Burrell Orchard 2008: CAS Summer Internship

Ciera M. Herron
Case Western Reserve University
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As the Cleveland Archaeological Society's summer intern for 2008, I spent five weeks of the summer at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History's field school site at Burrell Orchard with Dr. Brian Redmond and then three works working in the lab, studying the lithics from Burrell Orchard. Burrell Orchard is located in Lorain County on a promontory above the French Creek River on the Burrell Homestead, which was built circa 1820.

The first week of the dig I worked with Jim Bauers on unit 500N 504E, which was a two meter by two meter unit. Excitement hit the third day when we discovered the first piece of pottery (very soon we found more pieces of pottery, which were the only ones found on the dig). The next day we uncovered the first celt as well, which was the only complete of the entire excavation. The digging was tedious, for we had rock scattered throughout the unit and at about 28 cm BD (below datum) we hit a layer of clay. By the end of the week we had a feature (which was a pile of rocks in a shape that resembled Australia) and our last act was to map said feature. As in my previous experience I never had the opportunity to map, I found that I enjoy mapping a great deal.

The second week Dr. Redmond assigned me to supervise unit 490N 509E, a two meter by one meter unit. We knew that our unit was destined for good fortune when we were finding sizeable flint flakes in the top soil. Through our first layer we only found charcoal, burned bone, and flakes. However, the second day in our second layer we had our first projectile point—a base fragment. With our first real find under out belt, we continued working as points rained down upon us: a tip fragment at 25 cm BD and then a stemmed base fragment (part of a Saratoga point) at 28 cm BD. Most exciting of all, we ended the week with finding the first

complete projectile point of the entire site. We also had a feature (08-07) in the northeast corner, which were rocks in an almost perfect quarter circle (which then extended into the wall). Three different colored soils (Zone A, Zone B, and the matrix) were also present in the floor of the unit.

Week three was an exhilarating week for the unit. We started with a bang, or more literally, with a complete projectile point, the second and last complete point found on the dig. We also found a projectile point tip and a deer ankle bone, all of these discoveries within 41 to 44 cm BD. These finds, also interestingly, were found in Zone A and Zone B. We next discovered a hammerstone and a perform, and finally ended the week by mapping the unit floor, which now had six different soil colors. In addition, we cross sectioned Feature 08-07, which revealed itself to be nothing more than some rocks that looked like they were in a quarter circle, much to our dismay. Our sadness was soon forgotten as we carried onward and discovered at 48 cm BD a deer humerus, a deer antler, and a large amount of burned bone scattered throughout the unit.

As it turned out, the few pieces of bone found only foreshadowed what was to come. In the fourth week, we found seven large pieces of deer bone, including antlers, teeth, and an astragulus (ankle bone). The most exciting find of the entire dig, in my opinion, was the human jaw bone fragment discovered in our unit at 53.5 cm BD. The jaw contained the first molar as well as three premolars and another tooth was found in the soil next to it. The teeth were extremely worn down in a very angular fashion, showing that the person was using their teeth most likely as a tool. However, as this was the only piece of human bone found, it was most likely not part of a burial. Instead, Native Americans would often carry the bones of their relatives with them, so perhaps this piece was just lost, or maybe discarded on purpose. The thrills continued with another projectile point fragment and an exquisite complete drill;

nevertheless, still had not reached that coveted yellow subsoil, which would indicate the living floor of the prehistoric inhabitants and the end (almost) of our digging.

Finally, at week five we obtained our goal. After spending the first few days helping finish unit 496N 509E, I returned to unit 490N 509E and reached the subsoil at 66 cm BD. We had ten possible post molds, eight of which ended up being positive. In addition, we had six possible features, all dark stains in the soil, but only two (Feature 08-31 and Feature 08-29) were true features. We mapped the floor, post molds, and walls, and finally laid unit 490N 509E to rest by backfilling it. For the rest of the week, I employed myself where needed, helping mostly with different test units so we could leave the site and move into the lab.

My lab project for the summer was to measure the lithic assemblage from the Burrell Orchard excavation as well as the Burrell family collection. The goal in doing this was to determine the type of lanceolate projectile points we had found and to date the site. To conduct my study of the Burrell points, some research was first required. I read several books and articles about Steubenville projectile points, Adder Orchard points, and the Ohio lanceolate points found at the Sawmill site. With these, I gained a general knowledge of the possible candidates for the types of projectile points we had found. Also, more importantly, I learned how research on these types of points had been conducted previously, mainly what type of measurements had been taken. This way, I could measure the Burrell Orchard collection in such a fashion that it would be comparable to these other points and help determine the type.

To begin my study, I first measured the projectile points and point fragments from the Burrell family collection. I then went through the notes of the Burrell Orchard dig to determine how many projectile points and ground stone tools were found and their present location. I found all the points and then took the same measurements as with the Burrell points. However,

with the Burrell Orchard points I also had six drills and projectile point tip fragments. Following, I measured the ground stone tools (mostly varying lengths, widths, thicknesses, and weight).

After all measurements had been conducted, I entered the measurements, as well as Chert types, location of artifact (for the ones recovered during the excavation), and any notes taken into an Excel spreadsheet. This way, I could easily obtain averages for the different measurements and more readily compare our finds to the ones previously mentioned. At this point I removed any anomalies (such as stemmed points, fragments which were so large they may have been blades, etc.) so that the measurements would speak true for just the lanceolate points.

When looking at the dimensions, as well as the patterns of flaking, of the projectile points, the points and drills were aligned with the East Steubenville site and projectile points. This was important because, along with the ground stone tools discovered, the site could be re-dated from Paleo-Indian occupation to Late Archaic.

Overall, this internship has been a wonderful experience. Though I have had previous field and lab experience, it was nothing as intricate as this. This greatly augmented my knowledge of field procedures and especially what the work is like once the digging is done. More importantly, I feel greater confident as an archaeologist and I know that I will bring \what I have learned here with me to all of my future field and research experiences. I am eternally grateful to the Cleveland Archaeological Society for this experience, and I would especially like to thank Dr. Redmond, Brian Scanlan, and the field and lab staff/crew of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History for allowing me to work with them this summer.