



Archaeology News

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Investigating the Nokomis Complex in the Upper Wisconsin River

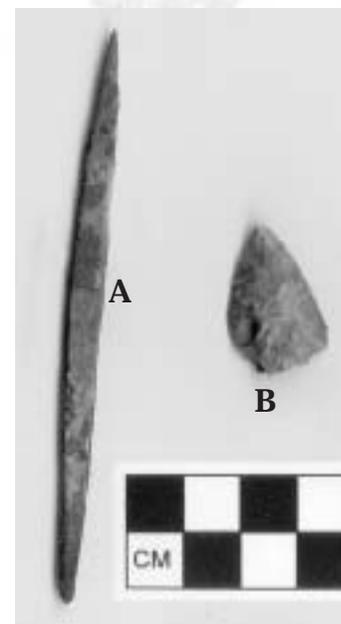
Ryan J. Howell
Research Archaeologist

Investigations conducted by MVAC in the fall of 2003 in advance of a highway bridge construction project led to the discovery of the Rodney Clark Site (47Mr146), a quartz lithic workshop site in Marathon County. Based on materials recovered from other surrounding sites and the preliminary testing, the site appears to be related to the poorly understood Nokomis Complex, a Northern Wisconsin culture of the Initial Woodland period (ca. 500 B.C.- A.D. 500). The site is located on the terrace of Cedar Creek, a tributary of the Upper Wisconsin River, southeast of Wausau, Wisconsin.

Test excavations at the Rodney Clark site recovered several thousand pieces of quartz debitage, tools broken in manufacture, and other lithic debris. The site may offer archaeologists a rare, detailed view of Nokomis Complex stone tool manufacturing methods and techniques. An analysis of the lithic artifacts and waste-flakes from the site suggests that the occupants were attempting to fashion large bifaces/stemmed points similar

to those commonly recovered from other known Nokomis Complex sites. Other artifacts recovered from test excavations at the site included (see photo right) a copper awl (A) and a chert Burnt Rollways Corner-Notched projectile point (B) suggesting a Late Archaic component may be present at the site as well.

The Rodney Clark site area and the surrounding Clark farmstead have had a long history of archaeological research. The Clark family has farmed the area since the 1950s and has amassed an outstanding private collection of points and other artifacts from the terrace area. The Clark collection contains examples of materials dating from the Late Paleo-Indian period through the Fur Trade era. Remarkable specimens include a small rolled-rim sherd of apparent Ramey Mississippian ware, a Hudson Bay trade axe and a cluster of several dozen Prairie du Chien chert bifaces that appear to be from one or two large blade/biface "caches" probably also dating from the Nokomis Complex habitations in the Cedar Creek area. The common source area for Prairie du Chien chert is southwestern Wisconsin, and these bifaces may



therefore represent materials that were traded prehistorically into the Upper Wisconsin River Valley from the areas surrounding La Crosse.

Future MVAC plans for research at the Rodney Clark site area include an expanded survey along the Cedar Creek terrace during the spring of 2004 and a detailed excavation of the Rodney Clark Site quartz workshop area. MVAC's research at the site is sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Marathon County and the Village of Rothschild.

MVAC at the University
of Wisconsin-La Crosse

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MVAC educators receive \$257,471 in grants:

Money will help educate area teachers in archaeology, math

Bonnie Christensen and Connie Arzigian have received two grants totaling more than a quarter million dollars. The first grant will allow middle school teachers to experience archaeology, then develop a curriculum to use with their students. The second grant will help math teachers learn more about statistics, probability and sampling. Both opportunities are available to both public and private schoolteachers in Wisconsin. The **Archaeology in the Classroom** grant will allow

teachers to create an inquiry-based curriculum that will be posted to the Internet, and will design a web-based course for future teachers. Teacher participants in the **Enhancing Math Skills** grant will learn more about statistics, probability and sampling. Teachers interested in learning more about the programs can log onto MVAC's web site at www.uwlax.edu/mvac/EventsDisplays/teacher.htm or contact MVAC Education Director Bonnie Christensen at (608) 785-6473.

From The Director: Joseph A. Tiffany



Joseph A. Tiffany

Hello everyone! This is our last newsletter before the start of the 2004 field season. We have a number of projects planned including our annual field days on May 1st and 2nd, the university field school in the Bad Axe Valley, and our public archaeology field school scheduled for July 26-30.

Additionally, spring is when the board conducts our annual fund drive for UFAH (United Fund for the Arts and Humanities)

in the greater La Crosse area. We will also have field crews scattered over Wisconsin and Iowa conducting survey, testing and site mitigation on contracted archaeological projects. And, there's more! MVAC staffers Bonnie Christensen and Connie Arzigian have garnered two large grants for training middle school teachers that involve integrating archaeology into the curriculum and using archaeology to enhance math skills of middle school students (see article on page 1).

So... we will be busy! Please take the opportunity if you can to participate in one of our public archaeological activities, visit us in the field (we will be working near Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center again this summer), or stop by the lab. We are open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

If you did not get to MVAC's annual Artifact Show this March at Valley View Mall, you missed a great day and a wonderful turnout of collectors and visitors. We were very busy (nearly swamped, as a matter of fact) helping folks identify artifacts and discussing their collections

with them. This is our most popular public event, and it is exciting to see the interest archaeology generates in the community and region. If you know of someone who has items to identify, have them contact us or stop by the lab, we are glad to help!

Work at MVAC on re-boxing and curating collections is proceeding very well. We have a new curation space and teaching preparation area designated for us by the university, and the curation facility should be fully operational by the end of this semester. This is not really new, but remodeled space (MVAC's old office in Wimberly Hall). It looks new to us though! We are pleased with the help we received on this project from the university.

Enjoy the newsletter, we certainly enjoy sharing with you the importance of what we do in public, pre-collegiate and university education, collections curation, site preservation, research, and pre-professional training for our Archaeology majors. MVAC is unique. There are many university archaeology lab facilities that do sponsored archaeological research. They do not provide fully funded comprehensive programs for all the things we do in education, curation, site preservation and research for the university, the surrounding community and our broader service area. We cannot do these things and provide the services we do without your help and support, which is much appreciated. If you have not renewed your membership for this year or are thinking about gifting to MVAC in other ways, please take a moment and consider MVAC and the services we provide. Without your support, we would not be. Have a great summer!

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*MVAC Educational Programs Are
Supported By:*

**NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
HUMANITIES**



Don Smith

From The Board: Don Smith

As the new chairman of the board of directors, I would like to thank you personally for supporting the Mississippi Valley Archaeology

Center. The board of directors has gone through significant internal changes, including reducing the size of the board while at the same time recruiting archaeology leaders from the upper Midwest.

Please take a moment to review this newsletter — it is our effort to ensure that you are aware of the important contribution that MVAC makes to archaeology education, discovery and preservation in the area. I would like you to be aware of three things:

1. MVAC and the academic undergraduate program are among

the best in the country. Our undergraduates report that their MVAC experiences are beyond what they are experiencing in their graduate programs.

2. MVAC is unique in the university because it is a self-funded regional program. Through contracts with area developers and state DOTs not only are students provided educational experience, but a greater understanding of our regional heritage is achieved. Income from contracted archaeological research funds MVAC.
3. MVAC serves an important role in educating the public of the importance and fragile nature of the archaeological record through pre-collegiate school programs, public digs, lectures and outreach activities throughout the region.

Announcements

MVAC to co-sponsor Iowa Archeological Society meeting

Mark your calendars for an exciting day of archaeology on October 9th, 2004! Luther College in Decorah, Iowa will host a joint MVAC/Iowa Archeological Society meeting beginning at 9 a.m. Morning sessions of archaeological presentations will be followed by keynote speaker John Anfinson at 10:30 a.m. The afternoon will be filled with site tours, including Effigy Mounds National Monument and possibly Prairie du Chien, WI. More information will be posted on MVAC's website as it becomes available.

MVAC Wish List AMS Carbon-dating Swennes bag \$1,000

Life-long La Crosse area residents Otto and John Swennes made an amazing discovery in 2003. While revisiting a small cave on their old homestead in La Crosse County, they uncovered most of a Native American woven bag. It is about 2 feet across and 18 inches high. The bag is of a style that was used by a

number of Midwestern tribes, including the Ho-Chunk, and could have been used to gather berries and nuts. The Swennes bag was apparently found with Oneota pottery which suggests that it may be at least 350 years old. Ho-Chunk ethnohistorian Nancy Lurie of the Milwaukee Public Museum suggests that the bag is at least 100 years old and could very well be much older. Two small samples of the bag cordage were snipped off and sent to Dr. Richard Ford, who identified them as twisted nettle fibers. Those samples could also be radiocarbon dated using Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS) methods, which would verify the age. AMS dates cost nearly \$1,000, and MVAC is seeking support to cover the cost for dating. If you would like to contribute to further investigations on this discovery, please contact Marcee Peplinski at (608) 785-8463.



Read More In Our Digital Newsletter

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

Look for the following articles in the Spring 2004 Digital Newsletter:

- MVAC educators receive \$257,471 in grants to educate area teachers in archaeology, math more details
- Complete list of summer programs
- Dedication of the Native American Garden

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 \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail address: _____

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+
- Benefactor.....\$500-999
- Supporting.....\$100-499
- Contributing.....\$50-99
- Active.....\$25-49

*Thank you
for your support.*



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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

Public Field Survey
Saturday and/or Sunday,
May 1-2, 2004
8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
Archaeology Center and Laboratories,
UW-La Crosse
Advanced registration required at
(608) 785-8454

Wisconsin Archaeology Week

May 2 - 8, 2004
For a complete list of activities contact:
Wisconsin Historical Society at (608) 264-6495

Ceremonial Garden Planting

Saturday, May 15, 2004
1-3 p.m.
Archaeology Center and Laboratories,
UW-La Crosse

Summer Programs for Youth and Adults

July 6-30, 2004

Check the MVAC web site now for spring
and summer field opportunities!