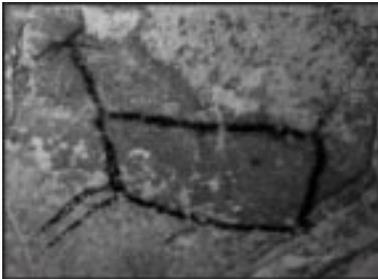




MVAC at the University  
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1725 State Street  
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[www.uwlax.edu/mvac](http://www.uwlax.edu/mvac)

**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](mailto:dowiasch.jean@uwlax.edu). Enjoy the newsletter!*

*Jean Dowiasch, Editor*

# Archaeology Education Program

Volume 22, Number 1

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## Rock Carvings and Paintings

### Where is rock art found?

Rock art exists around the world. Some of the oldest examples are in Europe, Africa and Australia. More recent examples are located in North and South America. The majority of sites in the United States are found in the dry southwest.

Most Wisconsin rock art is found in the southwestern part of the state known as the Driftless Area. Glaciers that covered most of Wisconsin did not cover the Driftless Area, leaving many rock outcrops that are ideal surfaces for rock art. Many of the rock outcrops are made of easily-carved sandstone. Rock art was made in cave walls, rock shelters, on rock walls, and even on boulders. The location of the images may give some clue to their purpose. Images done in relatively isolated locations may have been for religious purposes while those that are in highly visible locations may have been used for markers.

The first rock art was recorded in Wisconsin by Increase Lapham in 1852. Sites continued to be recorded throughout the 1800's and early 1900's. In 1942, Robert Ritzenthaler did a survey that recorded less than 20 sites in the state. Currently, there are about 100 known petroglyph sites and about 20 pictograph sites in Wisconsin. Archaeologists continue to search, and new sites are discovered all the time.

### When was it made?

It is hard to determine when rock art was made. The rock art creators did not put dates - at least dates that we understand - on their work. In a very few cases, radiocarbon dating can be used to date rock art, but, in most cases, this technique will not work. Archaeologists can also use a technique called "relative dating." The content of the rock art can sometimes yield a relative date if the rock image contains items that can be dated. One example of a datable image is a gun. Since we know that guns were introduced in North America within the past few hundred years, rock art containing the images of a gun must have been done after the arrival of Europeans.

The type of an image can also be compared to other rock art or even designs found on pottery. If the images are similar in style and content, they may have been created at the same time. All of these techniques only provide archaeologists with a very general idea of how old or new an image is.

Archaeologists can test the floor of the cave, or the ground below the rock shelter. If artifacts such as arrowheads and pottery found during the test excavations can be dated by shape, size or type; then one can hypothesize that the rock art was created at approximately the same time period as the artifacts.



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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

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## LESSON PLANS

### ***Experimenting with Petroglyphs***

Petroglyphs are visual images that are carved or pecked into the surface. There are several ways that you can have the experience of carving one of your symbols. The young communicator can use a nail to carve her symbol into a foam meat tray. If you want something a bit more like rock, try mixing plaster of Paris (follow instructions on bag) and pouring it into a shallow box or lid. When hard, carve your symbol in the surface with a nail or sharp rock. To hang your rock art, insert a paper clip/nail in the back while the plaster is still soft. Don't carve into rocks, because these images could confuse archaeologists in the future.

### ***Experimenting with Pictographs***

Pictographs are images that are drawn or painted on the surface of a rock. The young artist may want to experiment with crayons or charcoal on a brown paper bag. Older artists can try painting (mixing dry tempera paint will simulate mixing pigments) on a brown paper bag.

### ***Learn more about rock art***

The following activities will help you learn more about rock art and archaeology:

Visit the library to find books or videos about rock art and/or archaeology.

Contact your State Archaeologist. Ask him/her if there are any rock art sites in your area. If so, could he/she send you a picture. Ask if there are any exhibits in your area on rock art or archaeology.

Contact your State Archaeologist to find out if there are any amateur archaeologist organizations, or universities with archaeologists or anthropologists in your area. Getting involved with a local group will help you to learn not just about rock art but also the scientists who study rock art - archaeologists.

Visit museums and archaeological sites to learn more about rock art, archaeology and the pre-European people of your state.

Share information you have learned with others (classmates, family, friends, etc.)!

# Rock Art Resources

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## Book Review

**Title:** Stories in Stone

**Author:** Caroline Arnold

**Publisher:** Clarion Books, New York, 1996

**Age Range:** middle school

Beautiful images enhance the information given, as the author examines the rock art images in the canyons of the Coso Range in the Mojave Desert. Native Americans used this site continuously for thousands of years and created designs ranging from tiny figures to life-size images.



## Rock Art Resource Box

This assortment of books, teachers guides, bulletin board displays, videos and more provides background information on this early art form that includes carving and painting on rock surfaces. Emphasis is placed on the Upper Mississippi River area. MVAC will rent out this resource box, created for students in grades 3 - 8, to educators on a monthly basis, for \$30/month. To reserve the rock art resource box for your classroom, contact Jean Dowiasch at (608)785-8454.

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*Left: Bird-like pictograph, Crawford County;  
Above: Diamond-shaped petroglyph,  
Crawford County*

*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.*

## Who to Contact

For more information on Wisconsin's rock art sites, contact Wisconsin's State Archaeologist at the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison:  
(608) 264-6504.

## Places to Visit

### Perrot State Park

There is no longer rock art in the park, but a display in the Nature Center contains a life-size replica of rock carvings that once existed there. The park also has examples of conical and effigy mounds and the site of French explorer Nicholas Perrot's early fur trade post. Located one mile north of Trempealeau on STH 93. P.O. Box 407, Trempealeau, WI 54661.

*Rock art photos courtesy of  
Robert F. Boszhardt.*



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## Announcements

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### 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!

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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.***

### Twelve Millennia

Tuesday, February 10, 2004  
7:00 p.m., Port O' Call  
UW-L Cartwright Center

This slide presentation will review the 12,000 year sequence of Native American cultures that inhabited the Upper Mississippi Valley as understood through the archaeological records, and formed the basis for the recently published book ***Twelve Millennia: Archaeology of the Upper Mississippi Valley***. The program will touch upon the first occupants, and note several revolutionary changes that led to the development of mound building Woodland cultures 2,500 years ago, and later corn-based Mississippian societies such as the Oneota, who were here when the

French arrived 350 years ago. Copies of ***Twelve Millennia*** will be available for purchase and signature by the authors, **Dr. James Theler and Robert "Ernie" Boszhardt.**

### Artifact Show

Saturday, March 13, 2004  
10 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Valley View Mall, Onalaska

Come to Valley View Mall and see artifacts representing the area's long history. Local collectors will display their personal collections of artifacts. See artifacts recovered from local excavations. Bring in your own artifacts for help in their identification. Call MVAC at (608) 785-8454 if you would like to display your artifacts.