



# Newsletter of the **VERMONT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

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## The Minimization of Vermont's Native American Past

Archaeological studies over the past 25 years have recorded literally thousands of Native American sites throughout the State of Vermont. Each of these sites yielding hundreds to thousands of artifacts for analysis that should be adding to our knowledge of the past. However, having stated these facts, I find myself asking what is it we have learned about the culture, beliefs and lives of these earlier inhabitants of Vermont? In this essay I critique the general research focus of Vermont archaeology, and offer suggestions for how we might redirect our focus towards addressing these basic and essential questions. The issues I raise are intended as a self-critique as much as a critique of the "normal" practice of archaeology in the state today.

By far most archaeological studies conducted in Vermont are the result of environmental review legislation, both Federal (Section 106) and local (Act 250). The need for, and cost of, these studies have been a point of contention between the development and regulatory communities. In the pursuit of compromise and minimization of impacts, both on archaeological sites and developers' budgets, guidelines and site locational models have been developed by the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (VDHP). The locational models, designed to predict where archaeological sites will most likely be encountered, are an aid to the developer establishing *a priori* areas to be avoided (See Peebles' article in the VAS Newsletter, Number 98, 2004). However, being based in large part on the environmental and locational characteristics of previously identified sites, these models are biased to identifying the same limited range of sites already in the site inventory. These sites are predominately organic resource extraction and processing sites and short duration habitation sites. Lithic extraction sites (quarries), petroglyph sites, and burial sites are minimally represented in the site inventory. Sacred, religious, and ritual sites, other than burial grounds that have been identified primarily through construction accidents, are not represented at all. None of these under- and un-represented site types are predictable with the site locational models in current use.

The combined effect of the current and pending biases in the site inventory renders a one dimensional view of early Native American cultures. Small short term habitation sites tend to provide evidence of few definable activity areas. These definable activities are normally limited to tool refurbishment, food preparation and cooking, activities that may well be assumed common to all cultures world wide. Consideration of the sites' environmental contexts has resulted in an understanding of the seasonal and scheduled settlement - procurement system and analyses of faunal and floral content of hearths has demonstrated a strategy of broad-base food selection.

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**See us online [www.vtarchaeology.org](http://www.vtarchaeology.org)**

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From the Editors Desk. . .

I apologize for not getting this issue out by the end of June. It was a self-imposed deadline and one that I was unlikely to make.

At the time the Newsletter was due to go to press, the preparations for Vermont Archaeology Month were just beginning. No events had been planned and no information was available. We knew it was September, but...

I decided to postpone the Newsletter a month to be able to include as much information about VAM as possible. Luckily, I have been involved in the planning

and was able to get all (or most) of the events planned for the month into this issue.

Vermont Archaeology Month is the premier event(s) for those of us interested in archaeology. Every year the project grows. For the past few years Prudence Doherty and Sheila Charles have been the Coordinators of the event. This year, because of other commitments and just the amount of work involved, they have chosen to add to their management team. Sheila has remained Coordinator, joined this year by Casey Carmolli of the Division for Historic Preservation. Prudence is still involved as the finance manager and webmaster of our Web site ([www.vtarchaeology.org](http://www.vtarchaeology.org)).

Two others, Emma Coldwell, a member of the UVM CAP team, and myself have joined to offer support where needed. Emma will be promoting VAM with a display on the Church Street Marketplace, so look for it.

Other articles in this issue include an op-ed piece by Douglas Frink of Archaeology Consulting Team; a tribute to Vic Rolando, long time member and Journal editor; and a recap of our Spring meeting in Ludlow, so that those of you who couldn't make it will know what you missed.

As always, I welcome any comments you may have, any articles you may wish to submit, and any news or updates you may have to report.

Georgeana Little, Editor  
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**See us online**  
**[www.vtarchaeology.org](http://www.vtarchaeology.org)**

## A Tribute to Victor Rolando

*Vic isn't dead, he's just moving to Arizona. He was honored at the Spring meeting, and his long-time friend wanted to honor him in the pages of the Newsletter.*

I admire Victor Rolando. He's a sort of hero to me. That's a little unusual considering that he's almost a decade younger than I. Judging by experience, I'm supposed to be smarter than he is. Maybe when it comes to cooking or photography or libraries. But he's an official wise man when it comes to archaeology and has the enviable skill of good judgment.

I've often thought of names with which we might relabel Victor. For instance, one that comes to mind is Peter. If you know your Christian Bible, you must know that the name means "rock." If we had to think of just one term to characterize Vic, "rock" would be a good one. As our briefcase organization meanders along, often reinventing the wheel, Vic has been that solid influence who has many times steered the Board of Trustees back from its errant ways and reminded us of our purpose and mission.

When a job needed doing, he was quick to volunteer when no one else was willing or able to step forward. Since he joined VAS in 1979 (and became a Life Member in 1993), Vic was President, a fieldwork leader, trustee more times than I can accurately remember, newsletter and Journal editor, and he dignified the avocational archaeologist by writing and publishing the definitive work on early American industry, *200 Years of Soot and Sweat*.

Even when Vic lived in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, he managed to make almost every meeting regardless of the weather, the condition of his truck, or the minimal nature of the agenda. At meetings, Vic not only peddled his own book 'til it was gone, but did the same for other VAS imprints. If necessary, he hawked utility bags and T-shirts. And then he helped the host committee clean up after the party.

One achievement especially I'm thankful to Vic for is the index he produced to the earlier issues of the VAS Newsletter. While this work needs updating, the model has been established. Finally, Vic has a sense of

history (and prehistory). He has the instincts of an archivist and has preserved essential records, even those not his own responsibility, while the history of the Society vanished as portfolios for offices and committees were passed from one dragooned official to another.



Now, even as Victor Rolando prepares to ease himself into a sort of retirement and realize the enjoyment of his family, he still does the heroic. Vic will continue to edit the Journal electronically from Arizona. He knows we need the help, and he can't deny his lasting Vermont roots.

Vic, life hasn't always been as kind to you as it might have been. You're not rich in the things of this world but we wish you nothing but happiness and contentment. That sentiment comes to you from literally hundreds of your fellow archaeologists and countless friends in other pursuits. I'll forgo

telling some of the funny stories I have accumulated about you, but then, I never did like roasting my friends.

There is one last statement I must make: I am proud to call you friend.

Ave atque valle (didn't study your Latin in high school?)

—Joe Popecki  
VAS Treasurer



## Vermont Archaeological Society Spring Meeting 2004

Black River Academy Museum, from which Calvin Coolidge graduated in 1890, was the site of the Spring Vermont Archaeological Society meeting on April 17<sup>th</sup>. In the midst of exhibits of furniture, clothing, quilts, etc., the meeting room held a capacity crowd of over 50 Vermont Archaeological Society members.



Black River Academy Museum, Ludlow

After opening remarks by Vermont Archaeological Society president Elise Manning Sterling, Joe Popecki, treasurer of Vermont Archaeological Society and Giovanna Peebles, State Archaeologist, made a presentation to longtime Vermont Archaeological Society member Vic Rolando, an avocational industrial archaeologist. Vic has served as Board Member, President, Newsletter and Journal Editor and will soon be moving to Arizona. Joe talked of his admiration for Vic and of his solid influence over the years in keeping the Vermont Archaeological Society on track towards its goals and mission. Giovanna presented Vic with a Sabra Field print given by the Vermont Archaeological Society and members of Vermont Department for Historic Preservation. For once Vic was at a loss for words.

Our first speaker, Bob Bartone from the University of Maine at Farmington Archaeology Research Center, presented *Unwritten Stories of the Missisquoi Delta: Archaeological Discoveries in Swanton, VT*. He discussed the University of Maine's ongoing projects in Swanton at the Headquarters and Porcupine sites. Research and analysis is ongoing, but a preliminary survey of the sites and the artifacts recovered attest to occupation from at least the Middle Archaic period onward. Bartone also discussed excavation methods, initial floral and faunal analyses and settlement pattern reconstruction for the area, as it is currently understood.

Dr James B. Petersen followed with an *Overview of Paleo-Indian Research in the Northeast*. His discussion centered on current conceptions (and misconceptions) about the Paleo-Indian period, both in the Northeast and in North America in general. Some of the ongoing debates surrounding these people were highlighted, their distinctive tools and raw material preferences explained, and some of the Northeast's noteworthy sites were reviewed. Petersen's presentation culminated with a summary about what regional Paleo-Indian sites have taught us about these ancient people, and addressed some of the many questions that still await further study and research.

The next speaker was Dr. John Crock who discussed the UVM CAP's ongoing work at the Bohannon site in East Alburg, VT. He briefly discussed the site's initial identification and study during the 1988, 1999, 2000 field seasons, which culminated in Phase III data recovery over six weeks during the fall of 2003. The Bohannon site represents the first St. Lawrence Iroquoian site to be systematically studied in the state of Vermont. In order to collect information pertaining to the site's internal structure, age,



President Elise Manning Sterling



Stephen Loring gives the Keynote address

size, and material remains, mechanical and hand stripping of nearly an acre of the project impact area was executed. Research and analysis of the data and artifacts from the Bohannon site is ongoing, but Crock presented current findings about ceramic styles, site settlement patterns, and diet and subsistence, which included the remains of cultivated corn as well as a wide variety of recovered faunal remains. Finally a comparison of Bohannon with other St. Lawrence Iroquoian sites in the region was made.

After lunch, catered by the Ludlow Cooking Company, President Elise Manning-Sterling introduced our eminent guest speaker. Dr. Stephen Loring is affiliated with the Arctic Studies Center of the Smithsonian Institution and has conducted archaeological and paleo-environmental research in New England, Quebec, Labrador, Arkansas, Peru, Argentina and the Aleutian Islands. He titled his talk: *Another Ghost of Courageous Adventurers: Archaeological Reflections on the Spirit World of Ancient Hunters in the Far Northeast.*

Far from being a marginal backwater to cultural developments in more temperate climates, Dr. Loring makes the case that the ancient inhabitants of New England and the Maritimes, along with their neighbors to the north, participated in an elaborate and vibrant web of social and economic relations predicated on shared spiritual beliefs about the relationship between human beings, animals and the spirit world.

This lecture illustrated the potential of material culture to tell stories, the antiquity of caribou hunting and Ramah chert usage, as well as the unique relationship between the Innu, the animals, and their land. This all might provide a way of thinking about the lives of ancient Vermonters.

As with all Vermont Archaeological Society meetings, the participants were left with new information to consider and were looking forward to the Fall Meeting.

The Fall meeting has been scheduled for October 2<sup>nd</sup> at the University of Vermont. Information will be forwarded to members once plans have been finalized.

—Brigitte Helzer, VAS Board Member  
with Jess Robinson, UVMCAP



Giovanna Peebles and Vic Rolando admire the Sabra Field print presented to Vic by the Society and the DHP

## Obituaries

### **Edgar L. Bacon**

*Edgar L. Bacon, 74, of Colchester passed away on June 24, 2004, after a brave and courageous battle with diabetes and cancer.*

Ed was born on April 30, 1930, in Auburn, MA, son of Linus and Sophie (Jerome) Bacon.

He graduated from the University of Massachusetts and the University of Connecticut with degrees in Entomology and Microbiology.

In 1962, he moved to Vermont and was employed by UVM until 1973. Between 1973 and 1977, he did archaeological photography in the state of New York. In 1977, he became an employment specialist with the Vermont Department of Employment and Training in St. Albans remaining there until his retirement in 1996.

Ed loved his home and gardens, calling them "his kingdom." He loved photography, woodworking, reading and music, especially Russian liturgical music. His greatest love was fishing and he shared this with his children.

Ed was a member of the Vermont Archaeological Society from 1969 until 1977. He was buried July 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### **William Church Murphy**

*LCDR William Church Murphy, USN (Ret), died in Pensacola, FL, on June 2, 2004, after a long illness. He was 82.*

Commissioned in the United States Navy in 1942, Murphy served as a Naval Aviator for 28 years. He was assigned to duty in the Alaska/Aleutian and Korean Theaters, in Port Leyote, Morocco, and as a staff officer aboard the U.S.S. Wasp and the U.S.S. Valley Forge.

After Navy Intelligence School training and certification in Arabic, he was posted to the United Nations headquarters as Ambassador Adlai Stevenson's personal pilot. Murphy then served an extended tour of duty as Naval Attache with the U.S. Embassy in Cairo, Egypt.

He returned to New York City in 1960 as a contingency planning officer for the Eastern Sea Frontier and was recalled to active flight duty five years later as a VIP transport pilot for the Navy Wing at Andrews Air Force Base, Camp Springs, Maryland.

Bill Murphy was born in Yonkers, NY, on May 2, 1922, the son of Howard Cumming and Matilda (Anderson) Murphy.

He prepared at Admiral Bullard Academy, and graduated from the University of Miami, *magna cum laude*.

Following retirement from the Navy in 1979, Murphy taught at Middlebury Union High School, prior to joining the newly build Vocational Center as a guidance counselor. He also became a flight instructor at the Middlebury Airport, and an enthusiastic amateur archaeologist at sites throughout the U.S., in Europe, and the Middle East. He was instrumental in the preservation of Mount Independence in Orwell, now a much-visited Revolutionary War Site. There he served as a guide for many summers and helped bring in two successful archaeological digs. He joined The Vermont Archaeological Society in 1972 and remained a member until his death. He was buried July 17<sup>th</sup>.

—Obituaries excerpted from the Burlington Free Press  
Submitted by Joseph Popecki, *VAS Treasurer*

## Vermont Archaeology Month 2004

**Wednesday, September 1** 7:00 p.m.

*An Overview of Native American Archaeology in Vermont*—James B. Petersen, associate professor of anthropology at the University of Vermont, will present an illustrated talk on what archaeological investigations have discovered about Vermont's Native American past.

Chimney Point State Historic Site, Addison  
Sponsored by Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

**Thursday September 2**

9:20-10:00 a.m.

*Lakes Region Radio VAM Report*—Annaleigh interviews Chimney Point State Historic Site interpreter and VAM Co-coordinator Casey Carmolli on the *Coffee Break* morning show. Topics will include the atlatl contest and upcoming VAM events.

WVNR 1340 AM or WNYV 94.1 FM, Poultney

Sponsored by Lakes Region Radio and Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

**Saturday, September 4**

10:00 a.m.-noon

*Lake Dunmore's Sucker Brook Sawmill Community*—From 1864 into the 1930s the Newton & Thompson

Sucker Brook Sawmill was a center of industrial activity and a community on the east side of Lake Dunmore. A narrative on the history of the mill and the community will be given, including pictures, artifacts, and identification of persons who worked there. Included will be the history of the Branbury Beach area, the Falls of Lana, Ethan Allen's Cave and "Aunt Jennie's" tea room. **Rain date: September 5**  
On site-Vermont Route 53 east side of Lake Dunmore, Salisbury

**Saturday, September 4** 2:00-3:00 p.m.

*Behind the Scenes*—Get a behind the scenes look at artifact conservation at the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum. Tour will focus on recent field and archaeological work including the Sloop Island Canal Boat and other current projects. Participants will have the opportunity to view all stages of artifact conservation including documentation, preservation and display.

Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, Vergennes  
Sponsored by the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum



**Thursday, September 9** 9:00 a.m.

*Everything you wanted to know about Vermont Archaeology*—State Archaeologist Giovanna Peebles talks with Jerry Germain on his radio talk show.

WFAD 1490 AM, Middlebury  
Sponsored by Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

**Saturday, September 11** 1:00-3:00 p.m.

*Digging, Diving and Documenting for Families*—Discover Lake Champlain's rich legacy of historic shipwrecks and the evolving strategies to preserve, document and manage them. Learn about the techniques and challenges of documenting underwater sites and discover the importance of artifact location on board the replica gunboat *Philadelphia II*.

Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, Vergennes

Sponsored by the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum

**Tuesday, September 14** 7:00 p.m.

*Discovering Vermont through Archaeology*—A Lecture by Vermont State Archaeologist Giovanna Peebles

Woodstock Historical Society, Woodstock  
Sponsored by Woodstock Historical Society

**Thursday, September 16** 5:00 p.m.

*People in the Past: Native American and Early Euroamerican Settlement in Bennington, Vermont. The Archaeology of the Bennington Bypass Project*—Open house for temporary exhibit commemorating the history of Bennington as viewed through archaeological evidence recovered during the Vermont Agency of Transportation's Bennington Bypass Archaeology Project.

Downtown Welcome Center, Bennington  
Sponsored by University of Maine at Farmington Archaeology Research Center and the Vermont Agency of Transportation

**Thursday, September 16** 9:00 a.m.

*Archaeology on the Agency of Transportation*—VTrans Archaeology Officer Duncan Wilkie discusses recent archaeological discoveries, offers a Vermont archaeology quiz, and takes your questions on Jerry Germain's Morning Talk show.

WFAD 1490 AM, Middlebury  
Sponsored by the Vermont Agency of Transportation and WFAD

**Friday, September 17**

**12 noon-5:00 p.m.**

*Atlatl Workshop*—Learn to make and use your own atlatl and three field darts. Robert Berg of Thunderbird Atlatl demonstrates primitive technology methods and recounts stories of his own hunting adventures.

Chimney Point State Historic Site, Addison

\$65.00 registration fee includes all materials and instruction. **Pre-registration required.** Please call or visit Web site ([www.HistoricVermont.org](http://www.HistoricVermont.org)) for registration materials

*Sponsored by Vermont Division for Historic Preservation*

**Saturday, September 18**

**10:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.**

*9th Annual Open Atlatl Championship and Native American Heritage Celebration*—Designated a top 10 Fall 2004 Event by the Vermont Chamber of Commerce, this event features the atlatl, a prehistoric spear thrower. Experts and novices of all ages compete in accuracy and distance competitions throughout the day. Join us as a contestant or spectator and visit with demonstrators of traditional Native American skills and crafts. Children's archaeology-themed activities and games are offered. Come see the atlatl in action!

Chimney Point State Historic Site, Addison

*Sponsored by Vermont Division for Historic Preservation*

**Saturday, September 18**

**1:00-3:00 p.m.**

*Documentation Workshop*—Get hands-on skills in artifact drawing and photography, working on actual artifacts from recent fieldwork from the Champlain Valley. No experience necessary. Orientation followed by an opportunity to practice what you have learned.

Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, Vergennes

*Sponsored by the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum*

**Saturday, September 18**

*Walking Tour of Salisbury Mill Site*—Local author and historian Max Petersen will lead a tour of the Salisbury Mills site.

Salisbury Mills Site, Salisbury

*Sponsored by the Middlebury Area Land Trust*

**Sunday, September 19**

**11:00 a.m.**

*Atlatl Championship: ISAC Only*—Avid atlatlists compete in a second International Standard Accuracy Competition, a standardized contest designed by the World Atlatl Association to rank throwers worldwide.

Chimney Point State Historic Site, Addison

*Sponsored by Vermont Division for Historic Preservation*



**Tuesday, September 21 7:30 p.m.**

*Defensive Archaeology and the Politics of Wabanaki Prehistory*—A Research-in-Progress Seminar by Fred Wiseman, Professor of Humanities, Johnson State College. Archaeological data deal with cultural continuity, identity, and territoriality, the bases of indigenous people's rights, Two archaeological constructs,

"Wabanaki marginality" and the "St. Lawrence Iroquoians," which are politically dangerous to Wabanaki communities in New England and eastern Canada, will be discussed.

Memorial Lounge, Waterman Building, University of Vermont, Burlington

*Sponsored by Center for Research on Vermont*

**Tuesday, September 21**

**7:30 p.m.**

*From the Ice Age to I-91: Digging Up History Along the Upper Connecticut River Valley in Vermont*—Recent excavations in the upper Connecticut River valley in Vermont have uncovered dozens of archaeological sites dating from the pre-Contact period all the way through to the early twentieth century. These sites range from small Late Archaic camp sites to the remains of once bustling nineteenth-century villages and include evidence of very early European occupation along the northern stretches of river. This evening lecture will provide an overview of the work completed to date through photos and artifacts, as well as a discussion of the importance of these sites to local and regional archaeological studies.

Fairbanks Museum Public lecture room, St. Johnsbury

*Sponsored by Fairbanks Museum & Planetarium*

**Wednesday, September 22**

**7:00 p.m.**

*The Crown Point Road*—Slide show on the 1759 Crown Point Road.

Hubbardton Battlefield State Historic Site, Hubbardton

*Sponsored by Vermont Division for Historic Preservation*

**Saturday, September 25**

**11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.**

*Kids Archaeology Day at Mount Independence*—Children are invited to learn about archaeology and what it can tell us about our Revolutionary past. Archaeologists from the University of Maine at Farmington will show participants modern techniques for research and archaeological mapping. Vermont State Chamber of Commerce Top Picks for Kids.

Mount Independence State Historic Site, Orwell

*Sponsored by Vermont Division for Historic Preservation and University of Maine at Farmington Archaeology Research Center*



**Saturday, September 25** 2:00-3:00 p.m.  
*Behind the Scenes*—Get a behind the scenes look at artifact conservation at the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum. Tour will focus on recent field and archaeological work including the Sloop Island Canal Boat and other current projects. Participants will have the opportunity to view all stages of artifact conservation including documentation, preservation and display.  
 Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, Vergennes  
*Sponsored by the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum*

**Tuesday, September 28** 7:00 p.m.  
*And They Spoiled the Egyptians: The Plundering of Ancient Egypt and the Nile*—Internationally acclaimed archaeologist Dr. Brian Fagan presents this lecture on the plundering of Egypt and the trade in antiquities. Reception Follows.  
 Pavilion Auditorium, Montpelier  
*Sponsored by University of Vermont, Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc., Vermont Historical Society, Vermont Division for Historic Preservation*

**At the Atlatl Championship on September 18th** the Vermont Archaeological Society will have archaeologists on site to help identify artifacts you might have. Bring them along and have them identified by a professional.  
*Sponsored by the Vermont Archaeological Society*

**Month Long Events**

**Wednesdays September 1-29** 8:00-9:00 a.m.  
*WFAD VAM Report*—Chimney Point Site Historic Site interpreter and VAM Co-coordinator Casey Carmolli discusses upcoming VAM events with Jerry Germain of WFAD's *Good Morning Show*. WFAD 1490 AM, Middlebury  
*Sponsored by WFAD AM 1490*

**Sundays September 5-26** 9:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.  
*Sunday Afternoon Special Activities*—Variety of hands-on activities offered. Learn about ancient stone tools or how to throw an atlatl, explore the artifact cart, play period games, or enjoy other fun for all ages.  
 Chimney Point State Historic Site, Addison  
*Sponsored by Vermont Division for Historic Preservation*



**September 17 - October 22** M-F 9-5; Sat & Sun 11-4  
*The Archaeology of the Bennington Bypass Project*—Temporary exhibit commemorating the history of Bennington as viewed through archaeological evidence recovered during the Vermont Agency of Transportation's Bennington Bypass Archaeology Project.  
 Downtown Welcome Center, Bennington  
*Sponsored by University of Maine at Farmington Archaeology Research Center and the Vermont Agency of Transportation*

**Through October 17** 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.  
*Life Aboard: Archaeology of the Sloop Island Shipwreck*—Discover the latest archaeological research and recently conserved artifacts in this exhibit which highlights objects from the Sloop Island Canal Boat, and features reproductions of historic photographs showing life aboard.  
 Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, Vergennes  
*Sponsored by the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum*

**Mid-August-Mid-September**  
*The Archaeology of the Lemon Fair River: Ongoing Excavations in Cornwall, Vermont*—Various events associated with archaeological excavations for the Vermont Agency of Transportation's Cornwall Bridge Replacement Project. On-site tours, public presentations.  
 Various Locations, Cornwall  
*Sponsored by University of Maine at Farmington Archaeology Research Center and the Vermont Agency of Transportation*

**Throughout September**  
*Archaeology @ The Westford Library*—Join the action at the Westford Library, where programs, exhibits and displays about archaeology will be scheduled during September.  
*Sponsored by the Westford Library*

**Sundays in September** 2:00-4:00 p.m.  
*Vermont Glassmaking: the Forgotten Industry*—Historian and author, Max Petersen lends his Vermont glassmaking display to the Brandon Historical Society. Learn about the glassworks at Burlington and Lake Dunmore and other area industries.  
 Brandon Historical Society, Brandon  
*Sponsored by the Brandon Historical Society*

## The Minimization of Vermont's Native American Past, cont'd from page 1

Comparative analyses between sites are rarely undertaken, and when such studies are undertaken they tend to focus on lithic and ceramic descriptions. Diachronic and synchronic assessments of cultural and behavioral change could be forthcoming from comparative analyses of changes in site environmental locations in space and time.

Site analyses are generally oriented to descriptive rather than explanatory narratives. Articulation between the site and the greater cultural context of the New England region have been limited to speculations on trade networks to explain apparent exotic lithics in a single site's assemblage. With a common, often redundant, artifact assemblage evident at most of these small short term habitation sites, archaeological studies limited to a purely descriptive approach has led us to defining a site's uniqueness in terms like "biggest," "first," and "oldest." None of these characterizations contribute to our understanding and explanation of earlier Native American culture.

In failing to address meaningful anthropological issues beyond the environmental setting of small, short term habitation sites we have inadvertently contributed to a limited view of early Native American culture as simple hunting and gatherers meandering across an undefined terrain. No culture or society can be described as simple. The degree of fixed and changing relationships existing between the various components of human groups is, by definition, complex. Our current models and research designs fail to account for this complexity, thereby rendering simplistic and reductionistic characterizations of past Native cultures. Although not our intent as archaeologists, this minimalist assessment has been used to support the propaganda historically used to justify first English, and later American, claims to indigenous lands (See: *Preliminary Report on Abenaki Petition for Tribal Recognition*, State of Vermont Office of the Attorney General, March 12, 2002).

To rectify this minimalist assessment it is imperative that attention be paid to other aspects of early Native American culture evident in the archaeological record. For example, identified quarry sites for the extraction of various types and grades of horned dolostone, steatite, and slate, as well as chert and quartzite, evidence a complex industry producing a wide range of tools and other objects. While chert and quartzite make up the majority of lithic material found in small short term habitation sites, the disposition in the archaeological record of ground-stone tools, and presumably artistic and/or sacred objects, manufactured from the other material needs to be included in our archaeological characterizations. While it may be true that such objects were the primary target of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century artifact collectors, provenance studies of local and regional collections can be undertaken to reconnect this invisible part of Native Culture.

Serious consideration of petroglyph sites in Vermont is necessary to validate the holistic connections between local, regional, and continent wide Native Cultures in the past. Many of the icons evident on our local glyphs also appear singularly, and in combinations, on petroglyphs throughout the northern US and Canadian Shield regions all the way up to Alaska. Questioning the authenticity of local petroglyph sites only demonstrates our ignorance of these culturally shared mnemonic historic records. While the specific meanings of the icons may be beyond our current knowledge, iconographic studies leading to the creation of concordances can demonstrate shared cross-cultural beliefs and lead to a more complete discussion of behavior. By combining our concordances with ethnographic accounts (both historic and initiation of new interviews) of the meanings of these records by Native people can define both continuity and divergence in stories, language, and beliefs across time and space.

On this last point, ethnographic information on plant and animal procurement and preparation (for foods, medicines, tools, and perishable materials) would greatly augment the artifact inventories dominated by broken rocks that are generated from our studies of small short term habitation sites. Such information might also provide valuable insights that could aid and direct research into the articulation between and among different site types.

The true damage generated by a minimization of a culture's past is evident in the effects on descendents of that culture. Not only do we deny Native people as well as the rest of us access to the rich tapestry of this cultural history, but we risk degrading the cultural integrity of present day descendents, and promoting their continued minimization in our society.

—Douglas S. Frink, R.P.A.