



## The Archeological Campaign of 1937: Osborne Site

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Full Citation: “The Archeological Campaign of 1937: Osborne Site,” *Nebraska History* 18 (1937): 334-338

Article Summary: This is one of a series of 1937 archeological site reports that can be accessed individually. The series includes: [Ashland Site](#), [Pawnee Creek Site](#), [Cornish Site](#), [Fontenelle Forest Site](#), [North Plattsmouth Site](#), [Majors Site](#), [Williams Site](#), [Heywood Site](#), [Osborne Site](#), [Whitten Site](#), [Morehead Site](#), [Indian Cave](#), [McKissick Site](#), [Conclusion](#).

Cataloging Information:

Photographs / Images: House 1, survey camp at Brownville, ground plan of House 1

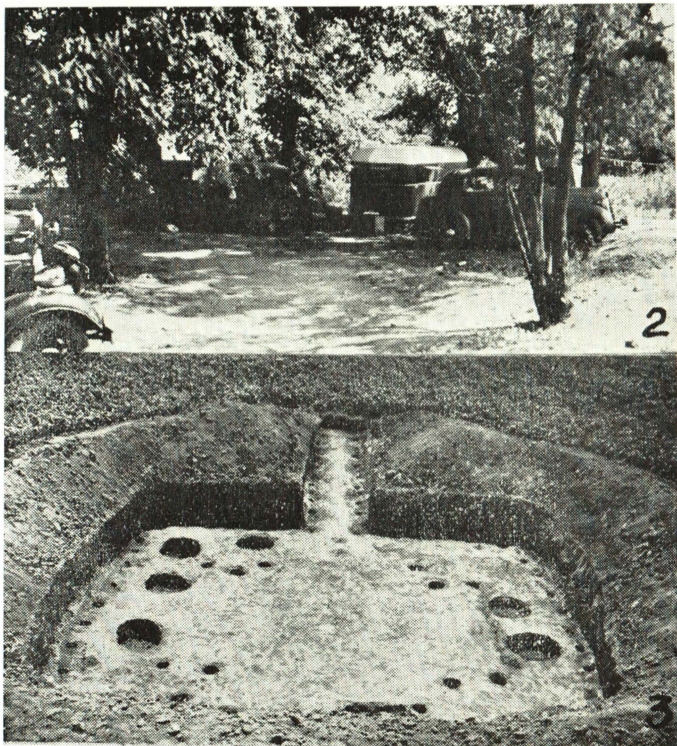


PLATE XX—2, 3

3. House 1, Osborne Site. Entrance to south.
2. Survey camp at Brownville.

### OSBORNE SITE

Camp was removed from Peru to Brownville, which served as the field headquarters for the remainder of the intensive investigations, consisting of the excavation of two burial sites and a lodge site.

The house excavated was situated on the river bluffs north of Brownville on a slight slope to the south and in a field in which prolonged cultivation had all but obliterated the original depression. Constructed in an approximately square, straight-walled pit with dimensions of 31 and 32 feet, and a depth of 48 inches, the lodge faced to the south, in which direction extended an entrance passage 4 feet wide and 19 feet long (Plate XX, 3). Well inside the walls of the pit was a line of rather regularly spaced posts, and four main center posts stood from 9 to 9½ feet from the house center. Flanking each of these large uprights were two somewhat smaller posts, which appear also to have served in the support of the roof. From the walls the floor sloped down to the central fireplace, which was a shallow depression 42 inches in diameter and 3 inches in depth filled with wood ashes.

It was obvious from the charcoal in the post moulds and in the fill that the house had burned, and it is to this fact that we owe a few details of the roof construction. Lying north and south in the west half of the house was a charred timber, whose ends rested near the northwest and the southwest center posts, a position which suggests that it was a horizontal beam supported by those two posts. Across it at a point near the north end lay the remains of a small timber, probably a roof pole, and near it a smaller pole was overlaid by a layer of blue-stem grass.

Beneath the floor near all four walls were dug cache-pits, of which there were eight in all. In vertical section they had the usual jugged form, but in horizontal outline some were of the common circular type and

others were oval with their long axes parallel with the walls near which they were situated. The fill in the pits was almost invariably a dark soil heavily loaded with organic material, but Cache 7 apparently was used as a receptacle for sweepings from the fireplace, for a deposit of ashes 23 inches thick lay above its floor.

Of the pottery specimens found, 85 are rim sherds and handles and 1296 are body fragments, of which total approximately 64 per cent are grit-tempered and the remainder originally contained shell fragments. In the pottery from the pits the shell is usually still present, but it has been almost invariably leached out of that from the fill above the house floor, leaving thin flat cells

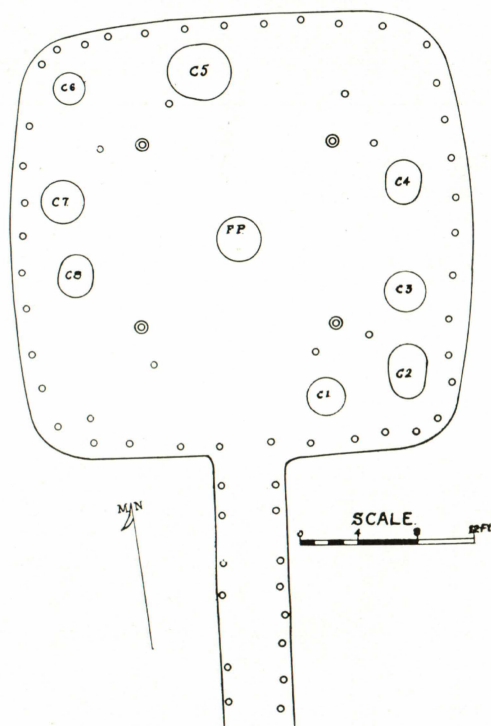


FIGURE 9. Ground plan of House 1, Osborne Site. O, post moulds; double circles, center post moulds; C1-C8, cache-pits; F. P., fireplace; ..... , edge of house pit.



which in general lie parallel with the surfaces. The exterior surfaces are usually smooth, traces of the application of a cord-wrapped paddle, usually rather well smoothed over, appearing on only 30 per cent of the grit-tempered and 22 per cent of the shell-tempered sherds. The surface color, which is frequently obscured by the discoloration from the cooking fire, is predominantly a grayish-brown, although the total range includes gray and a dull orange-red. A globular vessel with a constricted neck and moderately flaring rim of varying height appears to be the sole form except for an extremely rare bowl. Handles are indicated by the nineteen in the collection as of both loop and perforated lug varieties, the former most numerous, placed in pairs on the pots. Decoration of any kind occurs on very few sherds; in ten cases the rim exterior is slightly notched or scalloped near the lip and three body sherds are crudely incised.

Aside from numerous retouched flakes, chipped flint artifacts fall into three classes only. Side-notched and unnotched forms are equally numerous among the 22 small triangular projectile points, none of which has more than two notches. The other flint implements are four end scrapers and three small straight drills with diamond shaped cross-sections. These latter are similar to the type of drills found most frequently by the survey in the Leary Site.<sup>49</sup>

Other stone objects were likewise not abundant: grooved and flat abraders of sandstone, rarely boat shaped or rectangular, being most frequently represented. A single ground celt fragment with elliptical cross-section and several pecking stones, rarely with pitted sides, are the only other implements of this material. Several fragments of hematite have been worked, but apparently only for the purpose of removing material for paint. As is almost invariably true in villages

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49. Hill and Wedel, 1936, p. 51 and Plate VIII.

along the Missouri River, fragments of pumice were present in the house, but here none appears to have been used.

Among the bone artifacts were four awls, three of which are made from the usual sections of animal long bone; the other, however, is made from a turkey bone—a trait unusual in this area. The almost omnipresent hoe made from bison shoulder blades is represented here by only a single specimen on which the joint has been left with no modification except for a slight battering of the glenoid border. Six deer jaws all exhibit a polish which is probably the result of use and are worked down on the end; in addition, on two specimens, a shallow smoothly-worn groove extends diagonally across one surface from the back of the last molar. A small fish hook and a spoon, shaped from the skull of a deer, were also recovered, while a small cylinder of the type common in Nebraska sites is the only artifact of antler.

Shell work included a fragment with a large central perforation which apparently was a hoe, and nine slender tapering sections perforated at the larger end. These pendants have been reported from sites well distributed over the state, occurring in upper Republican components in south central and northeastern Nebraska,<sup>50</sup> and in Nebraska aspect sites along the Missouri River.<sup>51</sup>

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