

Archaeology News

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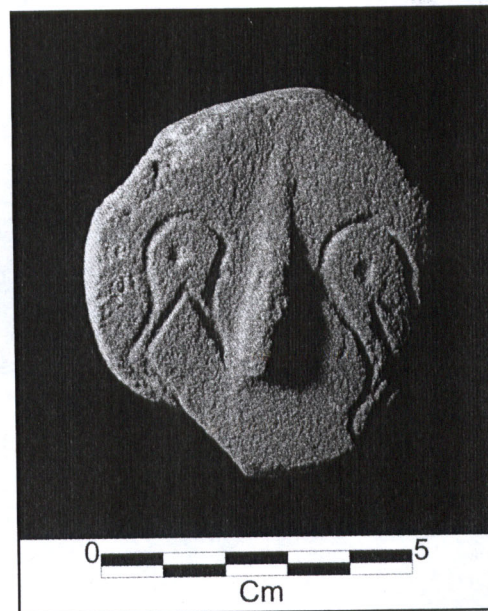
"The Face:" An Anthropomorphic Find

*Wendy K. Holtz-Leith, Research Archaeologist, and
Miranda J. Alexander, University of Oklahoma Graduate Student*

During the summer of 2009, MVAC and the UW-La Crosse Archaeological Studies Field School conducted excavations at the Lower Sand Lake site (47Lc45), northeast of the City of Onalaska. This site is located within the Sand Lake Archaeological District, a predominately Oneota village dating to ca. 1400 to 1550 A.D. with an earlier, more ephemeral Woodland and Mississippian occupation. This district is based around the former Sand Lake, a wetland that formed at the mouth of Sand Lake Coulee in prehistoric times. The Oneota were drawn to the rich fertile soil of the wetland for growing corn, beans, and squash, otherwise known as the "three sisters." In the early 1980s MVAC documented ridged fields within the Sand Lake Archaeological District, one of the few examples of ridged fields in the Upper Midwest.

The 2009 excavations identified over 300 Oneota features. The majority of the features contained the typical Oneota artifacts, pieces of shell-tempered pottery, end scrapers, and lithic tools and debitage; however, one of the features produced an unique archaeological gem. This feature appeared to be a typical Oneota garbage pit that contained over 100 pounds of rocks to line a fire pit. Amidst these rocks was a piece of worked sandstone. One of the field school students, while removing rock from the feature, discovered the etched stone and realized it had something carved on it. She exclaimed that it had a face on it, which Wendy didn't believe but the student insisted. Wendy looked and Eureka! it was a face. The face was unlike anything we had seen before and caused a great stir with the rest of the crew.

The worked sandstone has an etched face on one side and multiple etched lines on the



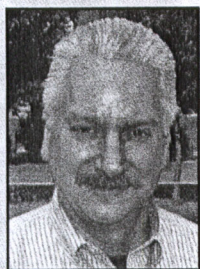
"The Face" recovered from the Lower Sand Lake site, La Crosse County.

other side. The artifact is 60.8 mm from chin to crown of the head, 54.5 mm wide, and 17.7 mm thick. The eyes of the face display a forked eye or weeping eye motif. Typically the eyes are mirror images, but in this case the eyes are not. The sandstone was carved so that the nose is raised, like a human face, but there is no mouth. The back of the worked sandstone has multiple etched lines.

The forked eye or weeping eye motif is commonly found at Middle Mississippian sites, however, it is unusual for Oneota artifacts to have this motif. The Middle Mississippian culture dates from approximately A.D. 900 to 1200 and is centered around the "city" of Cahokia, located near the modern day City of St. Louis. Middle Mississippian trade and influence reached as far as the Red Wing area of Wisconsin and Minnesota. The Mississippian culture was a complex socio-economic system including priestly and specialized

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From The Director: Joseph A. Tiffany



Joseph A. Tiffany

Hello everyone. MVAC was very busy last fall, and with the snow and cold, we are pretty much confined to lab work and report writing until the spring thaw. We had an excellent turn out for the fall banquet and a wonderful presentation by Dr. James B. Stoltman on his research in China. The banquet was also the Swan Song for long time colleague, Dr. James L. Theler, who retired at the close of the Fall Semester.

Jim continues to visit MVAC regularly, and we have many plans to keep him busy!

The staff is working on several grants and projects that are coming up later this spring and summer including another National Endowment for the Humanities Grant that Bonnie Jancik will be co-leading, and continued highway archaeological work in the Prairie du Chien area under Vicki Twinde-Javner's direction. Wendy Holtz-Leith just completed the final report on the US14/61 reconstruction project along Jackson and Farnum Streets in La Crosse and has projects lined up in Onalaska.

Memberships and donations are starting to roll in. We are pleased that so many of you remember MVAC and have increased your contributions again this year. This is the time of year, as many of you know, that I try and talk with many of the membership when renewals are made. Your continued support is most appreciated.

Thanks to your help, we continue our leadership in archaeological research, curation, public education and outreach in the Upper Mississippi Valley.

Our next public event will be a lecture by Dr. William Aylward of the Classics Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Dr. Aylward will talk on April 7 about his fieldwork and research at the site of ancient Troy in modern day Turkey. This sounds very exciting, and I hope to see many of you there!

Don't forget to check out the other upcoming events including the Public Field Survey on May 1 and 2. Contact Jean Dowiasch (608) 785-8454 if you are interested in the field survey, or MVAC's public field school and youth camps scheduled for the week of July 5 - 9, 2010.

Have a Wonderful New Year!

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NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
HUMANITIES

and:

The United Fund for the Arts and Humanities



"The Face" -continued from p.1

artisan classes, supported by intense farming of corn. Complex religious imagery including forked eye or weeping eye motifs were commonly found on items such as pottery, shell, copper, and stone. There have only been a handful of Oneota sites (Anker in Illinois, Utz in Missouri, and an unnamed site in Iowa) with artifacts displaying the forked eye or weeping eye motif. Although the face was found in an Oneota feature with Pam-mel Creek phase pottery, dating to A.D. 1400-1500, it is inconclusive as to whether the face was made by the Oneota or was an earlier Middle Mississippian artifact found by the Sand Lake Oneota and later deposited in this pit.



Etched lines carved on the back side of the worked sandstone piece recovered from 47Lc45

National Endowment for the Humanities awards MVAC \$145,013 grant

MVAC has received \$145,013 to offer a three-week National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute for Teachers on July 12–30, 2010. The Institute will be led by Dr. James Theler, Dr. Katherine Stevenson, and Bonnie Jancik. This dynamic learning experience for K-12 teachers will explore how Native Americans and Euro-Americans have adapted to the Upper Mississippi

River Valley over the past 13,500 years, and how archaeology leads to an understanding of how human cultures change and adapt through time.

The Institute will feature a one-day excavation experience, field trips to archaeological sites, hands-on laboratory and workshop activities, demonstrations, and classroom activities. Indi-

vidual projects will help participants tailor the content to their own teaching areas. Participants receive a \$2,700 stipend to help offset their expenses.

Application and other information on the Institute is available online at <http://www.uwlax.edu/mvac/neh.htm>. The deadline for applications is March 2, 2010.



Teachers excavating during MVAC's 2007 NEH Summer Institute for Teachers.

Education News

Matching Funds Grant

The UW-La Crosse Foundation has once again provided a grant to encourage teachers to use MVAC educational resources. The grant matches a teacher/school's cost dollar for dollar. For more information, contact Jean at 785-8454 or dowiasch.jean@uwlax.edu.

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.

Read more in the MVAC Digital Newsletter

A link to the digital newsletter can be found on the MVAC Home Page at www.uwlax.edu/mvac. Previous issues of Archaeology News are also available in digital form.

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 resources office.



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Upcoming Events

Contact MVAC at (608) 785-8454 for
more information or visit our web site:
www.uwlax.edu/mvac



Artifact Show

Join MVAC staff at Valley View Mall to see artifacts representing the area's long history. Local collectors will display their personal collections of artifacts. View artifacts recovered from the MVAC excavations in Onalaska and Prairie du Chien from the summer of 2009. Archaeologists will be on hand to answer questions. Bring in your own artifacts for help in their identification. Call MVAC at (608) 785-8454 if you would like to display your artifacts.

Date: Saturday, March 13, 2010

Time: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Location: Valley View Mall, Onalaska, WI

Wisconsin Archaeology Month - May 2010

The Wisconsin Historical Society's website will have a complete listing of activities offered statewide:
<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/hp/hp-week/index.asp>

Archaeological Research at Troy: Recent Discoveries

This presentation examines the archaeology, art, and legend of the Bronze Age archaeological site called Troy in northwestern Turkey. Who were the Trojans? Was there a Trojan War? How did later inhabitants of Ilium, the provincial town of the historical period built on the prehistoric ruins, perceive their city's past? Recent discoveries from ongoing fieldwork at Troy provide new ways to examine these enduring research questions.

Date: Wednesday, April 7, 2010

Time: 7 p.m.

Location: Ward Room, Cartwright Center,
UW-La Crosse

Speaker: Dr. William Aylward, Associate Professor
Classics Department, UW-Madison

Member Field Survey Opportunity

MVAC's annual Member Field Survey is scheduled for May 1 and 2, 2010. Join us that Saturday and/or Sunday to survey local fields for unreported archaeological sites. Advanced registration is required at (608) 785-8454. More information will be available in the next newsletter.