

Some of the most interesting reading we have done in recent years has been connected with archeology in one aspect or another. The origins of human presence on Planet Earth is a fascinating study, as is the history of human life on this North American continent. While much is known, there are also so many questions that have not yet been thoroughly answered. But, as time goes on and new methods of dating discoveries emerge, our prehistory may well become more clear to us.

This kind of reading has led us to think a little more about the history of place, the precise location where we live now. And, that is as fascinating as the continental and world studies. So little we know, and yet, we are not entirely ignorant.

I have often thought of our exact physical point on this earth. How we came to be here is a story that does not encompass many generations. Lars Augustineson and family came to this location in 1873. A daughter of the family, Cornelia, married Lars Erickson and they raised their large family on this homestead. Einar Erickson, one of the Erickson children, stayed on the farm, and he and his wife, Frances raised three children here. I was the youngest of them. Runo and I have been here since 1972.

During Lars and Cornelia's time a frame farmhouse was built, but the history of the other dwellings on the property is more "archeological" in a way. Here, where I am sitting at a desk in a small cabin, I am in the third small house on this exact piece of property.

We can't claim to be occupying an archeological dig. After all, this farm was not homesteaded millennia ago or even centuries ago. It is just a hundred and fifty years ago this year that the Augustinesons came to this property on what is now known as Coe Creek. But, the fact that the three houses were built on this precise spot is, in a way, a small scale archeological "layering."

The log cabin that the Augustineson family built was used as a farm blacksmith shop after the next generation, children half grown, moved to the white frame farmhouse. Some years later, the cabin burned, probably the result of a blacksmithing forge fire gone astray. On the same site Einar and Frances built their log cabin. Family necessities led them to eventually move to the farmhouse to care for Einar's mother, Cornelia. The little log cabin stood empty for years. By the time we were ready to have our own home, it was not in good enough shape to renovate. So, we built the third layer—archeologically speaking—on the same piece of land. Over the years people have asked where the first house on this farm stood. I answered, "Right here." But, that was never interpreted by others to realize that "right here" meant in exactly the same spot.

When we dug the basement for our cabin, excavation for our south basement wall revealed logs—the south wall of the log basement of the original house. In terms of layers, our cabin is the third in line—a cabin on a cabin on a cabin.

It would be interesting to know what the archeological history of this place will be a thousand years from now, but, maybe we are better off not knowing. One can only hope that future inhabitants—and in the longer term, future civilizations—will settle here with a feeling that a lot has gone before their occupancy, that the piece of ground has a discernible history and also a long existence shrouded in the mists of time.