

Meet Jennifer Rankin, New Head of Archaeology at MNHS



Jennifer collecting rock samples at a Normanskill quarry in New York during a Paleoindian toolstone procurement study

Who are you and what do you do?

I'm a new member to the Minnesota community, moving to the Twin Cities in 2017 from northwestern Pennsylvania. My family came to Minnesota as one of us is working in the medical device community and for myself in cultural resources and environmental permitting. I am a current board member at MAS. In March 2020, I was appointed as the new Head of Archaeology at the Minnesota Historical Society.

I started my career in archaeology in high school when a professor from Clarion University of Pennsylvania let me tag along to an excavation in the Allegheny National Forest. Planning to pursue a career in physical therapy, I decided that archaeology

was what I wanted to do and ended up at Mercyhurst College in Erie, Pennsylvania with Dr. J.M. Adovasio. After graduation, I worked in cultural resources management across the Mid-Atlantic, Northeast, and Midwest. During that time, I enrolled at Temple University in Philadelphia for my masters and PhD. My dissertation research focused on Paleoindian land use in the northern Middle Atlantic in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York, using geoarchaeological applications to address specific research questions. Along with lithic analyses and experimental methods, much of my focus has been on landscapes, soil science, and geomorphology. My younger sister is also an archaeologist, graduated from Beloit College in Wisconsin and just completed her PhD at Washington University in St. Louis, examining mound construction at Cahokia.

What is a current archaeological question you are interested in?

I have an interest in understanding climate change and the impacts, while also researching past human response and adaptations to those changes. My area of expertise relies heavily on interdisciplinary methods and a landscape approach, I think this relates to growing up and working on the family farm, having to understand the local environment and problem-solve. My research has taken me to such places as the New Jersey shoreline to understand historic and modern sea level rise, to the major river valleys in Colombia to study agriculture. I hope to continue that research on how early communities responded to those changes through time in Minnesota and bring that insight into our future to solve questions and address problems on a variety of issues.

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Letter from the President

By Dan Wendt

The letter from the MAS President is a vehicle to inform the general membership of the Minnesota Archaeological Society of recent Board of Directors activities. The following is a brief recap of the events, discussions, and decisions of the past quarter and future plans.

We were saddened by the passing of LeRoy Gonsior on March 12th. LeRoy was a friend and fellow MAS board member. He had a 36-year career in Minnesota archaeology and was a frequent contributor to the *Minnesota Archaeologist*. LeRoy had a passion for stone tools and lithic analysis and he was always willing to share his knowledge and enthusiasm for Minnesota lithics. You could count on LeRoy's participation in conferences, workshops and archaeology events. He was a central part of the archaeological community in Minnesota. We will miss his companionship, conversations and stories.

The virus has us all making changes, and staying home when we can. MAS board meetings in April and May were held by Google Meeting. Several gatherings were cancelled including the Superior Basin Workshop and our annual meeting. The Science Museum and the Minnesota Historical Society are closed and staff and volunteers were asked to stay home. University classes went online by Webex or Zoom. For a few archaeologists, necessary fieldwork and survey continued and was well suited to social distancing. We are finding ways to connect, but look forward to seeing friends and coworkers when we can do so safely.

We were excited to see the premier of our public television documentary: *Bound by Earth: Archaeology in Minnesota*. It aired primetime on April 27th as part of the **Minnesota Experience Series**, on Twin Cities Public Television (Channel 2 in the metro area). In the premier week 20,000 Minnesota families tuned in to the program. We have gotten several requests from teachers to use the video as part of their online teaching. We are happy to provide teachers with DVDs of the program and a learning guide via on our MAS website. The program can also be streamed from TPT's website. We have sent DVDs of the program to members and we have provided a copy to all 87 county historical societies in Minnesota. Please let us know what you think on our website or Facebook page.

The 2017 (Volume 76) issue of the *Minnesota Archaeologist* will be shipped soon. We hope to have the 2018 issue (Volume 77) out later this year. Thank you for your patience. We are working hard to catch up. Thank you to our authors who provide the content that makes the journal possible. Please consider publishing your papers with us. We will need additional content to catch up with our publishing schedule. We are working on our publishing process to better serve this key purpose for MAS.

Our MAS Annual Dinner Meeting has been tentatively rescheduled to Friday September 18th at Hamline University. Please follow updates on our website and Facebook page. Thank you to Hamline University for being flexible with our scheduling and providing the wonderful venue.

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Meet Jennifer Rankin *(continued from p. 1)*

What's your favorite MN archaeological site?

I will avoid picking just one archaeological site in Minnesota and will offer my excitement on future research on the Paleoindian and early Archaic periods in the Pine City area. This cluster aligns with similar research I have done in the past and the area has opportunity to get members of all communities involved in archaeological science and perhaps other interdisciplinary methods.

What's the oldest artifact you've found?

During my dissertation research and teaching an archaeological field school for Temple University, we were excavating a site along the Delaware River on the New Jersey side of the river that had 3 meters of soil on top of cobbles that illustrated the shift in the landscape from a braided stream valley setting at the end of the glacial period to the current land use as an agricultural field. It was that type of site that every small layer of soil had a story to tell. During our excavation, we identified an in situ fluted point and within the same hour, also excavated two trianguloid endscrapers. The soil layer dated to approximately 11,000 years ago and we were able to collect soil samples that after analysis, allowed us to paint a picture of what the area looked like at the end the glacial period in central New Jersey.

I look forward to developing new research and programs in Minnesota. More importantly, I look forward to connecting to people across Minnesota. Do not hesitate to reach out, my office phone at MNHS is 612-725-2410 and email is jennifer.rankin@mnhs.org.



Jennifer collecting soil data at a stream bank outside of Pereira, Colombia



Share your thoughts on Minnesota archaeology and find out what is happening right now across the state and region on our page.

In Memoriam LeRoy Gonsior



LeRoy with chert cobbles (Image courtesy of Dave Radford)

A few words about LeRoy Gonsior from Newsletter Editors Jake and Nicole Foss

LeRoy was a friend to both Nicole and I, and we always enjoyed running into him at events, meetings, and the occasional chance encounter. LeRoy consistently contributed articles to the MAS newsletter and I hope you enjoyed reading LeRoy's pieces on the projectile point types, lithic raw materials, and ceramic types that have been found in Minnesota. LeRoy had a deep knowledge and interest in Minnesota archaeology and was incredibly generous in sharing what he knew and we were delighted when he offered to write for the newsletter. Every few months we'd send him an email that we'd be putting out a new issue soon.

A few weeks later he'd send us a succinct article packed full of information about objects from the past. I worked with LeRoy for several years at the Minnesota Historical Society and spent many hours with him doing fieldwork all over the state, driving to far flung project sites, and collaborating on reports. LeRoy was always excited to find new sites and artifacts; even after three and a half decades in the field he as excited as a field school student on their first dig. We're glad that we had a venue for sharing what LeRoy knew about Minnesota Archaeology and we'll miss his contributions and friendship.

Why Your Membership is Important by Anna Morrow

In these strange times, as we have board meetings via telephone hookup and event after event is canceled, we are left wondering how to conduct MAS programing in 2020. Rest assured that board members and MAS volunteers are working hard to ensure that we carry out our mission, despite the limitations imposed by the pandemic.

While the MAS will survive this, we understand that there are far more serious ramifications happening all around us. Wearing a mask and staying six feet apart is not difficult; contracting Covid 19 is. Stay safe.

So many thanks to those who have updated their membership for 2020 and also to those who added a donation.

Contact me if you are not sure of your status. Thank you.

Anna Morrow
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LeRoy Gonsior (1953-2020)

By Dave Radford

Retired Minnesota Historical Society archaeologist LeRoy Gonsior passed away in the early morning hours of March 12, 2020 from a blood clot. LeRoy graduated from St. Cloud State University in archaeology and started working for the Society in 1976 as an Archeologist Field Worker at Fort Snelling. LeRoy has contributed to thousands of projects over the span of his 40-year career with the Society. LeRoy worked for the Trunk Highway Archaeological Reconnaissance Program, the DNR State Park Archeology Program, the DNR Trails and Waterways Archaeology Program, and on various Society projects at Lower Sioux Agency, Historic Forestville, Split Rock Lighthouse, Harkin Store, and C. A. Lindbergh House to name a few. He retired from the Society in June of 2016.

LeRoy was frequently asked by his peers, both inside and outside of the Society, for assistance in identifying lithics and ceramics from Precontact sites. His knowledge of Minnesota archaeology and his ability to discover and record archaeological sites in the field have led to the preservation and interpretation of hundreds of archaeological sites in Minnesota. We will forever be indebted to him.

LeRoy was an avid outdoorsman and sportsman. He also loved to garden and made incredibly wonderful salsa. A gentle giant and a good friend to archaeologists, his passing is a huge loss to Minnesota archaeology. We will miss him.



LeRoy and Jim Cummings at Archaeology Day, Kathio State Park



LeRoy documenting a site



LeRoy and Dave Radford conferring with colleagues at a Lake Superior Basin Workshop (Images courtesy of Dave Radford)

In Memoriam Guy Gibbon

By Scott Anfinson

In early 2020, I was at the University of Oslo pursuing a Fulbright research project when I heard of Guy Gibbon's passing. I mentioned this in the Archaeology Department lunchroom and one of the senior Norwegian archaeologists immediately said "Oh, no. I use his book in my method and theory class." This demonstrated to me once again that Guy was indeed Minnesota's best known and most accomplished archaeologist.



Guy Gibbon (Image courtesy of Scott Anfinson)

Those of us who were in awe of Guy's many archaeological accomplishments, were also amazed at the variety of his other talents. He was a ballet dancer, a squash player, a lifeguard, and a Zen Buddhist priest. Most of all, he was a friend and mentor to many, with a warm smile and easy-going manner. It is these qualities that made his passing on January 28, 2020 especially difficult.

I first met Guy in 1971 when I was part of Dale Henning's southwestern Minnesota field school. Guy came to our site from the University of Illinois the same day Elden Johnson visited. Seven years later, Guy became my PhD advisor at the University of Minnesota. He patiently guided me through the PhD process, reminding me that "closure" was the most important advice he could give.

A native of Milwaukee, Guy met his wife Ann in 1964 while in the Army stationed in Germany during a hiatus in his undergraduate work. Guy then got all three of his college degrees at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, completing his PhD in 1969. He began teaching at the University of Illinois that same year, moving to the University of Wisconsin in 1972, and finally to the University of Minnesota in 1973. He retired in 2011. At Minnesota, he was Director of the Center for Ancient Studies (1981-85) and Graduate Studies Director for Interdisciplinary Archaeological Studies (1991-2001). He did sabbaticals at the London School of Economics and the University of Heidelberg. He took a leave of absence from teaching in the mid-1990s, employed by BRW to direct the MnModel project and several mitigation excavations.

Guy Gibbon (1939-2020)

Guy spent parts of 17 summers leading field schools at Minnesota archaeological sites. Although originally known for his Oneota studies, he worked all over the state and dealt with almost all of its prehistoric complexes and multiple historic ones. He led a pedestrian survey in the valleys of Rock County and a canoe survey in Voyageurs National Park. He wrote articles on Old Copper and the Fur Trade. Three books on archaeological method and theory gave him worldwide notice, while his books on the Sioux and Minnesota archaeology further enhanced his regional status. Several of his publications appeared in 2019, with several more still “in press,” demonstrating that he never really retired.

Besides teaching generations of undergraduates, Guy guided many MA and PhD students through their degrees, beginning with Tom Neuman’s MA in 1975 and ending with Brad Perkl’s and Ed Fleming’s PhDs. Other notable Gibbon graduate students include Tom Trow, Clark Dobbs, Kent Bakken, and Ron Schirmer. At Illinois, he was one of Mike Michlovic’s professors.

When I was State Archaeologist, Guy would occasionally show up at my Ft. Snelling office as he pursued some new research, most recently rock art. After I retired in early 2016, we would rarely meet face-to-face, but I continued to get emails and phone calls. The last time I saw him was at the October 2019 Midwest Archaeological Conference in Mankato where I was a participant in a session in his honor. Dale Henning also gave a paper. Dale not only introduced me to Guy in 1971, he had served as one of Guy’s university mentors in Wisconsin. It was hard to believe I had known them both for almost 50 years. I was so happy to see Guy genuinely engaged in all the session

presentations. The familiar smile was on his face as he greeted many old friends. That is the way I will remember him, in that context and in that pose.



Guy Gibbon (Image courtesy of the Archaeological Institute of America)

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