Indian Mounds At LSU Targeted For Survey

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — An archaeological team Sunday will take the first step in trying solve the mystery of what is buried in two landmark Indian mounds on the campus of Louisiana State University.

The work may upset some students since the mounds have been favorite spooning spots for couples for generations.

LSU Curator of Anthropology Robert Neuman will head a three-member team which will take two-inch diameter soil core samples from the two mounds north of Tiger Stadium.

“They have been there a long time, but we don’t know anything about them. They’ve never been excavated,” Neuman said Friday. “People are always curious and those coming to the campus ask about them.

Rather than excavate, this is the easy way to find what is in there. We’ll take as many soil cores as we need and then analyse the results.”

A campus directory describes the mounds — about 15 feet high — as prehistoric.

“No one is 100 percent sure, but from everything we know I would put a 10 to one bet on that — and that’s better than you can get at a racetrack,” said Neuman.

Catherine Byrd, the state archaeologist, said no samples had been taken before because “these sites have been protected by the university and not threatened,” adding that most efforts in this area have been directed at mounds facing destruction.

“We have no idea what period they represent or what they contain. That’s the reason for the corings,” Mrs. Byrd.

Neuman said the mounds were first described in a book in 1852.

Louisiana Indians used mounds as far back as 2,000 B.C., he said.

“And there are reports of Indians building mounds up into the state’s early historic period — the time when explorers came to the state in the 16th Century,” said Neuman.

What is the team expecting to find?

“We might find an artifact or two. We might find organic material that can be carbon dated or find something out about the construction,” he said. “This is just our first avenue of investigation.”

Corings in similar mounds in the state have resulted in finds of pottery pieces, shells, bone fragments and the like.

Since the two mounds are on the National Register of historic sites, the team had to get permission from the Louisiana Archaeological Survey and Antiquities Commission.

Neuman said the team will samples “until we think we have enough data to come up with an interpretation.”

He said it was uncertain how long the analysis of the samples will take.

The team will include Richard Kesel, a physical geographer, and Robert J. Miller, a soil specialist.

Neuman said the drilling would begin about 9 a.m. Sunday, weather permitting.