**History**

Archaeological projects on the terraces and bluff top above the Rock River provide evidence for repeated use by prehistoric peoples, from the Middle Archaic beginning about 8,000 years ago through the Late Woodland time period ending about 1,000 years ago. Generally, during this long time period populations increased in size and complexity. More permanent villages were added to seasonally occupied camps. The variety of foods collected from the wild, grown in gardens, and in fields increased. Technologies also changed; spears and atlatls with darts were replaced by the bow and arrow.

Perhaps in the Late Archaic but certainly by the Early Woodland, pottery of various types was added to the items used for storage and for cooking. Plant material tempered the earliest pottery, but in the Early Woodland large, coarse pieces of rock or grit replaced plants. Through time, temper became smaller and pottery became thinner but harder. Pottery sherds from the Early Woodland through Late Woodland are found at Macktown.

Changes in temper size, vessel thickness and decoration from Early Woodland to Late Woodland.

Intact archaeological deposits from these periods are rare in Winnebago County so that all Macktown excavations into prehistoric deposits, provide important insights into how Native Americans used this landscape through time. In 1998 and 1999, Loyola University of Chicago field school students and volunteers conducted research at the west end of a terrace above the Rock River. Below a cap of modern picnic debris and mid-19th century artifacts from upslope, three prehistoric occupations, Late Woodland residential activities, overlapping Early Woodland occupations focused on tool making and summer food processing and below them a preceramic Archaic component. In 1997, MARS, Inc. archaeologists excavated a few pits at the east end of the terrace above the river; these pits contained a few stone tools, stone tool and grinding debris and some Early Woodland pottery sherds. In 2014 and 2015, excavations further south uncovered a Late Woodland camp containing eight trash disposal features. Since large areas between these excavated areas remain under prairie vegetation, the relationships among these various occupations is unknown.

**Excavations**

In 1999, Loyola Field School students and avocational archaeologists excavated 24 contiguous 1 meter by 1 meter units. In his report documenting the work, Dr. Daniel Amick describes the area as “a dense and complex pattern of repeated occupations blurring by cultural and natural disturbances.” Fifteen prehistoric features based on clusters of artifacts including three post holes from a Late Woodland structure, a large but shallow Early Woodland shellfish steaming pit, and cluster of debris from cleaning out cooking facilities were defined.

**Artifacts**

Prehistoric

Both Loyola and MARS excavators recovered stone tools and ceramics. While the more extensive Loyola excavations yielded artifact from the Middle Archaic through the Late Woodland, MARS excavations recovered artifacts primarily from the Late Woodland.

Loyola University 1998-1999

Projectile point/knives from the Late Archaic through Late Woodland.

Sand stone abrader.

Reconditioned and broken tools.

Bipolar cores.

Early to Middle Woodland ceramic sherds.

MARS, Inc. excavations 2014-2015

Late Woodland points and other tools.

Late Woodland ceramics.