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THE RUINS OF A PREHISTORIC HOUSE IN
HOWARD COUNTY, NEBRASKA

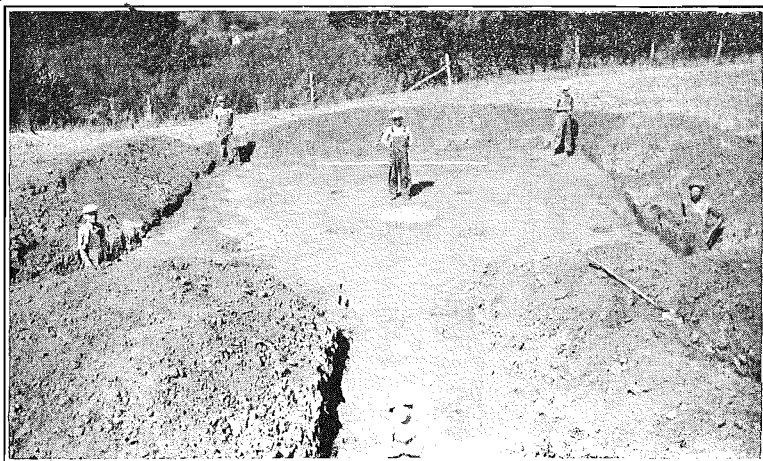
By A. T. Hill, Hastings, Nebraska

In the fertile valley of the North Loup, on the banks of Munson Creek, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Through the hospitality of Mr. and Mrs.

Lehn we were invited to enter the Pre-Columbian home of the farmer who lived on this land in the days for which we have no written record. The roof had fallen in long years ago, not the slightest part of the walls remained, yet to Mr. Lehn and sons this house was discernable by the dark depressed circle and elongated doorway of the lodge.

On former visits to the Lehn home I had expressed my belief that an early Indian village might be found on their farm and had answered to the best of my ability all their questions as to the most satisfactory method of excavating a prehistoric house site. I was very pleased to accept their invitation to come up and work with them during the period of any such excavation. In accordance with such a plan Mr. J. C. Samms of Hastings, Ivan E. Jones,



Prehistoric House Site on Lehn Farm, just after excavation.
Mr. Wm. Lehn in center, one of the Lehn boys in each corner.

assistant Superintendent of the Nebraska State Historical Society, and myself, arrived at the Lehn home on September 12, 1932. Here on the west half of the northeast quarter of section 11, range 7, township 15, Mr. Lehn and sons had opened the doorway of this ancient lodge and removed the dirt to within three or four inches of the floor level. Over the line of post holes they were down to where evidence of the old posts began to show and had a number of them marked.

A very beautiful piece of work it was, which delighted us, not only for the large amount of careful work they had done in removing the dirt. but especially because they had stopped work at this point so as not to destroy any of the evidence, which might yield knowledge of its former occupants, and awaited our arrival.

Here fifteen yards south of the twelve foot bank of Munson Creek, which has since changed its course to about one hundred yards north, was the old house site. The lodge was of the square house type, measuring 27 feet from east to west and 33 feet from north to south. The 76 post holes located showed the east and west wall lines to run almost true north and south. The entrance faced the south. The floor was level, as shown by use of the surveyor's transit. Its variation in depth from the present surface was eight inches on the north to 22 inches on the west and south. This difference was caused by the north slope on which the house was built. In the center of the house were the four center poles, forming a square surrounding the fire place, which was 42 inches in diameter and 6 inches deep.

There was nothing found to indicate contact with the white-man. No evidence of the use of horses. These things and the general condition of the ruins and the surrounding territory very strongly evidence a thriving village here when Columbus discovered America. These rolling lands, skirting the banks of Munson Creek, with its numerous shaded rills furnishing excellent stalking places for game, in the center of rich grazing territory, would have been an ideal home for primitive man.

The house was evidently destroyed by fire, soon after being vacated, or the occupants had been successful in removing all their desired belongings before the house burned down. There were no pots in pot holes, no whole vessels of any kind, or useful implements of any consequence, and the ground was well mixed with charcoal.

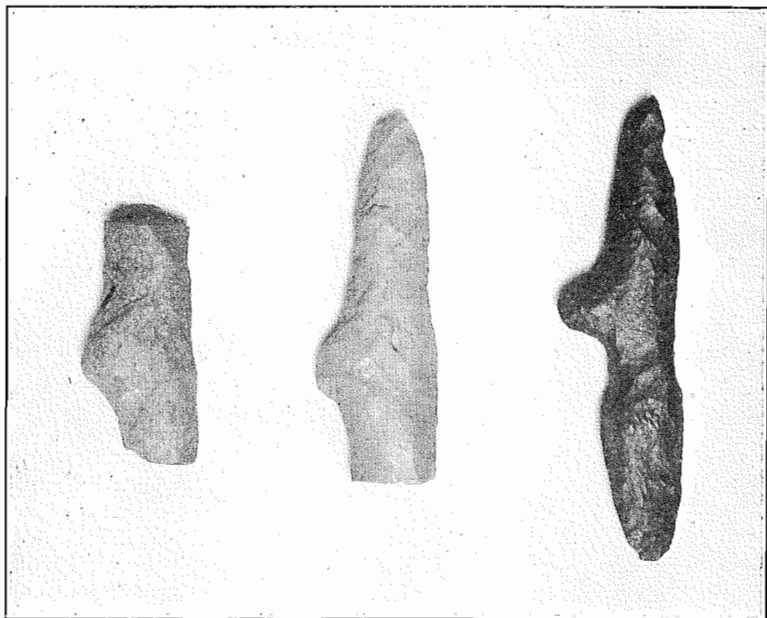
One of the important finds in the house was a ground, granite celt, a type very uncommon in this territory, though abundant east of the Missouri river. Numerous pieces of broken pottery and some pieces of flint were found. Four caches were unearthed, ranging in size from 16 inches across and 24 inches deep to 36 inches across and 44 inches deep. The top part of all of these was filled with the charcoal-mixed roof material indicating their use by the occupants of this house.

Cache number one was slightly jug shaped, with rounded bottom, 40 inches across and 38 inches deep. The first 18 inches was filled with the dark dirt mixed with charcoal, broken flints and pottery. The remaining 20 inches was full of very fine white ashes, containing very little charcoal. In the ashes were found an arrow shaft straightener, made of Elk horn, some nice potsherds and flint chips and several charred grains of corn, indicating that the people who lived here so many years before were of the agricultural class.

The other three caches yielded broken pieces of pottery, flint chips and the charcoal-mixed dirt, no ashes. From this material and their size we were able to tell they were caches from which

the family had evidently been able to remove all desirable material before the house came down.

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New Types of Indian Flint at Stinking Water. These are different from any hitherto found in Nebraska. Mr. Olmsted suggests they might be used for buffalo robe "buttons."

ANCIENT INDIAN VILLAGE ON STINKING WATER

By R. E. Olmsted, Imperial, Nebraska

For some time I have been deeply interested in the old Texas Trail, and have studied its relation to the early history of western Nebraska. This interest and study has been shared by two friends of mine, Nelson Burham and Leland Peterson, who join with me in making this report on another project.

During the spring of 1931 we were engaged in retracing the route of this great highway of the past as its tortuous path route wound along the Stinking Water, in eastern Chase County. At the time this report begins, we were trying to locate the site of a certain cattle camp on the Texas Trail. There was a difference of opinion among us, as to the exact spot occupied by the log trading-post and saloon, so we sought further information from an old ranchman who had lived in this community for many years.