

VAS newsletter...

A PUBLICATION OF THE
VERMONT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, INC.

Prudence Doherty, Editor

Forensic Archaeology in Vermont

On occasion, archaeological methods have been used in situations very different from traditional excavation sites-- at the scenes of crimes involving skeletons or buried bodies. The application of simple archaeological recovery techniques in such situations is called forensic archaeology. In Vermont, Dr. Peter Thomas and the state's Chief Medical Examiner, Dr. Eleanor McQuillen, have cooperated on a number of cases where archaeological techniques have helped law enforcement officials more accurately and efficiently explore crime scenes involving burials of bodies.

Forensic archaeology was first used in the state about three years ago when Dr. McQuillen contacted Thomas for help in identifying the age of a skeleton that had been recovered. This initial request began a working relationship between Dr. Thomas and the Medical Examiner's office. Thomas has consulted with Dr. McQuillen and police officials on a number of cases since then.

Dr. Thomas realized that archaeological methods could be very helpful for interpreting and recording evidence at crime scenes. Archaeological methods of site identification and excavation could locate and explain buried evidence more quickly and accurately than the less systematic approach often used by the police. Methods standard in archaeological excavation sites for recording the context of buried material were often lacking in police searches for evidence.

In one instance, for example, the police removed a cremation, screened the bones, and presented them to the Medical Examiner in a plastic bag. Important information that could have been derived from controlled excavation of the burial-- such as the length of time it has been buried--was lost.

Thomas has helped Vermont law enforcement officials obtain clues to crimes involving bodies from the context of burial rather than relying on the more traditional body and surface evidence only. In one

case, information suggested that the corpse of a man missing for three years was buried in Milton. Thomas joined police at the site and cut a cross section through the proposed burial site. He determined that the disturbance was natural, resulting from the decay of a fallen tree. Police were able to quickly eliminate the site without digging up the entire area.

More recently, Thomas used a standard tube sampler or corer to probe the area of a reported illegal burial to find evidence of below-ground disturbance. When the soil profile in the corer indicated a disturbance, Thomas opened the area and found an obvious pit. Using standard archaeological excavation techniques, the pit fill was removed to reveal a deteriorating box that did indeed contain a body. Controlled excavation allowed Thomas to determine how recently the pit had been dug and permitted careful recovery of all buried evidence. Less careful digging probably would have obscured such information.

Thomas hopes to be able to continue to share archaeological methods with law enforcement officials. In other states, extensive forensic archaeology and forensic anthropology training is available. Perhaps similar training will be available in the future in Vermont.

Environmental Commission Responds to Concerns

In two recent cases, the District #4 Environmental Commission has shown concern for the preservation of archaeological sites. One case involved a borrow area for the Burlington North Connector on the Winooski River flood plain, and the second involved recent destruction to a small portion of the Winooski Site (VT-CH-46).

Construction of the North Connector requires large amounts of fill, and plans were made to obtain some of the needed soil from a flat plowed field adjacent to the Winooski River in Burlington. Previous archaeological studies have indicated the possible presence of significant archaeological sites within the proposed borrow area. Recent decisions made by the District #4 Environmental

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Commission in cooperation with the Agency of Transportation require that removal of soil is permissible only after it has been determined that no significant archaeological sites will be destroyed.

The second case involves the Winooski Site, an 8-10 acre area partially excavated by Dr. Marjory Power. The site is one of the most important in New England for the period between A.D.1 and A.D.1000. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978. That listing was intended to help insure protection of the site during construction of a factory on the property.

In February, 1984, Linus Leavens, who had participated in the 1978 excavation efforts, reported that recent bulldozing activity had destroyed part of the site. Drs. Marjory Power and Peter Thomas of the University of Vermont visited the site to confirm that significant damage had been done. They reported their observations to State Archaeologist Giovanna Peebles. Peebles contacted the District #4 Environmental Commission to see if the bulldozing activity was related to any Act 250 permit applications. It has been determined that the disturbance did violate an Act 250 permit by destroying irreplaceable archaeological information. The State Archaeologist and the Division for Historic Preservation have recommended that steps be taken to retrieve any archaeological data possible and to preserve the rest of the site.

The steps taken by concerned members of the Vermont archaeological community, including interested amateurs, UVM personnel and the State Archaeologist, as well as by the District Environmental Commission, indicate that protection mechanisms for significant archaeological sites do exist and can respond to threats to these important parts of Vermont's heritage.

Abenakis Work on Archaeological Project

During the 1983 field season, the University of Vermont contract archaeology program, under the direction of Dr. Peter Thomas, returned to the Highgate Falls Archaeological District for a third season of work. The regular field crew was supplemented by seven Abenakis from the Swanton area.

Work on the Highgate area is being done for the Town of Swanton, which plans improvements to hydroelectric facilities that will inundate land adjacent to the Missisquoi River. Archaeological investigations conducted in past years indicated that the area was intensively used by prehistoric groups at various times.

The cost of the 1983 excavations was partially funded by a grant to UVM from the Division for Historic Preservation, and by a \$29,000 grant received by the Town of Swanton under the federal Emergency Jobs Program to hire local residents of Abenaki descent to work on the excavations at two sites. Participation in the program helped provide the Abenakis with direct links to their cultural past, according to Dr. Thomas, as well as an understanding of the archaeological methods used to gain information about that past. The Abenakis worked during the 10-week 1983 field season, and should be back for the final stage of excavation in 1984.

UVM Anticipates Busy Summer

The University of Vermont contract archaeology program expects a busy field season in 1984 with projects throughout the state. Work on Early Archaic and Middle Woodland sites in the Highgate Falls Archaeological District will continue for the final year. In Chittenden County, projects include background research for the Essex Circumferential Highway, projects in Colchester, Burlington and Milton for the state Agency of Transportation, and a small but potentially exciting project for the Winooski Valley Park District near the mouth of the Winooski River. This last area is close to the probable location of one of the most significant prehistoric sites in Vermont. Reported early in this century, its exact location is not known, but material from the site included the Colchester jar. VAS members may have an opportunity to participate in the survey here. In Addison County, projects will include work at the state-owned Chimney Point property to collect information for a National Register nomination. In the southern part of the state, there are projects on the Connecticut River in Brattleboro, on the Black River in Cavendish, and on the Ompompanoosuc River in Thetford.

1984 DUES ARE DUE

If you have not paid your dues since 1982, this is the last issue of the NEWSLETTER you will receive.

Write a check- Stay with us!

Summer Field Schools

The Mohawk Valley Project, State University of New York at Albany. This summer's field session is the third in a projected 10-year study of the former Indian populations of the Mohawk Valley region of New York State. The impact of European contact and the introduction of epidemic diseases on the Mohawk Iroquois population will be examined. The 8-week session will concentrate on the excavation of two Mohawk village sites. For more information, contact: Dean R. Snow, Dept. of Anthropology, SUNY at Albany, Albany, NY 12222.

Old Sturbridge Village Summer Field School in Historical Archaeology. The 6th Old Sturbridge Village field school will provide students with a comprehensive, first-hand involvement in the historical and material culture of the early 19th-century, as well as with the methods and techniques of field archaeology. Six weeks of the field school will be devoted to excavation of an early 19th-century blacksmith and farmer's home and work site. For more information, write: David Simmons, Archaeology Field School, Old Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge, Mass. 01566.

Lab Volunteers Needed

The VAS Lab Committee continues to work on alternate Wednesday evenings. Volunteers are presently working on two projects. Processing of materials recovered during the 1983 UVM field school at the Ewing Site is being done under the direction of Laurie LaBar. At the same time washing of artifacts excavated at VT-CH-5a has begun. VT-CH-5a lies north of the Ewing Site, and was excavated by the VAS in 1975. All are welcome to attend. The next session will be held March 28, 1984 in the Anthropology Lab at UVM.

New Uses for Fleming's Vermont Prehistoric Artifacts

In 1972 this Newsletter reported that recent projects were making use of the relatively large holdings of prehistoric artifacts at UVM's Fleming Museum. Exhibits and teaching kits were prepared that utilized the collections which had been in storage for years. Since that flurry of activity in 1972, the collections, now housed at the UVM

Dept. of Anthropology, have largely remained out of public view.

Now two projects are underway that will bring artifacts from this important collection back into use. Bill Haviland and Laurie LaBar are organizing an exhibit on Vermont prehistory with artifacts from the Fleming collection. The exhibit will be on display at the Fleming Museum in Burlington beginning in the fall of 1984.

Peter Mills, a senior in the Anthropology Dept. at UVM, has been analyzing the projectile points in the collection. He has been collecting data on the metrical attributes of the points and comparing them with data used in known typologies prepared for other geographic areas. The results of his project will be included in future VAS publications.

Newsnotes

The thirteenth annual conference of the SOCIETY FOR INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY will be held in Boston, Massachusetts from June 14-17, 1984. Two major sessions at the conference will be "The Archeology of the 'Post-Industrial' City" and "Boston's Role in the Industrialization of the U.S." further information, write:

SIA 1984 Conference
Charles River Museum of Industry
154 Moody Street
Waltham, MA 02154

Archaeology reports recently completed by the UVM contract archaeology program include the following:

Report 45. BURLINGTON M5000(3)--HOWE FARM ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT. Prepared by Peter A. Thomas and R. Scott Dillon. June 1983.

Report 46. PHASE I ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE SHELDON SPRINGS HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT. Prepared by Peter A. Thomas and Charles Paquin. July 1983.

Report 47. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECONNAISSANCE AND INTENSIVE SITE EVALUATION REPORT FOR THE PROPOSED ROUTE 4 BYPASS: WEST RUTLAND-RUTLAND. Prepared by Peter A. Thomas, R. Scott Dillon, Prudence Doherty and Rita Reinke. September, 1983.

Report 48. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY FOR TWO SEGMENTS OF THE QUEBEC-NEW ENGLAND HVDC INTERCONNECTION, BLOOMFIELD, VERMONT. Prepared by Peter A. Thomas and R. Scott Dillon.

Suzanne Spencer-Wood's 1983 excavations at the Isaac Green Mansion and Dry Goods Store Site in Windsor, Vermont will be the subject of a research report in a session on historical archaeology at the 1984 annual conference of the Northeastern Anthropological Association.

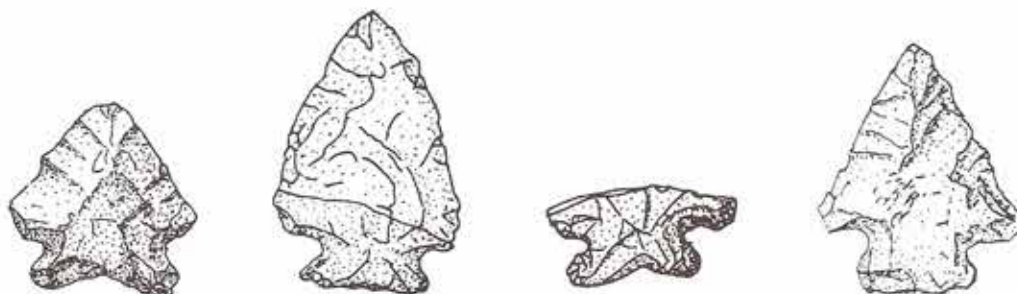
THE JOHN'S BRIDGE SITE

Order your copy now!

THE JOHN'S BRIDGE SITE:
AN EARLY ARCHAIC PERIOD SITE IN NORTHWESTERN VERMONT
Dept. of Anthropology, University of Vermont, Report #28

BY PETER A. THOMAS AND BRIAN S. ROBINSON

The John's Bridge site is an Early Archaic period site excavated in 1979 and 1980. The site produced a distinctive tool inventory, particularly a new type of projectile point, as well as data related to hunting and fishing subsistence strategies, butchering or hide processing, cooking, tool manufacture and a possible shelter. The site was probably occupied for up to a period of several months during the fall or spring by one or two extended families. Carefully selected C-14 samples provide dates of 8,100 to 8,300 years before present for the site's occupation. Examples of the new "Swanton corner-notched" projectile points have since been identified at nine additional sites in Vermont.



140 pp., including 33 figures, 16 tables, 5 plates
\$5.00 plus \$.75 postage, from the Vermont Archaeological Society, Box 663, Burlington, Vermont 05401

Printing funded in part with the assistance of a grant from the U.S. Dept. of the Interior administered through the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

Name _____

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Northern New England Archeological Conference

APRIL 14, 1984

NEW HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE, MANCHESTER

Sponsored by the Archeological Societies of Maine, New Hampshire & Vermont

PROGRAM

10-10:45 AM REGISTRATION

10:45-Noon NEW HAMPSHIRE

David Switzer, Plymouth State College

Hart's Cove Survey, 1982-1983

Jeff Maymon and Roger LaRochelle, University of New Hampshire

Wadleigh Falls, an Island in Time

Noon-1:30 PM LUNCH

1:30-2:30 PM MAINE

Bruce Bourque, Maine State Museum

A New Ethnohistoric View of Maine Indians

Dave Cook and Eric Lathi

Munsungan Chert and its Distribution in Relation to Canoe Routes

2:30-3:30 PM VERMONT

John Moody

The Vermont Abenaki: Current Research in Historical Perspective

Peter Thomas

Tromping Through the Back Country 8,000 Years Ago: Two Early Archaic Sites in Vermont

HOW TO GET THERE. Take exit 9N from Interstate 93, proceed 1.6 miles and turn left at Martin's Ferry Road (second traffic light). Follow the winding road for one mile; New Hampshire College will be on your right. The meeting will be in the Shapiro Memorial Library.

PREREGISTRATION

PLEASE ACCEPT PREREGISTRATION(S) FOR:

___ Meeting; coffee & Danish; box lunch; wine & cheese (VAS member) @ \$9.00.

___ Meeting; coffee & Danish; box lunch; wine & cheese (non-member) @ \$10.00.

___ Meeting; coffee & Danish; wine & cheese @ \$5.00.

___ Meeting only, @ \$2.00.

Total enclosed: \$ _____. Please make checks payable to:

The Vermont Archaeological Society, and mail to VAS, Box 663, Burlington, VT 05402

NOTE: THE BOX LUNCH PACKAGE IS AVAILABLE BY PREREGISTRATION ONLY. It is very important to observe the deadline.

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ADDRESS _____

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