



1000 YEARS AGO:
THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE US



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Presented by:
Russ Gifford, Sept 19, 2019
Western Iowa Tech Community College

REGIONAL HISTORY

The GOAL of this Class:

- **To Introduce us to the history of our region *before* the Europeans**

REGIONAL HISTORY

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- **To Introduce us to the history of our region before the Europeans**
- **To learn more about the actual history and culture of those who came before us.**

REGIONAL HISTORY

The GOAL of this Class:

- This class covers a time *prior to the emergence of the tribal cultures*



Prehistoric time

-- *the time
before history
was recorded
with words.*

Petroglyphs – found in 1841, photo from 1891, in the region of Homer, Nebraska to the Blackbird Hill site. – Photo courtesy of the Sioux City Public Museum



Prehistoric time

-- but the lack
of a written
language that
we can
understand
only means
we don't have
a *written*
record.

Petroglyphs – found in 1841, photo from 1891, in the region of Homer, Nebraska to the Blackbird Hill site. – Photo courtesy of the Sioux City Public Museum

REGIONAL HISTORY

Plains Villages --

- **We in Siouxland are on the edge of the Plains Villages region.**
- ***Archaeologists work to decide which came first – and Siouxland will be important in that respect!***

TIMING IS EVERYTHING!

Prehistoric time -- *the time before history was recorded with words* --

- **Paleoindian –10,000 years ago**

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- **Archaic -- in Iowa this was between 10,000 and 3,000 years ago**

TIMING IS EVERYTHING!

Prehistoric time -- *the time before history was recorded with words* --

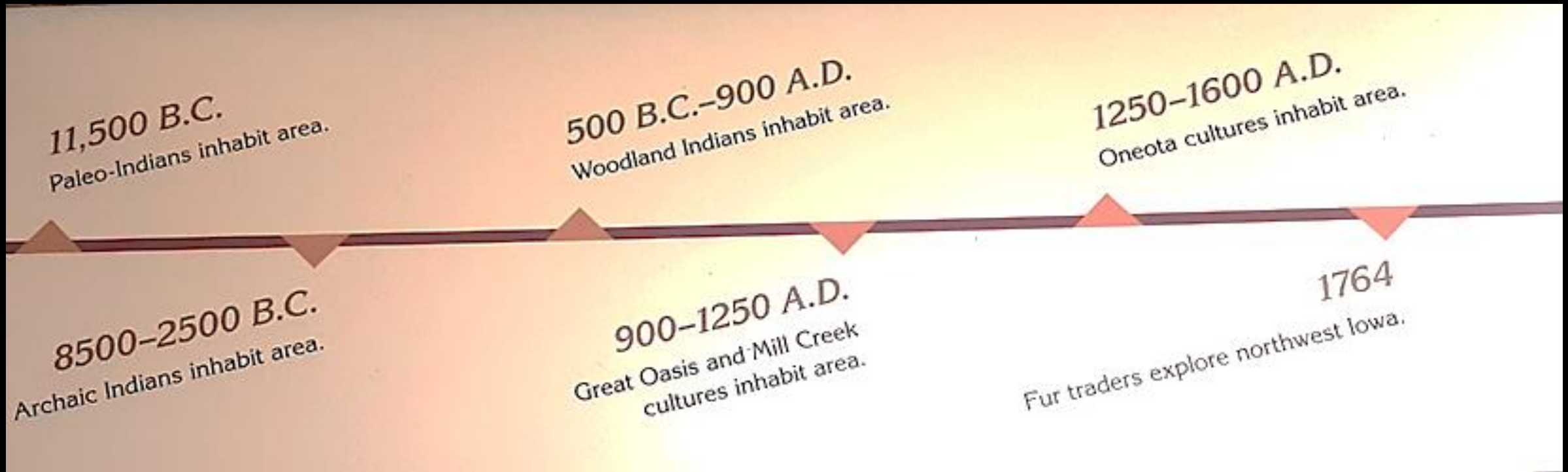
- **Paleoindian –10,000 years ago**
- **Archaic -- in Iowa this was between 10,000 and 3,000 years ago**
- **Woodland – started about 500 BCE**

TIMING IS EVERYTHING!

Prehistoric time -- *the time before history was recorded with words* --

- Paleoindian –10,000 years ago
- Archaic -- in Iowa this was between 10,000 and 3,000 years ago
- Woodland – started about 500 BCE
- **Late Prehistoric period— about 900 CE (AD)**

TIMING IS EVERYTHING!



WOODLAND ERA

500 BCE – 900 CE (AD)

Major social, technological, and economic developments:

- **bow and arrow hunting,**
- **pottery production,**
- **plant domestication and cultivation,**
- **and burial mound construction.**

WOODLAND ERA

500 BC – 100 BC

But in the beginning, before the bow:

Settlements were seasonally occupied.

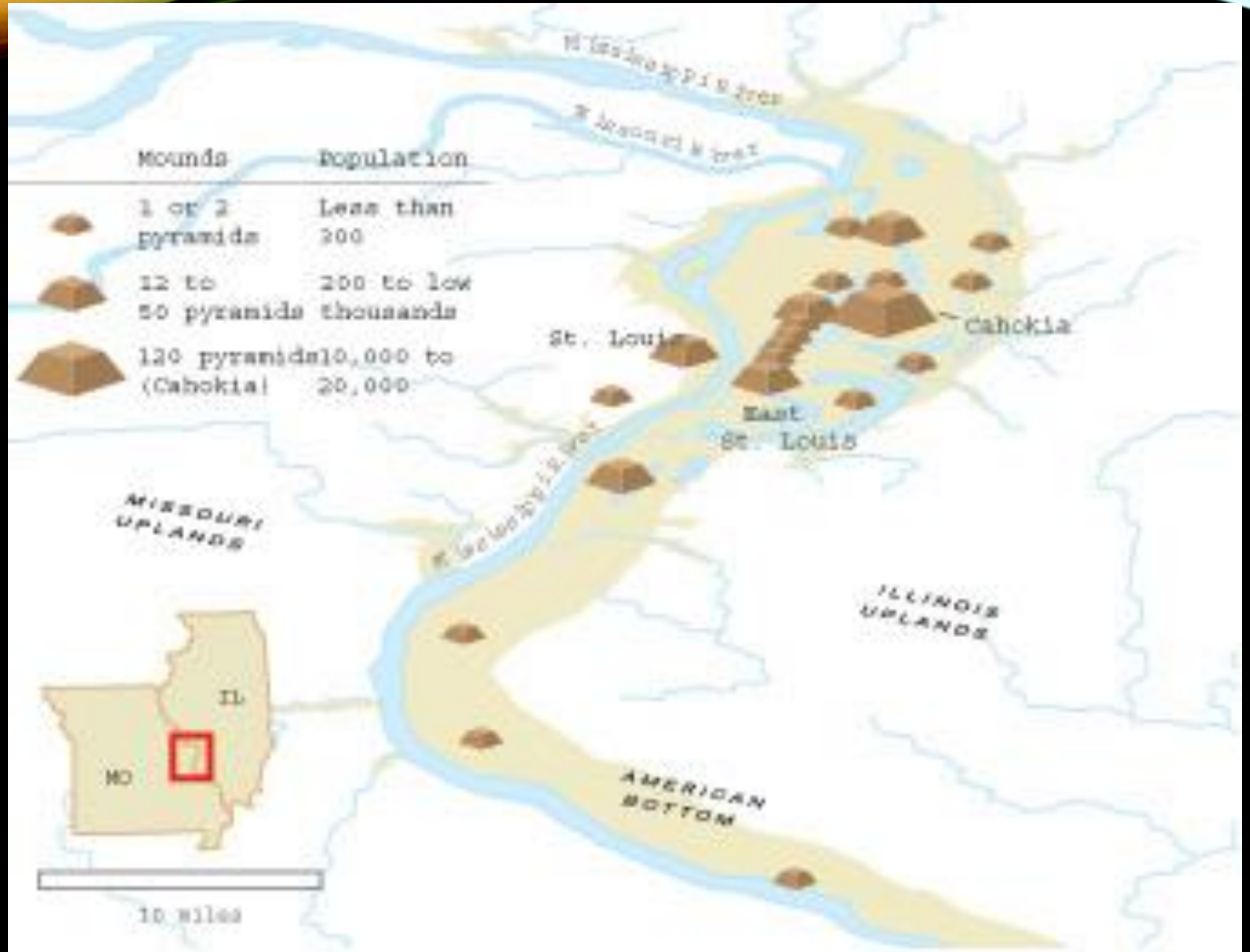
Hunter-gatherer civilization:

Fish, clams, deer, and bison.

Gourds, sump weed, goosefoot, sunflower, knotweed,

A little barley and NO CORN.

Eastern Iowa would have interaction with Mississippi waterway people, and the Hopewell (from Ohio-Illinois region).



WOODLAND ERA

100 BCE (BC) – 300 CE (AD)

But Northwestern Iowa – our region – is more involved with the **Plains Villages**. But widespread trade occurs:

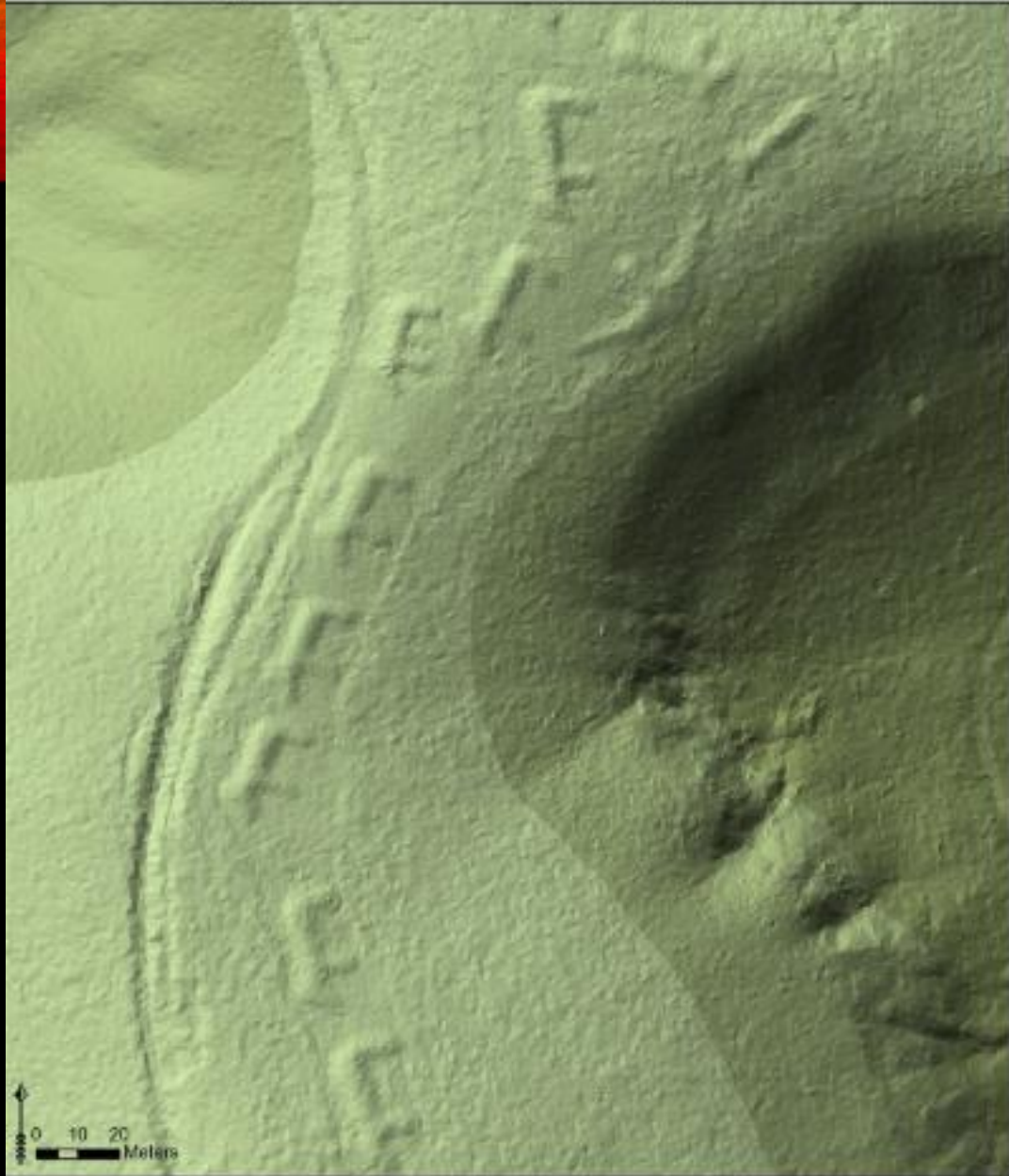
Materials from as far as Yellowstone in the West and Knife River in North Dakota. Also signs of trade with the Kansas City region.

WOODLAND ERA

300 BCE – 900 CE

The *Late Woodland* period was one of remarkable change:

- The continent-wide exchange of exotic goods declined**
- but interaction between communities continued.**
- Population levels increased**



WOODLAND ERA

650 CE – 1000 CE

Groups of linear, effigy, and conical mounds in northeastern Iowa begin

(Photo – Effigy Mounds National Monument, Iowa
photo courtesy National Park Service.)

LATE WOODLAND ERA

300 CE – 900 CE

- The *bow and arrow* came to Iowa, improving hunting
- Corn was introduced around 800 CE
- More food meant Populations grew – and villages grew and diversified.

SO WE ARRIVE AT...

Prehistoric time -- *the time before history was recorded with words* --

- Paleoindian – before 10,000 BCE
- Archaic -- in Iowa was between 10,000 and 3,000 years ago
- Woodland – started about 500 BCE
- **Late Prehistoric period— about 900 CE (AD)**

LATE PREHISTORIC

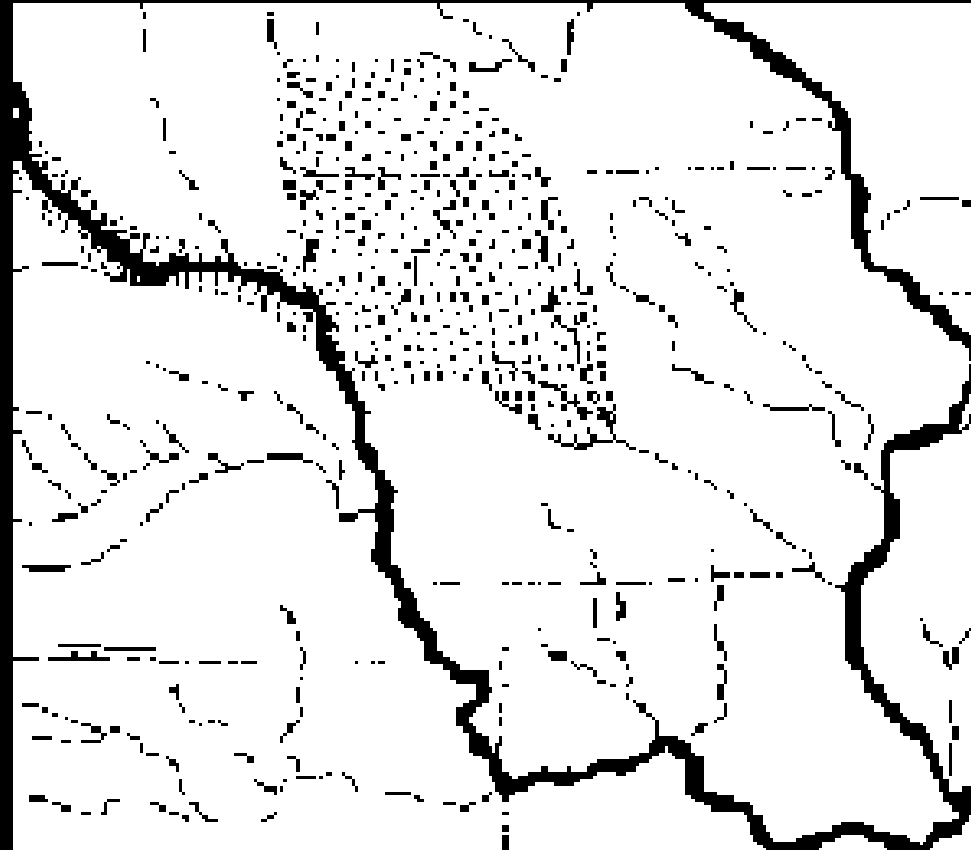
The three main prehistoric groups that inhabited this region:

- **The Great Oasis (900-1100 CE [or AD])**
- **Mill Creek (1100-1300 CE)**
- **Oneota (1200-1700 CE)**

GREAT OASIS

900 CE – 1100 CE

The Great Oasis
culture extended from
southwestern
Minnesota to
northwest Iowa.

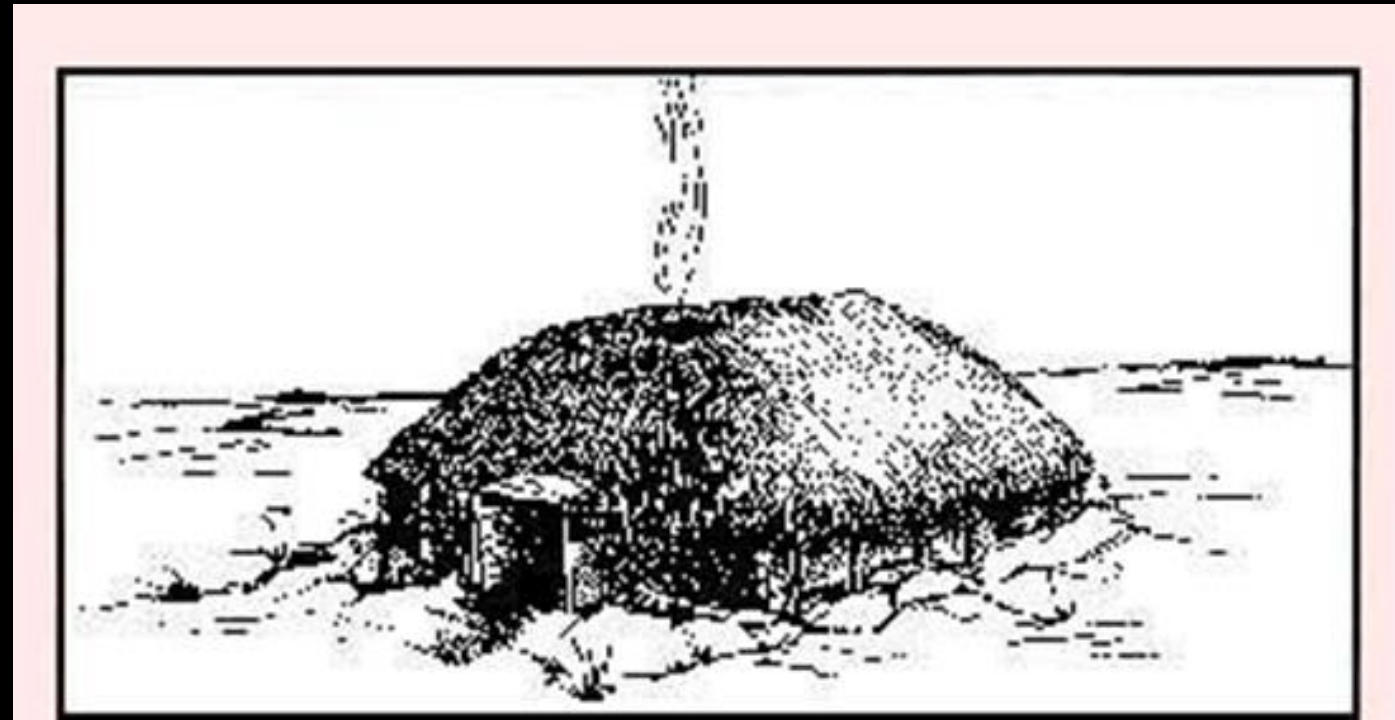


*Photo and Drawing courtesy of
Iowa Office of State Archaeologist*

GREAT OASIS

900 CE – 1100 CE

Concentrated winter occupations of semi-subterranean earth lodges and dispersed summer occupations of both flood plain farming stations and mobile hunting camps.



Drawing courtesy Iowa Office of State Archaeologist

GREAT OASIS

900 AD – 1100 AD

First people in the region to develop based *primarily* on agriculture, **though they were STILL** hunter-gatherers.



Photo and Drawing courtesy of Iowa Office of State Archaeologist

1100 CE – 1300 CE

The Mill Creek culture instead began creating fields to **GROW crops. While still hunter gatherers, they were the *early* farmers.**

MILL CREEK ERA

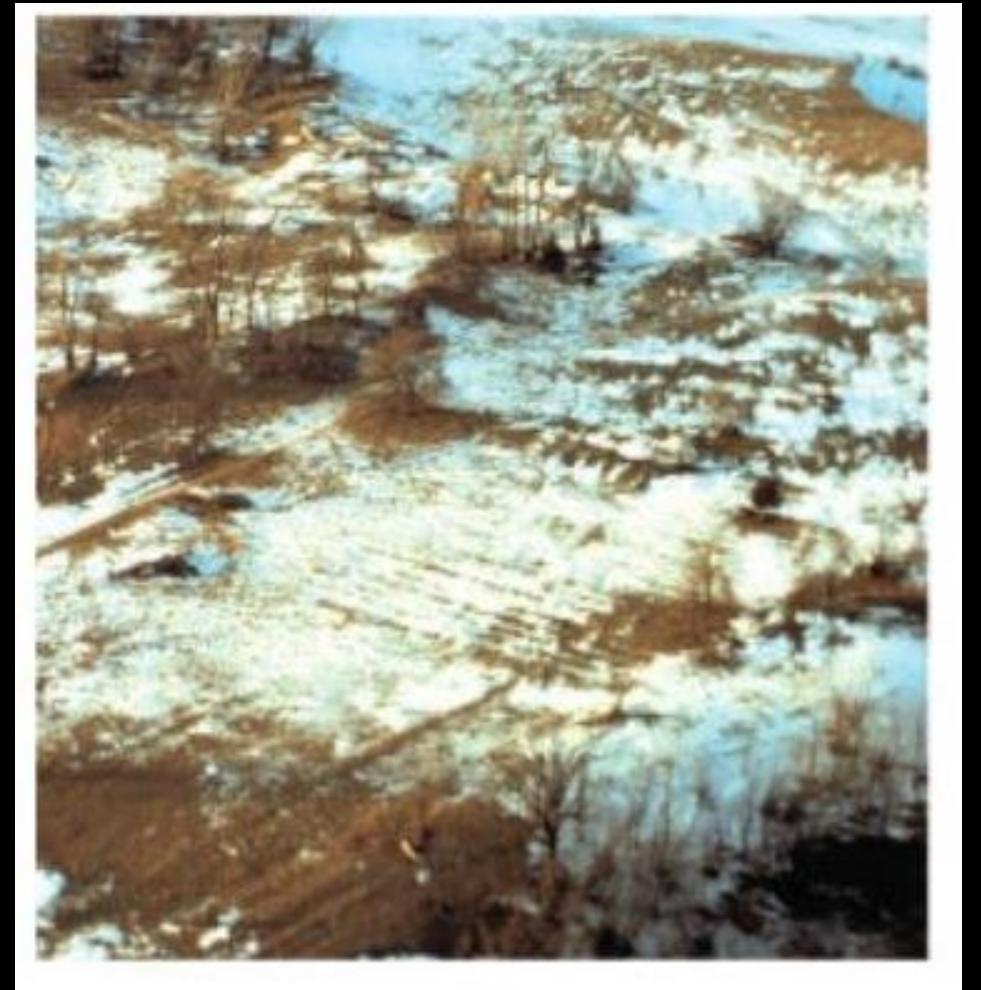
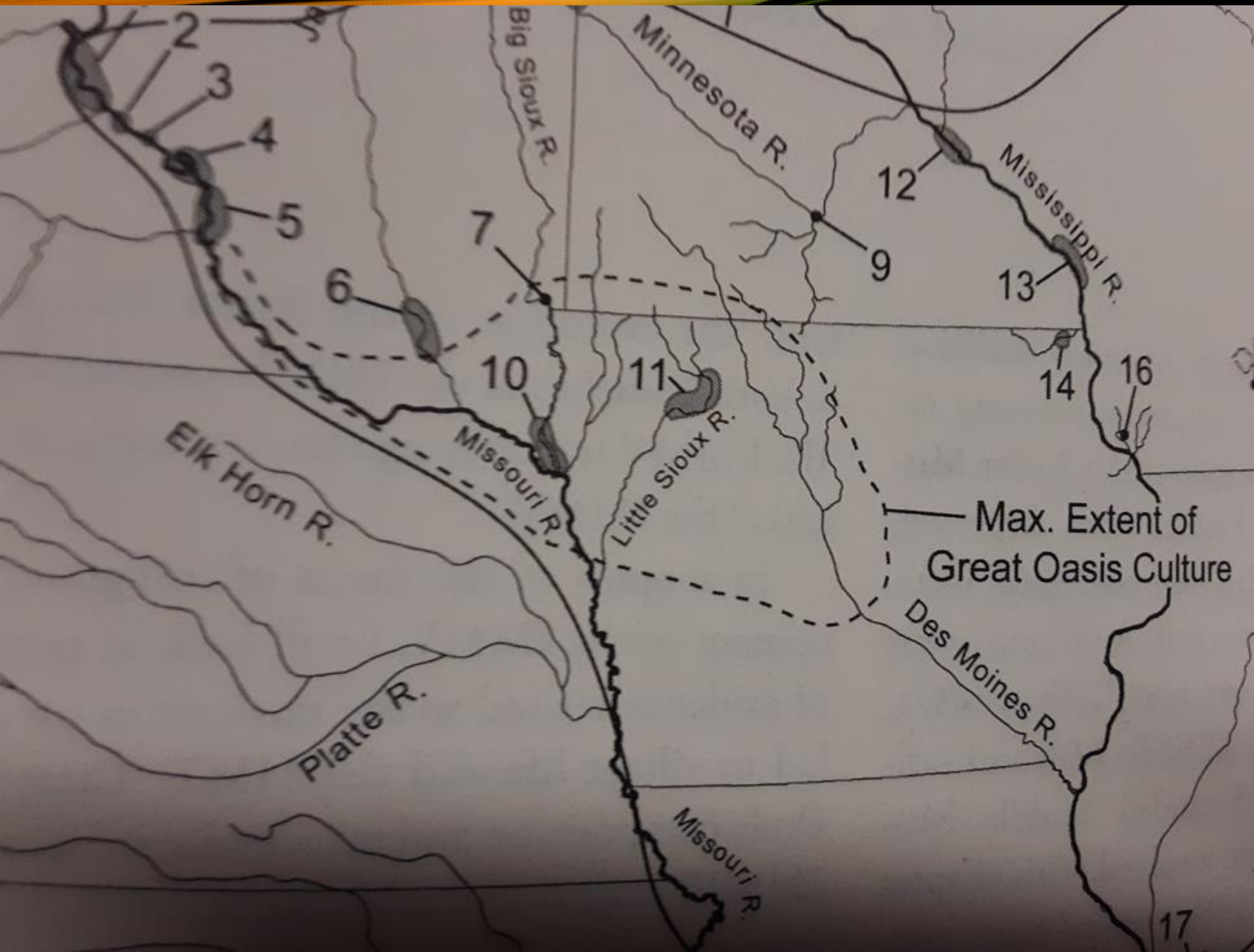


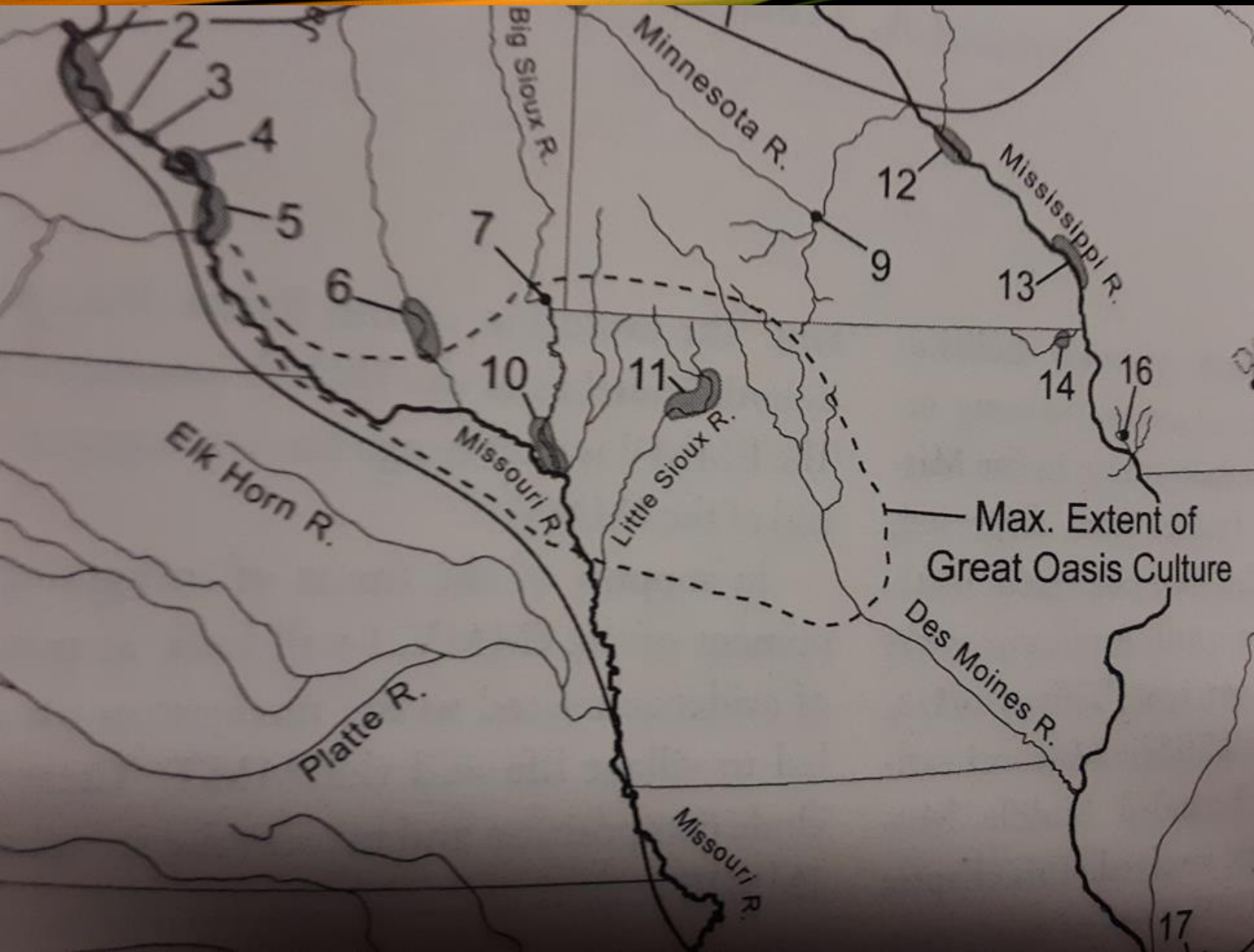
Photo courtesy of Iowa Office of State Archaeologist – a field used by Mill Creek farmers.



MILL CREEK ERA

Part of the issue is
'who influenced
whom?'

Did the Mill Creek
people come from
the Great Oasis
culture? Or is it
separate?



MILL CREEK ERA

Today, it is considered that the Great Oasis culture is the end of the Woodland Era, and the Mill Creek people are the start of the Late Prehistoric



Ellison Orr's excavations at Kimball Village, 1939.

MILL CREEK ERA

Two Sioux City excavations have great impact on his thinking –

The Broken Kettle site, and the Kimball site.

BROKEN KETTLE

Originally excavated in 1901 with the Sioux City Academy committee, it would be re-investigated during the New Deal programs by Ellison Orr in 1936.

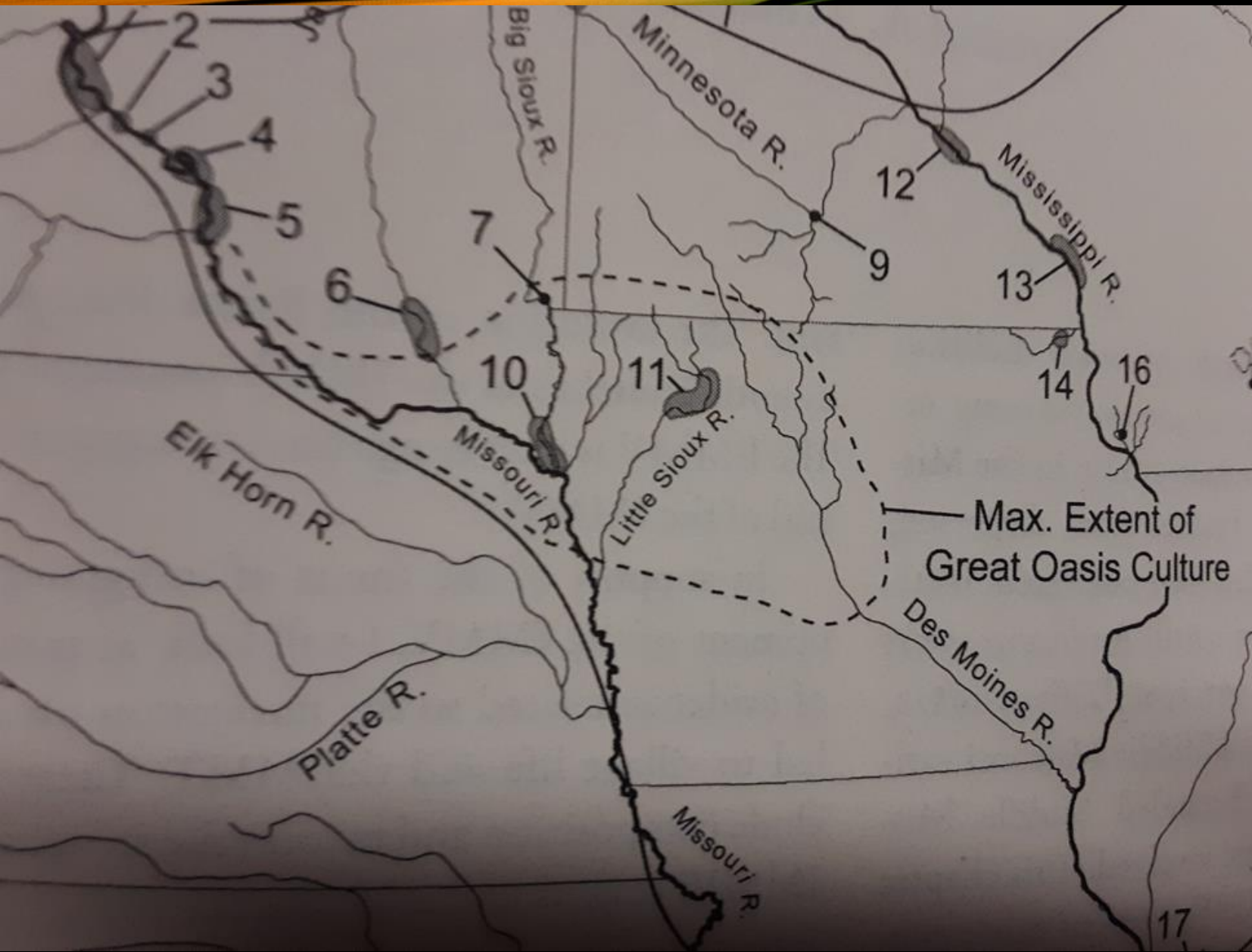
The site, well known locally, has suffered from 'over picking.'



Ellison Orr's excavations at Kimball Village, 1939.

MILL CREEK ERA

**But the Kimball site
was almost
completely
unknown – and
remains so!**



MILL CREEK ERA

Important differences:

The Mill Creek culture actually planted and farmed crops.



Artist's reconstruction of a Mill Creek village with ditch and palisade.

MILL CREEK ERA

The site is different from Woodland and Great Oasis.

They are larger, and fortified.



MILL CREEK

Their pottery and their implements are more refined than the Woodland Era.



MILL CREEK

Estimated construction of the buildings share more with later groups – not earlier ones.



MILL CREEK ERA

Pot Sherds reveal links and locations to other groups..



MILL CREEK ERA

**As do their tools –
like this axe head.**

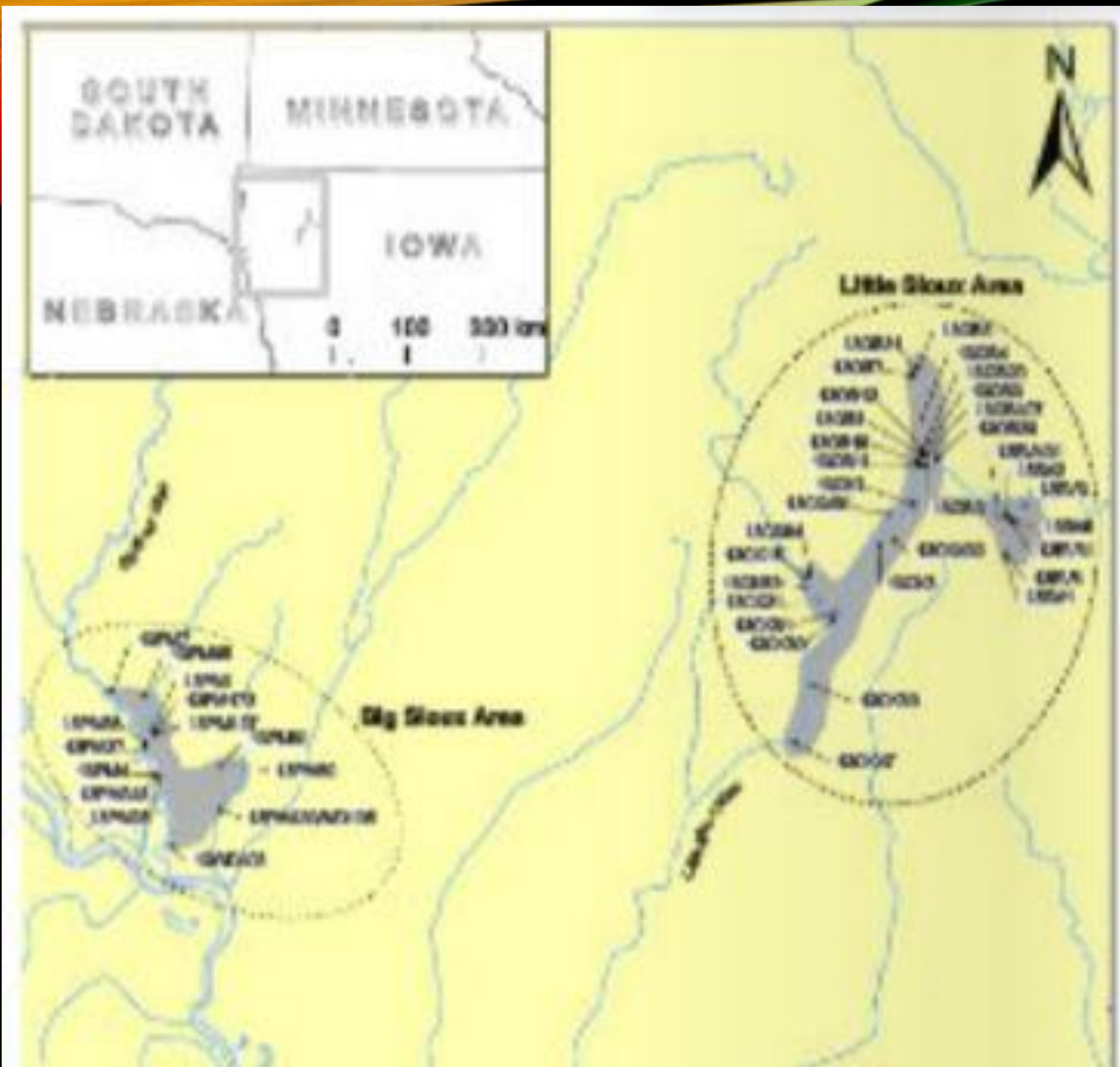
Location of Mill Creek sites in northwest Iowa. The Loess Hills study identified 14 villages and burial sites in the Big Sioux locality.



MILL CREEK ERA

**There are at least
14 village sites
along the Big
Sioux**

Photo courtesy of Iowa Office of State Archaeologist



MILL CREEK ERA

There are at least 14 village sites along the Big Sioux, and the Little Sioux has more.

35 sites have been identified.

Map courtesy of Iowa Office of State Archaeologist

MIDDLE / SOUTHEASTERN NATIVES

Cahokia appears to have begun about 400 AD – but the ‘city’ started around 1000 AD. It covered an area of 6 sq. miles.



MIDDLE MISSISSIPPI CULTURES

This included nearly 200 earthen mounds vast open plazas, thousands of pole and thatch houses, temples, and public buildings.



CAHOKIA, MOUND BUILDERS



© 2007 Sanborn

© 2006 Google™

Pointer 38°39'34.69" N 90°03'52.96" W elev 430 ft

Streaming ||||| 100%

Eye alt 4491 ft

MIDDLE MISSISSIPPI CULTURES

Hub of a broad trading network - from the gulf coast and southeast to the trans-Mississippi south, the eastern plains, the upper Mississippi valley, and the Great Lakes.



MIDDLE MISSISSIPPI CULTURES

Their trade included marine shell, shark teeth, pipestone, mica, Hixton quartzite, exotic stones, copper, and galena.



MIDDLE / SOUTHEASTERN NATIVE AMERICANS

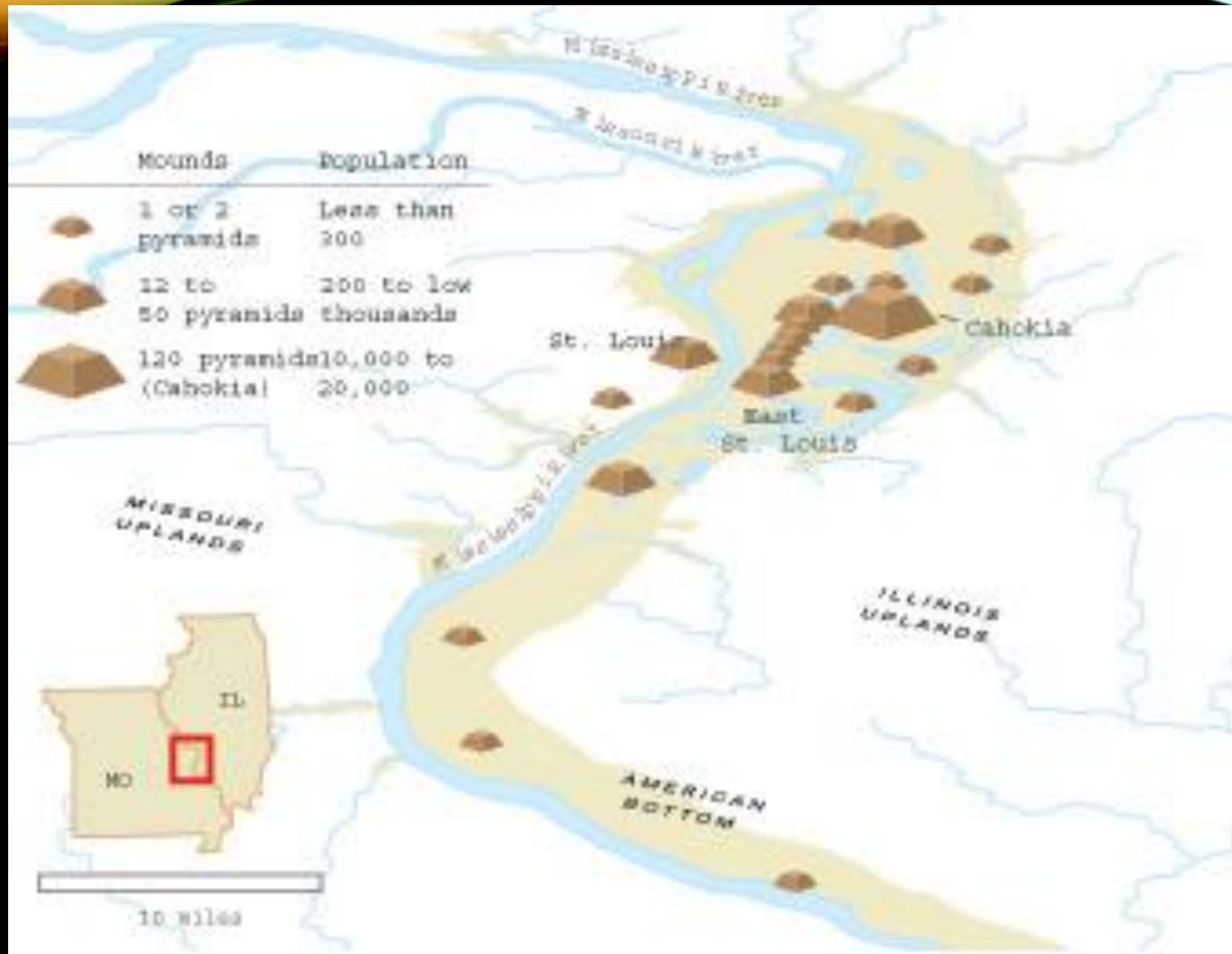
**By the way - At
10,000 people, it was
larger than London.**

**This pyramid is larger
than the ones in
Egypt.**

**Why don't we know
that?**



It did not fit with the idea of 'primitive savages.'





NATIVE AMERICANS

Why? Because none of the groups we are speaking of had:

- **Metal working**
- **Horses**
- **Coined money**
- **Alphabetic written languages**

MILL CREEK ERA

Important items they did have:

- **Freedom from food needs**

**With pots sturdy enough to boil
and cook their food.**



Mass of charred corn recovered from a Loess Hills earth lodge offers evidence for crops grown by early farmers and provides material for a radiocarbon date.



MILL CREEK ERA

- And the **MILL CREEK** culture is the **FIRST** of the true farmers in this region.
- While they did hunt, they were planting and growing and storing crops.

MILL CREEK ERA

Tools and pot handles
from Big Sioux sites:



Complementary large and small bone tools from Mill Creek (above) and Glenwood (below) sites. Top to bottom: scapula hoe, awl, fish hook, and fish hook blank.



More fanciful items also suggest some affinity. Clay pot handles: Mill Creek (top) Glenwood (bottom).

MILL CREEK ERA

bottom: scapula hoe, awl, fish hook, and fish hook blank.



More fanciful items also suggest some affinity. Clay pot handles: Mill Creek (top) Glenwood (bottom).



Items are not to scale.

- Similarities with southern Iowa Glenwood site tools and pot handles!



MILL CREEK ERA

Tools and pot handles
from Big Sioux and
Glenwood.

MILL CREEK ERA

Pot handles from Big
Sioux, and decorative
items.



NEBRASKA PLAINS VILLAGES

In the same timeframe as the Woodlands period, Nebraska Plains farmers once encompassed most of present-day Kansas and Nebraska and portions of Iowa, Colorado and Wyoming.

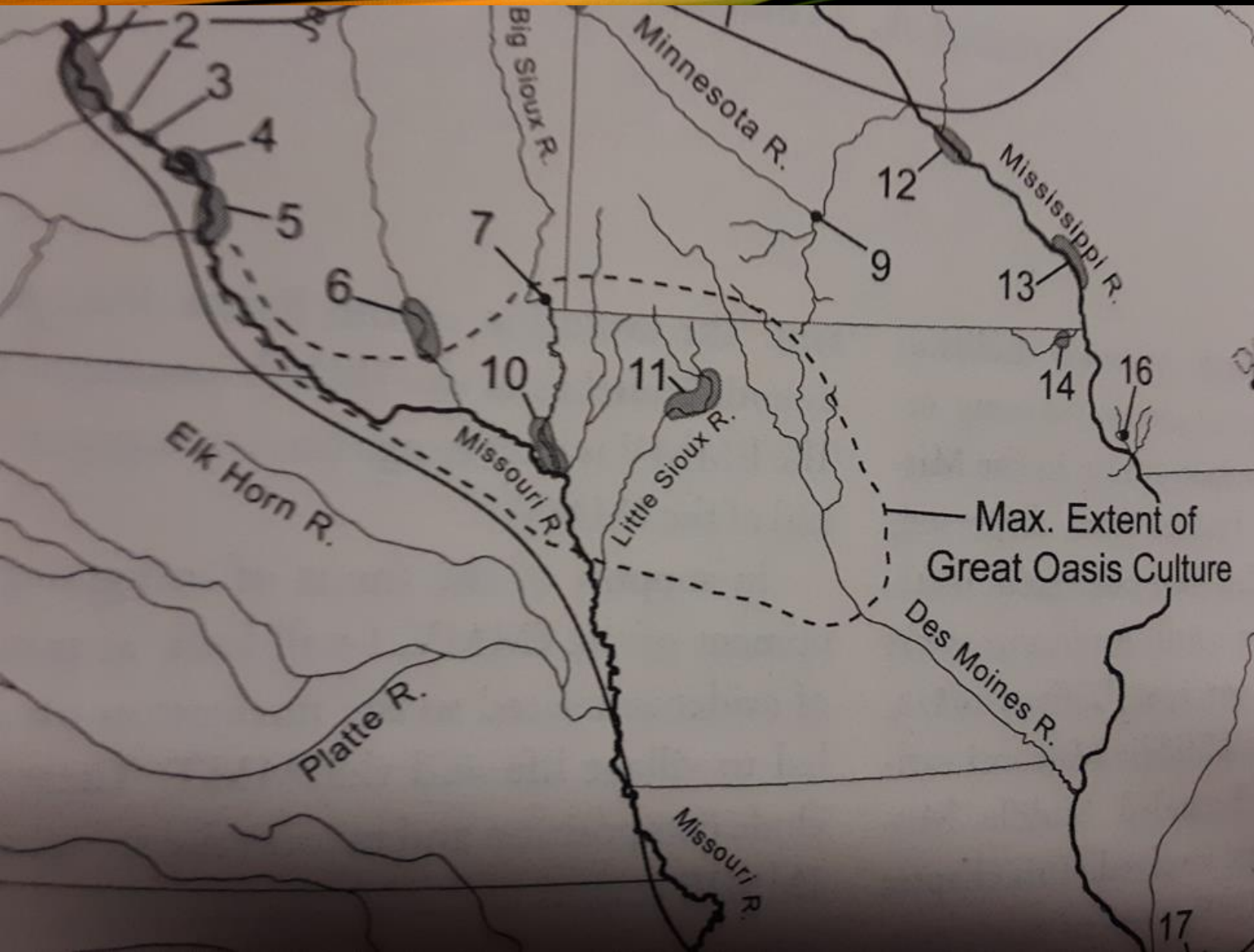


NEBRASKA PLAINS VILLAGES

But likely due to climate change, they were soon confined to the north and the east, along the waterways.

This picture is of an excavation at Lynch, site of a major village.





MILL CREEK ERA

But the Mill Creek people would abandon the Iowa area, moving north within the next century.

We are not certain why.



MILL CREEK ERA

**Climate changes,
depletion of natural
resources?**

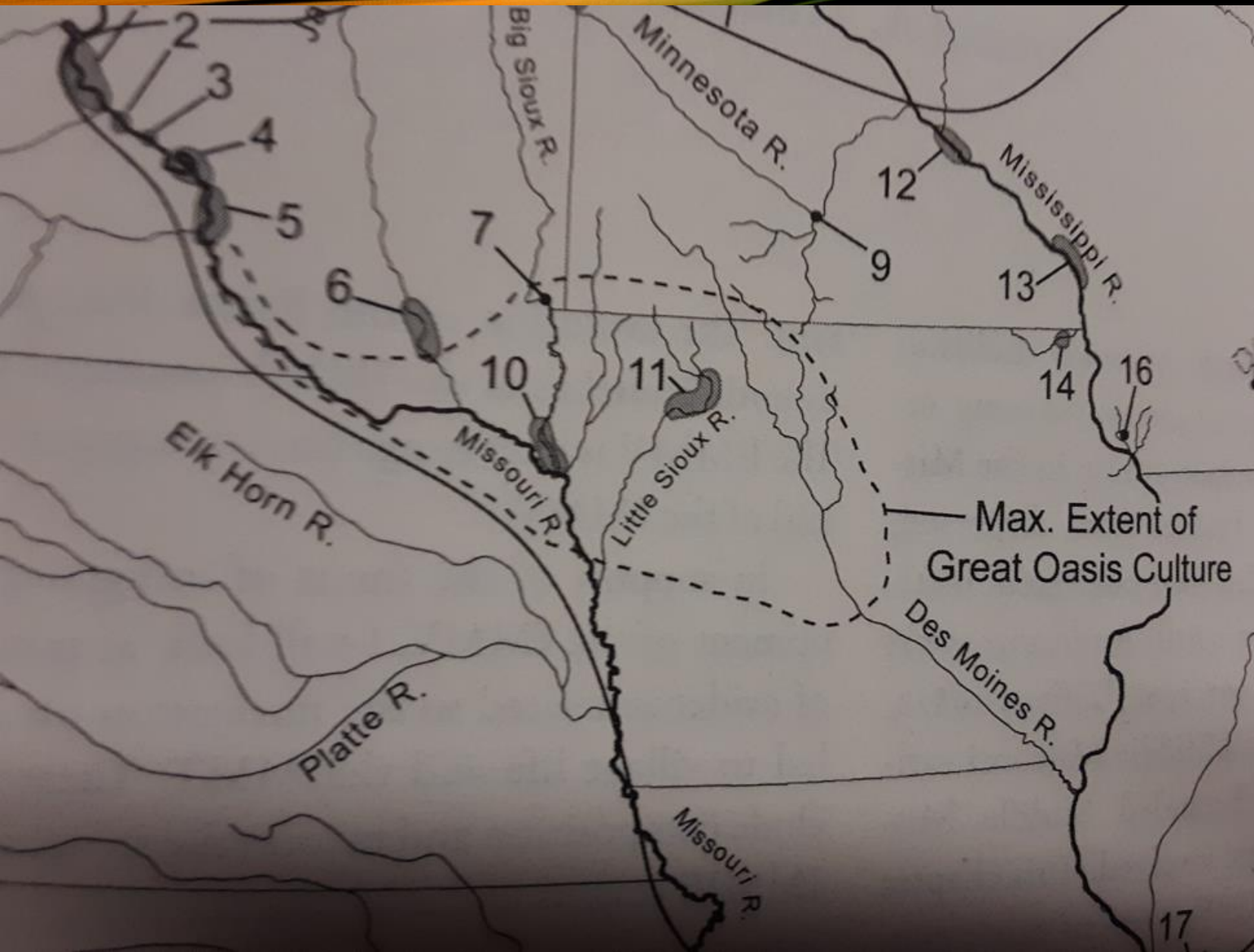
**Currently, it is
believed the new
arrivals of Oneota
severed the trade
routes with the
Middle Mississippi
cultures.**



Artist's reconstruction of a Mill Creek village with ditch and palisade.

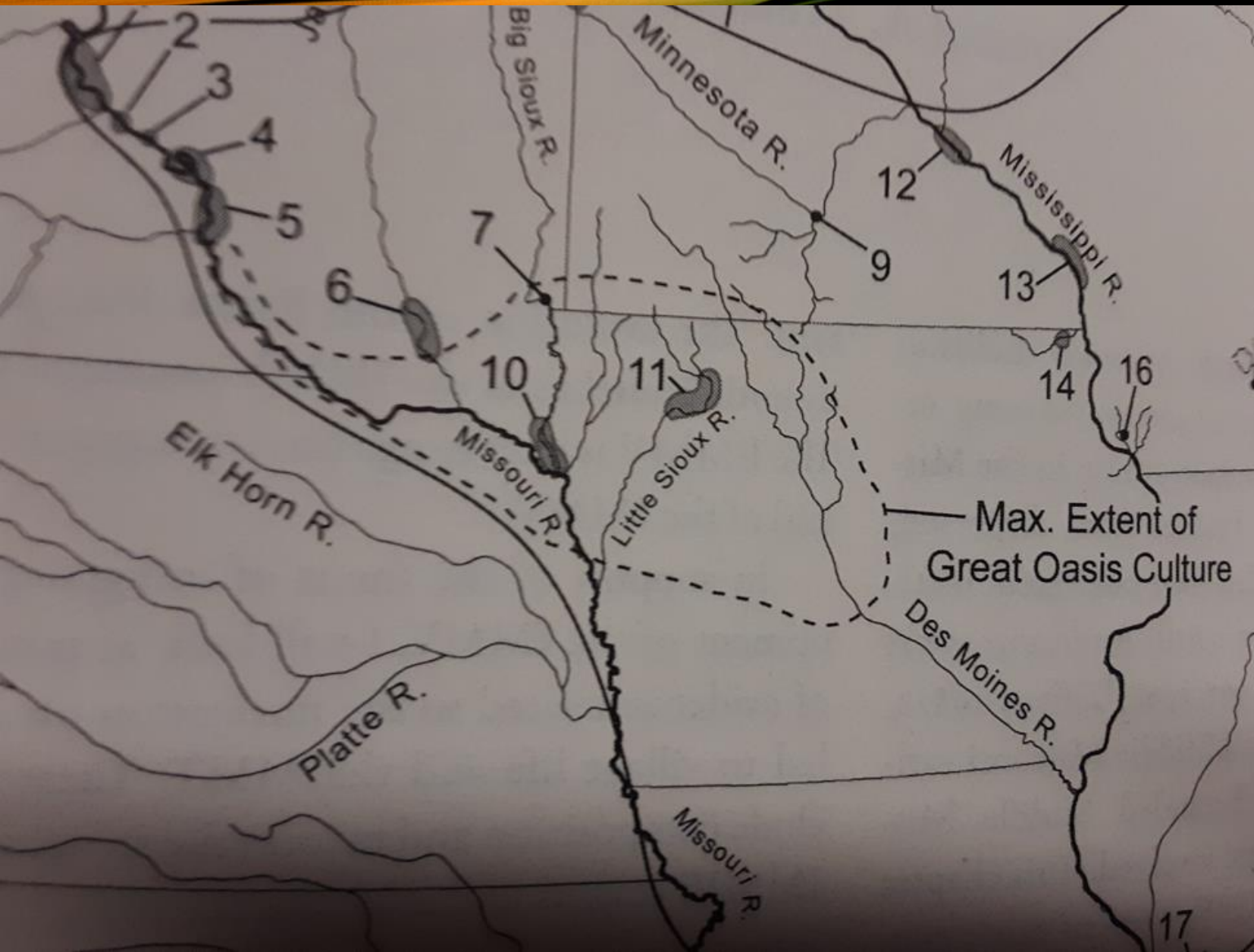
MILL CREEK ERA

But their time here bridged the gap from the individual hunter to the **farmers** who join together to hunt and know security, both in their person and their food.



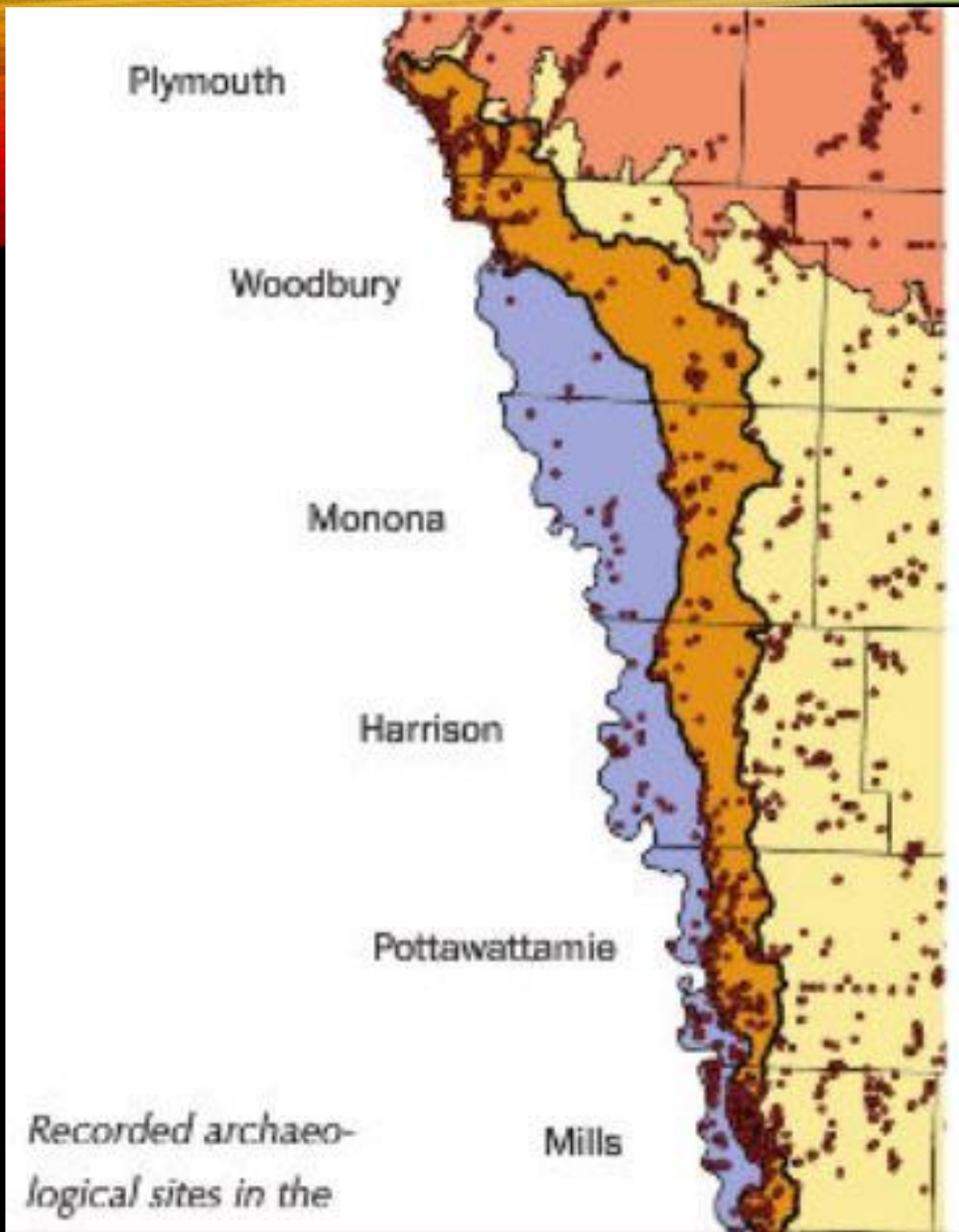
MILL CREEK ERA

- **Many researchers now believe that the Mandan and Hidatsa eventually developed from these Mill Creek roots.**



MILL CREEK ERA

- **Ponca and Omaha tribes in Northeast Nebraska are believed to be descendants of the Oneota.**



MILL CREEK AND BEYOND

- We have learned much from a few sites. There are thousands in Iowa.
 - And Nebraska
 - And South Dakota
- And only a handful have been examined closely.



KIMBALL VILLAGE

“As the earliest, best preserved eastern Great Plains fortified village known in the United States, Kimball Village is nationally significant for the detailed scientific data it has provided and the in-ground data it still contains.” – from the application to the **National Register of Historic Places**



Ellison Orr's excavations at Kimball Village, 1939.

MILL CREEK ERA

The Broken Kettle site, and the Kimball site.

Two Sioux City excavations that have had great impact.

SIOUXLAND 1000 YEARS AGO

My questions to you:

- **Did you hear anything new?**
- **Can you tell me one thing you learned today?**

CREATED BY RUSSELL GIFFORD



*Lifelong Learning Instructor,
Western Iowa Tech Community College,
Sioux City, Iowa 2004 – Present*

Siouxland: Ground Zero in the Great Depression

IOWA AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR
Keeping the Home Fires Burning:
The Impact of the Civil War in Iowa

Presented by Russ Gifford
Thursday, April 29; 7 p.m.
Cargill Auditorium No charge



BOOMER CLASSICS: Words that Changed the World

Third Week:
Monday,
10/22 6:30 PM

Revisit the landmark literature and a handful of pivotal writers that influenced the 1960's. Are they still relevant? Join us as we search for clues of their continued value 50 years on.

J.R.R.
TOLKIEN

As always, these seminars feature video and audio clips, with the sights and sounds of the 1960's.

by Russ Gifford
ber 29; 7 to 8:30 p.m.

The Institute for
Lifelong Learning
presents
"KHRUSHCHEV
IN IOWA"

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SIOUXLAND 1000 YEARS AGO

For further reading:

- *Ancient North America*, Brian M. Fagan, 2000
- *Plains Village Archaeology*, Alher & Kay, 2007
- *Immense Journey: Loess Hills Cultural Resources Study*, Alex, 2011
- *The Office of the State Archaeologist (website):*

<https://archaeology.uiowa.edu/>



CREATED AND PRODUCED BY

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Pictures provided by the Sioux City Public Museum, the Iowa Office of the State Archaeologist, and other regional historical groups.