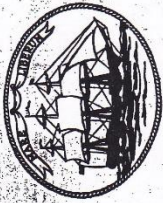


# The Day



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## Archaeological site in Lebanon brings scientists back 10,000 years

### Indian dig may help explain early commerce of Northeast

By ROBERT A. HAMILTON  
Day Staff Writer

**Lebanon** — The cutting edge of the 4-inch, stone knife could slice through a tough steak. Ten thousand years ago, this same tool was used to butcher animals like the woolly mammoth and the mastodon.

Unearthed next to a stream here, in a remarkable archaeological find, this knife, along with other assorted stone tools and ancient hearths — could provide an understanding of the trade and technology of Paleo Indians, who were among the first humans to inhabit the Northeast.

Archaeologist John E. Pfeiffer, who is overseeing the excavation, said the discovery this month of chert, a type of flint not indigenous to Connecticut, has archaeologists speculating about a trade network that extended hun-

discovered in the state, and is one of the most significant Paleo-Indian sites uncovered in Connecticut, said Pfeiffer, who lives in Old Lyme and teaches part-time at Westeyan University in Middletown.

Artifacts here were first discovered in late winter by Joseph Parkes, an amateur archaeologist from East Haddam and one of Pfeiffer's former students. Today, the excavation is funded by the Institute of American Indian Studies, Inc., Washington, where yields will eventually be catalogued. And though activity here is oftentimes intense, Pfeiffer hopes to keep the location secret, for fear of looters.

Here, the earth has yielded mysteries so old that they were ancient at the time of the Roman Empire. Here are buried treasures such as projectile points, once used for spears, and hand scrapers used to prepare hides as blankets or clothing.

"I've been looking for a site like this for 22 years," said Pfeiffer with boyish glee as he scrambled over a bobbled, eroded stream bed during one of his digs last week.

See ARCHAEOLOGICAL page A5



**A knife and the base of a fluted projectile point found in Lebanon, Conn., at a fertile site for Indian artifacts.**

Gordon Alexander/The Day

dreds of miles from the Hudson River Valley to the area around what is now Boston.

The find in the woodlands of this rural town is only the second archaeological site of its age



**'This is an area that was used by the Indians over and over and over again. My guess is it's telling us these people were quite mobile. They stayed here for a few days made their tools, sharpened their points, and then moved on.'**

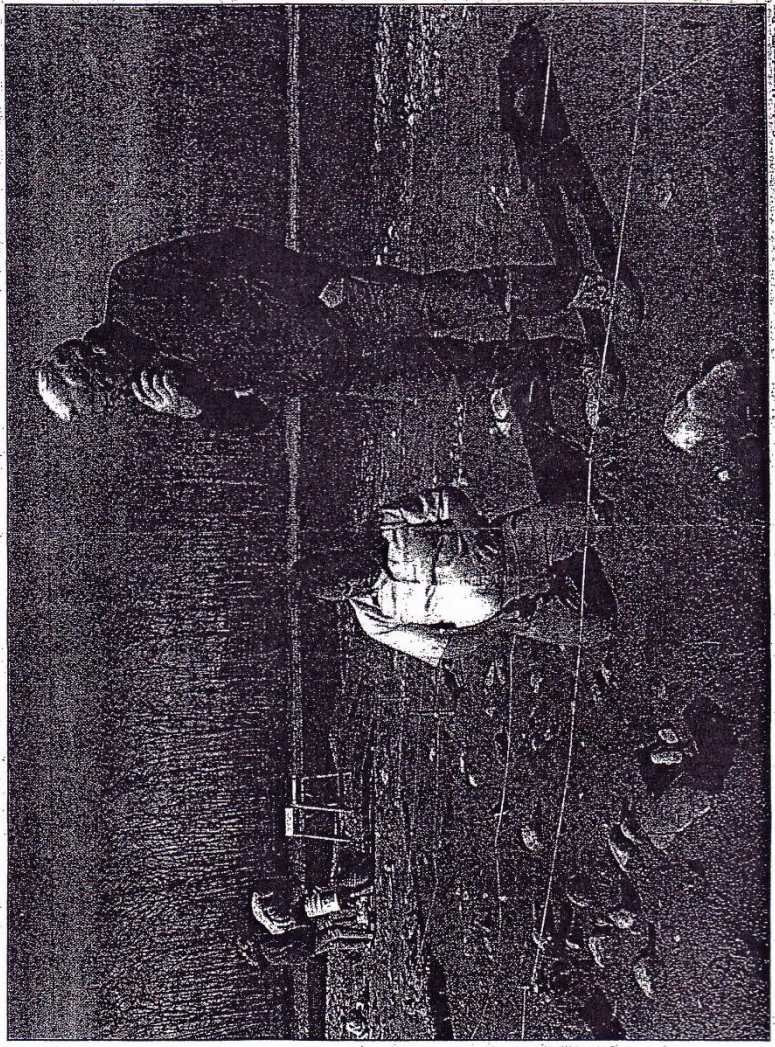
Archaeologist John Pfeiffer



*'Who were your ancestors 10,000 years ago? Maybe they were the Huns or the Goths? Or did they move to another area, or died out in the face of another wave of immigration into the New World. We would have no way of tracing them, from the information available to us now.'*

Archaeologist Joan Pfiiffer

# Archaeological site yielding treasures



From A1  
He pointed out rocks cracked from the heat of prehistoric fires and chips of stone, then suddenly he dropped to his hands and knees, looking for something. He found it: a fracture in the earth filled with a fine sandy soil.

Here the seemingly insignificant yields precious clues.  
Lori Chase, a Wesleyan archaeology student participating in the dig, was the first to notice the soil. She quickly plucked out a tiny glass-like piece of quartz, chipped off in a tool-making process.

"It never fails," she said. "You say, 'What's that?' and that's when you find it." After putting the chip into a labelled plastic bag, she entered data in a notebook. Record-keeping — of both the past and the present — is crucial in archaeology.

This is not the arid Southwest, where dry heat preserves bones and pottery shards. In the Northeast, the damp acid dirt and the freeze-thaw cycles eat away at remains, so archaeologists must study stones and the subtle nuances of the soil.  
In later years, Pfiiffer and his assistants found something resembling a 20-inch square of black dirt in an area of clay and sand. Pfiiffer instantly recognized it as an ancient hearth.

He believes the ash will yield information about the people who lived there and were used as fuel. And likely it also holds microscopic remains from the plants and animals the Indians ate.

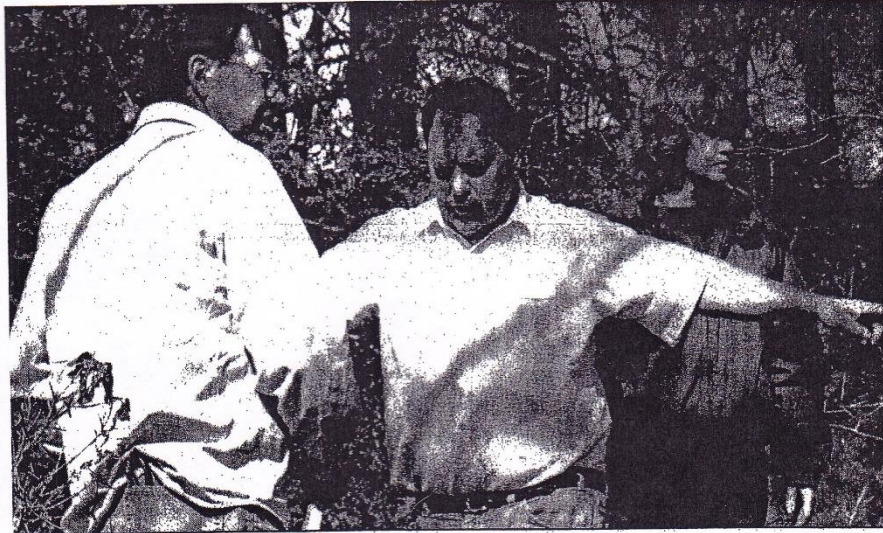
"It's the best hearth we've ever seen in a Paleo Indian site," said Pfiiffer. "Hence the name. It has a lot of information about what was going on at the time."

"I've been involved with some pretty important sites," said Parkos, the site-discoverer. "But as far as me, personally, finding anything that is significant ... no way. Not even close."

### In the woods and water

Today this great, slightly sloped land of gravel-filled soil. The upland ground is thick with oaks, birch and nut trees and blueberry bushes. But 10,000 years ago,





Fran Funk photo

archaeologist John Pfeiffer, center, directs Peter Kwasniewski of Essex, an amateur archaeologist, and Lori Chace, a Wesleyan University archaeology student, where to locate test holes at the Lake Williams site.

## In Lebanon, a prehistoric find

### Archaeologists turn up 10,000-year-old artifacts

by DEAN R. JACOBOWITZ  
Chronicle Staff Writer

LEBANON — Until Joe Parkos cut stone at Lake Williams last month, the town's oldest campers were often thought to be French soldiers who fought in the Revolutionary War some 200 years ago. The amateur archaeologist's discovery, which prompted an intensive three-week search for stone cutting tools and other artifacts at the lake, now puts the town's earliest campers at about 10,000 years earlier, when Paleo-Indians roamed the countryside in pursuit of the now-extinct animals they hunted.

This is as rare as they get," archaeologist John Pfeiffer said of the Paleo-Indian site, discovered at an area of the lake bed owned by local farmer Harold Liebman. His documents the first evidence of people coming into the New World.

The dates of people coming to North America — South America, too — really cluster around 11,000 or 10,000 years ago," continued the Old Lyme archaeologist, who saw a scientific excavation of the area. "This site fits right in there."

Parkos, a student of Pfeiffer's when the archaeologist was in Middletown, said he first visited Lake Williams a

few years, hoping to find signs of ancient visitors. This time he just happened to be lucky.

"As you're looking down, you're just looking for different materials, or what we call edges," the East Haddam resident said. "It just came in at the right angle to see. I was pretty amazed. Like, 'Wow!' 'Cause we don't get any older (pieces) than this."

The Lebanon site, which will soon be covered with water as the lake refills following a dam reconstruction project, is one of only two such Paleo-Indian campsites discovered so far in the state. The other, in Washington, was discovered in the late 1970s by Roger Moeller, who, like many other curious archaeologists, paid a visit to the Lebanon site since its discovery.

Pfeiffer, Parkos and a handful of volunteers, whose search for artifacts required them to sift through every grain of sand in a 58-square-meter area of land, eventually uncovered

many smaller pieces.

"We have more than 20 direct artifacts that show continual reuse," Pfeiffer said. "Artifacts that were made and resharpened, like scrapers, graters, spear points, knives, things for splitting bone. And we have thousands of pieces that were torn from the edges

or struck from the edges to be resharpened.

"Some of these are minute ... but they tell us what kind of work was being done at the site," he continued.

The team also discovered what some consider an even more important find — a hearth. Though about 30 feet inland from the sandy area, the fire pit contained a stone hammer and other tools similar to those pulled from the sand, leading Pfeiffer to tie the two sites together. He said the hearth will allow for a more accurate dating of the Paleo-Indian site, because scientists in the lab will be able to carbon date bits of charcoal and other organic matter found there. In addition to providing

organic matter will also provide many more details about the campsite, such as how old the early visitors might have been, what kind of wood they burned and what time of day they were at the site.

Pfeiffer speculated that the extended family of Paleo-Indians — all of whom wand from campsite to camp throughout the year in pursuit of the hunt — remained at the Lebanon site for three or four weeks.

Though the excavation of the Liebman property took many hours, archaeologists many hours of painstaking work, Pfeiffer said much of the legwork is just beginning. The lab analysis of the artifacts will take at least four weeks, he estimated.

"This probably will warrant a book," he said of the Lebanon site.

Funded by the Institute of American Indian Studies at Washington, Conn., the excavation of Liebman's property and the subsequent lab analysis will eventually help archaeologists piece together a more complex history, and a more accurate picture of Paleo-Indians in Connecticut.

Pfeiffer said the Paleo-Indians are believed to have come from Asia to North America by a land bridge that existed about 11,000 years ago. They then quickly spread out to various points in the North and South American continents.



The smoking gun: This tiny artifact, the base of fluted spear point, placed man at what now is the town of Lebanon 10,500 years ago during the Paleo-Indian Period.



## Lake Williams find

(Continued from Page 1)

But Pfeiffer said archaeologists will have to find many more campsites before they can really get a sense of what life was like 10 millennia ago.

"One site like this will not tell us what the adaptation was really like," he said. "It reflects only a very short-term residence at this place. We need to find quite a few of these."

Parkos said countless thoughts came to mind when he first discovered the tools at the ford of the stream, which existed long before Lake Williams came to be.

"When you pick (one of the tools up), you can kind of picture that you are likely the first person to handle this since that person handled it 10,000 years ago," he said. "You put yourself in that place. You try to imagine what was going through their mind, what they saw, where they were going."

"John and I have worked together for a long time and this is what we were looking for," Parkos continued.

The Lebanon discovery understandably had those in archaeological circles buzzing with the news. Among the first to hear of it was state archaeologist Nicholas Bellantoni, who visited the site to see it for himself.

"This is the first inkling of how long this area's been occupied," he said. "We have other prehistoric sites in the area, but John's is certainly the earliest one we have."

Bellantoni said other artifacts from the Paleo-Indian era have been uncovered at various sites, such as plowed fields and construction sites, but rarely have they been found at an undisturbed site.

"The controlled excavation provides the context for interpretation, because artifacts in and of themselves tell us very little," he said. "Artifacts within a site, in relation to other sites, can be plotted and can provide a context with which to interpret activities."

"Now we can actually talk about human behavior — what these people were doing, what their cultures consisted of," Bellantoni said. "You're talking about the first people of Connecticut."

Some of the diggers at the Lebanon site — who were making final test pits this week to ensure they hadn't overlooked anything — said they were excited to be a part of the discovery.

"I'm very blessed to be able to be here," said Lori Chace of Middlefield, an archaeology student at Wesleyan who spent a number of days at Liebman's property.

"Oh yeah, oh yeah, a big flake," she said excitedly when pulling a piece of a quartzite tool from one of the test pits. "This is why we do these test pits."

Upon checking it, however, Pfeiffer guessed the newest find to be only about 5,000 or 6,000 years old, simply by the way it was made.

Like all the other tools and artifacts found, the rock went

into a labelled, plastic bag. She then recorded its exact location — 40 centimeters beneath the surface — in a notebook for later study.

Though the quartzite piece was more recent, Pfeiffer said he is confident many of the other pieces, made of chert — also known as flint — are genuine Paleo-Indian. The largest piece, a cutting tool probably used to kill and skin animals, measures several centimeters long, its edges still razor-sharp. Another piece, identified as a fluted, or grooved, spear point, can be dated simply by its grooves.

Liebman, who owns about 60 acres in the Lake Williams area, said he was pleased the archaeologists were able to find the historic items there.

"I'm sure there are many other similar sites yet undiscovered," he said, adding he gave the diggers permission to keep what they found.

"If (the artifacts) had any commercial significance it would be an entirely different story, but this is an academic exercise, so why not?"

First Selectman Joyce Okonuk also was pleased to hear of the discovery, saying: "It's a wonderful find for the town of Lebanon and I'm glad they were able to make the discovery before the lake filled up."

"And I'm happy that someone discovered these items who knew their importance," added Okonuk.

Once all the artifacts have been analyzed, Pfeiffer said there will come the task of sharing the information with the public and finding a proper site for the display of all the prehistoric pieces.

"What I would hope would happen is the material goes into a local repository — a museum — because it does mark the first occupancy of the area," he said. "I would like to see it remain in a safe position in and around the Lebanon area. That would be the best of situations."

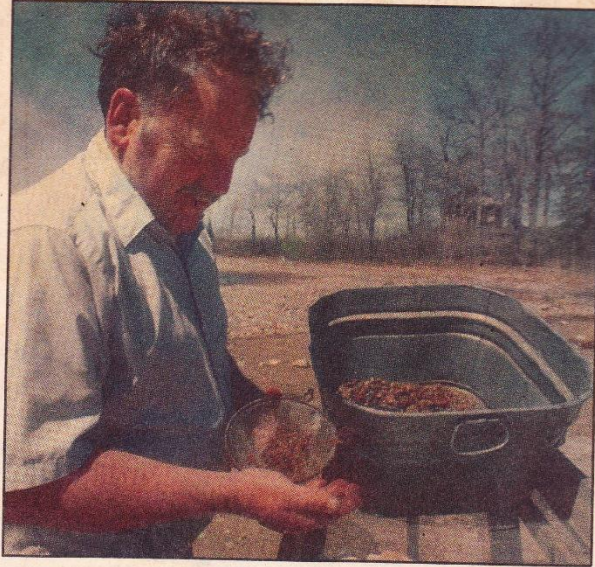
Bellantoni said the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History, located in the Wilbur Cross Building at the University of Connecticut campus in Storrs, features a

number of local Indian artifacts in a display called "One Circle Home." The museum, Bellantoni said, is affiliated with his office of state archaeology, also based at UConn.

Pfeiffer didn't realize until this week that Lebanon Historical Society has embarked on a fund-raiser to build its own museum on the town green, land for which it has already purchased. The archaeologist became excited at the possibility of keeping the Paleo-Indian artifacts there.

"I hope they contact me," Pfeiffer said. "One of the most important things in all of this is that while research is carried on by professionals and amateurs, if it doesn't make its way back to the people themselves, we have committed a terrible crime."

Hartford Courant May 2, 1994 Annual Meeting was held on Sunday, June 5, 2016 at The Acre. A small group met and heard minutes of the 2015 annual meeting, president, tax collector, treasurer, auditors, beach maintenance reports. Sand is needed at Beach 2. There will be no picnic this year. Beach and property maintenance was increased by \$700 so that tree work can be done by an insured and licensed contractor. Taxes were increased to \$70. per year. Current Officers and Directors were reelected for another term.



John R. Dunn / Special to The Courant

■ Archaeologist John Pfeiffer of Old Lyme sifts gravel in search of artifacts at a Lebanon site believed to have been used by Paleo-Indians, who inhabited North American more than 10,500 years ago.

## Lake bottom yields Indian artifacts

By LEE FOSTER  
*Courant Staff Writer*

LEBANON — A small team of volunteer archaeologists has been working frantically since last week to excavate the remains of a 10,500-year-old Indian campsite discovered at the bottom of Lake Williams, before the site is covered by the slowly rising waters of the lake.

With tense care, archaeologist John Pfeiffer of Old Lyme and his team have sifted and examined every pebble and grain of sand dug from 58 square meters of ground, looking for artifacts with one eye and watching the level of the water with the other.

Thursday, the tension eased. Pfeiffer said he was confident that what had been found on the lake bottom, combined with findings from another site farther inland, was enough to prove

that the site had been used by Paleo-Indians, who inhabited North American more than 10,500 years ago.

The only other site in the state where Indian artifacts that old have been discovered is in Washington Depot, and there are only eight or nine such sites in New England, Pfeiffer said.

The lake bottom had been exposed in the fall, when repairs began on the dam at the eastern side of the lake. When the spillway of the dam was opened, the only water left was in the stream bed that ran across the bottom of the lake.

Amateur archaeologist Joseph Parkos Jr. of East Haddam had been waiting for years for a chance to explore the lake bottom. As a student of archaeology, he knew that near a stream bed

Please see Artifacts, Page C7





■ Lori Chace of Middlefield is part of the team that is working at the Lake Williams site in Lebanon.

John R. Dunn / Special to The Courant

# Artifacts evidence of Paleo-Indians

# Artifacts evidence of Paleo-Indians

Continued from Connecticut page

was a likely place to find remnants of Indian life, and that burial beneath a body of water can preserve artifacts from the destruction of wind and weather.

On April 17, Parkos canoed across the already-refilling lake to where the bottom was still exposed. Walking on the rock-strewn sand, Parkos kept his eyes down, searching for anything unusual. He picked up a bit of stone that looked different from the rest, and found it had the markings of a human-made tool, including shallow grooves along each edge, similar to the grooves on a bayonet. Not far away was a second bit of strange-looking rock, a dark oblong with a sharp edge, about the size and shape of an old-fashioned straight razor.

Pfeiffer was excited when Parkos showed him the artifacts. The larger piece is part of a spear point and the narrow piece is a hand tool probably used to butcher and skin animals, Pfeiffer said. They are made of a mineral called chert, commonly called flint, that was known to be a favored material for early Indian tools. The grooves, or flutes, on the spear point meant it was most assuredly of the Paleo-Indian period, Pfeiffer said.

Parkos is awed by the serendipity of his finds.

"I was walking in the right direction, the light was at the right angle

— I couldn't believe it," he said.

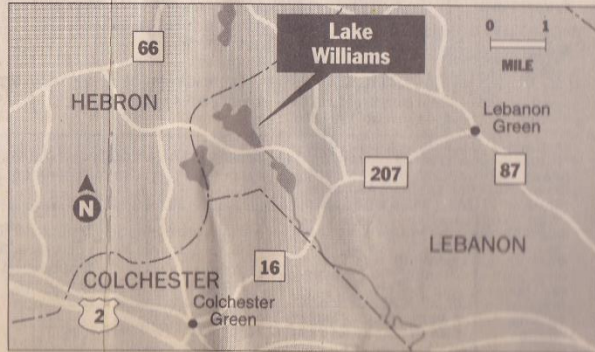
The next day, Pfeiffer got permission from Harold Liebman, who owns the lake bottom, and rushed to Lake Williams to begin a scientific excavation of the area.

Time was of the essence. Pfeiffer was determined to learn as much as possible about the site before the lake covered the site again.

Pfeiffer theorizes that the Paleo-Indians who lived in the Northeast 10,500 to 11,500 years ago used the spot by the stream as a short-term campsite. From scanty evidence gathered from other excavations, Pfeiffer said scientists believe that the Indians hunted and gathered in small family groups along regular routes. They may have stopped to hunt and butcher their kill for a day or two at the stream. A family might have used 100 similar camps along its route during a year.

When the lake was dry, it was easy to see why traveling bands of hunters might choose to stop at this spot for a couple of days, Pfeiffer said. The camp site is located where the stream was the narrowest, which would be a natural fording point for animals and people. Most of the evidence was found in a sandy spot—a much more comfortable place to camp than on the fist-sized rocks that cover most of the area.

Just 10 meters inland from where Parkos found the tools, he found the site of a fire pit from the same era,



The Hartford Courant

and the diggers uncovered a stone hammer, bits of charcoal and flakes of chert similar to the tools at the lower-level campsite. The discovery of the fire pit is a key to establishing the age of the site and samples of charcoal from the pit will be sent to a lab this week for carbon dating to more accurately pinpoint the date, Pfeiffer said.

State archaeologist Nick Bellantoni and Roger Moeller, the archaeologist working on the site in Washington Depot, confirmed Pfeiffer's claim.

"I was a little skeptical in the beginning," Moeller said. But the evidence of the fluted spear point and the nature of the site convinced Moeller that the camp was indeed Paleo-Indian. "I'm very excited about it," he said.

In the Paleo-Indian era, Connecticut probably looked a lot the way northern Canada does today. The Indians who camped by the stream may have hunted caribou, mammoths and mastodons over the semi-frozen tundra of prehistoric Lebanon. Because the tools found at the site were made of a high quality

material native to eastern Massachusetts, it is likely that the Indians traded with one another to get the best raw materials for their needs. The cutting edges of the chert knives would have been sharper than any surgical steel blades we make today.

The Indians would toss the blades aside when the edge got too dull to use.

"As archaeologists, we see what people left behind," Pfeiffer said.

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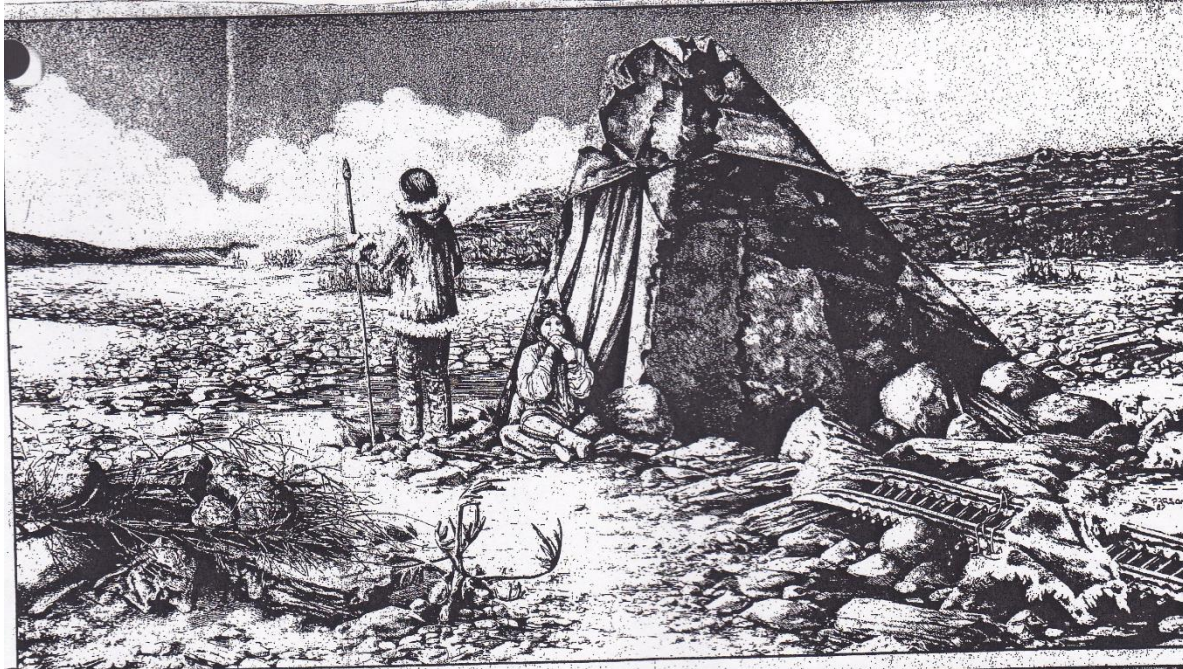
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ABOVE: This depicts how man from the Paleo-Indian Period looked and lived. The illustration by William Parsons is from the book, 'The Adkins Site: A Palaeo Indian Habitation and Associated Stone Structure,' by R.M. Gramly (Persimmon Press, 1988) and is about an excavation site in Maine. RIGHT: An archaeologist's tools of the trade wait in the foreground as John Pfeiffer shows the Lake Williams site to two amateur archaeologists earlier this week.

