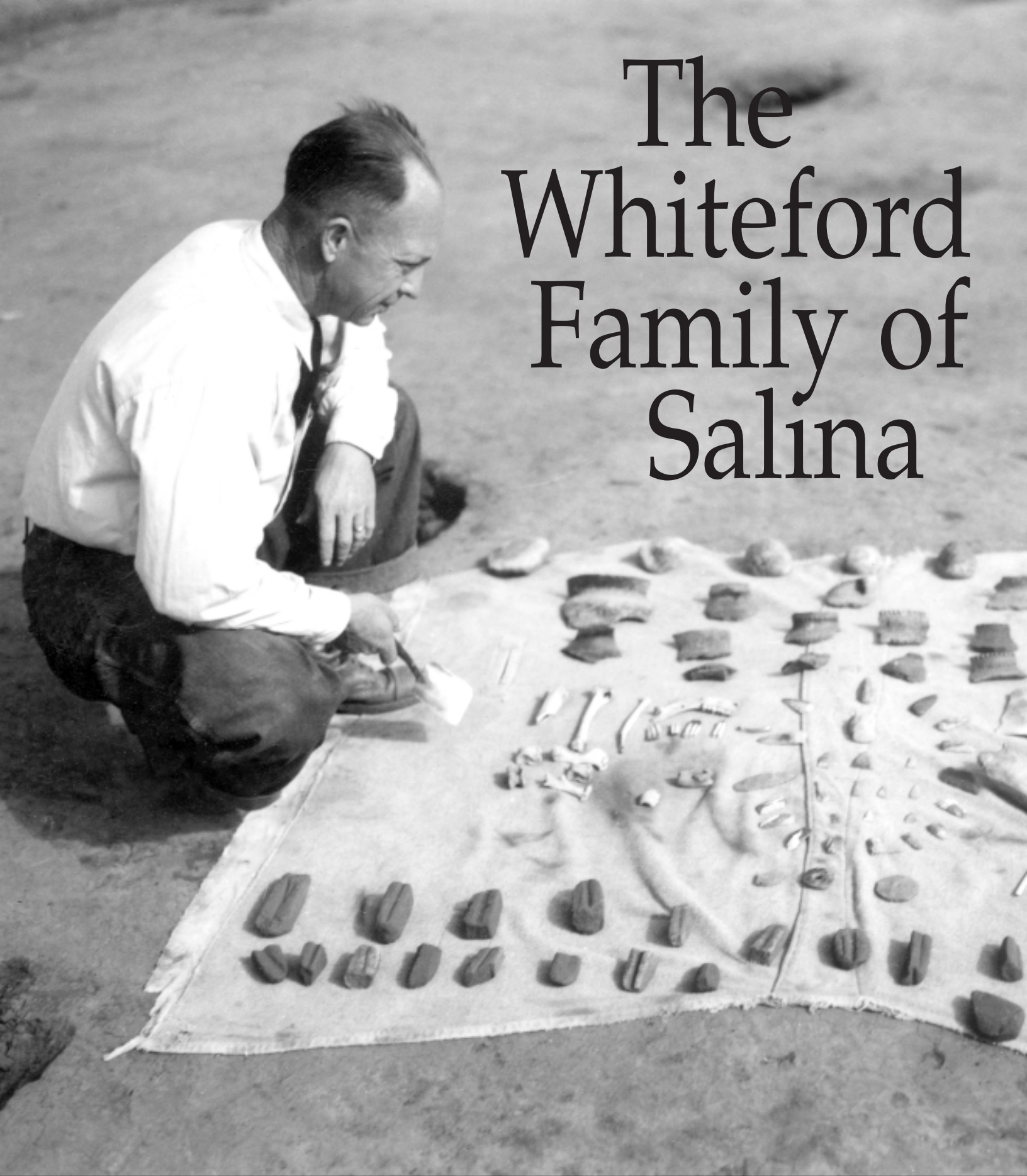


The Whiteford Family of Salina



Guy Whiteford examines artifacts discovered in the 1940s at the Markley site in Ottawa County.



Mid-Twentieth-Century Avocational Archeologists

by Donna C. Roper

The late-nineteenth–early-twentieth-century work of such individuals as J. V. Brower and J. A. Udden in Kansas and R. F. Gilder and E. E. Blackman in Nebraska anticipated the modern practice of archeology in the Central Plains, but not until the 1930s did a sustained effort develop. This rise stemmed from the quickening pace of North American archeology during that decade and came about in large part because of the efforts of several individuals, among whom were three outstanding professionals: A. T. Hill, who began his investigations as a hobby and came to direct the archeological work of the Nebraska State Historical Society; William Duncan Strong, whose career took him through the University of Nebraska, the Bureau of American Ethnology at the Smithsonian Institution, and Columbia University in New York; and Waldo R. Wedel, who began as a graduate student under Strong at Nebraska, worked extensively with Hill, and then had a long career at the Smithsonian.¹ Equally important, however, was a cadre of am-

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1. Gordon R. Willey and Jeremy A. Sabloff, *A History of American Archaeology*, 3d ed. (New York: W. H. Freeman and Co., 1993); William Duncan Strong, *An Introduction to Nebraska Archeology*, Miscellaneous Collections 93 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1935), remains an important work. Several of Wedel's major contributions to Central Plains archeology include Waldo R. Wedel, *An Introduction to Pawnee Archeology*, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 112 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1936), which is the published version of his University of Nebraska master's thesis; Wedel, *An Introduction to Kansas Archeology*, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 174 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1959); Wedel, *Central Plains Prehistory: Holocene Environments and Culture Change in the Republican River Valley* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986). Hill's published output is minimal, but his role as a director and enabler of research was critical to the development of Central Plains archeology.

The Whiteford family—Guy, Mabel, and son Jay Dee—were prominent amateur archeologists in central Kansas and became most widely known for their excavation and early operation of the Indian Burial Pit near Salina.



ateur archeologists who worked in their local areas. It was they who had the collections, knew the sites, and had the contacts to gain access to them, and they who supplied Hill, Strong, and Wedel with information. The assistance was reciprocal, for the professionals, better trained in field and laboratory techniques, could and did provide the amateurs with advice on fieldwork and handling collections.

Prominent among amateur archeologists in central Kansas were the Whitefords of Salina—Guy, Mabel, and Jay Dee. This family is most widely known for its involvement in the excavation and early operation of the Indian Burial Pit or Salina Burial Pit, also known as the Whiteford site (14SA1), the late prehistoric Native American cemetery that was a major central Kansas tourist attraction for more than half a century. The Whitefords might not have been involved in that site's story at all, however, were it not for the reputation they already had earned in the community through their prior investigations. In fact, by the time the burial pit story began, they had been excavating archeological sites for more than two years and collecting from them for even longer. In the decade from the time they began the burial pit excavation to their departure from Kansas, they would excavate more sites, photo-document important rock art sites, and provide Waldo Wedel, in particular, with information critical to parts of his mid-twentieth-century major synthesis of Kansas archeology. As will be shown, the Whitefords' work was in the best tradition of the archeology of their time; and their collection is largely intact at the Kansas State Historical Society, where its importance and value endure to this day.

The father in this family was Guy L. Whiteford. Reportedly he was born in northeastern Kansas, possibly Atchison County, on March 16, 1894, was in the army during World War I, then went to Salina in the early 1920s and joined the police force. He was a motorcycle patrolman in the 1920s and was known locally as Speedy or the "pop-pop cop." One of his Salina neighbors was Mabel Beulah Morgan. She was born on December 2, 1902, in Hydro, Oklahoma, moved with her family to Grand Junction, Colorado, in 1910, and to a farm near Salina in 1913. She was

not allowed to go to school during her early years, but did attend the Salina schools, boarding with a family in town during the week. She graduated from Salina High in 1923, after which she moved into town and became an assistant to Salina photographer W. C. Fuller.²

Guy and Mabel met during her last year of high school and were married in Salina on August 26, 1925. After a reception and chivaree at her parents' farm, Guy and Mabel left for a two-week wedding trip. They traveled on a motorcycle equipped with a side-car, and they slept outdoors. The entire 1,250-mile trip cost them about thirty-two dollars. Upon their return, they lived in a small house on Minneapolis Street in Salina. Their only child, son Jay Dee, was born in 1927.³

Shortly after their marriage, the Whitefords decided to build a rock garden using only "fossilized rocks," and they began scouring the countryside for suitable pieces. Not surprisingly, they found artifacts, too, and thus became avid artifact collectors.⁴ Their collection records include a wallpaper sample book on the leaves of which are pasted U.S. Geological Survey quadrangle maps with the sites they knew plotted on them. We have no indication of when or how the Whitefords first became aware of many of these sites, but events recounted in the following text show that they knew at least some of them by mid-1934. Most sites are in the major river valleys in Saline and Ottawa Counties; others are in Rice, McPherson, and Ellsworth Counties. Ex-

2. Jay Dee Whiteford, interview by author, September 22, 2000; "Guy L. Whiteford" entry (W316), microfilm roll KS-138, 1900 Soundex, U.S. Census; *Salina City Directory, 1925* (Sioux City, Iowa: R. L. Polk and Co., 1925); Mabel B. Whiteford obituary, *Everett (Washington) Daily Herald*, June 3, 2001, online edition.

3. C. E. Chambers, "Mabel Whiteford Remembers," *South Everett (Washington) Journal*, January 11, 2000, 22.

4. John Schmiedler, "Salina Indian Artifacts Find Haven Back Home," *Salina Journal*, September 26, 1971.



A chance encounter in 1934 between the Whitefords and a field party from the Nebraska State Historical Society initiated a fruitful working relationship between the family and two prominent authorities on Great Plains prehistory: Waldo R. Wedel (left) and Asa T. Hill (right). Standing at center is William Duncan Strong of the University of Nebraska Archeological Survey.

cept for those in Rice County, all sites were within thirty miles of their home.

The turning point in the Whiteford's archeological activities came in the summer of 1934. Mabel Whiteford recounted it to the *Kansas City Times* in February 1938:

one night it rained—a hard, pelting cloud-burst. This is the best time to find artifacts. We hurried to our favorite spot down near Lindsborg. And were we disgusted to find another group there?

They were some archaeology [*sic*] students from the University of Nebraska under the direction of Mr. [A. T.] Hill. It was really grand for us though, for we soon made friends and presently we were showing our collection to Mr. Hill. To our amazement, we discovered it had real scientific value.⁵

This encounter took place on one of the four July days during which a field party from the Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS), under the direction of A. T. Hill, excavated test pits and cache pits at the Paint Creek site (14MP1). This site is in the Smoky Hill River valley in northwest McPherson County, about four miles south of Lindsborg. It is one of the large sites of the Great Bend aspect, the archeological culture representing the mid-fifteenth through late-seventeenth-century Wichita Indians of central Kansas. It was some of these sites that Coronado entered when he visited the province of Quivira in 1541. The sites have been known since the late 1800s and were identified as the probable location of Quivira in the late

5. "Prehistoric Burial Pit is Discovered in Kansas," *Kansas City Times*, February 10, 1938.

1920s, although the formal definition of the Great Bend aspect came later. It was common in that era for institutions with archeology programs to seek to obtain "representative artifacts" of recognized cultural complexes, and the Quivira sites certainly were one set of sites to sample. This was one goal of the NSHS field party's July 1934 foray into northern Kansas. As it turned out, however, the NSHS excavation at Paint Creek was less momentous for its role in defining the Great Bend aspect than for its meeting with the Whitefords; for from this chance encounter emerged not only a new phase in the Whitefords' archeological career, but also a fruitful working relationship between the Whitefords and A. T. Hill and especially between the Whitefords and Waldo Wedel.⁶

The first result of this relationship was that the Whitefords directed the Nebraska party to a site near Minneapolis, Kansas, then and now known as the Minneapolis site (14OT5). Here, in late July 1934 the NSHS party excavated three houses attributable to what Wedel a quarter-century later would designate the Smoky Hill phase, a late prehistoric (ca. A.D. 1000–1400) culture. Wedel wrote the excavation report and gave "Mr. G. L. Whiteford of Salina" credit "[f]or discovery of the principal site, Minneapolis 1" in his report of the 1934 excavations. The *Salina Journal* covered the excavation as it was conducted, and in a piece published shortly after the release of Wedel's report, proudly pointed out that Guy Whiteford was credited with the site discovery. Mabel Whiteford is not mentioned in either that newspaper article or in Wedel's report, but it is difficult to believe that she was not involved too.⁷

6. Waldo R. Wedel, "Salina 1, A Protohistoric Indian Village in McPherson County," *Nebraska History Magazine* 15 (July–September 1934): 238–50; Salina 1 is a former designation for the Paint Creek site; Horace Jones, "Quivira—Rice County, Kansas," *Kansas Historical Collections, 1926–1928* 17 (1928): 535–46; Paul Jones, *Quivira* (Wichita, Kans.: McCormick–Armstrong Co., 1929); Paul Jones, *Coronado and Quivira* (Lyons, Kan.: Lyons Publishing Co., 1937); Waldo R. Wedel, "Culture Chronology in the Central Great Plains," *American Antiquity* 12 (January 1947): 148.

7. Waldo R. Wedel, "Minneapolis 1, A Prehistoric Village in Ottawa County, Kansas," *Nebraska History Magazine* 15 (July–September 1934): 218; "Find A Village," *Salina Journal*, July 31, 1934; "Digs Out the Past," *ibid.*, May 15, 1935.

During 1934–1936 the Whitefords' work on Great Bend aspect sites focused on, but was not confined to, the Paint Creek site, McPherson County.



The July 1934 events and contacts clearly stimulated the Whitefords to learn to identify and catalog artifacts, and to begin keeping a ledger to record and catalog their finds. They also began to conduct their own excavations into both Great Bend aspect and Smoky Hill phase sites. Some of these excavations would be crucial to the development of Kansas archeology.

All of their work on Great Bend aspect sites was conducted early in their excavation period. It focused on, although was not confined to, the Paint Creek site. Paint Creek was first studied by Bethany College geology professor Johan August Udden in 1881 and has long been known to collectors.⁸ The Whitefords obviously had been collecting from the site, perhaps for some time, prior to meeting the NSHS field party there, but they did not begin excavating until after that meeting. Their first excavations at this site, which they called the Nelson site after the landowner, were in November 1934, at which time they dug two cache pits. The catalog entry for the first pit, Cache I, is slim: it contains no description of the pit and lists only seven artifacts. The Cache II catalog entry does not describe the pit either, but forty catalog entries account for its contents.

The Whitefords excavated five more cache pits at Paint Creek during the next sixteen months: Caches III and IV in November 1935, Cache V in January 1936, and Caches VI and VII in March 1936. The ledger entries for these pits reveal a rapid development of the Whitefords' recording and possibly also excavation standards. Catalog entries always list pit contents, but the descriptions for Caches III–VII also provide some information on the size and internal stratigraphy of the pits. The Whitefords even drew small

profile sketches of Caches V and VII. A larger version of the Cache VII profile is in the A. T. Hill papers at the Nebraska State Historical Society. It accompanied a March 24, 1936, letter Guy Whiteford wrote to Hill in which he “wondered if this wasn’t a kiva instead of a cache.”⁹ Clearly the Whitefords had been reading some southwestern archeology. Of course, while this was quite a large pit, even for a Great Bend aspect cache pit, it really was a cache pit, not a kiva. Nevertheless, we should give the Whitefords credit for not just collecting the artifacts but also thinking about how to interpret their context.

Beyond the Paint Creek site, the Whitefords' quadrangle maps plot the location of the Sharps Creek site, another major Smoky Hill River valley Great Bend aspect site in McPherson County a few miles west of the Paint Creek site. The ledger also contains entries for artifacts from several sites in the Great Bend aspect site group in eastern Rice County, and the quadrangle map plots ten sites along the Little Arkansas River in the Galt area and two sites along Cow Creek near Lyons. All Rice County locations correspond to known Great Bend aspect sites. Catalog entries indicate that the Whitefords excavated one cache pit at what they called the Thompson site (14RC9, still called the Thompson site) in the Little Arkansas River group, probably sometime between November 1934 and May 1935. Nothing in their catalog or any of their other records, however, indicates any excavation on Great Bend aspect sites after the Paint Creek Cache VII excavation. The sum total of their Great Bend site investigations thus was eight cache pits excavated at two sites and, apparently, surface collec-

8. Johan August Udden, *An Old Indian Village* (Rock Island, Ill.: Lutheran Augustana Book Concern, 1900). For a review of Udden's career in Kansas, see also James R. Underwood Jr., “The Life of Johan August Udden, Geologist, Teacher, Inventor: Through the Kansas Years,” *Kansas Academy of Sciences, Transactions* 95 (October 1992), 177–91.

9. Guy L. Whiteford to A. T. Hill, March 24, 1936, A. T. Hill Papers, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln.



The Whitefords' first excavation on the Smoky Hill phase site was in Ottawa County at the Aerhart site. Their excavation procedures clearly reflect the influence of A. T. Hill.

tions from at least twelve other sites—a rather minor part of their archeological activity. The excavations also were a rather minor part of the history of investigations of Great Bend sites in central Kansas and were not critical to the definition of that culture. The converse, however, is true of the Whitefords' work on Smoky Hill phase sites. This work was extensive and varied. It also was vital to the formulation of the Smoky Hill phase.

The dominant paradigm in American archeology of the late 1920s and the 1930s was culture history, or determining the sequence of past cultures and their distribution in space by the study of material remains. At that time an important approach to culture history was what came to be called the direct historical approach, in which the analyst developed a sequence by first studying the material culture assemblages of recent peoples whose identity was known, then worked back in time and linked cultures together by analyzing progressively less similar assemblages. By 1930 in the Central Plains, this approach had tied the nineteenth-century villages of the Pawnees to their seventeenth- and eighteenth-century predecessors in Nebraska. About this same time, both amateur and professional archeologists in the region were becoming aware of sites whose assemblages bore some resemblances to those of the Pawnee sites, but yet also manifested some notable dissimilarities. Following a 1930 excavation at one such site in the Republican River valley in Franklin County, Nebraska, William Duncan Strong named this the Upper Republican culture. In 1933 A. T. Hill and Waldo Wedel excavated several Upper Republican sites in the Medicine Creek valley, in Frontier County, Nebraska, and excavated several more in the Medicine Creek valley and other parts

of the Republican River drainage in May and June 1934. From these excavations emerged a definition of Upper Republican culture that remains fundamental to our understanding of this complex. Upper

Republican culture, however, had been studied only in Nebraska and, as Wedel noted in 1934, "Kansas continues a blank on the archeological map of the central Plains." Yet some archeologists believed that remains similar to those of the Upper Republican sites would be found in Kansas. Indeed, they already had been, for Floyd Schultz of Clay Center had been working on these sites in Kansas even before Hill, Strong, and Wedel began their work. Schultz excavated several sites that we now assign to the Smoky Hill phase in the late 1920s and early 1930s, but he never really got along with people like Hill and Wedel; thus his investigations never had the impact they could, in principle, have had. It, therefore, would fall to the Whitefords to bring to the attention of the professionals the central Kansas remains placed at first within the Upper Republican culture but later designated the Smoky Hill phase.¹⁰

The Whitefords' first excavation on the Smoky Hill phase site actually preceded any of their excavations on Great Bend aspect sites and thus was the first excavation they conducted on their own. They knew this site, which is in the Solomon River valley about five miles northeast of Minneapolis, as the Aerhart site (14OT305), and they exca-

10. R. Lee Lyman, Michael J. O'Brien, and Robert C. Dunnell, *The Rise and Fall of Culture History* (New York: Plenum Press, 1997); Wedel, *An Introduction to Pawnee Archeology*; W. D. Strong, "The Plains Culture Area in the Light of Archaeology," *American Anthropologist* 35 (April–June 1933): 278; Strong described the Franklin County site excavation in *An Introduction to Nebraska Archeology*, 69–101; Donna C. Roper, "... its turtles all the way down': Pre-Federal Upper Republican Archaeology at Medicine Creek," in *Medicine Creek: Seventy Years of Archaeological Investigations*, ed. Donna C. Roper (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002); Wedel, "Minneapolis 1, A Prehistoric Village in Ottawa County, Kansas," 211; Carlyle S. Smith, "Floyd Schultz, 1881–1951," *American Antiquity* 17 (July 1951): 49; Marlin F. Hawley, *A Keen Interest in Indians: Floyd Schultz, The Life and Work of an Amateur Anthropologist*, Bulletin 2 (Topeka: Kansas Anthropological Association, 1993).

In the summer of 1936 the Whitefords excavated a third Smoky Hill phase house, this one just outside of Salina near the confluence of the Smoky Hill and Saline Rivers. Located on property owned by the Kohr family, the site was named Kohr House Number 1.



vated a single house there in September 1934. A. T. Hill's influence was already noticeable. At that time the recommended excavation procedure was to begin with a trench at the side of the site and to slice vertically into it, keeping the stratigraphic relations in view. This was the technique Omaha amateur archeologist Robert F. Gilder earlier had used in the first years of the twentieth century when he excavated prehistoric house sites along the Missouri River and it had famously led to erroneous conceptions of house form. Accordingly, Wedel assures us, since the late 1920s Hill had been excavating houses by exposing entire floors. Certainly both Hill and Strong were advocating this technique by 1932, and it is the approach Hill used at the Minneapolis site in 1934. The Whitefords apparently did not assist with the Minneapolis site excavation, but surely they must have at least visited the site while the excavation was in progress and, in any event, they would emulate Hill's field technique in their house excavations.¹¹

The Aerhart house excavation records include scaled floor plans, measurements for the central hearth and cache pits, and some size information for the post molds that defined the walls, entryway, and interior supports for the house. The Whitefords also photographed the finished excavation. All this was exactly the same type of information the NSHS excavators had recorded and presented for the Minneapolis site house excavations. The eighty-five artifact

catalog entries indicate that the Whitefords found and saved the standard suite of pottery, chipped stone, ground stone, bone, and shell artifacts. With the exception of a few river clam shells, however, there is no record of their saving any subsistence remains, nor did they collect flaking debris from stone tool manufacture.¹²

The Whitefords' second Smoky Hill phase house excavation occurred the following summer in 1935. They referred to this as the Lamar house, since it was near the town of Lamar in the Pipe Creek valley. Again, they set high excavation and record-keeping standards, drawing their most elaborate site map ever, and including on it a legend with comprehensive cache pit and post mold measurements and an inset map of the specific site location. This excavation was vandalized before it was finished, although it must have been nearly complete, judging by a description in the March 24, 1936, letter from Guy Whiteford to A. T. Hill. This same letter, which also had described some of the late 1935–early 1936 Great Bend aspect cache pits excavations, closed with a line that in hindsight was prophetic: "We are all O.K. and looking forward to finding a lot of interesting things this summer."¹³

The first excavation in the summer of 1936 was a third Smoky Hill phase house, this one just outside Salina near the confluence of the Smoky Hill and Saline Rivers, and on property owned by the Kohr family. They referred to this as Kohr House Number 1. The recovery, record-keeping,

11. "Guide Leaflet for Amateur Archaeologists," Reprint and Circular Series of the National Research Council Number 93 (Washington, D.C.: National Research Council, 1930); Waldo R. Wedel, "Toward a History of Plains Archeology," *Great Plains Quarterly* 1 (Winter 1981): 27; "Remarks by Mr. A. T. Hill of Hastings," *Nebraska History Magazine* 13 (July–September 1932): 163; "Conference on Southern Pre-History, Held Under the Auspices of the Division of Anthropology and Psychology Committee on State Archaeological Surveys, National Research Council," Birmingham, Alabama, 1932; reprinted in *Setting the Agenda for American Archaeology: The National Research Council Archaeological Conferences of 1929, 1932, and 1935*, ed. Michael J. O'Brien and R. Lee Lyman (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001), 320.

12. Wedel, "Minneapolis 1, A Prehistoric Village in Ottawa County, Kansas," 219–21; Donna C. Roper, "Five Smoky Hill Phase House Sites in Saline and Ottawa Counties: The Whiteford Excavations, 1934–1945," *The Kansas Anthropologist* 22 (2001): 137–50, describes the Aerhart house and all the Whitefords' subsequent Smoky Hill phase house excavations.

13. Guy L. Whiteford to A. T. Hill, March 24, 1936, Hill Papers.



Work at the Kohr site intersected with what would become the most well known of the Whitefords' findings: the Indian Burial Pit. As shown here, a fence and tent kept the site somewhat secured from curious visitors.

and cataloging standards matched those of the Aerhart and Lamar house excavations, although the map was not quite as elaborate. The Whitefords even kept a few subsistence remains, including river clam shell and some corn kernels from one cache pit. The *Salina Journal* ran an article about this house excavation in its Saturday evening edition on August 1, and Guy Whiteford estimated that seven or eight hundred visitors descended on the site on Sunday, August 2. The excavation remained open for two weeks, during which an estimated three thousand visitors, twenty-three hundred of them in the first eight days, viewed the house—not a bad turnout considering that the entire population of Salina at the time was only a little more than twenty thousand and that the August 13 official Salina temperature reached 118°, a record high that still stands.¹⁴

The house also generated considerable interest beyond the immediate Salina area. Of course, Hill and Wedel both were interested in learning about it. So was Kirke Mechem, the executive director of the Kansas State Historical Society (KSHS), who wrote to Guy Whiteford shortly after the house excavation was backfilled. Mechem at the 1934 KSHS annual meeting had complained about Nebraska people working in Kansas, a reference to the work of the NSHS field party at the Paint Creek and Minneapolis sites, and had gone on to suggest that the Kansas society should at least have the opportunity to obtain representative artifacts. How ironic that it was this Nebraska party's foray into Kansas that stimulated some Kansans to begin excavations. In his September 1, 1936, letter to Guy Whiteford,

14. "An Ancient House Found Near Salina," *Salina Journal*, August 1, 1936; Guy L. Whiteford to Waldo R. Wedel, September 29, 1936. G. L. Whiteford folder, box 19, Wedel Papers, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Federal Writers' Project, *The WPA Guide to 1930s Kansas* (Works Project Administration, 1939; reprinted Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1984), 270; S. D. Flora, *Climatological Data, Volume L: Kansas Section* (N.p.: U.S.D.A. Weather Bureau, 1936); Mary C. Knapp of the Weather Data Library at Kansas State University confirmed in August 2002 that the temperature record still stands.

Mechem clearly showed his pleasure with the Whitefords' activities and requested "a detailed report of your work." The Whitefords later sent Mechem copies of a 1937 booklet they published describing the house site, but how much additional information they supplied is not clear, for their subsequent letters show that they would have preferred to show him their work rather than describe it in letters.¹⁵

The completion of the Kohr house excavation brought the Whitefords to the grandest of their excavations: that at the Indian Burial Pit. Although some stories conflict and suggest otherwise, this probably was not a planned excavation but rather something that happened as the course of the Whitefords' archeological activities suddenly intersected with the separate history of the burial pit. It seems certain that the first Euro-American to recognize the existence of the site was the first homesteader of the property, Benjamin Franklin Marlin, who encountered bones as he was constructing a dugout home on his land in 1873. Marlin sold much of his 161.4-acre homestead, including that part containing the cemetery, to Daniel and Mary Kohr in 1878 and also told them of the bones. The story subsequently was handed down through the generations of the Kohr family. By 1936 Daniel Kohr was long deceased, but Mary Kohr lived in town and her son George occupied the farmhouse on the property. George's son Howard was stimulated by the Whitefords' excavation of the Kohr house, which was on the same property, and undertook to find the burial location.¹⁶

As this was happening, Waldo Wedel, with Berkeley Ph.D. newly in hand, was taking up a position as assistant

15. Kirke Mechem, "The Annual Meeting," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 4 (February 1935): 80; Kirke Mechem to Guy Whiteford, September 1, 1936, Correspondence Files, May 1914–1976, Archeology–Miscellaneous Correspondence, box 2, Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka.

16. Judy Lilly, "Kansas Land in 1871 Expensive for Pennsylvanian Moving West," *Salina Journal*, August 16, 1984, 6; Guy L. Whiteford, *Indian Archaeology in Saline County, Kansas* (Salina, Kans.: Consolidated Printers, 1937), 3.

More than one hundred human skeletons and a number of pots were unearthed at the burial pit site.



curator of archeology at the U.S. National Museum at the Smithsonian Institution. Wedel was a Kansas native. He had been a member of the 1930 to 1934 NSHS field parties and was A. T. Hill's assistant in 1934 when the Whitefords met the NSHS crew at the Paint Creek site. Shortly after he joined the Smithsonian staff in 1936, Wedel began planning a program of investigations in Kansas and was in active contact with amateur archeologists in the state, including the Whitefords. The file of his correspondence with the Whitefords begins with a September 24, 1936, letter to Guy, inquiring about the Kohr house excavation. This must have been an additional site that the Whitefords showed the NSHS party in 1934, along with the Minneapolis site, for he said he was "wondering whether this is the site which you and I visited in 1934," and Whiteford's reply assured him that it was.¹⁷

Wedel also asked Whiteford if he had "at any time in the past devoted any effort to the examination of cut banks along the smaller creeks" and explained a bit about the value of doing so. Whiteford's reply of September 29 said that he was "glad to hear of camp sites being found at such depths and as you stated, will give me something more to look for." We have no record, however, that the Whitefords ever did get around to looking at cutbanks; and they certainly did not need anything more to look for. According to contemporary accounts, two days later, on October 1, Howard Kohr found the place where Frank Marlin had encountered human bones over a half-century earlier. He contacted the Whitefords and the three of them (Guy and Mabel Whiteford and Howard Kohr) immediately undertook to excavate the remains. Guy Whiteford's next letter to Waldo Wedel is dated October 9 and begins simply: "Dear Mr. Wedel: We have discovered a burial pit and have been working on it for the past week, have unearthed more than fifty skeletons, eight small pots. . . . Have not found the out side walls of the pit, so cant [*sic*] say as to the size of it." Wedel got the letter on October 12 and promptly telegraphed both the Whitefords and A. T. Hill. He followed

up the telegrams with a long letter to the Whitefords, offering Hill's assistance, urging them to keep good notes, and hinting not at all subtly that the U.S. National Museum would be happy to have this material for study.¹⁸

The burial pit discovery was publicly announced in the *Salina Journal* the day after Guy Whiteford wrote to Wedel. Remembering the popularity of the Kohr House excavation, the Whitefords saw an opportunity. As Guy told Waldo Wedel on October 9: "We have a fence around the pit and an eighteen by twenty foot tent over it and if some of the people around here want to see it, its [*sic*] going to cost them." Undeterred by an admission charge of twenty-five cents (the same as the cost of greens fees at the Municipal Golf Course!) and that it was during the Great Depression, the crowds came and paid their quarters to see "The Largest Prehistoric Indian Burial in the Middle West." They would continue to come for more than a half century.¹⁹

The first notices of the burial pit were made well before the excavation was complete, and excavations proceeded as visitors arrived. The Whitefords continued the excavation as long as the weather held out in 1936, then resumed it in 1937, finishing it during that year. Between the two field seasons, they published a booklet describing both Kohr House Number 1 and the burial pit as it was understood at that time. A second edition of the booklet, released in 1941, included more photographs, a revised map of the completed burial site, notices of other sites, and tes-

17. Waldo R. Wedel, *An Introduction to Kansas Archeology*, 1; Waldo Wedel to Guy L. Whiteford, September 24, 1936, Wedel Papers; Guy L. Whiteford to Waldo Wedel, September 29, 1936, *ibid.*

18. Waldo Wedel to Guy L. Whiteford, September 24, 1936, Wedel Papers; Whiteford to Wedel, September 29, 1936, *ibid.*; Whiteford to Wedel, October 9, 1936, *ibid.*; Wedel to Whiteford, October 12, 1936, *ibid.*

19. "Burial Site of Old Indian Tribe Found," *Salina Journal*, October 10, 1936; Guy L. Whiteford to Waldo Wedel, October 9, 1936, Wedel Papers; Federal Writers' Project, *The WPA Guide to 1930s Kansas*, 270.



The Indian Burial Pit became a popular tourist attraction, and, in addition to being amateur archeologists, the Whitefords became promoters, writers, tour guides, and lecturers. The building housing the pit also contained a gift shop where tourists could purchase Indian-related curios.

testimonials from archeologists and others as to the importance of the site.²⁰

Meanwhile, Mary Kohr died in April 1937; and in July 1937, Daniel and Mary Kohr's heirs sold the property to the Price brothers—Howard, Lloyd, Levi, and John. The Whitefords soon thereafter moved out of their house in Salina (the house was small and Guy Whiteford had lamented in the March 1936 letter to A. T. Hill that their collection was getting too big for it) and into the farmhouse on the Price property, the yard of which held the burial pit. There were no regular visitor hours; instead, people just drove in and honked the horn to get someone out to collect their admission and give them a tour. Mabel, or sometimes Jay, usually was the tour guide since Guy was still on the Salina police force and working in town.²¹

The burial pit in that period was a curiosity and not the lightning rod for controversy it would later become. We now identify it to the Smoky Hill phase—it may well contain the remains of some of the people who lived in the Kohr site houses the Whitefords excavated—but in the 1930s its cultural affiliation was not certain. It was in part for this reason that it attracted the attention of not only the fascinated public but also professionals in archeology, history, and physical anthropology. Waldo Wedel was kept informed of excavation progress and in June 1940 made a detailed set of notes on the remains within the cemetery. Historian Herbert Eugene Bolton visited in 1941 as he conducted research for his Coronado biography. Wedel held

20. Guy L. Whiteford, *Prehistoric Indian Excavations in Saline County, Kansas* (Salina, Kans.: Consolidated Printers, ca. 1937). At that time, just under two-thirds of all skeletons and funerary objects in the burial pit had been excavated. Whiteford, *Indian Archaeology in Saline County, Kansas*.

21. Guy L. Whiteford to A. T. Hill, March 24, 1936, Wedel Papers; Whiteford interview.

out some hope of getting some of the skeletons to the U.S. National Museum for study by physical anthropologists at that institution, and in the early 1940s University of Kansas physical anthropologist Loren Eiseley also made some initial inquiries about a study of the remains. These latter came to naught, however, and it would be 1990 before a comprehensive study of the skeletons was undertaken.²²

In spite of the scholarly attention to the site, most visitors to the burial pit were members of the interested public, and the Whitefords were kept busy operating this popular tourist attraction. Clearly the burial pit had changed their lives. No longer simply avid amateur archeologists, they were now also promoters, entrepreneurs, writers, tour guides, and lecturers, and Mabel, the former photographer's assistant, had ample opportunity to draw on her experience. Publicity regarding the burial pit was everywhere in newspapers around the state, in magazines, the *Kansas Year Book* for 1937–1938, and a 1939 number of the national bulletin *Winners of the West*. Guy Whiteford gave a talk about the site at the 1938 Kansas State Historical Society annual meeting. In 1939 the national women's magazine *Independent Woman* included Mabel Whiteford as one of the "interesting" women in Kansas and the one with "[P]erhaps the most unique career." And in 1940 *Progress in Kansas* ran an article featuring Guy Whiteford's dual career as a police sergeant and an archeologist. The building housing the burial pit held a gift shop, and around 1942 the Whitefords opened an "Indian Curio

22. Waldo R. Wedel, untitled notebook, box 110, Wedel Papers; Herbert Eugene Bolton, *Coronado: Knight of Pueblos and Plains* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1949), 294; Marlin F. Hawley, "Loren C. Eiseley, KU Years: 1937–1944," *The Kansas Anthropologist* 13 (1992): 16–17; Michael Finnegan, *A Descriptive Report on the Fieldwork at Site 14SA1, Saline County, Kansas* (Manhattan, Kans.: Forensic Anthropological Consultants, 1990).

While continuing to operate the burial pit, the Whitefords resumed excavation activities, and in 1945 began their fifth and final Smoky Hill phase excavation at the Markley site in Ottawa County near Minneapolis.



Shop" in downtown Salina, where they sold jewelry, rugs, and blankets obtained from a New Mexico trader. It was about this same time that Guy Whiteford left the Salina police force and became a full-time businessman.²³

The burial pit did not command the Whitefords' full attention, however. They excavated a second house on the Kohr site, Kohr House Number 2, sometime between 1937 and mid-1940. Unfortunately, they never drew a site map, took no photographs, and did not catalog the artifacts, eventually co-mingling them with other materials from the site area in such a way that it is now impossible to reliably separate them from the larger collection. This lapse was uncharacteristic of them, however, and they returned to their usual excavation and recording standards with their fifth and final Smoky Hill phase house excavation, conducted in 1945 on the Markley site (14OT308) in Ottawa County near Minneapolis. The collection from this site is large, in part because the house contained a large number of artifacts and in part because the Whitefords retained objects such as ceramic body sherds and animal bone that they did not systematically save in the other houses they excavated.

The Whitefords also conducted limited investigations in May 1935 at a site they called Twin Mounds. This site is southwest of Roxbury in McPherson County and is attributable to an occupation some centuries earlier than the Smoky Hill phase. Around 1940 the Whitefords excavated a single, probably Smoky Hill phase, burial at what they called the Lindeman site. Lindeman, assuming it is correctly equated with the site numbered 14SA412 in the state site files, also contains Smoky Hill phase houses, and one wonders if the Whitefords might have had some thought of eventually returning to further investigate this site. They never did, however. The Twin Mounds and Lindeman site

investigations were small scale and not particularly important in the overall body of the Whitefords' work.

More important, but often overlooked, was the Whitefords' photography of several petroglyph sites in central Kansas. Petroglyphs, or images carved into bedrock outcrops, are restricted in their distribution in Kansas with most known sites in the Dakota Hills in Russell, Ellsworth, Ottawa, and nearby counties. The Whitefords' petroglyph photograph collection includes images of the fairly well-known Spriggs Rock (14RC1) and Peverly petroglyph (14RC10) sites in Rice County and the unnamed site 14OT4 in Ottawa County. Both of these were relatively small recording projects compared with the work at the Indian Hill petroglyphs (14EW1). Indian Hill, sometimes called Inscription Rock, is a large and complex petroglyph site in the Kanopolis Lake area of Ellsworth County. Wedel called it "probably the most outstanding petroglyph site in Kansas." Alexander Gardner, working for the Union Pacific Railroad, made the first comprehensive set of photographs of it in 1867. The Whiteford photographs, made about 1941, form a series of around sixty images and are the second comprehensive photographic record of the site. This site is now largely destroyed by a combination of vandalism and erosion, leaving the Gardner and the Whiteford photographs as the only complete documentation of the site.²⁴

Since July 1937, when the Price brothers bought the land from the Kohr estate, the Whitefords had operated the burial pit under an agreement with the Price family, living in the adjacent farmhouse for most of the time. A change in the relationship in 1946, however, led to the Whitefords'

23. "Prehistoric Indian Burial Pit Uncovered Near Small Kansas Town," *Winners of the West* 16 (August 1939): 1, 3; Kirke Mechem, "The Annual Meeting," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 8 (February 1939): 82; Josephine Nelson, "Meet These Interesting People," *Independent Woman* 18 (June 1939): 178; "Policeman Got His Man, Although He Had to Dig!" *Progress in Kansas* 6 (February 1940): 79–81.

24. Brian O'Neill, *Kansas Rock Art* (Topeka: Historic Preservation Department, Kansas State Historical Society, 1981); Wedel, *An Introduction to Kansas Archeology*, 483; Martin Stein, "Petroglyphs Lost at the Indian Hill Site," *Kansas Preservation* 10 (November–December 1987): 7–8.



In addition to excavations, the Whitefords photographed several petroglyph sites in the area, including the Indian Hill Site in the Kanopolis Lake area of Ellsworth County. Waldo Wedel called it "probably the most outstanding petroglyph site in Kansas."

withdrawal from the burial pit operation and departure from Salina. Mabel Whiteford gave her perspective on the situation in a March 20, 1946, letter to the Wedels:

The Price Brothers, who own this farm have given us an oral notice to move in 60 or 90 days. They say, they want the house to live in and don't care anything about the Burial. But we think or know that is not the truth. We are expecting a big tourist season and they want it all for themselves. . . . We have put in a lot of work here and have preserved them during the war, when business was poor and now that the war is over and people will be traveling again, they want us out. . . . We are out on a limb and hardly know what to do.²⁵

Waldo Wedel replied a few days later but was at a bit of a loss to know how to help them. Some efforts were made to try to get the state or the federal government to purchase the site, but they came to nothing. In late 1946, therefore, the Whitefords left the Price farm and the burial pit that had defined their careers as avocational archeologists in central Kansas. They bought a mobile home and toured the country for a time. By mid-1947 they were in Salem, Oregon. Prior to their departure from Kansas, they donated the contents of their Paint Creek site Cache IV to the University of Kansas, where it now is curated at the Museum of Anthropology. They retained the bulk of the collection for another quarter century, and in 1971 donated it, along with their maps, catalog, and other records, to the Kansas State Historical Society. That collection, whose nu-

25. Mabel Whiteford to Waldo and Mildred Wedel, March 20, 1946, Wedel Papers.

cleus the Whitefords learned in 1934 had real scientific value, continues to have real scientific value at the beginning of the twenty-first century.²⁶

During their Oregon years, Guy worked for the city of Salem and Mabel for the State of Oregon. They retired in 1965 and moved to Everett, Washington. There, Guy Whiteford died on May 22, 1989, at the age of ninety-five, and Mabel Whiteford died on June 1, 2001, at the age of ninety-eight. A part of Mabel's obituary in the Everett newspaper reads, "She and her husband, Guy, were noted for some outstanding archeological work in central Kansas before moving to Oregon then Washington."²⁷ Indeed.

The Whitefords' archeological career in Kansas thus spanned essentially twelve years, from 1934 to late 1946. The excavation and operation of the burial pit certainly was the centerpiece of their career, but it would be wrong to regard that as their only major accomplishment. The 1934 NSHS work in Kansas was, as we have seen, undertaken in part to determine if sites similar to the Upper Republican sites of southern Nebraska also were found in Kansas. Within a few days of arriving in Kansas, the NSHS field party was able to answer that question in the affirmative when they quite by accident met the Whitefords and were shown both the Minneapolis and Kohr sites. The NSHS promptly excavated three houses at Minneapolis and, of course, the Whitefords soon thereafter took up the excavation of Smoky Hill phase houses at Kohr and other sites.

The Whitefords' only publication of their excavation results was the description of the Kohr House Number 1 and the burial pit in the 1937 and 1941 booklets. They were, however, apprising both Hill and Wedel of the results of their house excavations and, after late 1936, of the burial pit excavation too. A newspaper story from November 10, 1936, reported that both Hill and Wedel had visited the burial pit the previous weekend. Other accounts suggest that

26. "Whiteford Archeological Collection to Society," *Kansas State Historical Society Mirror* 17 (November 1971): 2; Schmiebler "Salina Indian Artifacts Find Haven Back 'Home.'"

27. Mabel B. Whiteford obituary.

Unlike today, during the Whitefords' years in Kansas there was no opposition or controversy about the excavation or display of human remains. Still a popular tourist attraction into the 1970s, the site was closed in 1989 and respectfully covered over in 1990.

Hill and Wedel regularly viewed excavation progress, but just how many more visits Hill or Wedel made is not recorded. We do know that Wedel spent June 6, 1940, in Salina, for the Wedel Papers at the National Anthropological Archives preserve a notebook with his detailed notes for the burial pit and Kohr site houses Numbers 1 and 2. Why Wedel did not also describe the Aerhart and Lamar houses, both of which had been excavated by this time, is uncertain, although time limitations could have been a factor.²⁸

Later that same year, 1940, Wedel published the first of a long series of syntheses of Central Plains archeology. In it he recognized sites that he regarded as "hybrid" between those of the Upper Republican culture and the contemporaneous Nebraska culture of eastern Nebraska. Without naming them, it is clear from reference citations, text descriptions, and the positions of sites plotted on an accompanying map that he was referring to the Minneapolis and Kohr sites as well as the Griffing site in Manhattan that he excavated in 1937. Wedel and others continued to refer to these sites in future syntheses, and in 1959 Wedel formally named this "hybrid" the Smoky Hill aspect. The Smoky Hill aspect in that formulation had two foci: the Manhattan focus, exemplified by the Griffing site, and the Saline focus, exemplified by the Minneapolis and Kohr sites including the burial pit. The 1959 monograph also briefly describes the two Kohr houses and the burial pit on the basis of the notes from Wedel's 1940 visit to the Whitefords. Wedel's definition of the Smoky Hill phase, therefore, relies heavily on information supplied by the Whitefords: the site lead to the Minneapolis site and the Kohr site/burial pit information based on their excavation. These remain among the more completely reported Smoky Hill phase sites and continue to shape our perceptions of the archeology of this period in central Kansas.²⁹

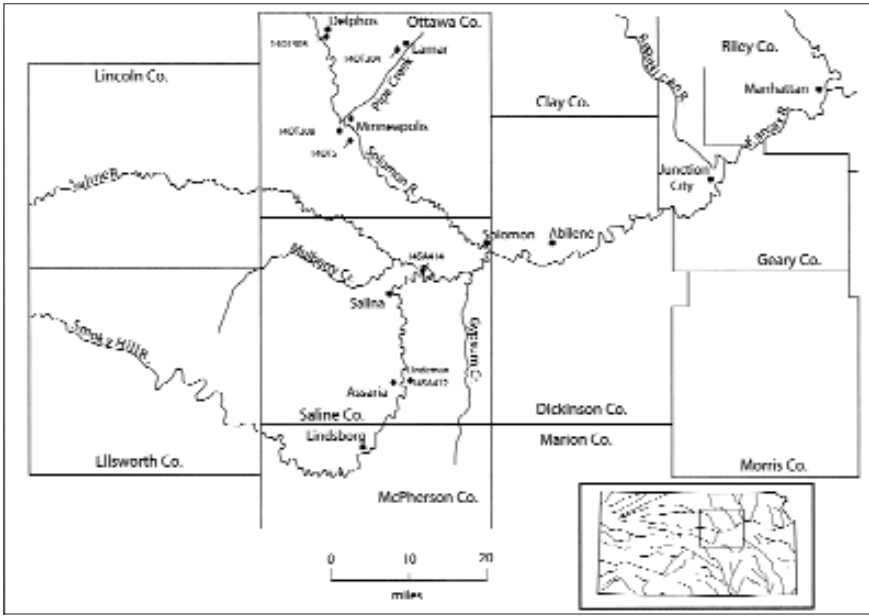
28. "View Indian Pit," *Salina Journal*, November 10, 1936; Wedel, untitled notebook.

29. Waldo R. Wedel, "Culture Sequence in the Central Great Plains," *Essays in Historical Anthropology of North America*, Miscellaneous Collections 100 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1940); Wedel, *An Introduction to Kansas Archeology*, 563–65. Archeologists now refer to Smoky Hill as a phase rather than an aspect, and the two foci of the Smoky Hill aspect are not recognized in the current taxonomy. It also should be noted that Wedel called the burial pit and the Kohr site the Whiteford site.



It is a bit more difficult to assess the Whitefords' legacy relative to the burial pit. Unquestionably, it was the Whitefords' entrepreneurship—in part responding to local interest—that led to the commercial display of the remains. It was indeed the Whitefords who operated this business for its first ten years. There was, however, no opposition or controversy about the excavation and display of the burials at that time, and it would be the 1970s, well after the Whitefords' departure from Kansas, before any documented controversy arose and the mid-1980s before a sustained dialogue on the burial pit's fate would begin. We know full well we would not now excavate and display human remains in the way they were presented at the Indian Burial Pit, but things were different in 1936. It is too easy to look back from the present and condemn the action taken two-thirds of a century ago. We must simply acknowledge the burial pit as a significant episode in the history of Kansas archeology.

We also must take note of the substantial involvement of Mabel in all aspects of the Whitefords' work. In an era where most of the archeologists we read about, certainly all the Central Plains archeologists, were men, Mabel Whiteford was not only active in the investigations but garnered a good measure of recognition for it. Most of the catalog and some of the maps are in her hand. This may seem to reaffirm her filling a traditional woman's role, but



Map of the major excavations of the Whiteford family, whose remarkable career in archeology greatly contributed to the study of Kansas prehistory that emerged during the 1930s and 1940s.

her handwriting also is considerably more legible than that of her husband. In any event, some of the accounts and the substantial photographic record of most of the Whitefords' investigations show that Mabel, and for that matter, a young Jay Dee, wielded shovels and were full participants in the excavation. It may be irritating to some to read the newspaper accounts that talk about Guy Whiteford and "his wife," as if she had no name of her own, but the newspapers seemed to be as fascinated with Mabel as with Guy, and there is little of the condescension that often accompanied accounts of a woman's participation in endeavors such as this.

The Whitefords, then, were key players in the development of a portion of the outline of Kansas prehistory that emerged during the 1930s and 1940s. Their Great Bend aspect site investigations were not notably different from those conducted by many other amateurs of the period and later, and some of their other investigations were routine. Their knowledge of and investigations into Smoky Hill phase sites, however, were crucial to Wedel's later formulation of that archeological culture, and Wedel also acknowledged that it was the Whitefords who brought the Indian Hill petroglyph site to his attention. Their photography of this site deserves wider recognition than it has received. In light of all these accomplishments, it is not surprising that Wedel presented the Whitefords with a copy of *An Introduction to Kansas Archeology* when that impor-

tant volume was published in 1959. The last letter in Wedel's file of correspondence with the Whitefords is from Guy Whiteford, writing from Salem, Oregon, and thanking Wedel for the book. In it he wrote the epitaph to the story of the Whitefords' remarkable career in Kansas archeology: "The Whitefords are very

happy that their small contributions in the field of archeology in the state of Kansas were able to help."³⁰

But there is an epilogue to the Whitefords' archeological career and that is the subsequent fate of the burial pit. The Price family did, of course, take over its operation in 1946 and continue that operation much as the Whitefords had established it. With undoubtedly a few individual dissents, the public overall condoned this display of human remains for several decades. The first organized protest arose only in 1972 when the Lutheran synod announced that it would not hold its annual meeting in Salina because of the burial pit's display. It was the mid-1980s, however, before controversy was sustained. The final result of the controversy and a long dialogue between the Kansas State Historical Society and several Indian tribes, particularly the Pawnee, was the state's purchase of the site at the end of 1989. In April 1990 the Pawnee tribe, generally regarded as the nearest descendants of the people buried in this cemetery, covered the remains with blankets and shawls, said final prayers, and held a funeral feast. The cemetery then was filled with 125 tons of clean sand, covered with a concrete cap, revegetated with grass, and surrounded with a wooden fence. It rests today much as it did before October 1936.



30. Guy L. Whiteford to Waldo Wedel, March 22, 1960, Wedel Papers.