

## Book Review

# THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF OHIO by Robert N. Converse

Seldom in one's lifetime does a book like *The Archaeology of Ohio* come along. This nearly 400 page hardbound book stands alone as the complete account of Ohio's prehistoric cultures from the time of the Ice Age PaleoAmericans of 12,000 years ago to the first incursions of the European explorers. The book is replete with 84 color plates, and hundreds of photographs and drawings of sites, artifacts, maps and accounts of archaeological investigations in Ohio and surrounding states.

Few people, professional or amateur, could have written this book. Converse's lifetime of familiarity with Ohio's prehistoric cultures and thirty or more years as Editor of *The Ohio Archaeologist* have uniquely equipped him to write such a book. His expertise with the artifacts and sites of Ohio prehistoric peoples and the remains they left behind are encapsulated in a book only he could have compiled. Written in a language readable by students, archaeologists and the general public alike, *The Archaeology of Ohio* presents for the first time a comprehensive picture of the 12,000 year long saga of the prehistoric peoples of the Ohio area and the impact exerted by Ohio's cultures on other groups in eastern North America.

Current theories on when and how the first humans entered the New World 12,000 years ago – or before – are discussed, as is the current controversy on study of human remains of this period. Early excavations at the Clovis, Folsom and Naco Mammoth sites are contrasted with evidence of this period found in Ohio. The first human penetration into the Ohio area by Ice Age PaleoAmericans is explained and Ohio's known PaleoAmerican sites and artifacts are illustrated. Numerous Ohio fluted points and tools are pictured in color and black and white.

Theories on the end of the Late Paleo or Plano period are offered. The Sawmill, Stringtown and other Plano habitation sites are illustrated and mapped. Oddities and peculiarities such as the nearly exclusive use of low quality cherts and flints by Plano flint workers, except for certain artifacts, are noted.

Artifacts and sites of the Early Archaic period are illustrated. They detail the introduction of new kinds of projectile points and tools – and perhaps new people – who left evidence over all Ohio and the Midwest.

The Middle Archaic cultures of the Ohio – little investigated and long neglected in archaeological literature – are discussed. The literal explosion during the Middle Archaic period of new kinds of artifacts, including the introduction of ground stone tools, atlatl weights and ceremonial objects, is explained. Theories are offered on the obvious Middle Archaic emphasis on ceremonialism as evidenced by the sometimes spectacular and unique objects created by Archaic craftsmen and women. The function or use of these objects, and the societal organization which produced them, are theorized.

The Glacial Kame, Red Ocher and other Late Archaic cultures and the florescence of Late Archaic burial ritual are explained in detail. New information on Red Ocher evidence in Ohio and

the little known Ashtabula presence in north-eastern Ohio is published for the first time.

Extensive discussion of the Adena people provides new understanding of the first mound building culture in North America. Adena sites, mounds, and artifacts are illustrated, and Converse's understanding of the several century relationship between Ohio Adena and the Ohio Hopewell culture is addressed. What happened to Adena and where did they go? Sites and artifacts of Adena in other areas and on the Atlantic Coast, including how they got there, are presented.

Ohio Hopewell, the most advanced prehistoric group in North America, and the earthworks, mounds, hilltop forts, village sites and artifacts of this powerful culture are pictured and discussed in detail. Did you know, for example, that nearly all Hopewell earthwork circles are on the west sides of these constructions? Did you know that the so called Hopewell trade network might not be a trade network at all but an acquisitions or tribute system? Did you know that Ross County, Ohio, may have been the center of what Converse calls the Hopewell universe? Did you know that not all Hopewell earthen constructions are geometric and some may have been built to simply enclose mortuary sites? Did you know that one of the most important of all Hopewell constructions – enormous cat effigies made of stone – were deliberately destroyed? These and other provocative questions on the organization of Hopewell society are explored and hundreds of Hopewell exotic artifacts are shown.

What about the mysterious Intrusive Mound culture? Who were they and where does this little known culture fit in the Ohio picture? What do their artifacts look like and where are their sites? All these questions are investigated in depth.

The Mississippian period, that explosive five or six centuries before the intrusion of European explorers when the Fort Ancient, Whittlesey, Sandusky and Monongahela cultures prevailed, is explored and their sites and artifacts are illustrated. What happened to these prolific cultures – why had they disappeared by the early 1600s? These and other questions on the end of the prehistoric period are discussed.

Because of my background as an educator, I see the importance, even the urgency, of revealing the story of the amazing past of Ohio. *The Archaeology of Ohio* opens a window through which everyone can see, to appreciate and support the science of the past in all its forms. This is a story of the evolution of tool types, the creation of art objects, and the changes involved in cultural development that pertain not just to the earliest Ohioans but to all humanity. *The Archaeology of Ohio* tells the history of all of us.

For those who want to know about the cultures that inhabited the Ohio area for 12,000 years, what their sites are like and the spectacular artifacts which originated with them, *The Archaeology of Ohio* will be a standard text.

All in all, Converse has written a major contribution to the understanding of the prehistory of the Ohio area. It is a provocative and insightful

book – one that everyone interested in Ohio's past will find indispensable.

Elaine Holzapfel

## COMMENTS

... let me congratulate you on this great project. This will be one of the best, if not the best, contributions to Ohio prehistory ever. I don't know too many people who would even attempt such a project covering the entire Ohio area. The field certainly needs a book like this.

Jeff Carskadden  
New Carlisle, Ohio

Finally, a comprehensive collection of Ohio archaeology data gathered in a well illustrated and easy to read format. The book was a long time coming but well worth the wait. This is the crowning achievement of Bob Converse, Editor of the *Ohio Archaeologist* and author of several other books on archaeology.

Dr. David Cox  
Greenville, Ohio

Converse's *The Archaeology of Ohio* is a welcome and important contribution to the Archaeology of Ohio. This is the first comprehensive synthesis of Ohio archaeology published in almost 100 years. The author has pulled together over four decades of his personal research based upon his unique perspective as Editor of the *Ohio Archaeologist*. This has permitted him the breadth and experience to complete such a daunting task. The coverage of the entire state of Ohio is exhaustive and all prehistoric periods are addressed from the first Paleo-American habitations until historic times.

The many illustrations and rare, previously unpublished photographs alone are worth the price. This book is a must for any professional or avocational archaeologist, collector, historian, or anyone interested in Ohio's fascinating prehistory. The book is also relevant to all the surrounding areas and states, showing the relationship of such important cultural manifestations as Adena and Hopewell within their local and regional contexts. The book is priced very reasonably for a hardbound edition of its size and has been printed on quality paper. I recommend this book for anyone remotely interested in archaeology.

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Your manuscript is a remarkable document and will be much used and appreciated.

Michael Gramly  
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