



# NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 30

IOWA CITY, IOWA

MARCH, 1959

Dear Members and Friends of the Iowa Archeological Society:

As retiring president of our organization, I would like to strongly urge each of you to attend our annual meeting at Cherokee Iowa's Sanford Museum, April 25th and 26th, 1959. The membership of the Society has dropped during the last year, so I suggest that you bring a carload of prospective members along and urge them to join. In order to have a strong, active, and useful Society we need more members, more publicity, more news articles for our Newsletter (such as the excellent one written recently by Donald D. Davis) and for the Journal.

Dr. George Agogino, who will give the featured speech, has done extensive archeological work on early man sites, including his work with W. D. Frankforter on the 8,000 year old Simonsen Site near Cherokee. Although I have not heard his talk on "Early Man in the High Plains," reports reaching me say that it is informative and very interesting.

The tour of the Simonsen Site alone should make the trip to Cherokee worthwhile, so pack your family, friends, prospective members and any parts of your personal collection of artifacts that you would like to display into your car, and head for Cherokee, Iowa, April 25th and 26th.

See you there.

James S. Pilgrim  
President  
Iowa Archeological Society

## NOTES AND NEWS

We are looking forward to the annual meeting of the IAS at Sanford Museum in Cherokee. If my experience with Sanford Museum, Frankforter, and his Northwest Chapter friends is any criterion, we will have a fine meeting. I made that prediction in the March 1956 Newsletter before the last meeting at Cherokee and that was the most successful meeting we have ever had. The Cherokee people outdid themselves in originality and hospitality. This meeting is one that no one should miss.

Field trips to the Simonsen Site at Quimby are planned. The Simonsen Site is the one recently featured in the newspapers over the state, because of a radio carbon date of 8,000 years ago. It is an extremely important site and a visit to it will be well worth while.

The last page in this Newsletter contains a news release that members should take to their local newspapers for publicity. The amount of publicity that we have received as a result of this kind of a release is gratifying. All members are strongly urged to help us spread the news of the Iowa Archeological Society's activities by turning in this news release.

In view of Jim Pilgrim's plea in his letter on the front page, that members bring friends to the meeting, we are reprinting in this issue the article "What is Archeology," which appeared in the January, 1953 Newsletter. If your friends ask "what do archeologists do, and what good is archaeology?" perhaps this article will help you answer them. Better yet, give it to them to read.

## ARCHAEOLOGY AT SUI

The new semester has arrived and we find ourselves surrounded by a sea of students. We now have twelve students enrolled in the laboratory course. Such a large number of students is welcome because we can accomplish more lab analysis, but at the same time we really do not have enough lab space for so many people. We are pleased at the number of people interested in archaeology, and it is the only way we will be able to obtain adequate knowledge of Iowa prehistory.

One of the students has instituted an archaeological survey of Cedar County as his lab project and we plan to publish his report in the Newsletter. Most of the students, however, are still processing and studying the material we obtained from the University dig last summer. For the first time we have seen the pottery and stone tools cleaned and spread out. We are excited about the material and surprised at the amount of stonework we collected.

With the arrival of nice weather the students have been going out on short field trips. John Vincent traveled to Cedar County to inspect a large limestone boulder that is covered with grooves made by Indians sharpening tools. There are wide grooves, evidently made grinding axes, and narrower grooves which must have been formed by sharpening awls and perhaps smoothing arrow shafts. We would like

to know if other members have found sharpening stones like this specimen.

Several students went down to St. Louis over the Easter week-end to help Dale Henning excavate a house site. It was a salvage operation and haste was necessary. The houses were uncovered by a contractor clearing land for a housing development and he very generously supplied the University of Missouri with several hundred dollars to excavate the site. They dug two houses and a crematorium. Four burials were also uncovered. This is an excellent example of cooperation - we can only hope that it will happen in Iowa someday.

#### STATE ARCHAEOLOGIST

This page has been rewritten while the Newsletter was partly mimeographed. We have seen the reports that the post of State Archaeologist passed the Iowa Senate on April 3, 1959. This is good news and I think the Society can take a good share of the credit. Nothing remains now but the signature of the Governor and there seems to be no reason for a veto. Additional details will be published in the Newsletter when we have more information.

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWS

We were pleased to receive a letter and a report on atlatl weights from a member of the Minnesota Archaeological Society, Mr. George A. Flaskerd of Minneapolis, Minn. Mr. Flaskerd enclosed the report and some very fine pictures of the atlatl weights. He desired to make these known to other archaeologists and would like to know if any similar artifacts have been found in Iowa. We will be happy to pass on to Mr. Flaskerd any information we receive. We are indebted to Mr. Flaskerd for his courtesy in allowing us to print the article in this issue of the Newsletter.

Reynold J. Ruppé  
Editor

## WHAT IS ARCHEOLOGY?

Many people think that archeology is a treasure hunt. Digging is really hard labor done under adverse conditions--excessive heat or cold, dust, bugs, drought, tropical dampness, and disease. The popular belief is that archaeologists unfold the past of strange people--giants, pigmies, and the like. Actually, we find that the ancient peoples were basically human beings, much like ourselves, with the same kind of loves, hates, and quarrels.

When, then, is archeology?

Before we can answer that question, we must define the science of anthropology, because archeology is part of that science. Anthropology is the science that treats of man and his behavior. Since the field is broad, it is divided into a number of branches: archeology, ethnology, linguistics, physical anthropology, social anthropology, and applied anthropology.

Archeology reconstructs human history from earliest times to the present. It deals, too, with man's rise from earlier forms. It utilizes the buried and fragmentary remains of civilizations (houses, pottery, tools, etc.) to formulate the histories of peoples for whom no written records exist. It is concerned with the beginnings of cultures and also with cultures and civilizations that are now extinct.

Archeologists seek to gather from ruined buildings and potsherds the same sort of knowledge that histories derive from books and manuscripts. Both Archeologists and Historians strive to recover and to interpret the story of man's past. Years ago, archeologists collected antiquities more for their rarity or their beauty than for what they might tell of the doings and thought of the men who made them. However, in recent years, emphasis in archaeology has shifted from more things to the meaning of things.

Since we are attempting to reconstruct the history of the Indians, who left no written records, we are forced to deal exclusively with material remains--houses, pottery, bone and stone tools--and our first task is to build up histories of material culture that will serve as the basis for deductions as to the daily life and the event in the career of the peoples under investigation. In order to work out the complete history of the Indians, it is necessary to excavate not only in places where rich and spectacular finds are to be expected, but also in regions where less showy materials but more important historical information may be obtained.

But many readers will wonder why we are eager to investigate the life of the ancient Indians. In short, why dig up dead Indians?

We are living today in a very sick world. If civilization is to endure, we must push forward in the study of man in every way possible. We must understand man in order to understand the culture he

has evolved. In our particular culture science has permitted man to bring some of the physical world under control. This knowledge may be used for good as well as evil. At present much of our scientific knowledge is being used for destructive purposes. Many people blame science for this state of affairs.

Actually, this is an uninformed point of view. The present chaotic condition of the world is not new; it is only worse than before. Every major invention, from the time of the first use of fire down to the airplane, though capable of bringing benefit and comfort, has sooner or later been abused and misused. Fire is useful for warmth and cooking, but it may be used for destructive purposes. What the atomic bomb will do to us, no one knows; but everyone is agreed that the study of nuclear physics, if man chooses to make it so, may be beneficial to him. If through anthropology we can understand all the facets of a relatively simple culture, if we can discover the whys and wherefores of such a culture, then we are better able to understand and attack the greater and more complex problems that must be solved if we are to attain real knowledge of man in the modern world. In other words, archaeology contributes to the understanding of the factors that cause civilizations to come into being, to flourish, and then to collapse.

Although we cannot prophesy about the future, we can build upon a solid foundation composed of lessons learned from past experiences of mankind. Progress is made only by trial and error. But we do not have to repeat the same trials and make the same errors.

Thus, digging up dead Indians has a very real significance and holds possibilities that stagger the imagination.

Furthermore, the study of the history of the Indians is important because they have made contributions to our own history and civilization. Few people realize that the following items in our culture have been borrowed directly from the Indians: corn, pumpkins, maple syrup, tobacco, pipe and cigarette smoking, succotash, beans, moccasins, toboggans, corncribs, snowshoes, and canoes.

Throughout this book we have used the terms "culture" and "civilization." In some places we have used the two words synonymously. Defining these two words is difficult, and the definitions given here are arbitrary and brief.

The word "culture" as used by anthropologists does not mean the improvement and refinement of the mind, an action which implies a conscious, voluntary effort. Culture in the anthropological sense embraces the sum total of human behavior and activities which are handed on by precept, imitation, and social heritage. This includes all customs, habits, usages, attitudes, beliefs, and religious and political ideas, and material products, such as the methods of building houses, of manufacturing all kinds of artifacts (weapons, pottery, ornaments, baskets, cloth), of planting and harvesting.

When a culture becomes complex and advanced, especially in a material way, it is customary to refer to it as a "civilization" (e.g., the Maya civilization); but in reality, culture covers all the elements of civilization and does not necessarily connote any degree unless the term "high" or "advanced" is used.

#### HOW THE ARCHEOLOGIST WORKS

The archeologist is often asked, "How do you know where to dig?" In choosing a site to excavate, the archeologist is guided by his past experience and his knowledge of the problems for a given area. Usually no excavation is undertaken until an archaeological survey has been made.

During a survey an archeologist searches out evidence of ancient houses, graves, village sites, mounds, etc. This usually entails much walking over a specified area and a careful scrutiny of the ground. A record is kept of all the graves, middens, mounds, and house ruins which are observed. Collections of potsherds and stone tools are made at each site and later studied and compared with similar collections from other areas. Then, with all the information provided by the survey, the archeologist can intelligently select a site for excavation.

Another question frequently asked the archeologist is, "How do you dig these ruins after you find them?"

After a site has been chosen, it is usually mapped with surveying instruments. This is done before digging starts. The actual excavation depends in part upon the type of site that is to be investigated. In general, excavation consists of peeling or stripping down the site, layer by layer. In a mound, a refuse heap, a midden, or a town, the top layer would be completely removed, then the next layer, and so on down to the bottom. Ideally, it would be like removing the layers of a cake. Actually, the removal of the strata is not that simple, for the reason that they were not laid down in a clear-cut fashion. Usually, the archeologist arbitrarily decided that each layer shall be, for example, six inches thick. Then the site is stripped down in six-inch layers or steps. By means of a surveying instrument, some stakes, and string, this can easily be done.

Sometimes the archeologist first cuts a trench through a mound or a refuse heap. By examining the vertical face of the cut or trench, he can many times distinguish the "natural" layers--that is, the strata of dirt deposited by man--and can remove them one by one.

In order to locate pit-house depressions, old camp sites, house floors, and other archaeological features, the archeologist often sinks a trench (perhaps three feet wide). This may vary in depth from a few inches to several feet and may be hundreds of feet long. In this way he can "pick-up" or run across features that otherwise are hidden by the top soil. But after the "feature" has been found, he may resort to the stripping technique. If a house floor or some

other obvious level of occupancy is found, digging proceeds along that level.

Although much digging is done with picks and shovels, they are not the only tools employed. When skeletons, pottery, postholes, implements, etc., are encountered, the digger then resorts to a trowel, a grapefruit knife, brushes, and perhaps even a bellows.

There are no set rules for digging a site. It is only after years of training and actual digging experience that a man becomes a good "dirt" archeologist.

Often the objects found are so fragile that they must be strengthened before removal. In cases where the earth is moist, pottery, bone, and shell objects are allowed to dry slowly and are then treated with a thin solution of celluloid and acetone. There are numerous methods for the preservation of all kinds of materials.

During the excavations the archeologist maintains a careful record showing the find-spot of every object, the construction features, and all other details. Theoretically, then, it would be possible to replace each object in its original position. Because interpretations are based on the sum total of information extracted from the excavation, meticulous note-taking is of paramount importance. Digging a site usually entails the reading and understanding of the unintentional record left by people who possessed no system of writing.

The complete interpretation of an excavation cannot be made until much laboratory work has been completed. The proportion of digging time to laboratory work is about one to three--that is, three months of digging to nine months of lab work.

In the laboratory all the excavated materials are cleaned, mended, and restored, when necessary. After this has been done, classifying begins. The archeologist sorts his materials, placing like with like and then makes comparisons with similar or identical materials from nearby sites. The only way one can learn to classify this material is by doing it under the supervision of a competent archeologist.

When all the materials have been classified, the archeologist can then determine whether one or more cultures are represented at his site and whether some materials are older than others. He can also determine the relationship of his site to other sites in the neighborhood. In this way, the excavations yield an historical record. True, it is not the kind of document or history book to which we are accustomed. It is an unwritten story, and it takes an archaeologist to read and translate or interpret it.

(We are indebted to the University of Chicago Press for the foregoing material, taken in part, from the book, "Indians before Columbus" published by the U. of C. Press and written by Martin, Quimby, and Collier. Your editor recommends it highly as a fine addition to your library.)

## MINNESOTA ATLATL WEIGHTS

George A. Flaskerd  
Minnesota Archaeological Society

Recent discoveries of two atlatl weights in Minnesota, in addition to the five originally reported in the bulletins of the Minnesota Archaeological Society, would tend to strengthen the theory that Minnesota was probably along the route used by ancient man in his advance from Asia to America.

The Minnesota Archaeologist bulletins reported these five originally in the following issues:

January 1941, vol. VII, no. 1, pg. 52-54

1. A seal-shaped atlatl weight, highly polished and made of a black-chert with slaty characteristics was found at Aurora, Minnesota. This is in the Charles F. Butts collection.

July 1942, vol. VIII, no. 3., pg. 128-129

2. The second specimen has one transverse ridge on each end and one central groove on top and is made of a slate-like stone. Found in western Hennepin County, Minnesota. This was originally in the A.G.W. Anderson collection.

3. The third specimen is only half complete. This is exactly the same description and material as above and from the same site as above.

4. The fourth specimen was reported as being broken and was made of Minnesota catlinite. Similar design as above. Site and owner not known.

April 1939, vol. 1, no. 1., pg. 4; also, July 1942, vol. VIII, no. 3., pg. 128-129.

5. The fifth specimen has one transverse ridge on each end and one central groove on top with a concave bottom the entire length. This is made of Minnesota catlinite and highly polished. Found in 1898, Lyon County, Custer Township, Minnesota. Now in the collection of George Flaskerd.

The sixth specimen found 1958 by Fred Blessing on the western shore of Lake Mille Lacs, Mille Lacs County, Kathio Township, Minnesota. This is made of Minnesota catlinite and highly polished. There is one transverse ridge on each end and two central grooves on top with concave bottom the entire length. Now in the collection of George Flaskerd and not reported before. (Fig. 1)

The seventh specimen was found by John Gleason on the south shore of Lake Peltior, Anoka County, Centerville Township, Minnesota. This is made of sandstone and has one central groove with bottom slightly concave. Now in the Raymond Landon collection and not reported before. (Fig. 2)

All of the above artifacts were found on very old sites which do not have evidence of white man contact materials such as glass or metal. They do have grit tempered pottery, stone hoes, notched and stemmed points. Native copper artifacts occurred on sites where specimens 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 were found. All sites are on lakes which drain into

the Mississippi River or can be reached through portage.

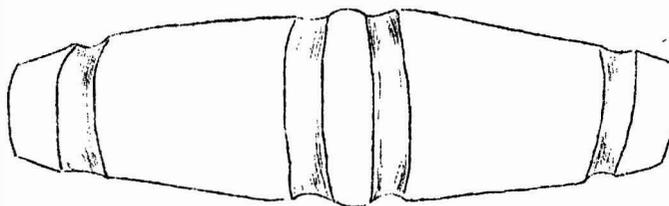
The most interesting thing about these artifacts is that three of the seven are made of Minnesota catlinite (pipestone). This would indicate they were made here of native material and not made elsewhere and carried into this State. The other four specimens are made of materials also native to this State.

If the atlatl is of great age, this would refute the theories of some writers that catlinite was not quarried or used until the very late prehistoric times, just before the coming of the white man.

Possibly more atlatl weights have been found in Minnesota and not reported. These, also, should be found in states to the south of Minnesota and perhaps to the north of us in Canada and through the MacKenzie Valley into Alaska and Siberia.

Trusting this informal report may be of assistance to the professional archaeologist as seen and appreciated by an interested amateur.

Top view



Side view

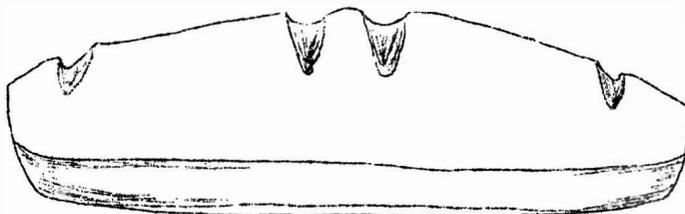


Fig. 1

Side view

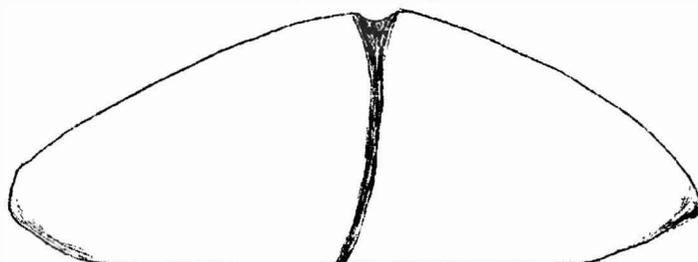


Fig. 2

## BOOK REVIEW

The March of Archaeology by C. W. Ceram. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1958. pp. 315. \$15.00

This is the third publication by Ceram on the subjects of archaeology and classical antiquity, the others being The Secret of the Hittites and the well-known Gods, Graves and Scholars.

The present work is again presented in Ceram's highly readable style. However, The March of Archaeology is essentially in the form of a picture book with the text built around the illustrations as expanded, extensive captions.

Ceram has introduced his material under four geographical areas of primary interest to the lay archaeologist and historian: Greece, Egypt, Babylonia, and Middle America.

With thumbnail biographical sketches of such prominent archaeologists as Heinrich Schliemann, Sir Arthur Evans, Sir William Flinders Petrie, and many others who have made important contributions in the above areas, a history of archaeological beginnings and progress has been recorded. Excerpts from original reports, diaries, and letters of these men blend into Ceram's presentation to give a warm, often intimate, fast-moving account of what might have been made dull reading by another author. For example, the discovery and opening of King Tutankhamen's tomb is recreated in an atmosphere of suspense and excitement.

Three hundred and ten black-and-white illustrations and sixteen color plates form the base around which Ceram has written this book. Included is a nine-page chronological table of milestones in the development of archaeology, extending from 1119 to 1955.

Although a good deal of ground has been covered both spatially and temporally, The March of Archaeology is an entertaining and intelligently composed survey of the subject, within the stated geographical limits. The book is expensive but would be a valuable addition to anyone's library and is certainly recommended as worthwhile reading for all those interested in the fields of archaeology and history.

James A. Scholtz  
Archaeology Laboratory  
State University of Iowa

PROGRAM

NINTH ANNUAL MEETING

IOWA ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

April 25 and 26, 1959, Sanford Museum, Cherokee, Iowa

Saturday, April 25, 1959

- 2:00 PM to 4:30 PM  
Registration at Sanford Museum  
Conducted tour of Simonsen Site, C-14 dated at 6,000 B.C.
- 7:30 PM to 9:30 PM  
Meeting of Board of Trustees, Sanford Museum  
(Alternate time: Sunday, April 26, 9:30 AM to 11:30 AM)

Sunday, April 26, 1959

- 9:00 AM to 11:30 AM  
Registration at Sanford Museum  
Tour of Museum and displays of private collections  
Second conducted tour of Simonsen Site
- 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM  
Lunch at Steak House, Cherokee
- 1:00 PM  
Meeting Convenes

Welcoming address by:

Clifford Chapman, President, Northwest Chapter, IAS

Business Meeting: James S. Pilgrim, President, IAS

Minutes and Treasurers report: W.D.Frankforter

Editors report: R.J.Ruppe

Old Business

New Business

Special reports:

W.D.Frankforter: Simonsen Site

Clifford Chapman: Northwest Chapter activities

Paul Rowe: Southwest Iowa activities

R.W. Breckenridge: Central Iowa Chapter activities

H.P.Field: Northeast Iowa activities

Paul Kline: Eastern Iowa activities

R.J. Ruppe: SUI plans for the coming year.

Election of new officers and Trustees

Adjournment

Guest speaker: Dr. George Agogino, Acting Director

W.H. Over Museum

University of South Dakota

Title of address:

"Early Man in the High Plains"

## N E W S   R E L E A S E

The Ninth Annual Meeting of the Iowa Archeological Society will be held at Sanford Museum, Cherokee, Iowa, on Saturday and Sunday, April 25 and 26. Meetings will convene at 2:00 PM April 25th. A display of private collections of artifacts and tours of the Museum will be featured. Mr. James S. Pilgrim, Clinton, Iowa, President of the Society, is chairman of the meeting.

Reports on archeological activities in various parts of the state will be presented on Sunday afternoon. Conducted tours of the Simonsen Site, Quimby, Iowa, will be held Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning. This site recently has been dated by radio carbon methods at approximately 8,000 years old. It has been only partially excavated by W. D. Frankforter of the Sanford Museum and Dr. George Agogino, University of South Dakota, and contains stone tools in association with extinct forms of bison. The featured address of the meeting will be given by Dr. George Agogino Sunday afternoon. Dr. Agogino is Acting Director of the W. H. Over Museum at the University of South Dakota, Vermillion, S.D. His address is entitled: "Early Man in the High Plains."

The public is cordially invited to attend these meetings.