have any pottery at all. It is possible that pottery was not needed for these people like it would be needed for agricultural activities in the Hopewell core (Seeman 2005, 310). But these sites do have many artifacts that were important for Hopewell populations. All Hopewell periphery sites have Hopewell bladelets that are made out of Flint Ridge flint, even though there may be closer sources of flint to these populations. This shows that they are still interacting with and have trading relationships with the Hopewell core (Seeman 2005, 307).

To date, there is a large amount of research done for Hopewell periphery sites in northeastern Ohio, or the Hinterlands. These Hinterland sites tend to be smaller and overall less impressive than sites in the core area (Seeman 2005, 307). Something important to understand about Hinterland areas is that earlier Adena populations were still living in these areas and did not disappear when Hopewell populations occupied
these areas. Hinterland Hopewell sites also appear in the same general area of Hinterland Adena sites (Carksadden and Morton 1997; Prufer 1964). In areas where Hopewell existed, it did not replace the local culture of the area but instead just added new funerary rituals and ceremonialism and new material culture (Prufer 1964). Thus, it is often difficult to differentiate Hopewell from the previous Adena culture. Because Adena population persisted in periphery areas during the Hopewell period, the distinction between Adena and Hopewell outside of the Hopewell core area is less clear (Woodward and McDonald 2002, 24).

Towner Mound itself is very close to an Adena burial mound that is now located on the shore of the manmade reservoir of Lake Rockwell. This site was a cause of confusion because it appears to have been also discovered by George Towner, the discoverer and namesake of Towner Mound, and is given the site name of “Towner Mound II” (33-Po-4) in the Ohio Archaeological Inventory. This site was excavated by George Towner and Dr. Phillip Shriver in July 1955, and many leaf-shaped Adena knives made of Flint Ridge flint were found. The site was located on the old bank of the Cuyahoga River before canals were built and the Cuyahoga River was rerouted (Shriver 1957). This is essentially all that is known about the Adena site that is now at least partially destroyed (Bush 1976). However, the location of the Adena mound is important because the site of Towner Mound was built in a context of this existing mound (Seeman 2006). It is also possible that the site of Towner Mound also connected to the old route of the Cuyahoga River. I attempted to find drainage maps of Portage County before canals were built, which caused the Cuyahoga River to be rerouted and Lake Pippin to be
drastically changed in size and water level. Despite my best efforts, I could not find any maps of Portage County that showed drainage patterns that were older than 1850, at which point canal building had already begun.

History of the Excavation

Some major challenges that I encountered while trying to document Towner Mound was trying to discover what artifacts had been found in the mound during the excavation, and where these artifacts had ended up. In order to do this, I needed to obtain primary sources describing the event as it happened. The Portage Park District had a folder that contained some local newspaper articles that reported on the excavation and also a transcribed copy of Dr. Emerson Greenman’s field notes on the excavation. I also used the archives at the Portage County Historical Society for more primary source material. However, even with all this information, the reports rarely agreed with each other.

Compared to Hopewell sites in the Hopewell core, Towner Mound is lacking several classes of diagnostic artifacts including Hopewell pottery and platform pipes. There are some hypotheses about Hopewell north of the core area. These people are sometimes seen as being “hardy frontiersmen” who made less beautiful art and did not make pottery because they were living in harsher climates than the Hopewell core in southern Ohio (Davis 1932). Other differences between what is found at the Towner Mound site and what is found at Hopewell core sites in southern Ohio can be explained
by the Hopewell periphery having different customs and ways of representing themselves.

The site of Towner Mound was discovered in 1931 by George Towner on his land in Franklin Township Ohio. He uncovered a number of artifacts including copper beads, a stone celt, small flake knives, and flint projectile points. He stopped his digging and contacted the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, now the Ohio History Connection, when he uncovered the remains of a cremation burial (Shriver 1982). It is important to note that Towner easily found these artifacts on the surface of his land indicating that the mound was greatly eroded. Hopewell mounds do not have their burials or artifacts close enough to the surface to be casually discovered. However, Towner Mound is made largely out of gravel, which allows water to enter the mound and erode it (Davis 1932). Its location on Lake Pippin causes even more damage from water. The geologic and geographic aspects of Towner Mound made it incredibly likely to erode which is how Towner was able to find artifacts so easily and why the size of the mound seems unimpressive.

The disposition of skeletons and artifacts uncovered by George Towner prior to formal excavations are unknown. Towner Mound was first excavated in 1932 by Dr. Emerson Greenman from the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, now the Ohio History Connection (Davis 1932; Shriver 1982). The fact that the mound was excavated during the Great Depression is another reason why there is confusion about disposition of the artifacts and burials in the mound. Many people were out of work then, and when they heard about burials in the mound, hundreds came out just to watch the
excavation. Towards the end of the excavation, there were an estimated 2000 people watching the operations (Shriver 1982). The crowding may have allowed looting of the site while the excavation was occurring.

Dr. Greenman’s field notes describe seven burials and the artifacts that were found with them. The first burial found in the excavation was covered by twenty-four flat, interlocking stones in four layers. These types of burials under layers of flat stones are called “rock tomb” burials and appear to be common features in northern Hopewell periphery sites (McGrath 1945; Seeman 1996). Beneath the stones was several mica ovals, with pieces of bone, chunks of graphite, and two copper beads. The second burial consisted of half a dozen fragments of human leg or arm bone without any associated artifacts. The third burial was a cremation that also lacked associated artifacts. The fourth burial was probably a re-burial of skeletal elements about a foot lower than the third burial. It consisted of two long bones that were split in half lengthwise but no artifacts were associated. The fifth burial was a cremation also without artifacts (Greber 1974).

The sixth burial was much different from burials 2 – 5 in that it was a mostly complete skeleton, also under a pile of flat stones. The burial was a flexed skeleton of an adult human lying on its right side with its head to the northwest (Greber 1974 and Shriver 1982). Flexed skeletons are unusual for Hopewell burials but not entirely uncommon (Davis 1932). Other northern Hopewell sites also have flexed burials (Redmond 2007), so it may just be another aspect of periphery Hopewell sites. The skull of the skeleton was badly crushed and only one leg was found. The skeleton was otherwise complete. It is remarkable that this skeleton was found so complete because the
gravel composition of the mound caused all of the other skeletons to be in very poor condition (Davis 1932). This burial did have associated artifacts including a piece of mica and a rectangular slate gorget. The sex was unable to be determined (Greber 1974 and Shriver 1982), but I think that this skeleton may in fact be the “Indian Princess.” Many of the sources I found referenced the skeleton of an “Indian Princess” being found in the mound and put on display. I assume that it refers to this sixth burial because it is so complete, it would be the only one that would be impressive to display.

The final burial that Dr. Greenman discussed in his field notes, burial seven, was the cremation burial that Towner had found and partially excavated before calling the Ohio Historical and Archeological Society. This burial is out of chronological order and should be between burial three and four. This burial had the most artifacts immediately associated with it, including ten tubular copper beads, one discoidal shell bead and one spherical shell bead, one mussel shell, five notched flint points, one thick leaf shaped point of flint, and twenty flake knives. Aside from the artifacts immediately associated with burials, there were also twenty flint flake knives, a thumbnail scraper, and twenty-eight tubular copper beads found in the mound (Greber 1974, Shriver 1982).

There is another burial that is described in several newspaper sources although it does not seem to appear in Greenman’s field notes. This burial is said to be the ninth found in the mound, but it is unclear if this is counting burials previously found by Towner (Davis 1932). This skeleton was also a rock tomb burial like the sixth burial. This skeleton was not as complete as burial six, with only about thirteen bones from the skull and pectoral girdle found, however these bones were in good condition. Twelve
teeth were found, with two being considered in “perfect condition” (Davis 1932; Paxton 1932). Because of the condition of the teeth, Dr. Greenman was able to estimate the age of this individual. Greenman aged this individual as being a “warrior youth” between fifteen and twenty years old (Hendricks 1932). This burial had associated artifacts of copper beads, flint projectile points and knives, and some slate instruments lying on a bed of red ochre and covered with mica sheets (Hendricks 1932). It is possible that the “warrior youth” and the flexed burial six were leaders or had some kind of higher status than the other individuals in the mound due to their rock tomb style of burial. The high number of artifacts associated with the “warrior youth” suggests he had higher status than the individuals buried without artifacts.

The warrior youth burial does not seem to be referenced in Greenman’s field journal. It is possible that this burial is “Burial 1” in his notes although he does not mention the teeth being found. The lack of clarity about this burial and the two that were allegedly found by Towner are what makes it incredibly difficult to determine an accurate count of individuals buried in the mound. It is unclear if this burial or the two burials that Towner had claimed to find are included in the seven that Dr. Greenman lists in his field journal. If these three burials are legitimate and were just not recorded in the field notes for one reason or another, that still only brings the number of burials in the mound to ten, not eleven as stated in many sources. To try and simplify and more clearly explain the burials in this mound, I have created this table below (see Table 1).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Burial number</th>
<th>Type of burial</th>
<th>Associated artifacts</th>
<th>Source where described</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burial 1</td>
<td>Rock tomb burial</td>
<td>Sheets of mica, a chunk of granite, copper beads</td>
<td>Greenman’s field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burial 2</td>
<td>Half a dozen pieces of leg or arm bone</td>
<td>No artifacts</td>
<td>Greenman’s field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burial 3</td>
<td>Cremation</td>
<td>No artifacts</td>
<td>Greenman’s field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burial 4</td>
<td>Re-burial</td>
<td>No artifacts</td>
<td>Greenman’s field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burial 5</td>
<td>Cremation</td>
<td>No artifacts</td>
<td>Greenman’s field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burial 6</td>
<td>Rock tomb burial Flexed burial</td>
<td>Cut mica sheet, slate gorget</td>
<td>Greenman’s field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burial 7</td>
<td>Cremation (?)</td>
<td>Projectile points, copper beads, shell beads, flake knives</td>
<td>Greenman’s field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burial 8 (?)</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Newspaper accounts suggest 9 burials found during dig</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Description of Skeletal Remains Found in Mound

| Burial 9 | Rock tomb burial | Copper beads, projectile points, knives, red ochre, slate instruments, mica sheets | Several newspaper accounts |
| Burial 10 | Log tomb burial | Unknown | Kent State field school notes |
| Burial 11 (?) | Unknown | Unknown | Newspaper sources and Field school notes mention 11 burials existing |

What Has Happened:

After the excavation was completed, Dr. Emerson Greenman was supposed to take some of the artifacts back to the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society in Columbus and George Towner planned to create a museum from an unused railroad switching station on his property to display the rest of the artifacts (Hendricks 1932; DiPaolo 2007). When I began this project, I contacted the current curator of the archaeology department at the Ohio History Connection, Dr. Bradley Lepper, to enquire if these items were in their collection. In an emailed response to my question, Dr. Lepper
stated that although Dr. Emerson Greenman was in charge of the excavation and was the curator of the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society at the time, there was “no record that the artifacts were ever a part of our collections” (personal communication, September 26, 2014). Dr. Lepper was able to send me copies of the Ohio Archaeological Inventory for the site, which was an incredibly helpful resource because it listed some specific artifacts that were found in the mound that I was able to use to check with other sources. The museum that George Towner wanted to create from the switching station never happened. It is unclear why Towner did not successfully create the museum or what happened to the artifacts that he was planning on displaying there. I then went to the Portage County Historical Society to see if they had any of these artifacts in their collection. Fortunately, they had a “Towner’s Collection”, but unfortunately there were only a few items that were labeled as specifically coming from the Towner Mound site. These artifacts include mica sheets and slate gorgets that I photographed and are displayed below (see Figure 1-3).
Figure 1: Mica sheets, courtesy of the Portage County Historical Society

Figure 2: Mica sheet possibly stained with red ochre, courtesy of the Portage County Historical Society
In 1972, Dr. Orrin Shane at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio used the site as a field school. Dr. Shane was unable to find a copy of Dr. Greenman’s field notes from the 1932 excavation, which caused him to believe that much less of the mound had been excavated and that a field school would be able to find new material at the site (Calhoun et al 1972). The 1972 field school excavation only turned up two artifacts and twelve features (Heaton, 1972). However, ten of these features were determined to be rodent burrows rather than post molds (Calhoun et al 1972), so ultimately only two prehistoric features were found. These features included a cremation burial that was originally discovered by Greenman and the remains of the “Indian Princess”.

In addition to the 1932 Greenman excavation and the 1972 field school, the field school notes indicate a third excavation of the Towner Mound site. In 1932 Thomas
Donkin of the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society came to do a preliminary investigation of the mound before Dr. Greenman was sent. Donkin and Towner appeared to find one burial in a log tomb, which is not discussed in Greenman’s field notes or in the newspaper articles that I had managed to find (Harten 1972). If Greenman found nine burials during his 1932 excavation and Towner found one on his own and then an additional one with Donkin, that makes eleven burials that were claimed by many of the newspaper articles.

From the field school notes, I have determined that in 1932 George Towner built a concrete block crypt to display the skeletal remains of the “Indian Princess” to the public. This concrete enclosure was covered with a sheet of glass so that the public could view the skeletal remains. The glass was later removed and the remains were covered with tar paper after some looters stole the teeth of the skeleton. The tar paper was removed during the 1972 field school excavation, but there were only very few pieces of skeletal remains remaining, including some vertebrae, long bone fragments, skull fragments, and an intact upper ramus of the mandible. There were also some modern materials mixed in with the skeletal remains including a railroad spike, probably to hold the skeletal remains in place and discourage looting, nails, and a marble (Harten 1972). I assume that the “Indian Princess” was the sixth burial as it was the most complete and contained impressive artifacts. Illustrations from the 1972 field notes show that only a few remaining fragments of bone were found so it is not possible to match these skeletal remains to Dr. Greenman’s original field notes.
The field notes also describe that in 1972, the artifacts from Towner Mound were on display at the Portage County Historical Society and in George Towner’s private collection. The notes mention going to see specific artifacts that were on display at the Portage County Historical Society in 1972. These artifacts included many sheets of mica, a lump of graphite, many bone fragments and teeth in poor condition, over a dozen Flint Ridge flint bladelets, ground stone tools, crude projectile points made of Upper Mercer flint, and a cache of flint lumps found by Towner 200 feet south of the mound (Calhoun et al 1972).

Dr. Shane and the students from the 1972 field school determined that even though there were no diagnostic Hopewell pottery at the site, the mound still belonged to the Hopewell culture because of the burial styles and artifact types found in the mound (Harten 1972; Heaton 1972). Hopewell bladelets are found at every Hopewell site, whether it is in the core area or the periphery. So the fact that bladelets were found at Towner Mound clearly makes this site a Hopewell site. The fact that the projectile points found at Towner Mound were made of Upper Mercer flint, a source of flint that is much closer to northern Ohio sites than Flint Ridge, while bladelets were made of Flint Ridge flint is again a clear sign of its place in the Hopewell periphery. Core area sites can be expected to use Flint Ridge flint for all of their flint needs, but it makes sense that periphery sites would only use this exotic flint for special purposes like for making beautiful Hopewell bladelets which may have served a special purpose, and use local sources of flint for less important, functional artifacts like projectile points. In addition to
the above information, the field school notebooks also contained some photographs of Towner Mound during the 1972 excavation. They are included below (Figure 4 and 5).

*Figure 4: Towner Mound viewed from the north 1972. Photograph on file at Kent State University Archaeology Collection.*
Figure 5: Towner Mound viewed from the east, facing Lake Pippin 1972. Photograph on file at Kent State University Archaeology Collection.

It is impossible to know now where these artifacts that were on display in the 1970s ended up. It is possible that they are still in the Portage County Historical Society’s collections although not labeled properly. It is also possible that the artifacts were lost, stolen, or given to another institution and the record is now lost. Whatever the case, the final disposition of most artifacts from the mound, and the skeletal remains, is still unknown (DiPaolo 2007).

Even though I could not find most of the actual artifacts from the mound, I still wanted to include representative images of similar artifacts so that the public who were viewing the Park’s webpage have some idea of what the artifacts from Towner Mound resembled. I also wanted to obtain images of artifacts that were associated with the
Hopewell core in order to demonstrate the marked differences between Hopewell core sites and Towner Mound in the Hopewell periphery. To do this, I received approval to use images the Ohio History Connection had uploaded to the Ohio Memory Project. The Ohio Memory Project is a collaboration between the Ohio History Connection, the State Library of Ohio, and other cultural institutions to provide access to an “online scrapbook” of Ohio history. I was able to get access to many beautiful images of artifacts that would be common in the Hopewell core, such as platform pipes and pottery, as well as images of artifacts described as being excavated from Towner Mound. I also requested images of artifacts from the Esch Mounds site. The Esch Mounds site appears to be very similar to the Towner Mound site so I thought that it would be an appropriate source of images. I also used items from the archaeological collections at Kent State University, primarily photographing artifacts that had been excavated from the Heckelman site, a multicomponent site with a Middle Woodland component in northern Ohio (Figure 6 and 7).
Figure 6: Hopewell bladelets from the Heckelman site, courtesy of Kent State University Archaeology

Figure 7: Projectile points from the Heckelman site, courtesy of Kent State University Archaeology
I used the research I discussed above along with the images that I found or photographed to create a webpage about my interpretations of the Towner Mound site. This website is currently online and accessible at townermound.wordpress.com. My research and images will later be added to the Portage Park District’s website, although it is not currently online at the time of this writing. Below I have included screenshots from townermound.wordpress.com to show the final work that I have created and what the website on the Portage Park District’s website will look like (Figures 8-13).
Towner Mound: Creating Content and Sparking Curiosity for the Portage County Parks

Towner Mound, also known as the Lake Pippin Mound, is a Hopewell Indian burial mound located on Lake Pippin in Kent, Ohio. Hopewell is a term that is used to define people that shared certain characteristics during a specific time period. These characteristics are extravagant burial ceremonialism, certain types of crafts and arts, and long distance trade networks. Burial mounds are probably the most distinguishing mark of Hopewell culture.

Figure 8
The prehistory, before the arrival of Europeans, of North America is generally divided into periods and traditions. In eastern North America, there are four prominent periods and traditions—Paleo-Indian, Archaic, Woodland, and Late Prehistoric. The Woodland period began 3,000 years ago and continued until about 1,000 years ago. It is also divided into periods, Early Woodland, Middle Woodland, and Late Woodland. The Hopewell were especially prominent during the Middle Woodland period, around 2,000 years ago.

The Ohio Hopewell is most extravagant and prominent at what is called “the Hopewell core.” The core is centered around Chillicothe, Ohio but Hopewell influence extends as far south as Louisiana and as far north as New York. The Hopewell core is marked with extravagant mortuary ceremonialism, most obviously through burial mounds and earthwork enclosures, and material culture. Common artifacts include platform effigy pipes, metal panpipes, breastplates, copper earring spools, pottery, mica cutouts, canine teeth of grizzly bears inlaid with freshwater pearls, conch shells, ritual knives made of obsidian, bladelets, and Snyder’s Point projectile points.

Included below are some of these diagnostic Hopewell artifacts.

Figure 9
However, because Towner Mound is so far north of this core area it is considered to be part of the Hopewell “periphery.” Sites in the periphery are usually smaller with less of the characteristic artifacts than what is found in the core area. Hopewell traits occur across a very broad region, and these traits do not appear evenly at all sites outside of the core area. In areas outside of the Hopewell core, the funerary customs and material culture associated with Hopewell were added to the local culture and did not replace other aspects of the local culture. Hopewell periphery sites generally have less diagnostic Hopewell artifacts than sites in the Hopewell core, but all Hopewell sites have bladelets made out of Flint Ridge flint.

Included below are artifacts from the Esch Mounds site and the Heckelman site, periphery Hopewell sites in northern Ohio.

*Figure 10*
Towner Mound is named after George Towner, who discovered it on his land in 1931. Towner found an oddly shaped piece of stone, which upon further investigation he realized was a stone celt. Towner dug a little deeper and discovered additional artifacts, including some copper beads, flake knives, and flint projectile points. He immediately stopped digging when he saw the remains of a cremation burial and contacted the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, now the Ohio History Connection.

The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society sent their curator at the time, Dr. Emerson Greenman, to excavate Towner Mound in 1932. The mound contained at least seven burials, maybe up to eleven burials. Reports of the excavation are confusing because of the time period in which it was dug. The excavation occurred during the Great Depression. Because so many people were out of work, there was an estimated 2000 people watching the excavation during its final days. The mass amounts of people caused a large amount of confusion about what was in the mound and possibly allowed for looting as the excavation was underway.

Dr. Greenman describes seven burials in his field notes of the excavation, with at least one additional burial being very well described in primary newspaper sources. Many of the burials were cremations with few or no associated artifacts. Most of the skeletal remains were poorly preserved because the mound was built out of gravel, which allowed water to enter into the mound and erode it. However, out of a possible eleven burials, two were in surprisingly good condition.

One of these burials was nicknamed the “Indian Princess”. The Indian Princess was a nearly complete skeleton in a flexed position. This burial has associated artifacts, a rectangular slate gorget and a piece of mica. A flexed position means that the skeleton was placed in a fetal position on its side during burial. This type of burial is relatively uncommon for Hopewell core sites in southern Ohio but seems to be a more common burial style in northern and northeastern Ohio sites from the Hopewell periphery. Another aspect of this burial that is uncommon for Hopewell sites in the south is that the burial was under layers of interlocking flat stones. These kinds of burials are called “rock tombs” and are a very common feature in northern periphery burials.

Figure 11
After the excavation in 1932, George Towner built a cement block enclosure that was covered with a sheet of glass in order to display the skeleton that he referred to as the “Indian Princess.” Towner reportedly charged the public 25 cents to view the skeleton. Unfortunately, looters took advantage of the display and stole the teeth and other pieces of the skeleton. To protect the remains from any further looting, Towner covered the remains with tar paper and reburied his exhibit.

The other very complete burial in Towner Mound was nicknamed the “Warrior Youth” by Dr. Emerson Greenman. This burial was not described in Dr. Greenman’s notes, but only in newspaper articles. This burial was also a rock tomb style burial. The only skeletal remains of this burial were a skull and shoulder bones, but the skull was in good enough shape that the teeth could be used to date the age of the individual. This individual was determined to be between fifteen and twenty years old. There were also a large amount of associated artifacts with the individual, indicating that they were probably of higher status than the burials without associated artifacts.

Towner Mound is lacking many diagnostic Hopewell artifacts that would be expected to be found in Hopewell core sites. Artifacts found at Towner Mound include mica sheets, chunks of graphite, over a dozen flint bladelets made of Flint Ridge flint, ground stone tools, projectile points made of Upper Mercer flint, a large amount of tubular copper beads, flint flake knives, and slate gorgets. Even lacking some items, it is clear that this site belongs to the Hopewell culture because of the bladelets recovered in the excavation.

However, between the original excavation and today, many of the artifacts from Towner Mound have disappeared. After the excavation, Dr. Greenman was supposed to take some of the artifacts back to the Ohio Historical and Archaeological Society, but this never happened. Towner was planning on making a small museum out of the railroad switching station on the property, but this also did not happen. Today, what remains of the artifacts from Towner Mound are on display at the Portage County Historical Society.
Dr. Greenman’s 1932 excavation was not the only time that Towner Mound was dug. In 1972, Dr. Orrin Shane at Kent State University used Towner Mound as an archaeological field school for students. Dr. Shane was unable to find Dr. Greenman’s field notes which led him to believe that a lot less of the mound was excavated than it truly was. There was no new material found during this excavation, but the students did re-discover the Indian Princess that Towner had covered to protect it.

The notes also mentioned that much of the artifacts from the mound were on display at the Portage County Historical Society or were privately owned by George Towner. However, the only artifacts currently at the Portage County Historical Society are the gorgets and mica that are pictured above. What happened to the remaining artifacts and the skeletal remains from the mound is a mystery.

![Towner Mound viewed from the north during the 1972 excavation.](image1.png)
![Towner Mound viewed from the east, facing Lake Pippin, during the 1972 excavation.](image2.png)

*Figure 13*

All images from townermound.wordpress.com, the website that I created.
CHAPTER III: PERIPHERY SITES IN CONTEXT

However, Towner Mound is important beyond the need to be documented for the Portage Parks District. Proper documentation of Towner Mound can also help in understanding how Hopewell sites manifest in northeastern Ohio in general. The site of Towner Mound appears to be very similar to other Hopewell sites located in northern Ohio, specifically the Pumpkin Site, the Esch Mounds, and the North Benton Mound. Esch Mounds was also excavated in the 1930s by Dr. Emerson Greenman. These conical burial mounds are in Erie County, Ohio and contained platform pipes and Flint Ridge flint bladelets as well as other copper and stone artifacts. The Esch Mounds site was radiocarbon dated to A.D. 590 which puts the site within the Hopewell time period. The Esch Mounds contained 46 individuals in flexed and extended positions as well as cremated. The site contained artifacts including Lowe cluster projectile points, bladelets of Flint Ridge flint, slate gorgets and pendants, copper beads and earspools, along with platform and pan-pipes (Redmond 2007, Ohio History Connection).

The Pumpkin Site is a “drowned” site located in the Sandusky Bay area and was discovered in 2004 when the previously submerged site was exposed by high winds. The site contained four burials with six total individuals, including one flexed burial with a large amount of associated artifacts including 59 rolled copper beads. The flexed burial with the high number of grave goods may signify a higher social importance for this individual (Redmond 2007). It is unclear if this site was originally a mound, because all
evidence of that would have been destroyed when the site became drowned by the Sandusky Bay. It is most likely that this burial site was originally a mound because open cemeteries are very uncommon in the Middle Woodland period.

The North Benton Mound is located in Mahoning County, Ohio, which makes it geographically closer to Towner Mound than the other two sites. The North Benton Mound is both physically larger and more elaborate than Towner Mound, but it shares many characteristics. The most important characteristic that the North Benton Mound shares with Towner Mound is that there are rock tomb style burials at this site (Magrath 1945). Rock tomb style burials are not incredibly common for the Hopewell core, but may have been diagnostic of northern Hopewell periphery.

Towner Mound shares many similarities with these three Hopewell sites in the types of burials as well as artifacts recovered. It is possible that periphery Hopewell groups simply did not use many of the artifacts that are considered diagnostic, such as the Snyder’s Point. In Redmond’s paper on the Pumpkin Site, he states that the “archaeology of the Middle Woodland period is largely ignored in northern Ohio because of a difficulty in recognizing definitive material culture” (2007, 189-190). I was able to find a photograph of artifacts that were recovered from Towner Mound in Dr. Phillip Shriver’s book, Indians of the Portage Area, the projectile points found at Towner Mound were not anything like the Snyder’s Point that is diagnostic for Hopewell, but look very much like the projectile points found at the Pumpkin site.
Projectile points such as the ones found at the Pumpkin site and in Towner Mound could be diagnostic for all Hopewell periphery groups in northern Ohio. Also, the fact that the Pumpkin site has flexed burials like Towner Mound shows some similarity between these two northern Ohio sites that is not shared between these sites and southern Ohio Hopewell. Adding Towner Mound to the current list of Hopewell sites in the periphery of Northern Ohio will help make further research on northern Ohio Middle Woodland possible.
CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

Towner Mound is an interesting, but little known, example of a northern Ohio Hopewell site. It is important that this site be documented through an easily accessible website so that the local public can be made aware of this site where they can experience local prehistory. I believe that I have researched this site and gathered as much information as possible and that at this point it is not possible to find more remaining information on the site. My interpretations of what was found at the site is the best that I could assemble with the conflicting reports from Dr. Emerson Greenman’s field notes and newspaper articles from the 1932 excavation. I also believe that the artifacts that I was able to find are all that is currently possible to find.

I think that creating a webpage is an excellent way to both document this site and make it accessible and relatable to the interested public. The webpage that I created is currently available at townermound.wordpress.com and will soon be added to the Portage Park District website at portageparkdistrict.com. I am thrilled that my thesis project was able to help the Portage Park District document this important site and increase public access and knowledge of this site. I hope that my work in documenting Towner Mound helps the public better understand this site and perhaps will help the Portage Park District be able to preserve this site for future generations to experience.
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