



MVAC at the University
of Wisconsin-La Crosse

1725 State Street
La Crosse, WI 54601-3788

Address Service Requested

mvac.uwlax.edu
https://www.facebook.com/UWLMVAC

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LA CROSSE, WI
PERMIT #545



*MVAC at the University
of Wisconsin-La Crosse*

*Archaeology News
is a publication of
the Mississippi Valley
Archaeology Center*

*Newsletter Submissions:
(608) 785-8454 or
jdowiasch@uwlax.edu*

mvac.uwlax.edu

*https://www.facebook.com/
UWLMVAC*

*1725 State Street
La Crosse, WI 54601-3788*

Upcoming Events

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

Volunteer Field Survey Opportunity for MVAC Members

MVAC will celebrate Wisconsin Archaeology Month by involving volunteers in surveys of local fields to find unreported archaeological sites. The day will begin with an introduction at the archaeology laboratory, followed by helping with an actual field survey. Participants will end the day back at the lab 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. E-mail or call MVAC at jdowiasch@uwlax.edu or 608.785.8454 to register. **Advance registration required!**

Date: Saturday, May 5 (rain date: Saturday, May 12)

Time: 8:30 AM–4 PM

Location: Archaeology Center & Laboratories,
UWL

Fee: Free admission for MVAC members

Sign up to receive MVAC's e-News at:
<http://mvac.uwlax.edu/mvac-e-news/>

Wisconsin Archaeology Month

A variety of activities will be offered throughout the state to introduce the public to Wisconsin's long and rich cultural past. For a complete list of activities check out the Wisconsin Historical Society's web site at <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/> and type "Archaeology Month" in Search.

Dates: May 2018

Public Archaeology Field Schools

High school/adult

Date: July 16-18 (3 day experience)

Date: July 16-20 (5 day experience)

Field School Open House

Date: July 19

Youth Classes

Temples & Tombs of the Americas, grades 4-6

Date: July 16

Introduction to Archaeology, grades 5-9

Date: July 17

Middle School Field Experience, grades 5-9

Date: July 18-19

Archaeology News

Volume 35 Number 1

March 2018

Archaeological Survey of a portion of St. Ferirole Island in Prairie du Chien

Vicki Twinde-Javner, Senior Research Archaeologist

In the fall of 2017, MVAC performed a Phase I archaeological survey for proposed improvements to St. Ferirole Island in the City of Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. These improvements included a new boat ramp, parking lot and drainage pond, a new walking trail with construction of new gazebos, and remediation and pending removal of the former Northern Engraving plant area.

Prairie du Chien is considered to be the second oldest city in Wisconsin. Aside from being home to a large prehistoric population due to its location near the confluence of the Mississippi and Wisconsin Rivers, it was also popular with historic Native Americans, fur traders, trappers, settlers, the military, and businesses. MVAC has worked in Prairie du Chien on myriad projects over the past 20 years, including projects along Beaumont Road and the USH 18 bypass, various projects for the City, and monitoring of construction in several burial sites. Prairie du Chien Township currently contains 269 archaeological sites, 92 of which are recorded in the City. These sites include military sites, historic foundations, historic cemeteries, prehistoric and historic shell middens, prehistoric campsites/villages and lithic scatters, prehistoric burial mounds, and a few historic and prehistoric individual burials.

St. Ferirole Island itself has seen changes to the landscape in the past 125 years, particularly with the construction of the railroad, changes from the lock and dam system in the 1920s and 1930s, and various floods over the years that deposited silt in different areas of the island. Archaeological surveys on the island have shown that some of the cultural deposits are near the surface with little fill, while many areas have either silt or historic fill on top of what would be considered the original ground surface.

MVAC's 2017 survey was required because of federal funding the City was receiving through a grant, and because the project overlapped three recorded burial sites. The survey of the new walking trail included shovel testing and soil augering near the western edge of the north half of the island, and surface survey along the beach line. Although the southern end of the trail showed fill over the original topsoil, the central portion had a thin intact topsoil horizon just below the sod. The northern portion of the trail has been disturbed by various railroad activities, building removals, utilities and drainage tunnels. However, MVAC did encounter a small but intact prehistoric deposit under 40 centimeters (15 inches) of fill. This intact deposit contained waste material from stone tool production (flakes and shatter), the tip of a projectile point or biface tip, and a platform core. These artifacts were mostly Galena and Prairie du Chien chert, although one flake was Burlington chert. Several of the Galena and Prairie du Chien chert pieces were heat treated. Heat treating was used by prehistoric populations to alter some

- continued on p.2



Shovel testing on St. Ferirole Island.

Prairie du Chien -continued from p.1

poor-quality cherts, particularly Prairie du Chien chert, to make them easier to work. The recommendation for construction in this area was to avoid disturbing the intact prehistoric deposit below the fill for the proposed new gazebo.

The boat dock had been surveyed by another archaeologist in the early 1980s. In 2017, MVAC did a few shovel tests in the area. These shovel tests showed that the beachline has eroded the original topsoil. Although a few prehistoric flakes were encountered, they were mixed with historic material. MVAC concluded that this area had almost no potential for intact prehistoric deposits. The project area closest to the railroad tracks by the existing dock was tested, and an intact original topsoil horizon was found under fill. Although no artifacts were found in this buried topsoil, there could be intact deposits in this soil horizon.

North of the boat dock would be another walking trail and gazebo along the treeline near existing railroad tracks. Two shovel tests identified a historic shell midden. The shells reflected historic mussel harvesting in the period of circa A.D. 1890-1930. This part of Prairie du Chien was a hotbed of episodic harvests of mussels for the shell button industry. During “pearl rushes,” mussels by the tens of thousands were harvested from the Mississippi River and steamed open, and the soft tissue searched for pearls. In some cases, shell piles

were sorted for shells of certain desirable species to be sold by the ton to be used for buttons.

The former Northern Engraving factory buildings would be the location of the new parking lot for the boat dock and a drainage pond. Previous environmental testing of soils in the vicinity indicated that the fill near the surface had some degree of contamination, so the City would like to remove that soil instead of building on top of it. The existing foundations of the former buildings would be removed during this construction effort. MVAC identified some potential original topsoil below the fill, although no artifacts were recovered.



Shells recovered from a historic shell midden on St. Feriole Island.

Books For Sale at the Lab

Hidden Thunder: Rock Art of the Upper Midwest, by Geri Schrab and Robert F. Boszhardt
Ernie and Geri have teamed up to interpret the hidden history and heritage painted in American Indian rock art found in the Upper Midwest. With an eye toward preservation, Geri and Ernie take you along as they research, document and interpret the petroglyphs and pictographs made in past millennia.

Alzheimer’s, Archaeology, and the Armed Forces: The Story of a Family, by Susan Steele
Gary Steele was a meticulous collector who assembled an amazing collection of artifacts from around Silver Mound. Gary’s daughter Susan has finished her biography of her dad, whose life story was much more than just stone.

MVAC Educational Programs are supported by
The United Fund for the Arts and Humanities
The National Endowment for the Humanities

Artifact Show a Success

Nineteen collectors joined MVAC staff on March 3 to display artifacts from the area’s prehistoric and historic past at Valley View Mall. A number of individuals brought artifacts for staff to identify, including some dating back to the Paleoindian Tradition (12,000-9,000 years ago). Robert Keiper, Gary Eldred, and Dave Becwar provided flintknapping (stone tool making) demonstrations that drew crowds throughout the day. Thanks to Jim Losinski, who provided this year’s mystery object, a stromatolite. Stromatolites are layered mounds, columns, or sheet-like sedimentary rocks formed by the growth of blue-green algae (primitive one-celled organisms).



2017 Mystery Object:
a stromatolite.



2017 MVAC Award

MVAC honored a single recipient at its annual award presentation in 2017. The James P. Gallagher Award in Archaeology Excellence was presented posthumously to Dr. Thomas C. Pledger in recognition of his contributions to archaeology throughout a career that was cut far too short by his unexpected death earlier that year. For more information about Tom Pleger, visit: <http://mvac.uwlax.edu/about-support/volunteer-recognition/>

Education News

Matching Funds Grant:
Teachers interested in using MVAC’s Archaeology Education Program resources in their classrooms can get financial help with our Matching Funds Program. The grant matches an educator or organization’s cost dollar for dollar. Thanks to the UW-L College of Liberal Studies for providing funds for this program.

La Crosse School District: Funds are available from the La Crosse School District for their elementary and middle school teachers to use MVAC presentations and resources in their classrooms. Thanks to the La Crosse School District for providing funds for this program. Contact Jean at jdowiasch@uwlax.edu or (608) 785-8454 for information.

MVAC Staff Contacts

Director
Dr. Timothy McAndrews, (608) 785-6774
tmcandrews@uwlax.edu

Operations Manager
Dr. Katherine Stevenson, (608) 785-8451
kstevenson@uwlax.edu

Main Office: (608) 785-8463

MVAC Staff
Michael Bednarchuk
Jean Dowiasch
Wendy Holtz-Leith
Bonnie Jancik
Marcee H. Peplinski
Vicki Twinde-Javner

Research Associates
David Anderson
Constance Arzigian
Kate Grillo
Suzanne Harris
Amy Nicodemus
James Theler

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: _____

I want to charge my contribution to:
____ Visa ____ MasterCard
____ Discover ____ American Express
Amount: \$ _____
Card No.: _____
Security Code: _____ Expiration Date: ____/____
Signature: _____
Date: _____ Phone: _____

Make your donation online at: foundation.uwlax.edu/mvac

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.

Membership Categories
Patron: \$1000 and above
Benefactor: \$500 - 999
Supporting: \$100 - 499
Contributing: \$50 - 99
Active: \$35 - 49
Students: \$10