

VAS NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 2 OCTOBER 1969

PUBLISHED OCCASIONALLY BY THE VERMONT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

ANNUAL MEETING

The Vermont Archaeological Society recently celebrated its first birthday and has weathered its initial year in rather respectable fashion. In the first NEWSLETTER we announced (in fact, bragged about) the first annual meeting at Sugarbush. Now, it is our pleasure to announce the date of the second annual meeting which, we hope, will be at least as successful socially and professionally.

The meeting will begin on Friday, December 5 at noon and end on Saturday, December 6 after lunch. In picking the Bolton Valley Lodge as the site of the meeting, the VAS has accomplished what President Nixon has not: reduce inflation substantially. The cost of resident attendance at the meeting will be only \$20-\$22 for lodgings and four meals. You can, of course, commute to the meetings and partake of the meals on an "a la carte" basis.

When you fill out the ballot (last sheet in this NEWSLETTER) and complete the meeting reservation form, think about bringing along a member of your family or a friend to the meeting. Although our growth to date has been nothing short of phenomenal, for a society of our type, we need all the interested members we can get, and we especially need representation and activity in other parts of the State than the greater Burlington area.

Outside of the commitment of your time, there is no other obligation on your part in order to come and enjoy a good meeting, good company and the promise of a rewarding year. Guests of the Bolton Valley Lodge should plan to bring skis and use one of Vermont's newest but finest winter resorts. The sauna is always available even if the snow is not. If you approach Bolton on Interstate 89, exit at 11 going east and south, and at 10 if you are traveling west. The Bolton Valley access road, off route 2, is well marked.

MEETING PROGRAM

- Friday, December 5, 1969
- Registration
- Noon Luncheon
- 2 P.M. Afternoon session
- Louise Bassa, Instructor, the University of Vermont, Graduate Candidate, University of Pennsylvania. "The Neolithic and Early Bronze Age in Slovakia. My Archaeological Experience in Czechoslovakia."
 - William Haviland, Associate Professor, University of Vermont. "The Pine Island Report."
- Both talks will be illustrated with slides.
- 5 P.M. Cocktails and conversation (a cooperative social experience).
- 7 P.M. Banquet
- 8:30 P.M. Evening session
- Speaker: Dr. Dean Snow, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, SUNY at Albany (formerly at the University of Maine).
- Saturday, December 6, 1969
- 8:30 A.M. Breakfast
- 10 A.M. Annual meeting of the Society
- Election Report
 - Financial Report
 - Committee Reports
 - Field Program for 1970
 - New Business
- 1 P.M. Luncheon (closing event)

VERMONT LIFE TO FEATURE ARTICLE ON VAS

An article about the VAS will appear in the winter issue of Vermont Life Magazine. Written by VAS vice-president Charles Morrissey, director of the Vermont Historical Society, the column describing why persons interested in the state's archeology decided to organize. The column points out that Vermont has not been studied thoroughly for its archeological background in comparison to other North Eastern States, and how the VAS hopes to rectify the situation. A summary of the Pine Island Dig, detailed elsewhere in this NEWSLETTER, is also included. Morrissey's article is based on an interview with Society president Joseph Popecki, board member William Haviland, UVM professor of anthropology, and secretary Nicholas Muller, UVM professor of history.

EXCAVATIONS AT PINE ISLAND

by William Haviland

In April 1969, members of the VAS conducted a brief "salvage" dig on Pine Island, Colchester. The site, "Vt-Ch-I", consisted of two low mounds which were unlike any Indian sites known from Vermont. Pine Island itself is a sandy remnant of the ancient Winooski delta, which stands about 50 feet above the present Winooski flood-plain known as "The Intervale". The site was on top of the island, about 800 feet in from an old bend of the river. A small cove from this river channel may once have furnished an excellent place for Indians to beach canoes. From this, a spur of the island furnished easy ascent to the top. The marshy flood-plain is excellent habitat for water fowl today, and must have been in the past. Fish were to be had from the river, which also could have served as a transportation artery. Various mammals would have been attracted by the fish, birds, and water. In all, the location would seem to have been made to order for Indians. From dry encampments on Pine Island they could have surveyed the entire Intervale with its abundant food resources.

The mounds were shown to William A. Haviland by the owner, Mr. Irving McKinstry, in the fall of 1968. At that time, the possibility of eventual removal was discussed, but with no specific date in mind. Subsequently, Mr. McKinstry sold his farm to the Perini Corporation as a source for fill for the Burlington Belt Line. Work on this was to begin in the spring, so that the need for fill became immediate. With the wholehearted support of the Perini Corporation, a small crew of VAS volunteers, under the direction of Haviland, began work as soon as the snow was off the ground. Regular diggers included Madaline Gifford, Joe Popecki, Carl Swanson, and Ken Varney. Numerous others volunteered their services from time to time.

Over the two mounds, we set up a grid of two-meter squares with the aid of a transit. We then excavated an east-west line of squares through the center of one (mound No. 1). Later, this excavation was extended to the south edge of the mound. The second mound was not excavated. However, a series of tests with a post-hole auger indicated that it was basically like the other one.

Mound No. 1 was found to be about 35 feet in diameter, surrounded by a ditch which was broken by raised areas at four points. A marked deposit of ash on the original ground surface indicates that a substantial fire burned here. Lying on this ash layer were pieces of charcoal and a large partially-burned log. The latter, almost as long as the mound diameter, was positioned at about the mid-point of the mound in rough east-west alignment. Over the ash from the fire was a mixture of discolored sand and charcoal, topped by a layer of charcoal.

The formation of the mound can be reconstructed as follows. First, logs were put in place for the fire. Then, the ditch was dug, and the sand thrown up on top of the wood. As the wood burned down, the sand was discolored and became mixed with the charcoal. As it filtered down through the burning wood, a residue of charcoal was left on top. The ditch prevented the fire from spreading from the burning site.

For a week or so, our excavations failed to turn up any artifacts. Then, a few came to light above the ash layer, just north of the east end of the log. These included portions of seven quartzite choppers, scrapers, and knives. With them were six small flint flakes and a tiny pot sherd. They show no trace of burning. No other artifacts were found in the mound, although bulldozing operations by the Perini Corporation disturbed an obvious Woodland Indian campsite near the supposed trail up from the old Winooski River channel. Here, Mike Williams of Colchester discovered quantities of stone flakes, burned cobbles, broken projectiles, knives, and drills; the sort of remains typical of campsites. Similar sporadic finds were made elsewhere as bulldozing progressed.

The interpretation of the Pine Island remains is not yet complete. It is obvious, though, that Indians camped not far from the mounds. What is not immediately clear is whether or not the mounds are of Indian origin. We think not, for the following reasons. First, the distribution of known Indian mounds does not extend east of central New York State. Second, early European settlers in the northeast are known to have made charcoal by building up a crib-work of logs, and setting it afire. Dirt was put on top to reduce the oxygen, so that the fire burned to charcoal rather than ash. This would explain the sand over the ash layer, and the great amount of charcoal. Finally, some pieces of charcoal appear to be from wood which was cut with a saw or a steel axe.

The presence of the few stone artifacts still remains to be explained. However, a fragment of a stone blade was found only 50 feet southwest of the mound. This is one indication of the presence nearby of such artifacts, and raises the possibility that those found in the mound were by accident in a shovel-full of sand which was dumped on the burning wood.

The question of the Indian or non-Indian origin of the mounds could be conclusively resolved if a reference to such charcoal burning on Pine Island could be found in an old Colchester town history. Barring that, samples of the large log, as well as some charcoal, were saved for possible radiocarbon dating. For about \$100.00 per sample, we could find out precisely when the burning took place.

MISSISSIQUOI REGION RECONNAISSANCE

William A. Ritchie, state archeologist of New York, accompanied by VAS member Richard Passinto, conducted a reconnaissance of the Mississiquoi region this summer.

A number of small campsites, mostly middle woodland, were located. Apparently prehistoric occupation of the region was centered around the lake, and tapered off to almost nothing inland toward Lamoille County. Moreover, the northern area seems to have been much more sparsely inhabited than portions of the Champlain Valley to the south, where large woodland sites and a number of earlier archaic sites are known.

The results of Dr. Ritchie's work will be incorporated in the records of the Vermont Site Survey, which was described in the last issue of the VAS NEWSLETTER.

TEAR OFF, FILL IN AND MAIL BY NOVEMBER 20, 1969

VERMONT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
ANNUAL BALLOT, 1969

The Nominating Committee (Dr. M. C. Twitchell, Chairman) has submitted the following nominees for the three positions that will become vacant on the VAS Board of Trustees:

- Charles T. Morrissey, Montpelier: Director of The Vermont Historical Society and presently serving as Vice-President of VAS.
- Joseph T. Popecki, Burlington: Director of Libraries, St. Michael's College, Winooski, Vermont, member of the Steering Committee that established VAS, and the first and current President of VAS.
- Dr. M. C. Twitchell, Burlington: Ophthalmologist, and member of the Board of Trustees, 1968/69.

Vote for three members and return the ballot by November 20 to:

H. N. Muller, Secretary, VAS
Waterman Building
University of Vermont
Burlington, Vermont 05401

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Charles T. Morrissey | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Joseph T. Popecki | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | M. C. Twitchell | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| <input type="radio"/> | I am a paid-up member of VAS | | |

RESERVATIONS

For second annual meeting of VAS, Bolton Valley Lodge, Bolton, Vt., December 5-6, 1969. Please check:

- I/We plan to attend all or part of the meeting. Indicate no. _____
- I/We plan to attend the annual dinner meeting, Friday evening (\$4). Indicate no. _____
- I/We will stay overnight and eat at the lodge. Please make the following reservations (\$20 each, double occupancy, American Plan; \$22, single occupancy, American Plan).

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Return to H. N. Muller, Secretary, as noted in ballot above, by November 20, 1969.

Return to:

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FIRST CLASS MAIL

TO

