

Maine attraction

11,000-year-old habitat discovered

By Donald J. Frederick
special writer

A paleo-Indian site almost 11,000 years old, complete with a hearth and thousands of stone tools, has been excavated in a dry lake bed in western Maine.

Discovery of a nearby killing ground, where animals were speared by the Indians makes the site on remote Aziscolos Lake unique in the East, according to archaeologist Richard Gramly of the Maine State Museum, who directed the excavation.

"Similar paleo-Indian habitations have been found in the East, but they've never been accompanied by a killing ground," he explained.

The hunting area yielded four complete fluted or grooved spear points "in mint-sharp condition" and tip sections of six more.

THE INTREPID hunters built their first fires in the area in the shadow of a waning ice age. Most of the great ice sheets had retreated to central Canada 11,000 years ago, although scattered remnants may have lingered in the highlands around the site.

Gramly pointed out that the climate at the 1,600-foot-high encampment, surrounded even today by wild hilly country, was comparable to the weather encountered at 7,000 to 8,000 feet in the Rockies or similar mountainous regions in Alaska.

"We can now infer," he said, "that no part of the eastern United States was off limits to these prehistoric peoples just because of a harsh environment."

Supported by the National Geographic Society, the archeologist uncovered more than 13,000 stone artifacts at the site. Almost half of them were shaped into tools such as spear points, knives, scrapers, and wedge-like chisels.

The great number of artifacts leads Gramly to believe that the habitation site — located at the end of a broad mountain river valley in ancient times — was occupied by perhaps one or two family groups on at least 50 different occasions. The visits may have continued on and off for as long as 100 years.

BITTER WINDS and blinding snows drove the hunters from the region in the colder months, just as they do most modern-day visitors. During a harsh winter the temperature can plunge to -35 F in the area.

So why did these early people return again and again after wintering elsewhere? Abundant game was one attraction.

The hunting area yielded four complete fluted or grooved spear points "in mint-sharp condition" and tip sections of six more.

A survey of the terrain revealed a spot where a small stream bisected the river in the valley. It was the only place where migrating animals could easily have reached the other side, and it was at this confluence that Gramly found the spear points. Unfortunately, there were no animal bones remaining on the site; the acidic soil had long ago devoured them.

But there was another reason the Indians were drawn to the valley. They wanted to replenish their tool kits. Just 20 miles north of the site, Gramly found Ledge Ridge, a rocky forested outcrop yielding a fine grade of stone.

"There's no question that the stone used to manufacture the tools at the habitation site came from this ridge," he said. "It's just a question of time until we can find the workshops."

Last year the archeologist had great success finding such workshops at Mount Jasper, a small mountain rising above the mill town of Berlin, N.H.

Indians began digging into a cliff near Jasper's summit 7,000 years ago. They were after rhyolite, an igneous rock prized for making tools such as knives, spear

points, drills and scrapers. Chunks of rhyolite weighing as much as 20 pounds were broken off the main mass with the aid of heavy greenstone hammers.

BY THE TIME generations of these primitive miners had exhausted the rich source of stone centuries later, they had tunnelled 30 feet into the mountain. The pillar of rock that they wisely left to support the roof of the mine still stands near the entrance.

"The mine is one of the only ancient Indian subsurface working areas yet found in North America, and is a striking example of the ingenuity of these early people," observed Gramly.

The earliest craftsmen shaped the stone on the crest of the mountain. Later workshops were situated on the banks of the Dead River several hundred feet below.

Gramly and his team found prodigious amounts of worked stone at these lower workshops. In one 30-square-foot area, more than 100,000 pieces were recovered.

But exploring the rugged, wooded terrain from top to bottom wasn't easy. As the archeologist put it, "On this site we learned our three R's very quickly — rocks, rocks, and raw knuckles." The hard work turned up about 400 finished tools at Mount Jasper, and promised new insights into ancient travel patterns.

The first people to mine the mountain stayed in the area, whereas later Indians ranged widely throughout what is now New England.

Said Gramly: "They stopped at other lithic source areas, made new tools of other rocks, and by the time they returned a year or more after wandering the northern woods, they discarded some of their badly battered tools at Mount Jasper. Similarly, I feel that as other ancient stone sites are discovered, we'll find stone from Mount Jasper at some of them."

Madonna College graduates 551 ... in Temple Beth El

Gathered in a Jewish temple, more than 300 Madonna College graduates and their families heard from a Catholic theologian a commencement challenge to "speak credibly about a world that is created by God as a gift."

The Rev. John M. Quinn of Madonna's religious studies program delivered the challenge as the Livonia college held its 34th commencement in Temple Beth El of Birmingham. The move to the temple was mainly practical and a little ecclesiastical, said Sister M. Francine Van De Vyver, Madonna president.

"With 551 graduates, our auditorium was just too small," she said of the first off-campus commencement. "I had participated in a special program at the Beth El at the invitation of Rabbi Richard Hertz, and many of our students are familiar with it because a visit there is part of our religious studies program."

"So I asked, and the rabbi and the board said they would be honored to have us."

Commencement for the college's largest class also included the awarding of an honorary doctor of humanities to Mother M. Clareline Dzienis, superior of the Midwest's Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Province of the Felician Sisters. The order founded and operates the Livonia college.

Diplomas were awarded to 29 recipients of Madonna's first bachelor of social work degrees, 399 receiving bachelor of science degrees, 111 receiving bachelor of science in nursing degrees, 46 graduating with bachelor of arts degrees, and 56 who completed associate degree programs.

FR. QUINN, who is associate pastor of St. Peter church in Harper Woods, discussed in his address the role of Catholic higher education in this country.

He told the graduates that despite monumental changes in the world, "the mission of the Catholic college remains ever the same from the great schools of Alexandria and Antioch ... to the founding of our unique system in our country."

"It is meant to further the exploration of bringing the Catholic Christian tradition into dialogue with the contemporary human experience," he said.

He also said that language out of Vatican II reinforces this idea.

"The Council fathers," he said, "remind us that it is our responsibility to read the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the gospel."

Fr. Quinn likened the Catholic college of today to "a lobster shedding its outer shell but growing and stretching in new ways."

"The task is every old and always new," he said. "We are as a pilgrim people, proclaiming a tradition, interpreting a present, enriching that tradition with our own unique insights and shaping a more humane and Christian future."

TOP HONOR among the graduates went to Mary Ellen Fritsch, natural sciences and religious studies major from Oak Park, who received the college's Lumen Award.

She maintained a 3.8 average, was active on the campus ministry team and did volunteer work at St. Edith Catholic Church of Livonia while a Madonna student.

Students who earned degrees with highest honors for grade-point averages of 3.9-4.0 included Rita Westhaus, Joanne Turshnik and Linda Myhrzky of Livonia, Susan Tuckey of Garden City and Carol Reiske of Farmington Hills.

High-honors diplomas went to Mary Louise Elzerman, Barbara Kutz, Christa Otto, Phyllis Paterson, Franca Tartaglia, Donna Tibbault, Maria Trujillo and Robert Zashak, all of Livonia; Kimberly Bogacki and Karen A. Pace of Redford; Lynn M. Pietrzak, Theresa Reese, Carol Sheppard and Wayne A. Wolf, all of Westland; Michael Harpster and Sharon Marie Milligan of Garden City; Dianne S. Evans of Canton; Patricia Cassidy and Barbara Majors of Farmington Hills.

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