



4-15-2014

## Backyard Archaeology: Informing the Southwest Michigan Community about local archaeological sites and research through the "Evidence Found" Exhibit

Tabitha Hubbard  
*Western Michigan University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors\\_theses](https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors_theses)



Part of the History Commons

---

### Recommended Citation

Hubbard, Tabitha, "Backyard Archaeology: Informing the Southwest Michigan Community about local archaeological sites and research through the "Evidence Found" Exhibit" (2014). *Honors Theses*. 2422. [https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors\\_theses/2422](https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors_theses/2422)

This Honors Thesis-Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Lee Honors College at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact [wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu](mailto:wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu).



Backyard Archaeology:

Informing the Southwest Michigan Community about Local Archaeological Sites and Research  
through the “Evidence Found” Exhibit

Tabitha Hubbard

Lee Honors College Thesis  
Western Michigan University

## Introduction

This paper is a report of my involvement with and background research for an upcoming exhibit called “Evidence Found”. The project is a collaboration between the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project and the Kalamazoo Valley Museum. It was initiated before I became involved and will continue after completion of my thesis. In this report, I provide a description of the exhibit and my involvement in preparation for the exhibit. I will also present the research I conducted for use in the exhibit.

## “Evidence Found”

The idea of presenting an exhibit on local archaeology at the Kalamazoo Valley Museum (KVM) has been present for some time. Last year there was a small exhibit at the KVM about archaeology and the Underground Railroad entitled “The History and Archaeology of Ramptown and the Michigan Underground Railroad.” Recently, however, this idea became more concrete with the initial planning and conception for “Evidence Found.” The exhibit will open in February 2015 and run until August 2015 at the Kalamazoo Valley Museum in Kalamazoo, Michigan. This exhibit is larger and includes more detailed overview of archaeology and local sites.

The design and content decisions of the exhibit are mostly taking place outside of the KVM. The two largest outside influences are Dr. Michael Nassaney, a Professor of Anthropology at Western Michigan University and the principal investigator of the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project, and Joseph Hines, an exhibit designer with Project Arts & Ideas. Nassaney is collaborating with Hines on the content of the exhibit. Hines is designing the exhibit. He has designed the layout of the exhibit and the artifacts displays. While displays are in the building stage, Hines is in the process of selecting images and artifacts for the exhibit. Soon

he will create the text and image panels for the exhibit. Nassaney is providing content based on his knowledge of local archaeology and Fort St. Joseph.

Hines and Nassaney are creating the exhibit to communicate in an interactive format what archaeology is, what archaeologists do, and the presence as well as the importance of archaeological sites in southwest Michigan. The exhibit will inform the public that the reason for doing archaeology is not to find artifacts, but to gain information about a past culture or way of life. It will explain the importance of stratigraphy, layers of soil deposits, and the importance of context. It will also highlight the tools archaeologists use. A few regional sites will be highlighted in the exhibit, with an emphasis on Fort St. Joseph. A final section of the exhibit will explain how to conserve archaeological sites and how to respond to discoveries.

One theme of the exhibit focuses on informing the community that archaeology is not an activity that only takes place in foreign places, but is something that happens right here in their community and region. People stereotypically think of archaeology as taking place in faraway places like Egypt. The exhibit will challenge this stereotypical view by showing and describing archeological sites that have been found and investigated in southwest Michigan. Therefore, in this section of the exhibit, there will be a brief description of five local sites. This section will display photos and artifacts that relate to the sites. The five sites are the Native American mound in Bronson Park; Dieffenderfer, a Late-Woodland site in St. Joseph County; Ramptown, an Underground Railroad community in Cass County; Schilling, a pre-contact sweat lodge in Kalamazoo County; and the Warren B. Shepard homestead site in Calhoun County. Another section will explain the history of Fort St. Joseph and the community's involvement in its archaeological study.

An additional aspect of “Evidence Found” is explaining the types of tools archaeologists use. Some of the images used in the exhibit will highlight the use of the tools. One of the large tools on display will be a tetrapod. The tetrapod is used to hang a screen that soil is then passed through to find small artifacts. The tetrapod will be both physically on display and on display in images that show it in use. Hines will use many of the images from Fort St. Joseph and other site excavations to make these connections between a physical object on display and an image of it in use by archaeologists.

This exhibit will bring more interest and exposure to the field of archaeology in a community that has many archaeological sites but is not aware of them. This exhibit explains to the community what archaeology is and the significance of it. It also draws attention to the fact that people left archaeological evidence of their activities everywhere, including the Southwest Michigan region. Most importantly, this exhibit will educate the public about the field of archaeology and the history of their region.

### My Involvement

As a Public History major at Western Michigan University, I enrolled in the Introduction into Archaeology class in 2011. Upon completing the course, I was invited to participate in the 2012 WMU Archaeological Field School at Fort St. Joseph under the direction of Dr. Nassaney. The following semester, I worked in the archaeology lab, where my main task was to enter information about artifacts found during excavations into the Past Perfect database.

As a part of my honors thesis, I am collaborating with Dr. Nassaney and Mr. Hines on this exhibit. My primary involvement has been focused on providing content for the section of

the exhibit on local archaeological sites. I have also worked on sorting images from Fort St. Joseph.

One of my responsibilities is to conduct background research on four of the five local sites. I have reviewed information on the Shepard, Ramptown, Dieffenderfer, and Schilling sites. Although Hines researched the Native American Mound in Bronson Park for the exhibit, I have also done a small amount of research on it in order to include that site in my report. For each of these sites, I provided a summary of the information I found to Hines. I also consulted with Nassaney to discuss how the sites could be interpreted in order to connect the purpose of the activities at each site to present people and activities. For each of the four sites, I have located images and artifacts. I presented those images and artifacts to Nassaney and Hines. I assisted Hines in digitizing some of the images from the sites, which were on slides. Hines will make the final selections from the material I located for inclusion in the exhibit.

For the section on Fort St. Joseph, I sorted through all the images of the site. I narrowed the selection to about 300 images. I divided those images into categories based on the content of the image. Some of the categories I was looking for were images of fieldwork, soil stratigraphy, lab work, artifacts, and archaeologist interacting with the public. Hines could use the images in the Fort St. Joseph section of the exhibit or in any other section in order to provide a visual overview for archaeological processes described in the text.

### Site Reports

In this section, I will present my research on the four sites I focused on. I will also provide a brief summary of the possible interpretation for those sites as well as the images and artifacts that may be used in the exhibit. In addition to those four sites, I will provide a summary

of the two other sites, Fort St. Joseph and the Bronson Park Native American Mound, included in the exhibit.

### Dieffenderfer Site 20SJ179

Dieffenderfer is a Late Woodland Native American site. Based on radiocarbon dating, Native Americans occupied the site from about A.D. 1000 to 1400.<sup>1</sup> The archaeologists named the site Dieffenderfer after the person who owned the property the site was located on.<sup>2</sup>

Dieffenderfer is located on the St. Joseph River in Constantine Township of St. Joseph County.

The site is located near a natural portage, which travelers along the Great Sauk Trail used.

Today, the Great Sauk Trail is known as Chicago Road or US-12.<sup>3</sup> On one side of the site is the river; the other sides there are low laying wetlands. The prominent feature of the site is an oval shaped ditch, which encloses an area of land. The ditch covers an area of 4000 square meters.<sup>4</sup>

Before archaeologists got involved with Dieffenderfer, two individuals tried to excavate areas of the site in order to find both its location and cultural material associated with it. The neighbor of the landowner attempted to excavate the western portion of the site using a backhoe and blade machine. The landowner's nephew also dug into the site; he used hand excavation techniques and found some Native American ceramic fragments and lithic (stone) tools.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Timothy L. Bober, "Social Agency and Dieffenderfer Ware: A Multiscalar Analysis Investigating Current Archaeological Perspectives Concerning Style, Social Dynamics, *Chaine Operatoire* and Practice Theory" (Master's Thesis, Western Michigan University, 2003), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Mark A. Steeby, "A Statistical Analysis of the Ceramics from the Dieffenderfer Site (20SJ179), St. Joseph County, Michigan" (Master's Thesis, Western Michigan University, 1997), 14.

<sup>3</sup> William Cremin and Arthur DesJardins, "Dieffenderfer: A Late Woodland 'Ditched' Hamlet in Southwest Michigan" (paper presented at annual meeting for Society of American Archeology, New Orleans, Louisiana, 2001), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Steeby, 21.

<sup>5</sup> Steeby, 21-22.

The 1993, 1995, and 1997 WMU Archaeological Field School took place at the Dieffenderfer site with Dr. William Cremin as principal investigator.<sup>6</sup> The archaeologists conducted a shovel test pit (STP) survey to try to identify the boundaries of the site. They discovered that most of the area outside the land enclosed by the oval shaped ditch was sterile but cultural material existed inside the ditched area.<sup>7</sup>

The archaeologists set out to try to determine what the purpose of the ditch was. From the excavations in the ditch, they discovered that the ditch was from 27-152 cm wide and 17-49 cm deep.<sup>8</sup> The profiles of the excavations did not reveal any evidence of wall structures connected with the ditch.<sup>9</sup> Once they discovered this, the archaeologists excavated inside of the land enclosed by the ditch in order to investigate it further.

During excavation, they discovered two house floors and over 20 pit features. One house floor was four meters by five meters and the other was three meters by four meters.<sup>10</sup> Each floor had a stone hearth and postholes along the centerline of the house floor.<sup>11</sup> Along with these features, the researchers discovered artifacts and ecofacts within the area enclosed by the ditch. Ecofacts are animal or plant remains. They found ceramics, fire cracked rock, bone, and other ecofacts within the house remains.<sup>12</sup> They also discovered several types of projectile points throughout the land enclosed by the ditch.<sup>13</sup> The archaeologists discovered both side-notched and

---

<sup>6</sup> Bober, 8.

<sup>7</sup> Steeby, 22.

<sup>8</sup> Cremin and DesJardins, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Cremin and DesJardins, 3-4.

<sup>10</sup> Cremin and DesJardins, 5-6.

<sup>11</sup> Cremin and DesJardins, 5-6.

<sup>12</sup> Steeby, 25.

<sup>13</sup> Steeby, 24.



corner-notched projectile points. The most prominent type of projectile point found was small triangular arrowheads from the Early and Middle Woodland periods.<sup>14</sup>

The evidence found at Dieffenderfer provides information about the lives of Native Americans. In particular, it gives information about the structure of Native American houses in the region. As in most cold regions, the hearth would have been in the middle of the house in order to keep in as much heat as possible. The archaeological remains at Dieffenderfer also tell us what types of food the Native Americans in the region ate. In one pit feature at the site, the archaeologists uncovered food remains such as freshwater mussel shells, and bones of turtle, fish, raccoon, beaver, deer, and elk. There was also a small amount of corn kernels.<sup>15</sup>

Another interesting discovery about Dieffenderfer is that it is located between two areas of influence. Downstream and to the southwest of the site, the Native American sites discovered have shown influences of the Mississippian culture. Upstream and north of the site, the Native American sites discovered showed influence of the Iroquoian culture.<sup>16</sup> As Dieffenderfer lies in the middle of these two influences, investigations can reveal the patterns of cultural influence on the indigenous Americans occupying the site. Mark Steeby and Tim Bober both used the ceramics found at Dieffenderfer to demonstrate the interactions between the different groups of Native Americans. They use the shapes of the ceramic vessels and the types of designs on them to decipher the multiple cultural influences on the occupants of Dieffenderfer.<sup>17</sup> The decorations on the Dieffenderfer ceramics are cord and fabric-pressed designs, and incision motifs.<sup>18</sup> The

---

<sup>14</sup> Cremin and DesJardins, 7.

<sup>15</sup> Cremin and DesJardins, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Bober, 16-18. & Steeby, i.

<sup>17</sup> Cremin and DesJardins, 7-9.

<sup>18</sup> Cremin and DesJardins, 8.

vessels from Deiffenderfer have slightly constricted necks, round bodies, and thin walls.<sup>19</sup> The thin walls suggest that most of these vessels were used for cooking. Deiffenderfer pottery was grit tempered, which means that sand was added to the clay used to make the vessels.<sup>20</sup> Steeby suggests that some of the incisions on the necks of the Deiffenderfer ceramics are similar to the typical incision designs on Iroquoian vessels.<sup>21</sup> Some of the ceramic fragments with cord pressed-motifs on the neck of the vessel and smooth bodies are similar to the typical designs of ceramics in the Mississippian culture.<sup>22</sup> The ceramics from Deiffenderfer have multiple forms and decorations, which could indicate a relationship to another culture. Further examination of the ceramic assemblages from other sites would help to identify the cultural influences on the occupants of Deiffenderfer. The fact, that Dieffenderfer is situated so close to a ford used by travelers on the Sauk Trail, is one possible reason that the evidence found at the site shows multiple influences. The location means that the indigenous Americans occupying the site could encounter many people along the trail. It is likely Dieffenderfer to aspects of other cultures such as different ways of forming and decorating ceramic vessels.

Through the evidence found at Dieffenderfer many different types of interpretation could work. One that people will connect to the most is relating the lifestyle and artifacts found at the site to current practices. The artifacts found at the site and used in the exhibit are ceramics and projectile points. The display of projectile points and ceramics could relate to food practices of Native Americans. The exhibit could explain and compare types of ecofacts found at the site to the types of food people consume today. Comparing the designs of ceramics to the types of vessels and design patterns used today is another possible interpretation of the site. Finally, the

---

<sup>19</sup> Steeby, 64.

<sup>20</sup> Bober, 86.

<sup>21</sup> Steeby, 68.

<sup>22</sup> Steeby, 79.

interpretation could be as simple as discussing how multiple groups influenced the Native Americans at Dieffenderfer and comparing that to the cultural influences present today.

Hines will display some of the images and artifacts from Dieffenderfer. The images related to Dieffenderfer include pictures of excavation taking place, excavated units, and features found at the site. The images show the environment or setting of the site. They also show excavations in process. These images can make the story of archaeological practices more real to the visitor. The pictures of the features such as the house floors with the hearths and postholes would give another visual representation for the descriptions in the text. The artifacts on display will be ceramic fragments and projectile points from the site.

### Ramptown Project

According to primary and secondary sources, many people in Cass County and southwest Michigan assisted formerly enslaved people from the American south in their search for freedom. Some came north to southwest Michigan in search of freedom or on their way to Canada. During the 1830s, Quaker abolitionists and free blacks began assisting African American in freeing themselves from the bonds of slavery.<sup>23</sup> In exchange for some labor, abolitionists allowed the escaped slaves to live on and farm small portions of their land.<sup>24</sup> In 1847, slave owners from Kentucky raided Cass County in search of some of their escaped slaves.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Amanda J. Campbell and Michael S. Nassaney, *Archaeological Report No. 23: The Ramptown Project: Archeological and Historical Investigations of Underground Railroad Activities in Southwest Michigan* (Lansing, MI: Michigan Historical Center, 2005), iii.

<sup>24</sup> Campbell and Nassaney, 8.

<sup>25</sup> Campbell and Nassaney, 6.

Ramptown was a nineteenth century community of escaped slaves. The community was located near Vandalia in Cass County Michigan.<sup>26</sup> Based on historical records and artifacts uncovered, archeologists estimated that people occupied the community from about 1840 to about 1890. Archaeologists estimate that somewhere between 250 to 500 people lived at Ramptown throughout its occupation.<sup>27</sup> They think that at its peak about 100 people lived in twenty cabins at the site.<sup>28</sup>

In 2002, Dr. Michael Nassaney, Professor of Anthropology at Western Michigan University, initiated the Ramptown Project. WMU students surveyed the area near the town of Vandalia in Cass County in order to identify the location of Ramptown. With permission of the landowners, the archaeologists surveyed about 760 acres of land.<sup>29</sup> During the survey, the archaeologists walked along transits from two to ten meters apart. They observed the ground surface looking for looking for nineteenth and twentieth century artifacts. When the archaeologists located artifacts, they marked the artifacts with survey flags and mapped the area before collecting the artifact.<sup>30</sup>

The archaeologists identified twelve concentrations of artifacts including ceramics, metal, glass, brick, coal, and bone. The archaeologists believe that three of the twelve sites found (20CS142, 20CS143, and 20CS145) may have been the houses of Ramptown residents.<sup>31</sup> Another three sites (20CS149, 20CS150, and 20CS151) may be associated with Ramptown. One site (20CS144) is a deposit of bricks, which is not associated with Ramptown as the archeologists dated the bricks to the twentieth century. The archaeologists identified the owners

---

<sup>26</sup> Campbell and Nassaney, iii.

<sup>27</sup> Campbell and Nassaney, 31.

<sup>28</sup> Campbell and Nassaney, 32.

<sup>29</sup> Campbell and Nassaney, 35.

<sup>30</sup> Campbell and Nassaney, 37.

<sup>31</sup> Campbell and Nassaney, 69-70.

or occupations of the other sites and it is unclear if those men or places had any association with Ramptown.<sup>32</sup>

Ramptown and the surrounding area were full of people involved in a struggle for racial and class freedom. The Vandalia community helped many slaves escape freedom even offering them a place to live in exchange for some labor. The Ramptown community itself was made of free men or escaped slaves who were struggling to find an identity and new role in society. The exhibit interpretation could focus on the history of racial struggles and the Underground Railroad so that people can see how these struggles were present right in their own region and community. Everyone knows about the history of the Underground Railroad but many do not know a lot about the communities that African Americans formed once they escaped slavery. Using this site is a good way to inform the local community more about the history of African Americans in general and specifically about it in their own region.

There are many artifacts from Ramptown. There are ceramic sherds, pipe stem and bowl fragments, metal fragments and bricks. Some of the artifacts found during the survey do not directly relate to the Ramptown settlement. Most of the artifacts that do not directly relate are from a period after Ramptown's occupation. Ceramic sherds are the best artifacts for use in the exhibit and reveal the most about the settlement. There are various types and patterns of ceramics found at the site. This indicates that people living at the site did not have full sets of dinnerware. The mismatched pieces found in the survey suggested that African Americans were not concerned with the middle class ideals of class respectability.

---

<sup>32</sup> Campbell and Nassaney, 70.

The images for Ramptown are pictures or drawings that connect to the concepts present at the site but are not from the site. There are few photos directly from the project. Most of the photos from the site are of artifacts found during the survey. For that reason, some of the images available for use in “Evidence Found” are a plat map and a map of the Underground Railroad routes.

### Schilling Site 20KZ56

Originally, the state of Michigan recorded the location of what today we call the Schilling site based on information gathered from artifact collectors. After walking through farmland near East Lake in the Pavillion Township of Kalamazoo County, the collectors found tools, which ranged in date from the Paleo-Indian to Late Woodland periods.<sup>33</sup> The Shilling site came to the attention of the Department of Anthropology at Western Michigan University (WMU) when the Shilling family donated their collection of projectile points and other stone tools to the department.<sup>34</sup> The family found the artifacts in the same area as the artifact collectors.

In 1984, Dr. William Cremin chose the Shilling site as the location of the WMU Archaeological Field School.<sup>35</sup> After obtaining permission from the owner of the field, the students and staff began to survey the field and established a grid on the western half of the site. The procedure was to remove the plow zone as one level. At the base of the level, the archaeologists examined the soil. If there was not any unnatural staining in the soil then they dug down ten centimeters more to see if any other material turned up. If not then the soil at the base of the unit was probed before closing out the pit to confirm that there was no further information

---

<sup>33</sup> William M. Cremin and Dale William Quattrin, “A Possible Sweatlodge at the Shilling Site (20KZ56), Kalamazoo County, Michigan,” *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology* 13, no. 1 (1988): 1.

<sup>34</sup> Cremin and Quattrin, 1.

<sup>35</sup> Cremin and Quattrin, 2.

available deeper down. Most of the material found at the site was located in the plow zone. They found no midden deposits (concentrations of discarded cultural debris) at the site. The archaeologists located stone flakes, projectile points, drill tips, a hammer stone, a scraper, and an earthenware ceramic sherd during their excavations.<sup>36</sup>

The archaeologists located three features. The first was a concentration of sherds from late Middle Woodland vessels. The second consisted of a large concentration of fire-cracked cobblestones in a soil that showed evidence of repeated firing. The third was two fire pits with fill that contained charcoal and fire cracked rock.<sup>37</sup>

The second feature provide to be the most interesting. Excavation on the second feature started as a one by one meter pit, which was located about thirty meters away from the lake.<sup>38</sup> At the surface of the pit, the archaeologists found deposits of fire cracked rock. At the base of the plow zone, the team located fire cracked rock and oxidized (burnt) soil. There was also a vertical piece of wood, which suggested that a post or supporting structure had existed in that location.<sup>39</sup>

After uncovering part of Feature 2, the archaeologists extended the pit in order to uncover the whole feature. The feature consisted of hundreds of fire-cracked cobblestones. In an oblong irregular shape, the feature covered an area of 6.5 square meters; the maximum length was 4.2 meters and the maximum width was 2.2 meters.<sup>40</sup> Spaced around the feature were postholes. Along a centerline of the feature, there were two more postholes. Also around the feature, there were a few centimeters of oxidized soil.

---

<sup>36</sup> Cremin and Quattrin, 2.

<sup>37</sup> Cremin and Quattrin, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Cremin and Quattrin, 3.

<sup>39</sup> Cremin and Quattrin, 3.

<sup>40</sup> Cremin and Quattrin, 3.

The archaeologist removed the cobblestones and troweled down to reveal the stratigraphy in the wall of the pit. The stratigraphy revealed a shallow basin like depression in the center of the feature. The basin soil stain had a maximum depth of thirty-five centimeters below the origin of the stain.<sup>41</sup> The soil revealed evidence of firing taking place at the site. The soil consisted of charcoal but no cultural or organic material such as bone or plant was uncovered.

Based on these attributes, the feature was interpreted as the remains of a sweat lodge. The shape of the feature and the structural support postholes are similar to what is known about Native American sweat lodges. The depression in the center of the oval would have been where the Native Americans built a fire to heat up the stones. Once the fire had heated the stones, the Native Americans would throw water on the stones causing steam to fill the enclosed space. The lack of organic material supports the idea that the Native Americans used the feature as a sweat lodge and not a hearth used for cooking.<sup>42</sup>

White oak was the most common type of wood uncovered with the feature. This could be because the wood is known for its high heat value. This would be another indication of the site's use as a sweat lodge. Since the heat of the fire needs to be high in order to heat the stones and create the steam, the Native Americans would use a type of wood known for its high heat value in order to speed the process up and make it more affective.<sup>43</sup>

A quote from a story published in 1898 about the Baw Beese band of Potawatomi in Hillsdale County supports the interpretation that Feature 2 is a sweat lodge. A. D. P. Van Buren wrote, "They held a ceremony which we called 'sissing stones.' For this, they had a long, narrow wigwam as the temple. A shallow hole was made in the center and encircled with a row of large

---

<sup>41</sup> Cremin and Quattrin, 4.

<sup>42</sup> Cremin and Quattrin, 5.

<sup>43</sup> Cremin and Quattrin, 5.



stones. Fire was then built within the circle. When the stones were thoroughly heated five or six Indians would enter the 'temple,' shut it tightly, and pour water on the hot stones until the wigwam was filled with steam. After remaining in there for several moments they would run a few rods and plunge, all in the sweat condition, headlong into the lake."<sup>44</sup> This description is consistent with the feature the archaeologist uncovered including the proximity to the lake.

Native Americans commonly used sweat lodges as a form of purification for both the spirit and the body. The sweat lodge was a place where Native Americans could connect spiritually with their gods. It was also a place used for health. The immersion in the heat could relieve tension and cause someone to release toxins through sweat. The practice of using the sweat lodge was also part of the hygiene of the Native Americans. The indigenous people took daily baths; the use of the sweat lodge was an extension of the bodily cleansing associated with daily baths.

The artifact used for representation of the Schilling is fire-cracked-rock (FCR). FCR represents the repeated fires that took place at the site. The FCR along with the images from the site will show people what the archaeologist uncovered at the site. The images related to the site are photos of excavations and the sweat lodge feature uncovered.

#### Shepard Site (20CA104)

The Shepard site is located in Battle Creek, Michigan. The Shepard site has a long history. According to historical sources, Native American activity took place at the site until the

---

<sup>44</sup> Cremin and Quattrin, 6.

1830s.<sup>45</sup> During the 1830s, the first pioneers began to settle Battle Creek. The proximity to the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo rivers as well as the fertile farmland influenced many people to settle the area. It was in 1834 that Warren B. Shepard, the first schoolteacher in the town settled the site. Shepard originally lived in a log home on the property.<sup>46</sup> In the 1850s, Shepard built the Greek Revival house that currently occupies the property.<sup>47</sup> After ending his career as a schoolteacher, Shepard started a brick manufacturing business.<sup>48</sup> He also farmed part of his land to feed himself, his family, and a few laborers. Sometime during the 1850s, Shepard developed the farm into a larger practice.<sup>49</sup> After Shepard's death in 1876, his daughters seem to have continued the farming business for a while, before they began selling off parcels of the land to other families in 1897.<sup>50</sup> The house switched owners a few times. In 1935, the owners began renting the house out.<sup>51</sup> People occupied the house until the 1980s. During that time, the owner did some renovations to the house and property.<sup>52</sup>

The Historical Society of Battle Creek acquired the house in 1990.<sup>53</sup> They wanted to use the house to interpret the early history of Battle Creek. The group wanted to have an archaeological survey conducted at the site. Through archaeology, they hoped to identify outbuildings and activities associated with the house in order to understand better the history of the owners of the house, pioneer history, and spatial changes in the activity areas.

---

<sup>45</sup> Michael S. Nassaney, *Archaeological Report No. 20: Historical Archeology in Battle Creek Michigan: The 1996 Field Season at the Warren B. Shepard Site (20CA104)* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Western Michigan University Department of Anthropology, 1998), 15.

<sup>46</sup> Nassaney, *Historical Archeology in Battle Creek Michigan*, 16.

<sup>47</sup> Nassaney, *Historical Archeology in Battle Creek Michigan*, 18.

<sup>48</sup> Nassaney, *Historical Archeology in Battle Creek Michigan*, 16.

<sup>49</sup> Nassaney, *Historical Archeology in Battle Creek Michigan*, 18.

<sup>50</sup> Nassaney, *Historical Archeology in Battle Creek Michigan*, 23.

<sup>51</sup> Nassaney, *Historical Archeology in Battle Creek Michigan*, 24.

<sup>52</sup> Nassaney, *Historical Archeology in Battle Creek Michigan*, 24.

<sup>53</sup> Nassaney, *Historical Archeology in Battle Creek Michigan*, 24.

Dr. Michael Nassaney, Professor of Anthropology at WMU and principal investigator of the Southwest Michigan Landscape Project, chose the Shepard site as the location of the 1996 WMU Archaeological Field School.<sup>54</sup> The field school ran for about two months. After the field school, fieldwork continued at the site for three weeks with a crew of field technicians.<sup>55</sup> The archaeologists conducted interviews with local residents to learn more about the house and the possible locations of outbuildings. They also conducted a geophysical survey. They used a magnetometer, electrical resistivity, and ground penetrating radar.<sup>56</sup> These devices are used to locate subsurface anomalies that may have been created by human activities, such as privies, foundation walls, or other landscape modifications. These results identified areas that could correspond with the remains of outbuildings or concentrations of activity.<sup>57</sup> Once they identified these areas, the archaeologist could further investigate those areas to determine their significance. The archaeologists dug both shovel test pits (STPs) and larger excavations. They used these procedures to test areas that had appeared in the geophysical survey.<sup>58</sup>

The archaeology revealed the foundation of a kitchen extension of the house and artifacts associated with the mid-nineteenth century, which corresponds to when Shepard built the house.<sup>59</sup> Through the geophysical survey and excavation, the archaeologists discovered a nineteenth century privy. The privy had been filled in with ceramics, metal, and glass artifacts. One of the artifacts discovered near the top of the privy was a chamber pot.<sup>60</sup> This indicates that the occupants of the house must have installed indoor plumbing around that time. Since they no longer needed the chamber pot or the privy, they filled in with dirt and things they considered

---

<sup>54</sup> Nassaney, *Historical Archeology in Battle Creek Michigan*, 1.

<sup>55</sup> Nassaney, *Historical Archeology in Battle Creek Michigan*, 1.

<sup>56</sup> Nassaney, *Historical Archeology in Battle Creek Michigan*, 39.

<sup>57</sup> Nassaney, *Historical Archeology in Battle Creek Michigan*, 40.

<sup>58</sup> Nassaney, *Historical Archeology in Battle Creek Michigan*, 48.

<sup>59</sup> Nassaney, *Historical Archeology in Battle Creek Michigan*, 65& 67.

<sup>60</sup> Nassaney, *Historical Archeology in Battle Creek Michigan*, 69 and 81.

trash. The layers of disposed artifacts reveal the economic status of the individuals occupying the house. The artifacts thrown in the privy and buried were items that the occupants of the house no longer wanted or needed. For example, the types of pottery thrown away would indicate the economic condition the occupants of the house were to be able to afford those objects.

Archaeologists can trace the change in the materials disposed to the transition from the owners of the house occupying the site to the tenants renting the house out. For that reason, the collection of material in the privy could be from a cleansing of the house in preparation for new occupants.

One way to interpret the findings at the Shepard site is to focus on sanitation and the transition from privies to indoor plumbing. They found the privy filled in with trash from the house. The filled in privy could mean two things. The first is that the owners of the house filled in the privy and created a new one. The second is that they filled the privy in because they added indoor plumbing to the house and the privy was no longer necessary. The archaeologists found the chamber pot near the top of the pit meaning that it was one of the last objects thrown into the pit. Although the chamber pot was broken, it is interesting that one of the last things thrown in was something that the occupants of the house would have used before they added indoor plumbing. The trash that filled the privy can tell us a lot about the economic status of the individuals living in the house.

Another possible interpretation could be the change in animal remains found at the Shepard site. During both the time that the site was a farm and after, the occupants of the site consumed the same types of animals such as cow, pig, and sheep.<sup>61</sup> The type of animal remains at the site remains consistent throughout the occupation of the site. The cut of the animal is what changed. Through this archeologists can see that while the sites was a farm more people needed

---

<sup>61</sup> Nassaney, *Historical Archeology in Battle Creek Michigan*, 107.

to be fed so there was more cuts like roasts and hams.<sup>62</sup> Later when there were less people occupying the site, animal cuts changed to steaks and chops.<sup>63</sup> This distribution of animal bones also indicates where the occupants of the house were getting their meat. It appears that while the site functioned as a farm, the meat and some of the other food would have been produced on the farm. Later after the farm ended, the occupants would have bought their meat from a nearby market or store rather than making it themselves on site. Through this interpretation, the site could show how evidence found at the site can reveal living patterns and how they change.

The artifact associated with the site is a chamber pot. The archaeologists found the chamber pot when they excavated the privy. This shows the changing sanitation during the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The images from the site are photos of the house, excavations, and some historical images such as one of Warren Shepard. One of the photos is of the chamber pot in situ. From this image, visitors will see how archaeologists find artifacts and how such finds are treated. Although the artifact to be displayed in the exhibit is the chamber pot, large and small bones from the site could be displayed to link the patterns of food consumption to the interpretation in the exhibit.

### Fort St. Joseph Site 20BE23

The French established Fort St. Joseph an eighteenth century trading post, mission, and garrison in 1691.<sup>64</sup> Priests, enlisted men, and traders lived in the fort. Native American tribes of the Potawatomi lived near the fort and interacted with the people living there. Some of the

---

<sup>62</sup> Nassaney, *Historical Archeology in Battle Creek Michigan*, 107.

<sup>63</sup> Nassaney, *Historical Archeology in Battle Creek Michigan*, 107.

<sup>64</sup> Michael Nassaney, "Decolonizing Archaeological Theory at Fort St. Joseph, An Eighteenth-Century Multi-Ethnic Community in the Western Great Lakes Region," *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology* 37, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 12.

French settlers married Native women.<sup>65</sup> In 1761, the British took control of the fort during the French and Indian War, but French traders still worked and lived in the area until 1780. In 1763 during Pontiac's Rebellion, Native Americans attack Fort St. Joseph in an effort to force the British out with the hopes that the French would take back control. In 1781, the Spanish seized the fort. Then the Americans had control of the region. Although they did not operate Fort St. Joseph, trade continued in the area.<sup>66</sup>

Overtime the community forgot the exact location of Fort St. Joseph, although they had an idea of the general location. The land the fort occupied had changed to an agricultural field. During late 19th to early 20th century, artifact collectors found cultural material related to the fort in the field. After reviewing documents during the 1970s and 1980s, Dr. Joseph L. Peyser a professor at Indiana University suggested that the fort was located on the east bank of the river in Niles.<sup>67</sup>

The Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project began in 1998 when a local group, Support the Fort, Inc. asked Western Michigan University (WMU) archaeologists to conduct a survey in Niles, Michigan in order to find the location of Fort St. Joseph.<sup>68</sup> The community was interested in finding the exact location of the site, which has been looked for and speculated about since the artifact collectors began looking for artifacts in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The archaeologists conducted a series of shovel test pits (STPs) in order to find the location of the site. In the end, they located

---

<sup>65</sup> Michael Nassaney, "Decolonizing Archaeological Theory at Fort St. Joseph, An Eighteenth-Century Multi-Ethnic Community in the Western Great Lakes Region," 14.

<sup>66</sup> "Fort History," *Western Michigan University*, <http://www.wmich.edu/fortstjoseph/about/history.html> (accessed March 28, 2014).

<sup>67</sup> "Project History" *Western Michigan University*, <http://www.wmich.edu/fortstjoseph/project/history.html> (accessed March 28, 2014).

<sup>68</sup> Michael Nassaney, "Public Involvement in the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project," *Present Pasts* 3 (2011): 43.

Fort St. Joseph on the east bank of the St. Joseph River in Niles as Dr. Peyser suggested.<sup>69</sup> After discovering the fort, the WMU Archaeological Field School took place at the site under the direction of Dr. Michael Nassaney, the principal investigator, in 2002 and every summer from 2004 to 2013.

The Fort St. Joseph Archeological Project is a collaboration between Western Michigan University, and the City of Niles.<sup>70</sup> The goal is to excavate the site and interpret it in order to teach the public about the site and the history of French colonialism and the history of the region.

One challenge at the site, that has to be handled before every excavation, is the high water table. The water table is high due to the location along the river. While the high water table helps preserve some types of artifacts, it creates a challenge for excavation. Therefore, before every excavation, a dewatering system has to be installed and the water is pumped out of the site.<sup>71</sup>

Overtime during excavations, archaeologists commonly discover artifacts such as glass seed beads, tinkling cones, animal bones, ammunition like lead shot and musket balls, clay pipe fragments, ceramic fragments, glass fragments, daub, and metal fragments. Some significant discoveries have been a Jesuit rings, which perhaps show the presence of the Jesuit missionaries at the fort. The archeologists have also discovered stone fireplaces indicating the presence of a habitation structures. At this point, evidence suggests that the archeologists have uncovered the remains of about five domestic buildings.<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> "Project History."

<sup>70</sup> Michael Nassaney, "Public Involvement in the Fort St. Joseph Archeological Project," 44-45.

<sup>71</sup> "Project History."

<sup>72</sup> Michael Nassaney, "Welcome to the Project," *Fort St. Joseph Post: Department of Anthropology Western Michigan University* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 1, <http://www.wmich.edu/fortstjoseph/docs/Spring-2012-Newsletter.pdf> (Accessed on March 28, 2014).

One of the unique aspects of the Fort St. Joseph Archeological Project is the public involvement. As described above, the site was located because the local community requested that WMU archaeologists come in to find the site. WMU archeologists work to communicate and collaborate with the local community in order serve the needs of all people involved with the site.<sup>73</sup> One important thing for this type of project to do is to find out what questions the local community is looking to answer from this project.<sup>74</sup> This is import so that the community is interested in the information that the archaeologists provide them. This comes into the way the archaeologists interpret the site and information they find. They have to do the same types of things we will be doing with this exhibit. They connect the information to the things that the community is interested in so that they are interested in and can learn from it. The Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project also disseminates information about the goals of each excavation season and the reporting and presentation of the results so that the information is transparent to the local community.<sup>75</sup>

One way the project involves the community is through weeklong summer camps. There are three different types of camps (students, educators, and lifelong learns). During the camp, the participants learn about archaeological techniques, the history of the fort and the region. Each participant receives the opportunity to participate in an active excavation. From this participation, each person learns the skills of archeologists and the work they do. Another way the project involves the community is through the annual archaeological open house. The open house began in 2001.<sup>76</sup> Each open house has a theme; for example, the theme in 2010 was

---

<sup>73</sup> Michael Nassaney, "Public Involvement in the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project," 44.

<sup>74</sup> Michael Nassaney, "Public Involvement in the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project," 44 -45.

<sup>75</sup> Michael Nassaney, "Public Involvement in the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project," 45.

<sup>76</sup> Michael Nassaney, "Public Involvement in the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project," 46.



“Women of New France.”<sup>77</sup> The open house includes the opportunity to see the site in excavation, watch historical re-enactors, participate in children activities, and see recently found artifacts. All of this is done to teach the public about the site and history and to get them involved in the project. These events also create transparency and trust between the community and the archaeological team.

The Fort St. Joseph Archeological Project provides a unique opportunity for the public to learn about the site. The focus of the project is both research and public outreach. Through events like the annual open house and the summer camps, this project has achieved its goal of educating the public about the work they do and the information they have uncovered.

### Native American Mound in Bronson Park

In the nineteenth century when pioneers arrived in Kalamazoo County, they found evidence of a past culture. They encountered mounds and earthen works, which they referred to as garden beds; some were garden beds, others were mounds.<sup>78</sup> The pioneers were not sure what the purpose of these structures was. After some inquiry, they determined that the Potawatomi, the Native American tribe in the region, was not responsible for the structures.<sup>79</sup> In fact, a civilization in the region before the Potawatomi probably built the mounds.<sup>80</sup> Over the course of settlement, most of the earthen works in the area disappeared. Farmers often destroyed the structures when they expanded their fields.<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>77</sup> Michael Nassaney, “Public Involvement in the Fort St. Joseph Archeological Project,” 46.

<sup>78</sup> “Uncovering Indian Archaeology,” *MuseON*, Kalamazoo Valley Museum Online Magazine, [http://www.kalamazoomuseum.org/info/museON/articles/articles\\_full.php?project\\_id=1209051452tw&kvm\\_article\\_order=2](http://www.kalamazoomuseum.org/info/museON/articles/articles_full.php?project_id=1209051452tw&kvm_article_order=2) (accessed March 28, 2014).

<sup>79</sup> “Uncovering Indian Archaeology.”

<sup>80</sup> Fred Peppel, “Kalamazoos First Residents: Our Native Americans,” *Kalamazoo Public Library*, 2010. <http://www.kpl.gov/local-history/general/native-americans.aspx> (accessed March 28, 2014).

<sup>81</sup> “Uncovering Indian Archaeology.”

The Native American Mound in Bronson Park of Kalamazoo is one of the few still present. Although the mound structures still exists, people have excavated and rebuilt it many times.<sup>82</sup> People in the nineteenth century did not have standards of proper archeological techniques. Therefore, there is little recorded information from these excavations.<sup>83</sup>

When pioneers settled the area, the mound was located on a plain, which had a scattering of burr-oak trees. It was for that reason that the pioneers called the area ‘Oak Openings.’<sup>84</sup> A man named Henry Little provided a description of the size of the structure, which he said was a perfect circle. He said that it was fifty-eight feet in diameter at the base of the mound and the height was four feet nine inches.<sup>85</sup> The first known excavation on the mound in Bronson Park was in 1832. Pioneers E. Laiken Brown and Cyrus Lovell excavated the mound and reported, “We discovered nothing whatsoever – no bones, no pottery, no implements or relics of any kind.”<sup>86</sup> In 1850, A. J. Sheldon excavated the mound.<sup>87</sup> After finding nothing of significance in the mound, Sheldon buried a bottle containing coins and a newspaper clipping from the *Kalamazoo Telegraph*’s June 28, 1850 edition.<sup>88</sup> As buildings rose in the areas around the Native American Mound, Kalamazoo decided to make the site a park in 1854.<sup>89</sup> Eventually the park received the name Bronson Park but that was not until 1899 when the city passed an ordinance, which officially gave it the name.<sup>90</sup> Then in 1954, Alexis Praus, director of the Kalamazoo

---

<sup>82</sup> “Uncovering Indian Archaeology.”

<sup>83</sup> “Uncovering Indian Archaeology.”

<sup>84</sup> Willis Frederick Dunbar, *Kalamazoo and How It Grew*, (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University, 1959), 14. Accessed from HathiTrust’s digital library.

<sup>85</sup> Dunbar, 14.

<sup>86</sup> “Uncovering Indian Archaeology.”

<sup>87</sup> Dunbar, 14.

<sup>88</sup> Dunbar, 14.

<sup>89</sup> Dunbar, 67.

<sup>90</sup> Elizabeth Timmerman, “Bronson Park,” *Kalamazoo Public Library*, 2006. <http://www.kpl.gov/local-history/parks/bronson.aspx> (accessed March 28, 2014).

Public Museum and Nicholas Kik, superintendent of parks excavated the mound once again.<sup>91</sup> During this excavation, they discovered the bottle that Sheldon had left behind. When they filled in the excavation, they enclosed a new bottle with things pertaining to life in Kalamazoo in 1954.<sup>92</sup> They meant this to be a hundred year time capsule.<sup>93</sup>

The mound at Bronson Park while being a Native American site is different from the other sites. Many of the people that excavated the mound did not record it properly and they did not know archaeological techniques. The site is also unique in how the use of the mound changed. Many of the sites have had alternative uses since the people that occupied them left, but the Bronson Park mound's new identity was unique. People have turned the mound into a time capsule.

### Conclusion

While conducting the research and work for this project I learned many things that I will be able to use in my future career. I have learned much more about what goes into planning an exhibit. Up until now, I have mainly worked on the collections side of things and have not had a significant amount of experience in exhibits other than assisting with installation. Background research is necessary to provide accurate information for the content. Locating artifacts and images that pertain to a topic is another big part of the exhibit planning process. Through this experience, I learned more about museum practices but also about archaeology and history. Before this project, I knew that there were archaeological sites in the southwest Michigan area but from this project I learned more about the types of sites and what knowledge has been gained

---

<sup>91</sup> Elizabeth Timmerman, "Bronson Park."

<sup>92</sup> Dunbar, 14.

<sup>93</sup> Elizabeth Timmerman, "Bronson Park."

from them. The knowledge I have gained and the skills I have learned from this project, I will be able to apply to my future career in museums.

## Works Cited

- Bober, Timothy L. "Social Agency and Dieffenderfer Ware: A Multiscalar Analysis Investigating Current Archaeological Perspectives Concerning Style, Social Dynamics, Chaîne Operatoire and Practice Theory." Master's Thesis, Western Michigan University, 2003.
- Campbell, Amanda J. and Nassaney, Michael S. *Archaeological Report No. 23: The Ramptown Project: Archeological and Historical Investigations of Underground Railroad Activities in Southwest Michigan*. Lansing, MI: Michigan Historical Center, 2005.
- Cremin, William and DesJardins, Arthur. "Dieffenderfer: A Late Woodland 'Ditched' Hamlet in Southwest Michigan." Paper presented at annual meeting for Society of American Archeology, New Orleans, Louisiana, 2001.
- Cremin, William M. and Quattrin, Dale William. "A Possible Sweatlodge at the Shilling Site (20KZ56), Kalamazoo County, Michigan." *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology* 13, no. 1 (1988).
- Dunbar, Willis Frederick. *Kalamazoo and How It Grew*. Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University, 1959. Accessed from HathiTrust's digital library.
- "Fort History." *Western Michigan University*.  
<http://www.wmich.edu/fortstjoseph/about/history.html> (accessed March 28, 2014).
- Nassaney, Michael S. *Archaeological Report No. 20: Historical Archeology in Battle Creek Michigan: The 1996 Field Season at the Warren B. Shepard Site (20CA104)*. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Western Michigan University Department of Anthropology, 1998.
- Nassaney, Michael. "Decolonizing Archaeological Theory at Fort St. Joseph, An Eighteenth-Century Multi-Ethic Community in the Western Great Lakes Region." *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology* 37, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 5-24.
- Nassaney, Michael. "Public Involvement in the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project." *Present Pasts* 3 (2011): 42-51.
- Nassaney, Michael. "Welcome to the Project." *Fort St. Joseph Post: Department of Anthropology Western Michigan University* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 1.  
<http://www.wmich.edu/fortstjoseph/docs/Spring-2012-Newsletter.pdf> (Accessed on March 28, 2014).
- Peppel, Fred. "Kalamazoos First Residents: Our Native Americans." *Kalamazoo Public Library*, 2010. <http://www.kpl.gov/local-history/general/native-americans.aspx> (accessed March 28, 2014).
- "Project History." *Western Michigan University*.  
<http://www.wmich.edu/fortstjoseph/project/history.html> (accessed March 28, 2014).

Steeby, Mark A. "A Statistical Analysis of the Ceramics From The Dieffenderfer Site (20SJ179), St. Joseph County, Michigan." Master's Thesis, Western Michigan University, 1997.

Timmerman, Elizabeth. "Bronson Park." *Kalamazoo Public Library*, 2006.  
<http://www.kpl.gov/local-history/parks/bronson.aspx> (accessed March 28, 2014).

"Uncovering Indian Archaeology." *MuseON*, Kalamazoo Valley Museum Online Magazine.  
[http://www.kalamazoomuseum.org/info/museON/articles/articles\\_full.php?project\\_id=1209051452tw&kvm\\_article\\_order=2](http://www.kalamazoomuseum.org/info/museON/articles/articles_full.php?project_id=1209051452tw&kvm_article_order=2) (accessed March 28, 2014).