

**THE LITTLE OSAGE**  
  
**and**  
  
**MISSOURI INDIAN VILLAGE SITES**  
  
**CA. 1727-1777 A.D.**

*by*  
  
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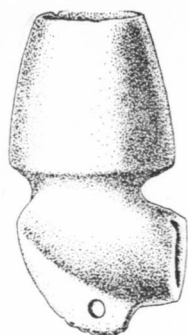
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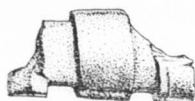
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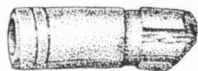
*The cover plate is a picture of Mobongo, an Osage woman, one of the seven Osages who went to France in 1825. The illustration is adapted from a painting reproduced in M'Kenney and Hall, Vol. 1, 1842.*



A



B



C



D



E



F



G



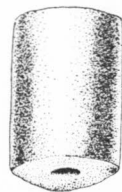
H



I



J



K

Figure 7. Native and trade artifacts, 23SA3 (*J. M. Crick collection*)



Figure 12. Bone and antler artifacts, 23SA3 and 23SA4

The strap handle and the loop handle had carelessly done, vertical incised lines on them (Fig. 6,E). Four parallel lines were on the strap handle. The one lug was roughly pyramidal in shape. It was 10 mm. in diameter and protruded 10 mm. from the surface of the rim. It might be classed as a node rather than a lug, but its position on the rim and the lack of others on the vessel were things evidencing the probable intent of the protrusion for a lug.

One sand tempered potsherd was entirely different from all the other pottery found on the site. Its presence might be explainable as something introduced by other Indians or as the remnant of an earlier occupation of the same site.

European trade materials were by far the most plentiful artifacts at the Little Osage site 23SA3. Items are considered to be European rather than Indian or native if the item was not made of native materials, by Indian methods or by Indians. The term European is used even though the item may have been made by native born white men locally or elsewhere in North America. All trade items manufactured by those of European cultural background have been called European to separate them from those of Indian make and/or of native materials. For example three wheel-made pottery sherds, one of which is glazed, have been identified as European although not made in Europe, and copper or brass cut-out arrowheads also have been identified as European though cut into shape by Indians.

Flintlock gun barrels and parts (Fig 13) were much more plentiful than flint arrowheads. Gunflints (Fig. 14) were of two types of flint, European and native. Copper or brass goods collected were flat cut-out arrowheads (Figs. 15, E; 7,I), tinklers (Figs. 15,F;7,F), flat oval pieces of gun-butt plates, possibly used as beads (Fig. 15, B,D), cylindrical beads, conical projectile points (Fig. 7, H), an awl (Fig. 15, A), pieces of kettles (Fig. 16), bells (Fig. 17), a ramrod decoration (Fig. 15, C), the butt-plate of a fusil or rifle (Fig. 17), buttons (Fig. 17), and a decorated piece (Fig. 17). Iron items were important and the following were found on the site: knives (Figs. 5; 18, center), square nails, spikes, scissors (Figs. 18; 19), rods (Fig. 18, center), arrowheads, awls and hoes and axes (Fig. 20). A silver pin-brooch and triangular dangle, white and red glass beads, glass bottle fragments, wheel-made pottery fragments and vermilion were other European trade objects.

Charred corn and beans from the excavations indicated that some gardening had been practiced by the Little Osage. Animal bones found in the refuse were primarily those of large animals including horse, bison, elk (wapiti), deer, bear, wolf and dog. Bones of smaller animals were those of turkey, beaver, wildcat, duck and turtle.

### Collections

During the past quarter of a century Mr. J. M. "Buster" Crick has spent a

collection were photographed or drawn and are listed as follows: gun barrels and parts, gunflints, iron kettle fragments, iron knives, iron hoes and axes (Fig. 20), iron files and scissors. Copper implements and objects are coils of wire (Fig. 7, J), tinklers (Fig. 7, F), cut-out flat arrowpoints (Fig. 7, I), a gun trigger guard made into an ornament (Fig. 7, E), rings, circular pieces, conical arrowpoints (Fig. 7, H), a thimble, bells, ramrod decorations and buttons. Also occurring were triangular silver pendants (Fig. 7, G), pieces of glass bottles and a great variety of glass beads (white, red, and blue and white striped, with the white predominating) (Fig. 7, K).

Mr. Crick reported two fully extended, supine, primary burials from the east side of the site. Both were lying in an east-west direction, but no mention was made of the position of the skull in regard to the cardinal points. One burial, approximately two feet deep had several white glass beads scattered around the skull and lying on top of the bones. A copper ring was with the beads, but was near the side of the skull. An iron knife was in the right hand (Fig. 22, B). The burial was judged to be that of a youngster, but only a portion of the skull was recovered (Fig. 22, A). Nothing was found with the second burial (J. M. Crick, personal communication 1939).

There are no doubt a number of collections from the site, but only two others were available for study. One of these, the collection of Alva Gauldin, contains an interesting elbow type catlinite pipe (Fig. 23). The bowl shape is similar to Micmac pipes and much like the bowls on some trade tomahawk metal pipes.

Another very important collection from the Little Osage site (23SA3) is the Joe Lefavre collection in the Museum of Anthropology at the University of Missouri. In the collection is a full complement of a chest of gunsmith tools and parts. The chest was found when a road was being graded at the edge of the site, more than 20 years ago. Joe Lefavre did a real service when he preserved the material. It is perhaps the most complete series of gunsmith tools and repair parts of the period about 1730 to 1777 A.D. in existence and gives an insight into this important aspect of Indian trade and contact, gun repair.

An inventory of the Lefavre collection of gun parts and tools has been compiled by T. M. Hamilton who has also made a study of these as well as a study of trade guns and related tools from all the Osage sites in Missouri. Hamilton has this in manuscript form ready for publication so no detailed descriptions of the cache will be included here. According to Hamilton there were 129 items that could definitely be assigned to the cache. Twenty-five items were gunsmithing tools or objects other than gun parts including the following; vises, metal files, wood rasps, wood saw, drawknives, screwdriver, case knives, gouges, chisels, wedges, hammerhead, nails, lock to the chest and several unidentified pieces (Fig. 24). The 104 gunparts included locks, lockplates, cocks, mainsprings, frizzen springs, lock mounting screws, flintscrews, frizzens, sear, trigger plates, trigger, barrel, rampipes,

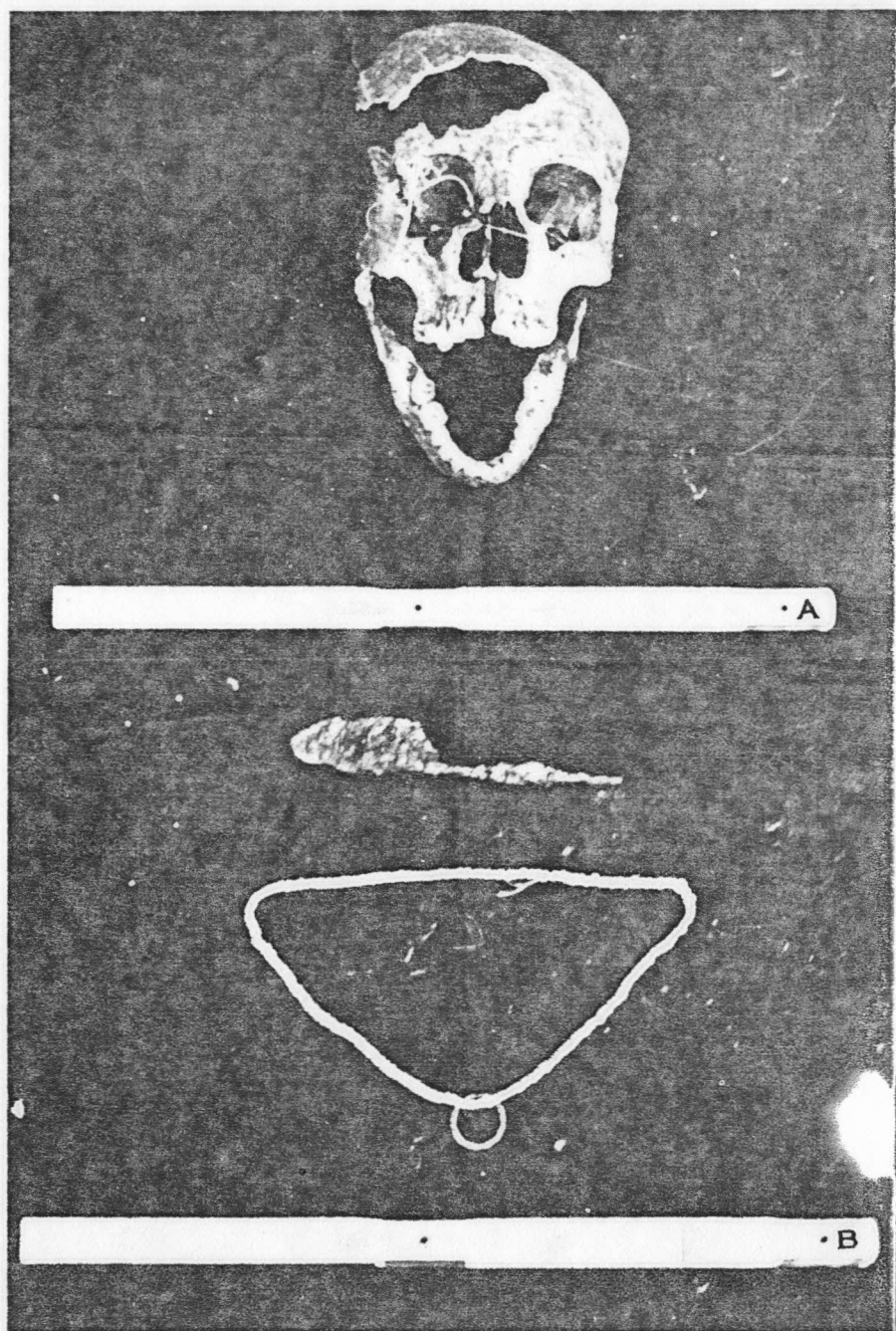


Figure 22. Osage Indian burial and grave goods (A. Skull B. knife, white glass beads and copper ring)

round pointed tool. The lip surface of another sherd had been notched diagonally.

Rims of large utilitarian vessels were judged to be straight in cross section, but most of these rim sherds were not large enough for the cross section shape to be determined with accuracy. The large vessel rims were generally thick (9+ mm.). Two rim sherds of medium to small vessels were flaring in cross section. The rim height of these two vessels was 9 to 18 mm. only.

Handles on small vessels appeared to be of the loop variety and extended from an attachment below the lip on the outer rim surface to the shoulder area. One handle was decorated with two vertical incised lines.

Vessel shape was the jar or olla and bowl. Jars and miniature jars were placed with burials. The diameter of the jars exceeded the height, and the base was flattened but was not completely flat. Vessel shapes will be discussed more fully under the section on collections (Figs. 36; 41; 42; 43).

Flint artifacts were not numerous. The small triangular arrowhead was the most frequently found flint item (Fig. 35). Only four large scrapers and one flake snubnosed end scraper were found. This lack of scrapers sets the assemblage apart from that at 23SA3 where the flint scrapers were most abundant. There were two flake knives, and non-classifiable pieces of flint.

Ground stone items were more plentiful than chipped stone. Pieces of sandstone abrading stones occurred most abundantly, and out of a total of 30 there were 7 that had red pigment ground into one surface. Other items were 21 pieces of catlinite, 21 pieces of rubbed hematite, 2 pieces of quartzite abrading stones, 3 pieces of catlinite pipes (Fig. 34, right), 3 pieces of gray claystone pipes (Fig. 34, left and second from right), 1 of which was unfinished (Fig. 34, bottom, left), and a pumice abrading stone. Pecked stone items were 2 limestone anvil stones (on 1 of which was red pigment) a red quartzite cobble that had been used as a hammerstone and a pebble chipping hammerstone.

Bone and antler items included a rib arrowshaft wrench (Fig. 12), a piece of a mat-weaving needle (Fig. 12), a flat bone handle (rib) and 2 antler tips (Fig. 12). A piece of a bison scapula may have been a part of a hoe.

Two shell beads and a notched mussel shell spoon (Fig. 36, bottom right) were the only shell items.

Two carved clay heads were of much interest for they appeared to be representations of horses, judging from the shape of the heads and the unmistakable manes. They had been baked after carving and were found in the bottom of the refuse pit in house I.

Trade goods were important items occurring on the site, but were not as plentiful as similar objects found at 23SA3. There were no gun barrels, although a total of ten gunflints was found, several of which were honey colored and wedge-shaped (Fig. 37). Small white glass beads were the most abundant type of trade object. Although usually white, a few were blue or black. They com-



monly were 2 to 3 mm. in diameter and were spherical or cylindrical. Larger beads were ovoid in shape.

Small fragments of thin copper or brass, assumed to be pieces of trade kettles, were prevalent items in the materials collected. Three pieces had rivets and holes in them as if they had been used as patches on kettles (Figs. 38, bottom; 36, left center). Conical tinklers (Fig. 36, right center) were made of the thin material, but no cylindrical beads were in the collections. A thin-walled bell (Fig. 38, center) and the fragment of a heavy, decorated bell and a heavy bracelet (Fig. 38, center) were other copper or brass items found.

Pieces of iron were so rusted that in most instances they were not readily identifiable as to the original item. The iron objects were almost as plentiful as the copper or brass. There were two knife blades (Fig. 39) and a knife handle with the iron rivets still in place. One large piece of iron appeared to be a portion of a kettle. Hand forged square nails (Fig. 39, center), an awl, a piece of a trap (?) (Fig. 39, bottom), bits of wire, the tip of a file, a handled tool more than 6 in. long and a fragment of a rod were the other iron items from the site.

There were numerous pieces of glass bottles. Glass fragments were found in the refuse pit and in house I and thus were undoubtedly trade goods.

Lead objects were small spherical pellets 5 mm. in diameter, a lead ball that had been chewed into shape, 15 mm. in diameter, a piece of a crude crucifix and a piece of a finger ring band.

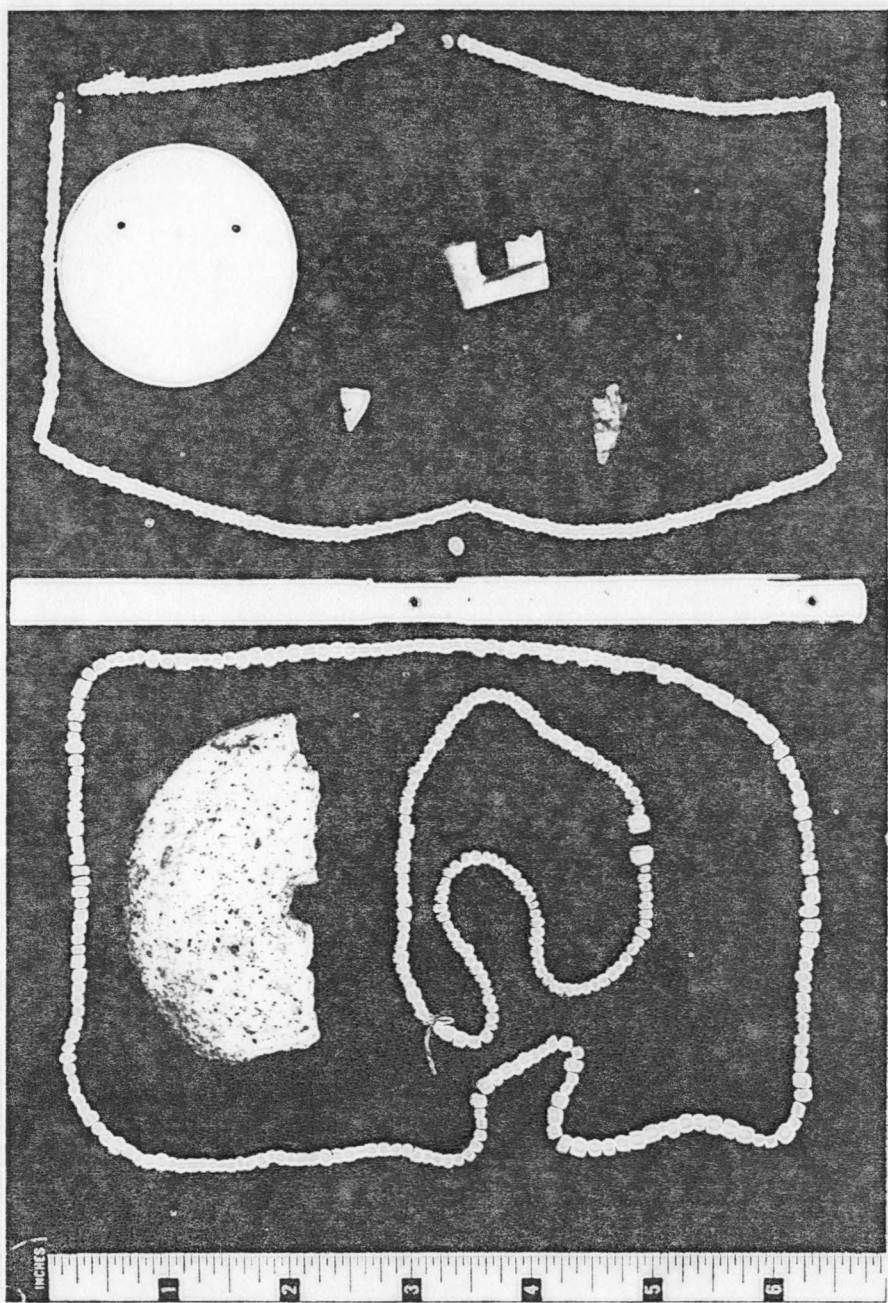
One molded trade clay pipe (Fig. 34, bottom, 2nd from left) has decoration on it and is perhaps characteristic of the particular period. It might be identifiable as to place of manufacture.

Caution should be used in the evaluation of the European trade material from 23SA4 because part of the site had been utilized as a modern trash dump. Some of the fragments of glass picked up on the surface as well as some pieces of iron were rather obviously from the more recent use of the site and thus were not described. Three shell buttons (2 hole shirt buttons) found in the excavation of the mash pit were thought to be modern.

### **Collections**

The Late Missouri village site and burial grounds, 23SA4, were cut through for drainage ditches, reverments and levees causing a great loss of artifacts, burials, houses, pits and other features. Several people salvaged artifacts that are important in the interpretation of the site. Those saving the materials did a very commendable service. Collections containing items from the site were made by Buster Crick, Joe Lefavre, Dr. Robert H. Nuckles and Mr. Sanstra.

Complete or nearly whole pottery vessels, both miniature and medium size utilitarian jars occurred with burials. The larger ollas or jars each had two strap handles, and three of the four observed also had lugs spaced evenly between the handles. The handles on the jar without lugs and on one jar with lugs were



**Figure 44. Burial goods, 23SA4** (*top, European trade beads, catlinite pipe, flint arrowhead, Crick Collection; bottom, half of perforated pottery disk and glass trade beads, Lefavre Collection*)

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Historical information with some certainty establishes the location of the Little Osage and the late Missouri Indian village sites (in the period 1727 to 1777 A.D.) on the south side of the Missouri River at the edge of the Tetsau (Petitesas or Little Osage) plains in Saline County, Missouri. Interest in the site evidences resulted in several descriptions of the Little Osage site 23SA3, and of the pits, earthworks and materials associated with it before there was any destruction by cultivation. Interpretation of these evidences included (1) the place of the massacre of a Spanish expedition, (2) the remains of Fort Orleans and (3) the location of the Little Osage village site. The latter was judged to be correct.

Archaeological investigations conducted on 23SA3 indicated that most evidences of house structures and other features had been destroyed by farming activities. There were some indications of flimsy pole framework house structures and straight sided storage/refuse pits. Burials were extended and supine and usually had grave goods with them. No pottery vessels were with burials and little pottery was found on the site. Pottery sherds were either undecorated or were decorated on the lip with finger impressions or punctations. Trade cloth impressions were on some of the body sherds. Handles were present and one was decorated with vertical incised lines. Artifacts made of native materials and of diagnostic or distinctive value were the large round, elliptical or ovoid flint scrapers, catlinite or siltstone "metal molds", a variation of the elbow pipe and the Micmac pipe.

Small triangular flint arrowheads, flint snubnosed end scrapers, double pointed flint knives, grooved sandstone arrowshaft smoothers and sandstone abrading stones were other native made items.

Artifacts in great preponderance other than large flint scrapers were flintlock gun parts (including gunflints), copper or brass kettle fragments and a variety of iron and copper or brass items originally traded to the Little Osage by European fur traders. Cut-out sheet copper arrowheads might be distinctive traits. Collections of materials from the site were important, particularly those of J. M. Crick and Joe Lefavre. Trade goods tended to aid in establishing the time that the site was inhabited.

The site of the Missouri Indian village (23SA4) in the estimated period 1727-1777 A.D. was not investigated and reported upon in detail by early writers, probably due to its location at a place subject to overflow by the Missouri river. It was not noticed and recorded until it was being destroyed by drainage ditches, levees and revetments.

Fortunately, the excavations conducted on the site produced evidences of houses. They were long, rectangular pole framework structures similar to the houses of the Osage, other prairie tribes, and Indians living in the northeastern United States. Bell shaped pits and shallow scooped out firepits were features