

# **Preliminary Report of 2012 Investigations at Kincaid Mounds Historic Site**

by

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## Introduction

The 2012 excavations by SIU at Kincaid focused on two parts of the site (see Figure 1). One focus was a low topographic rise northwest of the large Mx<sup>o</sup>10 mound. Test excavations on this rise were intended to reveal whether it is an artificial mound or a natural rise. Anticipating that it would be confirmed as a mound, we designated this area the “Douglas Mound,” named for the family that farmed and owned this portion of the site from the late 1930s to the time it came under IHPA control. The second focus was a location near the center of the site, inside the ring of large mounds. This area has long been called the “main plaza” and magnetometry suggests that the northern portion of it, near Mx<sup>o</sup>10, has few features. However, there is one area, about 10 x 14 m, that shows a high magnetic signature as if there were a large burned building out in this plaza. Our excavations on this magnetic anomaly were designated as the “Plaza 2012” excavation area.

As we had expected, the Douglas Mound is an artificial mound or platform. It was constructed in at least two episodes. We found evidence of buildings beneath the mound, and on the first mound summit. We also encountered a feature that suggests there was prehistoric architecture atop the second mound summit, though because of modern intrusions it is not certain that this feature is indeed prehistoric. Based on the presence of Late Kincaid pottery diagnostics in both the first-stage and second-stage mound fills, the mound was built during Late Kincaid times.

The large magnetic anomaly in the plaza is indeed the remains of a large burned building. Although that much is certain, we were left with a number of puzzles about this building. At the north and south edges of the building’s floor, we did not encounter any walls, and remain uncertain whether there were any walls on these sides. The floor itself is composed of an unusual “dusky red” (that is the Munsell name) sediment, but we do not know where this sediment came from (or what was done to it to make it this color). The floor itself is built atop about 20 cm of fill, but we do not know the spatial extent of the fill. It could be fill inside a basin that is considerably larger than the burned building, or it could be a low and now-invisible mound, or it may indicate that the plaza area was intentionally filled to create a level surface. The building was cleaned out and at least partly dismantled before being burned, and in the absence of chronologically diagnostic artifacts we do not know what the date of this building is.

In addition to training students in excavation methods, we had every student spend at least two days using the total station and prism pole. This gave them experience using the instrument, and contributed to our ongoing project to prepare a new topographic map of the IHPA-owned portion of the site.

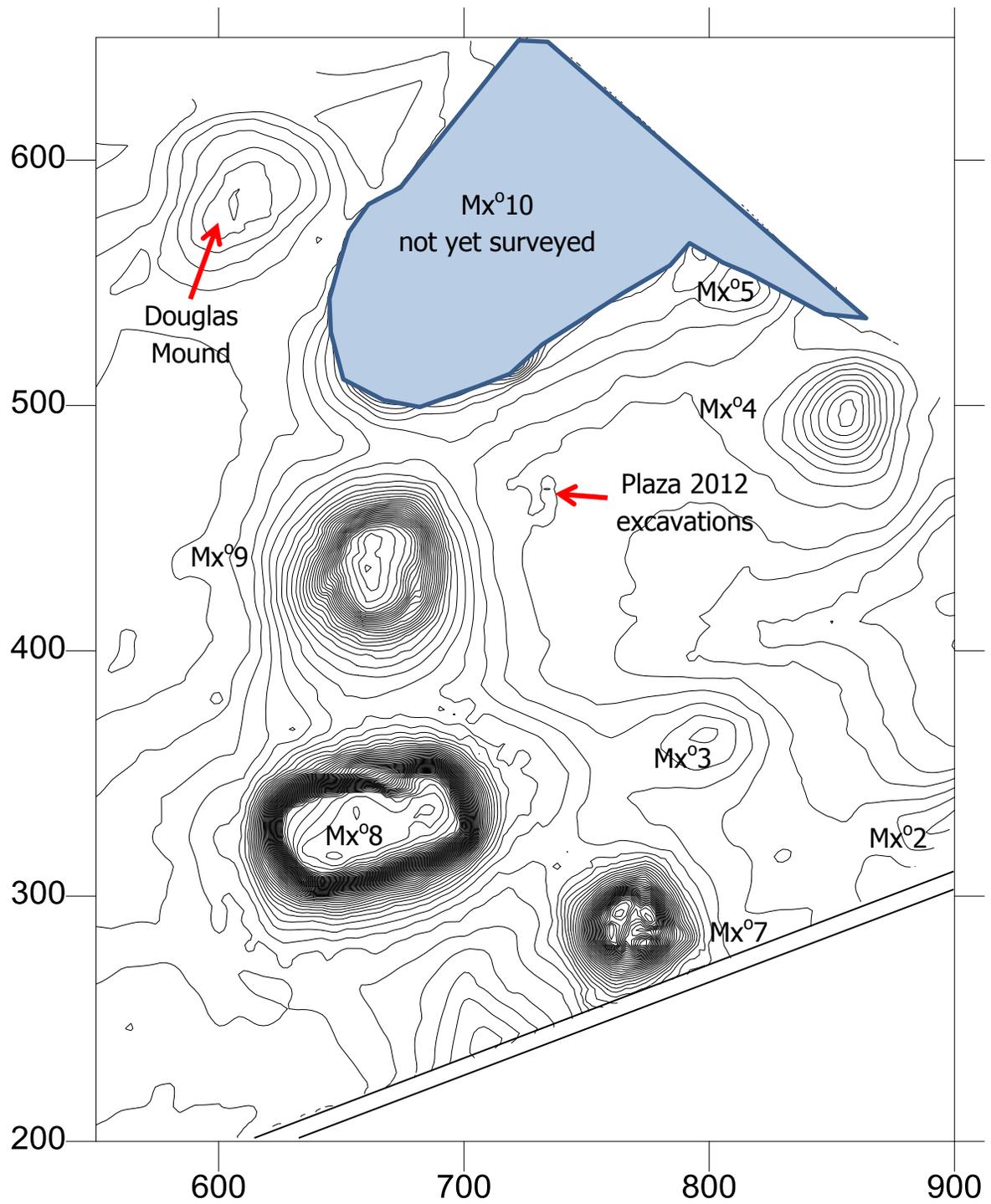


Figure 1. Locations of the 2012 excavations, shown on SIU topographic map of the central portion of the site with 20 cm contour interval.

## **Fieldwork statistics and personnel**

### **Dates of fieldwork**

The fieldwork was carried out in two sessions: the first session ran from May 21 through June 15; the second ran from June 18 through July 13.

### **Units excavated**

Douglas Mound: Three 1 x 2 m units (E600 N570, E600 N574, E600 N578) were excavated along a N-S line, with 2-m gaps between the units. Three 2 x 2 m units (E601 N568, E608 N576, E608 N582) were also opened.

Plaza 2012: Seven 2 x 2 m units were excavated; six of them along a N-S line that crossed the magnetic anomaly (E734 N454, E734 N456, E734 N458, E734 N46, E734 N464, E734 N466), with the seventh unit (E736 N456) extending east from one of these N-S units.

### **Total labor**

1. SIU crew (13), teaching assistants (2), and instructor (1) for session 1: 320 person-days
2. SIU crew (14, but 2 had health issues that curtailed their participation), teaching assistants (2), and instructor (1) for session 1: 285 person-days
3. Volunteers: approx. 25 person days

Labor was provided by the SIU archaeological field methods class, taught as two sessions each four weeks long, back-to-back. The course instructor was Paul D. Welch, Assoc. Prof. of Anthropology at SIU. There were two teaching assistants: Brandy Dacus, a doctoral student at SIU who was also a teaching assistant on the Kincaid excavation last summer; and Wesley Jackson, a Masters student at SIU. A third graduate (Masters) student, Rosanna Crow, was not formally a teaching assistant but often functioned in this capacity. Several people from the Paducah/Brookport/Metropolis area volunteered labor for parts of one or more days. We were visited frequently by members of the Kincaid Mounds Support Organization, several of whom plied us with much-appreciated iced water and Gatorade during this extraordinarily hot, dry summer. The Boy Scouts of Troop 314, Chester, IL, led by Joe Bohnert (Scoutmaster), worked on the site for 2 ½ days.

## **Methods**

The excavation units were labeled by the coordinates of their southwestern corners, using the site grid that we established in 2003. The locations for most of these designator corners were shot in by a total station that was set on one of the site's permanent grid stakes, although in three instances the units were located by taped triangulation from the corners of nearby excavation

units. Subsequently, three-dimensional coordinates for all corners of every excavation unit were shot in by total station, as part of our topographic mapping project. The actual process of excavation on the Douglas Mound differed slightly from that in the Plaza, so these will be described separately.

On the Douglas Mound, we mostly excavated by 10-cm arbitrary horizontal levels. The levels of the three 1 x 2 m units along a N-S line, and for an adjacent 2 x 2 m unit, were measured “below datum” with the datum defined as ground surface at the southwest corner of the lowest unit. In these four units, therefore, “20 cmbd” signifies the same absolute elevation. This system was used so that it would be easier to understand how depths in one unit compared to depths in the others. Although the lower levels were excavated to have horizontal bases, in these three 1 x 2 m units the first layer was removed with a base parallel to the (sloping) surface. This first layer was the modern, cultivation-disturbed layer, i.e., plow zone. Two 2x2 m units were placed closer to the mound’s center, inside the area once covered by the barn that was built in 1937. There was no plowzone at all here, though the top few cm were disturbed by bioturbation from plant growth and extensive rodent burrowing. In these two units, the excavation proceeded entirely by 10-cm-thick arbitrary levels. The modern ground surface in these units, though irregular, was roughly horizontal, and all excavation levels were removed to a horizontal base. We used shovels for much of the Douglas Mound excavation, but the remarkably high density of pottery sherds and animal bones often led us to switch to either trowels or splints of cane. All excavated sediment was screened through ¼-inch mesh. Features were excavated separately, with flotation samples saved and the remainder of the sediment screened. Vertical sections for all four sides of each excavation unit were cleaned, photographed, and drawn.

In the Plaza area, we began by removing the roughly 22-cm plowzone, which we did not screen. There are essentially no artifacts in the plowzone here, because the entire plowzone consists of post-occupation alluvium. The highest points of the remaining part of the burned building lie about 3 cm below the base of the plowzone, and the floor of the building lies 5-7 cm below the base of the plowzone. After the plowzone was removed and discarded, we next removed and screened the alluvium that blanketed the rubble of the burned building. We then removed and screened the rubble that lay atop the floor. In three units where we went below the floor, we excavated by arbitrary levels that were usually 10 cm thick. The one exception was an arbitrary level that was only 5 cm thick. Contents of a clay-lined hearth and another smaller clay-lined fire feature were removed separately and saved for flotation. Fill inside four large, deep pits for roof-support posts was removed was screened but in general we did not take flotation samples from these post pits. Vertical sections of at least two sides of each excavation unit were cleaned, photographed, and drawn.

The topographic mapping project recorded elevations for over 2700 points this summer. The points cover the entire plaza area; the Mx<sup>0</sup>2, Mx<sup>0</sup>3, Mx<sup>0</sup>4, Mx<sup>0</sup>5, Mx<sup>0</sup>9 and Douglas mounds; the areas between Mx<sup>0</sup>9 and Mx<sup>0</sup>10; and a strip running along the western and northern margin of Mx<sup>0</sup>10. The Mx<sup>0</sup>7 and Mx<sup>0</sup>8 mounds had been surveyed previously, and Mx<sup>0</sup>10 will be best accomplished early in the spring when the vegetation is low.

### **Excavations on the Douglas Mound**

The Douglas Mound today is a rise nearly 1 m high by 75 m across. Following the 1937 flood, the University of Chicago arranged for a barn to be built on top of this high spot. The structure was built for Mr. John Douglas, who at the time farmed and later owned the site, and who had lost his own barn in the flood. The photo archive of the UC project contains several images of the barn, one of which was taken during its construction (Figure 3). The barn had an elevated, wooden floor that was supported by a rectangular array of poured concrete piers. These had been poured in in-ground molds, each of which had a piece of iron rebar inserted vertically into the support. There were six rows of four piers each. This structure stood until after the state acquisition of the property in 1975, after which it was razed and some of the remaining debris burned on-site. This area slowly grew up in brush and, eventually, trees, and remained so until members of KMSO cleared the area in 2009-10 (Figures 3 and 4). The surface around some of the piers, especially near the south end, is very irregular with some significant depressions, probably reflecting burrowing by ground hogs under the structure. There is also some debris from the barn's destruction, including bits of sheet metal roofing, charred wood, glass, nails, etc. Because of the piers and the vegetation, this area was not included in our geophysical survey of the site (Butler et al. 2011).

Brian Butler, then a graduate student at SIUC, remembers seeing the structure during survey work in the early 70s. He recalls that numerous large plain potsherds were seen on the surface around the building. Jon Muller later learned from R. S. MacNeish that the barn was also used as a pottery sorting area during the last years of the Chicago excavations. In our excavation proposal we speculated that discard of plain potsherds by the Chicago excavators might explain the large number of sherds on the mound, but our excavations this summer suggest a different origin for the sherds. The mound is built of redeposited midden, some of which is extremely rich in artifacts. Exposure of this rich midden fill might be adequate to explain the abundance of sherds that Butler saw.

Because the mound was in pasture before the barn was built, and has not been plowed since then, the principal disturbance to the summit is extensive rodent burrowing and the excavation of the holes into which the piers were poured. The area under the barn roof seems to have been particularly attractive to rodents, from groundhog size on down to mice and moles. Stratigraphy and features here are severely compromised, with appreciable amounts of historic debris being

found even 80 cm below the surface. Outside the barn, disturbance is less extensive, and historic debris was rarely found more than 20 cm from surface.



Figure 2. Barn nearing completion in 1937 (UC negative Mx901, Illinois State Museum)

Because of the barn and the vegetation that grew up around it, most of the mound has never been plowed. In recent decades, the farmer's lease from IHPA stipulated that plowing is prohibited although a disk may be used. This limits the current agricultural disturbance to around 7 cm. Because of this, our first question—is it a mound or a natural feature—was answered within a few minutes of the start of excavation.

We began with three 1 x 2 m units running N-S along the E600 line, with 2-m spaces between the units (see Figure 4). This line marks the edge of our magnetometry coverage; we did not operate the instruments east of the E600 line because of the large amount of metal debris and the dense vegetation. The magnetometry showed high-value anomalies immediately to the west of our units, but it was not clear whether the anomalies came from subsurface prehistoric features or were magnetic fields from the historic metal nearby. Our units were outside of the footprint of the barn itself, and the surface has been disked and planted for some years by the current farmer. However, it appears that our units were so close to the barn that the ground here has never been plowed. Beneath 2 cm of flood deposits from 2011 and another 5 cm disturbed by diskings, the mound is intact. We saw the distinctive heterogeneous patches indicative of

basket-loaded mound fill (see Figure 5). We therefore had an answer to our first question—is it a mound or a natural feature—within 20 minutes of beginning excavation. Although it took longer to answer the next two questions, we did obtain clear answers to them also.



Figure 3. Douglas Mound area newly cleared in 2010, viewed from top of Mx<sup>0</sup>10.

Having shown that it is an artificial construction, the next question was whether the mound was built in one episode or more than one. After removing the layer of recent disturbance, we shifted to arbitrary horizontal levels. In the southernmost unit (E600 N570) at roughly 30 cm down we encountered a dramatic change in the sediments, with the unit divided into two zones that had fill different from each other and different from the overlying fill. Continued excavation showed that we had encountered the edge of a structure basin dating to an earlier mound stage (see Figure 6). The western part of the unit had intact Stage 1 fill, which at this location is mostly loam with moderate to abundant fired clay, charcoal, and artifacts. The eastern portion of the unit had sandy-to-silty sediments with not much fired clay, charcoal, or artifacts. This was fill inside the structure basin and the wall trench that lined the bottom edge of the basin. The Stage 1 summit is approximately 65 cm below the general level of the mound's current summit. The structure basin extends 26 cm below the Stage 1 surface, protruding a few centimeters into

the submound A horizon. Inspection of the profile suggests that at least some of the basin fill accumulated while the walls still stood, and that the posts were then dug out. However this may be over-interpreting evidence that is not as clear as could be wished. While we were excavating the deposit it was not apparent that we had both basin fill and wall trench fill until we reached the bottom of the basin, at which point the wall trench stood out clearly from the submound soil. Outside the structure basin, the submound A horizon has Stage 1 fill atop it, and there is no stratigraphic break between the submound surface that the Stage 1 summit.

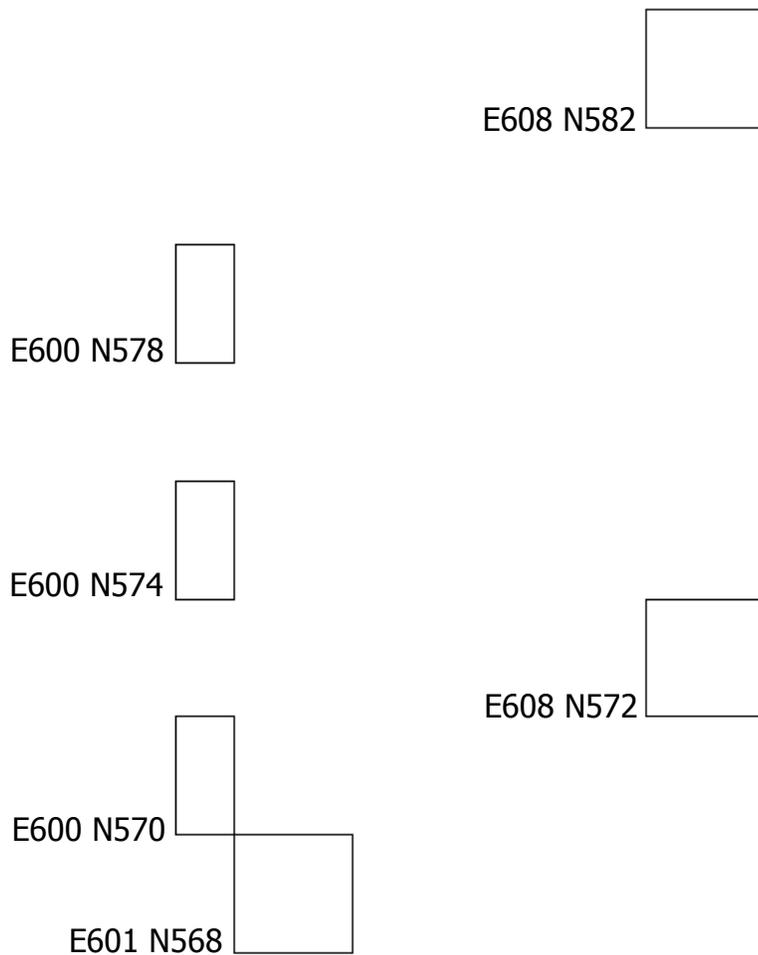


Figure 4. Excavation units on Douglas Mound.



Figure 5. Intact mound fill at 7 cmbs in unit E600 N574



Figure 6. North profile of unit E600 N570, showing Stage 1 wall trenches and structure basin.

In the next unit to the north, unit E600 N574, we did not observe any features on the Stage 1 summit, and indeed that surface would not have been perceived as a summit based only on what we saw in E600 N574. What we did find in this unit, however, is a feature beneath the Stage 1 mound. It appears that we caught a narrow slice off the southeast corner of a submound structure basin. The structure had burned, and the basin is lined with charcoal and fired clay fragments (see Figure 7). Given that so little of it is inside the excavation unit we cannot be sure it is in fact a structure basin instead of some smaller feature, but it is in perfect position to be the corner of a roughly rectangular, house-sized magnetic anomaly that is visible immediately to the west of this unit. We cannot be certain that the magnetic anomaly is caused by the fill inside a feature this deep, instead of a signal from the abundant artifacts higher up in the mound fill (e.g., the large sherds pedestalled along the walls, visible in Fig. 7). However, even if this is not a structure basin, we have evidence for another submound structure in the northernmost of our three 1 x 2 m units.



Figure 7. Submound structure basin in E600 N574.

Like the central unit, the northernmost unit (E600 N578) would not have persuaded us that there were two construction stages in the Douglas Mound. However, the unit did have clear evidence of a submound structure. At the base of the mound fill we encountered two parallel wall trenches intruding into the submound soil (see Figure 8). These originate at the submound surface. Unusual for Kincaid structures, there is no basin associated with these wall trenches. Both trenches had post holes that penetrated deeper than the general trench.



Figure 8. Wall trenches and an isolated post hole beneath the mound in unit E600 N578

After it was clear that unit E600 N570 had a Stage 1 wall trench running south-southeast out of the unit, we decided to open a 2 x 2 m unit that would expose more of the wall trench and the structure basin. The unit we opened was E601 N568. Excavations in the Stage 2 fill revealed sloping layers (see Figure 9) indicating that, at least on this part of the mound, the central portion of the Stage 2 summit was built and then this level was extended to the southeast. In the northeast corner of the unit we encountered a short segment of a wall trench that showed

evidence of burning (see Figure 10). We did not find a floor to go with this wall trench, indicating that the Stage 2 summit here has eroded away, been graded off, or been rendered invisible by bioturbation. Extremely high densities of artifacts in the Stage 2 fill here caused work to progress slowly, and we did not reach the Stage 1 summit.

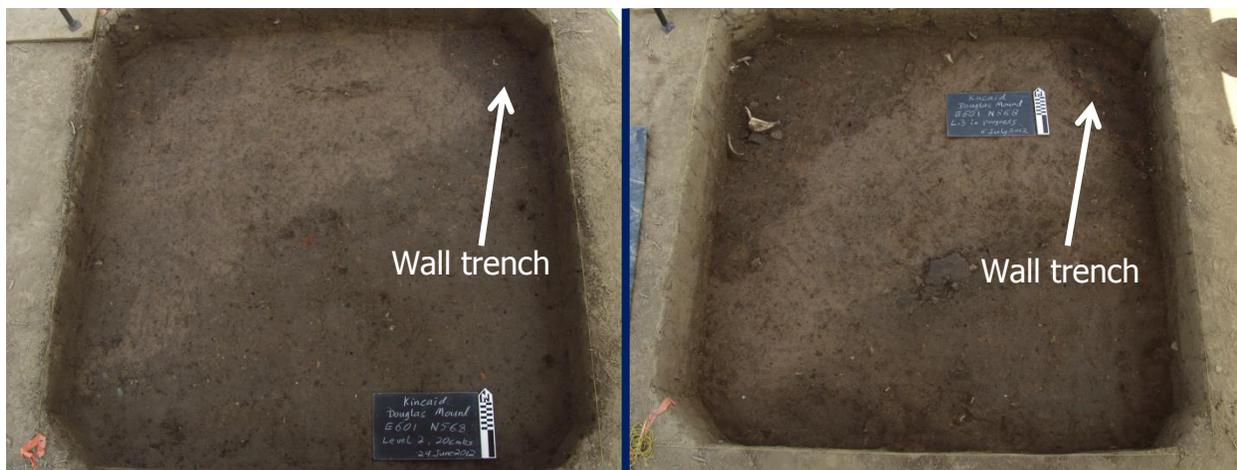


Figure 9. Excavation of E601 N568 showing sloping sediment zones shifting to southeast from base of level 2 (left) to part way through Level 3 (right).

The line of 1 x 2 m units was west of the center of the Douglas Mound. Desiring to see whether the same two-stage construction history would be present nearer the mound's center, we opened two 2 x 2 m units in the area formerly covered by the 1937 barn. One unit, E608 N576, was only excavated to 10 cmbs, and revealed nothing of note. The other unit, E608 N582, held part of a fired clay basin in the southeast corner. The outline of this basin was first seen at 18 cmbs (see Figure 11). The basin had sloping sides and a flat base. It appears to be a Mississippian prepared clay hearth, but there was historic metal and glass throughout the fill. Because there is no obvious explanation for why a historic hearth would be underneath the barn, and because this unit had very extensive rodent disturbance, we suspect the feature is a Stage 2 Mississippian hearth with historic artifacts introduced by pesky rodents.



Figure 10. Stage 2 wall trench in northeast corner of E601 N568.

As we excavated deeper in E608 N582 we continued to find extensive rodent disturbance both in the form of open tunnels, loose fill, and historic debris. Between 50 and 60 cm, much of the unit was filled with red fired clay. It may be that this is debris of a burned building on the Stage 1 summit, but the fired clay mostly was finely divided and was so riddled by rodent burrows that it was impossible to tell whether features were present. Because we were running short on time, at 60 cmbs we discontinued excavation in most of the unit and proceeded downward only in the southeast 1 x 1 m quadrant. This quadrant reached submound soil at around 80 cmbs, at which point a portion of a circular feature was visible. This feature was not excavated, and work in the unit terminated at this point.

Excavations on the Douglas Mound confirm that it is indeed a mound, although our work did not reveal its horizontal extent. The surface here had been occupied, with several structures present and midden materials in the A horizon. Then a low mound or platform 20 cm high was constructed of redeposited midden. At least one building was constructed in a basin on the Stage 1 summit. Subsequently, more midden, again with Early and Late diagnostics, was brought as fill to raise the platform to approximately 80 cm above the premound surface.

Selected artifacts from the Douglas Mound fill are shown in Figure 12. A short portion of a wall trench in one unit, and what appears to be a Mississippian clay-lined hearth in another unit indicate that one or more buildings stood on the Stage 2 summit. The buildings on both summits of the platform, and beneath the mound, were oriented parallel to (or at right angles to) the edge of Avery Lake, the orientation of most buildings and large mounds at the site. Unlike some other mounds at Kincaid where the final use-surface was capped by a final fill episode, the Douglas Mound does not appear to have been capped after its last use. The fill of both stages contained abundant artifacts and faunal remains, including both Early Kincaid and Late Kincaid pottery diagnostics. Some of the pottery is in fact very late, including a sherd from a Caborn-Welborn decorated vessel. The last use of the Douglas Mound summit may date to the final years of occupation at the site.



Figure 11. Outline of clay lined hearth in southeast corner of E608 N582.



Figure 12. Selected artifacts from Douglas Mound fill: two side-notched arrowheads; drilled canine; bone pins; strap handle on Matthews Incised jar; interior of negative painted plate.

## Excavations in the plaza

Magnetometry survey of the area bounded by mounds Mx<sup>9</sup>, Mx<sup>10</sup>, Mx<sup>5</sup>, and Mx<sup>4</sup> shows the area to be largely devoid of anomalies. The one exception is a strong anomaly measuring roughly 10 x 14 m (see A in Figure 13). In our previous work at Kincaid, the high magnetism indicated by the black shade in the image has usually been caused by the debris of a burned building. If what we see in the image is remains of a single building, it would be unusually large, matched in size only by the buildings atop several stages of the Mx<sup>4</sup> and Mx<sup>7</sup> mounds (Cole et al. 1951:74-85; Brennan 2007). Ever since we obtained this image in 2004, we have speculated that this is some kind of large, important “public” building situated in an open plaza. Excavations in 2012 confirmed that it is indeed a large burned building, but our work raised more questions than it answered.

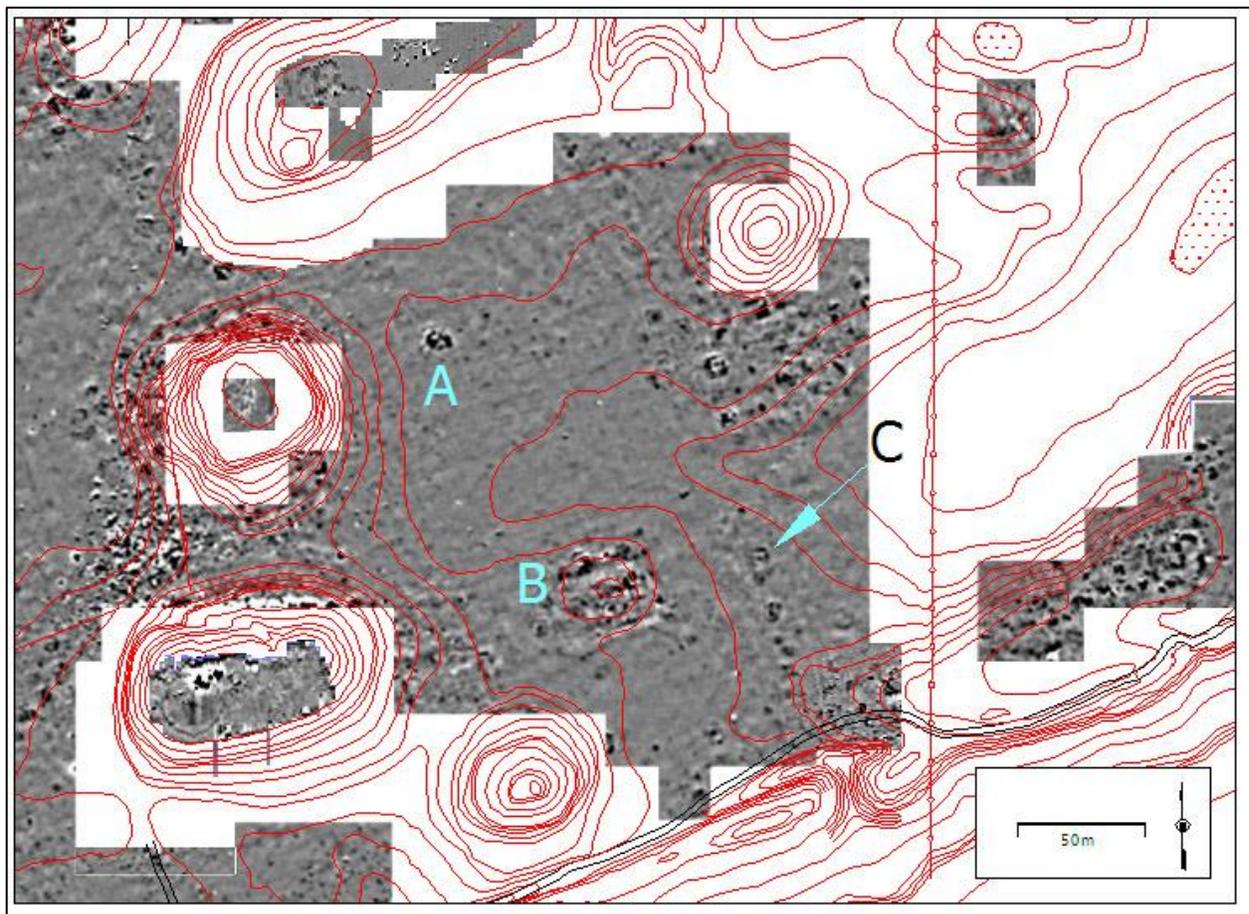


Figure 13. Geophysical coverage of plaza overlaid on Chicago topographic map. **A** indicates the anomaly thought to be the burned structure. Image adapted from Butler et al. (2011: Fig. 12).

We began work by laying out a grid of 2 x 2 m units over the area of the magnetic anomaly. Two contiguous units in a N-S line (E734 N456 E734 N458) were intended to straddle the southern margin of the anomaly, which we hoped would allow us to find the wall on the south side of the building. The 20-cm-thick plowzone here is essentially devoid of artifacts, so it was removed without screening. At the base of the plowzone in E734 N458 we observed a vaguely circular patch, that within a few more centimeters turned was resolved as the raised lip of a prepared clay hearth. Inside and around the circular hearth there was much rubble of fired clay, as from the collapsed wall of a burned building. The hearth was bisected and the east half removed (see Figures 14 and 15), with fill saved for flotation. After the hearth had been used for a time, the bottom was re-lined. Heat-reddening extended 8 cm under the hearth, indicating that the hearth was used for a long time, or that the fire in it was unusually hot. Fired clay rubble filled the interior of the hearth, which had been cleaned out before the building burned. The lip of the hearth protruded 5-7 cm above the level of the building's floor. The floor itself is visible in some areas as a distinct surface, but in other areas it appears to have been disturbed by bioturbation.

The composition of the floor is unusual. It is a clay or clay loam deposit of a striking "dusky red" color (2.5 R 4/6 in the Munsell color chart; the field notes refer to it as "purple clay"). None of the visitors who saw this deposit knows of any sediment in the region that has this color. If it is a natural sediment we have no idea where it comes from. If its color was artificially produced, we have no idea how this was done.

A second fired clay feature was encountered in the same unit, only a meter away from the hearth. This feature looks like a miniature hearth, or perhaps a brazier (see Figure 16). It is a shallow, well-fired, clay-lined basin, also cleaned out before the rubble of the burned building descended on it. Half of this feature is in the adjacent unit, which was not excavated.

We had expected to encounter the building's south wall in the unit south of the hearth (E734 N456), but we did not find any evidence of a wall there. Instead, we observed discontinuous patches of the dusky red clay floor extending across the entire unit. We opened the next 2 x 2 m unit to the south (E734 N454), again expecting to find the wall. In this unit we observed the dusky red clay only in the northern third of the unit. Although the floor seems to end in this unit, we did not observe wall trench or individual post molds. We also opened a unit to the east (E736 N456), in which again we observed an end to the lateral extent of the dusky red clay but no sign of a wall. Why there is no wall along the apparent edge of the floor is another of the puzzling aspects of this building.

To explore the building further, and look for its north side, we opened three additional units. Just as on the south side, on the north side the dusky clay deposit comes to an end without any evidence of a wall. With no evidence of walls on the north or south sides, one obvious question is where the fired daub rubble that covers the floor comes from. Our N-S row of excavation units is about 4 m from the western margin of the magnetic anomaly, so it is

conceivable that the rubble on the floor comes from a daubed wall on the west side of the building. However, that is just a conjecture.



Figure 14. Clay-lined hearth in E734 N458 with most fill removed.

Another conceivable explanation for the daub would be that it was on the roof, but our excavation evidence clearly rules this out. We encountered pits for four very large roof-support posts. All four lay partially outside our excavation units, and they were so deep that we did not reach the base of any of them. We excavated two of these pits as deeply as we could reach, but cores extending down from that level show the deposits continue as far as the corer could reach, which was 1.6 m beneath the dusky red floor. The posts, which appear to have been about 40 cm diameter, were dug out before the burning occurred. The fired clay rubble lines the extraction ramps (which we found for two of the posts) and extends down into the post holes as far as our cores could reach. These very large posts are puzzlingly close together, only a bit more than 2 m apart. We have three that are in a line, and a fourth that is presumably on another line (see

Figure 17). It is likely that they form a grid such as was seen in one of the large buildings atop Mx<sup>o</sup>7 (Cole et al. 1951:77; see Figure 18). Having such large posts so close together suggests either that the roof was unusually heavy, or else the building was simply over-engineered.



Figure 15. Clay-lined hearth in E734 N458 in profile.

Two other features were encountered during removal of the fired clay rubble. Both consist a compact cluster of pebbles from pea-sized to thumb diameter. The compactness of these clusters suggest that the pebbles had been in some kind of container, such as a sack or some other decomposable material. Both appeared to be either on top of, or intermingled with the fired daub rubble, suggesting that the containers may have been hanging on the outside of the wall at the time of the fire. The smaller of the two features is shown in Figure 19. Clusters of pebbles have sometimes been interpreted as possibly the remains of a rattle. That might be the origin of the smaller cluster, but the larger cluster is about twice the size and would have been quite a large rattle.



Figure 16. Small clay-lined hearth or brazier in E734 N458.

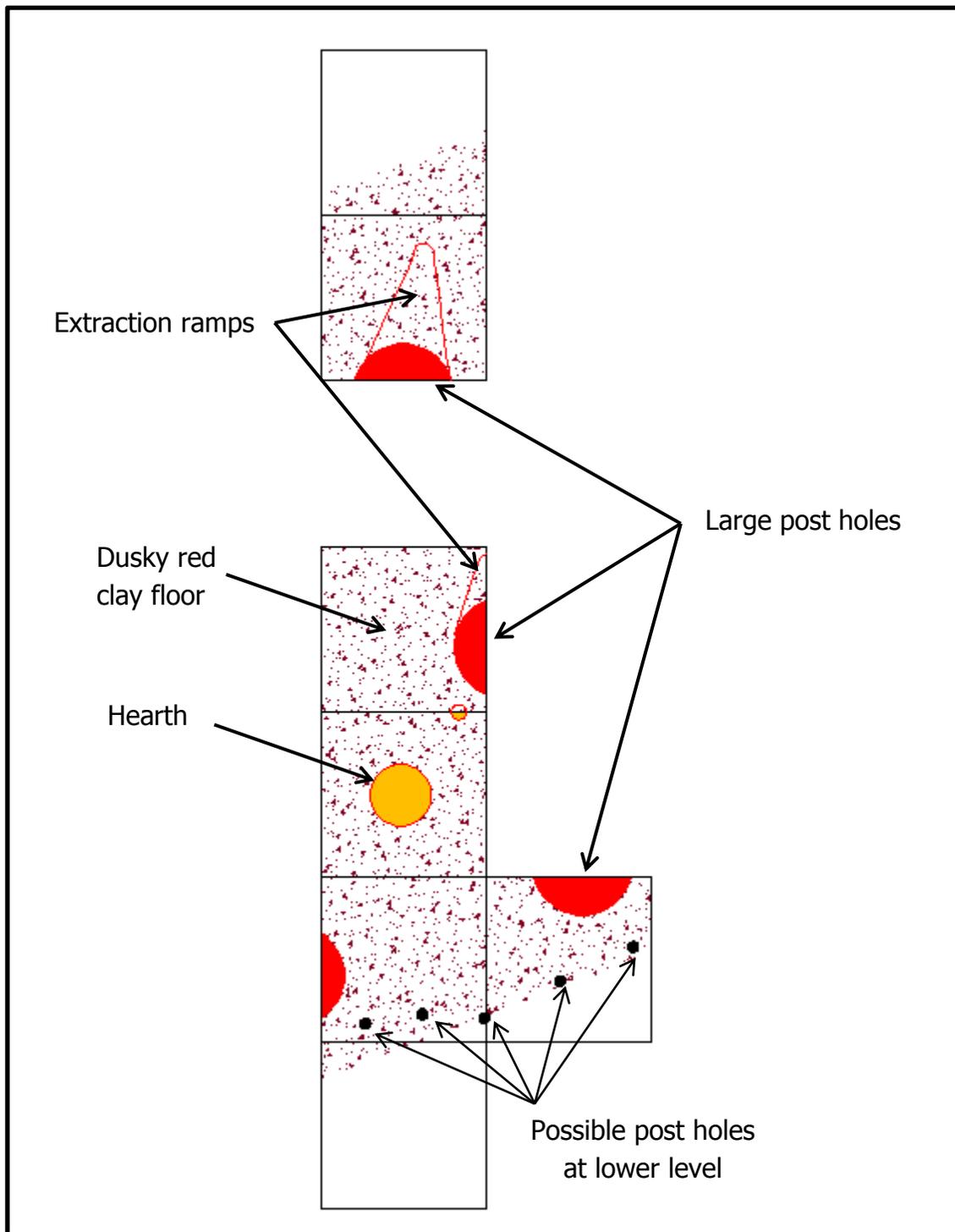


Figure 17. Schematic drawing of the burned building.

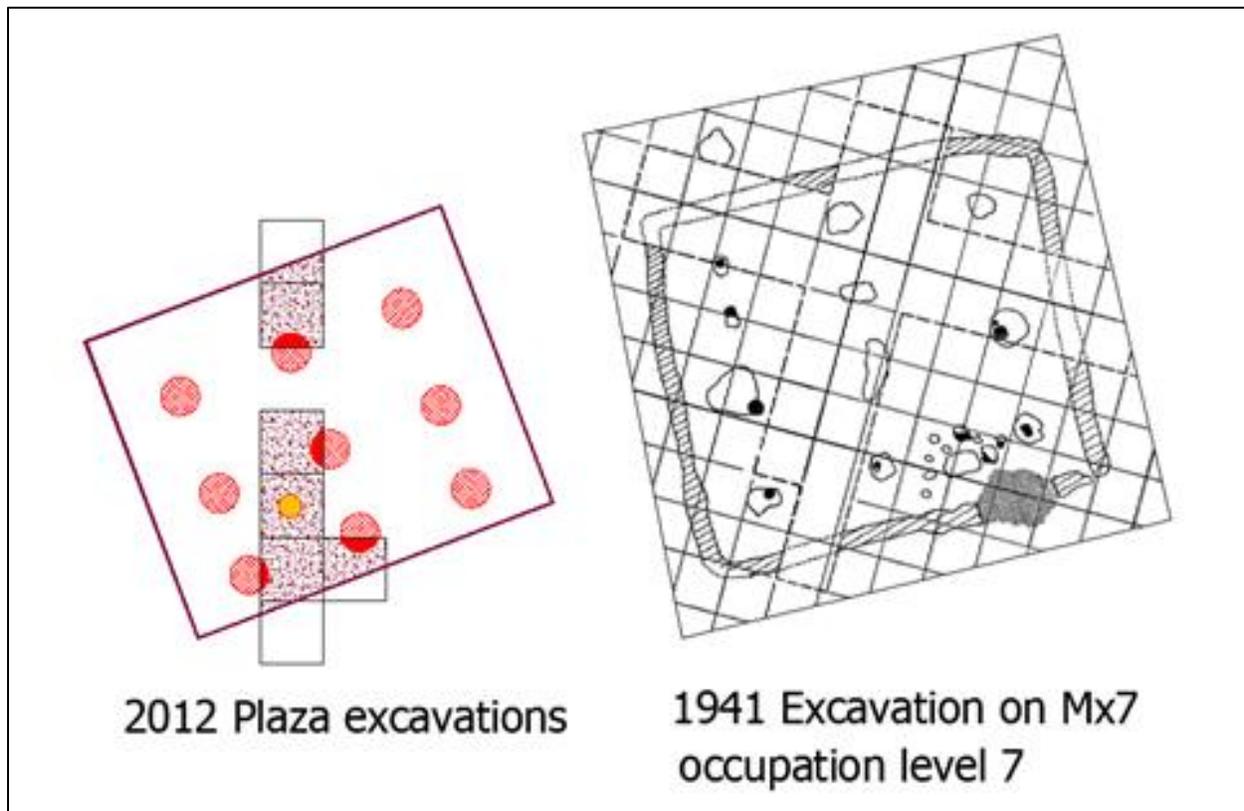


Figure 18. Inferred similarity of the plaza building with a building atop Mx<sup>07</sup>, with both buildings shown at the same scale and the same orientation (north is toward top of page).



Figure 19. Cluster of pebbles in Unit E734 N466.

We found very few artifacts during the Plaza 2012 excavations, and none were on the building's floor. Evidently the building had been cleaned out before being dismantled and burned. The paucity of artifacts in overall suggests that the entire area was kept clean, as might be expected for a plaza.

Four of our excavation units went through the dusky red floor and into underlying deposits, one of them reaching sterile subsoil. Here was the final surprise about this building: it is built atop 20 cm of fill. The fill is faintly patchy (different colors and textures), unlike the sterile alluvium at the site, and contains very sparse artifacts. When we first realized that there was fill below the floor, we expected to find an underlying basin which would have clearly discernible sides. Instead, the fill continues past the southern limits of our excavation (we did not go below the floor on the north side). Five possible small-diameter postholes were observed in or below the fill. Three of them happen to align with the edge of the red clay floor. Despite the alignment, it is not evident that they are related to the building because they were not observed until we were well below the level of the floor and none of them was confirmed by excavation (we left them in place). Thus, excavating through the floor did not clarify the nature of the building's southern margin, but instead presented us with a new puzzle.

With no evidence that the fill is inside a basin, we must speculate about what it is. It could conceivably be a low platform such as Stage 1 of the Douglas Mound, but we think this is unlikely because the surface today bears no trace of a rise. Another possibility is that the entire plaza area was leveled with fill prior to the construction of the large building. In the past decade or two archaeologists have learned that leveled plazas are far more common at large Mississippian sites (e.g., Cahokia, Etowah, Moundville, Shiloh) than we had previously understood. Thus, it is certainly possible that the nearly flat expanse in which this building was constructed is a leveled plaza, but confirmation will require additional field investigation.

In summary, we can confirm that the large magnetic anomaly in the plaza is a large burned building, but our excavation generated more questions than it answered. We have first the conundrum of a building that has no evidence of walls on (at least) two sides, yet has what appears to be a collapsed daub wall lying on the floor. Second, the floor itself is composed of a sediment whose source is unknown and that is so unusual that its Munsell color is on a page we have never before used. Third, the building was constructed atop 20 cm of fill, and we do not understand why this fill is present or how large an area it covers.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The large magnetic anomaly in the plaza is the remains of a large burned building. The building has a grid of very large interior roof-support posts. Extrapolating from our excavation units, we conjecture that there were three rows of three posts, spaced about 2.5 m apart in one direction and about 3 m apart in the other. No walls were found on the southern and northern sides of the building, yet remains of what looks like a burned, collapsed daub wall lie on the floor. The floor itself is an unusual dusky red color; we do not know where such sediment might have come from or how its color may have been produced. One hearth and a small brazier-like feature were found on the floor, both in a position clearly off-center in the building. Before the building burned the hearth was cleaned out, with no ash or charcoal remaining. At the time of the fire, the roof posts had been removed and the extraction holes were open. Two clusters of pebbles, which likely had been in containers that are not preserved, were found in locations suggesting that they hung on the exterior of the daub wall. The entire structure is built on top of 20 cm of fill, whose lateral extent remains unknown. Very few artifacts of any kind were found during the excavation, and none were chronologically diagnostic. Because the floor level is under less than 30 cm of alluvium, and there was no later disturbance of the building's remains, we suspect that the building may date late in the Kincaid sequence. However, until we receive a radiocarbon estimate, the date of this building remains unknown. Because we have so many unanswered questions about this building, we anticipate requesting permission to continue excavation here in the summer of 2013.

Excavation of the Douglas Mound handily produced answers to our main questions: is it an artificial construction and when was it built? It is a low platform built in two episodes. Both episodes are of Late Kincaid date, and indeed the later episode may date to very near the end of the occupation at this site. There were buildings on the premound surface, and buildings on both of the platform summits. The limited extent of our excavations did not reveal enough about any of these buildings to let us infer what kinds of buildings they were or how they were used. The mound fill is very rich in artifacts and faunal remains. Unfortunately, because this fill is redeposited from some other, unknown, location, the interpretive potential of the artifacts and fauna is limited: we do not know where these materials were originally used, and therefore have little ability to infer the social context in which they were used.

We have a specific management recommendation for the Douglas Mound. Because of the history of land use on this mound, the zone of modern agricultural disturbance is remarkably shallow, less than 10 cm. Although the flood of 2011 added about 2 cm to the surface, several years of sheetwash might well deflate the surface to the point that the farmer's disking would disturb intact mound deposits. Currently, the farmer can cultivate all of the mound except for the area covered by the concrete piers of the 1937 barn. We recommend that the "do not cultivate" zone be extended to include a larger area. Figure 20 shows the current limit of cultivation, and a more encompassing limit that encloses the entire topographic rise.

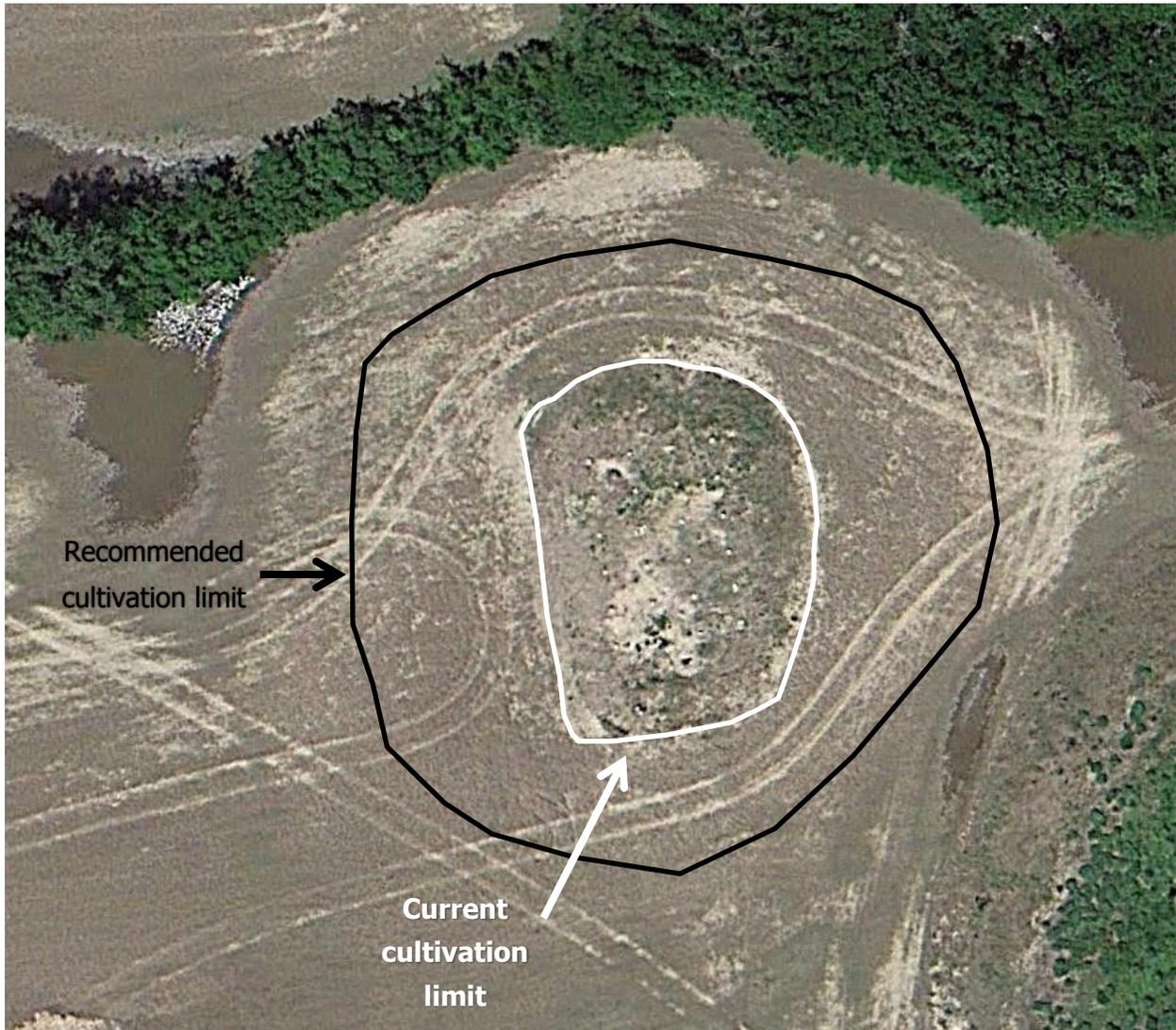


Figure 20. Current and recommended cultivation limits on Douglas Mound.

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## Appendix A Field Personnel

**Excavation director and course instructor:** Paul D. Welch

**Graduate student teaching assistants:** Brandy Dacus  
Wesley Jackson  
Rosanna Crow

### **First session crew (May 21 to June 15):**

|                 |                 |                    |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Rosemary Bolin  | Mary Kilduff    | Tasia Williams     |
| Hugh Bowman     | Cody Roach      | Marisa Beste       |
| Rebecca Guarino | Lisa Zimmerman  | Kathryn Bobolinski |
| Leanne Hoffman  | Leonard Caccamo | Russell Schiller   |

### **Second session crew (June 18 to July 13):**

|                       |                    |                      |
|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Russell Schiller      | Nina Los           | Christopher Schubert |
| Christopher Camarinos | Beth Machosky      | Joseph Wilson        |
| Curtis DeBlieck       | Daniel Muldoon     | Diana Pena Bastalla  |
| Michael Ekenstedt     | Dale Pearce        |                      |
| Andrew Lambert        | Christian Sweatman |                      |

### **Volunteers:**

Brian Butler  
Mike Walker  
Mark Benson  
Darwin Ramsey  
Melissa Litschi  
Sarah Jackson  
Joe Bohnert and the Boy Scouts of Troop 314, Chester, IL