

Minnesota Archaeological Society

*The inscriptions below are from a 1,000-year-old pot that was discovered in 1957 near Red Wing, Minnesota by an MAS member.
The thunderbird motif is representative of Middle Mississippian iconography.*



Spring 2011

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Investigating The Earliest Human Occupation Of Minnesota

The Archeology Laboratory, Augustana College recently began work on a research project aimed at investigating early Paleoindian (i.e., fluted point complexes) presence in the state. This project is part of the Statewide Survey of Archaeological and Historic Sites, funded by the Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund.

Archeology Laboratory staff hope to find MAS members who know of the existence of early Paleoindian artifact materials in private collections or small museums. Because this research project calls for limited field testing in the southwestern corner of the state (portions of Rock, Pipestone, Murray, Nobles, and Lincoln Counties), information concerning collections from or near this area of the state would be particularly valuable.

Anyone who has knowledge of early Paleoindian materials is asked to contact Austin Buhta at Augustana College. Contact information is provided below. We sincerely appreciate your assistance with this exciting project.

Austin Buhta
Archeology Laboratory
Augustana College
2032 South Grange Avenue
Sioux Falls, South Dakota 57105
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E-Mail: austin.buhta@augie.edu



www.mnarchsociety.org

The March meeting of the Minnesota Archaeological Society was held at the usual time and location at Historic Ft. Snelling. Good weather supported excellent attendance of the board members with a lively and spirited discussion on a number of issues, which include:

1. A recap report of the Council for Minnesota Archaeology Symposium, which was held on February 18th and 19th, 2011 at Inver Hills Community College, Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota. The general consensus was that the papers that were presented were most informative and entertaining and that Inver Hills Community College was an excellent venue for this event.
2. Additional discussion was held regarding our annual dinner meeting. We are now opted for a date of either April 8, or April 15, dependent upon speaker availability. The spring newsletter will be available in time for the official date, and time. (Subsequent to the meeting, speakers Ann Merriman and Christopher Olson of Maritime Heritage Minnesota in St. Paul have agreed to April 15, so mark you calendars now. For information about these speakers go to www.maritimeheritagemn.org.)
3. There was also much discussion about the pros and cons concerning the MAS Facebook page. The negatives were primarily concerns about security issues. The majority of the board felt that Facebook is a good medium to inform existing membership and attract new members. It was felt that the pros far out weighed the cons. Visit us on Facebook site, key word search "Minnesota Archaeological Society."

Rod Johnson: President

For comments or suggestions, mail your letter to President: Minnesota Archaeological Society, Ft. Snelling Center, St. Paul, Minnesota 55111 or email rodjohn33@msn.com

11,500-year-old Bones Of Child Found In Arctic

By Stephanie Pappas, LiveScience Senior Writer

www.livescience.com

An archaeological dig in Alaska has uncovered the oldest human remains ever found in Arctic or Subarctic North America – the cremated skeleton of a 3-year-old.

The child's burned bone fragments were found in a fire pit in the remains of an ancient house near the Tanana River in central Alaska. Researchers date the cremation to 11,500 years ago. After the child's body was burned, researchers report in the Feb. 25 issue of the journal *Science*, the house and hearth were buried and abandoned.

"The fact that the child was cremated within the center of the house, this was an important member of society," said study author Ben Potter, an archaeologist at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

Cooking and Cremation

The child's remains aren't the only thing about the find that excites Potter and his colleagues. The Paleoindian inhabitants of Alaska left few structures behind; usually, archaeologists discover outdoor hearths and specialized tools that suggest temporary work sites or hunting camps. The house that became a child's grave is the first



Researchers excavate at the Upward Sun River site in Central Alaska. Credit: Ben A. Potter

11,500-year-old Bones... continued on page 6

Minnesota Archaeological Society

will hold it's 2011 Annual Meeting and Banquet Friday, April 15th,
at Sorin Hall on the campus of Hamline University.

Social Hour will begin at 6:30pm

Dinner is served at 7pm

Lecture begin at 8pm



*Cost is \$18.50. Contact Anna Morron, anmorron@q.com or 612 922-7006 to attend
See page 7 for the reservation form and page 5 for directions to Sorin Hall*



This year's honored speakers are
Ann Merriman and Christopher Olson
Maritime Heritage Minnesota

A Survey of the Mississippi River in Aitkin County & the Wreck of the Steamer Andy Gibson

Ann Merriman and Christopher Olson are nautical archaeologists and founders of Maritime Heritage Minnesota. They recently conducted an archaeological survey of 104 miles of the Mississippi River in Aitkin County, using sonar equipment. Their survey located three new maritime archaeological sites and 40 locations worthy of further study. In their talk to the Society, Merriman and Olson will explain and discuss their survey, as well as their field research on the wreck of the Andy Gibson and other steamboats that plied the Mississippi River in the early days of central and northern Minnesota.

Ann Merriman has a PhD in Maritime Egyptology from the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, an MA in Maritime History and Nautical Archaeology from East Carolina University (ECU), and a BA in Anthropology Specializing in Archaeology from the University of Minnesota.

Christopher Olson has an MA in Maritime History and Nautical Archaeology from ECU and a BA in History from Bethel University. Together, Olson and Merriman co-founded Maritime Heritage Minnesota (MHM) in 2005, an organization that is dedicated to the documentation, preservation, conservation, and when necessary, the excavation of Minnesota's finite maritime and nautical archaeological resources within a not-for-profit paradigm.

Dates To Remember

Minnesota Archaeology Week 2011

Saturday, May 14 through Sunday, May 22

This year's Archaeology Week events will include site visits, public lectures, artifact identification sessions, and the 8th Annual Minnesota Archaeology Fair, which will be held at the Thomas Savage Interpretive Center in Fort Snelling State Park. A highlight of the week will be the Elden Johnson Distinguished Lecture in Archaeology. All events are free and open to the public.

Our Spring Newsletter will bring more details, and a full schedule of events for the week will be available on the State Archaeologist's website (www.state.mn.us/osa), and the MAS website (www.mnarchsociety.org) and Facebook page after the end of March.

Catch Rod Knapping

Experience the world oldest and most continually practiced craft as presented by Expert Flint-knapper, **Rod Johnson**.

- ▶ May 21 & 22, 2011 – Minnesota Archaeology Week.
- ▶ Flint-knapping demonstrations, Ft. Snelling State Park.
- ▶ October 1, 2011 – Archaeology Day, Kathio State Park, Onamia, MN



Paleoindian Research Lab, Department of Anthropology, University of Wyoming

2011 Field Work Dates – Hell Gap Site and Last Canyon Cave

June 4-13 Hell Gap

June 14-17 Break

June 18-27 Hell Gap (WAS Summer meeting and Atl-atl throw; June 17-19)

June 28-July 1 Break

July 2-11 Hell Gap

July 12-15 Break

July 16-25 Last Canyon



Hell Gap. Principal investigators and collaborators:

(Marcel Kornfeld, Mary Lou Larson, George Frison and Vance Haynes)

The 2011 field work dates have been set, so begin to plan your summer! We will be starting at the Hell Gap Site, where we will continue excavation of the Middle Paleoindian Cody component. The Advanced Archaeological Field School will be running concurrently with the excavation. For those of you interested in the field school please see the web site for our course or contact the instructors.

Mary Lou Larson – mlarson@uwyo.edu or Marcel Kornfeld - anpro1@uwyo.edu

Department 3431, 1000 East University Avenue, Laramie, WY 82071

MAS Offers Support for Local and County Archaeology Presentations

The Minnesota Archaeological Society is actively looking for lectures and presentations throughout the state that need support for speaker fees and travel expenses. We will be contacting local historical societies and other agencies in the future to see if some arrangements can be made. In the meantime, any readers who are interested in such a collaboration are invited to contact President Rod Johnson at rodjohn33@msn.com. Outreach and education are the twin missions of MAS and we are happy to entertain ideas toward such goals through archaeological activities, lecture series, site tours, interpretive talks, and other hands-on learning experiences.

Maritime Heritage Minnesota Receives Legacy Grants

In 2010, MHM received five Minnesota Historical and Cultural Grants – aka The Legacy Amendment – to conduct historical research, to digitize and edit ship log books for uploading onto the internet, conduct a remote-sensing survey, and to excavate a partially dry nautical site:

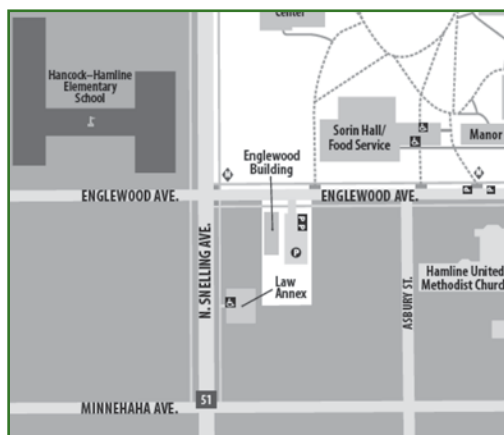
- ▲ Developing a Plan of Action to Preserve the USS Essex
- ▲ USS Essex Log Books Digitization Pilot Project
- ▲ Mississippi River Aitkin County Survey
- ▲ Andy Gibson Excavation and NHRP Nomination
- ▲ USS Essex Log Book Project II: Editing/Transcription



The steamer Andy Gibson wreck site in the Mississippi River in Aitkin, MN during low water conditions in September 2009.

Maritime Heritage Minnesota (MHM) completed a side and down imaging sonar survey of 104 miles of the Mississippi River in Aitkin County (as well as a small portion of Itasca County when the river meandered across the county line), in August 2010. This remote sensing survey resulted in 244 marked anomalies. After MHM reviewed the 31 hours, 50 minutes of recorded data, it was determined that 40 anomalies require further scrutiny and three new maritime archaeological sites were designated. Screen caps of the 40 anomalies, the three new archaeological sites, and the known steamboat wreck sites of the Andy Gibson and Swan in Aitkin were taken. MHM has also conducted historical research, primarily using newspaper accounts, to document the histories of the steamboats that worked in Aitkin and Itasca Counties, and to investigate the area north of Jacobson known as “Mississippi Landing,” where two confirmed archaeological sites are located. This paper provides the details of the most promising anomalies that may be the remains of the steamers Walter Taylor, Fawn, and City of Aitkin/George Houghton. This project was made possible with funds secured under the Minnesota Historical and Cultural Grant program, aka “The Legacy Amendment.”

Additionally, MHM received another Legacy Amendment grant to excavate the Mississippi River bank in Aitkin at the site of the Andy Gibson in order to determine if her starboard gunwale was intact, and to nominate her to the National Register of Historic Places. MHM has documented the wreck site during low water conditions in 2008 and 2009. MHM had confirmed that the steamer’s gunwale is intact and this information, along with the previous field work documentation, as been combined into a site plan. This site will be discussed as well.



To Get To Sorin Hall:

From I-94 take the Snelling Avenue exit, turn north onto Snelling. From Como Avenue, turn south on Snelling. Proceed to Englewood Avenue: turn east to 1535 Englewood. The nearest parking lot is behind Hamline Methodist Church: parking is free in all Hamline lots after 5:00 P.M. (street parking also available). Enter Sorin Hall’s main doors and turn left, follow the signs to the Banquet Room.

(See page 7 for Dinner and Lecture Reservation Form)

11,500-year-old Bones... continued from page 2

house structure found from this time period in northern North America. The most similar site found is on the Kamchatka Peninsula in far eastern Russia, Potter said during a press conference.

The cremated child lived and died at the very end of the “last cold snap of the last Ice Age,” Potter said. The Bering Land Bridge that once connected eastern Siberia and Alaska still may have been open, or was only recently inundated by rising sea levels. The newly discovered house sits in an area called the Upward Sun River site, which would have been well vegetated, Potter said. The inhabitants stoked their cooking fires with poplar wood.

Within the fire pit, the researchers discovered the cooked bones of small animals, including salmon, rabbits, ground squirrels and birds. The presence of salmon (and young ground squirrels), peg the site as a summer settlement, Potter said. The presence of the child, who could have been as young as 2 or as old as 4 based on the development of the adult teeth, suggests that women were present as well, said study researcher Joel Irish, a dental anthropologist at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

“In prehistoric times, weaning would come as late as maybe 3 years old,” Irish said. “So this child was probably still breastfeeding.” The researchers also found four used stone tools at the site, along with stone flakes left over from tool-sharpening.

Native son (or daughter)

By sifting through the layers in the fire pit, the researchers were able to reconstruct the house’s inhabitants’ summer. They fished and hunted small game, either cooking it in the hearth or disposing of bones and other leftovers there. When the child died, he or she – researchers can’t say for sure, though they’re hoping to find out – was placed on his or her back in the hearth and burned for one to three hours.

The child’s cremation site may have been a former cooking pit, but Potter and Irish don’t suspect cannibalism. The child’s body wasn’t disturbed during the burn, they said, and no limbs were carted off to the dinner table. The house’s foundation was filled in after the cremation, suggesting a respectful burial, Potter said.

The child’s cause of death can’t be determined, and only about 20 percent of the skeleton survived the fire (Potter first realized he’d found human remains when he uncovered a molar tooth). The teeth do provide some clues as to the child’s ancestry, Irish said. He or she had shovel-shaped front teeth, a genetic trait common in northeast Asian and Native American populations. “This child does have some affinity to native populations,” Irish said.

As such, the researchers worked with native groups in every step of the scientific process. When Potter found the first molar, he immediately halted the dig to consult with local native communities and the owner of the land. The researchers plan to try to extract DNA from the bones, both to see if they can tell the child’s gender and to see if they can genetically link him or her to living or ancient native populations. What will happen to the bones after that has not yet been decided, Potter said.

The find is a “very significant discovery and contribution to North American archaeology,” said E. James Dixon, an anthropologist at the University of New Mexico who was not involved in the dig. The find fits a pattern, Dixon said, in that 25 percent of remains found that are older than 10,000 years are children.

“It suggests that there is a relatively high infant mortality rate across North America at the time, and this reinforces that pattern,” Dixon told LiveScience. “The child’s young age hit close to home for the research team”

“We both have young children around the same age,” Potter said of himself and Irish. “That was quite remarkable for both of us to be thinking, beyond the scientific aspect, that yes, this was a living breathing human being that died.”

The Minnesota Archaeologist is available on DVD and CDROM.

These include Volumes 1-48 (1935-1989) & Occasional Publications. You will want to add this to your library and we should note here that we have a few DVDs left in stock. The cost is \$100.00, which includes postage.

Minnesota Archaeological Society

Please reserve _____ places for the MAS Annual Dinner and Lecture 2011:

Name[s]: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I enclosed \$18.50 per person Payable to MAS

Mail to:

Minnesota Archaeological Society, Fort Snelling History Center, St. Paul, MN 55111

Available Occasional Publications in Minnesota Anthropology

() Some of these publications are free but for postage and some would be copied.*

The cost depends on the size of the publication.

- 1 The Ojibway Indians Observed: Papers of Fred K. Blessing, Jr., on the Ojibway Indians from The Minnesota Archaeologist. (1977)*
- 2 Some Studies of Minnesota Prehistoric Ceramics: Papers Presented at the First Council for Minnesota Archaeology Symposium. (1976)
- 3 The Lake Bronson Site (21KT1): A Multi-Component Prehistoric Site on the Prairie-Woodland Border in Northwestern Minnesota. (1978) Anfinson, Michlovic and Stein.
- 4 The Alton-Anderson Site (21WW4), Watonwan County, MN. By Gordon A. Lothson. (1983)
- 5 A Handbook of Minnesota Prehistoric Ceramics. Compiled by Scott F. Anfinson. (1983)*
- 6 The Dead River Site (21OT51) by Michael G. Michlovic. (1979)
- 7 Ojibwe-Ikidowinan: An Ojibwe/English Word Source Book. Edited by Nichols and Nyholm*. (1979)
- 8 Bibliography for the Ojibwe: A History Resource Unit. (1973)
- 9 Current Directions in Midwestern Archaeology: Selected Papers from the Mankato Conference. Compiled and edited by Scott F. Anfinson (1981)
- 10 We have no copies and would appreciate anyone contacting us who has one.
- 11 Nookomis Gaa-inaajimota wid What My Grandmother Told Me by Maude Keggs, with texts in Ojibwe and English. (1983)*
- 12 The Archaeology of the Fish Lake Dam Site. Mulholland, Mulholland and Donahue. (2008) \$20.00

Minnesota Archaeological Society Membership

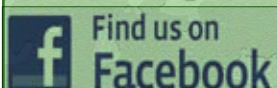
Those who receive this newsletter by snail mail can check their label, which has their latest update.

Everyone else can check with me if there are questions.

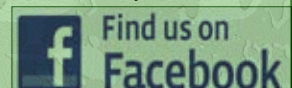
Anna Morron, anmorron@q.com or 612-922-7006

Costs are Individual \$25.00, Senior or Student: \$15.00, Household: \$30.00, All Institutions: \$40.00 US

Newsletter: Send your MAS news & notices to the Editor: Michael Brey, mike_2@mkbrey.com



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Fort Snelling History Center
St. Paul MN 55111

- *MAS members who would like to put in some hands-on time have several opportunities.*
- *To get more information about these current projects, please contact the individuals listed.*

The response to our Library Fund has been great. Thank you to everyone who wants to keep our journal in so many libraries, colleges and libraries across the US and Canada.

If you want to join in, make your check payable to MAS Library Fund, Fort Snelling History Center, St. Paul MN 55111.

Become a fan of MAS by joining us on Facebook. You can submit photos of your collections, ask questions, or leave comments. This is a place to connect with others interested in Minnesota Archaeology. We hope to see you there! If you have questions please contact: Debbie Pommer at 651-430-0137 or pomme001@umn.edu

Check the label on the outer envelope of this mailing to find the year of your membership status. Please update your membership if it is not current. All the details can be found at www.mnarchsociety.org or contact Anna Morrow anmorrow@q.com 612-922 -7006.

Attention libraries and interested members: Our Minnesota Archaeologist Volumes 1-48 (1935-1989) and Occasional Publications 1-9 & 11 is available in CD Rom form at the cost of \$25.00 and postage. (Six CDs) Make check payable to MAS, Fort Snelling History Center, St. Paul MN 55111. Or contact Anna at anmorrow@q.com 612 922 7006