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A Multicomponent Late Woodland Complex at the Vasey Site in the Northern American Bottom Uplands

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The Vasey site is situated in the northern American Bottom uplands just east of Roxana, Illinois. The site is a multicomponent series of occupations dating to the Patrick, Sponemann, and TLW I period, cal A.D. 650–925. Backhoe excavations revealed subsurface features, including 13 Patrick phase pits, 54 Sponemann phase pits and one house, and 81 pits and 7 houses dating to the TLW I period. Another 26 features could not be assigned to a particular phase but probably date to the Late Woodland period.

The Vasey site is significant because it is unusual to find three nearly contemporary Late Woodland occupations that can be studied in one location. Especially interesting is the fact that the TLW I occupation contains maize remains, while the Patrick and Sponemann occupations produced no evidence of corn. This fact speaks for the sudden appearance of maize in the northern American Bottom and supports a similar phenomenon observed elsewhere in the American Bottom at this time. The ceramic assemblages are quite distinctive and show rapid technological and stylistic changes over a very brief period, despite the fact that the overall occupation, procurement, and technological practices were very similar over time. Overall, the intensity of occupation seemed to increase over time, and then the locality was completely abandoned sometime after cal A.D. 925. This phenomenon is also observed at all other Vaughn Branch Upland Locality sites, where there is a gap in occupation between TLW I and Mississippian.

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