

Interpreting the Past for the Public

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Introduction

This research was undertaken to provide a database of material from which to draw information to educate the regional residents about local archaeology and the history of the American Indian cultures in the Chippewa River Valley and Wisconsin. Each article is part of an electronic database of texts with accompanying photographs that can be utilized to create pamphlets, posters, or websites for educational purposes. Depending upon which topic is being covered there are a variety of ways to combine different articles to provide the needed information. Each article was written with the intention of providing little known and interesting facts, as well as correcting misconceptions about local history for the public. In addition to sharing knowledge this research hopes to engender public support for the preservation of archaeological resources, an increasingly important component of archaeological research.

Trade

Not all of the artifacts used by Native Americans were manufactured locally by the group; some were manufactured elsewhere and made their way into Wisconsin and its different regions through trade. Archaeologists also find evidence that raw materials

were traded and then the artifacts were manufactured by the local group. For example, obsidian from Yellowstone Park, chalcedony from North Dakota, and copper from Michigan's Upper Peninsula have been found at sites in the Chippewa River Valley. In some parts of Wisconsin materials from as far away as the Gulf Coast were found.

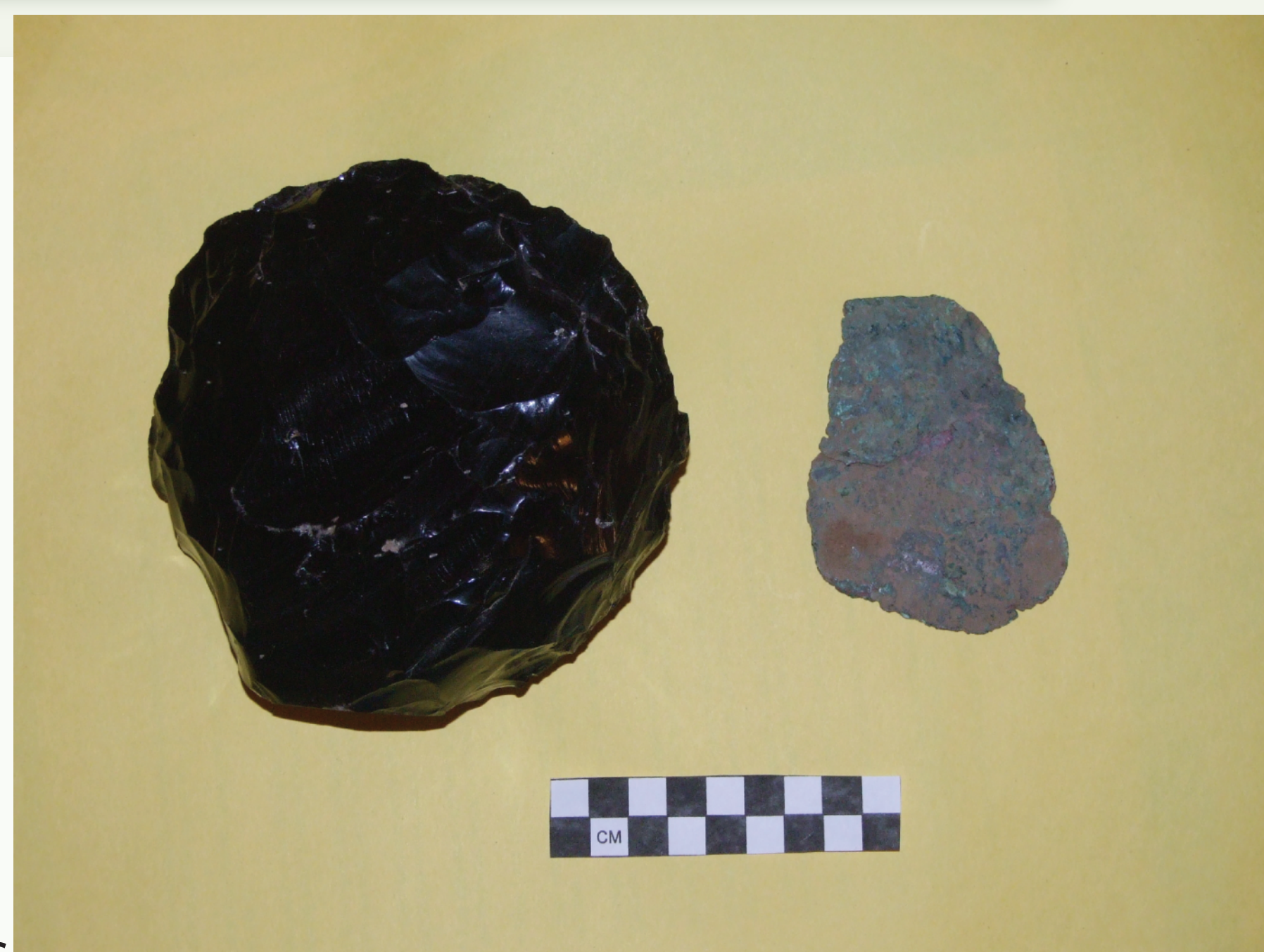


Figure 1. Obsidian and copper found at a Wisconsin site. Photograph: Jennifer Barth

Mounds

Mounds commonly come in three types, conical, linear, and effigy mounds. Conical mounds are simple circular mounds that vary in height and circumference; linear mounds can be either

tapered or uniform; and effigy mounds primarily are in the shape of either real or mythical animals familiar to Native American culture. The type of mounds erected depends on which Native American group built them and when they were built. Contrary to common belief not all mounds were used as burial mounds; archaeologists theorize that those that weren't were actually used as boundary markers for different territories.



Figure 2. Oval shaped mound located at Wakanda Park in Menomonie, Wisconsin. Photograph: Jennifer Barth

Wakanda Park in Menomonie, Wisconsin

There is evidence that the mounds found at Wakanda Park were effigy mounds from the Late Woodland Period (600-1,200 A.D.). Of the twenty mounds in the area seventeen were destroyed by flooding when a dam was built, though fourteen were excavated prior to this. When excavated the mounds were found to contain the remains of burials and rock altars. There are three oval shaped mounds left of the group, they can be seen at Wakanda Park.



Figure 3. Two of three remaining oval shaped burial mounds located at Wakanda Park in Menomonie, Wisconsin. Photograph: Jennifer Barth

Aztalan

Aztalan is a site in eastern Wisconsin that is thought to be evidence of colonization from Cahokia, a Mississippian Culture Native American settlement in Illinois. Aztalan was a palisaded village of about 31 acres containing, in addition to the village itself, two platform mounds with ceremonial buildings. Initially inhabited by Late Woodland peoples the population became mixed with the arrival of Mississippian immigrants from Cahokia. Evidence of this immigration comes from pottery. Aztalan pottery has many similar features to Cahokian pottery and pottery actually manufactured at Cahokia has been found at the Aztalan site. Currently Aztalan is part of a State Park, a reconstructed mound and log palisade now occupy the area.



Figure 4. Reconstructed palisade of Mississippian Culture Native Americans at Aztalan State Park near Jefferson, Wisconsin. Photograph: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (David J. Eagan)

Petroglyphs

Petroglyphs are a form of rock art where the rock surface has been chipped or carved away. They can appear on any rock face but are most commonly found in caves where they are removed from the elements and thus better preserved. At the over one hundred rock art sites in Wisconsin it is the petroglyph form of rock art that is most common; quite rarely some sites have petroglyphs that have also been painted.



Figure 5. Carved petroglyph animal figure with painted components. Photograph: Doug Reace

Copper Working

Native Americans did not exclusively create tools and ornaments out of bone and rock; many were skilled in working copper into useful and ornamental artifacts. Most native copper came from areas near Lake Superior with trade bringing it to southern Wisconsin groups. Copper was worked by hammering and

annealing processes to shape a variety of tools including axes and knives beginning about 5000 years ago. Ornamental and ceremonial copper use including beads, pendants, celts, plaques, and hair tubes didn't begin until about 1900 years ago in the Middle Woodland period.



Figure 6. Copper artifacts produced by the Old Copper Culture. Clockwise from middle: a spear point, an awl or punch, two projectile points, two knives, and an axe head. Photograph: Wisconsin Historical Society

References

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