

**“A Good Deal of an Archaeological Romance”**

**A History of the Discovery and Excavation of the Lamoka Lake Site**

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## **Introduction**

*The story of the job which the Rochester Municipal Museum is carrying on in an oat field between Lakes Waneta and Lamoka is a good deal of an archaeological romance, made possible by the belief that museum research of this type is a proper educational function. (The Evening Leader 1928)*

In 1932 William Ritchie published *The Lamoka Lake Site: The Type Station of the Archaic Algonkin Period in New York*. This report (Ritchie 1932a) and his related article in the *American Anthropologist* (Ritchie 1932b) led to the adoption of the term "Archaic" to refer to hunter-gatherer cultures that predated ceramic-using cultures throughout North America. About three decades later, Ritchie provided more information on the Lamoka Lake site and culture in *The Archaeology of New York State*.

Lamoka Lake is considered the type site of the Archaic Period and research at Lamoka Lake spans virtually the entire Twentieth Century. Yet beyond Ritchie's two accounts, relatively little has been written about the discovery, excavation, and interpretation of this important archaeological site. In this report, I summarize the site history to provide context for new interpretations of archaeology of the Lamoka Lake site. In addition, the history of research at Lamoka Lake provides a valuable perspective on the growth of archaeological method and theory in the twentieth century and the cultural context in which knowledge is attained and ideas develop.

## **Location and Description**

The Lamoka Lake site is a National Historic Landmark in Tyrone Township, Schuyler County, New York State, on the eastern shore of a small unnamed stream (sometimes referred to as the Waneta outlet) that connects two small, shallow, weedy lakes: Waneta Lake to the north and Lamoka Lake to the south. Part of the site is managed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the remainder is owned by the Archaeological Conservancy, a private organization that purchases and preserves significant archaeological sites. No collecting of artifacts or digging is allowed on any part of the site without a permit.

Waneta Lake, which is about three miles long, drains south through the stream to Lamoka Lake, which is about one mile long. Waneta was formerly known as Little Lake and Lamoka as Mud Lake (e.g., Child 1868:189-190). Both had gained their modern names by 1879 (Everts and Ensign 1879:678; Gazette Company 1885:250), although Waneta is still labeled "Little Lake" on the 1903 USGS topographic map.

The outlet of Lamoka Lake is known as Mud Creek. At Bradford, about two miles south of the Lamoka outlet, a dam (first constructed around 1793) has widened Mud Creek, which is sometimes labeled Mill Pond on maps. The construction of the original Bradford dam also created a rise in the lake level that flooded much of the flats on either side of the Waneta outlet (Everts and Ensign 1879:678) near the Lamoka Lake site.

In the nineteenth century, one could see the areas along the shore "now covered with mud, bushes, and water-where, in an early day, was the gravelly beach of Lake Lamoka." (Evert and Ensign 1879:678) In 1881, the outlet was relatively open and free flowing, but by 1911, it was described as a "narrow, tortuous and shallow channel" (State Department of Health 1912:853) jammed with drift wood and other debris. The southwestern shore of Waneta Lake, which is currently above water, was a swamp and residents petitioned the state to dredge the outlet (State Department of Health 1912:853-856). It seems likely this happened, as conditions were improved by the 1920s, as the former swamp was now described as "the meadows of the old lake bottom" (Follett 1928b:1), but "parallel to the outlet on both sides the land is exceedingly swampy, and low, there being only a fall of six feet between the two lakes" (Follett 1928b:1).

In 1928 an outlet was cut from the north end of Waneta northwest to Keuka Lake as part of a water power project. Because of this artificial outlet, Lamoka and Waneta, once among the farthest reaches of the southern-draining Susquehanna River watershed, have now become part of the Finger Lakes system, which drain by way of the Seneca River and Oswego River into Lake Ontario and thence northeast into the St. Lawrence River. By 1938, submerged tree stumps were reported in the north end of Lamoka Lake and the south end of Waneta Lake indicating a relatively recent increase in the water level (McVaugh 1938), presumably due to the raising of the level of Lamoka Lake for the hydroelectric power project. The stream has been dredged or modified several times since.

## **History of the Area**

Tyrone Township was part of the Phelps and Gorham Purchase of 1788. The township itself was formed in 1822 (Gazette Company 1885:250) as part of Steuben County, and Schuyler County was created in 1854 from parts of Steuben, Chemung, and Tompkins Counties (Gazette Company 1885:232). The small town of Weston is located east of the archaeological site, and Tyrone is farther south and east, along the same road.

In 1779, Iroquois reportedly "had quite an extensive corn-field along the inlet between Little Lake and Lake Lamoka." (Evert and Ensign 1879:678) When settlers arrived about two decades later, some Seneca Iroquois were still in the area and continued to spend winters along Lamoka Lake for several years afterward (Evert and Ensign 1879:678).

The first settlers near the Lamoka Lake site were Joshua and Elisha Wixon (or Wixson), who arrived around 1798 to farm the flats on the east side of the Waneta outlet (i.e., on the Lamoka Lake site). They stayed there only for a few years, leaving behind "a bark and brush shanty, and a patch of corn." (Evert and Ensign 1879:678)

In 1800, the Bennett family "settled on both sides of the creek, between the two lakes. They took up a large tract of land, some 800 acres, which included the site of Weston Village." (Evert and Ensign 1879:678) Several other settlers came to the area around 1800, including Benjamin Harden, who lived "at the head of Lake Lamoka." (Evert and Ensign 1879:678) Some of the early settlers are buried in a small cemetery in the wooded area on top of the hill overlooking the Lamoka Lake site.

At some point in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a cider mill was built on the east side of the stream (likely near the modern parking area). By the mid nineteenth century, Tyrone consisted of "two churches, a hotel, two saw-mills, two grist-mills, a tannery, half a dozen stores and several mechanic shops, and about 300 inhabitants" (Child 1868:189) and Weston was slightly smaller, with "two churches, a hotel, several stores and mechanic shops and about 250 inhabitants." (Child 1868:190)

By the early twentieth century, the Lamoka Lake site was known as the VanLiew farm. S. Alden VanLiew died sometime around 1916. His wife, Josephine (Heald) VanLiew, then moved to Dundee before passing away in 1920 (Penn Yan Democrat 1920). The land was purchased by Frank Wood, who owned it at the time of the earliest excavations.

## **Initial Discovery**

There is no mention of the Lamoka area in Squier's *Aboriginal Monuments of New York* (1851), but at the end of the nineteenth century there are two intriguing statements. William Beauchamp, in his county by county survey of New York prehistory, simply stated "Dr. S.H. Wright reports mounds at Lake Lamoka" (Beauchamp 1900:144), while another writer claimed that "Circular mounds appear about Lakes Lamoka and Waneta." (Corbett 1898:79) No prehistoric mounds have since been identified at the Lamoka Lake site.

A long blind stone ditch crossing part of the Lamoka Lake site (Follett 1928b:36) is indicative of a nineteenth or early twentieth century attempt to drain the field. Undoubtedly artifacts would have been turned up when the ditch was being dug, and other artifacts would have been uncovered every time the field was plowed. Early collectors "desultorily gleaned many arrowpoints, celts, mortars, and bone artifacts," (Ritchie 1932a:81) with E.M. Wixon (possibly Edgar M. Wixson of Hammondsport) gathering the "largest amount, and variety" (Follett 1928b:3) of artifacts from the site.

Reports of such finds made their way to New York state archaeologist Arthur C. Parker and his assistant, Everett R. Burmaster, in 1905. While "unpropitious circumstances permitted no examination," (Ritchie 1932a:81) Parker did record it as a "large village site" in his survey of New York archaeology (Parker 1922b:694).

## **Professional excavation**

William Ritchie may have visited the site as early as 1920 (Evening Leader 1950), but it was Henry Turnbull and Ellsworth C. Cowles who were the first to dig at Lamoka Lake. In September 1924, they discovered an "Algonkin burial" on the sand knoll or hill to the east of the Lamoka Lake site proper. (Evening Leader 1950; Ritchie 1932a:81) Cowles, about 28 years old at the time and, like Turnbull, a resident of Elmira (and later, Corning), became a prominent local historian and amateur archaeologist. Turnbull, at least, returned to Lamoka the following year:

Camping on Lake Keuka during the past few days, a party of lads with whom were Henry Turnbull of Elmira, and Winton Bennett of Bath, discovered a burying ground of the Algonquin Indians as indicated by the peculiar type of arrow-heads, and the pattern of stone hatchets unearthed. ... the lads unearthed the skeleton of an Indian, buried in sitting posture. The skull was broken, as though by a blow from an axe or hatchet. This burying ground was discovered near Lake Lamoka in the town of Wayne, the lads keeping the exact location a secret, as they desire to lease the plot, so that they may continue their investigations at leisure. (Evening Leader of Corning 1925)

Although the newspaper makes it sound like this was a newly discovered site, it seems almost certain this is the same site, and in the summer of 1925, Turnbull was digging again at the Lamoka Lake site:

Henry Turnbull, who had a camp near the spot, began to investigate it early in the summer, reporting numerous pits and many specimens. He sought out Commissioner Alvin H. Dewey, of the [Rochester] Municipal Museum, and after a conference with Director Parker, the expedition was sent out. (Rochester Democrat and Chronicle 1925)

The person in charge of the expedition was William Augustus Ritchie. Born in 1903, as a high school student he volunteered at the Rochester Municipal Museum (Kraft 1992:9) before being offered a paid position in 1924 as Museum Librarian and Assistant in Archaeology. Ritchie, who quickly became a curator at the museum, began work at the site in the autumn of 1925, returned for three weeks in 1926, and then, joined by Harrison Follett, who became responsible for most of the digging, had longer field seasons in 1927 and 1928.

Turnbull and Ritchie dug at the site from October 8 to November 25, 1925 (Ritchie 1925, 1932a:83; *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* 1925). This brief excavation focused, at least initially, on the top of the hill, where they discovered what was described as an "Iroquois fishing camp" possibly dating to the late eighteenth century A.D. Work closer to the stream was more productive, with 505 artifacts, including antler, bone, and stone tools being returned to the Rochester Museum (Ritchie 1925).

The following year, 1926, the Museum returned to Lamoka Lake and excavated up to five trenches<sup>1</sup> over three weeks, beginning on October 3 (Ritchie 1932a:83). Ritchie mentions that "The first discovery of human remains on the site was made by the writer, who in October 1926, uncovered in a refuse pit at a depth of only one foot, two young adult male skeletons." (Ritchie 1932a:114)<sup>2</sup>

Longer field seasons "with very limited assistance and between crops" (Ritchie 1969:36) were held in 1927 and 1928. The earliest of these, in the spring of 1927, was conducted by Ritchie with the assistance of James M. Hamilton, Walter H. Swan, and at least two other workers (*Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* 1927). Ritchie later lists the excavators as Donald L. Ritchie, Harrison C. Follett, and himself, with Arthur C. Parker making "repeated visits." (Ritchie 1932a:83) It's unclear where these digs were in relation to the 1926 excavation and the later 1927 and 1928 digs.

Ritchie states that "The first [human burial] find<sup>3</sup> was made in May 1927 when the writer exhumed a mature male skeleton (AP49) .... A thin arrowpoint (AR691), minus the stem, was found in the thoracic cavity..." (Ritchie 1932a:117). Ritchie's account is corroborated by a contemporary newspaper report:

The skeleton of an Algonquin Indian who died 2,000 years ago from a wound inflicted by an arrowhead, which still reposed between the fourth and fifth ribs of the skeleton when it was found, is the latest archaeological trophy added to the collection of Indian relics at the Rochester Municipal Museum. It was dug up two weeks ago [i.e., around May 8] near Lake Lamoka...by a group of men interested in archaeology under the direction of William A. Ritchie, assistant curator of the museum. (*Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* 1927)

The same crew of archaeologists, joined by George B. Selden, also excavated the Levanna Site in 1927 (Ritchie 1928:6; Follett 1957). The Museum returned to Lamoka Lake in October, presumably after the summer crop of beans and grains (*Geneva Daily Times* 1927) had been harvested, now with Harrison C. Follett in charge of excavations (it is possible that Ritchie was still working at the Levanna Site).

In October of 1927, Follett began excavation of his Trench 1, located, somewhat confusingly, in "the northern end of what was considered the south part of the site." (Follett 1928b:3) The total area of Trench 1 is approximately 3,952 square feet.

Another human burial, AP50, was found in the fall of 1927 and "carefully removed by Dr. Parker and conveyed to the museum where it was treated and restored by the writer" (Ritchie 1932a:120). In Follett's handwritten report, he describes a skeleton with beads and worked deer bone (1928a:61) that may be AP50 (Ritchie 1932a:figure 2 shows AP50 with shell beads and "bone object" – deer atlas).<sup>4</sup> Additional skeletons quickly came to light.

Much interest is being felt here over the excavation work being done on the Frank Wood farm at Weston, by men under the direction of H. C. Follett, of Rochester, for the Rochester Museum, for Indian relics.... The other day they unearthed a fine specimen of pottery in shape of a large bowl. It is gray in color, but breaks easily when it was exposed to the air and has been put in plaster of Paris to keep it from breaking.

So far there have been seven skeletons unearthed, one of those was of a child. ... The men are working very carefully, taking up the dirt and sifting it for closer examination. The fields where they are excavating were planted to beans and grains this summer, the soil being of gravel formation... As fast as the relics are found they are boxed and put on trucks for the run to Rochester. Two trucks left here this past week. (Geneva Daily Times 1927)

The site became something of a tourist attraction. Among the visitors to the site that year were a young Charles Wray, who would later become an expert on western New York archaeology, and museum director Alvin H. Dewey. Landowner Frank Wood's sons remembered visiting the archaeologist at his camp near the historic cemetery, where he would cook them pancakes (Roger Ellison, personal communication 2000). Another local resident recounted:

One of my favorite pastimes as a young person was Indian artifact hunting. There was a favorite hunting area near Wayne where the road now passes between Waneta and Lamoka lakes. A little stream runs between the two lakes, and an ancient Indian village was located along the stream in an area more recently known as Wood's farm. A Rochester museum conducted a dig at this site for two or three years, and I would get my father to take me there on weekends to watch the activities. I also hunted the plowed fields in this area for many hours, finding some nice projectile points, many broken ones, stone hammers, fishnet sinkers, skinning stones, throwing stones and many flint chips from the manufacture of projectile points. (Wilkin, n.d.)

Excavations for the year ended on November 23. The Rochester Museum summarized the work in the *American Anthropologist*:

Intensive work was done at two stations: one at Levanna, Cayuga county, and one at Lamoka, Schuyler county.... in a trench 28 feet wide and 225 feet long

more than five thousand specimens were taken out this year. The deposits, which were stratified, were nearly 6 feet deep, the original layer being directly upon the original valley floor.... The Lamoka occupation began as one of non-pottery users. Its first inhabitants were thin-skulled dolichocephalic people who occupied the site as a fishing station, and evidences seem to indicate that here they dried fish and eels in enormous quantities. When they had built up refuse layers of more than 4 feet, another people came in and destroyed the first occupants. The newcomers were a brachycephalic people who brought with them marine shells and olivella beads. They seem to have tortured, burned, and eaten the original inhabitants. The roundheads continued the occupation of the site and were pottery makers.... The date of this occupation seems quite remote. The culture converges at the point where the archaic and intermediate (ceramic) periods meet. The site is from 2000 to 4000 years old in the opinion of those who have worked upon it and know the characteristics of the New York occupations. (Parker 1928:515-516).

Follett began the 1928 excavations on April 24<sup>th</sup> (Follett 1928b:4). His assistants included Charles Kraus (*The Evening Leader* 1928). Excavation began with Trench 2, which started at the south end of Trench 1 and extended south for eight sections or 144 feet (Follett 1928b:4). Trench 3, west of and parallel to Trench 2, but separated from Trench 2 by a baulk about six feet wide, bordered the slope to the creek bank (Follett 1928b:24). The northernmost section of Trench 3 (Section 4) "reached contact with the southern extremity of Wm. Ritchie, trench 5 of 1926" (Follett 1928b:4), contained no artifacts, and may have been previously excavated.

After completion of Trench 3, oats were sown on the southern part of the site and Follett began excavation on and around the north end of Trench 1 (Follett 1928d). Trench 4 is a very large and irregularly shaped excavation area consisting of 97 sections totaling approximately 10,067 square feet.

During or after the excavation of Trench 4, Follett paused excavations at the Lamoka site proper, and conducted tests of several other areas in the vicinity (Follett 1928b, 1928d). Many of these sites contained pottery sherds, triangular points, and other artifacts, but none came close to the richness of the Lamoka Lake site, and Follett considered these unproductive.

After the oat crop was harvested, he returned to the Lamoka Lake site and excavated several more trenches (Follett 1928d). Trench 5 was located to the west of Trench 4 and contained three sections. Trench 6 was located to the east of Trench 4 and contained six sections. Trench 7, comprising three sections, was north of Trench 5.

Trench 8, west of Trench 5 was:



on the slope of the bank to the creek. A large area of disturbed refuse earth here did not contain any artifacts, near the west side the stump of an apple tree nearly all decayed was encountered and its existence probably accounts for the disturbed earth surrounding it to a depth of two and one half feet. (Follett 1928b:132)

Trench 9 contains 33 sections and was placed to the west of Trench 1 and "within about 12 feet of the creek bank" (Follett 1928b:132). About 3,897 square feet were excavated. Ritchie's R4 trench from 1926 was identified within Trench 9 during excavation. Section 12, located farther south, was determined to have been previously excavated. Trench 10 contains two sections and is located east of Trench 1 and south of Trench 4. Trench 11 also contains two sections and is east of Trench 4. Finally, Trench 12 contains two sections and is located east of Trench 1.

Visitors, including a group of teachers who motored out to the site in September (Steuben Farmers' Advocate 1928c), continued to come to view the excavations. Follett had "given considerable time to prominent visitors from all parts of the United States and delivered two talks of an hour each to two groups of Boy Scouts composed of 24 each." (Follett 1928c) That August, a local newspaper sent their "humorist", Ben Field, to the site:

we found the tent where Mr. Follett spends the summer. It was on the other side of the cornfield, and close beside the old cemetery. ...Then he has another tent, -sort of a lean-to to the main dining hall, and this small tent is almost full of skeletons of Indians. ...He has an assistant named Bill who does the digging for him while he directs operations; although I am told by eyewitnesses that Mr. Follett has been known to use the pick and shovel himself. Bill seemed to be enjoying himself too. But then you can't judge much by appearances, and he was on his way to dinner when I saw him coming through Corn Boulevard.

I should have liked to stayed to dinner with Follett. He is his own cook and gave us sample of his cake. The cake was very good, and I'll bet that Harrison C. Follett makes a good cup of coffee too, but we were forced to hurry along. (Steuben Farmers' Advocate, 1928b)

In summarizing the museum's work that year, Parker wrote

The year 1928 has been an especially successful one for the Rochester Municipal Museum, especially in archaeology, which is only one of its five divisions. The Lamoka Lake station has yielded a rather unusual lot of early implements, all from a preceramic culture.... Charts of the floor, surface, and cross-sections were taken at frequent intervals, an important detail of method when cultures are mixed. We also noted the implement depths for every foot of the layers, some of which were six feet in depth. (Parker 1929:352-353)

## Analysis and Interpretation

The numerous artifacts uncovered at Lamoka were brought back to the Rochester Museum at regular intervals for analysis. Some sections of the excavation were removed intact to the museum for display, including a 30 inch by 50 inch section with 17 discrete soil layers. Features identified in the field included refuse pits up to seven feet wide, fire beds (ash deposits with charcoal and hearths) over 55 feet long, lodge sites (possible house floors) and hearths, often found in the bottom of pits, containing a mass of charcoal frequently overlain by a stone slab.

In 1932, William Ritchie published *The Lamoka Lake Site: The Type Station of the Archaic Algonkin Period in New York* (1932a), which, along with an article in the *American Anthropologist* (1932b), introduced the concept of the Archaic to other archaeologists. The most diagnostic artifacts of this newly defined culture were "the beveled adze, narrow-bladed, notched arrowpoint, and the pendantlike antler objects." (Ritchie 1932a:130).

Artifacts from Lamoka Lake include more than 6,000 netsinkers, over 1,000 awls made of animal bone, and over 800 flaked stone tools, including types Ritchie called arrowpoints, javelinheads, spearheads, and knives. The majority of these are now called Lamoka points. There are also stone pestles, mortars, metates, and mullers; sandstone choppers, hammerstones, and anvilstones; and celts and beveled adzes. Other items made of bone include knives, fish hooks, and small bipointed bones called gorges. Over 500 pounds of unmodified animal bone and shell (mussel [*Unio complanatus*, now known as *Elliptio complanata*] and snail) were also recovered from the site. Some of the human burials at Lamoka also contained remnants of marine shell bead necklaces (although Ritchie argued that these all date to the more recent occupation [Ritchie 1932a:112]).

There are also numerous antler "pendants" that have been notched or otherwise worked and decorated with ochre. Rare items include four possible bone whistles and several other bones that had been pierced, grooved, or otherwise worked.

Over a dozen human burials were uncovered, as well as isolated human bone fragments in midden deposits. Ritchie argued that two types of people were found at the site: dolichocephalic, or long-headed people, represented by at least five skeletons, and brachycephalic, or round-headed people, of which three individuals were found. This reflects thinking prevalent at the time that has since been mostly abandoned. Suffice to say, a new study of the Lamoka human remains, utilizing advances made in physical anthropology over the past eighty years, would undoubtedly yield new and valuable results.

One of the so-called dolichocephalic burials at Lamoka, of an adult male, had a Lamoka projectile point in its thoracic cavity. Other evidence of violence at the site includes two young adult males, found together, who had their heads, hands, and feet removed. Each had a Lamoka point embedded in a vertebra, and one had an additional three points among his ribs (Ritchie 1932a).

The absence of pottery in Late Archaic deposits at Lamoka Lake was perhaps the most important defining characteristics of the site, and was essential to defining the Archaic Period (Ritchie 1932a). While 90 ceramic sherds from top soil or "Associated with shell-accumulations in certain shallow pits and in the superior levels of a few deep refuse pits" (Ritchie 1932a:112) were found, Ritchie was unambiguous in declaring that these were from a more recent occupation and the "original culture to which most of the village debris may be referred was non-ceramic." (Ritchie 1932a:112)

As reconstructed by Ritchie, the Archaic inhabitants (of the dolichocephalic skeletal type) lived in rectangular bark lodges and obtained food through hunting, fishing, and gathering wild plants. He postulated that these people were then invaded by the brachycephalic people:

On this unprogressive, sequestered settlement a horde of invaders suddenly swept... In eloquent testimony of their savage victory are the mutilated skeletons in the refuse pits and the skeletal fragments scattered widely over the site suggestive of torture and a possible cannibalistic climax. ... The advantages of the favored location and probably the large stores of smoked meat and fish were not disdained by the conquerors who for a comparatively short time occupied the site, leaving pottery and other new artifacts in its upper horizon and burying their dead in graves dug through the strata of the former occupation. (Ritchie 1932a:132)

While there is unambiguous evidence of violent deaths for some of the human remains, we now know that the ceramic artifacts at the site are many hundreds of years younger than the Late Archaic remains, and so cannot be from a violent and direct replacement of the Late Archaic people as Ritchie originally proposed.

## **The Mid-Century Period**

1928 was the last year of excavations for the Rochester Museum, in part because the museum thought they had learned as much as they needed to from the site, but also because the Lamoka Power Project, which was eventually expected to flood the site, had begun that August while the archaeologists were still in the field.

The Lamoka Electric Power Company plan was expected to flood much of the land around Lamoka and Waneta, creating a single lake over 14 miles long, as part of a

hydroelectric power-generating scheme.<sup>5</sup> Construction began with the cutting of the canal from the north end of Waneta Lake to Keuka Lake in August 1928 (while Follett was still working at Lamoka Lake), and was completed by October of 1929.<sup>6</sup> Frank Wood sold some of the land the archaeological site is on to the Power Company in 1929 but retained ownership of the rest of the site. The Lamoka Power Company went into receivership in April of 1934, and therefore, the later stages of the project, which would have included flooding the Lamoka Lake site and the rest of the valley, were never completed. Much of the land the company had purchased would later be obtained by New York State and turned into State Forests.

While the Great Depression likely was a major factor in the failure of the company, the power project was not warmly welcomed by everyone. The project resulted in an increase in the water level of Lamoka Lake, an expansion of the boundaries of the lake, and a reduction in the size of Red Bank Island in Lamoka Lake. Residents also complained about flooding and increased vegetation in the two lakes (The Evening Leader 1933).

While the Lamoka Lake site itself did not get completely flooded, the changes in water level from the power project had unknown effects on the site, and in the appearance of the shoreline and the path of the channel, which complicate attempts to correlate the 1920s excavation maps with modern conditions. At a minimum, work included the deepening of the channel between Waneta and Lamoka (The Evening Leader 1929).

After completing excavations at Lamoka Lake in 1928, Harrison Follett continued to dig throughout central New York for many years. In 1929, he and George B. Selden dug at the Great Gully site in Cayuga County for the Rochester Museum. Follett and Selden returned to the Levanna site (which the Rochester Museum had first excavated in 1927) in 1932 and excavated there for many years, at least partly with the support of the Cayuga County Historical Society. Their work became controversial, in part because they interpreted large clusters of fire-cracked rock as animal effigies, and because they attempted to create an open-air museum at the site.

A decade after he completed the work for the RMSC at Lamoka, Follett returned, presumably on his own:

EXCAVATING- Harrison G.(sic) Follett, who brought to light the 1,000 year old Algonkian Indian village at Levanna near Cayuga Lake, has recently been exploratively digging at the site of another Indian village on Lake Lamoka. He unearthed a number of valuable artifacts there previous visits. (Melone 1938)

After the end of World War II, the brand new Archaeological Society of Central New York, of which Follett was a founder, also dug at Lamoka. According to a 1946

newspaper account, "Dr. Follett" and several amateur archaeologists dug a 40 foot by 20 foot trench at Lamoka Lake. In addition to the expected arrowheads, netsinkers, and bone tools, they reportedly also found bannerstones, ceramic sherds, an ornamental pendant, three dog skeletons (one with an arrowhead in one of its bones), a child burial, and a cremation burial associated with chalcedony knives (Bennett 1946).

It is risky to rely on newspaper reports for facts about finds at the site. The 40 foot long trench may actually refer to one of the excavation units excavated by the RMSC in the 1920s. The "ornamental pendant" appears to conflate two types of artifacts, an antler pendant like those described previously by Ritchie (1932a), and perhaps a stone celt or adze. Several juvenile human burials and two complete dog skeletons were found during the RMSC excavations.

According to the *Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Central New York*, Elmira College and others also searched for artifacts at the Lamoka Lake site. It is not known where the artifacts and bones from any of these excavations are, but it is probable that most of them were kept by the people who dug at the site. It is possible that some of the artifacts from this or other collectors are curated at the Chemung County Historical Society/Chemung Valley History Museum in Elmira, or other local historical societies.

While Ritchie and Follett had previously worked together, an apparent animosity developed, likely triggered by Follett's increasingly far-fetched interpretations of the Levanna Site, his efforts to turn that site into a for-profit museum, and his continuing digs at various sites that Ritchie considered less and less scientific. Ritchie would later state that the Lamoka Lake site "has become the center of amateur activities of an indiscriminate and scientifically fruitless character." (Ritchie 1969:36)

Meanwhile, the Rochester Municipal Museum, renamed the Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences, continued to preserve and curate the thousands of stone and bone tools and ornaments that their expeditions had recovered. The Museum also exchanged a small number of artifacts, especially some of the bone tools, to other institutions, including the Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, and the Smithsonian Institution.

Arthur Parker retired as Museum Director on Jan 1. 1946. Later that year, the Rochester Museum moved to a new building on the east side of the city. It was at this time that a large part of the Lamoka assemblage disappeared from the collections. According to museum records, "the entire contents" of the warehouse — 167 truckloads of artifacts — were transferred by the city to the new museum building. Yet almost all the 500 to 700 pounds of unmodified animal bones from Lamoka, as well as some of the groundstone or rough stone artifacts, never made the trip. William Ritchie was in New York City at the time, fulfilling his obligation to spend a year in residence at Columbia University to obtain his Ph.D. Later, he tersely stated only that "...the Museum saw fit to discard this material." (Ritchie 1969:54)

## Ritchie Returns to Lamoka Lake

In 1951, charcoal from Lamoka Lake provided some of the first radiocarbon dates from any archaeological site. Ritchie asked A. Frank Barrott of Elmira to go to the site and dig up charcoal samples, which were obtained "from an adjoining portion of the site corresponding in all respects to the earlier explored area." (Ritchie 1951:130) The results indicated an age for the site of roughly 4,500 years, not much earlier than Parker and Ritchie's earlier estimates in the 1920s of 2,000 to 4,000 years.

Sometime around 1953-1954, part of the stream between Waneta and Lamoka lakes was dredged during a road rebuild by Schuyler County (Personius 1961). This may correlate with an account by local landowner of reports of bones being found during a road project (Roger Ellison, personal communication, 2000).

In August of 1958, Ritchie, by then at the New York State Museum (NYSM), would return to the Lamoka Lake site in association with palynological studies of Lamoka and Waneta Lakes conducted by Clair Brown, a professor of botany at Louisiana State University and Director of the LSU Herbarium.

Ritchie was assisted by two students, Tyler Bastian and Robert Whallon, and Carl S. Sundler, an avocational archaeologist and math teacher (Bradley *et al.* 2010). Tyler Bastian would later become the State Archaeologist of Maryland and Robert Whallon is currently the Curator of Mediterranean Archaeology, Museum of Anthropology, and Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Michigan.

The 1958 excavation comprised five irregularly sized (and non-contiguous) test trenches (labeled T.T. 1-5) and up to 12 five foot by five foot squares<sup>7</sup> (NYSM field notes; Woodbury 1959:342). It is difficult to reconcile sketch maps from 1958, curated at the New York State Museum, with earlier site maps from the 1920s. At the time, the site area was divided by an east-west running fence that separated the land into north and south fields. Another fence separated the two fields from the stream to the west. At least two units were in the north field in an area not excavated in the 1920s. The other excavation units were in what they called the north end of the south field.

Much of the area excavated by Ritchie in 1958 had been previously dug, whether by Ritchie and Follett thirty years earlier, or by subsequent diggers, such as a recently dug hole two feet wide and 13 inch deep recorded in T.T. 1. At a minimum, test trenches 1, 2, and 4 crossed previously excavated areas. Despite this disturbance and the presence of many woodchuck burrows, intact archaeological deposits, including ash lenses, hearths, and postmolds were still present.

One human burial was found in the eastern extension of T.T. 1, most likely in an area east of Follett's 1927-1928 excavation. This burial is mentioned in passing, but not included in the summary of human remains in *The Archaeology of New York* (Ritchie

1969:46). The individual, identified as an old male, was tightly flexed, lying on his left side, headed south and facing west. The bones were fragile and crushed. A thin layer of shell was beneath the skeleton, and underneath the shell was 1.5 inches (or perhaps 1.5 feet) of refuse soil, then a large slab of rock. A smaller slab was beneath the knees. It appears it was a relatively shallow burial (the humerus was only 9.5 inches beneath the surface), and the depression the skeleton was in looked to Ritchie like a treefall filled with refuse. No artifacts were directly associated with the burial, but the larger treefall depression had several artifacts, including a chopper, netsinker and mealing stone, near the bottom. Two Lamoka points were also found nearby.

Ritchie's 1958 field notes include a mention of charcoal samples taken from T.T.2, hearth 1 and 2, and in fact two radiocarbon dates were later obtained (Ritchie 1969:43).

Animal bones, mussel and snail shell, and netsinkers were well represented. Although at least 64 netsinkers were found, none were retained. Long bone shaft fragments were also not saved, but other bones were kept. Artifacts were reported as not being numerous, although several projectile points were found. Several thick ceramic body sherds were reported from T.T. 1 at depths of one to two feet below ground surface. A beveled adze fragment was found in the east end of T.T. 3 and a ceramic sherd in the west end. Other finds included fragments of burnt bark and wood, acorn hulls, and a dog coprolite with a fragment of a deer metapodial in it (found in T.T. 2 over a hearth and bagged with acorn hulls according to field notes [p. 23]).

Brown's palynological study included test pits in the same area as Ritchie's archaeological units and core samples taken from Lamoka and Waneta lakes and surrounding marshes (Ritchie 1969:42). The 1958 Trench 1 profile, for example, shows three of the palynological test pits dug by Clair Brown. It appears, however, that Brown's pollen study was not too successful: pollen was not well preserved at the site, and analysis of the core samples had not been completed by the 1960s (Ritchie 1969:42). I am not aware of any later pollen report by Brown.

Sometime after, Arlette Leroi-Gourhan of the U. de Paris, Ethnologie/Musée de L'homme studied pollen collected from the site (it was not clear if this was from Brown's samples or not), but Brown thought that sample was contaminated by recent pollen and noted that some non-native plant species were identified.

In 1961, Lamoka Lake was a member of the first group of prehistoric sites to be designated as National Historic Landmarks<sup>8</sup> and a few years later also become one of the first sites to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The NRHP nomination reads in part

As one of the first Archaic cultures excavated, the Lamoka Site has historical importance for the field of archeology as well as its intrinsic archeological value; its excavation in the 1920's ... presented archeologists with well-documented

evidence that American Indians with an Archaic lifestyle did indeed inhabit the Northeast thousands of years before European contact times. At the time of the initial excavation...this concept was far from generally accepted.

Ritchie returned once more to Lamoka Lake in August, 1962 with five graduate students (Borden 1963:590). Once again, his work was "restricted by time and resources" (Ritchie 1969:69) but he still managed to excavate over 15,000 square feet in the northern portion of the site (Ritchie 1969:69). He focused on features that extended into the subsoil, as the midden soil had been greatly disturbed by other excavators over the years, and in fact, most of the artifacts collected were "recovered from the fill of previous amateur collectors." (Ritchie 1962) He lamented that:

As nearly everywhere on the site, the inroads of collectors, since my original excavations, had thoroughly disturbed the deposits to, or within a few inches of, the subsoil. Their disinterest in the hearths...as providing too meager returns of artifacts, had fortunately resulted in the unmolested condition of such of these hearth features as were abundantly present in the subsoil. Also spared were the associated post molds and even the basal part of some of the lower and older pits. (Ritchie 1969:71)

Artifacts included 214 side-notched flat pebble netsinkers that were discarded on site, and numerous fish bones that were not collected. Animal bones from the 1958 and 1962 excavations that were retained were identified by John Guilday of the Carnegie Museum (Ritchie 1969:54-59). Field notes and photos illustrate "typical" postmolds – one for example, was 2.5 inches in diameter at the surface, extended 12 inches into the subsoil, and had a long taper and blunt point. He also noted a "definite tendency ...for p.m. to occur in pairs." Many hearths also had a postmold in the bottom, and/or were circled by an arc of postmolds. Two additional radiocarbon dates were obtained in 1962 from hearths intruding into the subsoil.

On a plan map dense with postmolds and hearths<sup>9</sup>, Ritchie also mapped what he interpreted as the remains of at least two complete and six partial lodges or houses (1969:72-73). Some of these overlaid others, indicating that all of them could not have been occupied at the same time. Ritchie therefore estimated that, over the entire site, about 27 houses may have been present at a single time and "a shifting small population over several generations better fits the archaeological picture than a larger fixed group of a few years' duration." (Ritchie 1969:76)

## **1970s-1990s**

In the early 1960s, the site was owned by Clarence Stokes<sup>10</sup>. Although there may have been other owners in between, the site was purchased by archaeologist Charles Nelson in 1975 to protect it from development (reportedly as a trailer or RV park), and no



further professional excavations were conducted at the site until the 1980s.

In 1981, R. Michael Gramly, then of the Buffalo Museum of Science (BMS), and about ten other people "camped upon the site during a rainy week in October" (Gramly 1983:130) and excavated a 1 x 4 m trench in the western portion of the site, close to the shore of the stream (Gramly 1983; pers. comm. 1993). A pump was used to remove water from the trench. Soil was screened through 6.4 mm (1/4") mesh "kept floating in the nearby canal [stream]" (Gramly 1983:130). Abundant artifacts, bones, and macrobotanical remains dating to the Late Archaic and Middle Woodland (including a Jack's Reef Corded sherd and a Point Peninsula Corded sherd) were recovered. In 1987, a second 1 x 4 m trench was excavated. Animal bones from this excavation have been analyzed (Madrigal 2000) but the artifacts from 1987 have not been reported.

Brown slopewash containing both historic and prehistoric artifacts extended from the ground surface to about 40 cm, and was underlain by a very dark gray to black peaty and silty sand, extending to 80 cm deep. This stratum contained primarily Middle Woodland artifacts including 142 ceramic sherds. Beneath this stratum was "a 10 cm thick layer of flat limestone pebbles intermixed with large animal bone fragments and Late Archaic artifacts. The black peaty zone with Kipp Island Phase objects lay unconformably upon this shingle or rubble. The rubble appears to be a lag deposit minus fines which had been removed by waves and currents." (Gramly 1983:136) The rubble is likely the natural lake bottom (cf. Odell and Senning 1938:77-78). Beneath this was grayish-brown silty sand.

In 1982, the Waneta-Lamoka Wildlife Management Area (WMA) was created when NYSDEC obtained a permanent easement on 157 acres of land on either side of the channel connecting Waneta and Lamoka lakes (NYSDEC Region 8 2012). Most of the acreage is on the west side of the channel, but part of the WMA includes land on the east side of the channel associated with the Lamoka Lake site.

By the next decade, ownership of the site had again changed hands. The new owner had professional archaeological experience and in 1990 he conducted a field school at Lamoka Lake through Utica College of Syracuse University. Beginning in July of that year, students began excavating two 10 x 10 ft pits, labeled North Pit and South Pit, each divided into four quadrants. Soil was screened through 1/2 inch (for plow zone/disturbed contexts) or 1/4 inch mesh. A second season of excavation at the North Pit took place in late July and August 1991, and a few days of work took place in 1992. Numerous artifacts, features, and faunal remains, all attributed to the Late Archaic Period, were recovered.

In the mid-1990s, a zooarchaeological analysis of the surviving unmodified animal bone from Lamoka Lake began. This study included bones at the RMSC that had been stored in a burlap bag for decades (finally being re-bagged by the Museum around that time), the bones from the 1981 and 1987 Buffalo Museum of Science digs, and a sample of animal bones from the Utica College field school (Madrigal 1999, 2000, 2001, Versaggi

*et al.* 2001).

Around the same time, thousands of animal bones and rough stone tools from the RMSC collections that had been lost in the 1940s were recovered under unusual circumstances and re-acquisitioned into the Museum. These bones have not yet been analyzed.

## **The New Century**

The most recent professional excavations at Lamoka Lake took place in 2000 as part of a Rutgers University field school. Excavation totaled about 10 square meters. In addition, a series of trenches were mechanically excavated to get a better understanding of the natural stratigraphy of the area and to identify areas that had been previously excavated. As with previous excavations, numerous animal bones and lithic artifacts were recovered.

While a portion of the Lamoka Lake site had been protected as a New York State Wildlife Management Area, most of the site was privately owned. In 2005, the Archaeological Conservancy purchased the privately-owned portion to preserve the site in perpetuity. The Lamoka Lake site continues to play an important role in Archaic research (e.g., Curtin 2015; Sassaman 2010). Research on the Lamoka Lake site continues (e.g., Madrigal 2000, 2001, 2014), and undoubtedly much more can be learned from this site.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Later maps by Follett label these R1-R5, and he refers to them in the 1928 field report as being dug in 1926 (Follett 1928:4).

<sup>2</sup> Burials AP75 and AP76 (Ritchie 1932a:114, Plate XIV, 124). These actually were not the first human burial recovered; as mentioned previously, a more recent human burial was found on the hill to the east in 1924. Other human remains have lower museum catalog (AP) numbers, but these numbers may not reflect the order in which they were excavated.

<sup>3</sup> By "first" Ritchie means the first of the dolichocephalic skeletons he is describing.

<sup>4</sup> Accession numbers from Follett's list of finds from 1927 begin with AR51 (Follett 1928a:5). Field notes from Ritchie's excavations in May 1927 were not identified at the RMSC when I requested them. Possibly they are present there, or at the NYSM or New York State Archives.

<sup>5</sup>The company was formed in 1915, received state approval for their hydroelectric project in 1919 and began purchasing land in the area around 1923.

<sup>6</sup> For contemporary accounts, see "Generating Equipment Next Step in Project" (*The Evening Leader*, Corning, NY, March 4, 1929, page 14) and "To Turn On First Power In Lamoka Project At Keuka Next Friday" (*The Evening Leader*, Corning, NY, October 22, 1929, page 14).

<sup>7</sup> The squares are mentioned in field notes, but do not appear to be shown on the 1958 site map.

<sup>8</sup> The first properties to be listed as National Historic Landmarks in 1960 included the U.S. Capitol, Mount Vernon, Monticello, and dozens of other historic sites. In January 1961, the Lamoka Lake site was one of 19 prehistoric archaeological sites to be designated a landmark (Mackintosh 1985). All NHLs were later listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

<sup>9</sup> Field notes state that "In final excavation of hearths 9 additional p.m. were found which were not added to maps. Also two additional hearths."

<sup>10</sup> NYSM records, A1962.14