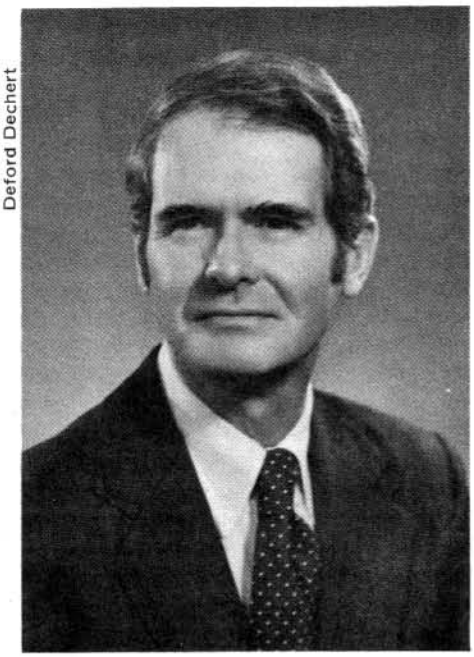
ARTIFACTS

Vol. III No. 3 March 1975 The Shepaug Valley Archaeological Society



Deford Dechert

Richard W. Davis

SVAS APPOINTS RICHARD W. DAVIS DIRECTOR OF AMERICAN INDIAN INSTITUTE

Richard W. Davis, retiring Headmaster of Miss Porter's School in Farmington, has been appointed Director of the SVAS' American Indian Institute of Connecticut, and will assume his new duties on July 1.

The Institute, which is now under construction, will be a research and education facility for the discovery and study of the human prehistory of the area. Among Mr. Davis's duties will be the inauguration and direction of school and university courses, educational materials, lectures and workshops, exhibits and the use and development of the Institute's collection of Indian artifacts.

Mr. Davis was graduated from the Taft School and Princeton University and holds an M. A. and Ph. D. from Yale University. He has also done graduate study in history and anthropology at Wesleyan and Yale. Last summer he visited with Mr. Stuart M. Struever, the director of the well-known Koster Site in Illinois where excavations have uncovered prehistoric communities dating back to at least 6,000 B.C.

Edmund K. Swigart, President of the SVAS, commenting on the appointment, said "As an administrator, teacher and student of history, Mr. Davis brings to the Institute a wealth of experience, an imaginative and enthusiastic personality and a conviction that the Institute can supply a vital role in preserving and interpreting the prehistory of Connecticut."

Mr. and Mrs. Davis are the parents of four children and plan to make their home in Washington.

Report

1974 SUMMER DIGS

Produce Important Samples for Dating

In addition to a number of sites in western Connecticut which were surveyed by SVAS Education Chairman John Pawloski for the state, seven sites in five towns were extensively excavated by the SVAS during the summer of 1974. These included three sites in New Milford, and one each in New Preston, Southbury, Warren and Washington. Although the major sites being excavated last summer were far smaller in size than those in 1973 and therefore required smaller crews, over 200 different volunteers participated. Among those digging were the spring and fall Gunnery-Wykeham crews, and the SVAS summer legions. Also aiding the SVAS were the volunteer crews from Central Connecticut State College under Dr. Fred Warner and those from the University of Wisconsin under Philip Salkin. These two crews helped at critical times, both in New Preston and at the New Milford sites.

Students from the Wykeham-Gunnery Pre-College Program in Archaeology uncovered five hearths from three different cultures at the Washington site. One C-14 sample was collected from an apparent trash pit by David Crane, Brad Simms and Edmund Swigart, the program's director. The date recently received from Geochron Laboratory in Cambridge, Massachusetts is 3435 B.C. ± 180 years (Gx3640) or 900 years earlier than the oldest date previously reported for Connecticut by two other Gunnery students, Stephen Post and Douglas Jarvis.

The 3435 B.C. date was from an hourglass-shaped hearth 6½ inches into the subsoil on the deepest occupied level so far unearthed at the site. The pit was 24 inches in diameter and 13 inches deep. Spread throughout the pit were flecks of charcoal, small pieces of calcined bone, 23 carbonized hickory nut shell fragments, flint and quartz debitage, and one whole and two broken small quartz triangles of the Squibnocket variety. Also in the pit were crude quartz tools including two hafted scrapers, a hump-back scraper, a hammerstone, parts of two knives, two tool bases worked on three sides and similar to those found on small-stem sites, a tool tip, and six unidentifiable crude tools.

At one New Milford site a large, classic Otter Creek point (see the September, 1974 issue of *Artifacts*) was found next to a hearth. The hearth should therefore provide a date for the first time in Connecticut for this very early Laurentian artifact.

Another report recently returned by Geochron is the date of 1955 B.C. ± 140 (Gx3639). This was for a firepit discovered by John Pawloski and his students on a small-stem point level (see the December 1974 issue of *Artifacts*) in New Milford. Directly associated with the pit was a very large post mold, usually indicative of a dwelling plan. The SVAS is eagerly awaiting spring so that further excavation can be done on the site to see whether this post mold might be part of the earliest dwellings so far recorded in Connecticut.

Also of great significance were sherds of stone (steatite) bowl and Vignette I type pottery in and around a line of fire-

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After Hours

Over the past three years I have come to treasure these times of solitude and reflection as I must take time out from my frantic pace to somehow articulate what I most want to share with you in this column.

Sometimes the events of the previous few months are easy to relate. They speak for themselves. Engaging a full-time director for the American Indian Institute is clearly such an event. We are all overjoyed that this need has now been so capably filled. I must admit, however, I find it difficult to wait until July 1st for Richard Davis, with all of his infectious enthusiasm and talent, to officially join the SVAS family.

I am also happy to welcome Miss Judy Herrick to the SVAS fold. She will be working with Mr. Davis as of July 1st and has already begun working on the Society's area membership.

With the imminent addition of a professional archaeologist to our staff, this will bring to five the number of full-time or part-time personnel which your Society has hired in the last 18 months.

I do not think there is anyone connected with the SVAS, including myself, who would *ever* in his wildest dreams have dared predict this meteoric course we have followed in these three short years of our existence – nearly $400,000 raised; a 3800-square-foot research facility nearly completed on 15 acres of SVAS-owned land; over 200 Indian sites located in one 200-square-mile study area; a collection of over 300,000 scientifically valuable Indian artifacts, and over 1000 people who have served as volunteers in some capacity.

"Why?" I ask myself in these quiet moments. "Why this?" I am truly awed by the magnitude of what is going on here.

Why should we have received applications for the position of Director of the American Indian Institute from people of all ages from all over the United States, many who are eminently qualified – Ph. D's, heads and assistant heads of large institutions, some controlling budgets of over one million dollars a year? Why should they want to come to a small research center, tucked away in the western Connecticut hills?

Then I interview them and I hear the same small voice in them that I cannot still in myself.

In their own way they say it. There is something more to life than position and money – and even fame. Without meaning, all this is nothing. And so all these years they have had a bit of Don Quixote lying buried in them – they have all "Dreamed the Impossible Dream," even as they went about their daily life routines.

In the interview this Dream takes many forms, but it has an underlying common theme. They believe that history has much to teach man. They believe that modern man, for all his ills, can learn from the triumphs and the mistakes of the past. They believe that people of all ages, and most especially the young, are ready to listen – if only they have something to listen to. And they share the terrible urgency of trying to get in touch with our predecessors and ancestors of thousands of years here in Connecticut who stand silently waiting – waiting to be heard before their unwritten legacy is lost and they are doomed to eternal silence.

They want to come here because they feel that something of deep significance is going on here that will give substance to their dreams and to their lives.

In the stillness of the night I am often haunted by this strange fact – that apparently something is going on here, and at times I am overwhelmed by the feeling that somehow in man's history, certain things are meant to be.

Perhaps the incredible string of good things that have happened to us means that this Quest was meant to be.

But what an awesome responsibility this puts on all of us!

Edmund K. Swigart
President,
Shepaug Valley Archaeological Society

LETTERS

(From Irving Harris, President-Chief Schagticoke Indians of Kent, Connecticut)

Dear Ned and SVAS Members:

Sincere congratulations to Ned Swigart, his staff and members and friends of SVAS for an undertaking so well done.

The construction of your museum may also serve as a monument for the recognition of the Native American. It presents many truths in Archaeology and Anthropology. It insures the fact that Columbus did not "discover" America. It is a great honor to all those concerned to have such interest and dedication.

I might also comment on the fact that although my interest in the Native American is present and future, my friendship with Mr. Ned Swigart and through interest generated by your project, made it possible for me to meet and know other dedicated Indian enthusiasts, which has led to a relationship of mutual benefit.

Thanking the entire SVAS membership,

Yours in Brotherhood,
(s) Irving A. Harris

1974 SUMMER DIGS

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pits at another site in New Milford. They were first located by John Pawloski and later excavated by Philip Salkin and his crew. The date of 1095 B.C. ± 135 (Gx3638) from a firepit Mr. Pawloski dug would appear to positively identify for the first time the period of transition from stoneware to pottery by Connecticut Indians. In this pit was a thin, well-made sherd of steatite. In subsequent excavations, pottery was found in and around the line of pits with additional steatite, by Mr. Salkin's crew.

The other three sites where excavation took place all had a late Woodland assemblage as a major component.

A small rock shelter in Warren, excavated by Gunnery students James Schroeder and Eric Leidel and Wykeham students Anne Richardson and Pat Vreeland, had bone, nuts, and four firepits. Associated with one of the firepits was a flint tool. On the same apparent stratigraphic level, Gordon Chabot, previous to the SVAS work, excavated a side-notched flint point along with some Indian pottery. Unfortunately the pottery was lost before the SVAS learned of the existence of the rock shelter. The C-14 sample associated with the flint tool and submitted for dating disappeared during the dating process. The other three pits excavated by the SVAS appeared too far removed from the center of Indian occupation, and of doubtful enough integrity to risk dating at this time.

The Southbury site, dated by three C-14 samples between A.D. 1320 and

1410, was the scene of a limited but productive dig effort headed by Mr. and Mrs. Walter Koons. In addition to numerous artifacts and more hearths, the highlight of their dig season was the discovery of a celt (an ungrooved axe), the first recorded from that site. Also these digs have established the northern terminus of site occupation, thus completing the northwest to eastern boundary previously established for the A.D. 1300-1400 camping activity. The southern boundary is yet to be determined.

The major summer dig activity took place at a rock shelter in New Preston first excavated by Silas Merrill in the late 1960's and first reported to the SVAS by Bernard Powell and Ted Adams. The unique feature of this rock shelter, according to Dr. Douglas Jordan, Connecticut State Archaeologist, and Dr. Fred Warner of Central Connecticut State College, and head of the State Site Survey, is the fact that the soil is not the typically acid New England soil. Its alkalinity is probably the result of thousands of pounds of bones being deposited on the site for several thousand years, according to state soil scientist Dr. David Hill of the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. Evidence supporting this theory, in addition to the huge quantities of bone, is that the surface of the site is the most alkaline, a pH of 8, while the subsoil is a more normal acid, a pH of 5. A limestone outcropping, the other possible reason for alkaline soils, would cause the subsoil to be more alkaline than the topsoil and no evidence of either the outcropping or this reverse layering is present.

Fifty-five 5-foot squares were begun after the site surface was mapped and large surface rockfalls had been removed. Of the 55 squares, 11 squares in the northern end and seven squares in the southern section were partially or wholly excavated by the team from Central Connecticut, nine squares were partially excavated in the central section by Philip Salkin's crew, and 30 squares in the southern and central sections were partially excavated by the SVAS summer and fall teams. The earliest levels so far reached in the deepest square are the late archaic small-stem and triangle components. Sample squares will be excavated further this summer to establish whether earlier occupations are present.

At the time this interim report is being written, the following cultures are present, as identified by projectile points (spears and arrowheads) already C-14 dated by the SVAS or by researchers in New York, New Jersey or Pennsylvania.

Projectile Point Style	Date	No.	%
Levanna	+1350 A.D.	45	17
Jacks Reef	+ 700 A.D.	3	1
Fox Creek	+ 450 A.D.	7	2
Meadowood	+ 600 A.D.	1	.5
Orient	+1100 B.C.	4	1
Susquehanna	+1300 B.C.	6	2
Snook Kill	+1710 B.C.	6	2
Small Stem & Side Notch	+2200 B.C.	148	56
Small Triangle	+2500 B.C.	40	16
Vosberg	?	6	2
Brewerton	+3200 B.C.	1	.5
11 Components	5,000 year occupation	266	100%

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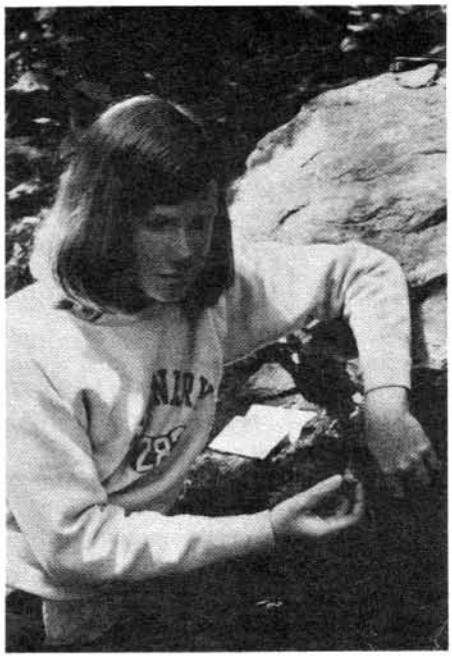

Margo Crabtree

Brett Boroughft, a Gunnery student participating in the summer dig in New Preston, holds a Levanna triangle point from the late Woodland period (A.D. 1000 – 1600).

Are YOU (and your friends) among our paid-up members? We need your support!

CAPITAL FUND DRIVE
$71,000 raised:
GOAL – $1000,000
by Dedication Day, May 10, 1975

Meeting Program

Meetings of the Shepaug Valley Archaeological Society are held in Bryan Memorial Hall in Washington Depot on the first Thursday of the month, October through May, at 8 p.m. The programs for winter and spring of 1975 are as follows:

March 6, 1975: Talk, "Above-ground Archaeology"
Ronald Whittle will present an introduction, accompanied by slides, to the study of early Washington gravestones. The designs carved on the stones will be interpreted in the context of social and religious history.

April 3, 1975: Talk, "Fort Stamford"
Elizabeth Gershman, chairman of the Fort Stamford Committee, will present a program concerning archaeological work at this site of early Connecticut history.

May 1, 1975: Film, *Exploring the Unwritten Past*
Shows how archaeologists and geologists use scientific methods to analyze objects associated with man in Great Britain prior to recorded history. Both the stratification and Carbon 14 methods are shown being used to date excavated materials such as pottery and tools. Organic remains such as bark, pollen, and grain are shown being used to gain information on the climate and vegetation of past times. The film uses models to demonstrate the orientation of Stonehenge and the structure of prehistoric mounds.

1974 SUMMER DIGS

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In addition to numerous quartz and flint tools, two bannerstone fragments (atl-atl weights), three pitted stones and four fragments of stone bowls (steatite) were found.

Six-hundred-eleven sherds of pottery from 32 different bowls were also excavated on the site. The number of different bowls has been computed solely from very different rim designs so that a conceivably greater number could be represented in this collection. The SVAS collection now has specimens with rounded and conical bottoms; others with plain, cord-marked, fabric-marked and incised body and neck markings; others with flattened, rounded, lipped and incised rims; and still others with plain and cord-marked interiors.

Because of the pH of 8 on the site, the unique feature of this rock shelter is the glimpse it offers into the diet of the people living there. At present it would appear that the great majority of preserved food remains at the site were deposited in the woodland (A.D. 1000 – 1600) and perhaps the late transition periods (1000 – 900 B.C.). This hypothesis may be verified when two C-14 sample results, one of a firepit and one of bone, are returned.

Bone made up the bulk of the food remains. The SVAS is indebted to David Starbuck of Yale for consenting to identify key bone specimens. While the SVAS is awaiting his report, there are certain tentative conclusions which can be reached concerning the species utilized, the diet preferences, and the seasonality of the site use.

From the first general check of the material, it would appear from deer toe-bones found in large numbers on the site that deer of all ages were killed and that therefore the site, at least in later years, was continuously occupied throughout the calendar year.

The following species of mammals, birds, reptiles and fish, grouped by the habitat that they live in, have been tentatively identified:

Woodland – white-tail deer, moose, elk, coyote or wolf, gray and red fox, porcupine, racoon, striped skunk, gray and red squirrel, wild turkey, and box turtle.

Fresh Water – beaver, muskrat, otter, catfish, and fresh water mussel.

Salt Water – hard-shell clam or quahog.

Field – woodchuck and rabbit.

Cave Dwellers – chipmunk, mouse, (porcupine), (skunk), snake.

Domestic – short-faced dog.

Unknown – birds, small mammals.

It is assumed that from the animal remains found on the site and therefore hypothesized to have been eaten by the Indians, that woodland species rank first, followed closely by water species.

In terms of numbers of specific joints found in the half of the collection examined in detail, deer rank first (64% of the identifiable bone joints) followed by elk-moose (6%). In terms of poundage of dressed meat available, figuring an average of 125 pounds per deer, 200+ pounds per elk-moose and one pound for all else, the percentages of meat assumed to have been eaten in the Indian diet is a revealing 86% deer, 13% elk-moose and 1% everything else.

Other apparently favorite meals on the site were "clam bakes." Hundreds of fresh-water mussel fragments were found spread over the entire site. Hickory, acorn, beech, hazel, and chestnuts in that numerical order were also found on the site, but the great majority appeared to be the result of a rodent meal rather than any Indian activity. No other plant material has as yet been identified although flotation samples were collected and taken to the University of Wisconsin for the identification of microscopic seeds and other organic debris preserved in the soil.

Much of the winter has been spent in examining, classifying and recording the immense amount of material excavated during the summer months. For every hour spent in the field, at least three must be spent in the laboratory in order to "clear the decks" for another digging season.

SAVE THIS DATE

On Saturday, May 10, from 3 to 5 o'clock, the SVAS will hold an Open House at the American Indian Institute, with tours of the building and Nature Trail and a brief dedication service at 4 o'clock. All members will receive an invitation with a complete program in April.

ARTIFACTS

The Shepaug Valley Archaeological Society

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