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UPPER AND LOWER RICE LAKE SITES

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Upper and Lower Rice Lakes are located in the southern half of Clearwater County which is in the northwestern part of Minnesota. The two habitations sites, although known only from surface indications and collections, seem to be significant to the understanding of Minnesota prehistory. Both sites appear to be of late prehistoric origin, that is, dating somewhere between 1000 and 1600 A.D. Much of the pottery collected at these two sites is Mississippian and it is significant that this shell tempered material has not been recognized in this area before this time. The pottery types represented in these sites differ from both the Arvilla or Red River Aspect pottery and the typical Blackduck pottery of the Headwaters Lake Aspect both of which are normally found in this geographic area. As both of these latter aspects are also classified as Late Woodland (Wilford: 1955), the relationship of these newly discovered materials is very important. The sites were located by survey teams from the University of Minnesota composed of students participating in the archeological field session held at Itasca State Park from June to July of 1959.

The Upper Rice Lake site (CE—4) is located on an isthmus between Upper Rice Lake and Minerva Lake (NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of NW $\frac{1}{2}$ of Sec. 13, T. 146, R. 37). The isthmus is a ridge one hundred yards wide, about one-quarter mile long, and ten feet above the water level of the lake. Rice Lake along this entire ridge area is extremely shallow and is covered by wild rice. Minerva Lake on the other hand is much deeper and would appear to be a much better fishing lake. The entire area conceivably made an excellent campsite either for prehistoric Indians, who used it as evidenced by the material collected, or would do so for the modern camper. The material collected was taken from a freshly plowed field which was being worked for the first time. The entire field (fifteen acres) produced cultural material although there was a slight concentration of material along the southeastern edge of the field. This concentration would seem to indicate that the site continues into an undisturbed area which is covered by a scattered growth of deciduous trees.

The material from Upper Rice Lake is rather scanty, consisting of a surface collection gathered in a few hours time. The collection consists of four artifacts (three stone, one bone) and four hundred and fifty-five pottery sherds. The artifacts are not distinctive and not

THE MINNESOTA ACADEMY OF SCIENCE

very informative. The list of artifacts is as follows: One chert side scraper, one broken jasper bifacially flaked knife, one broken quartz projectile point (possibly triangular), and a piece of worked bone. The pottery collection consists of four hundred and four body sherds, six decorated, seven near rim, twenty-three rim sherds, and fifteen split sherds for a total of four hundred and fifty-five sherds. Of particular interest in the group of body sherds are the one hundred and seventeen sherds that show check and simple stamping. This type of body treatment is very unusual in Minnesota. The nearest area which has pottery with this type of body treatment is central North Dakota. Body treatment of this type is usually associated in this area with Mandan or Cheyenne pottery (Will and Hecker, 1944). The tempering of these sherds is also rather unusual. The checked stamped sherds consist of 60% grit temper and 40% shell temper, while the simple stamped was 28% grit temper and 72% shell temper. The feature is very interesting in that both the Cheyenne and Mandan pottery are grit tempered. The decorated body sherds are too few in number to be of any significance. The rim sherds pose several intriguing possibilities as there are at least four pottery types represented in the collection. Eleven of the nineteen sherds are of an undifferentiated Woodland type with no decoration. Two sherds show an affinity with the Blackduck pottery type of the Headwaters Lake Aspect (Wilford 1955). The third distinct type is a shell tempered sherd which appears to be like the Mississippian sherds of southern Minnesota. It could be either an Oneota or Bryan rim type, but due to the small size of the sherd and lack of decoration it is not possible to make any distinction. The final type is what is known as Madison Plain. The latter was first identified in Wisconsin and has since been noted in southern Minnesota, primarily in the group sites around Spring Lake on the Mississippi River near Pine Bend, Minnesota.

The site on Lower Rice Lake (CE—5) is located on the east shore at Ponsford Landing. Along the east shore is a ridge ten to twelve feet high which parallels the present shore line. Ponsford Landing is located on a small point of land extending out in the lake. This site was found when a road was cut through the ridge and a picnic ground made on the point. The material from this site is from two sources. John Little Wolf of Bagley, Minnesota, gave the University nine bone artifacts, and a skeleton of a child which he had collected at the time the road was built. The University survey party also made a small surface collection when they visited the site in July of last year. The bone artifacts are primarily spatula implements and awls though two of the artifacts are of particular interest. One is a unilaterally barbed harpoon and the other is an arrow shaft straightener. The former is usually associated with the Red River Aspect (Wilford 1955). The survey team found a number of pottery sherds and two artifacts. The only lithic artifact of any importance is a small triangular quartz projectile point.

A total of two hundred and seventy pottery sherds were recovered. The body treatment corresponds with that of the sherds from the Upper Rice Lake site but the percentages differ. The majority of the

body sherds (89%) are either treated with cord marking or are smoothed. Sixteen of the sherds show check or simple stamping and all but one of these sherds are grit tempered. The number of decorated body sherds is again limited but they seem to reflect the same pattern of types as evidenced by the rim sherds. There are three rim sherds and two body sherds which appear to be similar to the Blackduck pottery type. Again there are three rim sherds and four decorated body sherds which seem to represent an undifferentiated Woodland pottery type, seen through the fact that the rim sherds are straight with no indication of a neck or shoulder, there being no decoration but merely the cord wrapped paddle body treatment. The decorated body sherds have puntate, dentate, boss, or cord wrapped stick designs but because of their small size and the lack of a definite association with a particular rim form, very little information can be drawn from them. The third distinctive rim type is represented by only a single specimen. This particular rim form, the so-called S rim, is very distinctive and is usually associated with Plains—Mississippian pottery types (Will and Hecker, 1944). Very often this rim type is identified as Archaic Mandan. Since there is only one sherd and it is very small no such definite identification is possible. There are also six grit tempered body sherds which are smoothed and exhibit trailed line design characteristic of Mississippian pottery.

As can be readily seen, the evidence used in this discussion is extremely scanty. Nevertheless, even this small sample is sufficient to indicate several important possibilities and to point up the need for a thorough and carefully controlled excavation of at least one, if not both, of these sites. One of the most interesting problems presented by these sites is the range of pottery types represented and their seemingly wide geographical points of known origin and association. The Upper Rice Lake site in particular, which has four pottery types each normally associated with distinct geographical areas, shows this situation rather clearly. There are several possible explanations. It is conceivable that these types were traded in or that several groups of divergent cultural affinities used these sites as camps at various times. The complex may also represent a new late Woodland focus in an area thought to be limited to Arvilla and Blackduck foci. The complexity of the late Woodland manifestations in this area appears to be greater than heretofore thought. Careful excavation and analysis of the two sites should contribute to our knowledge of the movement of several historic tribes on the northern Great Plains who are traditionally thought of as entering the Plains area from northwestern Minnesota.

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