

Lasley Point Archeological Site

5900 Lasley Point Rd
Winneconne, WI 54986

The wilds of the Lasley Point Archeological Site mark the spot where a Native American village once thrived. Between 1200 and 1500 AD its 47.7 acres supported an Oneota Indian village. In the early 1940s, numerous archaeological digs took place in the area uncovering broken bone tools, shells, human bones, copper flakes, charcoal and pottery. The sites of early garden beds and cache pits were also discovered. No additional excavating has been done since the 1940s. However, the area was nominated and accepted for inclusion in the listing of the National Register of Historic Places late in 1979. This unique site was purchased two years later from the Winnebago County Historical Society. Below are excerpts from several sources on the Oneota.

Oneota

Wisconsin Historical Society web site

(1,000 to 500 years ago)

As Late Woodland communities across Wisconsin settled into permanent villages and adopted aspects of Mississippian culture, a new culture that archaeologists call 'Oneota' was born. Some early Oneota communities continued to build mounds, while others created formal, non-mounded cemeteries near their villages. Individual flexed and bundled interments gave way to single or multiple extended and bundled burials. Arrows, stone pipes, jewelry, small pots and shell spoons were left in graves as offerings. Sometimes graves were dug underneath house floors in village areas, or empty storage or refuse pits were used to hold burials.

The residents of Diamond Bluff, opposite modern Red Wing, Minnesota, literally surrounded their villages with conical and linear mounds. They even built a few effigy mounds—perhaps some of the last to be constructed in Wisconsin. After the Diamond Bluff villages were abandoned and their residents relocated to the area of La Crosse, Wisconsin, mound construction ceased. Instead, the La Crosse Oneota built large non-mounded cemeteries and buried their dead under house floors.

The Oneota living on the banks of the Grand River and near Lake Winnebago also built conical mounds for a time. They placed burials on natural knolls at the Walker-Hooper and Pipe sites and covered them with earth, just as participants in the Red Ochre complex had done centuries earlier. The resulting accretionary mounds contained bone bundles and semi-flexed burials, accompanied by pottery, shell spoons and the remains of ceremonial fires. One mound built near the Grand River contained an internal stone ramp and platform.

The last Oneota 'mounds' in eastern Wisconsin were built at Lasley Point on the shores of Lake Butte des Morts. These odd earthworks were probably built to cover charnel houses or temples. The 'Feast Mound' at Lasley Point contained a platform made of clamshell and earth. At its center was a stone-

lined pit, surrounded by a patterned arrangement of stones. The skeleton of a deer had been left lying on an “altar” north of the pit. The mound also contained many other ceremonial features, including hearths, shell heaps, pits, and more “altars”. Three partial human skulls were found lying on one hearth, and burned and split human long bones were found in pits.

After A.D. 1300, Late Woodland communities no longer lived in southern Wisconsin. The remaining Oneota populations had already gathered together into large villages in a few select locations. Most lived near modern La Crosse, and in the Fox River valley near Lake Winnebago. The presence of large, sedentary, farming populations led to the creation of immense cemeteries. As villages slightly shifted their location, new cemeteries were created a short distance away from old ones. Many burials were left behind under house floors and in pits in the old village areas.



A map showing approximate areas of various Mississippian and related cultures, including the Oneota.

Oneota is a designation archaeologists use to refer to a cultural complex that existed in the eastern plains and Great Lakes area of what is now the United States from around AD 900 to around 1650 or 1700. The culture is believed to have transitioned into various Macro-Siouan cultures of the protohistoric and historic times such as Ioway. A long-accepted ancestry to the Ho-chunk has yet to be conclusively demonstrated.

Oneota is considered a major component of Upper Mississippian culture. It is characterized by globular, shell-tempered pottery that is often coarse in fibre. It often had a spherical body, short necks and/or a flat lip. Sometimes the vessels had strap handles. Decoration includes wavy and zigzag lines, often in parallel. Most decoration was done on the top half of the vessel. Analytically, the culture has been broken down into various stages or horizons. Generally accepted are the following: the Emergent Horizon (ca. AD 900-1000), the Developmental Horizon (ca. AD 1000-1300), the Classic Horizon (ca. AD

1300-1650) (previously called the Oneota Aspect), and the Historic Horizon (post-contact, generally after 1650). In addition, the Oneota culture has been divided geographically based on stylistic and socio-economic differences. Some of these traditions are Orr, Langford, and Fisher-Huber.

The Oneota diet included corn, beans, and squash, wild rice, nuts, fish, deer, and bison, varying according to the region and locale.

Relationships with Middle Mississippian were present but are not yet clearly understood. Whether Oneota developed *in situ* out of Late Woodland cultures, was invasive, was the result of influence from (proto-)Middle Mississippian peoples, or was some mix of these, is not clear. (From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

The Oneota Culture

Prehistoric Farmers of the American Midwest

By [K. Kris Hirst](#), *About.com Guide*



Throughout the area known as the Prairie Peninsula in the North American Midwest, including Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and into Manitoba, Missouri, and Nebraska, are found artifacts from several groups of people archaeologists call Oneota (oh-nee-OH-tah). Archaeological sites with Oneota artifacts are mostly villages, situated alongside major rivers, and include Grant and Wever Terrace sites in Iowa, the Blood Run site in Iowa and South Dakota, several La Crosse area sites in Wisconsin, and sites in the Red Wing area of Minnesota. Radiocarbon dates for the villages range between about 1000 and 1650 AD.

Named by archaeologists for an Algonquin term for the Upper Iowa River, the Oneota tilled the fertile fields of the Midwest. The people planted gardens of corn, beans, and squash in rows of small hills or ridges. They included some plants we consider weeds today--knotweed and lamb's quarters, for example. Oneota people also hunted buffalo, elk, deer, and a wide variety of small mammals and fish. Madison arrow points are often found on Oneota sites.

Oneota houses varied in shape and size, from a square or oval plan of 15 feet (5 meters) across where an individual family might live, to long rectangular floor plans of 15 x 50 ft (5 x 15 m) and longer, for use by several families or the community at large. Cemeteries were right next to the villages.

Artifacts of the Oneota

The Oneota mined copper, which they beat into decorative objects. They mined or traded for catlinite, also called red pipestone, in southwestern Minnesota, and carved elegant pipes in animal effigies and platform shapes, some almost art deco in appearance. They wove baskets and clothing from plant fibers.

They were wonderful potters. The few complete pots that archaeologists have found are satisfyingly round or oval jars and bowls, with pale glints of crushed clam shell in their thin walls. The surface designs are geometric and often include stylized representations of hawk's wings and serpents, combining elements of supernatural, water, earth, underworld, and sky concepts.

Fortifications at some of the larger village sites, as well as skeletal evidence of violence and physical trauma on buried individuals, tells us that the Oneota spent some amount of time in warfare, perhaps in defending their gardens or settling boundary disputes.

Where did they come from?

We believe Oneota artifacts are creations of Late Woodland indigenous peoples, perhaps influenced by contact with people from the large prehistoric town of Cahokia, in Illinois across the Mississippi from what is now St. Louis, Missouri. Many Oneota artifacts have similar traits and symbols to those found at Cahokia; and we're certain there was trade between the Oneota peoples and Cahokia. Several projects are presently underway to identify the descendants of the Oneota. Lance Foster, a member of the Ioway tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, has dedicated part of his academic research linking Ioway to Oneota. Archaeologist Robert Salzer has been investigating Gottschall Rockshelter, a cave site associated with the Oneota culture in southwestern Wisconsin. The walls of the cave were decorated with figures identifiable to the Red Horn myth, a myth of the Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) people. Other groups traditionally associated with the Oneota include the Ioway, and the Otoe, as well as Missouria, Ponca, Omaha, Osage, Kansa, and Quapaw tribes of today.

Where did they go?

By 1650, French and British fur traders had made contact with the Oneota, and the effects this time included the devastation of diseases new to the Indians. Nonetheless, Native American groups still live in Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota, and many descendants of these groups in other places report stories of their homelands 350 years ago.

Nature Observations

Winnebago County Parks web site

Lasley Point Archaeological Site currently supports beautiful woods of oak, hickory, basswood, and ash with dense shrubbery underneath. Trails with informational signs weave through the woods offering glimpses of the numerous varieties of wildflowers. The archeological site also supports sizable populations of small game, songbirds and mammals.

Recreation

There are miles of hiking trails and in the winter self-guided cross-country ski trails. Camping is prohibited. No dogs are allowed! The park is located about 2-miles north of Winneconne, west of County M. A small parking area is located off Lasley Point Road.

Winnebago County Ordinance 19.06 requires that users of County recreational areas strictly adhere to a "carry-in-carry-out" policy. Thus, all refuse must be carried away from the park, boat landing, trail or other recreational site by the person(s) responsible for its presence and be properly disposed of elsewhere.

