

## Dryerson Weir is a unique cultural resource

By David R. Brown

**Charles R. Brown Archeological Society**  
*Editor's Note: The following is an edited version of a published article that highlights some of the contributions made by WUAA members to the Dryerson Fish Weir project. Since this is a continuing project, those who would like to assist in future surveys should contact Tom Villand at 608-221-1996.*

### ABSTRACT

This paper describes the Dryerson Fish Weir, a Native American site located in the Yahara River between Lower Mud Lake and Lake Kegonsa. The Dryerson Weir is a stone structure formed from glacial boulders and cobbles placed in linear formations by Native Americans.

This stone weir is apparently of prehistoric origin. In the Fall of 1994 and the Spring of 1995, a team of surveyors from the Wisconsin Underwater Archeological Association and the Charles R. Brown Archeological Society mapped in the placement of the stones that comprise the Dryerson Weir.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

David Cooper, State Underwater Archeologist with the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, was extremely helpful in the project's planning and executing this survey. John Wood, who lives on the Dryerson Farm, kindly granted access to the site.

Thanks to Danny Aerts for the CAD layout of the weir, Tom Villand for photographic assistance, and Betsy True for her illustrations.

Special thanks to the volunteers who helped in the survey including Craig Malven of the Charles R. Brown Archeological Society, and the members of the Wisconsin Underwater Archeological Society including Tom Villand, Danny Aerts, Betsy True, Dave Neudek, Brad Rodgers, Paul Lewandoski and Dave Beard.

### BACKGROUND

The Dryerson Fish Weir is located in Dane County's Dunn Township in the NE corner of Section 14. The weir is apparently of prehistoric Native American origin as there is intense occupation on both sides of the river including multi-component sites on the east bank and a mound group associated site on the west bank. The fish weir itself was registered as a site by the Wisconsin State Archeologist in 1990.

Modern Americans have known of the site since the first half of the nineteenth century. T.J. Cram, a Captain of the U.S. Topographical Engineers, conducted a survey in

the late 1830s of the "Neenah, Wisconsin (sic), and Rock Rivers" including the Catfish (Yahara) to determine if the rivers could be improved.

Cram's report in 1840 to Congress included the following passage:

"The length of the channel between the second (Waubesa) and first (Kegonsa) lakes is 3.5 miles; at the outlet of the second there are many rocks in the bed of the stream, which, however can be removed without blasting.

At a short distance below the outlet, a rapids occurs, having of total fall of .912 of a foot in a distance of 800 feet, where it is but 18 inches of water, below this rapids the depth soon increases to three feet and the bottom becomes sandy.

About one mile lower down a second rapids occurs for an extent of 860 feet for which the total fall is .231 of a foot and depth from 22 to 30 inches after which the depth increases to three and four feet.

At a point about 1200 feet farther down the stream deepens into a breadth of four tenths of a mile (Lower Mud Lake) and has a depth which varies between the limits of

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## Research & Communications

## Internet is now more user friendly

By Bob O'Donnell

In the last issue of WUAA Newsletter, we discussed the history of the Internet and some of its basic features. This article will discuss two developments that have made the Internet a much more useful research tool: Gophers and the World Wide Web.

### GOPHERS

As researchers began to look for more efficient ways to use the Internet, a number of special search tools were developed.

One of the earliest such archival search tools was called "Archie" which was later followed by a tool called "Veronica."

In recent years, an even more powerful tool or "protocol" has been created called a "gopher."

Gophers make the finding of information easier through the use of menus similar to how Windows software operates on IBM-compatible computers and the graphical interface works on Apple's Macintosh computer.

This protocol was created at the University of Minnesota, hence the name "gopher." Another explanation for its name is the fact that using it allows people to "go for" information. A gopher menu gives Internet users

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Bullhead Point Project  
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**Wisconsin's****Underwater Heritage**

is published quarterly by the Wisconsin Underwater Archeological Association. The WUAA is a non-profit association of individuals who are interested in studying and preserving the underwater cultural resources and historical sites of Wisconsin.

In addition to publishing this newsletter, the Association also holds two annual meetings and provides financial support to members' research and publication projects.

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# Dryerson Weir

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three and six feet.

After attaining the last limit, the depth suddenly decreases to two feet, where a third rapid commences, whose total fall in 1300 feet is 0.44 of a foot.

In this rapid the depth is but 12 inches and several large rocks appear above the surface of the water where an old Indian fish dam crosses the stream."

The federal Land Office survey of Dunn Township in 1833 did not specifically refer to the Dryerson weir structure. However the surveyors showed an "Indian Old Field" on the east bank serving about 40 mounds with a Native American trail running north-south through the center of the field. The surveyors noted that the Catfish (Yahara) "abounded with different kinds of fish such as catfish, pike, black bass, rock bass, etc."

Local residents recall stories of Native American utilization of the site. Tura Grabar, a resident down river from the weir all her life, remembered her grandfather telling her that Winnebago Indians used to stand in the fish weir at night holding torches. "The torches would attract spawning fish and the Winnebago would spear the curious walleye or northern pike."

## METHODOLOGY

Preliminary mapping of the Dryerson Fish Weir was conducted on November 11, 1994 and May 4, 1995.

First, a datum point was selected on the east bank of the river where theodolite instrument readings would be taken. A metal rod was driven into the ground to mark the datum point.

Once the instrument was set up and leveled, the surveyors proceeded to piece plot each glacial boulder or cobble remaining in the river. Surveyors waded transits in the river to locate individual stones.

Each stone located was numbered and its location was recorded relative to the datum point in terms of distance, bearing and elevation from instrument mirrors.

In addition, the team developed a sketch of each stone including the width, length, height, plan sketch and profile sketch.

The surveyors wading in the knee deep river were clad in dry suits to ward off the 40 degree water. They formed a team with each member having a different responsibility.

One member held the stake end to allow for precise distances and elevations to be measured. Two other team members measured the individual stones. A final team-

mate drew sketches of each stone on mylar sheets.

## RESULTS

A Computer-Aided Design (CAD) rendering of the Dryerson Fish Weir has been made, on which each stone is plotted reflective of its relative size and distance from the datum.

In general the weir extends approximately 75 meters north-south and 65 meters east-west at its broadest extent. There appear to be two major linear segments forming an amorphous "V" shape.

In addition there is a large cluster of stones just to the west of the datum point. It is likely that the spawning fish heading north against the river's current would be prime targets for Native American harvesters. Fish would be funnelled between the "V" formation as well as toward the cluster of rocks on the eastern shore.

The shape of the Dryerson Fish Weir is somewhat reminiscent of the Type A weir described by John D. Richards in surveys of sites in Jefferson and Waukesha Counties. The weir type includes stonework in the form of an open "V."

Fish could be taken by spear, or in very shallow water, by stunning with a club. According to Richards, this type of weir is a common configuration.

To date, 148 stones have been mapped to approximately 100 meters north of datum. Additional mapping will be accomplished north of the datum during the Fall of 1995 to determine if any other stone patterns emerge.

## DISCUSSION

The Dryerson Fish Weir is very likely of prehistoric origin with usage continuing through to historic Winnebago times in the late 1800s. The associated prehistoric sites on both sides of the river are multi-component sites with material from the Paleo-Indian to Woodland times recovered.

Archeologist Warren Wittry, quoted in a *Wisconsin State Journal* article about the Dryerson Weir from April 9, 1957, remarked that:

"Indians made considerable use of rock dams as a means of procuring food. If there were rocks in the river they would, of course, take advantage of these rocks to make a dam across the river. If there were no rocks at the site they selected, they would bring them in."

The Dryerson site is a natural choice for a fish weir. The receding glacier left a wide variety of stones from which to choose. The Yahara is only one to two feet deep just south

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# The Internet

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a set of options that they can select from.

Those options will either take them to a specific piece or source of information, or to another gopher menu. For example, when Internet users log onto the University of Wisconsin-Madison's computer (address: wiscinfo.wisc.edu), they can get a gopher menu with various information sources.

One of those selections is "library catalogs" which will provide users with access to the library card catalog of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Another selection will allow users to view a sampling of the Society's photo collection.

## THE WORLD WIDE WEB

Most of the public interest in the Internet has been generated in recent years by the development of the "World Wide Web" which combines many of the research and communication features of the Internet into a very simple protocol referred to as a "browser."

The introduction of World Wide Web browsers have made the Internet much more graphically oriented and easier to use by the average person. The Web consists of "home pages" created by a variety of individuals

and institutions that provides users with access not only to text information, but also graphics, video and audio.

At these "Web sites" users can review not only what is on the screen, but can also "click" on highlighted words and graphics to receive more information either at the current site or another site that is "linked" to it. These highlighted words are referred to as "hypertext" and the graphics which may also include video and audio are referred to as "hypermedia."

One of the most popular "Web sites" is NASA's Jet Propulsion Lab which provides users with full-color satellite photos of the planets in our solar system. By clicking on a particular planet, detailed information and graphics appear.

Currently, there are thousands of World Wide Web sites on the Internet, with hundreds being added every month. For example, the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes at Kingston, Ontario is working on creating its own home page on the Web which will provide Internet users with a variety of information on the Marine Museum and its collection.

For more information, contact the Marine Museum at 55 Ontario St., Kingston, Ontario K7L 2Y2; (613) 542-2261. Or in true Internet fashion, you can contact them via E-mail at: mmuseum@qucdn.queensu.ca

If you are using a direct Internet access provider, a World Wide Web browser should be part of the communications software provided to you. If you are using one of the commercial on-line services, such as CompuServe, America On-Line and Prodigy, all three expect to have web browsers as part of their service in the near future.

In addition, Internet users can download some of the more popular web browsers for free or little cost directly from the developers. Two of the most common browsers are "Mosaic" and the more recent favorite "Netscape."

Like many other items on the Net, Netscape has been placed in the public domain by its developers, as "shareware." Internet users can simply download the program onto their computer using the File Transfer Protocol (FTP) feature we discussed in last issue's column. It is then suggested that you pay a small fee to the developer.

The hardest part of the whole process normally is finding the site at which the protocols are posted.

However, there are a multitude of both books and periodicals available to provide users with not only the Internet addresses for various tools like Netscape, but also unique and interesting places to visit on the World Wide Web.

## WUAA Membership Application



As a private, non-profit organization, the Wisconsin Underwater Archeological Association presents an opportunity for both individuals and organizations to participate in and contribute to state efforts in underwater archeological research and preservation. Dues are \$15 per year.

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☐ Association Committees:  
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     ☐ Training                      ☐ Membership  
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## Fish weir project

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of Lower Mud Lake and spawning walleye, northern pike and bass abound in the spring.

Over the years, starting with Captain Cram in 1840, improvement schemes have been spawned for dredging the Yahara's channel between Lakes Mendota and Kegonsa.

The Yahara River Improvement Association discussed such a project in 1909. A dredging operation was also contemplated in the late 1950s.

Once the survey of the northern segment of the fish weir is completed in the Fall of 1995, the Dryerson Fish Weir will be nominated for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The weir is a unique site as only 10 Native American fish weirs have been documented in the state of Wisconsin.

The Town of Dunn has been recognized with national awards for its land use planning capabilities and stewardship of the environment. It is a kind twist of fate that the Dryerson Fish Weir resides in the Town of Dunn. Perhaps this location will enhance its chances for continued survival.

## WUAA 1995 Fall Conference

**When:** Saturday, October 14, 1995  
from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

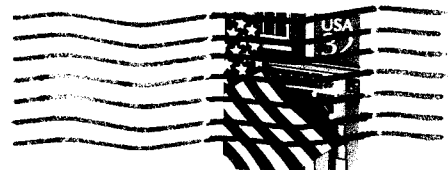
**Where:** Sturgeon Bay Public Library  
107 South Fourth Avenue

The morning business meeting will review current and future research projects. In the afternoon, we will take an interpretive tour of the Door County Maritime Museum with Pat Labadie, director of the Canal Park Museum in Duluth, Minn. Pat will also be on hand during our work on the Bullhead Point Project near Sturgeon Bay on Sunday, October 15. All members are encouraged to spend the weekend to attend both the fall meeting and work at Bullhead Point.

For more information, call  
Tom Villand at 1-608-221-1996 or  
Bob O'Donnell at 715-842-1762.

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Summer 1995

Fall Meeting in Sturgeon Bay on  
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