

Northern Kentucky Views Presents

The Bintz Site

**An Archeological Site on the Ohio River
Near the Mouth of Twelve Mile Creek**

by

Howard A. McCord

As printed in
American Antiquity
Volume 18, No. 3, January, 1953

THE BINTZ SITE

HOWARD A. MACCORD

CAMPBELL COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Reprinted from
AMERICAN ANTIQUITY,
Volume 18, No. 3, January, 1953



THE BINTZ SITE*

HOWARD A. MACCORD

THE BINTZ SITE is a small village site** located on the left bank of the Ohio River at the mouth of Twelve-Mile Creek, Campbell County, Kentucky, on property belonging to Mrs. William C. Bintz. The village consists of two parts—the “lower village,” at the immediate edge of the river, just downstream from the mouth of the creek, and the “upper village” about two hundred meters from the river and the creek on a terrace about four meters higher than the flood-plain where the “lower village” is located (Fig. 87). The cultural material found at both areas is identical, and it appears that both areas were occupied by the same people and at the same time. With the exception of a small amount of Woodland material found on the surface and in the excavations at the “upper village,” all the material is definitely of the Fort Ancient type. Since the pottery types link the site specifically with the Madisonville and Fox Farm sites, we classify the Bintz site as a component of the Madisonville focus (Griffin, 1943).

THE UPPER VILLAGE

Construction of the Mary Inglis Highway in 1938 uncovered 7 burials and considerable midden material. The skeletal material and artifacts found by the construction workers are now in the cabinets of local collectors, or are lost. Surface indications on the terrace reveal a village area of about two acres with a few outlying house-sites near the Bintz home and barns. Mrs. Bintz states that excavation of foundations for one of the outbuildings near the house uncovered several well-preserved skeletons, but no other data could be elicited.

* Excavations at the Bintz Site were conducted as a spare-time project by the following members of the Kentucky Archaeological Society, Northern Kentucky Chapter: Mrs. Bertha Mergenthal, Mr. Arthur Mergenthal, Mr. E. W. “Bud” Adams, Robert VanDyne and the author. The author assumes full responsibility for the facts, statistics and conclusions stated in this paper, since he supervised the field work, the keeping of the field-notes and the analysis and study of the artifacts. Collections made at the site have been placed in the William Behringer Memorial Museum, Devou Park, Covington, Kentucky, where they are displayed and available for study.

** See p. 262 for a comment on this site by James B. Griffin.

The upper village is now under cultivation, except for a small pasture, in which no excavations were permitted. The surface of the terrace is rolling and affords excellent drainage. Potable water was formerly available from several springs, now dry, which lie just west and south of the occupied area.

Permission to excavate was obtained from Mrs. Bintz and from William Graden, lessee of that part of the farm on which the village lies. It was desired to excavate a strip across the center of the village in order to obtain a cross-section of the midden deposit and to sample the cultural detritus. Accordingly, a trench 2 meters wide by 15 meters long was dug in what appeared to be the center of the village area. Excavation was done in units of one square meter, in order to reduce earth handling to a minimum. The sub-soil in each square was carefully examined for pits, post-molds or other disturbances. Occasionally, tests were sunk into the undisturbed hardpan to assure ourselves that we were safely below cultural deposits.

Excavation of the test trench revealed the mantle of refuse filled black earth over the hardpan to be from 25 to 60 cm. thick. Hardpan was uniformly a dense brown clay resulting from the decay of the local fossiliferous limestone. The plowed zone was usually about

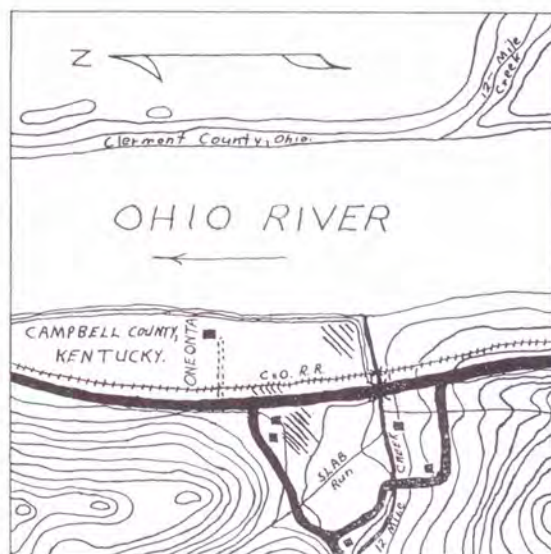


FIG. 87. Bintz site and vicinity.

15 cm. thick. Scattered through the plow disturbed topsoil and below it in the undisturbed refuse were found fire-cracked stones, animal bone fragments, and occasional mussel shells, sherds, and worked flint. Bones and shells were usually well preserved. In the area uncovered by the test trench were found two hearths, one burial (No. 1) one "clambake" site and eighteen postmolds. The postmolds could not be identified as a house-site or other structure, though probably if a larger area had been stripped of topsoil, such an identification would have been possible.

Hearth 1 was oval, 80 by 60 cm. and consisted of a burned area on the hardpan at a depth of 40 cm. from the surface. Hearth 2 was round, 60 cm. in diameter, and like hearth 1 was merely a burned area on the hardpan, 40 cm. deep. However, hearth 2 was partially surrounded by rough slabs of stone which enclosed the western and southern sides of the burned area. No accumulation of ashes or charcoal marked either hearth, though fire-cracked stones were plentiful on and around each hearth. The clambake consisted of a pocket of clam and snail shells closely packed into an oval area 80 by 60 cm. This mass was found immediately below the topsoil at a depth of 20 cm. and was 15 cm. thick in the center, thinning out rapidly to each edge. Very little soil was found among the shells, and no sherds or bones were included in the deposit. Most of the halves of the bivalves were separated, though three pairs were found closed. The snails may have been included as part of the food, or they may have been accidental inclusions. Identification of species found is shown in the section on food remains.

Burial 1 was that of an infant approximately six months old. The bones were found in a shallow grave covered by three 10 cm. thick slabs of limestone, the tops of which were 30 cm. from the surface. The grave had been dug into the hardpan and was 60 cm. long, 40 cm. wide and 8 cm. deep, with a flat bottom. The body had been placed on its back with the head to the south and the face turned toward the right. The hands had lain on the pelvis. The bones were in good condition, except that most vertebrae and the bones of the hands and feet had disintegrated. No artifacts were found with the burial.

The test trench had been started at the center of the midden area and extended simultaneously east and west. At the start, the refuse filled soil above the hardpan was 40 cm. thick. As the trench was extended, the thickness decreased to around 25 cm. and became increasingly low in artifact content. The full-width trench was then abandoned and two lines of test holes were dug, one meter apart in prolongation of the test trench. On the east these tests reached to the edge of the highway, while on the west they approached the edge of the gully which seems to have been the limit of the village. No features were found in the western series of test holes, but a gradual thickening of the refuse was noted as the gully was approached. Here the refuse was found to be about 60 cm. thick, apparently the result of surface wash and farming activities. Fifteen meters east of the eastern end of the test trench was found a circular pit, 70 cm. in diameter. The pit was 60 cm. in depth from the present surface and was semi-circular in cross-section. The pit contained only black soil and a few small scraps of split deer bones. No sherds or other artifacts were found in or around the pit. Three and one-half meters east of the pit was found burial 2. This was the fragmentary skeleton of a male (?) subadult buried in the midden layer. No pit outlines were found, and no artifacts accompanied the burial. The upper portions of the burial had been carried away by the plow, and a few skull fragments were found on the surface above the burial. The depth from the surface to the remaining portions of the skull was 20 cm. The bones remaining indicate that the burial had been that of a dismembered individual, and that many parts of the body were missing. No trace of the pelvis or legs could be found, and, except for the left arm, the upper parts of the body were not in anatomical order. The skull lay on its right side at one side of the deposit of bones, while the lower jaw lay, upside down, 80 cm. away. Vertebrae were scattered, and bones of the right arm were in reverse position; that is, the proximal end of the humerus lay where the distal end should have been, touching the proximal ends of the radius and ulna. The right hand was entirely lacking. Under the bones at a depth of 10 cm. in apparently undisturbed hardpan was a fragment of a steatite pot. This sherd was 16 mm. thick and 75 by

50 mm. across. No other article of steatite was found either on the surface or in the excavations at the Bintz site.

Artifacts recovered from the test trench are as follows:

<i>Ceramic</i>	
31 fragments of pot handles	
1 bird-head pottery effigy	
1 pottery disk bead	
1 pottery disk, problematical	
856 body sherds	
193 rim sherds, representing 118 vessels, divided as follows:	
<i>Type</i>	<i>No. of sherds</i>
Madisonville Cordmarked.....	79
Fox Farm Bowls, plain.....	36
" " " , cordmarked.....	16
" " salt pans.....	5
Net-marked salt pans.....	4
Indeterminate rims.....	53

<i>Nonceramic</i>	
2 bone awls, complete	
3 beamers, broken	
5 bone beads	
1 bear tooth pendant	
2 antler arrowpoints	
1 celt blade, broken	
2 pitted hammerstones	
5 projectile points, two stemmed, three triangular	
1 flint scraper	
1 mussel shell hoe	
1 shell disk bead	
1 cannel coal pendant, incomplete	
1 steatite pot fragment	

Five meters south of the center of the test trench a test was dug to determine the thickness of the refuse at this point. A concentration of sherds and bone refuse was found which led to the enlargement of the test hole into an area two by three meters. This test was designated test A, and all material found in it was treated as a unit. No pits or other features were found in the tested area. The refuse layer was a uniform thirty centimeters thick. In the refuse at one point, and badly disarranged and broken by the plow was the incomplete skeleton of an infant of about four months. No artifacts were found which might have been interred with the infant, and no grave pit was present. Apparently the infant had

been buried in a shallow grave scooped out in the topsoil. Scattered through the midden in A were found the following:

<i>Ceramic</i>	
10 handle fragments	
1 pottery disk, problematical	
615 body sherds, all types	
75 rim sherds, representing 63 vessels divided as follows:	
<i>Type</i>	<i>No. of sherds</i>
Madisonville Cordmarked.....	26
Fox Farm salt pans.....	15
" " Bowls, cordmarked.....	28
" " " , painted.....	5
Net-impressed salt pans.....	1

<i>Nonceramic</i>	
1 beamer, broken	
1 celt blade, perfect	
1 flint point, stemmed	
1 flint point, triangular	
3 broken or crude points, flint	
1 pitted hammerstone	
1 "cut" turkey femur	

Surface collections were made at every visit to the site. All rimsherds of pottery were saved, as were all stone implements and fragments of bone showing aboriginal working. The artifacts found comprise the following:

<i>Ceramic</i>	
67 rims, Fox Farm Bowls	
70 rims, Madisonville Cordmarked	
2 rims, Fox Farm salt pans	
3 rims, net-impressed salt pans	
19 handle fragments	
1 bird head effigy	
1 grit tempered, cord-marked rimsherd	

<i>Nonceramic</i>	
5 pitted hammerstones	
1 flint nodule hammerstone	
15 broken or unfinished celt blades	
1 broken pipe, cannel coal	
1 fragment sandstone tube or pipe	
7 flint scrapers	
9 flint drills, whole or broken	
28 flint points, stemmed, whole or broken	
56 flint points, triangular, whole or broken	
1 flint point, bifurcated stem	
53 flint points, broken, indeterminate	
15 flint blanks and rejects	
2 pieces "cut" bone or antler	

THE LOWER VILLAGE

About thirty meters north of the mouth of Twelve-Mile Creek and extending northward for about twenty meters a layer of mussel shells, animal bones, sherds, wood-ash and other midden debris was exposed in the river bank. This layer was about forty centimeters thick and was covered by an overburden of flood deposited sand two meters thick. No indication of the buried refuse appears on the surface of the cultivated flood-plain. In order to determine the extent of the buried village, test holes were dug with an extension-type earth auger. These holes revealed the refuse to extend away from the river for at least 30 meters, where it was found to be 10 cms. thick at a depth of 2 meters. Measuring from the center line of the exposed face of the refuse at the river bank, the midden was found to extend upstream about 30 meters, or to within 10 meters of the bank of Twelve-Mile Creek. Downstream, 15 meters from the center line the refuse was found at a depth of 1.8 meters and was there 7 cms. thick. The total area therefore appears to have been roughly elliptical, 50 meters long parallel to the river and about 30 meters wide, with the present river bank tangent to a part of one long side of the ellipse. No large-scale excavation was attempted in the field over-lying the refuse, since the field was planted, and it was felt that such disturbance would so loosen the soil that the next flood might severely damage the field.

Excavation was accordingly limited to the cutting of a trench along the river bank exposure and extending into the refuse layer for 3 meters. The trench was about 5 meters long, but was interrupted by the roots of two large trees which could not be removed. Initially, the material found was kept separate by squares, one meter in size, but when it was observed that the deposit was homogeneous and that no stratification could be detected or features isolated, all material was pooled and treated as a unit. Since the total area excavated was less than 15 square meters, the mass of refuse involved is not great. At the side of the tested area away from the river, the refuse layer measured 50 cms. thick, with minor irregularities on both upper and lower surfaces of the layer. No pits were encountered, though several burned areas containing wood-ash could be identified as hearths. Scattered throughout the refuse layer were found refuse

bones, shells, fire-cracked stones, sherds and artifacts of bone, antler, stone and copper. Every sherd or other artifact was saved, as were most of the shells and identifiable bone fragments. Screening of the wood-ash in several instances, yielded the small bones of fish, small mammals and similar minute refuse. Artifacts found were not plentiful nor of great variety, but those found were, as a rule, in excellent condition due to the protection afforded by the flood-deposited overburden and the high ash content of the refuse layer.

The artifacts found in the tested area comprise the following:

Ceramic

- 3 effigy figures (1 bird, 1 snake and 1 flying squirrel?)
- 1 pottery disk, problematical
- 1 sherd, partially perforated
- 6 lumps potters' clay
- 1 awl (?), made of potsherd
- 1 handle (?), of pottery dipper
- 1081 body sherds, including two painted sherds
- 1 sherd showing small diamond-shaped incised design over body of vessel
- 344 rim sherds representing 280 vessels, as follows:

<i>Type</i>	<i>No. of sherds</i>
Madisonville Cordmarked.....	170
Fox Farm Bowls.....	104
Indeterminate	29
Fox Farm salt pans.....	23
Cordmarked salt pans.....	8
Net-impressed salt pans.....	10

Nonceramic

- 17 bone beads
- 2 perforated teeth
- 2 perforated deer phalanges
- 12 beamers, including 1 perfect
- 12 antler arrowpoints
- 9 fragments of "cut" bone
- 31 "cut" antler tines
- 5 fragments of "cut" antler strips
- 4 antler drifts
- 2 fishhooks, bone, broken
- 1 fishhook blank, broken
- 29 bone awls (2 bird joint, 7 mammal joint, and 20 splinters of bone, usually deer)
- 5 triangular arrowpoints, flint
- 3 stemmed arrowpoints, flint
- 1 cannel coal pendant
- 1 copper bead
- 1 celt blade, broken

Food remains representing the diet of the aboriginal inhabitants of the Bintz Site (both portions) comprised bones of mammals, birds, amphibians, and fish, mollusk shells, charred nutshells and fish scales.* The following species have been identified from the remains found.

Mammals

Elk — *Cervus canadensis*
 Deer — *Odocoileus virginianus*
 Bear — *Euarctos americanus*
 Raccoon — *Procyon lotor*
 Panther — *Felis concolor*
 Fox — *Urocyon argenteum*
 Skunk — *Mephitis mephitis*
 Opossum — *Didelphis virginianus*
 Beaver — *Castor canadensis*
 Groundhog — *Marmota monax*
 Muskrat — *Ondatra zibethica*
 Rabbit — *Sylvilagus floridanus*
 Squirrel — *Sciurus carolinensis*
 Rice rat — *Oryzomys*
 Chipmunk — *Tamias sciurus*

Plant remains

Corn — *Zea mays*
 Hickory nut — *Carya glabra* Mill

Fish

Catfish
 Drumfish
 Garfish

Amphibians

Land turtle — *Terrapene carolina*
 Water turtle — *Amyda spinifer*

Birds

Wild Turkey — *Meleagris gallopavo*
 Bald Eagle — *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*
 Duck — probably *Aix sponsa* (?)
 Crow — *Corvus brachyrhincos*

Mollusks

Fusconaia ebenum (Lea)
Quadrula metanevra Rafinesque
Quadrula pustulosa (Lea)
Cyclonaias tuberculata (Rafinesque)
Plethobasus varicosus (Lea)
Plethobasus crassidens (Lamarck)
Pleurobema clava (Lamarck)
Pleurobema mytiloides (Rafinesque)
Lexingtonia dolabelloides (Lea)
Actinonaias carinata orbis Morrison
Obovaria subrotunda (Lea)

* Identification of food remains was made by the appropriate divisions of the U.S. National Museum, Washington, D.C. for which our sincere appreciation is again expressed.

Obovaria retusa (Lamarck)
Dromas dromus (Lea)
Lampsilis ovata (Say)
Dysnomia torulosa (Rafinesque)
Dysnomia cincinnatiensis (Lea)?
Dysnomia flexuosa (Rafinesque)
Campeloma ponderosum (Say)
Oxytrema canaliculatum (Say)

ARTIFACTS FROM THE BINTZ SITE

Nonceramic remains from the Bintz site are typical of those found throughout most of the eastern half of the United States. Projectile points, either whole or identifiable fragments, show that the predominate type is the simple isosceles triangle (65 per cent) with the remainder being simple stemmed or notched types. Material used was flint in one form or another. Considerable refuse cannel coal indicates that this material was plentiful and used by the Indians for many purposes. One finished pendant, shaped like a bear claw, was found, as well as one of similar shape but unfinished. One half of a double conoidal pipe of this material and one semi-circular, flat piece complete the list of objects made of this material. Numerous broken celt blades found on the surface, including some incomplete specimens, indicate that these tools were made and used on the site in considerable numbers. The lack of grooved axes is indicated by the absence of fragments thereof.

The single copper bead found is made of sheet copper folded to make a bead of roughly triangular cross-section. The bead is 16 mm. long, while the cross-section is 5 mm. wide and 7 mm. high.

The great number of bone implements found seems to coincide with the similar condition found at other Fort Ancient aspect sites, especially those at Madisonville and Fox Farm. Beamers and fragments are plentiful, as are bone awls made of deer and turkey bone joints. Beads made from hollow bird bones and from segments of antler are common. Antler arrow-points, including specimens in various stages of manufacture are common, a total of 14 being found. Turtle shell fragments were numerous, but no indication of their use as rattles or cups was observed. Perforated deer phalanges show their use in games or as "tinklers." Bear, raccoon and elk teeth perforated for suspension were also found.

Pottery from the Bintz site falls within the pattern of the Madisonville focus as outlined by Griffin (1943). With the exception of the sherds of negative-painted ware, all of the common types at the Bintz site have been adequately described and named by Griffin. These types as determined from rim sherds at the Bintz site are: Madisonville cordmarked (46 per cent), Fox Farm Bowls (33 per cent), Fox Farm salt pans (6 per cent), net- or cord-impressed salt pans (3 per cent), Indeterminate (12 per cent). Of the Fox Farm Bowls some forty per cent are cord-impressed on exterior surfaces, five per cent are plain exteriors with negative-painted designs on interior surfaces, while the remaining fifty-five per cent is made up of plain surfaced ware. Most Fox Farm bowls show rounded bottoms, though one surface find shows a flat bottom on a plain Fox Farm Bowl. No body sherds were found which could be definitely ascribed to Madisonville Plain as described by Griffin. Twenty-five hundred and fifty-two body sherds were found, washed and examined. All proved to be either cordmarked, or were recognizable as parts of Fox Farm Bowls (plain).

Pottery handles and fragments found seem identical to those found at Madisonville and may be ascribed to Madisonville Cordmarked bowls. Lugs found on Fox Farm bowls are limited to simple horizontal rounded lugs at lip level. Effigies found seem to be from Fox Farm Bowls exclusively and consist of bird heads, a snake head, a flying mammal of some sort, and a fragmentary ornament resembling a saddle or a "setting" hen.

Five pottery disks of unknown use were found, as were similar disks of flat stone, usually limestone. The pottery disks are usually made of cordmarked ware and vary from 40 to 55 mm. in diameter.

A very few grit-tempered sherds were found in the excavations at the upper village and on the surface. These sherds are usually small

and are mixed with the shell-tempered sherds in the midden. They are simple, cordmarked sherds with undifferentiated rims, which are square in cross-section. The tempering material used is usually angular pieces of limestone 2-3 mm. across.

The object listed as a pottery "Awl" is triangular in shape, about 5 cm. long, 2 cm. wide at the base with a point forming an angle of about 10 degrees. The point is polished entirely around, and the polishing extends halfway along the sides of the triangle.

The one fragment of a steatite pot and the circumstances under which found raise problems in age and source which cannot be solved at the present time. Steatite is so scarce in sites in northern Kentucky that several local collectors asked state that they have never seen such pot fragments.

Thus, the Bintz site is a small component of the Madisonville focus of the Fort Ancient aspect. The village consists of two portions: one at the river's edge at the mouth of Twelve-Mile Creek; and the other on higher ground, out of reach of ordinary floods, yet still adjacent to both the Ohio River and Twelve-Mile Creek. The cultural material removed from the site consisted of a study sample only, and the bulk of the site remains for future students. The paucity of village sites in the northern peninsula of Kentucky as compared to the profusion of such sites on the Ohio side of the Ohio River, however, renders the Bintz site an important addition to the complex of sites comprising the Madisonville focus.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GRIFFIN, JAMES B.

1943. *The Fort Ancient Aspect*, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

379 Harriet Street
Winona, Minnesota
April, 1952