Overview

The Mower County Historical Society (MCHS) and its Project Partners, The Archaeological Conservancy (TAC) and the Prairie Island Indian Community (PIIC), are seeking the assistance of a team of professionals in the disciplines of landscape architecture and cultural resource planning for Phase 2 of a landscape development project (Project) for the Grand Meadow Chert (GMC) Quarry (21MW8). The goal is to create 1) a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) with specific plans for public access to the site, as well as suggestions for interpretation, preservation and management, and 2) construction designs and documentation for subsequent implementation in Phase 3. The CLR team will be supported by the staff of MCHS, a special group of Advisors and a Project Archaeologist/Project Coordinator, all of whom are available to contribute as needed to the work of the CLR Team. It is anticipated that the CLR Team will be led by a cultural resources management or landscape architectural firm with experience in the development of CLRs and management plans for archaeological or historic sites.
The Grand Meadow Chert (GMC) Quarry (21MW8) is a 170-acre archaeological site on the National Register of Historic Places near the town of Grand Meadow in Mower County, Minnesota. Located on the western edge of the Root River Watershed, it falls just outside of Minnesota’s portion of the Driftless Area. Previously surrounded by prairie, most of the site is now hidden below what is mostly cultivated farmland, but there is a notable exception: a small 8-acre patch of woods that contains a completely pristine remnant of the original Native American open-pit quarry, estimated to have been in use for at least 8,000 years.

The entire interior of the woodlot is made up of large pits dug by hand using tools of stone, antler and wood, and the corresponding spoil piles of dirt removed as each pit was excavated to reach the layer of chert below. There are 88 large and deep pits and trenches that are clearly visible, and none of the original surface is easily seen on the undulating landscape.
Surface collections of the surrounding fields indicate that the original quarry was substantially larger than this small remnant. Using the known density of pits within today’s woods, the entire site appears to have had well over 2,000 quarry pits.

Beneath the woods and fields at this location is a 360 million-year old flat layer of egg-shaped chert nodules that formed in what later became limestone, as ancient oceans receded. That limestone has since eroded, leaving only clay and prairie soil above the chert layer. The first discovery of this valuable stone for making tools, at least 8,000 years ago, probably involved the simple exposure of nodules in the bottom of a creek 350 meters to the south. Only after that supply of visible chert nodules was exhausted would the extraction of the chert then have required digging into the sides of the creek bed, and then followed later by digging parallel rows of pits moving progressively further away from the creek. The first pits would have been very shallow, but the land slopes up to the north gradually, requiring an increasing amount of work to reach the flat bed of chert with each successive row. By the time Native communities were taking the last chert from this site, the pits they were digging were deep and wide.

The final pits were so large that nineteenth century farming equipment could not bury them, and they were simply left in place. However, plowing removed the surrounding prairie grasses and ended the required cycle of fires needed to maintain that biome, giving the seeds of trees and shrubs a chance to eventually grow and hide these pits, as they have ever since.

The distinctive and high-quality Grand Meadow Chert, found at sites in 52 counties throughout Minnesota as well as at sites in Wisconsin and Iowa, is sourced solely from this site. Considered to be perhaps the finest of material from Minnesota for making chipped stone tools, artifacts made of GMC at those various sites represent its use for over 8,000 years. With the emergence of agricultural villages in the region after 1050 CE, the significance of this chert appears to have increased.

From that point forward, apparently related pre-Dakota Native communities at Red Wing, Blue Earth and La Crosse – identified as “Oneota” communities by archaeologists - used GMC in large amounts, both
for making small triangular arrow heads and especially for making end scrapers for cleaning hides and smoothing arrow shafts. At one village along the Blue Earth River nearly 97% of excavated end scrapers were made from Grand Meadow Chert, as were 73% of the end scrapers at a contemporary village near Red Wing. The Grand Meadow Chert Quarry is situated in the middle, equidistant between those two sites, and may have been a meeting place during annual rounds.

The GMC Quarry is the most extensively utilized Native American site in the state for providing stone for making tools, and the only example where there is evidence of chert having been extracted through digging rather than appearing in bedrock outcrops or as deposits in glacial till. It is one of only a few such places regionally that have preserved quarry pits, and stands out for its remarkable condition: except for the trees and shrubs that have appeared since the prairie fires ended when farming began, it appears unchanged from its last day of use prior to the European invasion.

The modern discovery of the site was made by local artifact collector Maynard Green, who led State Historic Preservation Office archaeologists to the woods in 1980, during a statewide survey that included the watershed of the Root River. Until then, the distinctive gray chert was well known to archaeologists, but identified by other names, and its elusive source was still a mystery. No excavations nor extensive on-site research has been conducted since 1981, although there are multiple recent studies of the presence of GMC in formal and private collections. Fortunately, the national Archaeological Conservancy chose this untouched woodlot as their first property in Minnesota to purchase and protect, and the Prairie Island Indian Community from near Red Wing has agreed to oversee the interpretive programming for the site, and to be the liaison to all other descendant communities involved with the use of this unique landscape.
The Mower County Historical Society, The Archaeological Conservancy and the Dakota Community at Prairie Island have formed a partnership to develop the preserved 8-acre wooded portion of the GMC Quarry Site for public access, interpretation, education and preservation. The Project entails 3 phases, the first of which has been completed (see Timeline, below). In this portion, Phase 2, the Project Partners are seeking to enlist a team to research and write a Cultural Landscape Report that will inform future management decisions, and to prepare design and construction documents that will guide development in Phase 3, in 2022.

The CLR Team will require researchers and writers experienced in cultural resource analysis, planning and management. The Team will also require a Landscape Architect (LA) to design an ADA-accessible walking path, a circular area for sitting and talking in small groups or classes, and a parking area to accommodate a school bus and up to 5 cars. The LA will also be asked to provide final design documents and a construction manual, to facilitate the
construction activities of Phase 3. The CLR Team will have the full benefit from all members of the Advisory Team, who have been selected based on their specific expertise, skills and experiences. That team of expert Advisors includes four archaeologists, two Dakota THPO staff members from Prairie Island, a specialist on Minnesota lithics, two landscape architects, a DNR program officer and two K-12 educators, among others.

Additionally, the CLR team will have the benefit of a Project Archaeologist/Coordinator (PA) who is already under contract with the MCHS, and part of all three phases of the Project. Although he reports to the Executive Director, his time during Phase 2 will be dedicated to supporting the CLR Team. As the Coordinator, he will manage communications among all of the participants, ensure that the process is completed on time and guarantee that all required reports are submitted to the funder on schedule. He will arrange online and on-site meetings for the CLR participants, and facilitate as needed. As the Project Archaeologist, he is available to provide professional guidance, oversight and communications regarding archaeological matters during the project period, and be responsible for project activities and planning that involve the preservation, protection and archaeological interpretation of the Grand Meadow Chert Quarry. As the lead archaeologist for the original recording of the site (see Appendix A), his role in Phase 2 is to serve the CLR Team as their archaeologist. He will work under their direction to fully contribute to the writing and producing of the CLR, by doing archaeological file research data, and providing photos and written text as requested. The rights for use of his photographs of the site, related artifacts in private and research collections, and still images from recent drone footage have been contributed to MCHS and are available for inclusion in the CLR.

All of the contracted participants are being funded through a Legacy grant from the Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant (MHCHG) program, administered by the Minnesota Historical Society. The Project Timeline for Phase 2 is from February 1, 2021 to March 1, 2022.
Scope of Work

The CLR Team will:

1. Provide and manage all necessary services and supporting activities in the fields of landscape architecture, historic landscape architecture, historical research, archaeological research (provided) and environmental assessments as needed to successfully complete a Cultural Landscape Report as described in Preservation Brief 36: Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes.


3. Conduct or supervise all appropriate research and interviews necessary to ensure that the Cultural Landscape Report document is comprehensive and relevant for long-range planning.

4. Direct the Project Archaeologist as a member of the CLR Team to obtain the existing archaeological records, research data and images needed for the CLR, including existing and new photographs, and request written draft language from the PA for use within the CLR, as needed.

5. Interview PIIC Dakota THPO advisors and tribal leaders to establish their interests and goals for public access and interpretation of the site, along with their findings as liaisons to other descendant communities, including those related to ancestral Oneota communities.

6. Invite local public residents and stakeholders to participate in one online session to determine public interest and expectations for the site and the Project, and to notify them of the planning issues.

7. Provide the Project Coordinator with information regarding details of progress and updates, as requested for scheduled reports due to the funder.

8. Participate in or lead online meetings with other Project participants, including the Advisors. The CLR Team can work with the Project Archaeologist/Coordinator to arrange multi-party Zoom meetings as needed.

9. Establish and implement an inclusive process for determining the relevant options for the development of the site for public access, as noted below in #4 (a) (i-vi) of the Report Outline. The resulting final recommendations for each specific issue will be detailed in the CLR.

10. Prepare and provide construction documents to be used in Phase 3, as outlined below under the section Construction Documents.

11. Notify the Project Archaeologist/Coordinator of any intended visits to the site; he will be available onsite for all scheduled visits.
Deliverables

1. A thorough and complete Cultural Landscape Report, in a digital format only but ready for print versions to be produced. Permissions for all maps, figures, photos or tables used to be responsibility of the CLR Team.

2. A complete second, edited, version of the CLR for sharing with the public via posting on the MCHS and PIIC websites, or for print distribution. Any sensitive information deemed inappropriate to share with public readers will be removed to protect the site or for the sake of neighboring residents, along with any data or discussion intended for a technical audience. No additional writing or images will be necessary for this public version.

3. Notes and conclusions from online open houses to present findings and collect input regarding the planning process, with 1) interested community members in Mower County, and 2) with members of the Prairie Island Indian Community.

4. Design and construction documents, including a Project Manual, needed to create the RFP for all construction in the 2022 Phase 3.

Report Outline

The Cultural Landscape Report will include the following, in the manner chosen by the CLR Team:

1. Introduction
   a. A Management Summary will describe the purpose of the Project, a description of the scope and methodology for its completion and a description of the Project boundaries in relation to the full quarry site, including an accurate site map.
   b. Also included will be a concise account of all research done to produce the CLR, major research findings, major issues identified and a summary of recommendations for treatment and use.

2. Site Environmental and Cultural History
   a. Environmental History: This section will describe the likely natural conditions at the site beginning in 10,000 BCE to the present, and the general changes through time involving flora and fauna.
   b. Cultural History: This section will offer a narrative history of the site and its southeastern Minnesota location and its cultural context, describing the region at the arrival of the first Native communities, at least 10,000 BCE, through to the arrival and impact of Europeans in the region and the apparent abandonment of the quarry site in the 17th century. Included will be any information involving prior archaeological investigations.
   c. Postcontact History: This section will describe the impact of the European invasion on this landscape as the Native communities abandoned the site, followed by the arrival of 19th century farm families and the documented ownership of the full quarry site,

3. Existing Conditions, Analysis and Evaluation
   a. This section will give an inventory and documentation of significant characteristics and
features, and a condition assessment of those features. Included will be:

i. The rationale for site boundaries, and a brief description of primary features, along with a list of major plants present within the woods.

ii. An assessment of the archaeological integrity of the site and related site information.

iii. A summary of the results of interviews with Dakota leaders and community stakeholders and neighbors.

iv. Assessment of integrity of the cultural landscape organized by landscape characteristics according to the NPS and SOI guidance for cultural landscapes.

4. Recommendations for Public Access and Interpretation

a. This section will provide recommendations for treatment of the landscape following input from all participants, including the Advisors, the Landscape Architect and the Project Archaeologist. It will be informed by the analysis of the existing conditions, and will include the final determinations of:

i. the exact route of a proposed walking path and its length and width, with an assessment of what portions can be made fully accessible;

ii. the materials to be used for the pathway;

iii. the location of a ‘talking circle’ where small groups or classes can meet during their tour of the site, and the type of materials for seating on benches in that area;

iv. the locations for interpretive signs along the walking path and at the circle, for at least 8 signs or kiosks. Note that the content, with interpretive texts and images, will occur outside of this phase, as will the manufacture of the signs;

v. the location of parking for visitors that will simultaneously accommodate at least 1 school bus and 5 cars, with room for the bus to easily return to the road;

vi. the location for the entry to the site, and the placement of a welcoming sign;

vii. recommendations for the enhancement of the visitor experience.

c. Special attention will be given to activities that offer the least possible risk of ground disturbance; all of the site is of archaeological significance.

d. Recommendations are to be presented in a treatment plan and/or in narrative form. Rough cost estimates are to be included.

e. The Interpretive Plan will be developed separately during this phase of the Project; the CLR should include suggestions for what content might be most appropriate for onsite signage.

5. Preservation

a. Recommendations that enhance the protection and preservation of the site are welcome, and are to be included here.

6. Notes, Bibliography, and Appendices

a. This section will include notes pertaining to the main body of the report, a fully annotated bibliography that will identify the resources referenced in the report, and any appendices needed to provide supporting documentation for sections of the report. Included will be a list of all interviewees whose information or commentary contributed to the report in any way.
The Landscape Architect is a valuable contributor to the CLR discussions that will determine the best options for all questions involving public access, as outlined above in #4. Once those final decisions are made, the Landscape Architect will prepare the documents to be used to move to Phase 3 (Construction) by:

1) Preparing a preliminary Project Plan drawing, based on a surveyor’s map of the walkway area.

2) Writing specifications for the:
   a) walkway, including its distance and width, and selected surface material;
   b) talking circle, with materials specified for benches, and their number and location
   c) parking, with location, size, egress and material type;
   d) signage locations, both at the entrance and interpretive signs within the site.

3) Estimating a Probable Cost of Construction for each element. Rough estimates during planning to be included in the draft submittal at 75%, and a final cost estimate for guiding Phase 3 bidding to be included in the final report.

4) Creating the Project Manual with general condition and tech specifications.

**Timeline**

The Phase 2 portion of this timeline involves estimated dates; the final timeline will be determined following discussions between the CLR Team and MCHS Staff, and appear in the Contract for Service.

Here are the estimates for the first two phases:

**Sept 2019 - April 2020:** Phase 1, part A *(completed)*: MCHS recruited a *pro bono* consulting archaeologist for advice regarding site preservation, development and interpretation, and for estimating potential mitigation expenses. We then identified and recruited local partnering organizations; began planning with those partners; created a scope of work, estimated budget and a preliminary plan with a landscape architect *(pro bono)*; contacted the Township Board regarding parking at the site for a school bus and 5 cars; worked with the County Engineer and a construction contractor *(pro bono)* to determine estimated expenses for the parking area; recruited leaders and experts as the Project Advisor. We also opened a related exhibit on precontact southeastern Minnesota at the MCHS Museum in Austin.

**May – Oct:** Phase 1, part B *(completed)*: Prepared and submitted Legacy Grant application and began seeking and receiving matching funds.

**Nov - Dec:** Phase 2 *(preparations)*: Received the grant; prepared 2 RFPs for the Project. The RFP process for the Project Archaeologist is completed; the RFP for the CLR Team is released.

**Jan - Feb 2021:** The CLR Team is selected, and a contract signed. The reporting and payment schedules will be discussed and finalized for inclusion within the contract.
**Feb - March 2021**: Phase 2 (*Legacy Grant period begins*): The CLR Team will meet online in mid-February with the Project Archaeologist/Coordinator, the Executive Director and the Advisors, to establish the overview of the plan for the CLR process for sharing among all participants. Following that first conversation, the CLR Team will then develop a detailed work plan and schedule with assigned tasks and goals. An outline for the CLR will be offered, with specific writing assignments assigned by the CLR Team. Extensive existing archaeological data will be targeted for research by the Project Archaeologist working under the CLR Team, and the historical research of Mower County will be gathered with contributions from the MCHS staff. Environmental data will be assembled, with professional assistance contributed from Advisors.

**March-May**: Site to be cleared, if conditions allow. Potential options for a pathway, talking circle and parking area sketched or mapped by CLR Team’s landscape architect. Clearance of dead wood and undesirable plants, especially Buckthorn, will occur. The Archaeologist will be on site.

**May – July**: Project Team and Advisors will meet to discuss options presented by the Landscape Architect, and eventually determine final preferences for construction locations, the nature of the public experience, and the general direction for interpretation. Writing for CLR continues.

**August – September**: Final decisions made regarding location, size and materials for the walking path, talking circle and parking area. Locations for interpretive panels proposed. Drafts of sections the CLR to be reviewed by participants. Landscape Architect begins developing plans and construction documents, with rough estimates of potential costs. Outreach to other descendant tribal communities, including invitations to visit the site, will be coordinated with PIIC THPO staff.

**September – October**: Final drawings by the Landscape Architect completed for the layout of an accessible walking path with a talking circle, the location of an ADA-compliant parking area and the entrance into the site. Exact locations for 8 educational kiosks and for stone or wood benches will be determined, and for an informational sign with map and contact information for MCHS that will be near the entrance. The 75% draft of the Cultural Landscape Report and design documents will be submitted to MHCHG staff for review.

**November 2021 – January 2022**: Response to MNHS suggestions for improvement; CLR and design documents assembled.

**February 2022**: Cultural Landscape Report and the construction drawings and documents finalized for submission to MNHS for approval. Work Plan and cost estimates for Phase 3 (construction) completed. Final day for billable hours is **February 25**; all deliverables are due by end of day.

**March 4**: Final documents and grant report submitted to MNHS Legacy staff for approval.

**March 31**: End of Phase 2 project period; MNHS approval anticipated.

Concurrent but funded separately:

**July 2021 – June 2022**: Development of a Dakota-centric Communications and Interpretive Plan begins. Signage plan for educational kiosks developed, with cultural and scientific information. Brochure design proposed, for annual distribution to regional tourism sites including hotels and the Mayo Clinic. Educational units featuring the Quarry prepared by PIIC and MCHS staff being prepared for distribution to area and tribal schools. Outline created for a video project with the Austin PBS station.
Proposal Requirements

Project Approach (maximum of 6 single-sided pages)

- Please provide a brief written statement of your proposed approach to the project.
  - How will the CLR team work together internally, and with MCHS Advisors, staff and Project participants, to complete the project within the schedule described in the Project Scope of Work and Timeline?
  - What special skills and innovative thinking will your team bring to the project?
- Regarding the competing factors involved in the preservation, protection and maintenance of a publicly accessible archaeological site: What are the potential roadblocks that could delay project completion? What factors could disrupt public use or the management and operation of the developed cultural landscape?
- What steps can you recommend during this planning stage to ensure that all potentially interested parties are included in the decision-making process?
- Indicate a willingness to propose potential design attributes to reduce expenses and annual operating costs, or for providing other features that could help achieve a cost-effective public facility of lasting value.
- Demonstrate understanding of the scale of this project and your compatibility with the mission of the MCHS.

CLR Team Qualifications (maximum of 12 single-sided pages)

- Provide a brief overview and history of your company, including location, number of employees, organizational structure, and number of years in business.
- Provide a statement of the firm’s experience and qualifications in the field of researching cultural landscapes, their restoration, preservation and maintenance, and planning strategies for long-term management. Demonstrate knowledge of and experience in implementing standards and guidelines governing the treatment of cultural landscapes (even though this is private property).
- Provide descriptions of three relevant projects, preferably in a parks, open space, or other minimally-developed setting, led or substantially managed by the proposed project team lead, that demonstrate a thorough understanding of Secretary of the Interiors Standards for Rehabilitation. Provide the resumes or qualifications of the key team members.
- Describe your team’s experience working with Native American communities.

References

- Provide a list of at least three client references from the last five years that have relevant knowledge concerning the project team’s ability to perform similar projects. Please include names, affiliations, email addresses, and current telephone numbers for all references.

Response to Project Schedule and Work Plan

- Please prepare and submit information regarding your approach or plan to working on the Project, addressing your ability to proceed with the proposed Timeline.
The selected applicant will agree to perform the work for a Contract Sum that will include the cost of work, the applicant’s fee and travel expenses. The MCHS has established an inclusive budget for all deliverables, up to the amount of $52,000. Note that contributions of research and writing for the CLR by the Project Archaeologist and the coordination of the Project are already covered separately, beyond that sum. The payment schedule will be outlined in the contract, and payments will occur upon receipt of scheduled invoices. The final amount will be released upon final approval of all reports by the funder.

Selection Criteria

The MCHS will consider the following factors in the evaluation of proposals:

1) professional qualifications of individual team members;

2) the experience of the team for working successfully with comparable projects at similar historic or archaeological properties;

3) the capacity to complete the project within the allowed time;

4) the ability to achieve goals while working in a cost effective manner;

5) a demonstrated skill for working in a collaborative atmosphere;

6) experience working respectfully with tribal communities;

7) responses received from references;

8) appropriateness of general approach as outlined;

9) any other factors considered to be in the best interests of the MCHS.

Conditions of Receipt of Proposals

In evaluating the proposals received, the MCHS will consider all of the above criteria, including overall value. This is a quality-based selection process. The MCHS reserves the right, at its own discretion: (1) to reject all submissions received; (2) to accept a submission without further discussion; (3) to reject a submission due to defects, irregularities or provisions inconsistent with this RFP; and (4) to negotiate directly with respondents for other terms, prices and conditions deemed proper and reasonable for the completion of the projects. MCHS also reserves the right to waive irregularities in proposal contents or to request supplemental information from bidders. This provision will be liberally interpreted to permit consideration of all proposals received by the stated deadline for submission.
Interviews

- The MCHS may, at its discretion, hold interviews before entering into contract negotiations with the successful candidate.

**Critical Project Dates**

- Notification of the outcome of the selection process will occur by **February 12, 2021**.

- An online Zoom meeting to launch the project will be required for all participants, on **Tuesday, February 16 at 2pm**. It will be both an opportunity for everyone to meet, and the first discussion to establish the roles, responsibilities and expectations for the participants.

- The timeline for reporting requires all billable activities for the Project to be substantially complete by no later than **February 25, 2022**. Final submission of all deliverables to MCHS.

- Final Report submitted to Minnesota Historical Society **March 4, 2022**

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*Hillshade lidar image of the Grand Meadow Chert Quarry*
Proposal Submission

Please reply by email no later than 11:59 pm on Monday, February 8, 2021. Late proposals will not be considered.

Send any inquiries or responses to:

Randal J. Forster, Executive Director
Mower County Historical Society
director@mowercountyhistory.org

(507) 437-6082

The mission of the Mower County Historical Society, founded in 1947, is to discover, collect, preserve, and share the history of Mower County and relate it to the history of Minnesota.