

Annual Report of the State Archaeologist

1966-67



Introduction

This report covers the activities of the office of the state archaeologist during the period of July 1, 1966 to June 30, 1967. The state archaeologist is a member of the academic faculty of the Department of Anthropology, University of Minnesota, and is responsible for conducting and supervising research in Minnesota prehistoric archaeology as outlined in the Minnesota Antiquities Act. Because the state archaeologist is also a full time member of the teaching faculty of the University, a relatively small percentage of his time is spent in these activities. Most of the field research funds for prehistoric archaeology during this biennium came from the Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Commission through the Minnesota State legislature and it is encouraging to note that the 1967 legislature continued the appropriation for the 1967-69 biennium. Additional funds for both field and laboratory research came from the Department of Anthropology research budget and from a special grant from the Graduate School. A project of salvage archaeology financed by the Northern States Power Company was also begun during this biennium. Each of these projects will be outlined below.

Archaeological Permits

No permits for archaeological investigation were issued during the biennium.

Field Excavations

i. MORRC Program in Prehistoric Archaeology:

Excavations under this program were conducted in two localities, Mille

Lacs Kathio State Park and the area adjacent to the Snake River near Pine City.

Peter Bleed, a graduate student in anthropology at the University headed a field crew which excavated the site of Petaga Point (21ML 11). These excavations began in June of 1966 and continued through early September. Two major occupations of Petaga Point were discovered, the first a late prehistoric zone of wild rice harvesting activity, and the second, a much earlier Late Archaic habitation site. The latter probably dates somewhere between 1,000 and 3,000 B.C. and the assemblage is characterized by tools and weapons fashioned out of native copper. The copper industry, sometimes called the "Old Copper Culture", is restricted to the western Great Lakes region and had been known in Minnesota only through surface finds of the copper artifacts. The excavation of an actual habitation area associated with this industry is therefore of considerable importance.

Ziden Johnson conducted excavations at two other sites within Hillis Lacs Kathio State Park after first conducting the archaeological field training session for the University. Excavations were conducted at the Leland R. Cooper site (21 ML 9), a late prehistoric village site which can probably be attributed to the Eastern Dakota or Sioux, and at the Kathio School Site (21 ML 10), an earlier site probably falling in the Middle Woodland period and dated about 800 A.D. Both excavations were preliminary in the sense that considerably more work will be done on the sites over the next two years.

Leland R. Cooper worked in the Pine City area with a small crew, locating and testing several sites. Most of his time was spent in excavating a linear mound in the Stumba Mound Group (21 PN 5). This mound group is extremely

interesting in that it is undisturbed by agricultural activities and the burial mounds retain their original contours. The mound group consists of several very long, narrow mounds, a mound form which is quite rare in Minnesota, and which differs considerably from the usual circular burial mound form. The Stumpe Mound Group is visually spectacular and is the only undisturbed mound group of this nature known in Minnesota. Cooper's work disclosed a cultural type resembling that known for the Red River Valley of Minnesota and North Dakota and the excavations produced some extremely interesting artifacts.

2. Northern States Power Company Project.

Construction of an atomic generating plant on Prairie Island, Goodhue County, will threaten several prehistoric archaeological sites in the immediate area. Negotiations with officials of the Northern States Power Company by Arch Grim of the Minnesota Historical Society and Eileen Johnson of the University of Minnesota succeeded in providing a grant to the Historical Society for salvage excavations. The work was begun in June, 1967, with extensive trenching and machine tests of several areas involved in immediate construction. Two separate mound groups and a large Mississippian village site lie within the power company area but are not immediately threatened. Work by a University of Minnesota crew will continue in the fall months and it is hoped that extensive excavations of the village site may be begun in the summer of 1968.

3. Wild Rice Research.

A grant from the Graduate School, University of Minnesota, allowed the initiation of a research project directed at analyzing the origins and significance of wild rice utilization in Minnesota prehistory. Dennis Dickinson was

was employed as a research assistant during the academic year and produced an annotated bibliography on wild rice as well as extracting data from University site records on evidence of wild rice utilization represented in previously excavated sites. This work will continue in 1967-68 and it is hoped that a foundation for a long term field research program will be built.

Publications

- Bleed, Peter. Archaeology of Petaca Point. M.A. Thesis, University of Minnesota, 1967.
- Cooper, Leiland A. The Stumps and Vack Sites, Pine County Minnesota. MORRC Publications in Prehistoric Archaeology, No. 3, 1967.
- Dickinson, Dennis. A Selected and Annotated Bibliography on Wild Rice. Mss., 1967.
- Mudron, Ruth Ann. Cahokia Village Complex, Plains Anthropologist, 12:37, 1967.
- Johnson, Elden. Prehistory in our State Parks, The Conservation Volunteer, Vol. 30, No. 173, 1967.
- Lothson, Gordon. The Distribution of Minnesota Burial Mounds. Accepted for publication, Minnesota Archaeologist.
- Norquist, Carla. A Roster of Excavated Sites in Minnesota. Accepted for Publication, Minnesota Historical Society.
- Norquist, Carla, and Robert Keyser. The Orwell Site. Mss., 1967.

Public Contact and Scientific Meeting

Faculty and students engaged in the research participated in several scientific conferences including the:

Annual Meeting, Minnesota Academy of Science, May, 1967.

Annual Meeting, Society for American Archaeology, Ann Arbor, May, 1967.

24th Annual Plains Anthropological Conference, Lincoln, November, 1966.

Papers were read by David Webster, Peter Blead, Elden Johnson, Ruth Ann Kaudson, Charles Watwell, and Gordon Lechson. The Plains Conference accepted an invitation to meet in the Twin Cities in November, 1967. Elden Johnson is Chairman of that conference.

Considerable time was spent in contacting individuals from various areas of the state who had questions about or information on prehistoric archaeology. Much of this contact is in the form of letters requesting information, but personal contacts also derive from field site surveys, individuals calling at the laboratory, and in talks given to local service clubs and schools.

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