

A MINNESOTA BANNER STONE

A banner stone, one of the few ever found in Minnesota, has recently been placed on deposit in the museum of the Minnesota Historical Society by Mr. G. W. Freed of Granite Falls.

While taking gravel in June, 1924, from a gravel pit on the north bank of the Minnesota River, a mile and a half northwest of Granite Falls, Mr. Freed discovered a rock cyst grave perhaps four feet long and two and a half feet wide some two hundred feet above the river level and about three feet below the surface of the ground. The sides and top of the grave were made of small rocks. Inside of this rude burial vault was the skeleton, drawn up into what is technically called a "bundle burial" because of its position. The bones had been covered with red paint, traces of which were still to be seen in the coloring of the sand. An arrow point, clam shells, and a beautiful specimen of the ceremonial stone known to archeologists as the banner stone had been buried with the body.

The banner stone so found is of mottled greenish gray granite, shaped like a double-bitted lumberman's ax, four inches across from edge to edge, two and seven-eighths inches long, and seven-eighths of an inch thick. A hole slightly smaller than the size of a dime has been bored completely through it, parallel to the edges, as if to hold a handle, and carefully smoothed off. The piece was painstakingly finished, and it still retains something of the high polish which it must once have had.

Banner stones of this type are not unusual in southeastern Wisconsin, but are very rare in Minnesota, and a comparison of this specimen with Wisconsin pieces shows such similarities as to make it seem probable that this stone came from that district through some intertribal exchange or warfare. Being a prized possession of its owner, it was buried with him.

Archeologists are not certain as to the use made of these stones, but from the careful workmanship exhibited upon them it is probable that they were used for ceremonial purposes, and they may have been carried on sticks in certain dances or worn as ornaments.

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