
Aztlalan Times

The Friends of Aztlalan State Park Quarterly Newsletter

In this Issue:

UW Mini Course on Aztlalan to be Offered in October 2014.

UWM Archeologist Jennifer Picard discusses her research of floral remains from 2011 and 2013 excavations at Aztlalan.

Highlights from the 2014 Summer Solstice Event at Aztlalan with Dr. Timothy Pauketat.

Aztlalan Day, July 6th 2014

Aztlalan Field Trip planned to Cahokia Mounds in September.

UW Mini Course on Aztlalan and the Mississippians

This fall, the University of Wisconsin Continuing Education will be offering a min-course entitled Aztlalan and the Mississippians as one of its history offerings. The class will be taught by Robert Birmingham, co- author (with Lynne Goldstein) of the award winning book Aztlalan Mysteries of an Ancient Indian Town, and Executive Director of the Friends of Aztlalan State Park.



The course will consist of two evenings of lectures and discussions and a field trip to Aztlalan. This course will examine many aspects of the spectacular Mississippian culture as revealed by archaeological excavations at numerous sites including Cahokia and Aztlalan. Lectures will be held on Tuesday nights October 7 and 14 at the Pyle Center on the University of Wisconsin -Madison campus, and the field trip will on Sunday October 19. The cost is \$40 and those interested can register by calling (608) 262-2451. Or register on line at <http://www.catalog.dsc.wisc.edu/>

Analysis of Floral Remains from UW-Milwaukee Excavations at Aztalan 2011-13

By Jennifer Picard, UW-Milwaukee

When Samuel Barrett of the Milwaukee Public Museum led the first large-scale scientific excavations at Aztalan in the early twentieth century, the only plant remains identified were large carbonized fragments such as corn cobs and nutshell. Prehistoric peoples were assumed to have followed the same dietary traditions as historic Native American peoples – namely growing maize, beans and squash.

The invention of archaeological flotation greatly changed the way we understand prehistoric plant use. Archaeologists collect soil samples and then process them in a flotation tank, enabling identification of smaller carbonized plant remains. Using these methods, older assumptions have been challenged. For example, beans do not appear in eastern North America until the fifteenth century A.D. – much later than the occupation of Aztalan, at its height between A.D. 1000-1200.

Perhaps most interestingly, archaeologists determined that the prehistoric peoples of North America had domesticated a suite of native annual plants – often referred to as the Eastern Agricultural/Horticultural Complex. These plants include goosefoot/lambsquarters, little barley, maygrass, amaranth, sunflower, sumpweed, and knotweed. These findings demonstrated that eastern North America was an independent center of plant domestication. Research has also found that a species of squash was domesticated in North America, not just in Mesoamerica as previously thought.

My recent research used flotation analysis to examine differences in plant use and food production between the Late Woodland and Middle Mississippian occupations at Aztalan. In 1984, a University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee field school headed by Dr. Lynne Goldstein discovered evidence of two periods of occupation in a stratified midden (trash dump) outside the palisade wall along the Crawfish River. During the first period, local Late Woodland groups inhabited the site. Later, they were joined by Middle Mississippian peoples from the American Bottom (near Cahokia).

I examined flotation samples from three main areas at the site (Figure 1). The first was the midden excavated by UWM in 1984. Stratum 11 had materials associated with the Late Woodland occupation, while Stratum 5 was associated with the Middle Mississippian period. Second, I looked at a set of pit features excavated from the plaza area in 1984. In addition, I examined a feature excavated in 2011 associated with the early part of the Middle Mississippian occupation. This feature (Feature 8) is an ash deposit superimposed by Aztalan's palisade, meaning it was deposited before the palisade was built (Figure 2). This feature contained an unusual artifact assemblage, including a large number of worked copper fragments (Figure 3).

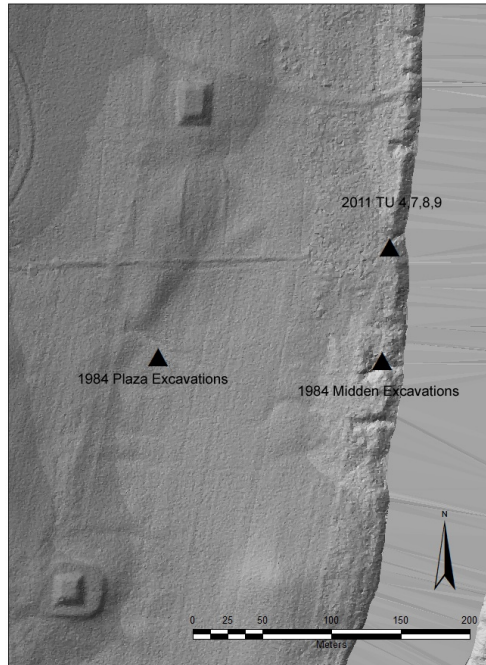
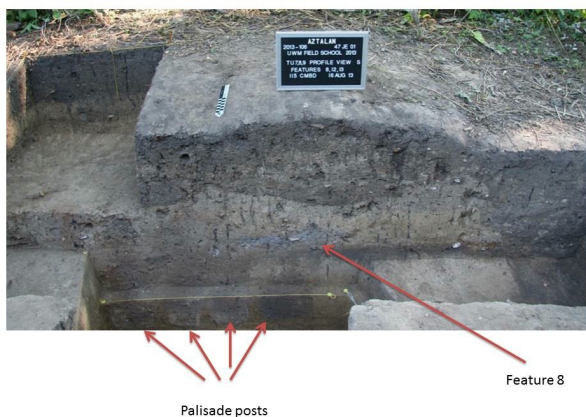


Figure 1: Map showing 1984 and 2011 excavation areas. LiDAR data provided by Wisconsin DNR; basemap created by T. J. Zych



More surprisingly, the importance of goosefoot (*Chenopodium* sp., Figure 5), one of the Eastern Horticultural Complex grains, increases dramatically. This mirrors recent research from the American Bottom, where native domesticated plants are important alongside maize during the Middle Mississippian period (see Simon and Parker 2006).

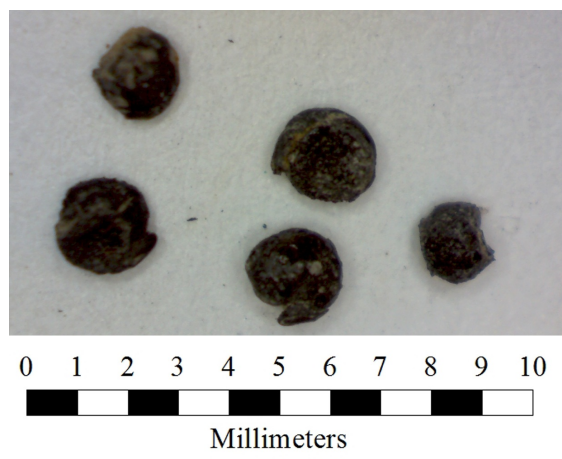


Figure 5: Microscopic image of charred goosefoot seeds from Feature 8

The floral remains recovered from Feature 8 may also shed light on the purpose of that feature. The feature contained a large quantity of worked copper, including tools and beads. The pottery from the feature included both Mississippian and Late Woodland types. Stone tools were present in the feature, and the animal remains included a wide variety of species, including bear, wolf/dog and bird of prey. When I examined the plant remains from this feature, I found that food remains such as nutshell, carbonized maize and squash rind were present at greater densities than in other areas of Aztalan. The feature had a wide

variety of seeds in it, including cherry, sunflower, goosefoot, little barley, mint, sumpweed, and wild rice (Figure 6). In addition, I identified tobacco seeds in Feature 8. It is not yet clear what sort of activity Feature 8 represents, but it does not



seem to be an ordinary household trash pit.

Figure 6: Microscopic image of carbonized sunflower achene

Flotation and analysis of soil samples from archaeological sites has the potential to answer questions about diet and other aspects of prehistoric life. At Aztalan, my research so far has provided data on changes through time at the site, as well information related to the ways in which different areas of the site were used. Additional research is necessary in order to further explore these questions.

Reference

Simon, M. L. and K. E. Parker
2006 Prehistoric Plant Use in the American Bottom: New Thoughts and Interpretations. *Southeastern Archaeology* 25(2):210-255.

2014 Summer Solstice Event a Big Success

What started out as a very rainy day did not dampen the enthusiasm of the 50 participants at this year's annual Solstice gathering and lecture at Aztalan State Park. As the evening drew near, the rain stopped, and the clouds cleared, creating a spectacular evening sunset.



Dr Timothy Pauketat, author of the recently published book "Archaeology of the Cosmos" (available on amazon.com) discussed the role of astronomical observations and experiences of the Mississippians who occupied much of Central North America in starting in the 10th century A.D. As Dr. Pauketat explains in his book the observation of astronomical events and alignments was more than a "predictive devices", and that such observations were meant to be "more performative than predictive".



Dr. Pauketat's lecture centered around a number of pictures he presented from his new book, including diagrams of how Mississippian buildings were symmetrically aligned to not only solstice events, but also to the minimum and maximum alignments corresponding to the Lunar 18.6 year cycle.



Alignments with lunar events was important in Mississippian cosmology. He encouraged Aztalan researchers to examine the site and surrounding area for potential lunar alignments.

Aztalan Day

The Friends of Aztalan was an active participant in this year's Aztalan Day, sponsored by the Lake Mills Aztalan Historical Society (website: <https://www.facebook.com/LakeMillsAztalan>), held on July 6th 2014.

Activities at Aztalan State Park included a character portrayal of Increase A. Lapham by Rob Nurre. Mr. Lapham was portrayed as revisiting the site of Aztalan in the early 1870s over twenty years since his visit to the site. It was on this early visit that Lapham made the most thorough maps of Aztalan before the site was largely leveled by farming. His maps and descriptions are still important documents, referenced by all Aztalan researchers.



Also at this year's Aztalan Day event, Atlatl demonstrations were conducted by members of the World Atlatl Association ([World Atlatl website](#)). Some of the top atlatl throwers in the world were at this event. They demonstrated the use of this interesting weapon, and provided the opportunity for others to try their hands at the sport.



Friends of Aztalan Cahokia Field Trip

The Friends of Aztalan State Park will be taking a bus trip between September 19 - 21 to the unique ancient Mississippian city of Cahokia, now the Cahokia Mounds Historic Site near Collinsville, Illinois. The visit will include a guided tour of the site and a lengthy visit to the fabulous Cahokia Mounds museum, as well as ample time for personal roaming. The cost of the trip is **\$100** that covers the cost of the bus and two box lunches and not including the cost of the hotel for two nights. A block of rooms for September 19 and 20 have been reserved at the Super 8 hotel, 2 Gateway Drive, Collinsville, a short distance from Cahokia, that is in easy walking distance of restaurants. The cost of motel rooms is \$71.10 per night for two queen beds and \$66.61 per night for a single king sized bed. Attendees will need make their own reservations for the two nights by contacting the motel at 1-618-345-8008 and telling them that you are with the Friends of Aztalan so as to get the discounted rate. We will be taking a comfortable Van Gelder bus with on board bathrooms and air conditioning. Videos and on board lectures and discussions on Cahokia and the Mississippians will be provided during the course of the bus trip. Snacks and beverages will be provided on the bus.

Here is the itinerary :

Sept. 19. The bus will depart from the DNR Glacial Drumlin State Trail headquarters at 1213 South Main (the old train depot) , Lake Mills at 8:00 A.M. **We will not be leaving from the park.** Individuals wishing to leave their cars can do so safely in the parking lot behind the headquarters. Those from the Madison area can make arrangements with us to be picked up at the Dutch Mills Park and Ride. A box lunch will be served on the bus with a stop at an appropriate place along the route. We will arrive in Collinsville in mid-afternoon and take a brief driving tour of Cahokia and then check into the hotel. Dinner is on your own.

Sept. 20. Breakfast on your own. The hotel serves a free continental breakfast. The bus will leave at 8:00 AM for Cahokia where there will be a guided tour of the site by Cahokia staff experts. A box lunch will be served at the Cahokia Mounds museum, followed by viewing of the museum in the afternoon and touring other places on the site that the attendees may want to visit on their own. The bus will depart Cahokia for the hotel at 4:00 PM. Dinner on your own.

Sept 21. Breakfast on your own. The hotel serves a free continental breakfast. After check out, the bus will depart Collinsville at 8:00 AM and we will arrive back in Wisconsin about 3:30- 4:00 PM. There will be a stop on the way for lunch at convenient restaurant.

To register for the trip, contact Bob Birmingham at 608-516-3421 or birmi@sbcglobal.net and send a check for \$100 to the Friends of Aztalan. P.O. Box 855, Lake Mills, 53551 by September 15 .

Friends of Aztalan State Park Awarded \$20,000 Stewardship Grant

The Friends of Aztalan State Park has been awarded a \$20,000 matching stewardship grant administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to help finance preliminary architectural plans for a much needed visitor center at Aztalan State Park. With the addition of a first class visitor center, Aztalan State Park is expected to draw many thousands of new visitors to the park.

The grant was matched by another \$20,000 donated by Aztalan benefactor Elizabeth Parker. Since 2012, Elizabeth has made dollar for dollar match for donations made towards the visitor center from the trusts of George S. Parker II of the Parker Pen Corp. of Janesville. With the DNR grant, private donations from many Aztalan Friends and other supporters, and matching dollars from Elizabeth Parker, the Friends of Aztalan State Park has thus far raised over \$100,000. Ultimately the Friends want to raise a total of \$800,000 which is the estimated cost of the structure that will

include educational exhibits, a room for school children activities and lectures, office space, and first indoor bathrooms at the park.

In cooperation with the Bureau of Wisconsin State Parks at DNR, the Friends will now be hiring an architect for approximately \$40,000 to provide an architectural concept design for the visitor's center. Later in the year, exhibit plans will be developed by museum professionals for an estimated addition cost of \$10,000. Those wishing to contribute to exhibit planning or for final construction costs can use the accompanying donation form or via Paypal on the Friends secure website at: www.aztalan.us

Aztalan State Park Interpretive Center

Yes, I would like to donate to help build the Friends of Aztalan Interpretive Center Fund.

Amount _____ *Your donations are greatly appreciated.*

Name _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Email _____

Send to: Friends of Aztalan State Park • P.O. Box 855 • Lake Mills, 53551

Volunteers Still Needed for Information Center

Once again the Friends of Aztalan will provide a place where visitors can obtain information about the park and the ancient site. It's in the form of a trailer situated at the second parking lot.

The trailer features displays, brochures, books, and merchandise. Visitors can watch the short introductory video produced by Wisconsin Public Television with funding from the Friends of Aztalan. The trailer will also serve as a center for fund raising for a permanent, first-class interpretive center.

Volunteers are needed this summer to staff the trailer, especially during the week. If you have a few hours to spare to support Aztalan State Park, contact volunteer coordinator Kristine Kust at [Kristine Kust@gmail.com](mailto:Kristine.Kust@gmail.com) or at 608-770-7159.

Training will be provided and no experience is necessary.

A Message from the President

This summer has certainly been a busy season at Aztalan State Park. The Solstice Event and Aztalan Day were all well attended, and it was great to see the enthusiasm of those in attendance for learning more about the past as represented at Aztalan State Park.

The Friends of Aztalan Board has been busy as well. The RFP for a vendor to create the initial design of the new Interpretive Center was published earlier this summer. Several firms bid on this phase of the project, and the board, along with representatives from the DNR will be evaluating the submitted proposals. The selection should be made by the end of August, with the final proposal delivery in October.

Finally I encourage everyone who is able to join us in our September visit to Cahokia. If you haven't been there yet, let me tell you it is an impressive sight to see. From the top of the 100 foot tall Monks Mound you can see across the vast expanse of this once great city from came forth the Mississippian visitors who settled at and build the mounds preserved at Aztalan.

Joining the Friends of Aztalan

Memberships: ☐ Basic (\$20); ☐ Patron (\$50); ☐ Corporate (\$100); ☐ Life (\$250)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Send to: Friends of Aztalan State Park, Aztalan State Park, 1213 S. Main St, Lake Mills WI 53551