



WRIGHT L. COFFINBERRY CHAPTER

MICHIGAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

COFFINBERRY NEWS BULLETIN

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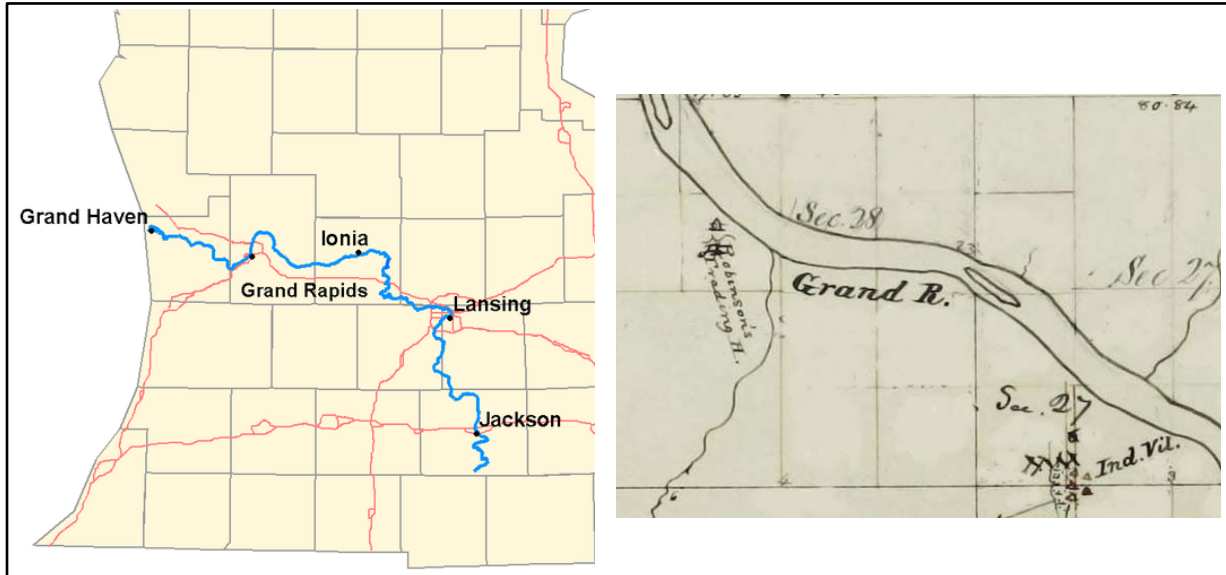
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Please submit articles to Lynn Chapman (lynnalanchapman@gmail.com) or to Wesley Jackson (jackowe@gvsu.edu) via e-mail or in person.

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

Dr. Jessica Yann from MSU will be presenting *Historic Odawa and Trade in the Grand River Valley*

“In this presentation, I will start by exploring the Grand River Valley as it may have looked in the mid-1700s and early 1800s, including the environment and the people present. These groups, though incorporated into the European institution of the fur and cloth trade, used these trade relationships to leverage political action and thwart government-sponsored removal. I will explore some of these strategies through ethnohistoric and archaeological data.”



The meeting is expected to be held in the Anthropology Lab at Grand Valley State University. See the back of this bulletin for map and parking information.

GVSU Covid Policy

As of the time of writing we are still planning to meet in the Anthropology lab at GVSU (see schedule of meetings below). GVSU has required or advised the following:

- As mentioned above, masks must be worn.
- If you are sick, please do not attend the meeting, likewise, if you are sick you should not be on campus.

- GVSU is taking precautions to have hand sanitizer available, cleaning high touch surfaces such as the desks and table tops.
- We are going to maintain safe social distancing (6 ft) – to that end Wes is going to determine what the capacity of the Anthropology lab is. One possible alternative for us would be to duck into the adjacent classroom, which we have done in the past, if classes are not being held there at the time of our meetings.
- Last, but not least, if you consider yourself to be a high-risk category, please do not put yourself in danger by attending the meetings. As much as we would like having you to the meeting, we would rather see people being safe.

CHAPTER NEWS

Our plans as of now are to continue with the seminar series we had started in 2019-2020 which were so abruptly cancelled after our meeting in February 2020.

- **November 11th**, Dr. Jessica Yann of MSU will be presenting on the historic Odawa occupants of the Grand River valley and the fur trade.
- **December 9th**, Jeff Seaver will present on the American settlement of the Grand River valley.
- **January 13th** (2022), Dan Wymer will give a presentation on the Gray site, a Gainey complex early Paleo site.
- **February 10th** (2022) Alex Michnick will present his research concerning fur traders Rix Robinson and Daniel DeMarsac. Note: Alex is using materials that came either directly or indirectly through Coffinberry Chapter excavations in the 1960's and 1970's.
- **March 10th** (2022), Speaker TBD Research on the Ottawa County Poor Farm and GVSU recent field school there.
- **April 14th** (2022), TBD
- **May 12th** (2022) Lynn Chapman, Cartographic History of Western Michigan. This is if we do not have another speaker lined up. I (Lynn Chapman) love old maps and have collected a number in print form or digitally and have assembled them in a presentation that I think will be interesting.

The presentations after January 2022 are somewhat tentative.

The Coffinberry News Bulletin has been distributed via hard copy handed out at the chapter meetings and through posting on the Coffinberry web site linked to the MAS

website however, the link to our website coming out of the MAS home page has been down for some time now. The website for the Coffinberry chapter was created a few years ago by the Michigan Archaeological Society. In the home page of the MAS website, click on “About us” and scroll down to the list of chapters and links to their websites.

However, the website can be accessed directly by searching “Coffinberry Chapter of the Michigan Archaeological Society”, or, <http://chapmicharch.com/coffinberry/>

Also note, some of the chapters, notably the Huron Valley and Detroit chapters have additional, interesting content besides the bare minimum of meeting time and location.

SOCIETY NEWS

The fall meeting of the MAS was not be held on 9/26 as was tentatively indicated in the previous edition of the *Coffinberry News Bulletin*. If and when there is going to be a fall meeting is to be determined. Nor to this authors knowledge, has a new issue of the *Michigan Archeologist* been released as was previously indicated it would be.

UP-COMING EVENTS

- Archaeology Day at the Michigan Historical Museum is scheduled for October 23'd, 2021.
- If MAS is going to have a fall meeting the time and location will be announced later.

ARCHAEOLOGY AROUND MICHIGAN

The Midwest Archaeological Conference (MAC) was held at the Kellogg Center, MSU in East Lansing 10/7 – 10/9/2021. In spite the small attendance due to the covid epidemic, many very interesting papers were presented. Alex Michnick participated in a poster session Friday afternoon, the topic being his GVSU senior thesis topic concerning differences observed in the assemblages from Rix Robinson's and Daniel De Marsac's trading posts. His description is provided below.



Alex M at the MAC poster session 10/8/2021.

Also, of interest to Coffinberry members who attended meetings in 2018 – 2019, Dr. Susan Kooiman, a MSU graduate who gave a presentation to the Coffinberry Chapter concerning her dissertation topic on Native American foodways in the northern Great Lakes, also presented a paper at MAC and has published a book *Ancient Pottery, Cuisine, and Society at the Northern Great Lakes* (University of Notre Dame Press) based largely on her dissertation research.

MAC is a gathering composed largely of professional archaeologists held annually at locations chosen around the Midwest.

Experiences at the Midwest Archaeological Conference In East Lansing, Michigan, 2021 Alexander Michnick

On October 8th, I made the trek out to East Lansing to convene with my peers at the Midwest Archaeological Conference (MAC). This was the day I was making my second poster presentation in my budding career after January of 2020 at the Society for Historical Archaeology. Likewise, the Midwest Historic Archaeological Conference was jointly being held with MAC this year, a conjunction that occurs every few years and allows two crowds of scholarship to intertwine and further the discussion about

archaeology in the Midwest. I met for lunch with some colleagues I had previously worked with at the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project in Niles, Michigan prior to the poster session we were all presenting in. This was the first time we were all in one place after the pandemic had set in, and it was an excellent indication that things are finally starting to look like normal.

My poster, “A Tale of Two Traders: Merchandise Sourcing and Item Preference Analysis from Two Nineteenth-Century Fur Trading Posts in the Grand River Valley” focused on a comparison between the commercial enterprises of Rix Robinson and Daniel DeMarsac, two Euro-American merchants who competed for business in the area surrounding present-day Ada and Lowell. The materials for this project were drawn from the anthropological collections at Grand Valley State University and the Special Collections of the Grand Rapids Public Library. Much of the archaeological investigation done on the Robinson and DeMarsac post sites were conducted by the Coffinberry Chapter during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Many familiar faces such as Dr. Terry Martin, Dr. Jan Brashler, and our own Lynn Chapman made appearances at the poster session to discuss the importance of continued and updated study from long-curated collections. I was pleased to also speak with Dr. Jessica Yann of Michigan State University, whose dissertation provided a wealth of contextual and analytical information to reference in the writing of “A Tale of Two Traders.” Several Cultural Resource Management (CRM, commercial archaeology) industry members also discussed their interest in work done on later fur trading sites in the Great Lakes region, an enterprise that was complex and geographically dispersed among hundreds of communities well into the 19th-century.

I look forward to many more conferences to come, notably the Society for Historical Archaeology’s first in-person conference since the beginning of the pandemic coming up in January! This year’s conference is being held in Philadelphia, a city I have not had the pleasure of travelling to, as of yet. Archaeology and the historical aspects of it that I have honed in on have given me many reasons to travel, so it is difficult to not pursue this amazing path.

FEATURE ARTICLES

A Stone Cache from Ottawa County Michigan

Wesley Jackson

In late 2020, an Ottawa County resident contacted Grand Valley State University regarding several artifacts recovered from his property. The land is situated on a bluff on the south bank of the lower Grand River, 600 ft amsl. Having just acquired the property, the land owner was working on grading the driveway and noticed several shiny stones with obvious working. In all, 14 bifaces were recovered from the surface

and near surface. No other prehistoric artifacts were discovered on the property and the scattering of historic artifacts dated to the 20th century.

From the photographs sent to Grand Valley, it was believed this biface concentration may have belonged to a single cache. In May of 2021, Dr. Janet Brashler and the author visited the landowner to record measurements and photographs of the bifaces. All artifacts are made on Upper Mercer Chert and are not projectile points, but instead bifaces in the middle of their reduction from a source material to becoming a finished tool. The stages of biface reduction, described by Andrefsky (2005), range from 1 to 5, with 1 being a core with minimal flaking and 5 being a finished biface. The artifacts from this collection exhibited little to no cortex and flaking around the edges, but did not achieve a flat cross section of a preform (Figure 1).

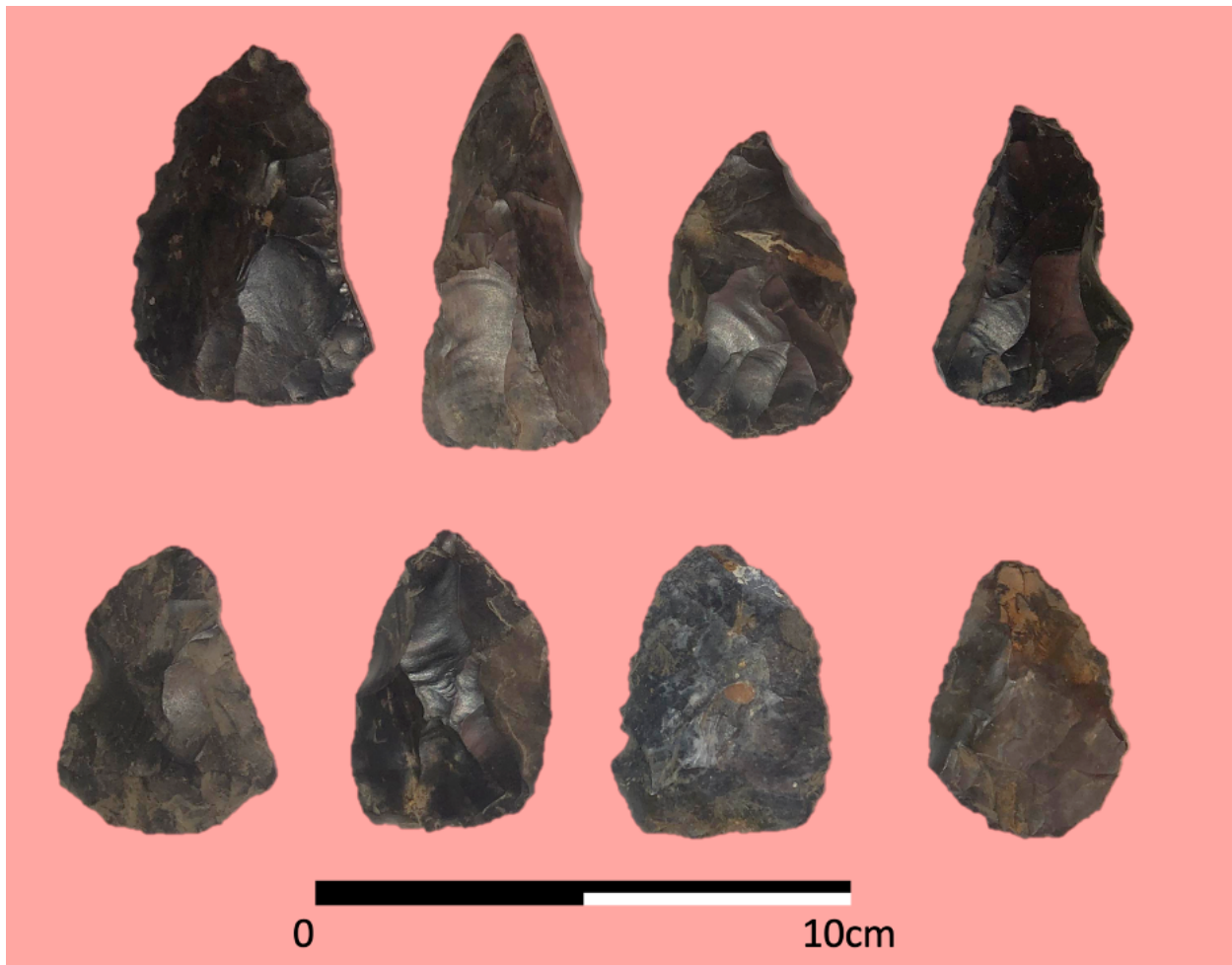


Figure 1. Select bifaces recovered from the lower Grand River cache discovered in 2020

Given the lack of associated material and context, Dr. Janet Brashler and the author placed a single 1X1 meter test pit near the findspot in July 2021 (Figure 2). The intent was to potentially recover additional diagnostic artifacts or bifaces and gain a better understanding of the stratigraphy and deposition. Unfortunately, no additional prehistoric artifacts were recovered, although a small number of 20th century artifacts were recovered including a rusted washer, bottle glass, a small bit of terra cotta, and a small piece of leather. Likewise, the stratigraphy proved to be highly disturbed. Although all bifaces were recovered out of their primary context and likely brought to the surface from the grading of the driveway, the description of their recover by the landowner and the proximity of all specimens, all were found in a 1-2 meter stretch along the side of the drive, still suggest the artifacts belonged to a single cache.



Figure 2. The south profile of the test pit showing a highly disturbed stratigraphy and continued fill deposits on the base.

Archaeological caches are an artifact concentration or archaeological site consisting of artifacts which were not discarded or lost, but rather were set aside with the intention of future use. Caches can consist of food items, stone tools, or other materials. Prehistoric peoples in West Michigan lived in mobile groups, moving seasonally with resource availability. Bifaces, such as those described here, could be cached in a known location to recover at a later date.

Biface caches are comparatively uncommon when looking at the entire archaeological record, but occur throughout North America and archaeological evidence begins with the Clovis material (Huckle and Kilby 2014). In Michigan, early biface caches may be associated with the Paleoindian Gainey phase (Carr and Lovis 2016). Late Archaic and Early Woodland caches of Turkey Tail bifaces have also been found throughout the Saginaw Bay region (Sommer 2004-2006), many associated with the Red Oche mortuary tradition described by below by Chapman (Chapman, this issue; Binford 1963). Middle Woodland mortuary practices included biface caches, and such caches were found in Hopewell mounds along the Grand River (Brashler, personal comm 2021). Later prehistoric caching is common in Michigan in the form of storage pits. These storage cache pits have been described in ethnographic and archaeological literature in the Upper Great Lakes (Dunham 2000) but have been found in increasing quantities in West Michigan recently, including several dense areas of cache pits identified both by the MDOT contracted explorations of the M231 bypass and by explorations by Grand Valley State University (Brashler 2016, Hambacher et. al 2014). Late Woodland and Late Prehistoric storage pits are thought to be food storage and point to the transitory nature of the peoples.

Caching can be understood as a means of planning by prehistoric peoples and may give archaeologist insight into the intentions of these groups as they move through the landscape. Given the paucity of high-quality chert sources in Michigan, cherts were often traded from various locations in the Midwest. As they were traded, they were generally worked down into a manageable size for transportation. These blanks can be easily traded or cached and quickly finished into whatever tool is needed at any given time (a projectile point, knife, scraper, etc.). The location of caches is believed to be in significant locations, easily remembered from season to season. The biface cache discovered in 2020 was located along a bend in the river and would have been easily remembered with its proximity to a nearby bayou and river island.

There are no recorded habitation sites in close proximity to this cache. Nearby sites include two light lithic scatters to the north as well as a historic refuse scatter. An additional previously discovered lithic scatter was recorded on the west side of nearby bayou. No description of the lithics scatters were provided in the State Archaeological Site Files, but it would be difficult to associate these bifaces with other sites given the lack of diagnostic materials. A better association may be seen in similar caches in the region.

Other notable biface caches have been found on the Muskegon and Grand Rivers. A cache of bifaces discovered at the Spoonville was also produced on Upper Mercer chert. However, the cache was found in Mound 2 and is associated with the mortuary practices there (Brashler personal comm). Another cache discovered on the Muskegon River in 2012 may serve as a better analog to the current cache. These bifaces were constructed primarily on Upper Mercer chert, but also on Flint Ridge cherts. They were discovered by a landowner digging a pond on a terrace overlooking the Muskegon River. In all, 86 biface and biface fragments were discovered during land excavation for a pond and a subsequent investigation by Grand Valley State University. Although no prehistoric artifacts other than bifaces were discovered in the backfill- a small number of prehistoric pottery sherds and an archaic projectile were found nearby- there was a carpet discarded in the area. According to the landowner, the bifaces were recovered in the vicinity of the carpet, putting into question the original deposition of the cache (Brashler and Gaff 2011). Although cultural affinity or age cannot be determined, Brashler and Gaff suggest that these bifaces may date to the early Late Woodland and state that several Stage 3 bifaces resemble Jack's Reef blanks. The 2020 cache discovery is solely produced on the same Upper Mercer chert which is sourced in central Ohio, over 400 km from the final cache location and is similarly unassociated with a habitation or mortuary context.

Upper Mercer chert was traded into Michigan beginning in the Paleoindian period (Simmons et. al 1984) but is also associated with the early Late Woodland Jack's Reef tradition in West Michigan. Given the similarities of these bifaces with those discovered on the Muskegon River, this cache may give further credit to the hypothesis proposed by Brashler and Gaff, that this caching activity may be associated with the movement of Ohio Cherts into Michigan during a time of rapid societal transformation.

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ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

In the summer of 2020 during the covid shutdown, Sarah Verschueren discovered a large biface, shown below (Fig. 1) in the bottom of a stream bed flowing from a spring in the side of hill in the forest of southeastern Mason County. The biface is 6 inches long, 3 inches wide and varies from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{8}$ inches thick. Interestingly, the biface is manufactured from Flint Ridge chert from central Ohio (Fig. 2). This material identification was made through the comparison of the artifact with examples of Flint Ridge chert found within the lithic material comparison collection in the Anthropology lab at Grand Valley State University.



Figure 1. Preform made of Flint Ridge chert found by Sarah V in southeastern Mason County.

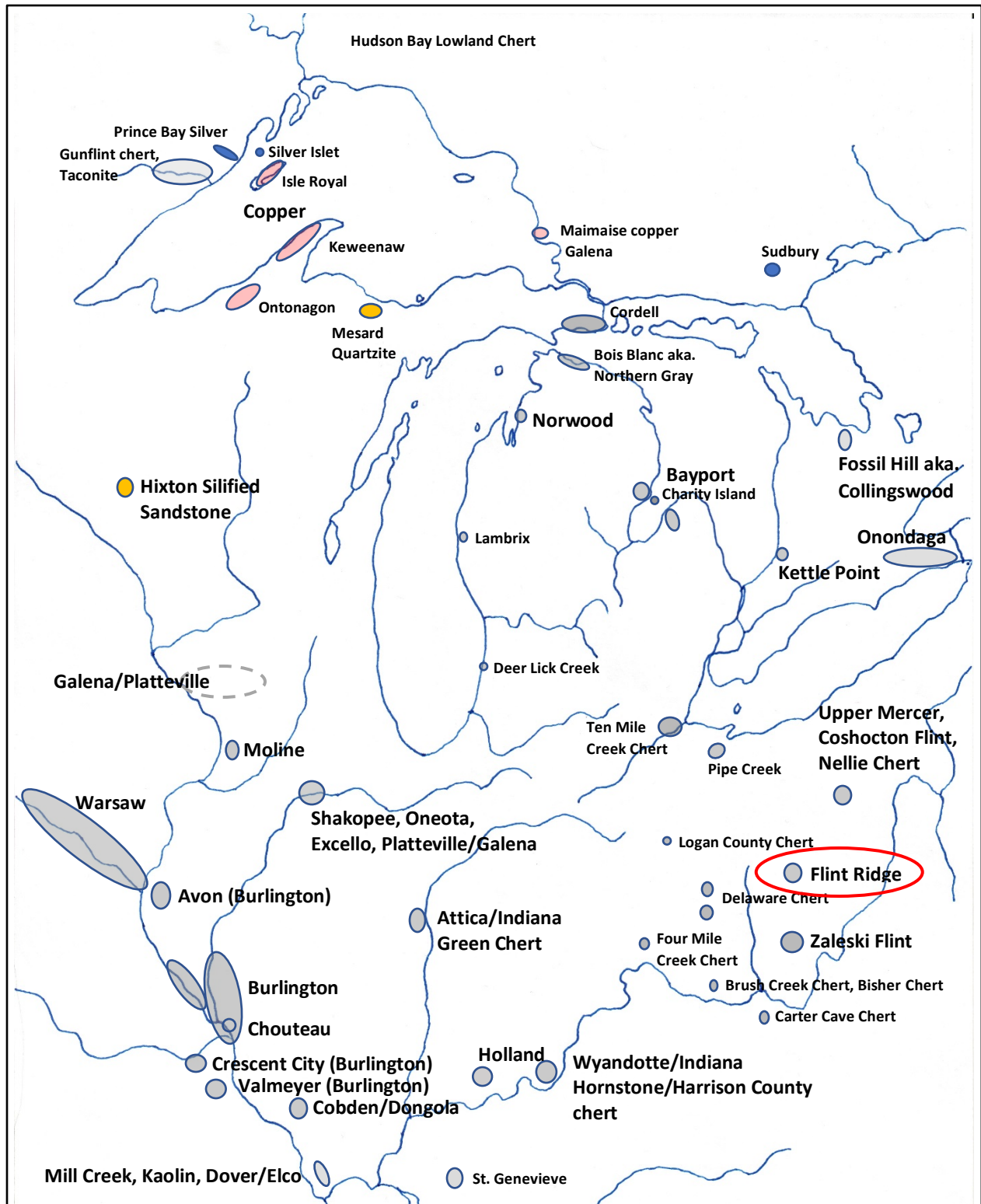


Figure 2. Lithic sources in the Great Lakes and Midwest. Gray = chert; red = copper; orange = quartzite and related, blue = silver. Many smaller sources of chert in southern Indiana and Illinois are not indicated.

The artifact does not exhibit signs of pressure flaking but is made through the removal of medium and large flakes using percussive techniques. Because of this, we do not think the biface represents a finished tool like a knife but rather is an example of a preform. Native Americans made preforms at or near the quarry sites to remove poor quality stone in an effort to reduce weight and aid in the portability of good quality lithic material. Later, both the preform itself, and the flakes removed from it could be manufactured into tools. The artifact exhibits some signs of wear but this could be abrasion from the action of the stream from which it was recovered, being used for some purpose or abrasion from being carried in a bag with other preforms.

Unfortunately, preforms are not particularly diagnostic of any particular time period. During a recent archaeological conference, I described the artifact to Dr. Lovis who commented that the preform may date to the Late Archaic since that period witnessed an influx of this material into Michigan (Lovis per com 10/7/2021).

The artifact bears some resemblance to terminal Late Archaic Red Ocher complex ceremonial blades, described by Ritzenthaler and Quimby (1962) as “large (some are over 19 inches in length), ‘ceremonial’, whitish-flint blades, ellipsoidal in shape with a taper toward a truncated base. Primary flaking with secondary retouching” (Ritzenthaler and Quimby 1962:247). The ceremonial blades illustrated by Ritzenthaler and Quimby however are narrower than the Mason County artifact and exhibit finer flaking around the edges.

The Red Ocher “culture” is a terminal Archaic burial complex involving the internment of the body into a grave, often dug on sandy knolls, sprinkled with red ocher. The burials were often accompanied with goods made of exotic materials such as the famous turkey tail blades made of Wyandot chert, the ceremonial blades described above, marine shell beads, copper beads, birdstones and bar amulets made of slate (Ritzenthaler and Quimby 1962; Stevenson et al. 1997; Robertson et al. 1999). The Red Ocher complex is thought to date between 3,450 and 2,050 B.P. (1500 to 100 B.C.) (Robinson et al. 1999:117).

The artifact was recovered from the bed of a stream, partially covered with sand and fine gravel about 5 to 10 feet from the source of the stream which is a spring flowing from the side of a hill (Fig. 3). The spring is situated about midway between the valley floor and the top of the hill/bluff which is rather flat in this particular locale. How did the artifact end up in the stream to begin with?



Figure 3. Left: View looking downstream from the mouth of the spring, the stream formed by the spring threading its way through boggy terrain. Right: The mouth of the spring issuing from the side of the bluff.

There are several possible explanations for this:

1. It washed down from higher elevations. However, to-date, no other prehistoric artifacts have been recovered from this locale. The top of the bluff and the spring itself are heavily disturbed by the presence of a 1800's logging camp. Obviously, this situation is ripe for an archaeological survey using subsurface testing (shovel test pits).
2. Maybe someone in prehistoric times lost the preform while resting, drinking at the spring. There is no-way to ever verify this hypothesis.
3. A more intriguing hypothesis would posit the placement of the preform in the stream near the mouth of the spring as an offering. It is this last idea I wish to explore further.

Native Americans divided the world into three zones, a realm beneath the earth or water surface called the underworld, the earth surface or the Middle World, and the upper world of the sky. All these realms are inhabited by spirits, manitous, or other-than-human persons (Smith 1995; Hallowell 1960). These manitous had the capability of controlling important aspects of human destiny such as the weather or food supply, or good/bad fortune. They were all important within Native American belief systems.

“These other-than-human persons occupy the top rank in power hierarchy of animate beings (Hallowell 1960:38). Human’s relationship with manitou is always personal. An Ojibway scholar basin Johnston explains, manitous “were just as much a reality as were trees, valleys, hill, and winds,” and people “felt the presence of the manitous all around them” (Johnston 1995:xx-xxi)” (Howey 2020:349).

One class of other-than-human beings involved those dwelling in the beneath world. This included a manitou commonly called Mishipishu (also Misshipeshu, Mishi-bizheu, or Mishibishu) (Fig. 4), who is considered the principle manitou of the underworld (Howey 2002:349). Mishipishu, also called the underwater panther, great lynx, underwater tailed serpent or underwater horned serpent:

“Mishipishu is always a complexly powerful, seductive and dangerous underwater, nonhuman *known as the head of all water spirits*, Mishipishu is fierce and singularly powerful being occupying a complex place in traditions and life worlds (Smith 1995:99)... Mishipishu is always encountered in or near water (Redsky 1972:121). This manitou could inhabit any lake, and is also reported to exist *in mountains near lakes where underground passages connect caverns to water, in tunnels between lakes, in slimy mud banks and swamps*, on islands, in rapids, and within whirlpools (Barnouw 1977; Dewdney 1975; Gary 2011; Kohl 1985 [1860]; Lenik 2010; Lovis 2001; Smith 1995)’ (Howey 2020:350 with emphasis added).



Figure 4. A famous image of Mishipishu found at the Agawa Pictograph site, on the northeast shore of Lake Superior. Note that the image of Mishipishu is flanked by other serpents, presumably other inhabitants of the underworld.

Note also, that Mishipishu is the leader of underworld manitous but not by any means the only one and there were a host of other serpent-like manitous.

Springs, such as the one where Sarah found the preform, formed a connection between the underworld and the middle world of humans, a place where two worlds met, a place where the manitous of the underworld might interact with those of the middle world or the sky world. "Springs have been widely documented as important features Anishinaabeg mythology, viewed as portals between the dangerous underworld and living world" (Howey 2012:118, fig. 5.5, various references omitted).

Native Americans, in order to placate these spirits would make offerings at particular locations close by to where the manitous dwell (Smith 1995; Landes 1968). In historic times these offerings would often consist of tobacco but other items could also be offered.

Of course, there is no way to prove the artifact was left in the spring as an offering to underworld manitous but given the context of the find and what we know right now it seems as plausible as any other explanation.

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WRIGHT I. COFFINBERRY CHAPTER
of the
MICHIGAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The W. L. Coffinberry Chapter of the Michigan Archaeological Society was organized in 1951 for the purpose of obtaining and recording information on the aboriginal inhabitants of the State of Michigan, to preserve their cultural evidence, and to disseminate knowledge concerning them.

Regular meetings are held on the second Thursday evening of each month, September through May, beginning at 7:00 P.M. at Room 249, Lake Michigan Hall, Grand Valley State University. A map and parking instructions are included on the back of the bulletin. Visitors are welcome.

The Chapter publishes a *News Bulletin* at multiple times during the year and the State organization publishes the *Michigan Archaeologist*, periodically as well. These publications are received with membership. The State Society holds an annual meeting in the spring and a workshop in the late summer or fall.

Membership in the Chapter is open to anyone interested in promoting the objectives of the organization, with *concurrent and corresponding membership required* in the Michigan Archaeological Society. Go to <http://micharch.org/wp/> to visit the web site of the Michigan Archaeological Society which also contains a membership page and forms.

Classes of Membership:

Individual / Family	\$25.00
Foreign	\$30.00
Institutional	\$40.00
Foreign Institutional	\$45.00

Dues are payable on January 1 to the Treasurer of the Michigan Archaeological Society.

Coffinberry Chapter Officers:

President:	Lynn Chapman
Vice President:	Wesley Jackson
Treasurer:	Don Spohn
Secretary:	Brian and Brenda Geib
Board:	Dr. Janet Brashler, Ken Price, Greg Baldus
Coffinberry News Bulletin editors:	Lynn Chapman, Wesley Jackson, Alex Michnick

Coffinberry Chapter Michigan Archaeological Society

- Meets on the second Thursday of each month, September through May.
- Meetings are held between 7:00 pm and 9:00 pm.
- GVSU Allendale Campus (see map).
- On M-45 (Lake Michigan Drive), 8 miles west of downtown Grand Rapids.
- Lake Michigan Hall, Second floor, Room 249.
- Parking in Lot M in front of Lake Michigan Hall is open after 6:30 pm.

