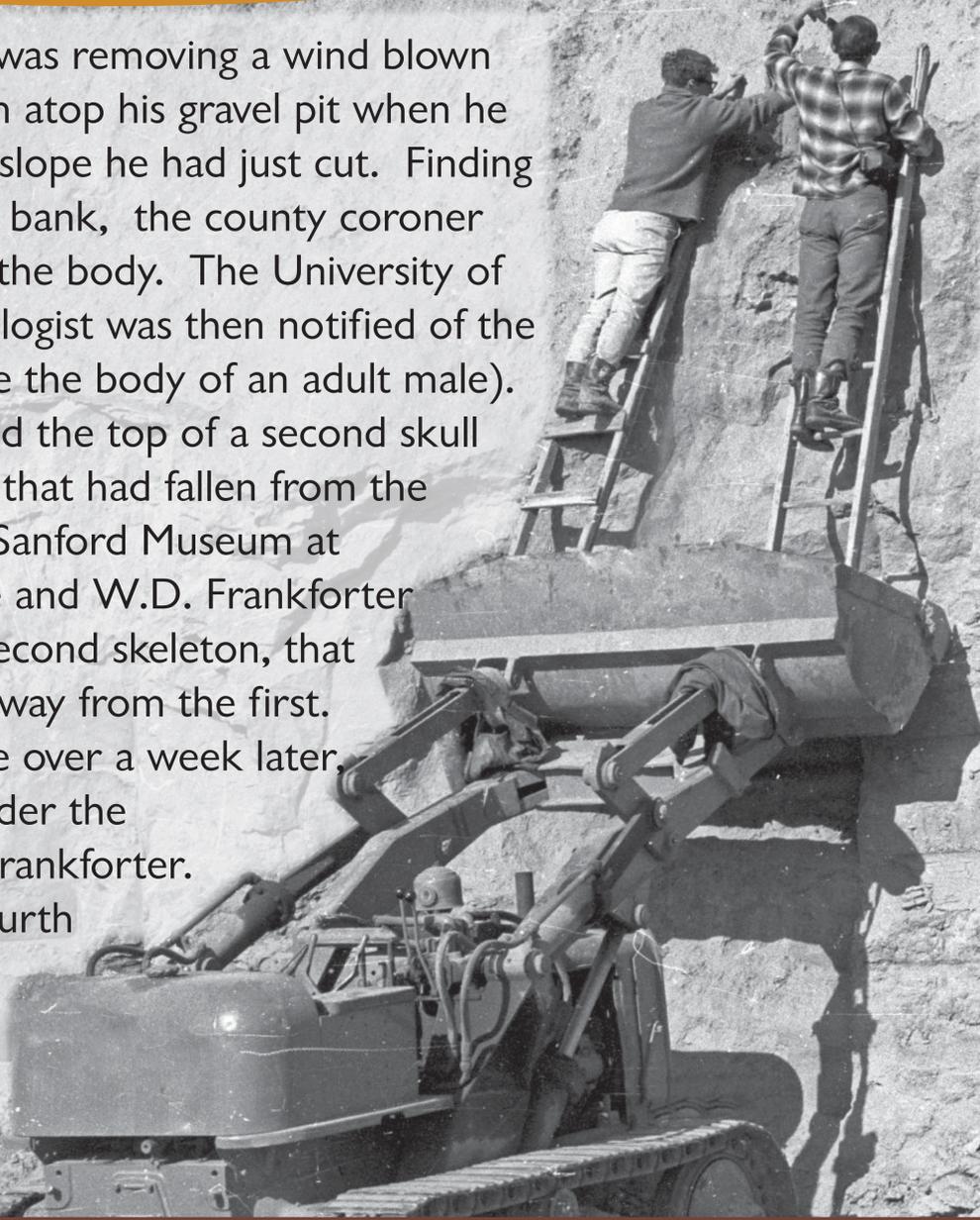


Turin Man Discovery

In August of 1955, Asa Johnston was removing a wind blown silt deposit (known as loess) from atop his gravel pit when he saw a human skull roll down the slope he had just cut. Finding that some remains still laid in the bank, the county coroner was called to remove the rest of the body. The University of Iowa Office of the State Archaeologist was then notified of the discovery (later determined to be the body of an adult male). A few days later, Johnston noticed the top of a second skull exposed in a large block of loess that had fallen from the bank. This was reported to the Sanford Museum at Cherokee so that Reynold Ruppe and W.D. Frankforter could examine the bones. The second skeleton, that of a child, was found 15-20 feet away from the first. A third skeleton was found a little over a week later, still in situ, and was excavated under the close supervision of Ruppe and Frankforter. In the course of excavations, a fourth skeleton was found fairly close to the third one but it was very fragile and poorly preserved.

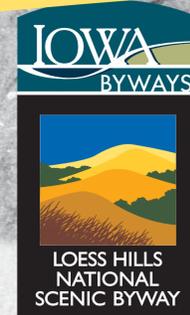


Burial Customs

The four burials discovered at Turin consisted of an adult male, an adolescent, a child and an infant. All were found in a flexed position, with knees raised to their chest, and lying on their side. Red ochre (a powdered form of iron oxide) had been sprinkled over the bodies, which is widely associated with flexed burials from the late Paleo-Indian period onward, especially in the Eastern United States. Placed with one individual was a necklace or clothing adornment of Anculosa shell beads (perhaps a symbol of status) and a side-notched projectile point (pictured above, which has come to be known as the "Turin Point").



Excavation photos: background, above, and above right. When first discovered, the Turin skeletons were believed to have been of the Late Wisconsinan Age and possibly the oldest human remains to be found in North America. After further research, the Turin skeletons were assigned to the Middle Archaic period based on a radiocarbon assay on bone from skeleton three. These examples range from approximately 2770 to 589 BC. The soil strata in which the skeletons were found indicate that the hunters roamed this region in the last glacial period. The ice probably extended only to a point of 100 miles north of the present site of Turin, but great rivers flowed from the melting ice sheets and the ground was frozen for long periods. Oral health patterns in these skeletons suggests a diet of hunting and gathering. All photos used with permission from the University of Iowa Office of the State Archaeologist.



The Loess Hills National Scenic Byway™ is a 220 mile paved route through the Loess Hills. The 16 excursion loops make up an additional 185 miles (some gravel) for the more adventuresome!



www.iowabyways.org
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