

## NATIVE AMERICAN ARTIFACT DONATION

Mon, July 13, 2009

More than 1,500 Native American artifacts collected by a Wheatfield area farmer have been donated to Valparaiso University's [Brauer Museum of Art](#), creating a significant new facet to the museum's permanent collection focusing on the history and culture of Native American societies in the Midwest.

The Robert Schoon Collection recently was donated to Brauer Museum by the farmer's widow, Pearl Schoon, who said her husband's passion for Native American artifacts was kindled about 20 years ago.

"There was a wooded area along the Kankakee River near our farm that we decided to clear so that it could be farmed," she said. "As Robert walked that ground he started finding arrowheads and hatchet heads, and he became quite interested in these Native American artifacts."

Over the next 15 years, Robert found hundreds of artifacts on his land and purchased more from collectors at auctions.

"Robert took a lot of pride in his collection," Schoon said. "He displayed it very nicely in the basement and would invite many people to see the artifacts."

After her husband passed away four years ago, Schoon decided that, rather than simply selling off the artifacts piecemeal, she would honor the effort he dedicated to building the collection by keeping it intact.

"I'm happy that people will see the collection he built and that it is going to be used at Brauer Museum to teach people about Native American culture," Schoon said.

The Schoon's farm along the Kankakee River is located in an area that previously was a marsh providing bountiful hunting and fishing habitats that attracted several different groups of Native American peoples over the course of several hundred years. Gregg Hertzlieb, director of Brauer Museum, said the various groups who lived in the region left behind a wide range of artifacts recovered by Robert Schoon.

"The Robert Schoon Collection is a true benefit to Brauer Museum and a world class sampling of Native American artifacts," Hertzlieb said. "This donation greatly expands the museum's collection of artifacts, which previously had included small holdings of ancient Jordanian pottery and tribal artifacts from New Guinea."

In addition to more than 1,500 Native American artifacts, the collection includes more than 600 artifact fragments.

Helping catalogue the collection is Patty Korzeniewski, a senior [art](#) and [geography](#) major from Crown Point who has worked with geography professor Dr. Ron Janke's research on the creation of the Kankakee Sand Islands approximately 15,000 years ago.

The Kankakee Sand Islands, a series of hundreds of small, moon-shaped dunes, stretch from the southern tips of Lake and Porter counties in Northwest Indiana into northeastern Illinois, an area that includes the Schoon's farm.

More information about Brauer Museum's current season, including a complete list of exhibition-related events, is [available online](#). Summer hours are noon to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. Admission to the museum and all events is free. Group tours may be arranged by calling (219) 465-7926.

