



## **Ancient Spear Found on Diamond Lake**

By Anne Cogswell, 1984

A copper spear found on Diamond Lake in the southern part of the town of Grand View is evidence of early inhabitation.

Walter Moore, who has lived on Takodah Lake in the Town of Drummond for over 70 years, found the spear in 1965 when he was doing construction work on Diamond Lake.

A letter to Moore from James B. Griffin, Director of the University of Michigan, Museum of Anthropology identifies the spear as of the Old Copper Culture of the Wisconsin Great Lakes. Spears of this type, Griffin indicated in the letter, were made in the Wisconsin-Michigan area from around 2000 BC to 1000 BC. The people who made the spear were probably ancestral to the Great Lakes Algonquin groups, but their culture changed considerably from this period up to the period of the arrival of the Europeans.

Harris Palmer, Professor Emeritus of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville and summer resident in the Town of Grand View, in explaining the occurrence of the copper spear, said, "There was a wide-spread Old Copper Culture of Indians concentrated particularly on the eastern side of the state, an Old Copper Culture which utilized copper artifacts like that spear to a great extent. They mined their copper in different places – Isle Royale was one place. Most of the copper lodes on the south shore of Lake Michigan were discovered by Indians.

"Towards the west end of the copper range the masses of copper were so large the Indians couldn't work them very well. The best they could do would be to hammer off chunks," Palmer continued. "The glacier picked up so much copper from the copper range and it distributed it all over the Midwest, particularly concentrating it on the eastern side of Wisconsin.

"The Indians would walk the stream beds and riverbeds and recognize these copper nuggets. They would heat it up as hot as they could get it and pound it into shape. They made all kinds of tools including fishhooks and digging sticks and spear points, arrowheads.

### **Copper Range**

"The copper range is just south of the iron range which runs from Ironwood, Michigan down through Upson and just south of Mellon and it terminates at County Trunk D just North of the Pioneer Tavern. In the ditch on the right-hand side is the last westward outcrop of iron ore," explained Palmer.

“South of this iron range is the copper range which likely came the copper used in the spear point found on Diamond Lake,” according to Palmer.

Said Palmer, “The range of country that passes through the Red Cliff Indian Reservation and passes through Washburn especially and down through Drummond is loaded with copper nuggets. Several tons of copper nuggets were taken out of a small short railroad cut at Washburn that went down to the dock. When they dug the well at the courthouse at Washburn, they encountered masses of copper. The Indians, especially of Wisconsin, specialized in looking for this material and making artifacts. They would heat it and shape it. They learned that if they would reheat it that would anneal it, take the temper out, and then they could continue to pound it into any shape they wanted.”

An extensive collection of artifacts from the Old Copper Culture is on display at the Natural History Museum at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

### **Old-Timers**

Walter Moore, whose background is French, English and Indian, tells of finding the spear point. He found it “where I was going to build a house on the west side, but I won’t tell you because it might be a grave. Years ago they came up the White River, Diamond Creek and the length of Diamond Lake and they went to Crystal Lake and from there they portaged the river. The old-timers would go around the shore and if they saw a crick or something they’d follow it.”

“Then the other trail, they came up the Drummond River to Lake Own and they went through Lake Owen and they portaged the Price Lake. Then they portaged to the Namakagon River.

“When I was a kid my brother and I used to go over to Lake Owen and see the old guy. He was the first white man on the lake. He lived in a dugout cabin in the hill and they called him Billy the Bear. His name was Billy DeLaney. He used to have us come over and hoe his garden. He had a little garden there in the narrow. And I found an arrowhead there when I was working in that garden. He was a caretaker for the Owen Lumber Company. He said, ‘Walter, I’m going to take this to Rust Owen and see what tribe it was.’ And he said, ‘do you want it?’ and I said no. And he brought me a sack of candy that high. I wish I’d kept it.”

The copper spear, however, found almost twenty years ago on Diamond Lake, remains a prize possession.

- *The ancient spear can be seen at the Cable/Namekagon Historical Museum, Cable, WI.*
- *Harris Palmer (1913-1986) was the father of Cary (Frosty) Palmer. He purchased land in the Twin Pines Lane area in 1945. The properties are currently owned by Cary and Mary Palmer, David and Susan Reichert, and Kris and Trish Leaf.*
- *Anne Cogswell and her husband Seddie Cogswell purchased the “Diamond in the Rough” Boys Camp on Canterbury Trail in the 1940’s. That property is currently owned by Susan Trankel.*

*Transcribed by Beth Johnson, 2023*