

REGIONAL RESEARCH

Central Wisconsin Area

UPPER WHITING PARK MOUND GROUP

by Thomas Willems, Regional Archaeologist, Central Wisconsin Archaeology Center, UW-Stevens Point

In May and June of 2000, the Central Wisconsin Archaeology Center (CWAC), University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (UWSP), conducted a Phase I archaeological survey in the area of a proposed development project in the Upper Whiting Park for the Village of Whiting, Portage County, Wisconsin (Project ID: SHSW 00-0387/PT). During the intensive phase of the survey, students participating in an archaeological field school, offered by the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, assisted CWAC staff in the shovel testing of the areas proposed for construction activities associated with the Village of Whiting's development project for Upper Whiting Park.



Students on an archaeological field trip from The Neighbor's Place (Wausau, Wisconsin). The educational benefit of the proposed preservation project is already visible.

Upper Whiting Park is located on the east bank of the Plover River, a tributary of the Wisconsin River. As set forth in the adopted Village of Whiting Park and Recreation Plan 1998-2002, the Village of Whiting proposes development of the Upper Whiting Park. A key component of the development project is to insure the preservation of the prehistoric Indian mound group located within the boundaries of the park. The mounds were previously identified in 1912 by researchers from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. Four of the mounds were reported in *The Wisconsin Archeologist* by Charles E. Brown of the Wisconsin Archeological Society in 1925. The mound group was also referred to in a report by University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point researchers John H. Moore and Tom Krajnak in 1979. As part of the current Upper Whiting Park Development

project, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin required another archaeological survey of the site to be conducted. This recent investigation was also conducted by researchers from UW-Stevens Point, led by Tom Willems, State Regional Archaeologist and director of the Central Wisconsin Archaeology Center.

The methods of investigation consisted of literature and record review, a reconnaissance survey of the entire area of the Upper Whiting Park, and 133 shovel tests (5-meter interval) within the proposed construction areas of the project. A small amount of Euro-American (ceramic) and prehistoric (lithic and ceramic) materials were recovered during shovel testing. A small number of Euro-American materials and prehistoric artifacts were recovered during shovel testing. Most notable, four rim and body sherds of a distinctly decorated, thick-walled type of pottery uncovered during this survey may date from about 100 B.C. to A.D. 100. Several thin walled, cord-marked body sherds and other non-diagnostic pottery fragments were also found. Based on one defining rim sherd, the pottery appears to be from a Prairie phase vessel similar to the one recovered in Crawford County and reported in a recent issue of *The Wisconsin Archeologist* (Volume 70, Number 1/2). As a result, the Whiting Park site may be one of the earliest sites of the Woodland Tradition discovered in north central Wisconsin. In addition to the four previously recorded earthen mounds, six unrecorded mounds were identified during this last survey. The four previously recorded earthen mounds were relocated and their current conditions assessed.



Looking northwest towards Mound 4 in the Upper Whiting Park.

The Village Board and Parks Committee desire to protect these mounds and construct an interpretive kiosk, along with hiking trails and signage, in the park to serve as an educational resource for the community and users of the Upper Whiting Park. The Village also intends to develop

additional park facilities in other areas of the park to address other community needs, including parking areas, playground equipment, restrooms, and a picnic shelter. To insure that the mounds will not be disturbed by the proposed development project, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin requested that a qualified archaeologist survey portions of the project area to locate and protect all mounds in the park before, during, and after construction. CWAC staff will monitor all future ground-disturbing construction activities associated with the project. All subsequent fieldwork associated with this monitoring will be conducted by CWAC staff under the direct supervision of the author.

The Upper Whiting Park Development project is an exceptional example of archaeological stewardship. Less than two centuries ago, as recorded by some of our State's pioneering scientists like Increase A. Lapham, there may have been literally tens of thousands of prehistoric earthen mounds dotting the land we now call Wisconsin. Outside of the descriptions and maps left by people like Lapham, all that remains of the "moundbuilder's legacy" is a few token remnants. A few of these remnants are the intriguing Whiting Park mounds that the residents of the Village of Whiting have committed themselves to preserve and protect for future generations to learn from and to foster an appreciation for our area's nonrenewable cultural resources. This commitment is supported by the Village's efforts to confine all of the proposed construction projects of the Upper Whiting Park General Development Plan to already disturbed areas within the park.

Another unique aspect of the Upper Whiting Park Development project has been the realization that our area's archaeological record, what has been left behind by the people who came long before us, contains volumes of knowledge about the diverse cultural heritage. If these fragile and irreplaceable resources are not protected and preserved for future research and public appreciation, our ability to gain knowledge of the past is in danger of being forever beyond our grasp.

The Upper Whiting Park Development project has also exemplified what is referred to within the archaeological community as "Common Ground." Common Ground refers to a point in time and space, either physical or psychological, where a variety of individuals from different backgrounds, initially brought together for different reasons, ultimately achieve a mutual understanding and end up sharing a common goal. This project initially brought together a diverse group of people from local government, the university, and the community, including representatives from several Native American tribal governments. Though there are often areas of disagreement, the "Common Ground" for mutual agreement is that the mounds must be preserved and protected.

A major component of the project is the construction and development of an "Educational Kiosk". According to architectural drawings obtained by the author from the Wisconsin DNR, the kiosk will measure approximately 20 feet wide by 25 feet long. This kiosk will serve as an interpretive center/trail rest shelter. The Upper Whiting Park kiosk will be modeled after the kiosk located at Roche-A-Cri State Park in Adams County. The educational content of the kiosk will be developed through collaboration by a large group of volunteer researchers from diverse backgrounds that include archaeology, history, natural resources, and education. Our Native American partners in preservation and our north central Wisconsin neighbors who have an ancestral link to those who resided in this area will also be major contributors in the development of the educational content of the kiosk. In the future, the author and the Village of Whiting will continue to seek the assistance of representatives from the area's Native American communities in developing the interpretative signage and informational panels for the project's educational/interpretative components.

THE ZARLING LAKE SITE (47 FR-186): A NORTHERN ONEOTA SITE IN FOREST COUNTY, WISCONSIN

by Katie Egan-Bruhy, Nicolet Area Technical College & Mark A. Bruhy, Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest

During the month of July, the Zarling Lake site (47 Fr-186) was the focus of an archaeological investigation conducted cooperatively by the U.S. Forest Service and Nicolet College. Located in southern Forest County, 47 Fr-186 was discovered in 1988, and was the focus of limited excavation the following year. Initial excavations revealed the remnants of a house, and wood charcoal recovered from this feature was dated to A.D. 1490 ± 45 years.



Investigations at the Zarling Lake Site