

APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE  
FOR AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT,  
AND NATURAL RESOURCES

State Archaeologist Position and  
the Office of the State Archaeologist

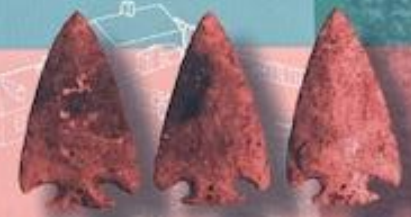
APRIL 11, 2023



# RETRIEVING MICHIGAN'S BURIED PAST

The Archaeology of the Great Lakes State

Edited by  
John R. Halsey









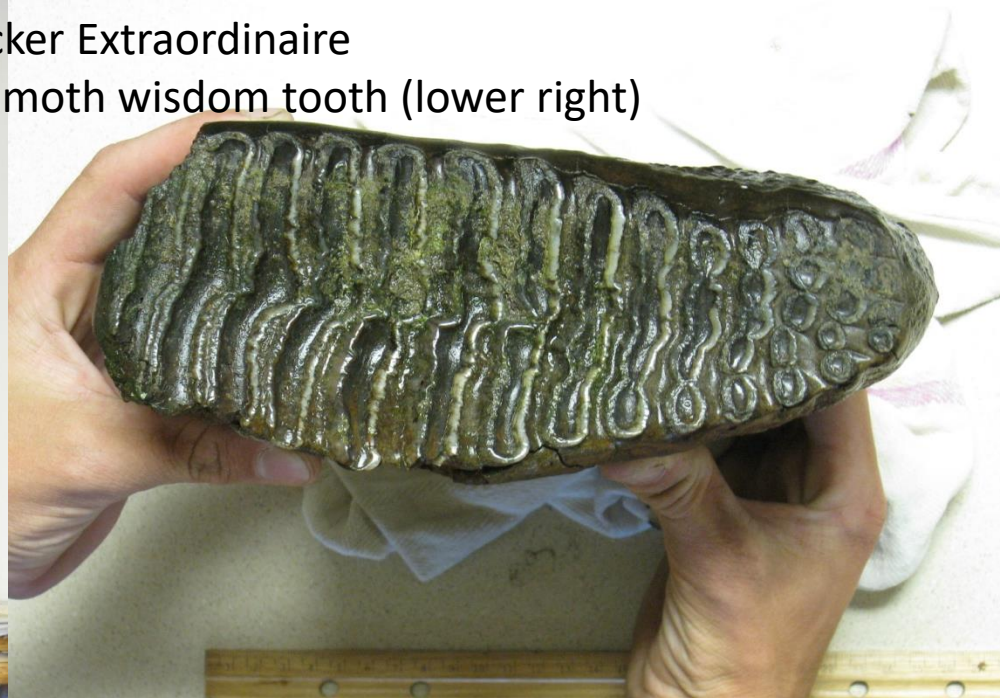






Patrick Walker, Weedwacker Extraordinaire

Mammoth wisdom tooth (lower right)





























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**LEGISLATION TO CREATE THE POSITION OF STATE ARCHAEOLOGIST AND AN  
OFFICE OF THE STATE ARCHAEOLOGIST IN STATE GOVERNMENT  
MICHIGAN HISTORY CENTER, DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**



Investigation by State Archaeologist and Graduate Student Assistant, the Johnson Site (20CH46), Mullett Township, Cheboygan County.

The position of State Archaeologist existed in state government from 1972 to 2019. The State Archaeologist—and the Office of the State Archaeologist—was dedicated to the preservation and protection of 14,000 years of human history on state land by:

- Overseeing archaeology on state land
- Serving as the voice of archaeological expertise in Michigan state government
- Managing the **State Archaeological Collections**
  - The collection has legislative origins in Public Act 271 of 1913, which created the Michigan Historical Commission. Other non-archaeological responsibilities from that act, such as those now fulfilled by the State Archivist, rest with the Michigan History Center.
- Maintaining the **State Archaeological Site File**
- Working with Tribal groups on archaeological issues on state land and on cases of accidental discovery of human remains
- Jointly issuing permits for archaeological investigations on state land
- Reviewing and commenting on permit applications for recovery of abandoned property on state bottomlands
- Fulfilling the archaeological responsibilities required of the State Historic Preservation Office under federal law

Although the **State Archaeologist** fulfilled these responsibilities and many more, the position was never formalized in state law.

[Please see reverse.]



Dr. Dean Anderson, Michigan's last State Archaeologist, and Laura Ashlee, formerly a historian in the State Historic Preservation Office, are seeking to have the position of **State Archaeologist** and an **Office of the State Archaeologist** created through legislation that places the position and the office in the Michigan History Center in the Department of Natural Resources.

- The DNR manages **4.6 million acres of state land** and has responsibility for **38,000 square miles of Great Lakes bottomlands**. The DNR has archaeological responsibilities under the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA, 1994 PA 451).
- The DNR is the only department in state government that includes the conservation, protection, and management of cultural resources as part of its mission.



DNR Maritime Archaeologist on the *Grecian* shipwreck (20UH46), Lake Huron.

The cost to fund the **Office of the State Archaeologist**, including staffing and space rental to DTMB, will be just under one million dollars.

The cost of not passing this legislation is:

- The potential loss of evidence of 14,000 years of human history on state land
- A lack of clarity and the potential for confusion in state government about who is responsible for the responsibilities formerly fulfilled by the **State Archaeologist**
- Existence of the position in state government will be at the whim of section supervisors or department heads
- The loss of a recognized spokesperson in state government to speak on behalf of archaeology

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