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Archaeology on the Road: July 20–27, 2013

Office of the State Archaeologist, University of Iowa

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ARCHAEOLOGY ON THE ROAD

JULY 20–27, 2013

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Welcome to the 6th Season of Archaeology on the Road!

The University of Iowa Office of the State Archaeologist (OSA) is delighted to welcome RAG-BRAI riders to Iowa, and we’re pleased to share a few details of our fascinating past as you ride across the state. We hope this booklet enhances your enjoyment and helps you learn something new each day of your ride, from the astoundingly well-preserved Palace site to the nationally significant War of 1812 Fort Madison battlefield. Let us know if you have questions or comments!

—John Doershuk, State Archaeologist

Team Archaeology Outreach Booths:

- Expo at Council Bluffs (July 20)
- Fort Madison on Day 7 (July 27)

Join us at the following events to continue our celebration of Iowa Archaeology 2013:

August 3—Hoover Hometown Days (West Branch)
August 8–11—Meskwaki Powwow (Meskwaki Settlement, Tama)
September 7–9—Lakeside Lab Natural History Weekend (Milford)
October 19—International Archaeology Day (University of Iowa, Iowa City)

- Public lectures by visiting archaeologists
- Lab and Repository tours at OSA, Museum of Natural History, Departments of Classics and Anthropology
- OSA tent exhibit outside Museum of Natural History, atlatl dart throwing, flint-knapping demonstrations, and interactive Native American children’s games
- Iowa Archeological Society (IAS) Annual Fall meeting

Additional information on event times and locations at: http://www.uiowa.edu/~osa/teamarcheo.html
HARLAN - PERRY

ARCHAEOLOGY DAY GOES INTERNATIONAL!

In 2011 US Congress declared October 22nd as National Archaeology Day. Events throughout the month of October across the nation and beyond celebrate archaeology from the thrill of discovery to the illumination of our past through research. Join us this year to celebrate Archeology Day and visit www.archaeologyday.org for details of events in your area.

PERRY - DES MOINES

HOTEL PATTEE

While staying at the overnight stop of Perry, take a look at the historic Hotel Pattee. For the last 100 years, Hotel Pattee served as a town icon. Recently, the hotel has been restored to its historic beauty with 40 individually themed rooms and public spaces.

HISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGY AT FORT DES MOINES NO. 2

HISTORIC DOCUMENT RESEARCH

Before backhoes and shovels hit the dirt, archaeologists examine historical documents to assess the archaeological potential beneath the ground. In downtown Des Moines, maps and written accounts alerted archaeologists to the rich historic and prehistoric past that may still lay underneath modern streets and buildings, including ancient Indian mounds, Fort Des Moines of the 1840s, early City of Des Moines buildings, and beautification projects of the 20th century.

FORT DES MOINES NO. 2

Fort Des Moines No. 2 was built at the confluence of the Raccoon and Des Moines rivers in 1843. The fort’s primary function was to control the Sauk and Meskwaki Indians who were recently transplanted there from eastern Iowa. The fort was abandoned in 1846.

A small cluster of Great Oasis sites are located along the South Raccoon River in Dallas County, south of the 2013 route. Great Oasis culture (A.D. 900–1100) extended throughout the eastern Plains across eastern Nebraska and southwest Minnesota, central and western Iowa, and South Dakota. Great Oasis sites are small hamlets and farmsteads found along major stream terraces. Archaeological investigations of Great Oasis sites indicate increased reliance on agriculture combined with hunting and gathering. Pit houses and a transition from Late Woodland to Late Prehistoric ceramic forms are also characteristic.

Iowa Archaeology 2013 is fortunate to have received an educational outreach grant from the ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF AMERICA. The AIA is North America’s oldest and largest organization devoted to the world of archaeology. The Institute is a nonprofit group founded in 1879 with nearly 250,000 members in over 100 local societies. As the Iowa Society of the AIA, we are pleased to be a contributing member of this year’s Team Archaeology riders as they participate in their 6th consecutive RAGBRAI Iowa Archaeology outreach event!!
**WHAT DOES FORT MADISON REPRESENT?**

- First U.S. military fort in the Upper Mississippi River valley.
- Scene of the only true military battle fought in Iowa.
- Only location in Iowa where U.S. soldiers were killed defending their nation.
- Location where Black Hawk first fought with the U.S.
- Possibly the oldest U.S. military cemetery in the Upper Mississippi River valley region.

**1965**

Urban development covered and partially preserved portions of the old fort and battlefield under streets and buildings.

The location of the fort was confirmed in 1965 when archaeological investigations of the fort were conducted by then State Archaeologist, Marshall McKusick.

No excavations were conducted in 1965 west of the fort where outbuildings and the battlefield were located.

**Artifacts recovered from the fort excavations in 1965.**

**2009**

The locations and historic importance of the fort battlefield and ravine were revealed in historic journals and letters.

In one such letter, Fort Madison’s Commander, Lieutenant Hamilton, wrote that the ravine in the battlefield provided sufficient cover for the Sauk Indians, led by Black Hawk, to attack the fort resulting in soldier’s injuries and in some cases death. These events at the fort occurred in August of 1813 which eventually led to the abandonment of the fort later that year.

This battlefield and ravine were not explored archaeologically until 2009 when the University of Iowa Office of the State Archaeologist conducted trench excavations across the battlefield.

A fort-era timber feature located at the base of the ravine in Trench 4.

**A fort-era timber feature located at the base of the ravine in Trench 4.**

The likely locations of the ravine and the battlefield were relocated and several artifacts were recovered ranging from the prehistoric through the early town era.

Archaeologists also identified a wide range of fort-era artifact types, including:

- a portion of a buckle inlay,
- fragment of a leather shoe,
- metal digging tools,
- and hand-painted ceramics.
THE PALACE SITE

The Palace Site in Des Moines is an exceptionally well-preserved early site with several occupations. The earliest occupation dates to about 7000 years ago and has one or two houses. The main occupation is dated to about 6800 years ago and has three or four likely houses. Later occupations contained no activity areas other than shell middens.

A 6800-year-old burial of an adult female and a young child is the oldest in Iowa and displays evidence of burial preparation including being covered with hematite, a red pigment.

The site was excavated in 2010 and 2011 by the Office of the State Archaeologist. Artifacts were plotted with a laser transit in three dimensions. This, combined with extensive soil sampling, flotation for botanics, and the excellent preservation of the site will allow for detailed reconstruction of activities at the site.

PELLA

Founded in 1847, Pella is an example of a community working toward historical preservation and restoration, including 16 properties and districts on the National Register of Historic Places. Famous for its Tulip Time in May and continued Dutch cultural influence, Pella has become a popular tourist destination. Visit Pella’s tourist website at: www.pella.org for more information.

VERMEER MILL

The Vermeer mill, reaching 124 feet high, is the tallest working windmill in the United States. Patterned after 1850s Dutch windmills, it provides a working example of craftsmanship and flour production from the late 19th century. Powered solely by the wind, the mill sells its flour to local businesses. Visit www.pellatuliptime.com/historical-village/vermeer-mill for more information.

PELLA OPERA HOUSE

The Pella Opera House was built in 1900, replacing the earlier building that burned in 1880, and served as a theater for only 18 years. In addition to hosting plays, musicals, and silent movies, the building has also housed a grocery store, bowling alley, skating rink, hardware store, and recreation teen center. The building was purchased by the Pella Historical Society in 1987. The restored building, now on the National Register, is again being used as a theater for over 300 patrons. Visit www.pellatuliptime.com/historical-village/pella-opera-house for more information.

WYATT EARP HOUSE

Born in 1848 in Monmouth, Illinois, Wyatt Earp was brought to Pella at the age of two where he spent most his childhood. Wyatt’s father, Nicholas, disagreeing with the South’s secession and the emancipation of the slaves organized a large wagon train, left Pella and headed for California in 1864. Restored in 1986 to a typical 1850s homestead, the Wyatt Earp house was added to the National Register in 1990 and is now the location of the Historical Village Museum. Visit www.pellatuliptime.com/historical-village/wyatt-earp for more information.

Photos courtesy Pella Convention & Visitors Bureau
THE OSKALOOSA MAMMOTH SITE

Oskaloosa gained national attention last year as the University of Iowa Museum of Natural History began coordinating volunteers for the excavation of a mammoth skeleton discovered by a local farmer and his sons in 2010. Over 150 people have had the opportunity to help with the excavation and preservation of the bones. While mammoth bones have been found in every county in the state, what makes this a rare find is the fact that it appears to be mostly intact and undisturbed. What makes it even rarer is that this one site has now yielded at least two individual mammoths, the first of its kind in Iowa. To add another layer, the specimens appear to be Woolly Mammoths, a cousin to the more prevalent Columbian Mammoth that is typically found in the state.

The ongoing excavation has recovered over 100 bones as of early Spring 2013. Researchers have used the size and number of certain bones, including a shoulder blade and teeth, to determine the species and number of individuals. One mammoth, in particular, appears to be a rather large middle-aged male who was likely about 40 years of age when he died. Preliminary dating based on tree remains found with the bones could date the site at about 16,000 BC. The bones have been well preserved in their “Smurf-blue” clay due to the plunge-pool in which they are located. During the last ice age, the area where the mammoths died may have been a much larger plunge-pool near two major rivers. Now it is little more than an eroding creek bank.

While the dig is led by the Museum of Natural History, the bones remain the property of the landowner who would ultimately like them to be on public display locally.

Visit www.uiowa.edu/~nathist/mammoth-excavation for updates.

DEFENDING THE FORT

Recent efforts to raise awareness about the historic importance of Fort Madison was, in part, in response to news of its endangerment from urban development.

A “Hold the Fort!” campaign, intended to put pressure on the local political scene, successfully received much-needed attention of city officials and the new property owners of the fort and its associated battlefield.

Recent archaeological investigations confirm that intact War-of-1812-era deposits are represented west of the fort structure including the battlefield and Black Hawk’s ravine.

As a cultural landscape it is an area that, at least from 1808 thru most of 1813, saw intensive usage by diverse populations including various American Indian and U.S. military units as well as both native and newcomer civilians variously engaged in the trading, hunting and game processing, farming, livestock raising, structure building, and general pursuit of the many other crafts of the time that leave archaeological traces.

BONAPARTE, IOWA, AT A GLANCE

- The Bonaparte area, originally called Meek’s Mill, was settled in 1836 by William Meek and Dr. Roger Cresap.
- The townsite was founded and surveyed in 1841, and the name was changed to Bonaparte. The town was officially incorporated in 1899.
- Six sites in or near Bonaparte are listed on the National Register of Historic Places: Aunty Green Hotel, Bonaparte Historic Riverfront District, Bonaparte Pottery Archaeological District, Bonaparte School, Meek’s Flour Mill, and Des Moines River Locks No. 5 and No. 7.
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Booklet designed by Angela R. Collins of the OSA. Additional booklet contributions by Richard Beckley, Alan Hawkins, Mark Anderson, and John Doershuk, all of the OSA.