



Archaeology News

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FALL 2003

2003 Excavations at Meier Farm

By Robert "Ernie" Boszhardt,
Associate Director

The Meier Farm site is located adjacent to Sand Lake Coulee near Onalaska, and a portion of the site is within the Sand Lake Archaeological District. This series of rolling sand dunes is being developed into a residential subdivision, and the developers have supported MVAC's efforts to recover the archaeological remains there over the past two years. The project allowed us to incorporate both university and public field schools along with regular MVAC crews. This summer, we worked in the northern portion of the development, excavating features from four knolls, and investigating the original location of "Sand Lake."

Using a bulldozer and backhoe to remove the disturbed plowzone, we identified nearly 200 Native American pit features and several clusters of post molds. The pit features are common to late prehistoric Oneota habitation sites in this region, and originally served as storage compartments that were subsequently reused as convenient places to dispose of refuse. These are often circular, about 3 feet in diameter, and range from a few



Gregg Jamison excavating an elk scapula at the Meier Farm site.

feet deep to six feet deep. Excavation of these produced a variety of artifacts including pottery, stone tools, bone tools and food remains such as fish, deer, and elk, and charred plants, including corn kernels, cobs, beans and nut shell. The Oneota pottery is distinctive of the period around A.D. 1500-1600. A few fragments of earlier Woodland culture pottery were also found.

Post molds are smaller circles, about 6 inches in diameter, and can easily be confused with rodent burrows. These represent organically enriched stains from posts that were placed in the ground to support structures such as houses. Chasing "post molds" to try to identify house patterns has long flustered many

of us in this region, with only a few examples of definite structures having been recognized in the La Crosse/Onalaska area. These include a palisade line at the Valley View site; several lines of partial structures at the Gundersen site; and a series of long ovals that represent longhouse type buildings at the Tremaine site, along STH 53 between Onalaska and Holmen.

At Meier Farm, we succeeded in following post mold patterns on three of the knolls, finding a small 30' x 15' oval, a very large 30' x 120' oval which was overlapped by a second smaller oval, and half of another oval, which was partially disturbed by an adjacent road. These all appear to be Oneota structures that may have been used for living quarters, or other functions such as special activities for social groups, similar to the medicine lodge of the Ho-Chunk. Analysis of the structures and the artifacts found within and nearby will continue through the fall and winter to clarify their purpose.

We wish to express our appreciation to Elmwood Partners for their outstanding cooperation and support of the archaeology at Meier Farm.

This year Archaeology News will have two different formats per issue: one paper copy and one digital copy on the MVAC web site. As you will see from this issue, we continue to highlight recent archaeological excavations and special finds, along with keeping our members informed of upcoming events and important announcements. We will post additional articles and complimentary photos on the MVAC web site in conjunction with each issue. One further change is that

the Archaeology Education Program's teacher newsletter will also be on the web, making its archaeology content, lesson plans and resources available to educators everywhere! If you do not have access to the web and would like a hard copy of the digital newsletter, please contact me at the address on the back page. We hope you enjoy the change in format and check the web site for new postings throughout the year.

Jean Dowiasch, Editor

MVAC at the University
of Wisconsin - La Crosse

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From The Director: Joseph A. Tiffany



Joseph A. Tiffany

Joseph by Vicki Twinde led to the discovery of 14 upland sites, nine of which will require additional research and testing for National Register eligibility.

Fieldwork continues in the Sanford Archaeological District under Wendy's direction. The university field school also tested part of the area under examination. So far 70 Oneota pit features have been identified and tested, and with a new area opened up, that total will soar to an estimated 150 pit features! Since only a third of the area to be tested has been examined, expectations are high for further discoveries. Our fieldwork, data processing, curation, and storage of artifacts and documentation have been enhanced by the implementation of bar coding on all MVAC projects.

Barb Kooiman is beginning work on an architectural and historic sites survey of Bennett County in the South Dakota Badlands. Ryan Howell has been hitting "clean up" and covering a number of small projects this summer including several for the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

I am an old farm kid so it is time for the crop report! MVAC's Native American garden is doing pretty well despite the heat and lack of water. The squash are ruined, but the beans and sunflowers look

Hello everyone! MVAC has had another productive and busy summer in the La Crosse region and beyond. Work at the Meier Farm site in Onalaska led to the discovery of four longhouse structures used by the prehistoric Oneota. Meier Farm was one of the sites used for the university field school under Ernie Boszhardt and Wendy Holtz-Leith's direction, and the public field school directed by Connie Arzigian also dug at Meier Farm in July. Work along the Highway 33 corridor from La Crosse to St.

pretty good, and the corn has finally tasseled (very late, however). Descriptive signage has been placed throughout the garden, as well as a permanent sign at the garden site with handouts available. Plans are to dedicate the garden to the late Merlin Red Cloud, Jr., a Ho Chunk elder who donated his seed stock to start the MVAC garden. The ambience of the garden and the MVAC "Commons" area has been enhanced by the removal of the old woven wire fence, the planting of new bushes and addition of a decorative wooden fence at the corners of the lot, and new building signage directing the public to our exhibits.

Connie wanted me to be sure to remind everyone that her recent co-authored book with Katherine Stevenson, Minnesota's Indian Mounds and Burial Sites, is finished and will be available for purchase at MVAC. This one has been a long time coming, but will be an excellent addition to our regional information resource base.

I have been busy, too, with a number of projects this summer. Among the most important of these has been working with board members on drafting a new set of bylaws for MVAC, Inc. that clearly spell out the roles and responsibilities of the board with MVAC and the university. I also spent 10 days working with colleagues on protohistoric Plains Village sites in the Fort Thompson Archaeological District along the Missouri River in central South Dakota. One site affiliated with the Arikara Indians dates to the AD 1680s and has produced horse bone, a possible circular earth lodge style house and enormous bell shaped storage pits set in a shallow sheet midden deposit.

Be sure to attend the first MVAC public program this fall. Dr. Eileen Johnson will discuss her years of work at the Lubbock Lake Paleoindian site. This talk will be tied to our annual awards ceremony and reception. See you there!

From The Board:

The Board of Directors has had a busy summer. Many hours have been spent reviewing the bylaws of the organization and making changes where needed. The full board will review the proposed bylaw changes at the September 16th meeting. A delightful orientation/social evening for the MVAC Board and Staff was spent at the home of Ron and Roz Schnick on French Island August 20, 2003. We welcomed new board member Chuck SansCrainte and his lovely wife Patty. The gathering is an annual opportunity to visit on an informal basis with staff and board members in a beautiful setting. Thank you, Ron and Roz, for your gracious hospitality and support of MVAC. It is generous members like Ron and Roz that makes the difference in attaining our MVAC mission and goals over the years. We thank all of you too that are dedicated supporters of MVAC. Please continue to keep up your support and interest in this vital area of learning about our ancestors and their patterns of life.



Carole Edland

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MVAC Educational Programs Are
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Announcements

UWL Foundation continues to support Archaeology Education

Thanks to a grant from the UW-La Crosse Foundation, three high school students received partial scholarships to attend MVAC's Public Field School in July 2003. Jennifer Barnes attended the 3 day Public Field Experience for the first time, while Kameron Kiley and Ashley Solsrud participated in the Public Field School for their third and second time, respectively.

New Books for Sale at MVAC

To purchase these books directly from MVAC, call 785-8463 for more information or visit the MVAC web site for an order form.

Deep Cave Rock Art in the Upper Mississippi Valley

By Robert "Ernie" Boszhardt
\$24.95 - Special price for MVAC members - \$19.95

Twelve Millennia: Archaeology of the Upper Mississippi River Valley

By James L. Theler and Robert "Ernie" Boszhardt
\$27.95

NEW! *Minnesota's Indian Mounds and Burial Sites*

By Constance Arzigian and Katherine Stevenson
\$40.00

MVAC Executive Director Honored

Dr. Joseph A. Tiffany received the Keyes-Orr Distinguished Service Award from the Iowa Archaeological Society at its annual meeting in Cedar Falls on May 24. The Keyes-Orr Award is given to persons who have made valuable contributions to Iowa Archaeology and the Iowa Archaeological Society.

Digital Newsletters

There will be a link to the digital newsletters on the MVAC Home Page at www.uwlax.edu/mvac

In the Fall 2003 Digital Newsletter look for the following articles describing a busy summer:

- Survey of State Highway 33 in La Crosse County, by Vicki Twinde
- Supervising the Public Field School, by UW-L student Mandy Georgeff
- Public Field School
- Youth Camps

In the Education Newsletter - Our new theme for 2003-04 is Rock Art with information and lesson plans for educators.



Estate Planning

Successful estate planning is a valuable way to continue your support for MVAC into the future. By giving a gift in your will or estate plan, you are providing for future programs in archaeological research, public education and site stewardship. Please consider MVAC when planning for trusts, gifts and bequests. Contact Marcee H. Peplinski, Development Director at the MVAC office for more information, (608)785-8463.



MVAC MEMBERSHIP FORM

Consider becoming a member of MVAC

MVAC's innovative public education program brings the excitement of archaeology to children and adults throughout the area. Become a member of MVAC and receive our newsletters, which report on programs, current research, upcoming events, and volunteer opportunities. Also, as a member, you will receive reminders of special "members only" events. Please remember that your contribution is tax-deductible.

Yes! I want to support the Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center Programs!

Enclosed is my contribution of \$ _____

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Please make checks payable to UW-L Foundation, Inc. for MVAC, and send to MVAC, 1725 State St., La Crosse, WI 54601. Gifts to the UW-L Foundation for MVAC qualify as charitable tax deductions to the full extent of the law as applied to the individual circumstances of each donor. You can increase your gift's value if your employer has a matching gift plan. Check with your human resource office.

Membership Categories

- Patron.....\$1000+
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- Contributing.....\$50-99
- Active.....\$25-49

*Thank you
for your support.*



*MVAC at the University
of Wisconsin-La Crosse*

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Upcoming Events

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

www.uwlax.edu/mvac

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

Highlights of MVAC' Summer Excavations

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

Laboratory Work Day

Saturday, November 8, 2003
9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Registration Required at (608) 785-8454 or
dowiasch.jean@uwlax.edu