

ROCK CREEK SITE - ATCHISON COUNTY, MO.

SW 1/4, NW 1/4, SE 1/4 Sec. 9, T64N, R41W, approximately 2.5 miles south of Rock Port, Mo. on Rte. 111, at the junction of relocated bluff road (to the north) and Rte. 111 & Rte. E on Project I-29-2 (60) 111, Atchison County. Located between Station 11+00 and 12+00 on relocated county road. Property owner: Linnie Hunter (lives south of site in SE quadrant of the interchange on relocated county road).

On August 24, 1973 at 8:30 A.M. Mr. William Herndon, Missouri State Highway Department soil and geology specialist phoned the St. Joseph Museum with word that bones had been uncovered on the I-29 highway project some ten miles north of Corning, Mo. in Atchison County. Operations had been halted and work was at a standstill on that particular portion where bones had been found. With Mr. Herndon we arrived at the site some two hours later and after a preliminary examination of the site area excavation work was at once begun at three places in the 45 degree grade angle along the west side of the county road where bone fragments had been graded out with soil being removed to a highway fill area some 200 yards to the southwest.

A considerable area of burials from the width of the already graded roadway and from an undetermined length along it immediately east of the exposed bone in the graded bank had already been removed by earth moving equipment and strewn along the highway fill. From the amount of bone sighted during the grading one onlooker present during the grading guessed that as many as eight or so bodies may have been buried there. Much of this bone material had been picked up from the road and fill area by the contractor's employees, placed in a box and was still at the site. A great deal more could be seen in the surface of soil deposited in the fill. It would be difficult to estimate a number of individuals from the road area due to the fractured and scattered condition of the bones. On site examination of the box of collected bone pieces indicated at least two individuals because of the presence of parts of two separate lower mandibles.

No pottery nor any other artifacts were found with the burials left intact in the grade bank, but some small pieces of charcoal were noted.

From the type of projectile points (or knives) found in the fill area, an archaic culture may be indicated. Three base ends and one point end (#4), all of which appeared to be from large size points, were found in the fill where bone fragment concentration was most in evidence. All point fractures appeared to be freshly broken. The largest of the base ends (#1) measured 1 1/2 by 6 1/4" and before the point end was broken off may have been 8 to 10" in length. The other two base ends (#2 and #3) measured 1 5/8 x 4 1/4" and 1 1/4 x 3 3/4". In comparing them with examples pictured in Bell's Classification of Projectile Points (Bulletin No. 2), they resemble very closely the Benton point listed as dating from about 3500 B.C. to 1200 B.C.

The loess area where the burials were uncovered is near the termination of a low diminishing ridge extending westward along the north side of Rock Creek from the main line of the loess bluffs along the east side of the Missouri River flood plain. Elevation at the burial site is 910 feet and above Missouri River flood stage. Rock Creek is one-fourth mile south.

All burials, numbers 1, 2 & 4, as well as number 3 (part of a large bone not definitely identified at the site) were about five feet beneath the surface. They were buried 1 1/2 feet into the loess with 3 1/2 feet of siltation, mostly colluvium, above the original surface.

#1 burial contained bones of a juvenile (primary molar and fragments of thin skull). Also the remains of an infant (part of a very small lower mandible).

#2 area indicated the presence of remains of three separate skulls and long bones paralleled as if from a secondary burial. There also seemed to be a lack of vertebrae and rib cage structure in the small burial area.

#3 area produced a portion of larger bone part of which had been removed by the grader blade and lost in the highway fill. The remainder is of sufficient size and proper shape as to suggest identity as the core of a bison horn. It was partially exposed and then a plaster cast was applied to the lower side to insure transport.

#4 was discovered after work on the bank grade was resumed and required a second trip to the Atchison County site. It contained part of a single burial the extent of which was determined, based out, divided into two sections and removed in two pieces along with surrounding hardened soil so that it could be more quickly removed from the highway work area and taken to more favorable laboratory conditions for study.

Burial areas #'s 1, 2 and 4 were about ten feet apart. The unidentified bone was forty feet to the north of the burials. All were in the same level.

A third trip to the area was made after Mr. Herndon discovered another deposit of bone fragments and subsequently the base ends of two of the broken points as previously described which he brought to the museum. On our return we took three-tined cultivator rakes and raked the whole area known to have been covered with soil from the burial area. More bone fragments and teeth found. Highway inspector, Jim Resler, before our arrival had found another base end of a point which he loaned to the museum for comparison.

While none of these points were found in close association with burials at the site proper there was no doubt among those present that they came from that site. In all cases the points found at the fill area were in soil that was known to have been removed from the burial site and also contained bone fragments from the burial area.

A tentative landowner-contractor agreement to move the remaining portion of the ridge west of the road to a low area nearby will quite probably disclose more burials to the west of those described here. Further archaeological investigation should be conducted at that time if at all possible.

Earth moving and grading contractor:

E. M. Duesenberg
Des Moines, Iowa

John Thieman (Foreman)

Highway Inspector - Highway Department:

James Resler
Fairfax, Mo. 64446

1st trip to site: William Herndon, Don Reynolds and Tom Olmstead (St. Joseph Museum)

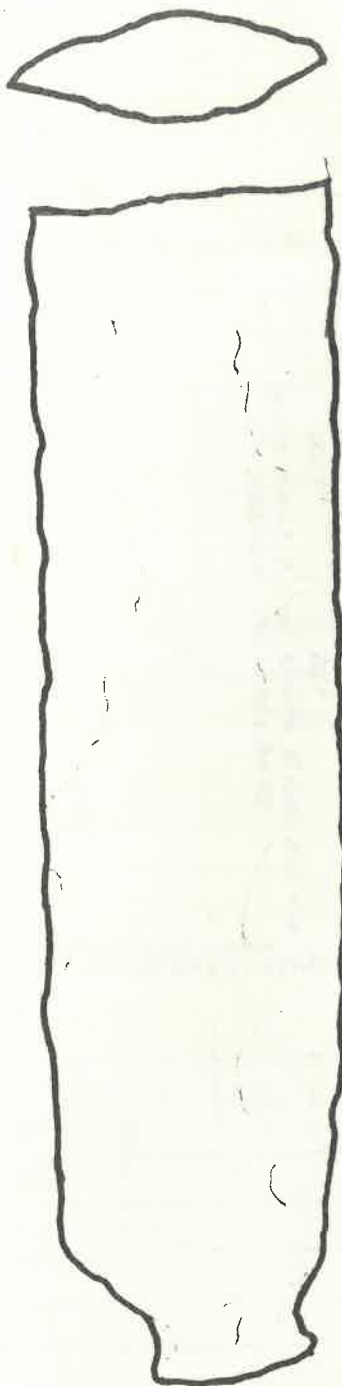
2nd trip to site: William Herndon, Don Reynolds and Michael Fisher

3rd trip to site: William Herndon, Don Reynolds and Michael Fisher

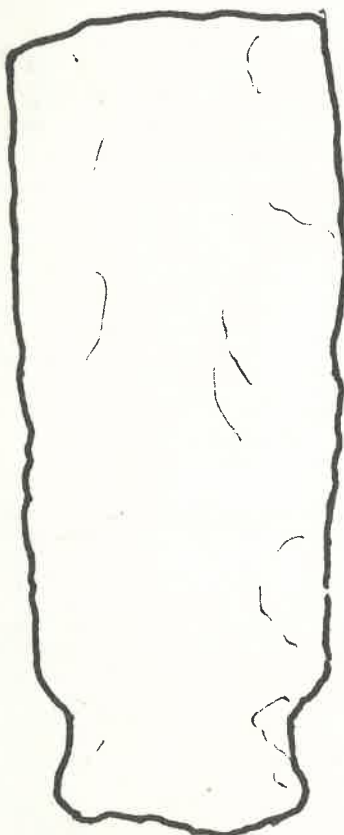
All bone material, teeth and artifacts from the burial sites and fill area are thus separated and so labeled and will be kept stored at the St. Joseph Museum for possible future reference or study unless removed elsewhere for advanced study.

Mr. James M. Shippee of Kansas City, Mo., Associate Archaeologist, University of Missouri, will be shown all materials and artifacts along with this preliminary report for his comment and study. Any recommendation for further detailed study or dating will be complied with.

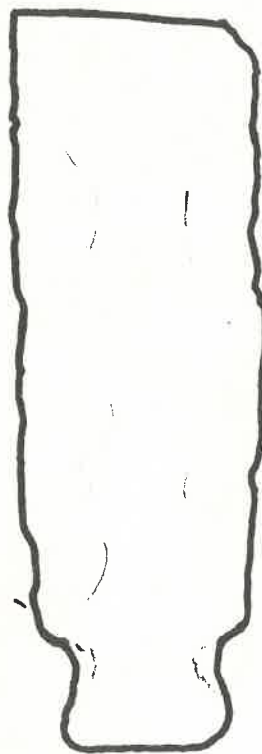
This report compiled by D. L. Reynolds,
Assistant Director, St. Joseph Museum,
St. Joseph, Mo. - September 14, 1973.



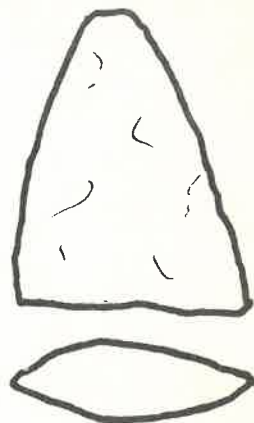
1



2



3



4

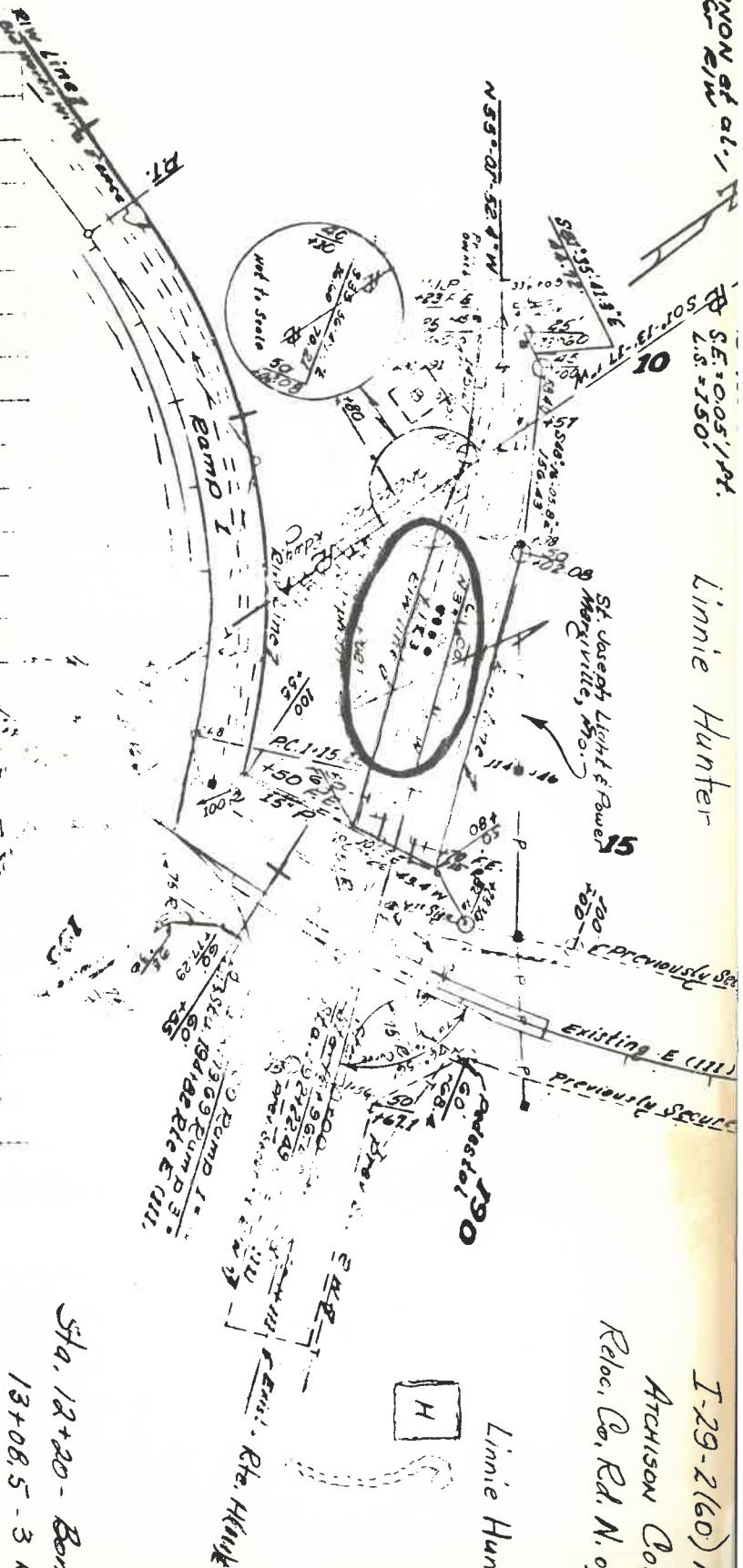
ROCK CREEK SITE

ATCHISON Co., Mo.

Linnie Hunter

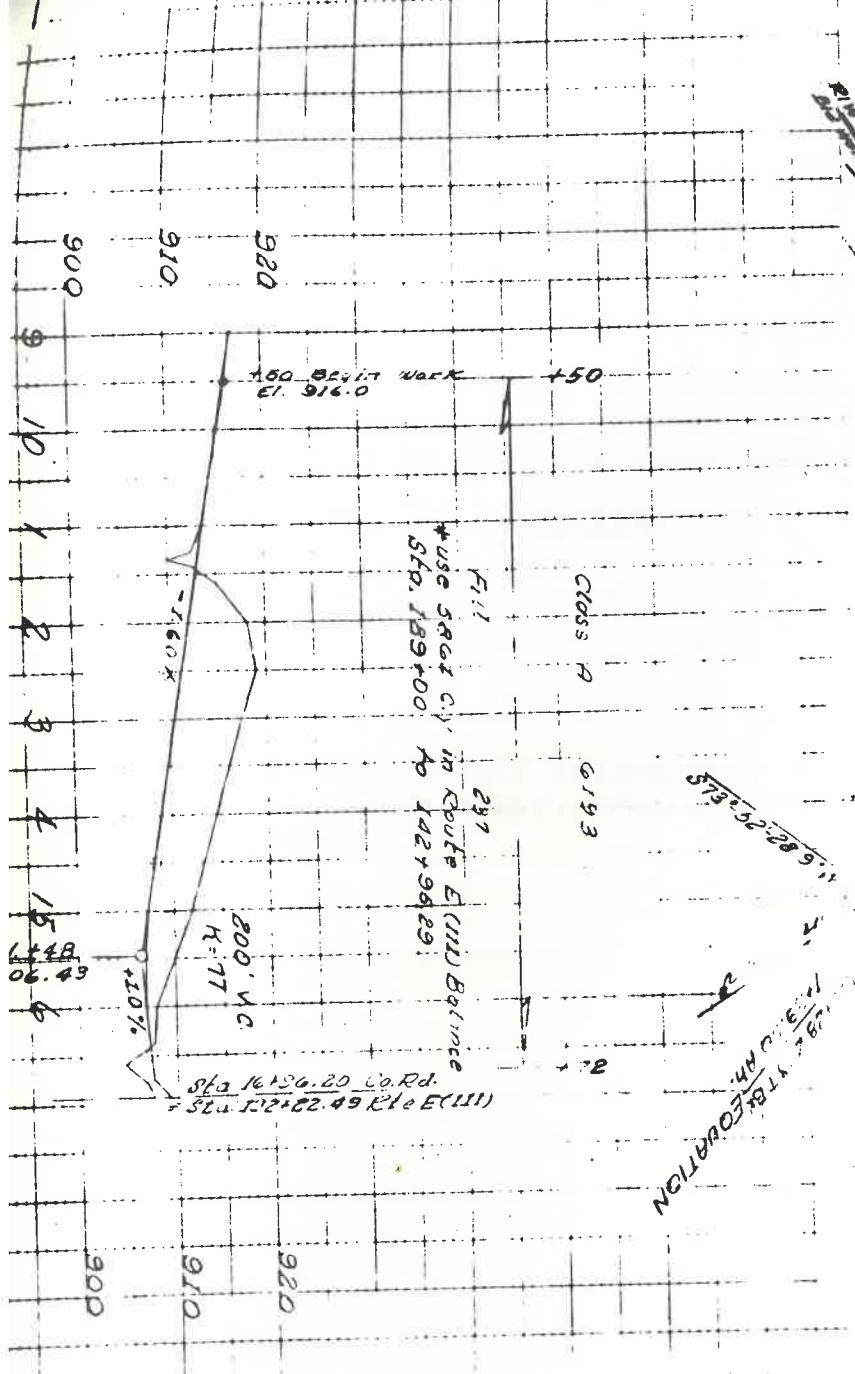
T-29-2(60)A

Atchison County
Reloc. Co. Rd. N. of E(11)



Linnie Hunter

Sta. 12+20 - Bone
13+08.5 - 3 Burial
13+20 - 2 "
13+36.5 - 1 "
13+00 - 2+@ #



Bend : m

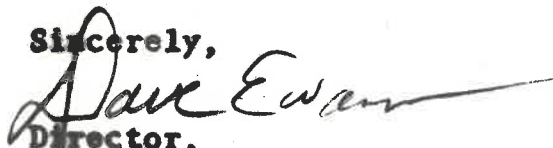
(To Doc. 12. Nov 16, 1973)

Thank you for the information that you sent us concerning the archaeological site(s). It has been located on a map and assigned an identification number. They are as follows:

<u>Site No.</u>	<u>Section</u>	<u>Township</u>	<u>Range</u>
23 AT 21	9	64	41

Any further information that you can send us about this site or any other archaeological site will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Director,
Archaeological Survey of Missouri
22 Switzler Hall
University of Missouri-Columbia
Columbia, Missouri 65201

October 5, 1973

Mr. David Evans, Editor
15 Switzler Hall
University of Missouri
Columbia, Mo. 65201

Dear Dave:

Recently we here at the museum were asked by the State Highway Department to check out bone in a graded area of I-29 highway construction near Rock Port, Mo. Made a rush trip to the site and found they had graded right through the middle of an archaic cemetery. It was a sickening site to say the least. Did what we could with what was left--got a few slides and managed to save part of a large bone that looks to be the core bone of the horn of an extinct bison. The large side notched points (found later in the fill) and the large bone prompted us to call on Matt Shippee for advice. He thinks Copper Culture and was somewhat excited about the circumstances.

I am sending along to you our report of sorts so that you can register the site. There could very well be other burials in the undisturbed area adjacent to the site. This as yet undisturbed area will have the top taken off either late this working season or early next spring. We are told, however, that the level in which the other burials were found may not quite be reached. I mention this in case you are interested in investigating.

Our man, Bill Herndak, a geologist with the highway department will keep us informed.

Sincerely,

DR:js

Don Reynolds, Asst. Director
St. Joseph Museum
Pony Express Museum

P. S. We probed and eye-balled the Mason Rd. Highway construction area that you asked help on and found nothing.

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October 9, 1973

Mr. Mett Shippee
3622 Russell Road
Kansas City, Mo. 64117

Dear Mett:

Thanks, first of all, for the time devoted to listening to and looking over our Atchison County, Rock Creek site information and also for your letter and report.

We appreciate your willingness to help us unravel our mysteries. You have always been someone within a "stones throw" that we could turn to and depend on. I did not know that you were not still with the University of Missouri connection. Or rather, you had mentioned that to us some time back, but I guess I had forgotten the date. It is unfortunate that your status with that institution could not have continued. Your help to archaeology in this corner of the state has been most valuable and certainly it has to the St. Joseph Museum. I know that Mett will still give us a helping hand but we will probably feel a little more reluctant to pester him as much. I wonder if the powers that be realize just how much Mett has been running around--and investigating--and corresponding--and keeping that phone busy! Well--some of us up here in northwest Missouri know.

Sent a copy of the Rock Creek report (ours and yours) to Dave Evens so that he can record the site. Told him that you were somewhat excited about the find and will wait to see if anyone there may be interested. Dave told us once that they would look into certain sites up this way if they had enough people to do it.

We (Rich, I and staff) kicked around the idea of a joint Kansas City Museum--St. Joseph Museum archaeological dig at the Rock Creek site but so far can't see much way that we could handle it. Probably could not keep up our end of such an endeavor. Actually we do not have enough people to turn anyone loose for very long at a time. Only half a dozen full time staff people here to operate two museums. We had a difficult time trying to keep all the rows hood when we were involved in the King's Hill dig. About the best that we could do at the Rock Creek

Mr. Mett Shippee

October 9, 1973

Page 2

site would be to help on days off and week ends if someone like Missouri University could see value in further digging up there. Maybe some of Greg Stock's people would want to lend a hand that way too. That way we could both (K.C. & St. Jo) still be involved but have the M.U. facilities available. There are so many new scientific techniques now that we here do not feel adequate for an important dig especially in this Old Copper Culture. Some salvage we must try to do once in awhile, but digging further into this is something else. Wouldn't want to get a tiger by the tail. We already have a bison by the horn!!

The latest word that we have from up at the site was from Bill Herndon, our highway engineer friend, and he thinks now that the landowner-contractor removal of soil from the remainder of the site will not quite reach down as far as the level of the other burials. At the time he told us (October 3) the contractor had twenty working days of their own highway work to do before the burial area over-burden was to be touched. So you see if good weather holds they might get to the burial area late this working season. Or if winter closes work down, next spring, possibly before archaeologists come out of hibernation. Providing there are more burials, it is anyone's guess as to whether they would then be destroyed, or if we are lucky, hardly reached by the earth movers. Guess we better keep our fingers crossed.

You might tell Gregg Stock what we now know about it all. We would like to help out to the extent of our abilities in anything that might develop up there. Mike Fisher feels sure that there are more burials there (his intuition) and is anxious to lend a hand on days off. Probably could get some help from club members. He will be on the free K.C. telephone line to keep your brow picked for us.

Best regards to you and Mrs. S. from all here.

Sincerely,

Don L. Reynolds, Asst. Director
St. Joseph Museum
Pony Express museum

DLR:js

Supplementary Report on Further Grading from the Top of 23-AT-21
Rock Creek Site in Atchison County, Missouri

April 23, 1975

At 8:15 A.M. Mr. William Herndon of the Missouri State Highway Engineer's Department called the St. Joseph Museum to tell us that regular highway work in the area of the 23-AT-21 site had been held up by rain and that the ridge under which the burials were located in 1973 would be leveled for the owner as promised by the contractor at that time. (The burials were thought to be Copper Culture) Mr. Herndon came by in 45 minutes to drive up to the 23-AT-21 site to follow the bulldozer and grader to watch for signs of additional burials. We had asked to be informed when this work was to be done.

On arrival grading was already in progress. As removal of the upper portion of the 4 1/2 feet of soil above the original burial level progressed, we picked up a few pieces of bone scattered in the fill dirt from the top of the site. Since the first grading was from the surface of the site area, these fragments were thought to have been left over from those picked up at the time of the 1973 grading when a few were possibly left scattered on the surface. The soil was removed in 4" - 6" increments and the fill dirt was watched for bone fragments and the machines were followed in order to watch the bladed ground surface for signs of additional burials or artifacts.

When we finally left the area the contractor said no more grading from the burial site area would be required. At that time the graded level was down to within only a few inches above the original level in which the 1973 burials were found. In one place near the edge of the bank grade a few bone fragments were visible at the surface. They appeared to be part of an infant's skull. This spot is in station 13.21 and is 79' north of the contractor's electric utility pole. It is on the west side of the road at the edge of the angle grade. It is on Missouri State Highway Department property. The grader blade appears to have just sliced into the top of the burial. It was covered over with dirt, leveled and left intact for possible future archaeological investigation. Knowledge of this exposed burial spot was kept in confidence.

Don R.

3622 Russell Road W.E.
Kansas City, Mo. 64117

September 28, 1973

Mr. Don Reynolds
St. Joseph Museum
St. Joseph, Mo.

Dear Don:

After Mike Fisher called me several times from St. Joseph to keep me posted on the archeological remains that Mr. Herndon took you to, I was considerably in the dark as to what they might be. Yours and Mike's visit yesterday cleared up things considerably and I have some comments to make about the discovery.

The points are evidently of the complex that has not been defined in this area where such artifacts have always here-to-fore been found on high ground and seem to be a cache unassociated with any cultural material that would give an indication of the people who used them or the time that they were in use. Curtiss of the Peabody Museum of Harvard, 13th Annual Report, Vol. 2, No. 4, pp 709-755 by F.W. Putnam, 1880, pictures several of the large blades that he recovered in a mound on the Brenner-Keller ridge above the present town of Riverside in Platte and Clay Counties. Wedel also pictures these same points and I sketched them in Research No. 2 for The Missouri University-Archaeological Society publication. I also traced several more that have been recovered in isolated caches on the high hills along the Missouri River. Wedel's account of them is in Bul. 183, of the U.S. National Museum, about Platte and Clay County Archeology.

Warren L. Wittry and Robert E. Ritzenthaler, Dec. 1957, Vol. 38, No. 4, pp. 199-321, Plate 6, picture a number of large sidenotched points that were in the material recovered from the Osceola site in Southwest Wisconsin. This site is thought to be of the Old Copper Culture which dates from 3,000 to 5,000 B.C.

I was telling Gregg Stock, director of the Kansas City Museum about your discovery when he like to have boled me over by suggesting that his museum would like to cooperate with the St. Joseph Museum in excavating the remainder of the site and financing several thousands of dollars and furnishing personnel. He seemed to think that it was a most opportune time to really do something of value in regional archeology. If he had seen your fine slides he would have been enthusiastic to a greater extent. This museum surely has a lot more money than they used to have. They have quite a number of well paid people among their teachers and curators of the several departments. You St. Joe Museum people might find this a good deal and should talk with Gregg Stock.

Sincerely,

Mett

Mett Shippee

P.S. That pan full of bones might be good to use in an assay for a radio-carbon date. That would be a real start toward finding out when those points were in use.

3622 Russell Road E.
Kansas City, Mo. 64111

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Sincerely, *Mett*

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Oct. 28, 1974

Bill Herndon, Mo. Highway Dept. contacted re any development at Rock Creek site in Atchison Co., Mo. Highway Dept. equipment and mobile office trailers etc. still at site. The land owner-contractor agreement plan to move the remaining portion of the ridge west of the road still in effect but not yet carried out. Could still be done yet this year but depending on the weather could be held up till next spring.