



*MVAC at the University
of Wisconsin-La Crosse*

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MVAC's 2008 Excavations at Sand Lake Coulee

Robert "Ernie" Boszhardt, Associate Director

Last summer, MVAC undertook extensive excavations at Sand Lake Coulee near the northeast edge of Onalaska. The mouth of this small coulee was long known to local collectors as having a substantial archaeological record. MVAC investigations in the 1980's brought national attention to this location due to the discovery of buried and preserved agricultural ridged fields made by the Oneota Culture around A.D. 1400. Based on those early excavations, MVAC prepared a nomination for the Sand Lake Archaeological District, which was accepted and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984.

Since then, several major private developments have taken place at Sand Lake Coulee such as the creation of the Cedar Creek golf course and several adjacent subdivisions. These have impacted much of the district, but MVAC was often able to work with developers to recover some of the archaeology in advance of the bulldozer. Those efforts further documented an intensive Oneota agricultural complex at Sand Lake from about A.D. 1350-1500, and also identified traces of earlier occupations dating back to the Late Paleoindian period about 10,000 years ago. A startling find was made in advance of a condominium development in 2003, when a unique Late Woodland and Middle Mississippian area showed evidence of direct intercultural contact around A.D. 1100. Soon thereafter, Late Woodland cultures were replaced by the Oneota. In 2008, MVAC worked with Elmwood Partners to excavate one of the few remaining undeveloped portions of Sand Lake Coulee.



MVAC crew members Lauren Roeglin and Lauren Jagielski at Lower Sand Lake.

Working in former farm fields, a team of MVAC contract archaeologists were supplemented by a UW-La Crosse field school and an MVAC public field school. The excavations in this area found evidence of a minor occupation dating to the Early Woodland period (250 B.C.-A.D. 100), and traces of use through the Middle Woodland and early Late Woodland stages (ca. A.D. 200-1000). The majority of the recovered artifacts represent the terminal Late Woodland Culture, known as the Lewis phase, dating to about A.D. 1000-1100. Here again, traces of imported Middle Mississippian artifacts were found, further documenting cultural interaction during this revolutionary period.

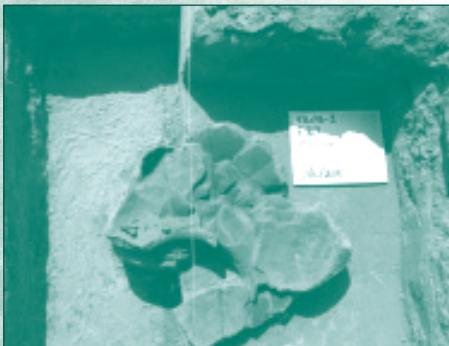
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2008 UW-La Crosse Archaeology Field School

Sand Lake, continued from p.1

Not surprisingly, evidence of subsequent Oneota activities were also encountered, including several deep storage pits and sections of large shell-tempered pots. Unfortunately, the long-term and repeated occupation at this portion of Sand Lake, including the Oneota pit digging, had mixed artifacts from earlier cultures. Thus, while the archaeology was interesting and insightful, the remains were less informative than had each of the cultures occupied a distinct area.



Oneota pottery recovered from the Lower Sand Lake site in 2008.

The staff has just completed a 150 page report describing the history and environment of Sand Lake Coulee as well as the methods and results of the 2008 investigations. At present, MVAC is planning to return in 2009 to excavate the remaining field area adjacent to the 2008 project.



MVAC's field crew at the Lower Sand Lake site. Branden Fjerstad and Lindsay Maass in the foreground.

*Editor's note: MVAC's Public Field School will be held at the Lower Sand Lake site on July 6-10, 2009. For more information on the field school, contact Jean Dowiasch at 608-785-8454 or look at the **Events** section of the MVAC web site: www.uwlax.edu/mvac

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MVAC Educational Programs are supported by:

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
HUMANITIES

and:

The United Fund for the Arts and Humanities

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.

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. Previous issues of Archaeology News are also available in digital form.

Trempealeau Mammoth

Constance Arzigan, Research Archaeologist

One of our most exciting discoveries this past fall started as a phone call from someone who had a bone he wanted to show us. Most of the time, we have to tell the person that their find represents a modern cow or pig, but the call from Adam Leahy was different. Even as he gave the dimensions of the bone, we knew something interesting was happening. Adam brought in his bone, and Jim Theler was able to identify it as a vertebra bone from a mammoth. It is HUGE, as seen in the pictures. A friend of Adam's had found the bone in a quarry in Trempealeau County, and hadn't known what it was, so he passed it on to Adam to find out. The bone is nearly complete and in very good condition, considering that it is probably well over 10,000 years old and dates from the end of the ice age. No other bones were found with the vertebra, but this is not an uncommon situation.



Jim Theler and Adam Leahy with the Mammoth vertebra found in Trempealeau County.

When animals died, often their bones were swept up and redeposited in the huge sand deposits that were formed on the Mississippi river terrace systems at the end of the ice age. Thus, there may or may not be more bones out there, but Adam is going to keep an eye out!

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 \$ _____

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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.

Member Field Survey

Opportunity

MVAC members are invited to volunteer to help survey local fields to find unreported archaeological sites. Each day will begin with an introduction at the archaeology laboratory, followed by helping with an actual field survey. Finally, participants will end each day back at the archaeology laboratory to wash the artifacts recovered and learn more about their history. The number of participants is limited so register early. Children may participate if accompanied by an adult. Call MVAC at 608-785-8454 to register.

Date: Saturday and/or Sunday May 2 and 3, 2009

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Location: Archaeology Center and Laboratories, UW-L

Fee: Free admission

Advanced registration required!

February Digital Newsletter

More images from the Sand Lake excavations and the Trempealeau County Mammoth vertebra will be featured in the digital newsletter.

Membership Categories

Patron \$1000 +

Benefactor \$500-999

Supporting \$100-499

Contributing \$50-99

Active \$25-49





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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 our web site:

www.uwlax.edu/mvac

Artifact Show

Saturday, March 14, 2009

10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Valley View Mall, La Crosse

Come to Valley View Mall and see artifacts representing the area's long history. Local collectors will display their personal collection of artifacts. See artifacts recovered from local excavations in the Holmen area. 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.



Wisconsin Archaeology Month - May 2009

A variety of activities will be offered throughout the state. The Wisconsin Historical Society's website will have a complete listing:

<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/hp/hpweek/>

Rulers & Ritual: Searching for the Origins of the Egyptian State at the Predynastic Settlement at el-Mahasna

Thursday, April 9, 2009

7 p.m.

Port O'Call, Cartwright Center, UW-La Crosse

Speaker: Dave Anderson, Assistant Professor,
UW-La Crosse Sociology/Archaeology Department

Large-scale excavations in the fall of 2000 at the site of el-Mahasna uncovered habitation remains dating from the Naqada Ic-IIc-d period (ca.3700-3200 B.C.) including the remnants of a large, more substantially constructed structure. This presentation will present information on this structure and its associated artifact assemblages. Specifically, data suggest early ritual activity, as indicated by a large number of human and animal clay figurines, and differences in the faunal remains recovered from the structure. The potential that the structure at el-Mahasna is the remains of an early temple/ritual building dating to the Naqada Ic-IIab period (ca. 3700-3450 B.C.) will be discussed.

Member Field Survey Opportunity

Saturday and/or Sunday, May 2 and 3, 2009

Advanced registration required.

see page 3 for more information