

**TROWBRIDGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE**, circa 200-600 A.D.

Vicinity of North 61st Street and Leavenworth Road

Register of Historic Kansas Places: July 1, 1977

National Register of Historic Places: February 24, 1971

This important archaeological site was discovered in 1939 by well-known amateur archaeologist Harry M. Trowbridge, quite literally in his own back yard. Since that time, archaeological investigations in this area have been carried out by the University of Kansas. This was the first discovery, and therefore the type-site, of a Kansas City Hopewell village, the westernmost manifestation of the Hopewell Indian culture. It is also the principal Kansas City Hopewell site in Kansas, the others being on the Missouri side of the river. In the present terms of Kansas archaeology, the various Kansas City Hopewell sites represent the Middle Woodland phase of the Early Ceramic period.

The Hopewell were the mound builders of whom the nineteenth-century mythmakers dreamed. Contrary to those beliefs, however, the mound builders were American Indians rather than romantic representatives of some sort of "lost race." Their influence spread hundreds of miles from their heartland in the upper Ohio River valley, and they obtained trade goods from as far away as the Rocky Mountains and the Gulf of Mexico. In the core of the Hopewell territory - southern and central Ohio - they erected their great construction projects: thousands of burial mounds, geometrical earthworks, processional avenues, ramparts and fortifications. Outside this heartland, earth-works other than burial mounds are rare, and the size of the latter tends to decrease with the distance from Ohio. At the Trowbridge Site, there may have been small burial mounds north of Parkview Avenue and east of North 63rd Street, but these were reportedly destroyed by the early 1900s.

The Hopewell culture took form about 500 B.C., reached its greatest influence by 450 A.D., and by 750 A.D. had died out. It was thus both contemporary with and the successor to the earlier Adena culture, the people who built the famous Great Serpent Mound in Adams County, Ohio. Some authorities have suggested that the Kansas City Hopewell sites were the result of dispersal following the culture's collapse in Ohio, but the earliest suggested dates for the sites make that seem unlikely. It is also uncertain as to whether or not the Kansas City Hopewell sites represent an arrival of Hopewell people or simply the diffusion of Hopewell cultural traits and the Woodland Tradition among otherwise unrelated American Indian peoples.

The material manifestations of the culture represented by the Trowbridge Site include pottery, the beginnings of horticulture, and the use of the bow and arrow. Trowbridge Site pottery is grit-tempered with plain, rocker-roughened and cord-roughened designs. It also includes clay platform pipes and crude figurines in the form of bird effigies and human figures. No remains of beans, maize or squash have been found at the Trowbridge Site, but that may simply reflect the vagaries of excavation, as similar materials have been found at Kansas City Hopewell sites on the Missouri side of the river. The Trowbridge tool kit included a 3/4 grooved axe, polished celts, triangular projectile points, and bone awls. Stone pendants and gorget fragments have also been found.

Whether it was the result of immigration or cultural diffusion, by 400 A.D. a Kansas City Hopewell village lay along the headwaters of the left fork of Brenner Heights Creek in what is now north central Kansas City, Kansas. Here they may have practiced small scale farming (as noted, the evidence is inconclusive), while supplementing their diet by hunting and the gathering of edible wild plants in the Missouri River bottom land to the north. The village was small, and may have been occupied for only short lengths of time. Unfortunately, modern development in the area has prevented a more thorough archaeological investigation of the site.

One element in this recent construction points out the questionable value of even National Register protection without constant vigilance. The Trowbridge Site was placed on the

National Register of Historic Places on February 24, 1971. The site's location is broadly described as being between North 61st Street and North 63rd Street, north of May Lane and Leavenworth Road. In 1975, an F.H.A. sponsored elderly high-rise apartment building was built on the southeast corner of the site, at 6100 Leavenworth Road. Although Federally funded, this project did not go through the Section 106 review process required by law for work affecting National Register sites. The State Historic Preservation Department was not even aware of the project until the building was halfway completed, too late to halt or to even attempt salvage archaeology. It is thus uncertain as to what irreplaceable artifacts now lie buried beneath concrete and asphalt.

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Harry Martin Trowbridge was born in Blue Mound, Kansas, in 1889, and moved with his parents to Kansas City, Kansas when he was six years of age. He graduated from the University of Kansas, and subsequently spent 38 years with the Abner Hood Chemical Co. of Kansas City, Missouri, holding the position of office manager at the time of his retirement in 1952. He was a veteran of World War I, where he served in Army Intelligence.

The passion of Trowbridge's life was American Indian archaeology. He took part in numerous excavations and collected a wide range of artifacts, often in the company of fellow amateur J. G. Braecklein, a local architect of some note, and amassed an impressive archaeological and historical library. He was a charter member and past president of the Kansas City Archaeological Society, a life member of the Kansas City Museum Association, a life member of the Kansas State Historical Society, a member of the Missouri Archaeological Society, and a member of the American Association of Museums. His archaeological interests spanned the full range of American prehistory (including Mexico and Central America), but were primarily focused on the great mound building cultures of the Woodland Tradition - the Adena, the Hopewell, and the Mississippian. In 1936, following the tragic looting and deliberate destruction of the Mississippian Spiro mound in Oklahoma, he began tracing and purchasing Spiro artifacts, building a major collection which he donated to the Smithsonian Institution in 1958.

In addition to his archaeology, Trowbridge almost single-handedly revived the Wyandotte County Historical Society, serving as its president and working to establish a museum to preserve the artifacts and historical records of the Wyandotte County area. Once the museum had been initially set up on the third floor of the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Building, Trowbridge worked toward the goal of securing permanent quarters for the collection. When construction of the first phase of the museum in Wyandotte County Park took place in 1956, Trowbridge was first named curator and then director of the new facility. In addition, Trowbridge and his wife Georgie, who served as Society treasurer, put in countless hours at the museum as unpaid volunteers.

Harry M. Trowbridge died at the age of 80, on July 1, 1969. The library wing of the museum, under construction at the time of his death, was subsequently designated the Trowbridge Memorial Library. Following the death of his wife in 1990, the entirety of his archaeological collection and library was left to the museum, provided that funds could be obtained within five years to build adequate space for its storage and display. Following a two-year fund raising effort, construction of the museum expansion began in December, 1992. Designed by Ross and Gadgil Architects, the 4,300 square foot addition was dedicated on November 14, 1993. The expansion included a new entry foyer, several storage areas, and two new exhibit galleries, one featuring the early history of Wyandotte County and one dedicated entirely to the display of the Trowbridge collection.

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