

Annual Report of the State Archaeologist

1 July 1974 - 30 June 1975

1. The Changing Nature of Archaeological Research.

A series of recent federal requirements affecting both prehistoric and historic archaeological sites are forcing archaeologists to devote the majority of their field research time to intensive archaeological site survey and away from extensive single site excavation. The thrust of these federal regulations is toward the preservation of archaeological sites as significant segments of our national cultural resources; a thrust that demands archaeological site inventory, evaluation of significance, and recommendations for protection or mitigation by trained, professional archaeologists.

Much of the time of both the State Archaeologist and the archaeologists on the staff of the State Historic Preservation Officer is spent in reviewing construction permit requests by federal agencies and by private individuals. The federally required environmental impact statements (required by the National Environmental Protection Act) include determination and evaluation of both archaeological and historic sites within the areas to be affected. This involves an initial record and literature search and usually means a field check of the area. The latter is normally necessary as there are very few areas in the state that have been intensively surveyed in the past.

Further archaeological efforts are involved in the requirements of Executive Order 11593 that requires federal agencies to inventory all cultural resources on lands over which they have jurisdiction. Federal lands in Minnesota are controlled by several agencies, with the U.S. Forest Service controlling the largest land areas. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is the only federal agency that has begun this inventory task on any scale and this is perhaps fortunate at this point in time. Federal agencies with land jurisdiction, with the exception of the National Park Service, do not employ professional archaeologists for field surveys, but depend upon

archaeologists in various institutions to do this work under contract. The word "fortunate" is used advisedly, for if each of these agencies decided to meet this demand for inventory immediately, the number of trained archaeologists required for the task would be enormous.

Finally, the Reservoir Salvage Act of 1966 as amended, (the 1974 Moss-Bennett bill) extends the enabling legislation for mitigation (salvage archaeology in the older terminology) to all federal agencies. This act allows a percentage of construction funds to be used for excavation of "significant" sites threatened by construction or other activities that modify the landscape. "Significant" in this sense means sites that are on or that qualify for inclusion of the National Register of Historic Places.

Each of these requirements demands the services of professional archaeologists, in some cases limited to the State Archaeologist and archaeologists on the staff of the State Historic Preservation Officer, but in most cases involving nearly all professional archaeologists within the state working through their institutions under contracts negotiated with the agencies involved. The results, only beginning to be felt in the summer of 1975, have serious implications for individual archaeologists and for the institutions that employ them. It is immediately obvious that there are too few professional archaeologists in the state to meet these demands--demands that are certain to accelerate in the next few years. A number of academic institutions including private colleges, the State University system, and two campuses of the University of Minnesota do not now have archaeologists on their faculties. Another obvious conclusion is that the State Historic Preservation Officer in the Minnesota Historical Society is understaffed and the State Archaeologist, with no budget for staff, cannot cope effectively with the demands placed upon them.

There are also serious implications for the professional archaeologist in that the usual problem-oriented field research excavations that are essential to the development of knowledge and cultural theory will almost disappear in favor of site survey. This is not to imply that site survey is devoid of any sort of problem-oriented theoretical concerns; it does imply that archaeologists involved in survey activities must make every effort to maximize these survey activities and develop problem orientations that can be applied to site survey. The danger is that survey will be carried out solely as an inventory--simply locating and counting sites--a practice that has very limited professional value and that, in the long run, is self-defeating. It must be remembered that such site surveys require not only an inventory but an evaluation of significance, and survey done outside the context of research problems and theoretical concerns simply produces a list of sites and locations with very little promise of data needed for evaluation.

2. State of Minnesota Requirements.

The state has some requirements for site inventory and protection similar to those of the federal government, but, unfortunately, these requirements are neither extensive enough nor adequately adhered to. In the majority of cases, it is only when federal funds--usually on a matching basis--are involved that either the State Archaeologist or the State Historic Preservation Officer are notified and then it is because the federal regulations come into play. A good example of fine cooperation from a state agency is the Minnesota Highway Department and its Highway Survey Program operated under contract by the Minnesota Historical Society. This program has been in effect for several years and it appears that it may soon be expanded to include county highway construction. With other state agencies, the level of cooperation is highly variable and certainly not satisfactory. I would suggest that a bill be prepared for the legislature making mandatory the

inventory, evaluation and mitigation provisions parallel to those of federal statutes. I would also suggest that one or more of the larger state agencies, particularly the Department of Natural Resources, and the State Planning Agency, employ a professional archaeologist to monitor all construction and land alteration proposals in the planning stages and to refer them to the State Archaeologist and State Historic Preservation Officer for review-- much as Minnesota Highway Department advance construction planning information is provided to the Highway Survey Program staff. I would also suggest that the Department of Natural Resources automatically refer for review all permit requests from private individuals or corporations. At the present time, only those that also require a federal permit are seen, and that information comes from the federal agency and not DNR.

3. Revision of the Minnesota Field Archaeology Act.

An unfortunate event during the 1975 legislative session was the introduction of companion bills in the Senate and House to revise the Field Archaeology Act as it dealt with the State Archaeologist position. It was unfortunate in that neither the State Archaeologist nor the majority of the professional archaeologists in the state who are members of the Council for Minnesota Archaeology were consulted in drawing up the bills. Members of the Council, particularly Council President Richard Lane and former editor Timothy Fiske, with the help of many members of the Minnesota Archaeological Society were able to delay action on the bills. Members of the Council meeting in May, 1975, agreed to review the legislation and to discuss the question before the fall, 1975, meeting. It is hoped that a solution satisfactory to professional archaeologists and which is in the best interests of the state can be found.

As of 30 June 1975, all funds for the operation of the State Archaeologists duties ended. Over the past ten years, these had been supplied by the

legislature through the Minnesota Resources Commission, and the original intent of the members of that Commission was that such financing would become a part of the regular legislative budget process. This did not happen and while the needs have spiraled, the budget has been eliminated. Short term, emergency funding at some minimal level is essential if the duties required of the State Archaeologist by law are to be met.

4. Council for Minnesota Archaeology, Inc.

This organization is composed of professional archaeologists active in Minnesota research and employed by institutions located within the state. It is from this group that individuals come who are involved in contract survey archaeology with federal agencies, and to this date, the cooperation has been excellent. Archaeologists lobbied hard and long for the federal requirements discussed above, and they have an obligation to provide the required services. The prospects for a more viable organization and one that has greater involvement in policy formulation are very good. The prospects for better cooperation between Council members and lay archaeologists who are members of the Minnesota Archaeological Society are also very good. The Council can, and should, play a more significant role in archaeological activities in Minnesota.

5. Minnesota Indian Affairs Commission.

The practice that was initiated several years ago of informing the Executive Secretary of the Commission of all plans for prehistoric site excavation each year continues. Members of the Commission as well as members of nearly all reservation and urban groups in the state are also given this information and asked to raise questions about any planned field excavations. This system of communication has benefitted both the archaeologist and the American Indians resident in the state. Communication needs

to be expanded, however, and archaeologists must make continued efforts to understand the points of view represented among various American Indian groups. Efforts must also be made to increase American Indian participation in the training programs, the field research, and the interpretative programs centered on their own cultural heritage. This is a continued obligation of the archaeologists and the institutions employing them.

7. Permits.

No applications for archaeological permits required for excavation on non-federal public lands were received during the past year.

8. Publications.

The major publication this last year was another in the Prehistoric Archaeology Series published by the Minnesota Historical Society. This issue, number 11 in the series, is entitled "Aspects of Upper Great Lakes Anthropology" and includes contributions by 15 separate authors. The series was begun under a subsidy from the Minnesota Resources Commission and is very important in making available the results of archaeological research within the state. Much of the success of the series is due to the excellent editing and production skills of June Holmquist, Jean Brookins, and Alan Ominsky of the Minnesota Historical Society.

9. State Archaeologist's Activities.

A great deal of time was spent in reviewing permit applications and environmental impact statements forwarded by federal agencies. The majority came from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District, but others came from agencies as disparate as the Federal Aviation Administration and the Soil Conservation Service.

Field research included work at the L.A. Wilford site (21ML12) located in Mille Lacs-Kathio State Park. This site is a late prehistoric-early

historic Eastern Dakota habitation site and has been utilized as the site of the annual University of Minnesota field archaeology school.

A contract with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provided for excavations at the Gull Lake Dam area in Crow Wing County in 1974. The major portion of the research was directed by Christy A.H. Caine, with Thomas Neumann completing some aspects of the excavations.

A survey team under Thomas Neumann tested the Lake Bronson Site in Kittson County to determine if county highway construction would destroy a segment of the site and to determine if the site extended into Lake Bronson State Park. Both questions were answered affirmatively, and what was originally determined to be a single component Arvilla Complex site appears to have a much earlier pre-ceramic component.

Public interpretation included completion of the Visitor Center planning for Mille Lacs-Kathio State Park and the construction and installation of exhibits by Ken Sander. This small interpretation center is intended to provide the park visitor with a visual synopsis of the prehistoric archaeological sequence and major trends of cultural change seen in the large number of prehistoric sites located within the park. A color film by Stephen Church on the University of Minnesota Field School in Mille Lacs-Kathio Park and at Gull Lake will also be made available to the public as will his second film on Gull Lake archaeology. The latter was completed under contract with the Corps of Engineers.

Elden Johnson
30 June 1975