This summer I was fortunate enough to receive The Cleveland Archaeological Society’s summer internship for 8 weeks. This wonderful opportunity allowed me to spend four weeks in the field at a middle-late archaic site called Burrell Orchard in Sheffield Village, Loraine Co. The second half of the internship was spent in the laboratory gaining hands-on experience working with artifacts from the Northern Ohio region. This experience culminated in a research project on the Eastern ditch of the Heckelman Site (33ER14) in Erie Co. and its potential significance.

The first week in the field was meant to orient both the interns and the students with the excavation procedures established by the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Dr. Brian Redmond, and the rest of his team. We were familiarized with the historical, and geological past of the site, as well as its regional significance right beside the French Creek. We were then split up into our groups and units. I was assigned to work with Supervisor Angela Haynes, and our student group for the first week consisted of four girls, Julie C., Katie H, Sam K. and Rebekah K. We were opening up a new 2mx2m unit at the site coordinates of 494N 512E, which was divided into quadrants. We were first tasked with removing the over burden, or turf, and breaking through the plow-zone of level 1. Due to the uneven terrain we set our datum 5cm above ground level and set out first level to 5-20 cm below datum. The majority of what we extracted from level one was disturbed by plowing, but there were a number of debitage
pieces, fire cracked rocked, and historical intrusions. Towards the middle of the week we started excavation in arbitrary levels of 10 cm, and began level 2 at 20-30cm below datum, where we started to see flint tools appear. Towards the end of the week we found an interesting conglomeration of burnt siltstone in the Southeast quad, which later became feature 16-04. This was very exciting for all of us, especially since we had spent the better part of a week working in plow zone.

The second week brought some new face to 494N 512E. Sam had left planning to return for the final 2 weeks of the field school. Julie, Katie, and Rebekah remained, but we also added Anne J. and Rich L. to our group. Both Anne and Rich were retired and showed a great interest in archaeology and history so it was very pleasant having them on the team. We focused our efforts on finishing level 2 which gave us more flint debitage, flint tools, and an increase in faunal remains. Feature 16-04 was bisected, the west half was removed, and seemed to be an intentional deposit of burnt silt stone. At the bottom of level 2, we started to find deposits of burnt clay in inconsistent globs. This led to more intrigue about the usage of the area within our unit and more excitement within the group.

The third week we saw Julie C., and Katie H. leave, but Sam Returned, Rebekah remained and we added Garret P, and Nick P. We managed to get the entire unit through level 3 at 30-40cm below datum, and revealed a larger extent to the clay floor throughout the unit. A large circular concentration of burnt clay in the Southwestern quad was given a feature number 16-15. Additionally, several charcoal zones, and the continuation to a feature of large stone slabs, 15-08, were found. We saw a spike in the number of large faunal remains that were found and we continued to find a small amount chert debitage and flint tools. Towards the end
of the week the charcoal zones were bisected and out of three only one proved to be positive for a significant density of charcoal within the stratigraphy. We decided the best course of action was to map the profile of that zone.

The final week I spent the majority in 494N 512E with the exception of one day which was spent supervising and teaching the children visiting from the museum. The other intern Emil and I taught the children excavation techniques and how to find artifacts when sifting in the screen. The children opened a new unit 486N 500E, and managed to get down to approximately 9 cm below datum. Although it was a lot of hard work, many of them seemed to have enjoyed learning about archaeology and finding artifacts.

In unit 494N 512E the remains of feature 15-08 were removed and a large fragment of antler and bone beneath it was also removed. Finding those remains below the slabs and within a charcoal deposits was very indicative of the unit’s former usage. The clay floor was completely exposed throughout the unit and proved to be rather extensive, it had been found to be associated with feature 14-11, which continued into an adjacent unit. Another peculiarity is that far beneath what use to be the burnt silt stone and feature 16-04, we found potential post molds. The final day of the dig I mapped the unit in it’s completion for this season, before we bisected and removed the remains of feature 16-15 and attempted to verify the authenticity of 2 out of 5 post molds. Both of them turned out to be negative. The dig concluded with Rebekah, Sam, George, and Mary.

We suspect that 494N 512E showed a large number of burning incidents, as seen by the amount of charcoal, burnt bones, burnt clay, burnt siltstone, and fire cracked rock found. It is
possible that the unit was used in hide preparation or cooking due to the amount of faunal
remains we found. I’m sure that future excavations in the unit and analysis of the artifacts will
paint us a broader picture of this site. What I can tell you is that we worked hard and had a
blast uncovering the peculiar history of Burrell Orchard and its clay floors.

The second 4 weeks consisted of laboratory time and my research project. The first few
days of the first week were really meant to familiarize the other intern and me with laboratory
procedure. We spent the first day cleaning the equipment and sorting the bags to make sure
they were all present. The second day was spent on washing, and finally cataloguing the
artifacts. After that we were given our projects, mine started off simply as diagnostic flint tool
analysis of feature 08-01, 09-36, 09-37, and 09-39 of the Heckelman’s (33ER14) Eastern ditch. I
sketched, measured, and weighed all the diagnostic flint tools, then proceeded to figure out
what chert type they were made of.

The questions we really wanted to answer were: What was the ditch’s composition, and
how could its usage and deposition patterns be significant? The next step involved using data
from the inventory as well as entering the data from my analysis sheets to find the distribution
of artifact types within the features mentioned above. After calculating basic densities, it was
important to look at other Ohio Hopewell sites in southern Ohio and compare the
characteristics of the diagnostic flint tools from Heckelman to the assemblages at these sites. It
was found that the tools fit nicely with the assemblage from the Liberty, the McGraw, and the
Pumpkin sites and I was able to identify the assemblage as non-ceremonial. Still, the intentional
deposition of certain artifact classes in specific features might signify a ritual aspect to the filling
I found the research project to be both incredibly enlightening and fulfilling, as there is still so
much to learn about Ohio Hopewell occupation in this region. To be able to contribute in any way to this investigation has felt quite accomplishing.

This amazing opportunity to work with The Cleveland Museum of Natural History is one that I will take with me for the rest of my archaeological career. This experience has taught me so much, and given me the chance to work in a professional environment, as well as a highly regarded and prestigious institution. I am grateful that I have received this wonderful internship and gained the ability to hone my skills, while working under these accomplished people.

I would like to give my thanks to Dr. Redmond, Brian Scanlan, Ann DuFresne and Angela Haynes for their guidance and endless support throughout this internship, as well as the countless volunteers for their helpful advice and cheerful dispositions. I would also like to thank all the students who allowed me to supervise and assist them; your passion in the field and eagerness to learn is one of the greatest inspirations anyone in our discipline could hope to receive. Finally, I would like to thank the Cleveland Archaeological Society for their generosity with this internship; you have given me the opportunity to experience something so profoundly special, that will be both an irreplaceable memory and an invaluable asset as a professional archaeologist.