

State Archaeologist

Annual Report

July 1, 1967-June 30, 1968



This has been an important year for Minnesota archaeology. The excavation program in prehistoric archaeology financed by the Minnesota Natural Resources Commission had a very productive year of field research, the Minnesota Historical Society program in historic sites archaeology has begun an intensive field excavation program after an initial period of careful survey and planning, salvage archaeology financed by the Northern States Power Company was begun on Prairie Island, and a highway salvage archaeology survey program began in a Minnesota Department of Highways-Minnesota Historical Society cooperative program. In addition to the field research activities, two very important prehistoric archaeological sites, the Stumas Mounds in Pine County and the Morrison Mounds in Ottertail County, were purchased by the state for preservation as historic sites. The Conservation Commissioner's Advisory Committee on Scientific and Natural Areas has also established a priority list of archaeological sites on public land which the committee recommends be posted and preserved. The interpretation program received a considerable boost when the Historical Society agreed to begin a publication series on archaeological data and the Division of State Parks began planning an archaeological interpretation museum in Big Stone Lake State Park. These activities and events signal the increased tempo of productive archaeological research, both prehistoric and historic, which have been stimulated by the inclusion of archaeology in the Minnesota Natural Resources Commission program.

University Excavations

Excavations conducted under the Program in Prehistoric Archaeology again concentrated on the important late prehistoric sites in Mille Lacs-Kathie State Park. The initial work consisted of excavation of a rectangular house floor associated with the late Woodland component of the site at Petaga Point. The site was excavated the previous year by Peter Blood and one corner of the house floor was located on the last day of his excavations. Construction of a swimming pool in the area necessitated the additional work in 1967.

The large late prehistoric site which has been named the Cooper site and which is certainly an Eastern or Molewanton Dakota (Sioux) village was worked for several weeks. The excavations centered on stripping a large area to expose post mold-house floor patterns, fire and storage pits, and what may have been a defensive palisade. One additional season of field excavation will be necessary to complete the work at this site. One interesting facet of these excavations has been the recovery through a " flotation" method of plant seeds contained in the village refuse. A large sample of these seeds from a variety of domesticated and wild plants has been obtained and the sample is undergoing analysis by Mrs. Claudia Wang of the James Ford Bell Museum of Natural History. The seeds and the faunal remains recovered

at the site will be important in determining aspects of the diet of the villagers.

Dennis Dickinson excavated another section of the Vinland Bay site at the Mille Lacs outlet of the Rum River to increase the ceramic sample obtained the previous year. His results were incorporated with those of the 1966 work giving us a good sample of St. Croix stamped pottery in context.

One of the significant finds of the Mille Lacs work in 1967 came from Gordon Lethson's excavation of one burial mound adjacent to the Cooper site. There are several mounds in the group, all scattered in the park camp ground area, and most of them badly disturbed. The mound excavation was conducted to determine the possible affinities of the mound and village site. Though pit burials occur within the village, this does not preclude burial in mounds as well. The mound provided a positive association with the village, and more important, produced primary and secondary burials which had village-produced and early European trade goods in direct association. The mound thus substantiates the Eastern Dakota as the group occupying the village and building the mound and gives a good late 17th-early 18th century date for the mound construction. Also illuminating were the several pottery vessels accompanying the burials. In type they were like the ceramics of the village and the majority were smooth surfaced, shell tempered, Mississippian vessels.

The final season of intensive work at sites along the Snake River near Pine City was directed by Leland R. Cooper, Professor Emeritus of Hamline University. Cooper worked late prehistoric sites adding considerable data to the previous season's work and amplifying the work of Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Vach of Pine City whose excellently documented surface collection was donated to the University. Cooper also discovered late prehistoric structures at the Lloyd Winters site, again at the end of the field season, and a small crew will complete the excavations of these structures in 1968. We have been extremely fortunate to have been able to obtain the services of Professor Cooper for the program. His contributions over the past three years have been important and his work of the highest quality.

The final series of excavations were conducted by Professor Vernon Helmen of Hamline University who took a small field party to a village site located on a neck of land between Upper Rice and Minerva Lakes, Clearwater County. The site is owned by Mr. Kjas of Minneapolis who generously gave permission to excavate. The site is also late prehistoric but of a different cultural complex than the Mille Lacs or Pine City sites. Helmen's initial work indicates that the site does have affinities with the Plains to the west and that further research will be productive and informative.

University Site Survey

Highway improvement work at the Minnesota Man site near Pelican Rapids

necessitated sending a survey crew under Peter Bleed to the site during the initial construction and excavation. Through the cooperation of the Highway Department District office in Detroit Lakes, Bleed was able to re-locate the original locus of the find and the 1935 excavated area. The Highway Department provided a motor patrol which bladed both the original area of the find and the surface of the road cut to the west. Bleed and his crew also remained at the site while the contractor leveled the western road cut. The results were negative in that no additional skeletal remains or cultural materials were seen. The lack of additional human remains in the form of burials gives greater credence to the original interpretation of the find as that of an accidental burial. The stripping of a large surface area by machine which exposed the surface of the dense blue lake bottom clay in which the Minnesota Man skeleton lay was also very helpful and also supports the original interpretation. It is difficult to conceive of the Minnesota Man as an intentional human burial in such a matrix-- particularly when a burial pit located 100 paces in any direction could have been excavated into sand or gravel.

Blead also conducted a site survey of the newly established Maplewood State Park east of Pelican Rapids as a part of the continuing program of site survey in park areas. He was successful in locating two good sites, one of which produced quantities of bison bone remains and may be a bison kill or butchering site. Unfortunately this site is located at the point where a public bathing beach is planned and it will be necessary to alter excavation plans in 1968 to begin work there. Bleed's Maplewood survey report was sent to the Division of State Parks for their information.

David Webster conducted brief test excavations in an area adjacent to the mounds at the Smith or "Grand Mound" group on the Rainy River in Koochiching County. The purpose of these tests was to determine the extent and nature of the Laurel focus habitation zone at the site with plans to conduct excavations at the site later to obtain a valid organic sample for radiocarbon dating. Webster's tests showed the presence of a deeply stratified habitation site with a clear Laurel component and it is planned to work at the site briefly in 1968 with Professor James B. Stoltman of the University of Wisconsin directing the work. The 1968 site survey crew began work in June under Alan Foxas with examinations of Frontenac, Rice Lake, Sakatah, and Blue Mounds State Parks. The results of these surveys are not yet available.

Wild Rice History Project

A special ecological-archaeological research project which has grown out of the late prehistoric excavation work is centered on a combination of paleobotanical and archaeological investigations of wild rice (*Zizania sp.*) and its relationship to subsistence economic and settlement patterns in the late prehistoric period. The paleobotanical work is being conducted by Dr. John McAndrews, now of the Royal Ontario Museum. McAndrews completed one pollen core analysis using a core from Rice Lake in Becker County. A late prehistoric rice harvesting site called the Mitchell Dam Site is

located on the south shore of Rice Lake. McAndrews presented his analysis of the core in a paper titled "Paleobotany of a Wild Rice Lake in Minnesota" which he read at the 1968 annual meeting of the Ecological Society. In the summer of 1968 he will take similar cores from Ogechie Lake off shore from the Cooper site, and we hope to continue this coring at selected rice harvesting site localities to obtain the distributional pattern of the development of rice as a major subsistence element. The archaeological research at Mille Lacs, Snake River sites, Upper Rice Lake, and other late prehistoric sites in the main rice area will contribute data on settlement pattern, population size, seasonal patterns of movement, and other facets of culture associated with the apparent increased utilization of wild rice during the late prehistoric period. A manuscript detailing the archaeological evidence for wild rice utilization has also been prepared and will be published.

Northern States Power Company Salvage Archaeology

The intensive excavation program at mound and village sites located on NSP property on Prairie Island, Goodhue County, began in June, 1968, and will continue into 1969. During June of 1968, 5 burial mounds were excavated and work was begun on a large Mississippian village site. This salvage program is financed in part by Northern States Power Company through a grant to the Minnesota Historical Society, with the field research conducted by the University. The area of concern is that included in the construction zone of the NSP Prairie Island Atomic generating plant, now in its initial construction phase.

Historic Sites Archaeology

The Minnesota Historical Society has been conducting a research program in early historic archaeology in Minnesota under the Minnesota Natural Resources Commission, a program comparable in scope and intent to that in prehistory conducted by the University. While the State Archaeologist is not directly involved in the operation of the Society's program of research, it is useful to summarize some of the activities of the Society in this report. The continuing excavation and restoration project at Fort Snelling is moving rapidly and the work under the direction of Loren Johnson is impressive. The previous survey of historic archaeological sites undertaken by Timothy Fiske has laid the groundwork for an excavation program that began in 1967-68 with field parties under the direction of David Nystuen and with the work coordinated by Alan Woolworth, who supervises the historic sites program. This excavation program will provide a wealth of data on the French, British, and early American periods in Minnesota--data which are poorly known as yet and which are extremely important in amplifying the written historic record. Future public interpretation of the results of this work will also be of considerable public interest.

Beginning reconstruction of the Corner fur post near Fina City has begun under the direction of Leland R. Cooper who supervised the earlier excavations of the site. The proximity of the Stume Mounds, now administered by the Society, promises a future prehistoric-historic site interpretation area unique in Minnesota.

Highway Salvage Archaeology

The Minnesota Department of Highways has agreed to support a program of site survey along right-of-ways where new construction may pass through archaeological sites. The Department has contracted with the Historical Society and Charles Watrall, an advanced graduate student at the University, has been employed to conduct the surveys. Many states have had such a salvage program in operation for a number of years, a program authorized on the national level by the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads. The Department of Highways should be congratulated for recognizing the significance of salvage archaeology, and Russell Fridley and members of his staff at the Society deserve great credit for their efforts in obtaining this agreement.

Analysis and publication

Two major monographs have been prepared for publication and accepted by the Minnesota Historical Society for inclusion in a new monograph series on archaeology. The first of these monographs contains reports on 24 burial mound groups excavated by Lloyd A. Wilford, A. E. Jenks, and Ralph Brown of the University over the period from 1934 through 1959. Manuscript reports on these excavations written by Wilford were edited and sometimes enlarged by Elden Johnson and Joan Vicinus. The publication should be available in the fall of 1968. The second larger research paper is Peter Bleed's analysis of "The Archaeology of Petage Point: the preceramic component." This report is based on work in Mille Lacs-Kathie State Park in 1966.

Additional manuscripts and publications prepared include:

Blead, Peter. The Archaeology of Petage Point. M. A. thesis, University of Minnesota, 1967.

Caine, Christy A. H. Big-Game Hunting Artifacts from Minnesota. Plains Anthropologist, Vol. 13, No. 40, 1968.

Dickinson, Dennis. The Vineland Bay Site. M. A. thesis, University of Minnesota, 1968.

A Selected and Annotated Bibliography on Wild Rice. Plains Anthropologist, Vol. 13, No. 40, 1968.

Johnson, Elden. Archaeological Evidence for Wild Rice Utilization. *ms.*, 1968.

Stipe, Claude E. Eastern Dakota Acculturation: the role of agents of culture change. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1968.

Watrall, Charles. Virginia Deer and the Buffer Zone in the Late Prehistoric-Early Historic Periods in Minnesota. Plains Anthropologist, Vol. 13, No. 40, 1968.

Sources of Raw Materials at the Cambria Site. *ms.*, 1968.
(Accepted for publication, Minnesota Academy of Science.)

The 1968-69 Year

During the coming year I have been granted a sabbatical leave by the Board of Regents and will be absent from the University campus from the end of the field season in September to the beginning of the 1969 field season in June. During this period I will be completing a manuscript on the Arvilla focus burial mound complex of the Red River Valley, a project begun with the assistance of Jean Vicius during the past year. This manuscript draws upon excavation data from A. E. Jenks, Lloyd Wilford, and more recent work by parties under my direction. The manuscript will be submitted to the Minnesota Historical Society.

The main purpose of the leave is to provide time for the completion of the analysis of the Cooper site and preparation of the manuscript. Work at the site will be finished in August of 1968, and the manuscript finished within the following 9 months. I also plan to write a general book on prehistoric burial mounds during the sabbatical period. During my absence, Dennis Dickinson will serve as Acting State Archaeologist and will direct the laboratory work, handle the correspondence, and consult on archaeological problems where needed.

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