

# WisArch News

The Newsletter of the Wisconsin Archeological Society

## A Nodena Point Cache in the Driftless Area of Wisconsin



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# Wisconsin Archeological Society

[www.wiarcheologicalsociety.org](http://www.wiarcheologicalsociety.org)

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*Kenosha County Archaeological Society-Kenosha*

*Robert Ritzenthaler Society-UW-Oshkosh: Jeremy Cobble, [jeremycobble@excel.net](mailto:jeremycobble@excel.net)*

*Rock River Archaeological Society-Horicon: Julie Flemming, [julieflemming@yahoo.com](mailto:julieflemming@yahoo.com)*

*Three Rivers Archaeological Society-Beloit: Currently Inactive*

*UW-La Crosse Archaeological Club-La Crosse*

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The editor appreciates the assistance of Kat Kleinschmidt for help on formatting this issue.



## Affiliated Organizations Information

### Charles E. Brown Archaeological Society

The Charles E. Brown Chapter meets monthly (except the summer months) at 7pm on the second Thursday of each month, at the Wisconsin Historical Society Auditorium, 816 State Street in Madison, across from the Union, unless otherwise noted.

### Kenosha County Archaeological Society

The Kenosha County Archaeological Society meets on the second Saturday of the months of October, December, February and April at 1:30 pm at the Kenosha Public Museum, 550 First Ave., Kenosha, Wisconsin. Information on events at the Kenosha Public Museum can be found at [www.kenosha.org/museum/](http://www.kenosha.org/museum/).

### Robert Ritzenthaler Society

The Robert Ritzenthaler Society meets on the second Tuesday of the month, at 7:00 pm, September through May. Meetings are held at Room 202, Harrington Hall, on the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh Campus. Contact Jeremy Cobble at [jeremycobble@excel.net](mailto:jeremycobble@excel.net)

### Rock River Archeological Society

Monthly meetings of the Rock River Archeological Society are held on the third Wednesday of the month, from May to September, at 7:00 pm, at the Visitor's Center, Horicon National Wildlife Refuge. This facility is accessible via Highway 28 between Mayville and Horicon. Contact Julie Flemming, [julieflemming@yahoo.com](mailto:julieflemming@yahoo.com)

### Three Rivers Archaeological Society

The Three Rivers Archaeological Society meets on the second Monday of every month (except July and August), alternating between the Macktown Living History Education Center (Rockton, IL) and venues in Beloit, Wisconsin at Beloit College and the Beloit Public Library. Currently Inactive.

### UW-La Crosse Archaeological Club

The Archaeology Club provides a social and academic outlet for UW-La Crosse students interested in archaeology and/or anthropology. The club provides speakers, field trips, and presentations.

## THE WISCONSIN ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



### CELEBRATES CITIZEN SCIENTISTS AND ARCHAEOLOGY!

Hello Everyone!

The board of the Wisconsin Archeological Society has designated 2024 as the year in which we, as a Society, recognize the role of citizen scientists in Wisconsin archaeology in the past, present, and future. Of course, this comes on the tail of our 120th Anniversary celebration last year and we want to take the time to not only honor the roots of the Society (founded entirely by avocational archaeologists), but also to highlight the research that citizens are currently doing in Wisconsin to further our understanding of the past. To that end, we will be having a number of events over the upcoming months to recognize the role that non-professional citizens have played, are playing and will play in the future in archaeological research in the state.

- We are planning an online panel discussion in March when several citizen scientists will discuss how they became involved in archaeology and where their passions and research have taken them.
- In April, the Society is co-sponsoring “An Evening with Artifacts” at Madison Area Technical College where local and state historical societies, private citizens and students will share their collections and research with the public.
- In July, we will hold our annual Field Assembly at High Cliff State Park where we will highlight tours of the archaeology, geology and botany of the park. The orientation of activities and presentations will be far more kid-friendly with the hope that the passion for Wisconsin’s past will be shared with those who will be charged with protecting, preserving and furthering archaeological research.
- Finally, we are working on a fieldwork opportunity for a limited number of Society members. Participants will have the opportunity to experience hands-on research.

We hope that you will support and participate in and enjoy our 2024 events. Please keep an eye on our website and on Facebook for updates as they become available. We look forward to seeing and hearing from you as 2024 evolves.

## A Nodena Projectile Point Cache in the Driftless Area, Wisconsin

Marlin F. Hawley and Thomas J. Loebel

A plowed out cache of Nodena Elliptical projectile points was found in the Bohn Creek valley, southwestern Dane County, Wisconsin, in 2015 (Figure 1). The cache, initially numbering 50 small, leaf-shaped bifaces, was found by Tim Goplin in April of that year following clearing of a portion of a field where derelict machinery had been deposited. After removal of this equipment and deep plowing, a visit to the site revealed a tight concentration of bifaces (< ca. 10 sq. m; ca. 100 sq. ft.). A visit to the location the following spring (2016) by Eddie Goplin netted one additional point, bringing the total to



Figure 1. Localities referenced in the text

51 points (Figure 2). After being alerted to the discovery, one of us (Hawley, usually with 1-2 others) repeatedly surveyed the field where the cache was found. Close interval pedestrian survey was conducted several times over the course of more than a year, in corn stubble and following spring planting under dry and wet surface conditions. While no additional Nodena points were found, the survey did reveal a lithic scatter covering an area



Figure 2. The Goplin site Nodena point cache.

of 3.5-4.0 acres, now designated as site 47DA1522. The flakes, shatter and other material were all made from locally obtainable Galena chert, including probably expedient use of the material found in glacial till. In the absence of projectile points or pottery, the age of the scatter is not known, though it seems likely that it predates by an unknown margin the Nodena cache. The cache location lay close to the southern edge of the site, near a small, intermittent tributary of Bohn Creek.

The points are all assignable to the Nodena Elliptical type, associated with the late Mississippian/protohistoric Nodena phase (AD 1400-1650) in eastern Arkansas and southeast Missouri (Justice 1987; Morse 1990). (“Phase” is an archaeological term denoting a cluster of related sites, probably indicative of a cultural relationship between their inhabitants.) Those from the Goplin site range from 25.72 to 42.40 mm in overall

length with widths varying from 7.94 to 14.89 mm. Maximum thickness ranges from 3.18 to 8.04 mm. The 51 points were chipped from non-local chert, including Burlington (n=45 or 46), Salem (n=2 or 3), Jefferson City (n=1), and unidentified (n=1); some of the stone appears to have been thermally altered to improve its flaking qualities (Figure 2). Perhaps the most notable aspect of the points, however, is that all bear extensive wear on edges and surfaces. Use wear analysis (by Loebel) indicates that this wear derives from transport, probably from the points rubbing together inside a hide bag.

Nodena points have a wide distribution and have been recovered from sites flanking the Mississippi River from the Gulf Coast northward into the Great Lakes region (see Justice 1987:230-232, Map 101), as far north as southern Ontario (e.g., Dann 2011:7-8, Figure 4).

The Nodena points reported in eastern Iowa (Anderson 1981:49; McKusick 1973; Straffin 1971:18, Plate 7c; Wedel 1959:52, 153), western Wisconsin (Gibbon 1986:328, Figure 11; McKern 1945:135, Plate 39; Sasso 1989:45-46, 198, Appendix 29) and southeastern Minnesota (Sasso 1989:198; Wilfred and Brink 1974:33) have been recovered from Oneota tradition site contexts. Late Mississippian artifacts, including pottery and a carved shell gorget, also have been reported from the Anker site, a Huber phase Oneota tradition site located in the greater Chicago area (Bluhm and Liss 1983).

Formerly, the few Nodena points found at Oneota sites were in artifact assemblages ascribed to the Orr phase (Gibbon 1986; Sasso 1989:198). However, in light of taxonomic revision and temporal refinement of the La Crosse area Oneota cultural sequence in the 1990s (Boszhardt 1994), these assemblages presumably now would be considered as belonging to the Valley View phase (ca. AD 1530-1625). Of course, in the absence of diagnostic ceramics at Sasso's (1989:211) "ephemeral" sites in the Coon Creek drainage, uncertainty as to dating remains. (The sites in question are 47VE577—with a single Nodena point made of Burlington chert—and 47VE892, n=1, where chert is unidentified light tan material; there may be one other from Sasso's survey in the private collection from 47VE807, but the point is broken and typological assignment is somewhat clouded as a result.) Contact between Nodena phase peoples and the Oneota potentially could extend back into earlier Pammel Creek phase times (but still overlapping the early Nodena phase).

The Goplin cache points were intended as part of a suite of goods exchanged between populations in the lower Mississippi Valley and Oneota tradition peoples several hundred miles upriver (Dye and Aid 2022). The cache's location in the Bohn Creek valley, far outside the obvious trade route of the Mississippi or the Wisconsin rivers and, for that matter, far from any Oneota settlement, however, remains puzzling. Movement up the Rock River valley remains a distinct possibility, though. The late pre-European contact/early historic era was a time of conflict in the midcontinent (Hollinger 2005) and the cache's placement may somehow relate to unsettled conditions. Possibly, too, exchange may have taken place in areas removed from settlements or which possessed some special

significance. It also has to be considered that the cache did not end up at its intended destination.

The Goplin cache is unique in that it is the only known cache of Nodena points in a region otherwise characterized by infrequent isolated finds of the type. The transport of a substantial number of these points into the upper Mississippi Valley (which were then subsequently cached), is reflective of the complex social landscape and population dynamics which existed in the late pre-contact era.

All of the materials collected from the Goplin site, including the cache, have been retained by the Goplin family.

### Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Eddie Goplin for bringing the cache to our attention and letting us measure, photograph and even borrow the artifacts for use wear analysis. This last was facilitated by Madeline Evans. We are also grateful to both Eddie and his son, Tim, for permission to visit the site, repeatedly as it turned out. Amy Hawley, Rachel Hawley, and Matt G. Hill assisted at different times with site survey, while Sydney Hanson helped with shovel testing vegetated portions of the site. We appreciate information and comments from Bob Sasso. David Dye has been a source of information and encouragement for many years.

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## “The Wisconsin Idea” and the Golden Age in Wisconsin Archaeology, ca. 1900-1930

Roland L. Rodell and William Green

The ideological seeds that inspired “The Wisconsin Idea” began to germinate during the four-year nationwide depression known as the Panic of 1893. In Wisconsin, both urban and rural citizens began calling upon state government to alleviate the hardships of this social-economic crisis. In Milwaukee, various grass-roots organizations such as the Academy of Social Science, the Church and Labor Social Union, and the Economic League arose to address an array of citizens’ concerns. In response, University of Wisconsin faculty and staff began offering a variety of “extension courses” (forerunners of UW Extension created in 1907) in both rural and urban communities to cope with a multitude of economic, social, and political concerns (Thelen 1972:55-85).

With the 1901 election of Governor Robert M. La Follette and like-minded Republicans, Wisconsin began enacting legislation that in theory and practice embraced “The Wisconsin Idea.” This term denotes the “general attitude or approach to public policy” that calls for scientific and academic research to address the needs of citizens statewide (Buenker 1998:569; Myers 1991; Stark 1995), a hallmark of the Progressive Era. We argue that the creation, rapid growth, and success of the Wisconsin Archeological Society was inspired in large part by The Wisconsin Idea.

### **The Wisconsin Archeological Society**

Charles Edward Brown (1872-1946) was born in Milwaukee where, in his youth he became interested in natural history and Native Americans. As a young adult his family witnessed the turmoil and social upheaval of the 1890s depression. By his late twenties he was employed as a “scientific worker” at the Milwaukee Public Museum (MPM), which was then housed within the Milwaukee Public Library (Lurie 1983:25). The library was also home to the Wisconsin Natural History Society (WNHS), which Brown joined in 1898.

In 1900, Brown and fellow WNHS member Charles Doerflinger published a paper asserting that Indian mounds in Milwaukee County and elsewhere were “doomed to destruction and oblivion” (Doerflinger and Brown 1900:20). Their concerns for preservation led the WNHS to form an Archeology Section that published a quarterly bulletin. The inaugural issue of *The Wisconsin Archeologist* called for public action to preserve “the yet remaining evidences... of prehistoric man” and promote the “scientific and educational value” of archaeology. Five goals for Wisconsin archaeology were put forth: scientific studies; public education and preservation; a statewide field survey; a

repository for collections and publications; and the teaching of anthropology at the state university (University of Wisconsin, Madison) (*The Wisconsin Archeologist* 1901). Membership in the Archeology Section was open to all who applied, and *The Wisconsin Archeologist* would be freely distributed without charge to schools, colleges, and libraries statewide.

The public response was favorable and the Archeology Section's membership surpassed expectations. In early 1903, Section members voted to leave the WNHA to become the independent Wisconsin Archeological Society (WAS). At its first meeting, the membership elected Brown as secretary and editor of *The Wisconsin Archeologist*. He would serve in both positions, with just one short break as editor, for the next 38 years.

In order to engage the public on the importance and purpose of its mission, the WAS created a traveling exhibit and presented displays at the Wisconsin State Fair, and organized community events across the state (Houghton 1905). Notable examples of the latter were the field assemblies at Carroll College (Brown 1906) and at Prairie du Chien (Brown 1911). In 1906, the WAS gained national recognition in a report (most likely written by Brown) published by the American Anthropological Association about recent developments in North American anthropology (AAA 1906:511-516).

The rapid growth and success of the WAS soon caught the attention Reuben Gold Thwaites, secretary (i.e., director) of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin (SHSW). Thwaites pioneered the progressive, public service orientation of state historical societies (Lord 1963). Although not an archaeologist, he considered archaeology essential to the cause of promoting public history. As Thwaites followed the growing success of the WAS, he envisioned the possibility of the two organizations becoming affiliated. In 1905, Thwaites joined the WAS and soon thereafter was elected to its Board of Directors, whereupon he began discussing the possibilities for a merger of the two organizations (Hawley 2019:36-40).

When the State Legislature increased the SHSW's annual budget in 1908, Thwaites offered Brown a full-time position as museum curator. Brown accepted, but on the condition that he maintain his position with the WAS. Thwaites agreed, but with the provision that one-third of Brown's salary of \$1500 be paid by the WAS (Lord and Ubbelohde 1967:181-182). With this appointment Brown was now in the unique position to bridge the missions of both societies.

As head curator Brown oversaw the organization of the SHSW museum's collections and exhibits, and he conducted public programs focusing on historic preservation and archaeological research. He also worked with the University of Wisconsin Extension, offering short courses on archaeology, public history, and preservation. And like Thwaites, he routinely traveled the state to promote and support local historical societies, giving public lectures, and doing research (Lord and Ubbelohde 1967:181-189, passim). His position also expanded his correspondence network of collectors, farmers, educators, and businesspeople which he had started as WAS secretary. Brown transferred the WAS

inventory of data on more than 1300 archeological sites to the SHSW (Brown 1905), which forms the core of the database now maintained by the Office of the State Archaeologist.

The legislative session of 1911 initiated several social, economic, and political reforms that included statutes for the preservation of cultural resources (Buenker 2012). Through the efforts of Brown and others, laws were passed to protect archaeological sites—notably mounds—on public lands. The 1911 Legislature also approved a one-time appropriation of \$1500 for a survey of the state’s archaeological resources. With this funding, the WAS formed a committee to establish guidelines for how the funds would be spent, where surveys would be conducted and managed, and who could participate in the surveys. In 1912 and 1913, sixteen WAS members (including Brown) carried out surveys in 31 counties, primarily in the west-central and northwest areas of the state (Brown 1914). All the participants authored or co-authored reports of their investigations which were published in *The Wisconsin Archeologist*.

Thwaites’ death in 1913 was a severe blow to the SHSW. His immediate successor Milo Quaife, followed by Joseph Schafer in 1920, valued Brown’s leadership but had little interest in archaeology or the WAS. Instead, it was left to Brown to maintain these connections.

### **The Milwaukee Public Museum**

In 1909, the Milwaukee Public Museum (MPM) hired Samuel Barrett as its first full-time curator of anthropology. Barrett’s credentials included a Ph.D. and museum experience at the University of California, Berkeley. Over the next three decades, he would advance from curator to museum director, modernizing the MPM and creating its archaeological research program. In 1924, Barrett hired another former UC Berkeley student, archaeologist Will C. McKern (Lurie 1983). Both became active members of the WAS.

The campaign to save Aztalan in Jefferson County stands out as a major cooperative accomplishment of the MPM, SHSW, and WAS. In the summer of 1919, as Barrett was conducting his first field season at Aztalan, representatives of the three organizations began planning a public event to promote preservation of the site. “The Pilgrimage to Aztalan” was held on Labor Day. The public turnout and overwhelming support exceeded organizers’ expectations (*The Wisconsin Archeologist* 1919). The following January, the Jefferson County Board of Supervisors approved \$500 to buy a portion of the site. In addition, local schoolchildren raised \$300 to save Aztalan (*The Wisconsin Archeologist* 1920:29).

### **The End of a Golden Age**

The Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II ended Wisconsin archeology’s “golden age.” The SHSW’s budget was cut by more than 42%, and the City of Milwaukee reduced the MPM’s operating costs by over 30% (Lord and Ubbellohde 1967:318-341). After 30 years at the MPM, Barrett retired on January 1, 1940 (Lurie 1983:73). Although

the WAS also experienced setbacks, it navigated through these hardships relatively intact: monthly meetings continued to be held at the MPM and publication of *The Wisconsin Archeologist* carried on without major disruptions. When Brown retired in 1944, the WAS had realized the five objectives of its founding mission. After World War II, Wisconsin archaeology largely reinvented itself, with academic and contract archaeology coming to dominate the profession, yet the WAS retained its invaluable position as a principal link between archaeology and the public.

As the WAS celebrates its 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we reflect upon the leadership roles of Charlie E. Brown, his colleagues in the WAS and SHSW, and others who exemplified the principles of The Wisconsin Idea by bringing people from around the state into a kind of imagined community (Anderson 1991) of enthusiastic generators and consumers of archaeological knowledge and advocates for preservation. In the same era, the academically trained MPM archaeologists played complementary roles by promoting problem-oriented research, methodological advances, and museum anthropology. Few other states hosted such diverse and successful archeological programs in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The legacy of Wisconsin's archaeological "golden age" survives, not only with the WAS and the Wisconsin Historical Society, but also with public archaeology programs such as the Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center at UW-La Crosse. Nonetheless, challenges to engage and inspire public interest in Wisconsin archaeology will undoubtedly require an even more inclusive vision of the original blueprint, and a great deal of political acumen and willpower.

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## Information for Contributing to the Newsletter

If you have news, information about upcoming programs, events, or other interesting short notes you would like to see in the newsletter, please contact WisArch News editor, Norm Meinholz via e-mail at: [norman.meinholz@wisconsinhistory.org](mailto:norman.meinholz@wisconsinhistory.org). The newsletter is published semi-annually in the spring and fall each year. Text should be submitted in Microsoft Word format and images as JPEG's.

## Archaeology News and Notes

### Additional Dating of White Sands Footprints May Resolve Controversy

An article published in the journal *Science* (382, 73-75, 2023), claims to have resolved the dating of human footprints at White Sands National Park, New Mexico in favor of their formation during the Last Glacial Maximum (28,000-21,000 years ago). The finding of several trackways of both humans and megafauna at White Sands dating to this early period would suggest Native Americans coexisted with megafauna thousands of years earlier than expected at a time when glacial ice covered the ground across much of the Midwest.

The trackways and associated early dates were originally reported in 2021 and were not unexpectedly met with concerns mainly centered on dating issues. These issues involve the aquatic plants that were used to radiocarbon date the tracks and concerns over the plant's uptake of old carbon from groundwater (hard-water effect) that could account for these early dates. Other concerns include the possibility of dating older, reworked plants.

To address these dating issues, new techniques were employed. These include the dating of pollen grains of terrestrial plants from the same stratigraphic level as the footprints. This pollen is not subject to hard-water effects. The resulting radiocarbon dates obtained from these samples are statistically indistinguishable to dates obtained from the original study. OSL (Optically Stimulated Luminescence) dating of the sediment also support these early dates. The authors conclude that

the convergence of three chronological data sets all support the conclusion that Native Americans were living in southwestern North America during the Late Glacial Maximum.



### Grand Meadow Chert Quarry Trail to Open in 2024

Native Americans in what is today Mower County in southeastern Minnesota mined a high-quality gray chert from the upland oak savanna and prairie. This location is today the Grand Meadow Chert Quarry Archaeological and Cultural Preserve. As reported in the Fall 2023 issue of *American Archaeology*, a quarterly publication of the Archaeological Conservancy based out of Albuquerque, New Mexico, the site is expected to open to the public in 2024.

The 15 acres site, a remnant of a much larger 175-acre area, originally contained an estimated 2,000 pits and trenches dug to acquire this distinctive chert used for making stone tools. The resulting artifacts are found throughout Minnesota and adjacent states including western Wisconsin. Its use by Native Americans

extended back in time for thousands of years but was especially favored by late precontact Oneota groups to make hide scrapers and triangular arrow points.

The site was originally purchased by the Archaeological Conservancy in 1994. A special partnership with the Conservancy, the Mower County Historical Society, and the Dakota Community at Prairie Island are working to build a public trail and install interpretive signage at the preserve. The self-guided "Wanhi Yukan" ("there is chert here" in Dakota) trail will have signage in both Dakota and English. Nearly 100 quarry pits are found within the preserve, created more than 400 years ago.

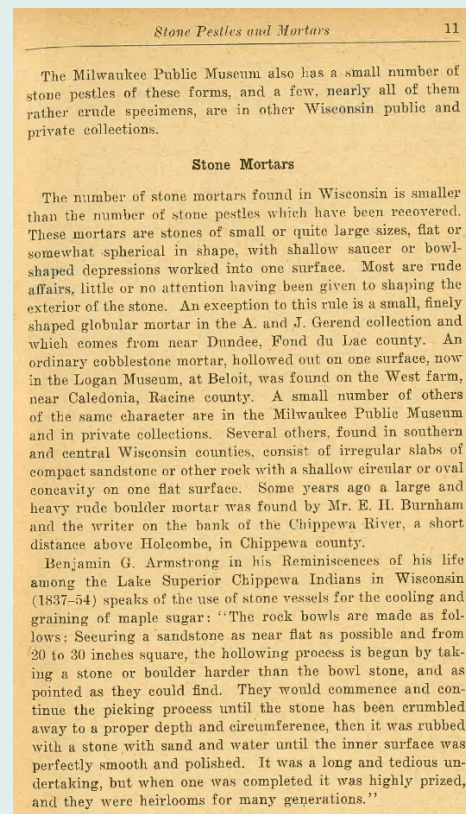
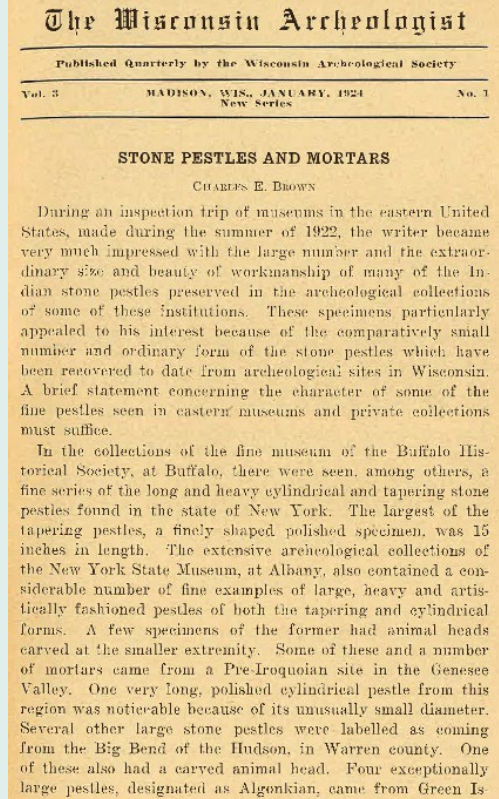
As a result of this partnership and assistance from state and county grants, a cultural landscape report has been produced; an interpretive plan with Dakota advisors for the site has been designed; a six-year effort to restore the original oak savanna and prairie habitats has begun; and the plans for parking and trail building have been created. The group is currently fundraising to support annual maintenance of the trail in perpetuity.





## Back Dirt: 100 Years Ago in the *Wisconsin Archeologist*

The January 1924 issue of *The Wisconsin Archeologist* begins with a report on stone pestles and mortars by Charles E. Brown. This report was initiated after an inspection trip to eastern museums Brown undertook in 1922. He states that stone pestles are not common in Wisconsin and stone mortars rather scarce. He goes on to list examples of 11 pestles from 7 counties mainly across southern Wisconsin. Pestle forms range from long tapering, cylindrical, short conical and bell-shaped. Stone mortars are fewer in number. "These are stone of small or quite large sizes, flat or somewhat spherical in shape, with shallow saucer or bowl-shaped depressions worked into one surface". Most are crudely made unlike those seen in the eastern museums. Several large boulder mortars or "corn mills" were reported from Wisconsin locations, including: the Doty log cabin at Menasha, Black Wolf township south of Oshkosh, the west bank of the Fox River near Green Bay, the northeast shore of Lake Monona at Madison, and in front of the earthwork enclosure at Aztalan. Other news reported in this issue includes the launching of the Michigan State Archaeological Society in Lansing. A conference on state archeological surveys conducted by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, was held at Cincinnati. The conference suggested states should adopt the policy pursued by the state of Ohio with regards to the establishment of state archaeological parks. In Ohio the policy is to create self-sustaining parks with custodians who are farmers who till the land to pay for the cost of the park. Farming should be conducted only in areas that are not detrimental to the archaeological features.



# Don't Forget to Renew Your Membership for 2024!

## Benefits of The Wisconsin Archeological Society:

- ✓ Receive *The Wisconsin Archeologist*, the longest continually published archaeological journal in the United States, and the *WisArch News*, the biannual newsletter filled with information about Society history and events.
- ✓ Participate in archaeological programs from around the state and the world.
- ✓ Get involved in Society field sponsored events such as artifact shows and site tours.
- ✓ Help raise awareness of Wisconsin's incredible archaeological heritage and preserve unique and irreplaceable sites.

### Wisconsin Archeological Society Membership Information

Membership Category	Benefits		2024 rates
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Individual	X	X	\$30
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Student	X	X	\$20
Senior	X	X	\$20
Associate	X		\$5
Sustaining	X	X	\$50
Donor	X	X	Minimum of \$100
Institutional (Libraries)	X	X	\$40

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 3413 N. Downer Avenue  
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**Please Include**

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Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Contact the society president at [president@wiarcheologicalsociety.org](mailto:president@wiarcheologicalsociety.org)

\* Your e-mail will not be shared with any other organization. It is the means for distributing the *WisArch News* newsletter and facilitates Society related communications.