



Science News-Letter

The Weekly Summary of Current Science

Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.



A Science Service Publication

Edited by Watson Davis
Vol. XI No. 317

10¢ a copy \$5 a year
May, 7, 1927

ARCHAEOLOGY

Old Indian Mounds Used as Flood Refuges

The thousands of terror-stricken people who have taken to Indian mounds to escape the flooding Mississippi waters, are showing scientists how the Indians probably used these earthworks which they built in pre-Columbian days.

Each of these mounds, very frequent in this section, can take care of some 500 persons. Sturdily built of earth, they have resisted the onslaught of the waters for generations, and are now pinnacles of safety to the refugees.

The situation today, according to Dr. Alfred Kidder, well-known American anthropologist, is strong evidence in favor of the theory that the mounds were originally built by the Indians a thousand years ago for this very purpose—to afford refuge from floods. Undoubtedly the Indians experienced floods of considerable magnitude and had to find some method of protecting themselves.

"In all probability," said Dr. Kidder, "it was for this purpose that they toiled for years to build these high mounds. It was a gigantic task, since they had only their baskets in which to carry the tons of earth necessary to make them.

"It was at first thought that these mounds might be funeral piles like other smaller mounds in this section and in the Ohio valley, but excavations unearthed no human remains. However, post holes were discovered where the framework of buildings had evidently been erected. Baked clay was also discovered. This clay had plastered the log and twig structure of the building and was hardened into enduring form when the buildings caught fire.

"Were these mounds erected merely as high places for temples as in the case of the Aztec and Toltec pyramidal structures? This was the conjecture. Against this theory arose

the remote possibility that the mounds were places of refuge from floods—a theory substantiated by the present situation.

"The buildings were probably temples, altars and the habitats of chieftains," said Dr. Kidder. "In time of flood a mound could accommodate the entire tribe, most of the members of which probably lived in the inundated area."

Pyramidal in structure but with a flat top to permit erection of buildings, the mounds are about 150 feet in diameter and some fifty feet high. They are largely confined to the flood area of the Mississippi. A number occur, however, in areas in the valley which are not completely inundated in flood time. These were probably built later, Dr. Kidder said, in the manner of primitive peoples, after the erection of such mounds had become a custom. The funeral mounds, on the other hand, are much smaller

and lower and occur frequently in both the Mississippi and Ohio valleys.

Science News-Letter, May 7, 1927

METEOROLOGY

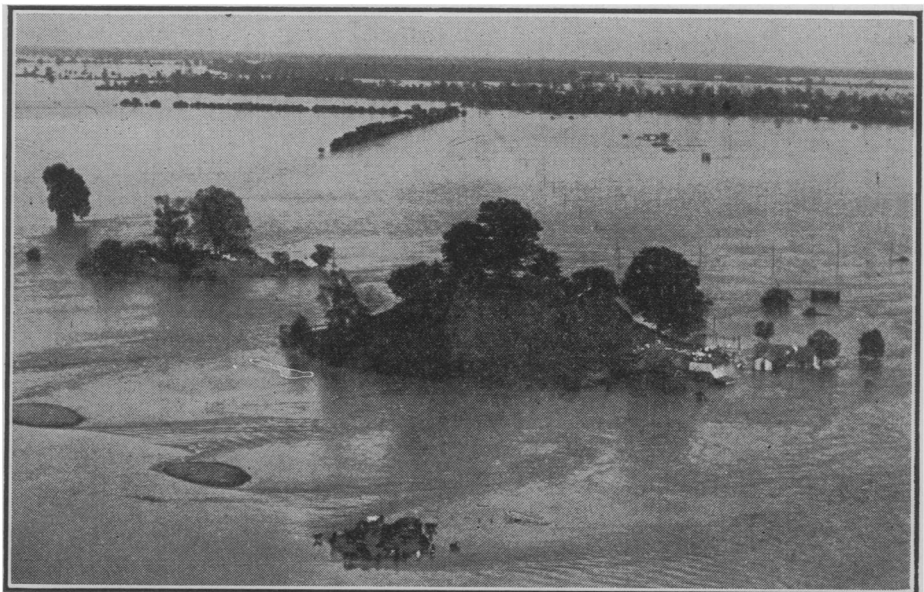
Flood Began Last September

The greatest flood in Mississippi River history, now raging, gave the first grim warning of its approach eight months ago.

"The present flood began late in August when heavy rains set in, raising the waters of one or two rivers in Kansas and Oklahoma," said H. C. Frankenfield, head of the division of rivers and floods of the U. S. Weather Bureau.

"In October there was flood in the Arkansas and Neosho Rivers with damage of \$40,000,000, or perhaps more. Last fall, I saw mud clots on ten-foot corn stalks, out in the prairie. Then, the rains drifted east-

(Just turn the page)



ANCIENT INDIAN MOUNDS in flooded Mississippi, now used by refugees. It is suggested by archæologists that the Indians who built them have used them for similar purposes