

Maine Archaeology

The Newsletter of The Maine Archaeological Society



Tim Spahr at the
Georgetown Shell Midden

Winter 2024

Inside This Issue

Happy New Year! This brand-new issue begins by looking back at an shell midden excavation in a beautiful spot in Georgetown this past September. Next, we focus on the insightful lectures presented during the Maine Archaeological Society's 2023 Fall membership meeting. Finally, we remember two dear friends whose passion for—and dedication to—archaeology inspired people across the state and beyond.

Georgetown Shell Midden Discoveries

Benjamin Smith

On September 13 – 16, 2023, Maine Archaeological Society members and other volunteers excavated two test units in a shell midden, located on a small peninsula in Georgetown, Maine.

The bottom of the midden in both test units contained undisturbed shells and Native American artifacts, including stone tool fragments and one hand-wrought nail. The test units also contained discarded food animal bones, including deer and bird—but mostly cod.

The northern test unit revealed a small pit feature and an array of football-sized rocks that seemed to have been placed there purposefully by some of the first people to camp at the site.

Arthur Spiess of the Maine Archaeological Society has made a few initial assumptions:

- The site may have been inhabited by Native Americans during the “Contact period” (about 1500 – 1600 AD) who had access to European trade goods and who used the site as a winter/spring campsite, gaining topographic shelter from north winds as well as access to clams and the spring cod fish run.
- The nail may date from 1500 – 1700 AD.
- The pit feature and rocks in the northern test unit may have been used as a post hole and rock supports for a structure, such as a wigwam.

The Maine Archaeological Society took multiple bulk samples of shell midden soil for further analysis. Water screening in the laboratory may recover additional artifacts, such as glass trade beads if present, and animal bones that the excavation team overlooked in the larger field screens.

The Georgetown site was brought to the attention of the Maine Archaeological Society by Jim Milan, an avocational archaeologist and history enthusiast based in Auburn. The Maine Archaeological Society encourages cooperative work between responsible avocational archaeologists and professional archaeologists and hopes to provide more appropriate field work opportunities.

The Maine Archaeological Society

Promoting Archaeological Awareness through Education and Publication, and encouraging Conservation



Excavating Test Unit #1 at the Georgetown shell midden



Olivia Olson (far left) prepares to speak at the 2023 Fall membership meeting

2023 Fall Membership Meeting

The Maine Archaeological Society held its 2023 Fall membership meeting on October 15 in the Bangor Room, Memorial Union, University of Maine at Orono. About 40 members attended, several of whom brought collections for conversation and discussion.

The event centered on three lectures. First, Olivia Olson summarized recent research on the sea mink, a large mink of the Maine coast that was hunted to extinction about 150 years ago and whose remains have been found in Indigenous shell midden remnants. Next, Josh Cummings presented survey results and a collection from Falls Island, Pembroke, including Archaic artifacts. Finally, Gemma-Jayne Hudgell summarized a major archaeological test for parking and visitor area reconfiguration at Fort Popham State Park, located on Hunnewell Point in Phippsburg. This site features a complex overlay of 19th-century building foundations, railroad and derrick locations, fort debris, and pre-European Indigenous shell midden remnants that survived the landscape modifications.

The Maine Archaeological Society thanks Dr. Bonnie Newsom for hosting the meeting and reserving the room, which worked perfectly for the occasion.

Saluting Charlie Adkins

Tim Spahr

On February 9, 2023, Charles Henry Adkins III passed away from his battle with pancreatic cancer. Charlie was a career game warden whose region of responsibility was northern Oxford County in Maine and the Canadian border. Prior to joining the Warden Service, Charlie served in the United States Navy as a plane captain assigned to Patrol Squadron 48, one of the last seaplane squadrons in the Navy. I met Charlie when working for the Department of Conservation in the Rangeley area in the 1990s. At that time, I was responsible for a two-million-acre region of the unorganized territory and found myself overwhelmed, not to mention lost and confused, in the backwoods of western Maine. Charlie was quick to help, taking me "under his wing." He became my backwoods mentor and good friend.

Charlie was not only committed to conserving fish and wildlife (one of his common remarks was "I was green before it was popular to be green"), but also to identifying and protecting archaeological sites.

In 1984, while patrolling the banks of Aziscohos Lake during low-water levels, Charlie identified a 10,000- to 11,000-year-old Paleo-Indian site stone structure (perhaps a meat storage cache). Artifacts recovered at the site added important information to the archaeological record and are now curated at the Maine State Museum in Augusta as a permanent exhibit. Charlie's work at Aziscohos Lake and other locations in western Maine led to several professional publications by Dr. Michael Gramly. Those included *The Adkins Site: A Palaeo-Indian Habitation and Associated Stone Structure*, published by Persimmon Press in 1988, and two reports on file with the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. In all three works, Charlie was honorably mentioned as a contributor to the field research.



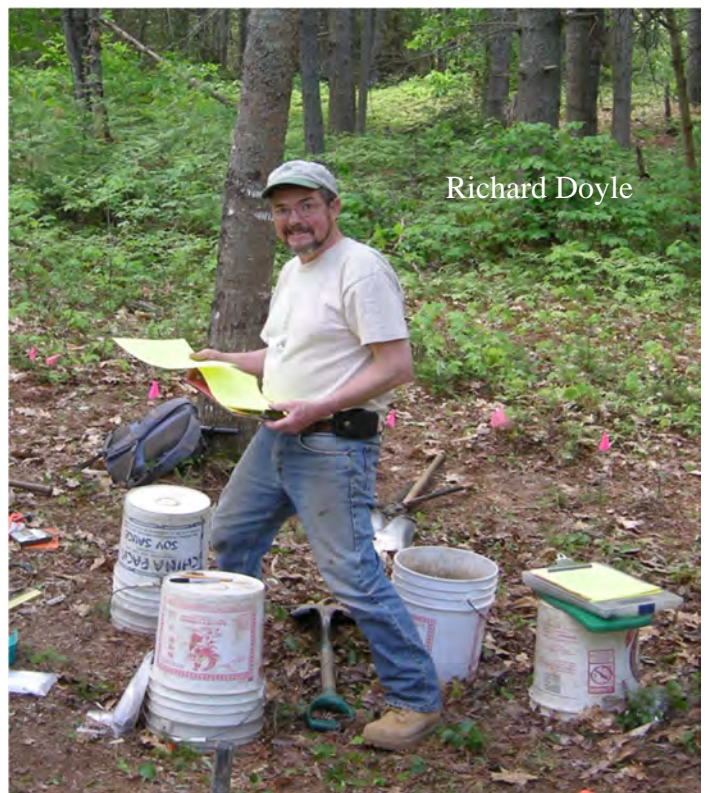
Charlie Adkins

Charlie's presence in the backwoods of western Maine contributed to the preservation of fish and wildlife as well as Precontact cultural heritage. His contributions are remembered among members of the fish, wildlife, and archaeological communities. His legacy is recorded.

Remembering Richard Doyle

Arthur Spiess

Richard Doyle, a friend and colleague to so many archaeologists and geologists in Maine and across the Northeast, passed away on December 26, 2023, after battling melanoma for a short time. Richard was on the Maine Archaeological Society Board for about 40 years and was an eager contributor to countless digs and projects. Many of us are still in shock and grieving disbelief. The Maine Archaeological Society will find proper ways to celebrate and honor Richard's life as we gather our thoughts.



Richard Doyle

The Maine Archaeological Society

The Maine Archaeological Society (TMAS), a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, was founded in 1956 and currently consist of professional and avocational archaeologists, as well as individuals of the general public who are interested in furthering the objectives of the society. The organization's mission is to promote archaeological awareness through education and publication, and encourage archaeological conservation.

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2024 Spring Membership Meeting

The 2024 Spring membership meeting will be held at the Viles Room in Viles Arboretum, Augusta, on either Sunday, April 7, or Sunday, April 14.

Stay tuned for updates!

COMMON GROUND COUNTRY FAIR

September 20 – 22, 2024

We are looking for Maine Archaeological Society members who can volunteer for a half-day to help staff the Maine Archaeological Society table and talk to visitors about Maine archaeology.

If you are interested or have questions, please:

- Send an email to info@mainearchsociety.org
- Send a note to: Maine Archaeological Society, PO Box 982, Augusta, Maine 04332
- Or contact a Maine Archaeological Society Board member

Learn more and become a member at:

mainearchsociety.org

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