

## **An Archaeological Mystery in Middle Tennessee**

Help from *Tennessee Archaeology Net* visitors is needed to solve an archaeological mystery in Middle Tennessee.



In the 1960s, an artifact collector found a very rare and unusual artifact on a prehistoric American Indian mound site in Nashville, Tennessee. This artifact is a rock slab measuring about 14" × 13" × 2.5". One surface of this rock has an artistic image that the ancient inhabitants of the mound site etched into its surface with primitive stone tools. The only known picture of this artifact is the artist's hand drawing that accompanies this message.

The man who found this etched stone slab died in 1993, and some of the artifacts in his collection were sold to well known collectors in the mid-south region. Unfortunately, other artifacts, such as the etched stone slab, have disappeared from public awareness and have not been seen in more than 13 years. There is good reason to believe that the etched stone slab has dropped from sight because it was sold to some ordinary citizen at an extremely low price in a local flea market, craft show, or antique booth. Therefore, the current owner most likely knows nothing about the background of this unique artifact and its scientific value.

Tracy C. Brown, a professional archaeologist in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, is searching for this etched stone slab and its current owner. He specializes in studying this type of artifact and would like an opportunity to closely examine the etched slab, make some notes on it, measure it with calipers, and photograph it so future generations will have a permanent record of it. In addition, he can provide important background information on the artifact to the current owner and help them to better protect it in the future.

It should be emphasized that this etched stone slab is not stolen property. The right to its ownership is not in dispute. It is not at the center of a legal proceeding, and ownership of this stone does not violate federal, state, or local cultural resource management laws and regulations. Therefore, it is quite safe for the current owner to step forward and by so doing contribute to our understanding of the prehistoric past in Middle Tennessee.

If you own this etched stone slab or know the person who does, please get in contact with the archaeologist at the following mailing address, telephone number, or e-mail addresses:

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