

NORTHERN KENTUCKY VIEWS PRESENTS:

Boone County



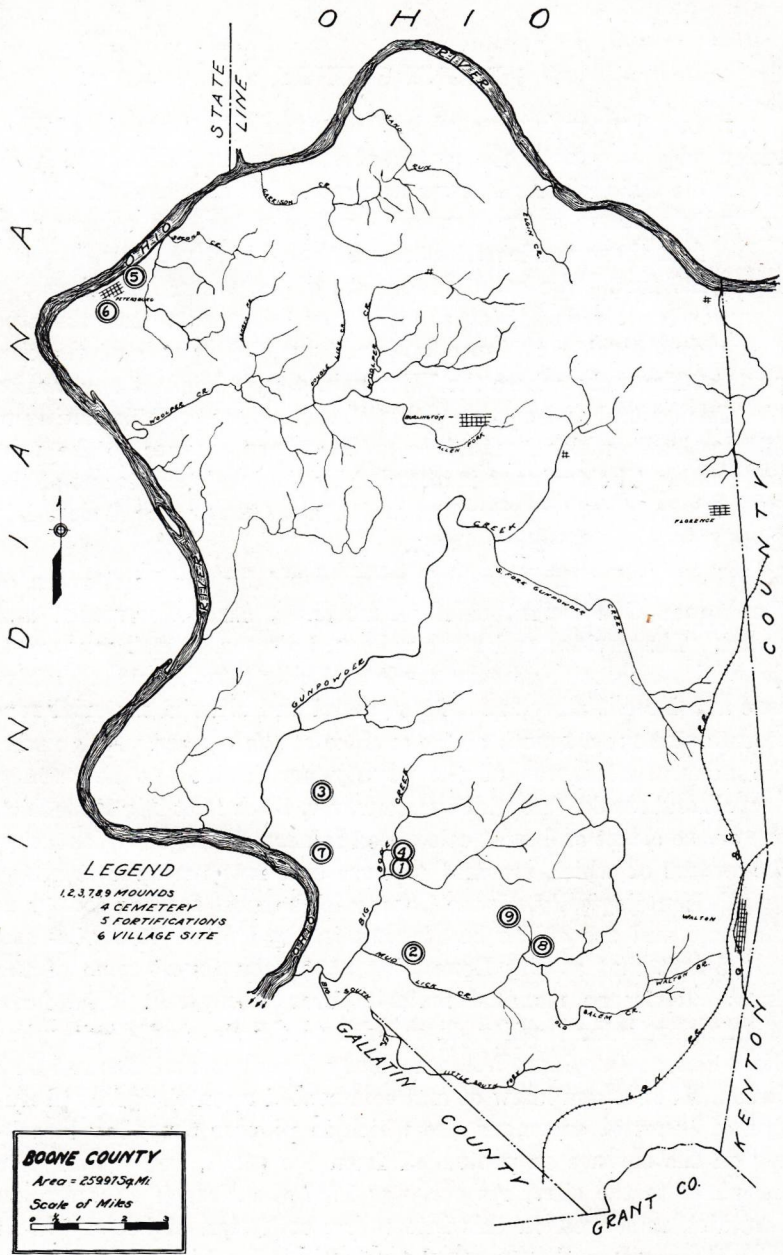
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Excerpted From

Reports in Archeology and Anthropology, V. II
University of Kentucky
September, 1932

www.nkyviews.com



LEGEND
 12,3789 MOUNDS
 4 CEMETERY
 5 FORTIFICATIONS
 6 VILLAGE SITE

BOONE COUNTY
 Area = 25997 Sq. Mi.
 Scale of Miles

BOONE COUNTY

Boone County is situated in the extreme northern tip of Kentucky adjoining both the states of Indiana and Ohio which lie across the Ohio River. It covers an area of 251 square miles. The upland elevations as represented by Burlington, the county seat, is 848 feet above sea level but along the Ohio River this drops to about 430 feet. The county is a part of the Outer Bluegrass Region of the state, but it is not typical of this region since the area shows considerable evidence of glaciation, being one of the few parts of Kentucky where the Wisconsin glacier has left any marks.

The central and eastern parts of the county are undulating to hilly uplands which break into rather sharp ravines to the west and south. The drainage is afforded by the local tributaries of the Ohio River, most important of which are Gunpowder Creek, Big Bone Creek and Woolper Creek.

Geologically the county is represented by the hard rocks of the Upper Ordovician, chiefly limestones, shaly limestones and shales. The ravines and river valleys, however, contain enormous quantities of glacial gravels, sands and silts together with Pleistocene and Recent alluviums. This glacial and alluvial material represents perhaps a fourth of the surface of the county. As a result the mineral resources of the county are limited to limestones, gravels and sands. In addition, however, there is at Big Bone Lick one of the oldest and most celebrated mineral springs in Kentucky, the waters of which are said to have excellent therapeutic value.

Paleontologically, Boone County is the most famous county in the state and one of the best known in the United States because of the fact that at Big Bone Lick have been found some of the finest Pleistocene mammal material ever discovered. The fame of this particular locality dates back to the days of Christopher Gish, George Croghan, William Henry Harrison and Thomas Jefferson, all of whom knew of and commented upon the great profusion of bones of enormous size which in pioneer times lay bleaching on the surface or protruded from the earth, and which gave the name to the site. As early as 1739 the French explorer, de Longuiel, remarked on this interesting collection of bones and in 1751 Christopher Gish secured from Big Bone Lick a mastodon's

tooth which he exhibited as a curiosity.¹ Big Bone Lick has yielded remains of *Megalonyx*, which was discovered and named by President Thomas Jefferson,² as well as many species of extinct deer, moose, bison, horse, mammoth and mastodon.³ The interest in this site manifested by Dr. William Goforth in 1804, Thomas Ashe in 1806, General William Clarke in 1807 and John Clifford in 1816 resulted in the publication of fifty or more papers on the subject in the early part of the nineteenth century⁴ and since that time many accounts of the site have been written⁵ of these great deposits of bones.

Archaeologically the county is well represented in prehistoric sites, probably due to the fact that a large part of its northern boundary is represented by the Ohio River, which throughout its entire length shows evidences of having been a great aboriginal highway, and because of the salt springs in the south which doubtless were constantly frequented by buffalo, deer and elk and so became excellent hunting grounds for the savage. The most important of these sites as known to the authors are as follows:

1. A mound on the farm of Mrs. W. R. Miller, a quarter of a mile south of Big Bone Lick. This mound is twenty-five feet in diameter and three feet high. Reported by J. D. Moore.
- B 2. A mound on the farm of John Henry Slater, one and one-half miles south of Big Bone Lick. The site is locally known as "Black Grave Yard" and has yielded many bones and artifacts. Reported by J. D. Moore.
3. A mound on the farm of Robert Robbins, two miles northwest of Big Bone Lick. A considerable amount of pottery has been taken from this mound. Reported by J. D. Moore.
4. A cemetery just at the east edge of the town of Big Bone Lick on the property of Mrs. W. R. Miller. Skeletons and artifacts have been found in this ancient burial field. Reported by J. D. Moore.
5. The remains of a prehistoric fort one-half mile up the Ohio River from Petersburg. Reported by E. M. Johnson. Collins mentioned⁶ this site but did not give its exact location and there are other references to it in the pioneer literature of the state. It was apparently well known to the early settlers.
6. A considerable portion of the town of Petersburg was built on the site of an ancient cemetery and from local tradition it would appear that the town itself was the site of a prehistoric village. Many skel-

¹ Funkhouser, W. D., *Wild Life in Kentucky*, p. 31. 1925.

² Funkhouser, W. D. and Webb, W. S., *Ancient Life in Kentucky*, p. 40. 1928.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-46.

⁴ Jillson, W. R., *Introduction to Kentucky Paleontology*, p. XII. 1931.

⁵ Cooper, C. L., *Pleistocene Fauna of Kentucky*. 1931.

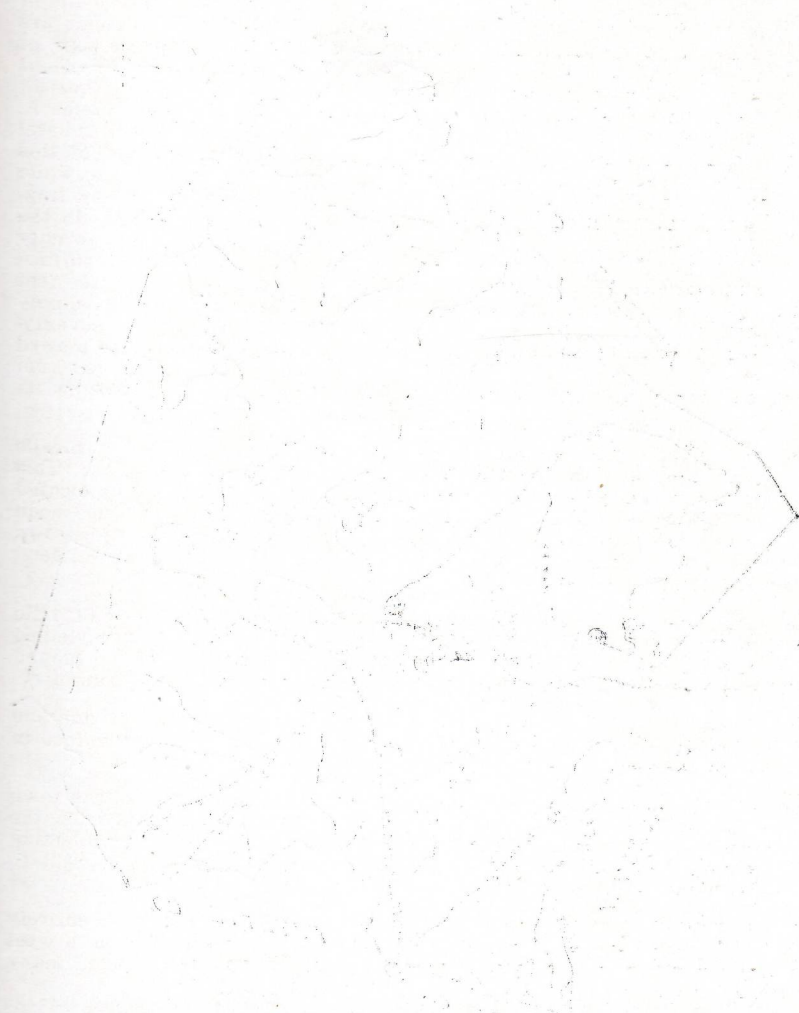
⁶ Collins, Lewis, *History of Kentucky*. 1874.

etons have been discovered in digging cellars and in excavating for the foundations of buildings and the surrounding fields have yielded many artifacts. This site has been known since pioneer days. It was mentioned by Collins and has been reported to us by many persons.

7. A mound on the farm of John Rich, formerly the Johnson-Mason Place, one and one-half miles west of Big Bone Lick. The mound is one hundred feet in diameter and nine feet high and is situated on the top of a hill. So far as is known, it has never been excavated.
8. Two mounds on the farm of Joseph W. Cleek, one mile south of Sleet's Store and five miles southwest of Walton. The mounds are in a ten-acre bottom and the entire bottom is famous because of the numerous artifacts which it has yielded. Almost every resident of the neighborhood has artifacts in his possession, some of them of exceptional interest, which have been found on this site. James A. Sleet reports the plowing up of two skeletons from a bed of mussel shells. The site is on Mud Lick Creek and on the banks of this creek are areas showing layers of ashes and burned limestone while the ground for several acres around is covered with pottery fragments, mussel shells, animal bones, human bones and teeth. In the field, also, is an arc-shaped ridge about two hundred and seventy feet long which is rich in pot shards, flint spawls and other surface material. One of the mounds is fifty feet in diameter and three feet high and is located on the bank of the creek. The other is ninety feet in diameter and two and a half feet high and is located seventy-five yards west of the first. Both mounds have been regularly plowed over for many years. The site is seven miles by direct line from the Ohio River and about ten miles up Mud Lick Creek from its mouth.
9. A mound on the farm of W. M. Wilson, a half mile west of Sleet's Store and one and one-half miles due west of Big Bone Lick. This mound is thirty-five feet in diameter and two feet high and is located on the top of the highest hill in the vicinity. The mound has been under cultivation for many years and the nearby fields are strewn with flint chips and fragments of other objects. It has never been thoroughly excavated.
10. A mound and burial field on the Klasserner Farm, one-half mile south of Constance. Both the mound and the cemetery have yielded many artifacts and human bones and it is assumed that the mound was a burial mound although it has never been carefully examined.
11. A mound on the farm of Henry Jergen on the top of a hill, one and a half miles from Constance. This mound is one hundred feet in diameter and ten feet high. It has never been excavated.
12. A village site on the property of J. Herbstreit, in a part of the town of Constance locally known as "Stringtown" about a mile from the center of the village. This has long been known as a collecting ground for artifacts and much kitchen midden material is still to be found on the surface.
13. A mound, formerly of considerable size but now almost entirely obliterated, on the farm of Henry Peeno, a quarter of a mile west of Constance on the top of a ridge. This mound has yielded many excellent artifacts, including pottery and pipes.

In addition to the above sites which are shown on the accom-

panying map, other sites have been reported which we are unable to definitely locate. Among these are certain ancient forts mentioned by Rafinesque⁷ as being in Boone County which we have been unable to find. The authors have investigated rather carefully the sites in Boone County and have been given permission to excavate a number of them, but have not as yet had opportunity to do so.



⁷ Rafinesque, Constantine S., Ancient History of Kentucky. 1824.