

Archie Howlogee, Archeologist

There's been a lot of rain lately in the area of Kansas where John Walker lives. On Monday afternoon the weather finally broke, and John decided to take his dog out for a walk. As they set off, he noticed that the heavy rains had actually moved around some top soil in his yard. Trying to skirt the muddiest parts of the yard, John wandered through the warm sunshine toward the river. With all the rain it seemed like weeks since the sun had been out. Trying to avoid the water dripping from the trees he usually walked through, John stayed close to the edge of his neighbor's field. The sun felt good and added a sparkle to the day as it glinted off the wet grass.

John had just reached the edge of the field when something on the ground caught his eye. As he bent down for a closer look, he noticed several other objects that seemed out of place and a dark stain on the ground. His interest only increased after he picked up the pieces and wiped them off on his jeans. Even through the mud left on the pieces, he was certain he'd found a stone arrow point and a couple of pieces of pottery. After a moment's hesitation he placed them back on the ground and tied his handkerchief on the branch of a nearby bush. He decided to come back with a friend who was an amateur archeologist.

The next day, with the landowner's permission, John and his friend Laura were bent over the same spot looking at the pieces. Laura was pretty sure that the pieces were real. After making a couple of calls to archeologists she had worked with in the past, she was also certain the pieces were an important enough find to merit further investigation. She filled out a site recording form and made a sketch map. She planned to take them to the college the next day to show to the archeologists on staff there. If the pieces were thought to be from the Native American group she suspected, this site was a very important find.

Archie Howlogee is a professional archeologist who works for a state university in Kansas. He examined the artifacts that his amateur archeologist friend Laura brought to show him. He recognizes them as a being from a Middle Ceramic-age (A.D. 1000-1500) culture about which not much is known. From the site form and sketch of the area that Laura had made, he could see that the site is close to a public recreation area where people go to fish, boat, and hike. He was concerned that, once word of the find got out, artifact collectors might descend on the site and damage or contaminate it. On the other hand, he thinks that the site needs to be evaluated. If excavation of a test unit over the dark stain showed that it represents a trash-filled storage pit or other cultural feature, then this would indicate that at least part of the site is still intact and not disturbed by farming practices. Once that is known, then a decision could be made about the best way to further investigate or preserve the site. Archie doesn't believe in digging just for the sake of digging, but this site might yield new information about this prehistoric culture.

Archie is aware that the landowner would have to give permission before work of any kind could proceed. He also knows that Laura and a number of her acquaintances in the amateur archeological society would like to have the opportunity to dig and perhaps even to clean, label, and sort the artifacts. However, Archie is aware that these steps would be only the beginning of the project. He worries that there is no money to support the artifact analysis and report writing and no provision for a permanent repository for the artifacts. If arrangements could be made for the artifacts to be placed in a public institution, future researchers could study and compare them.