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CERAMICS AND CHRONOLOGY AT THE STEPHAN-STEINKAMP SITE (12 PO 33): THE 1986 IU/GBL FIELDSCHOOL EXCAVATIONS

The 1986 Indiana University Archaeological Field School was co-sponsored by Indiana University, the Glenn A. Black Laboratory of Archaeology, and the Indiana Historical Society. Excavations were conducted at the Stephan-Steinkamp site (12 Po 33) in southeastern Posey County, Indiana. This site is thought to have been an early Angel phase Mississippian village located approximately 300 feet north of the Ohio River on a slight rise on the floodplain.

A surface survey was conducted to determine the site boundaries as defined by the surface distribution of shell-tempered pottery and to prepare a topographic map of the site. A controlled surface collection was made along a north-south transect on the western side of the site. This collection was analyzed to select units for excavation. An area of 1000 square feet was opened by hand, and an additional area of 800 square stripped of plowzone by backhoe and mapped. A backhoe trench was used to test for a stockade line on the northern end of the transect.

The excavations uncovered portions of at least four houses, several associated pit features, and a dog burial. One large pit produced wood charcoal which gave a radiocarbon date of 1230 +/- 60 BP (AD 625 - 895 corrected, 95% confidence limits) and two sherds from a globular shell-tempered jar which provided thermoluminescence dates of 940 +/- 160 BP and 860 +/- 230 BP (mean date of AD 1050 with a pooled variance of +/- 280). The backhoe trench located a clearly defined feature which may represent the remains of a stockade line on the northern border of the site. Grog-tempered pottery of the emergent Mississippian Yankeetown phase was recovered in both the controlled surface and in the excavated collections, but Yankeetown occupation features were not identified by excavation.

The shell-tempered ceramics from the excavated units represent a homogeneous assemblage. Its diagnostic elements are loop handles and cord marking below the necks of some globular jars.

Fabric-impressed "salt pans" are also present. The assemblage appears similar to early or pre-Kincaid phase ceramic assemblages in the lower Tennessee-Cumberland River Valleys of Kentucky and the Black Bottom of southern Illinois. Non-ceramic artifacts are generic Mississippian types.

In conclusion, the 1986 Indiana University Archaeological Field School excavations at the Stephan-Steinkamp site (12 Po 33) have demonstrated that a portion of the site represents the remains of an early Angel phase occupation similar to other early Mississippian occupations in adjacent areas which have been assigned dates of occupation around AD 1050.
