

# Newsletter of the Iowa Archeological Society

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## Prairie Trails Museum, Corydon, Iowa

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# MASTODON WALKS 13,000 YEARS INTO PRAIRIE TRAILS MUSEUM

by

Jason Selby and Dale Clark

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Around 13,000 years ago, mastodons and woolly mammoths browsed and grazed the plains of what is now Iowa, hunted by the Paleo-Indian Clovis people using spears with stone points.

Two years ago, Humeston natives Don and Steve Hysell were navigating timber, artifact hunting when they stumbled upon a long, thick object in the Weldon River west of Lineville.

"We had no clue [what it was] when we found it," Steve Hysell said.

It was obviously a bone, and the Hysell brothers took turns carrying the 29-inch long, 20-pound specimen back to the truck. For two years, it leaned in a corner of Don's house.

By chance, last summer the Hysells had been working on the new machine shed west of the Prairie Trails Museum of Wayne County.

"So one day, I was out there chit-chatting with them," museum manager Brenda DeVore said. "And Steve said, 'you know, Don and I found this bone a while back. Do you know anybody who might be able to tell us what it is?' I said yes, I do."

"Brenda contacted Dale Clark in hopes that he could help the Hysells with their find.

Clark first contacted research archeologist Mike Perry last fall, who got him in touch with State Archeologist John Doershuk and fellow researcher Bill Whittaker. Clark and his wife Joetta transported the bone to the University of Iowa for analysis, meeting first with the archaeologists, then visiting the Earth and Environmental Sciences department. Present at the inspection were Tiffany Adrain, paleontology repository collection manager, and geologist Dr. Holmes Semken.

"They were pretty excited about it," DeVore said, as mastodon finds in Iowa are rare. Dr. Semken believed it had been washed from higher up the river and deposited in that location, which Clark has named the Hysell Site. The bone was beginning to spall and needed conservation.

"They do have bones like this in the office up there, and even much larger," Clark said. "Bones that have been taken care of, versus bones that have not been taken care of. They showed us the difference. We got to see things that you normally don't get to see. "Kinda like, Behind the Scenes."

Adrain showed Clark how to preserve the bone, and passed on the information to DeVore. "The compound that they told him to use, Acryloid B-72 lacquer, I was very familiar with, because I use it here," DeVore said. DeVore brushed the preservative onto the bone in four coats.

Mastodons went extinct around the end of the last Ice Age. Though the state archeologist did not carbon date the bone, he determined it to be approximately 10,000 to 15,000 years old based on comparison to specimens of similar antiquity. Semken and Adrain determined it to be a humerus from an adult mastodon rather than from a woolly mammoth; it is the bone in the front leg that connects the shoulder blade to the knee joint.

Clark recorded the location site of the mastodon bone with Colleen Eck, the site records manager. "This is an important step, because the site will never be lost or forgotten," Clark said. "Even if the Hysells never find another piece of the mastodon, someone else may, and another piece will be added to the puzzle.

"There are a couple of Indian sites close to where they found this. So one of the first things that [the archeologists] did was look that thing over really closely for cut marks." Cut marks would have changed everything.



The past speaks to Don and Steve Hysell. Before a mural of woolly mammoths, the brothers hold the humerus of an adult mastodon, which they have donated to Prairie Trails Museum of Wayne County in Corydon. The Hysells found the bone in a creek bed while hunting for Native American artifacts just west of Lineville. Beginning this year, it will be on display at the museum. Photo by Jason Selby.

Another word for cut marks is butcher marks, where prehistoric people would have butchered this animal for food. But Dr. Whittaker and his colleagues did not find any cutting marks.

The Hysell brothers began hunting for artifacts around four years ago. “Once it gets in your blood, you’re in trouble,” Steve Hysell said. “We’ve been crossing creeks all our lives, but never stopped to look—too busy.”

Prairie Trails Museum also has a large collection of spearheads, arrowheads, drills, awls, axes and stone tools thanks in large part to Harold Dent. Other artifact collections donated by D. E. Pidcock, Beryl Green and family, Howard Hildenbrand, and Clark. Some of them date back to a time when they would have been used to hunt mastodon.

“We do have evidence of all the timeframes for Native Americans here in Wayne County,” Clark said. “The 13,000 thousand-year-old mark is here.”

The museum in Corydon also has on display a fern seedpod, *Trigonocarpus pachytosta gigantean*, found in Wayne County by Thelma Pidcock, one of only 12 specimens known and dating back to about 280 million years.

“Not a lot of museums have a mastodon bone,” DeVore said. “The kids are just fascinated by it. When we had our open house, one kid came in and said, ‘It’s a dinosaur bone!’ Most people are really amazed that it was found locally.”

“It was just being wasted,” Don Hysell said about his decision to donate the bone to the museum. “I had it in my house. All my grandkids petted it and looked at it—I didn’t know what to do with the bone.”

“Look at all the people that are going to get to see it now,” Clark said.

Visitors can view the mastodon bone and the museum’s many other treasures. The Prairie Trails Museum hours are:

April 15 through May: Monday–Saturday, 1–5 pm;  
June through August: Monday–Friday, 10 am–5 pm and Saturday, 1–5 pm.;  
September through October: 1–5 pm.

More information can be found at the museum’s website: <http://www.prairietrailsmuseum.org/>

## Keyes’ First Visit To Toolesboro

by  
Mike Perry

On his first visit to Toolesboro, April 3, 1925, Charles Keyes brought his camera and was accompanied by Cloyce Downer, of Letts, Iowa. They looked over the mound group and the large village site nearby, now known as the McKinney site. Keyes remarked about the mounds:

“The big mounds of this well known group (of the early Proceedings of the Davenport Academy) stand on the edge of the Mississippi bluff overlooking the broad flood plain of the Mississippi River where the Iowa River enters. A wonderful view of the heavily wooded bottomland. These mounds wrecked by excavation starting at the top, and in the case of those farther north, by cultivation.”



Keyes’ photograph of Cloyce Downer perched on Mound 2 of the Toolesboro group, taken 90 years ago.

# FALL FEST AT PRAIRIE TRAILS MUSEUM

by

Dale Clark

Each year in the autumn, the Prairie Trails Museum in Corydon, Iowa puts on a Fall Festival. It is only a one day event, but the public, young and old, enjoys turning back time for just that one day. During this day, the lineup of events we show includes rope making, rug making, the use of flax with a spinning wheel, blacksmithing, pottery making, cake walks, face painting, and old time music. Admission to the museum is free that day, and my favorite part is the living history within the museum. This year we had volunteers present "Ghost Towns of Wayne County" and there was my annual presentation on prehistoric tools from Wayne County. The museum has a large prehistoric artifact collection from local collectors, and with these artifacts nearby, I set up my presentation on two 6 foot tables and cover them with my own finds from this area.



Part of the author's Fall Fest presentation display.



Part of the author's Fall Fest presentation display.

was to them. Like the projectile points, I show some endscrapers with handles and others without handles. For hide working, I use knives with bone and antler handles, turtleback scrapers, and even modified chips. This gives the audience a very good idea of the tools that are needed or could be used to scrape and cut hides. I also use a couple of bone awls for hole-making in the hide.

The pottery is a little different. I have both rim and body sherds in my presentation. I use these little broken pieces of history as examples when I'm making my own reproductions of pots or other vessels. In preparation for last year's Fall Fest, I built a pit kiln in the ground, and using grit-tempered clay, I made bowls and pots. I produced these vessels with dentate, cord-wrapped, cord-paddled, and cord-impressed rims similar to the prehistoric examples, so the public could really get a feel for what the pottery looked like and how it was used. Reproductions are presented full of grains, seeds, and nuts as they would have been when used for storage.

The presentation is hands-on. We grind a little corn with a mano and metate, crack a few nuts with a nutting stones, and pretend to start a fire with a fire starting stone and accessories. I also use a small bow, an arrow that I made, a spear, a deer antler rake, a deer scapula hoe, an axe, and celts in my demonstration.

I am currently working on adding the games they may have played to the presentation. I have several stone

I show a few projectile points, providing examples of spear points, knives, dart points, and arrow points. These examples are used to show the difference in the size and shape and what they were used for. I have some hafted on shafts and handles and some are presented just as they are when we find them. This way the attendees can see how they appear when they were collected as well as how they would have looked when they were being used. I have found that by adding shafts and handles to the tools, people can relate to them and better understand how they were used.

I really stress hide work, all the different tools that are used or could be used on hides, and how important this



Pottery decorating.



Pit kiln before firing.

balls of various sizes from 3 ¼ inch in diameter to marble size. So far, I have not found the use for them but I suspect they were used for one or more game. This is something I'm still working on and will be looking deeply into this subject before next year's presentation.

So you see, I cover just about everything that would be used in the life of our prehistoric people of Wayne County, Iowa. I add a little Indian flute music to set the stage and work from one end of the tables to the other, picking up each tool and showing what it is and how it was used. The presentation lasts about 3 hours and is repeated through the day. After one presentation ends and the next one starts, people can enjoy looking at our large collection of artifacts and you can tell by listening to them that they have a much better idea what they are looking at when viewing our exhibits.

This is a blast and most everyone is interested. This is what artifact hunting and learning how everything fits together is about.

What I'm doing is not just teaching facts; it's about having fun and sharing information about the artifacts I have found in our area. I believe I have such a good



Pottery reproductions.



Attendees examining a pot.

turnout and high level of interest because this history is their history and it is being told to them in a little different way.



Other museum exhibits.



The author setting up exhibits for his presentation.

# WHAT'S THE POINT?

DANIEL HORGEN  
OFFICE OF THE STATE ARCHAEOLOGIST  
IOWA CITY

**Discovered:** Allamakee County, Iowa.

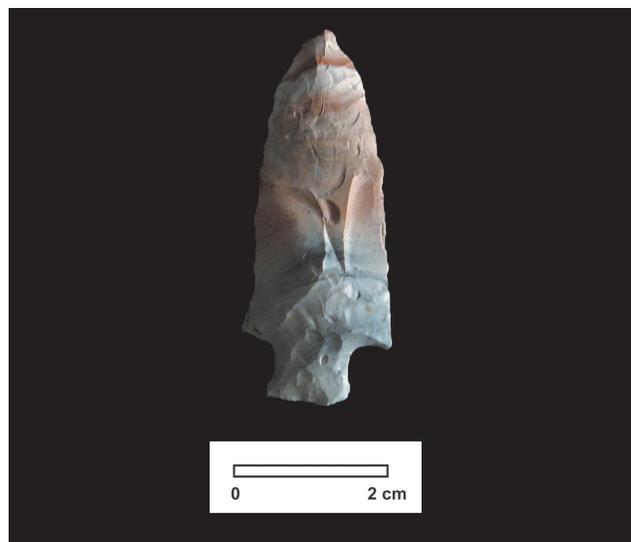
**Measurements:** 4¾ inches in length with a maximum width of 1¾ inch.

**Notes:** This type has several varieties of subtypes and is commonly distributed over much of the Great Lakes and Midwest regions. The blade outline and notch placement generally are the defining characteristics for classification. The stem often appears out of proportion to the general size of the blade.



Send your responses to Daniel Horgen at [daniel-horgen@uiowa.edu](mailto:daniel-horgen@uiowa.edu). Answers will be listed in the next issue of the newsletter.

**Last Issue's Point:** The specimen illustrated in the Spring issue of the Newsletter is classified as an Etley. These points are commonly recovered in eastern Missouri and western Illinois and also occur in southeastern Iowa. The type was named by Edward G. Sully in 1951 from the large, stemmed variety found in Illinois and Missouri (Bell 1960:36). Etley points are diagnostic of the Titterington phase (3000–1000 B.C.) of the Late Archaic period in the lower Illinois Valley (Justice 1987:146). Etley points are large to medium stemmed points with distinct barbed shoulders that portray a corner-notched appearance. Blade shape tends to vary from long parallel-sided to recurved and triangular. These points are routinely heavily resharpened almost to exhaustion, and often exhibit short or absent barbs with a variety of expanding and square stemmed



Last Issues Point: Etley

characteristics. An accurate identification on resharpened specimens is often troublesome, with many sharing similar characteristics to other Late Archaic varieties, specifically Stone Square Stemmed and Smith points (Chapman 1975). Pristine early use-life specimens are generally larger in length than other Late Archaic types, which often is the defining characteristic. Bill Green and John Lisle submitted correct responses. The raw material type is classified as heat treated Burlington chert. This type of raw material commonly outcrops within much of the Mississippian bedrock found in southeastern Iowa, northeastern Missouri, and western Illinois (Ray 2007). Burlington chert was an important raw material resource and was utilized by knappers throughout much of prehistory.

#### References:

Bell, Robert E.

1960 *Guide to the Identification of Certain American Indian Projectile Points*. Special Bulletin No. 2. Oklahoma Anthropological Society, Norman Oklahoma.

Chapman, Carl H.

1975 *The Archaeology of Missouri I*. University of Missouri Press, Columbia.

Justice, Noel D.

1987 *Stone Age Spear and Arrow Points of the Midcontinental and Eastern United States: A Modern Survey and Reference*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana.

Ray, Jack H.

2007 *Ozarks Chipped-Stone Resources: A Guide to the Identification, Distribution, and Prehistoric Use of Cherts and Other Siliceous Raw Materials*. Special Publication No. 8. Missouri Archaeological Society, Columbia.

## Iowa Archeological Society Spring Meeting 2016

Friday, April 29<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, April 30<sup>th</sup>

City Hall Community Room  
88 North Street  
Marquette, Iowa  
(next to the Cobblestone Inn and Suites)

and

Effigy Mounds National Monument Visitor's Center  
151 Iowa Highway 76  
Harpers Ferry, Iowa

Friday, April 29<sup>th</sup>:  
2:30: Registration  
3:00–4:00: Business Meeting  
4:00–5:40: Presentations

Saturday, April 30<sup>th</sup>:  
7:30: Registration  
8:15–12:30: Presentations  
2:00–4:00: Effigy Mounds Tour

Iowa Archeological Society  
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Iowa City, IA 52242-1030



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### CALL FOR ARTICLES AND PICTURES

The IAS Newsletter always needs articles. Do you have something you'd like to share with the membership? Did you take photos at any of the meetings or field trips? Do you have a collection, individual artifacts, or a site that you would like to highlight? Let the newsletter editor know.

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Cresco, Iowa 52136

### NOMINATIONS SOUGHT FOR THE CHARLES KEYES—ELLISON ORR AWARD

The Keyes-Orr Award is presented to individuals in recognition of outstanding service to the Iowa Archeological Society and in the research, reporting, and preservation of Iowa's prehistoric and historic heritage.

Nominations should be sent by mail or e-mail to:  
Mike Christensen  
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Fort Dodge, IA 50501

[mchristensen45@yahoo.com](mailto:mchristensen45@yahoo.com)

### MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Please contact the IAS Membership Secretary:

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### MEMBERSHIP DUES

Voting	
Active	\$25
Household	\$30
Sustaining	\$35
Non-Voting	
Student (under 18)	\$14
Institution	\$35

### NEWSLETTER INFORMATION

The Iowa Archeological Society is a nonprofit, scientific society legally organized under the corporate laws of Iowa. Members of the Society share a serious interest in the archaeology of Iowa and the Midwest. The Newsletter is published four times a year.

All materials for publication should be sent to the Newsletter Editor:

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When submitting articles, please provide text, captions, tables, and figures separately. All photographs should be at least 300 dpi. Graphics should be high-resolution tiff, jpg, or eps files or be scan-ready paper copies.

### IAS WEBSITE

<http://archaeology.uiowa.edu/iowa-archaeological-society>