



# Archaeology News

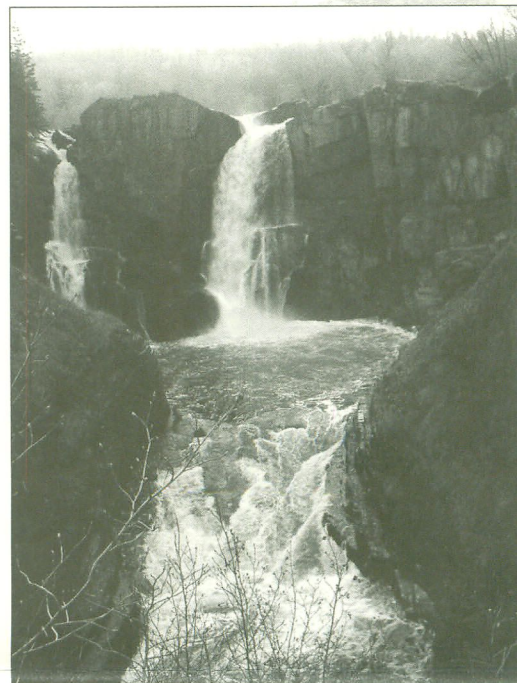
Volume 26 Number 1

August 2008

## MVAC heads north to the Grand Portage

*Mike Bednarchuk, Laboratory Supervisor*

In May of 2007 MVAC conducted an archaeological survey within the Grand Portage National Monument in partnership with the National Park Service and the Grand Portage Band of the Lake Superior Ojibwe. The Grand Portage, located in the extreme Northeast corner of Minnesota, is an 8 ½ mile trail connecting Lake Superior to the first navigable section of the Pigeon River which today forms part of the US-Canadian Border. The survey was performed to determine the presence or absence of prehistoric archaeological material and evidence of use of the trail corridor by Native Americans prior to European contact. Principal Investigator Robert "Ernie" Boszhardt along with crew members Lindsay Maass, Justin Moe, and Mike Bednarchuk headed north for a nearly two week stay along the North Shore.



*High Falls on the Pigeon River near Lake Superior.*

Grand Portage National Monument was established to preserve one of the most important entrepot trans-shipment points along the "Voyageurs Highway." *Le Grand Portage* or "Great Carrying Place," starting from the early part of the 18<sup>th</sup> to the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries was a hub for French, English and eventually American fur traders going to and returning from the continental interior in what is now Canada. It is believed the earliest European explorers were shown the Grand Portage by Native Americans who would have already established the trail long prior to use by the Europeans. During the height of the fur trade activity the British North West Company controlled the Grand Portage, which in addition to the trail had fortified the trailheads with the posts of Grand Portage on Grand Portage Bay and Fort Charlotte along the Pigeon River.

The Pigeon River was used by fur traders and even earlier by Native Americans to reach the interior waterways of the continent. For hundreds of miles upstream from

the portage trail are numerous interconnected lakes and marshes that are familiar to anyone who has traveled in the Boundary Water Canoe Wilderness Area. However, down river lie numerous rapids and the magnificent, but hardly navigable, 120 foot High Falls located near the river's mouth on Lake Superior.

To reach the interior waterways the Grand Portage trail must first pass through several high diabase ridges. Along the North Shore, the landscape is dominated geologically by the upthrusts of the Pre-Cambrian Canadian Shield through softer slate strata. Erosion and glacial scour over the millennia has worn away the softer rock leaving parallel ridges many hundred of feet high broken through by faulting. These fault lines eroded out creating gaps in the ridgelines several of which the Grand Portage traverses.

(cont.on page 3)

*MVAC at the University  
of Wisconsin-La Crosse*

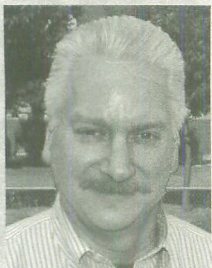
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## From The Director: Joseph A. Tiffany



Joseph A. Tiffany

Hello, Everyone!

MVAC has been busy this summer. Currently, Wendy Holtz-Leith is directing work on the Lower Sand Lake site (47Lc-45). This is the first of two seasons of work planned for this site and the immediate area which is slated for development and road improvements.

Lower Sand Lake was also the site for the University of Wisconsin - La Crosse's field school this year which I directed. We had excellent press and TV coverage. Among the items found are two fragments of worked copper, obsidian flakes, the stem of a catlinite tobacco pipe, and more early Mississippian and locally-made Mississippian pottery similar to ceramics reported a few issues back from the nearby Iva site (47Lc- 42).

Our public field school, directed by Connie Arzigian, was also held at the Lower Sand Lake site (47Lc-45), with sixteen participants. This past summer the teachers participating in *Language Arts and Archaeology* (an ESEA Title II grant funded project) directed by Bonnie Jancik and Connie Arzigian will have completed their third and final

year of excavation at the Swennes site (47LC-333). In addition to excavation, the teachers redesigned their Action Research Plans to increase the differentiation component of their Plans. The teachers will be implementing their revised plans in their classrooms this fall.

I am pleased to announce that Dr. David Anderson was hired by the Department of Sociology and Archaeology and will begin teaching in the Archaeological Studies Program this fall. David's hiring is a direct result of our growing number of majors. He has several years of archaeological professional experience in the private sector, and is an Egyptologist. As you might imagine our students are very excited!!

MVAC provides many opportunities for active public participation in archaeology, and we enjoy sharing our research, education, and outreach activities with you. We thank you again for your continued help and support. Please consider MVAC and the services we have provided for over a quarter century, and think about a gift to MVAC that reflects your interests in our programs. There is always a need; please contact us and we will be happy to work with you!

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*Mark your calendar for MVAC's Annual Fall Reception on Thursday, November 13.*

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MVAC Educational Programs are supported by:

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and:

The United Fund for the Arts and Humanities

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## 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](mailto:dowiasch.jean@uwlax.edu).

### La Crosse School District Archaeology Funds

Funding is available for La Crosse School District teachers to use Archaeology and Native American resources from MVAC. Teachers interested in using the funds should contact Jean at 608-785-8454 to schedule materials and presentations.

### 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](http://www.uwlax.edu/mvac). Previous issues of Archaeology News are also available in digital form.



## Grand Portage (continued from p. 1)

The 2007 survey locations were chosen on the basis of results from recent historic archaeology surveys conducted by park personnel, inland water source locations, and demonstrated fur trade era resting sites along the trail. Finally, geomorphologically identified locations were chosen where the modern Grand Portage trail crosses ancient shorelines which in some cases are hundreds of feet above the current Lake Superior shore level. Investigating the shoreline traces allowed for the possibility of identifying evidence of the earliest possible human occupation (Late Paleoindian).

Over 220 shovel test pits were dug in six prioritized survey areas along the en-

tire length of the trail from just north of Grand Portage Village to the banks of the Pigeon River. A single shovel test on Thompson's Ridge, midway along the Grand Portage trail recovered two tertiary flakes, one made from Jasper Taconite the other from Gunflint Silica.



Mike Bednarchuk (left) and Justin Moe shovel testing along the Grand Portage trail.

Having flakes made from two distinct materials indicates pre-contact or very early contact tool finishing or resharpening. Of paramount importance is determining the age and cultural affiliation of the site through recovery of diagnostic tools or a datable feature. Whether this site (Thompson Ridge II [21Ck348]) indicates pre-contact/early contact or more general subsistence/settlement use remains a topic for further investigation.

*Today the Grand Portage National Monument overseen by the National Park Service maintains and preserves the entire trail and interpretive facilities in Grand Portage Village which include a reconstructed Great Hall, depot and stockade next to a reconstructed Ojibwe village.*

*In 2007 a new \$4 million dollar Heritage Center was dedicated in cooperation with the Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe. For more information go to [www.nps.gov/grpo](http://www.nps.gov/grpo)*

## 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!

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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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of Wisconsin-La Crosse*

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Coming up in our next issue...



**2008 Public Field School**

## Upcoming Events

Unless otherwise noted, events are free and open to the public. Contact MVAC at (608) 785-8454 for more information or visit our web site:

[www.uwlax.edu/mvac](http://www.uwlax.edu/mvac)

### Annual Reception

Thursday, November 13, 2008

6 p.m. Social

7 p.m. Awards

7:30 p.m. Lecture: MVAC's Summer Excavations  
Port O'Call, Cartwright Center, UW-La Crosse



This past summer **Joe Tiffany and Wendy Holtz-Leith** directed Phase II excavations at the Lower Sand Lake site in Onalaska, WI. Future development and road improvements prompted the investigations. Fragments of worked copper, obsidian flakes, the stem of a catlinite tobacco pipe, and early Mississippian pottery were recovered. Additional findings from other investigations will also be highlighted. Lecture will follow the MVAC Awards ceremony.