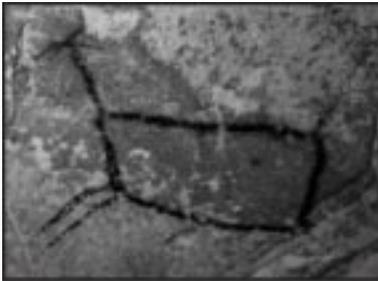




MVAC at the University
of Wisconsin - La Crosse
1725 State Street
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www.uwlax.edu/mvac

**This year's theme:
Rock Art**



This year we are switching our MVAC Education newsletter to a digital format. We will continue to include content, lesson plans and resources for teachers to use in their classrooms. The new digital newsletter format will be issued three times a year.

Please let me know what you think of this change and any suggestions you have for new material to include. You can contact me at (608) 785-8454 or dowiasch.jean@uwlax.edu. Enjoy the newsletter!

Jean Dowiasch, Editor

Archaeology Education Program

Volume 21, Number 3 Fall 2003

Rock Carvings and Paintings

What is rock art?

Before there were letters, there was rock art. Rock art images that are carved or painted onto rock surfaces are visual symbols that ancient people used to convey meaning in the absence of a written language. Even though we often do not understand the exact meaning the images had for the people who made them, they are still beautiful connections to those who inhabited the area before us. Rock Art stimulates our imaginations to ponder what early life was like for the people who lived where we now live. It encourages us to consider how their lives were different and similar to our own.

There are two types of rock art: petroglyphs (carvings) and pictographs (drawings or paintings), both of which exist in Wisconsin. Most petroglyphs were probably carved into the rock surface with sharp rocks, antlers, or bones. Some were made by pecking one rock against another. Pictographs were drawn or painted onto a rock surface. The color or pigments came from natural sources, such as charcoal, ground up colorful rocks, or plants (berries, nuts, etc.). The paints were ground to fine powders and mixed with plant oils, animal fat, vegetable juices, milk, blood, or water to hold them together and make them stay on the rock surface. Colors that are usually observed in pictographs include red (ocher), black (charcoal), and white (gypsum, kaolin, chalky deposits). Occasionally, yellows, oranges, and bright blues were used. Instead of paint brushes, as we know them, twigs (sharpened or pounded), grasses, moss, fingers, corn husks, spongy bone, feathers, fur, or hair might have been used to apply pigment to the rock surface.

Who made the rock art?

Most of the rock art in Wisconsin was made by the Native American people who lived here before the arrival of Europeans. Since the people who created the rock art are gone, it is difficult to know if men, women, children, or special people within the tribes did the actual work. We do know that the rock art in Wisconsin was not done by Old World cultures such as the Egyptians, Vikings, or Phoenicians.

*Below: Human Pictograph, Crawford County.
Right: Bird Petroglyph, Vernon County.*





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*The activities on
this page will help
your students
experience what it
was like for early
rock art creators to
express their ideas.*

Rock Art Activity

LESSON PLAN

Symbols from Today

Symbols are used to communicate meaning. In our culture, we use many symbols every day to communicate ideas without words, such as the symbols on the outside of restroom doors and the symbols that identify fast food restaurants. Can you identify what the symbols below mean?

1.  _____

2.  _____

3.  _____

4.  _____

5.  _____

Creating your own Symbols

Early people created visual symbols to communicate ideas. Some ideas may be easy to express, such as **Keep out!** More complicated ideas such as **This is my family** may be more difficult to communicate.

Draw symbols for two of the ideas listed below. Ask someone else to see if they correctly identify your ideas. If not, think about how you can improve your visual image so that others will correctly understand your message.

This is mine!

This is my family.

Food nearby!

This makes me happy.

Keep out!

This is who I am.

Answers:

1. Automated Teller Machine
2. Snowmobile Trail/Crossing
3. Food/restaurant
4. Hospital
5. Pedestrian Crossing

Rock Art Resources

Book Review

Title: Deep Cave Rock Art in the Upper Mississippi Valley

Author: Robert F. Boszhardt

Publisher: Prairie Smoke Press, St. Paul, MN

Age Range: High school to adult

This book discusses Tainter and Larsen Caves in western Wisconsin, how archaeologists recorded more than 100 new rock art images found at the caves, and the ongoing preservation efforts of rock art.



Pictograph of pregnant deer, taken from Tainter Cave.

Who to Contact

For more information on Wisconsin's rock art sites, contact MVAC's Regional Archaeologist, Robert "Ernie" Boszhardt at (608) 785-8451. To rent MVAC's Rock Art resources, contact Jean Dowiasch at 785-8454.

Places to Visit

Roche-a-Cri State Park

Examples of rock art, including petroglyphs (carvings) and pictographs (paintings) are located in this park. This is the only rock art site open to the public in Wisconsin. Located two miles north of Friendship on Highway 13. P.O. Box 100, Friendship, WI 53934/(608) 339-6881.

Out-of-State

When visiting parks, particularly in the southwestern United States, be sure to ask if there are rock art locations open to the public nearby.



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The book review, contacts, and places to visit can be used as supplemental information for your lessons. Let us know if you have found any great resources we can share with our readers.

Rock art photos courtesy of Robert F. Boszhardt.



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Announcements

La Crosse School District Funds

Each elementary and middle school in the La Crosse School District has been awarded \$200 to use toward MVAC resources. Special thanks to Mark White and Sandra Fuhrman, the district's Supervisors of Humanities for their continued support of this program. Teachers interested in using the funds can contact Jean Dowiasch at (608) 785-8454.

Matching Funds Grant

The UW-La Crosse Foundation has awarded MVAC a \$2,500 grant to help teachers "double their money" when using MVAC's educational resources. Application forms to apply for the grant are on the MVAC web site under the **Educators** section. Teachers who would like more information on this program can contact Jean Dowiasch at (608) 785-8454.

MVAC's Archaeology News on the Web

The newsletter for the general members of MVAC is also on the web. Pdf files for the regular newsletter and our Online Supplement can also be viewed by following the links from the front page of MVAC's web site. The most up-to-date news on recent excavations, western Wisconsin archaeology, newly discovered artifacts and upcoming events are all on the web for your convenience!

Upcoming Events

Unless otherwise noted, events are free and open to the public. Contact MVAC at (608) 785-8454 for more information.

Annual Reception

Tuesday, September 23, 2003
6 - 7:30 p.m., Port O'Call
UW-L Cartwright Center
RSVP to (608) 785-8463, \$10

Lubbock Lake Landmark

Tuesday, September 23, 2003
7:30 p.m., Valhalla
UW-L Cartwright Center

The Lubbock Lake Landmark is a 300-acres archaeological and natural history preserve in Yellowhouse Canyon on the Southern High Plains. Speaker **Dr. Eileen Johnson** is from the Museum of Texas Tech University.

Highlights of MVAC's Summer Excavations

Tuesday, October 14, 2003
7:30 p.m., Port O'Call
UW-L Cartwright Center

This discussion will cover two excavations conducted in the Sand Lake Archaeological District near Onalaska, and the dig on 4th Street in the city of La Crosse, near Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center.

Laboratory Work Day

Saturday, November 8, 2003
9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
UW-L Archaeology Laboratory

Registration Required at (608) 785-8454 or
dowiasch.jean@uwlax.edu.