

NYSAA Newsletter

Fall 2006



About This Issue

This is the second issue of what I envision as a quarterly newsletter. Past and present issues are available under "Publications" on the NYSAA web site, <http://nysaaweb.bfn.org/>. In each issue I would like to highlight a significant CRM project in the state. Don Smith, Houghton Chapter president, and Frank Schieppati submitted this issue's summary of a Phase III investigation. No CRM report is presently scheduled for the winter issue, so please contact me as soon as possible with suggestions or material. The winter newsletter should appear toward the end of January.

Bill Engelbrecht, engelbwe@buffalostate.edu.

Millenium Pipeline Project

At the spring NYSAA annual meeting I said during my paper that I would notify folks when Gray & Pape, Inc. began its Millennium Pipeline Project data recovery work on sites in Orange and Broome counties. As with all things, Bureaucracy (with a capital B) has stepped in and fiddled with our digging schedule. I will post an announcement when the data recovery work begins. Right now, it looks as if we will be completing all the work between February and May (Orange County) and August and October (Broome County) 2007.

Carole Weed, Gray & Pape, Inc., cweed@graypape.com

The Archaeological Conservancy at Work in New York

by Andy Stout, Eastern Regional Director

Several of New York's most significant archaeological sites have been preserved as a result of the work of the Archaeological Conservancy. For over 25 years the Conservancy has been the only national nonprofit organization in the United States that acquires and preserves important archaeological sites. Once the Conservancy acquires a site it manages the property as a permanent archaeological research preserve to be held for the public benefit. The Conservancy has established nine such preserves in New York, including important Seneca, Mohawk, and historic period sites.

In 2006 the Conservancy acquired a significant portion of the famous Lamoka Lake site near Tyrone, NY. Excavated by William Ritchie, the site is the birthplace of the concept of the Archaic period in American archaeology, and the type site of the Lamoka projectile point. The remainder of the site is owned by the State of New York and is managed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation as the Waneta and

Lamoka Wildlife Management Area. The Conservancy is also in the process of acquiring the Bosley's Mill site near Avon, NY. Archaeological excavations conducted in the 1980s demonstrated the site's significant research potential and confirmed that the area represents a Seneca occupation dating from 1620 to 1640.

In addition to saving important sites, the Conservancy also publishes *American Archaeology* magazine, offers archaeological-based tours throughout the Americas, and relies on member support. For more information on how you can join The Archaeological Conservancy, visit its Web site at www.americanarchaeology.org

NYSAA members can also be a great help to Conservancy staff as volunteer site stewards or in identifying potential sites for Conservancy acquisition. If you know of a site that should be considered for acquisition, or would like more information on the Conservancy's work in the eastern U.S., please contact: The Archaeological Conservancy, Eastern Regional Office, 8 East 2nd Street, Suite 200, Frederick, MD 21701, (301)-682-6359, tac_east@verizon.net

The Archaeological Conservancy's considerations in acquiring properties for preservation:

- 1) May be historic or prehistoric period sites;
- 2) Must be eligible for National Register of Historic Places inclusion;
- 3) Must have significant research potential;
- 4) May or may not be threatened with destruction;
- 5) May be any size;
- 6) Will most often be privately held, especially sites adjacent to public land such as parks;
- 7) May or may not have local management groups/stewards, although having local supporters and management plans will make a site a better candidate for acquisition;
- 8) May sometimes be acquired by The Archaeological Conservancy as an interim protective measure until local agents complete financial arrangements for local acquisition;
- 9) May in some instances remain in use for agricultural (or other) production, if that use does not conflict with preservation of the site;
- 10) May in some instances include buildings on the site.

New Morgan Chapter Web Page

Congratulations to Jen Teremy and the Morgan Chapter for their new web page:
www.morganchapter.com

Preliminary Results of Excavations at the Erie Canal Harbor Site

by Donald Smith, PhD and Frank Schieppati, PhD
Panamerican Consultants, Inc.

In August and September 2005, Panamerican Consultants, Inc. completed four weeks of excavations at the prehistoric Erie Canal Harbor site in downtown Buffalo. The site was investigated during a Phase III data recovery operation focused on the western end of the former Commercial Street. Before the development of the Buffalo waterfront in the mid-nineteenth century, this point was located near where the Little Buffalo Creek flowed into Buffalo Creek (later Buffalo Harbor), roughly 1000ft (305m) east of the Lake Erie shore (Photographs 1 and 2). The site was discovered during the course of previous cultural resource investigations for the Erie Canal Harbor project, a component of the ongoing improvement of the Buffalo waterfront. It was located in undisturbed soils

buried beneath several meters of historical fill likely deposited to form a stable base for Commercial Street and its utilities.



Photograph 1: Western end of Commercial Street in the early twentieth century, facing east from the Buffalo Harbor shore.

The excavations were limited to the footprint of a planned museum for the Buffalo and Erie County Naval and Military Park. Additional nearby development will not extend deeply enough to disrupt unexcavated portions of the site, the limits of which likely correspond with the edges of Commercial Street. Panamerican excavated a total of one 2-ft-x-5-ft and thirteen 5-ft-x-5-ft units, from which roughly 20,000 artifacts were recovered.

Of this material, all but approximately 250 items was debitage representing all stages of lithic reduction.

Although the density of artifacts was high across much of the site, about 8,000 items were recovered from 6 highly concentrated clusters, ranging in size from 30cm to just over 100cm across and 3cm to 20cm in thickness. In addition to debitage, other lithic artifacts from the site include core fragments; broken bifaces and biface fragments; biface preform fragments; prismatic blades and bladelets (Photograph 3); an exhausted polyhedral core; a drill midsection; a possible abrading stone;



Photograph 2: Erie Canal Harbor site during excavations; Buffalo Creek/Harbor is visible in the background (Panamerican Consultants, Inc., 2005).

knife fragments; several hammerstones; scraper fragments; an anvil stone; 4 netsinkers; and fragments of 2 projectile points (both likely Madison points).

In addition to the lithic assemblage, 18 pottery fragments were found, of which 3 are possibly rimsherds. The potsherds are grit tempered, have cord-impressed exteriors, and plain interior surfaces. Although there are no refits, the qualities of the sherds are similar enough that they are possibly from the same vessel. Small numbers of other items were also present, including mammal bone fragments (some of which are calcined); tooth fragments; seeds from drupaceous fruits; pieces of nutshell; marine shell fragments; and fish bone pieces. Although charcoal was relatively scarce, enough was recovered from



three of the lithic concentrations to permit radiocarbon dating; the uncalibrated results are: AD30±80; AD800±40; and AD1420±70. Finally, 5 to 6 small-diameter (3-4cm) postmolds were also recorded. Given their proximity to the netsinkers, all of which were found together, the molds were possibly related to a structure for fishing. An AMS date of AD1710±40 (uncalibrated) was obtained from the decayed contents of one of the postmolds.

Photograph 3: Onondaga chert (Clarence member) prismatic bladelet from Erie Canal Harbor (Panamerican Consultants, Inc., 2006).

Since the completion of the fieldwork at Erie Canal Harbor, John Holland of the Holland Lithic Laboratory at the Buffalo Museum of Science has contributed greatly to the interpretation of the lithic material from the site. His efforts have focused on three avenues of analysis: identifying the geological sources of the site's lithic artifacts; the classification of use wear on a sample of the assemblage; and determining the stage(s) of stone tool manufacture represented in the assemblage. His results indicate that, with the exception of small numbers of items made from Seneca-member Onondaga chert, the assemblage consisted of artifacts composed of locally available Clarence-member Onondaga chert. Also, despite the presence of many large usable flakes, surprisingly few pieces of debitage (less than 1% of the assemblage) show signs of use. Beyond this, while debris from all stages of lithic reduction is represented at the site, an unexpectedly large percentage (roughly 10-15%) is from very early stages of tool manufacture; in addition to the presence of primary reduction flakes, there are many large angular fragments of low quality material. Holland's analysis indicates that, in addition to manufacturing stone tools, the site's visitors were also acquiring lithic raw materials from a now-unknown, nearby source that was perhaps either exhausted prehistorically or destroyed during the development of the Buffalo waterfront.

These hypotheses dovetail with several of the site's other qualities to form a fuller picture of prehistoric lifeways on this part of the Niagara Frontier. While people were certainly visiting the site to benefit from its favorable geographical position for fishing (and perhaps hunting waterfowl), they were also acquiring raw material for stone tools

nearby, and engaging in at least some level of tool manufacture. Beyond this, the range of radiocarbon dates from the site suggests that inhabitants of the Niagara Frontier were returning to the site during much of the Middle and Late Woodland periods.

Currently, Panamerican is completing further analyses of the Erie Canal Harbor assemblage. One study focuses on the prismatic blades. Some examples of these items made from Ohio Flint Ridge material have been found in western New York in Middle Woodland burial mounds (eg. Ritchie 1980:224). However, they are rarely recovered from prosaic contexts or made from local raw materials. Panamerican's examination of the Erie Canal Harbor blades applies Holland's use wear analysis in a comparison of how those tools were used relative to other implements from the site.

The Erie Canal Harbor site represents a unique opportunity for studying aspects of stone tool manufacture on the Niagara Frontier. As such, additional studies of its lithic assemblage will continue to contribute further to our understanding of the Woodland Period inhabitants of western New York.

Reference

Ritchie, William A.

1980 *The Archaeology of New York State*, rev. ed. Purple Mountain Press, Ltd., Fleischmanns, New York.

Photo Gallery



Photo of Charles Wray as a boy with his uncle and Harrison Follette (kneeling) at the Lamoka Lake site c. 1927. Harrison Follette did field work at Lamoka Lake for the Rochester Museum c. 1927-28. (From the collections of the Rochester Museum and Science Center, Rochester, NY.)

2007 Annual Meeting

The 2007 annual meeting will be hosted by the Adirondack Chapter and will be held April 20-22 at the Gideon Putnam Hotel in Saratoga Springs, (518) 226-4700. On Friday afternoon there will be a tour of the Saratoga Battlefield led by Linda White, Adirondack Chapter member and park ranger. The NYSAA package includes sleeping accommodations for Friday and Saturday, Saturday and Sunday breakfast buffet, Saturday lunch buffet, and Saturday banquet. Single, \$355.52, double occupancy per person, \$221.05, triple \$191.30. Members will be sent an information packet in 2007.

Other Events

October 19, Involving the Public in Public Archaeology, Public Hearing Room, Landmarks Preservation Commission, Municipal Building, 1 Centre St. 9th F I N, New York, NY 10007. Contact Amanda Sutphin at Asutphin@lpc.nyc.gov

October 22, Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology, Westchester Marriott, Tarrytown, NY. Contact Nancy Brighton at nancy.j.brighton@usace.army.mil.

October 27-28, Ontario Archaeological Society Symposium, Lamplighter Inn, London, Ontario. Contact Nancy Van Sas at nvansas@uwo.ca

Nov.4, New York State Museum. Opening of the Ska-ni-kwat exhibit expressing Haudenosaunee beliefs through beadwork.

November 8-12, ESAF Annual Meeting, Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel, Fitchburg, MA. Arrangements Chair: Alan Smith at asmith@johnmilnerassociates.com.

November 15, Joint PANYC – Metropolitan Chapter meeting, 6:30 P.M., 951 Schermerhorn Extension, Columbia University. Contact: Nan Rothschild, roth@columbia.edu.

January 10-14, Society for Historical Archaeology/Underwater Archaeology, Colonial Williamsburg.

Current Exhibit, “Jews, Scholars, and Vikings.” The Yeshiva Univ. Museum, 15 W 16th St. New York, NY.