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The Conservancy saves a mound from a 1,400-year-old site in Louisiana.
Preserving Sites for Future Legends

“Legends of Archaeology” is an occasional feature series in American Archaeology that focuses on the outstanding pioneers who advanced the science. It also seeks to humanize these legends and reveal some of the trials and tribulations they suffered in making their contributions. In this issue we feature Nels Nelson (see “Revolutionizing American Archaeology,” page 34), who developed and refined stratigraphic analysis of ruins in the Galisteo Basin of New Mexico. Nelson believed that artifacts could be dated by their relative position in the ground—upper items are younger than lower items—and careful excavation and analysis could reveal a chronological sequence.

Between 1912 and 1916, Nelson excavated some 1,500 rooms in 45 sites in the region between Santa Fe and Albuquerque. (Archaeologists work much more slowly and carefully these days.) Some of these sites are the largest Pueblo ruins in the United States, with several thousand rooms and many plazas. When the Conservancy began to preserve endangered sites in 1980, the great ruins of the Galisteo Basin were an opportune target. Development and looters were threatening them, and prices were rapidly rising. Pueblo San Marcos, where Nelson worked, was one of our early successes. Using his maps, we were able to define the site and eventually preserve it. Others, like Galisteo Pueblo, followed.

In 2004, Congress declared the area a national protection zone and named 24 ruins in need of preservation. Joining with government agencies and private groups, we are working in Nelson’s shadow to preserve the great legacy of the area. Little research has been done in the 100 years since Nelson, and new techniques will undoubtedly add greatly to his findings—but only as long as the sites are preserved to yield their secrets.
Preserving History in the Face of Disasters
I really enjoyed your article ‘Responding to Disasters’ in the Spring 2009 issue. Not only are disasters detrimental to people, livestock, pets, homes and businesses, but we need to take a long hard look at how we preserve historical artifacts, archival material, etc., when disasters occur.

It takes a lot of preparation to have an efficient disaster response team. I am familiar with this, since I have worked with the Governor’s Office of Emergency Services and FEMA during two disasters: the Northridge Earthquake and the Napa Floods. I am glad we are learning from such disasters as Hurricane Isabel. We must always preserve our history.

Paul Dale Roberts
Elk Grove, California

West Coast Utopia
I’m a long-time member of The Archaeological Conservancy and an avid reader of every issue of American Archaeology: I’m writing to comment on “The Remnants of Utopia” article that appeared in the Spring 2009 issue.

The second paragraph of the article states that there were a number of 19th-century utopian communities in the Eastern U.S., “…but the Aurora Colony was the only utopian settlement on the West Coast.” However, as documented by Robert V. Hine in California’s Utopian Colonies, for varying periods of time between 1850 and 1950, at least 17 utopian colonies existed in California.

Six of these were religious colonies: the Mormon settlement in San Bernardino (1851–1855), Fountain Grove (1870s–1900), Point Loma (1890s–1940s), Temple Home (1900s–1910+–), Pisgah Grande (19teens–1920) and Holy City (early 1900s–1950).

Another 11 were founded on secular principles: Modjeska’s Farm (1870s), Icaria Speranza (1880s), Joyful (1880s), Kaweah (1880s–1890s), Winters Island (1890s), Altruria (1890s), Little Landers (early 1900s), Fellowship Farm (19teens–1920s), Llano del Rio (early 1900s), Army of Industry (early 1900s) and Tuolumne Farm (1945–1950).

J. Charles Whatford
Associate State Archaeologist
Santa Rosa, California

Editor’s Corner
We’re all familiar with the British, Spanish, and French conquests of the Americas. But our history books give little attention to another powerful invader, Russia. In a contest of historical recognition, Vitus Bering is no match for the likes of Columbus or Captain John Smith. But as we learn in our feature “When the Russians Were Coming,” (see page 12), Bering did nothing less than cross the north Pacific in 1741 and declare Alaska a Russian territory.

Thus began Russia’s colonization of America, an effort that was not nearly as successful and enduring as those of the British or Spanish, though it wasn’t lacking in ambition. Russia focused mostly on Alaska, but its reach extended to California and even Hawaii. Colonization, for the Russians, was primarily a business proposition, that business being furs. But as the other foreign powers learned, conquering the New World was no simple matter.

The Russians, like the European powers, overwhelmed many of the natives they encountered with their superior technology. They were brutal at times, slaughtering the natives or forcing them into servitude. But it also served their interests to minimize their effect on the native cultures, and some of the lower class Russians adopted native ways. Due to the scarcity of Russian women, cohabitation and intermarriage were encouraged by Russian leaders.

By the mid 1800s the American colonies were no longer yielding a profit, so the Russians, in true business fashion, chose to sell. As we do know from the history books, the United States bought Alaska for $7.2 million in 1867.
the Archaeological Conservancy is the only national nonprofit organization that identifies, acquires, and preserves the most significant archaeological sites in the United States. Since its beginning in 1980, the Conservancy has preserved more than 375 sites across the nation, ranging in age from the earliest habitation sites in North America to a 19th-century frontier army post. We are building a national system of archaeological preserves to ensure the survival of our irreplaceable cultural heritage.

Why Save Archaeological Sites? The ancient people of North America left virtually no written records of their cultures. Clues that might someday solve the mysteries of prehistoric America are still missing, and when a ruin is destroyed by looters, or leveled for a shopping center, precious information is lost. By permanently preserving endangered ruins, we make sure they will be here for future generations to study and enjoy.

How We Raise Funds: Funds for the Conservancy come from membership dues, individual contributions, corporations, and foundations. Gifts and bequests of money, land, and securities are fully tax deductible under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Planned giving provides donors with substantial tax deductions and a variety of beneficiary possibilities. For more information, call Mark Michel at (505) 266-1540.

The Role of the Magazine: American Archaeology is the only popular magazine devoted to presenting the rich diversity of archaeology in the Americas. The purpose of the magazine is to help readers appreciate and understand the archaeological wonders available to them, and to raise their awareness of the destruction of our cultural heritage. By sharing new discoveries, research, and activities in an enjoyable and informative way, we hope we can make learning about ancient America as exciting as it is essential.

How to Say Hello: By mail:
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5301 Central Avenue NE, Suite 902,
Albuquerque, NM 87108-1517

by phone: (505) 266-1540

by e-mail: tacmag@nm.net

or visit our Web site:
www.americanarchaeology.org
NEW EXHIBITS

Anchorage Museum
Anchorage, Alaska—The pursuit of gold has driven explorers, built empires, and inspired artists for thousands of years. The museum opens its new wing with the dazzling traveling exhibit “Gold” from the American Museum of Natural History, which explores the scientific, historical, cultural, and financial significance of gold. The exhibit features a stunning array of more than 300 objects, some of which come from the Mixtec and Aztec cultures. A companion exhibit created by the museum titled “Pay Dirt! Alaska’s Golden Landscapes” tells the story of gold in Alaska and demonstrates through historical photographs and objects how the Alaska Gold Rush both Americanized Alaska and earned the state its ‘Last Frontier’ status. (907) 343-4326, www.anchoragemuseum.org (Through August 2)

Ohio Historical Center
Columbus, Ohio—Explore more than 15,000 years of Ohio’s ancient heritage through the exhibition “Windows to Our Collections: Ohio’s Ancient Past,” which includes some of the Society’s most significant artifacts such as the Adena Pipe, the mica hand, and the Wray figurine, as well as many animal effigy pipes from Tremper Mound. Numerous artifacts that ancient people used on a daily basis as well as for special purposes are on display. (614) 297-2300, http://ohsweb.ohiohistory.org/places/c09 (Long-term exhibit)

CONFERENCES, LECTURES & FESTIVALS

Biennial Conference on Archaeoastronomy of the American Southwest
June 11–13, Camp Verde, Ariz. Spon- sored by the Arizona Archaeological Society, this biennial conference provides a forum to promote research and achieve a better understanding of the cultural significance of astronomical knowledge among American Southwest cultures. This first year’s theme is “Creating Sustainability in American Southwest Archaeoastronomy Research” and includes workshops, oral and poster presentations, tours to local sites, and an award banquet to honor Stephen McCluskey, a pioneer in archaeoastronomy of the American Southwest. www.caasw.org. administrator@CAASW.org

Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian
National Mall, Washington, D.C.—Meet the native peoples of the Chesapeake Bay region—what is now Washington, D.C., Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware—through the exhibition “Return to a Native Place: Algonquin Peoples of the Chesapeake.” The exhibit includes photographs, maps, ceremonial and everyday objects, and interactive displays, educating visitors on the continued native presence in the region, and providing an overview of the history and events from the 1600s to the present that have affected the lives of the Nanticoke, Powhatan, and Piscataway tribes. (202) 633-1000, www.americanindian.si.edu (Long-term exhibit)

Historic Arkansas Museum
Little Rock, Ark.—The new exhibit “We Walk in Two Worlds: The Caddo, Osage & Quapaw in Arkansas” was produced by a partnership between those three tribes, the State of Arkansas, and the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. The exhibit tells the story of Arkansas’ first people from early times to today. More than 150 objects such as pottery, clothing, and weapons are complemented by relevant research from archaeologists, historians, and ethnographers. During the two years of exhibit development, many tribal members were interviewed and their voices inform educate, and guide visitors through the exhibit. (501) 324-9351, www.arkansashistory.com/exhibits (New permanent exhibit)
Events

Arizona State Museum
University of Arizona, Tucson, Ariz.—The traveling exhibit “Circles of Life: Katsina Imagery in Hopi Basketry” explores the importance and impact of the katsina religion on Hopi culture. Many people are familiar with carved representations of katsinas, but images of the beneficent supernatural messengers also appear on Hopi pottery, paintings, and basketry. Created by the Grace Hudson Museum and Sun House in Ukiah, California, this exhibit of historical and contemporary works demonstrates the continuing vitality of this art form. It presents an overview of the Hopi basket-making traditions, techniques, and types, and information about how to understand katsina iconography. (520) 621-6302, www.statemuseum.arizona.edu/exhibits (Through July 3)

Fort Ancient Celebration:
A Gathering of Four Directions
June 13–14, Fort Ancient, Oregonia, Ohio. Join us for a weekend of American Indian heritage celebration, learning, and fun featuring up to 100 dancers, five drums, and numerous vendors and presenters. Storytelling and hands-on activities will be available for children. (800) 283-8904, http://ohsweb.ohiohistory.org/calendar.

The Miami Valley Council for Native Americans 21st Annual Keeping the Tradition Pow Wow
June 27–June 28, SunWatch Indian Village/Archaeological Park, Dayton, Ohio. During the Pow Wow, the serene setting at SunWatch is transformed by the beat of drums and the sound of native music. For American Indians, Pow Wow is a special time to reflect upon a rich heritage and come into the Pow Wow circle with honor and respect for each other and the drum. The event features both men’s and women’s dances, the men’s grass dance and the women’s shawl and jingle dance, performed wearing full regalia. Traditional native foods and arts and crafts will be available. (937) 268-8199, or check the calendar of events at www.sunwatch.org

Native American Festival and Basketmaker’s Market
July 11, College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor, Maine. Co-sponsored by the Abbe Museum, Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance, and the College of the Atlantic, the festival features native dancers, drum music, food, baskets, jewelry, carvings, and many other wonderful crafts, plus a silent auction to help support Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance educational programs. (207) 288-3519, www.abbemuseum.org

2nd Annual Northern Arizona Archaeology Fair
July 11, Show Low campus of Northern Pioneer College, Ariz. This annual event strives to educate the public about cultural heritage preservation by providing an opportunity for interaction with professionals through talks, hands-on activities, and interactive educational displays. For more information, contact Cheryl Ford at (928) 205-3188, nazarchfair@gmail.com

2009 Pecos Conference
August 6–9, Lake McPhee Campground, Cortez, Colo. The 72nd annual conference features academic papers and presentations of recent research concerning the Southwest for professional and avocational archaeologists and the general public. The activities include a Thursday night reception at the Cultural Center in downtown Cortez, oral and poster presentations Friday and Saturday at Lake McPhee Campground. Noted author Craig Childs will make a presentation Friday night, and there will be a catered dinner and dance featuring live music on Saturday night. Tours to local sites will take place on Sunday. http://pecos.cortezcultural-center.org

Pointe-À-Callière/ Montreal Museum of Archaeology and History
Montreal, Canada—“Pirates, Privateers, and Freebooters” tells of the 16th- to 19th-century seafaring adventurers who prowled the Eastern seaboard of North America and the Caribbean. The more than 150 fascinating objects on display include pewter tableware, navigation instruments, a cluster for treating diseases, firearms and sabres, figureheads, sea chests and other prized personal possessions, some rare objects linked to Canadian piracy, and a life-size ship for visitors to board. Visitors may be surprised to learn that pirates and privateers once plied Canadian waters, too. (514) 872-9150, www.pacmusee.qc.ca (Through January 2010)
Landowner Discovers 13,000-Year-Old Artifacts

Analysis reveals Clovis-period tools were used to process extinct animals.

Last spring during landscaping of Patrick Mahaffy’s front yard overlooking Boulder, Colorado, workers recovered a number of artifacts that were buried along the edge of an ancient drainage ditch. The artifacts, which include eight stone bifacial knives, one chopping tool, and numerous flakes, have been named the Mahaffy Cache.

“What I saw was just astounding,” said Douglas Bamforth, a University of Colorado archaeologist and Paleo-Indian specialist who Mahaffy asked to inspect the artifacts. “Looking at the cache, I saw non-local raw material and some spectacular bifaces that looked like they could be very old.” A local geomorphologist confirmed that the sediment in which the artifacts were found dated to the end of the last Ice Age.

Bamforth sent the artifacts to California State University for protein residue analysis that Mahaffy, a biotechnology entrepreneur, paid for. Four of the pieces tested positive for animal protein, including that of bear, sheep, horse, and camel. “Horse and camel have both been extinct since about 13,000 years ago, so the results were very exciting,” said Bamforth. This marks the first time extinct camel protein, and the second time horse protein, have been identified on North American stone tools.

Clovis stone tool caches are rare; the only other known cache, which was found in Washington State, contained a nearly identical oval-shaped bifacial knife. The knife was made from obsidian, however, while the Mahaffy artifacts were primarily fashioned from chert.

“This gives us a highly unique snapshot of a moment in Clovis time that tells us how individuals or groups moved across the ancient landscape in a way that a normal archaeological site wouldn’t allow us to do,” said Bamforth, who doesn’t think this is a ritualistic cache, given the direct evidence of use and the variety of the tools.

Bamforth hopes to do a limited excavation of the site in order to get more directly datable evidence. The artifacts were covered by a dark layer of carbon-rich material that could prove to be what’s known as “black mat,” which has been found at a number of North American Clovis sites. A group of scientists have proposed that this layer could have been caused by a comet explosion over the Great Lakes around 12,900 years ago, possibly resulting in the Younger Dryas or Little Ice Age and the extinction of numerous animal species.

Mahaffy plans to rebury a few of the artifacts where they were found and donate the rest to a local museum for public display. —Tamara Stewart
Christopher Columbus established La Isabela, the first European settlement in the Americas, on his second voyage to the New World in 1493-94. Now researchers analyzing the remains of 20 individuals recovered from a shallow grave at the site are discovering new details about who lived at La Isabela.

The remains were excavated in 1990 by a team of Italian and Dominican archaeologists. The individuals were buried without coffins or shrouds and the graves had no headstones or other means of identification. Historical accounts of La Isabela, which is located in what is now the Dominican Republic, say it was populated exclusively by men who sailed with Columbus on his fleet of 17 vessels. But a team of researchers led by T. Douglas Price, the director of the Laboratory for Archaeological Chemistry at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, has concluded that some of the individuals were native Tainos, and they included women and children.

In addition to analyzing the bones, the researchers have conducted isotopic analysis of the individuals’ tooth enamel. Their analysis focused on three elements—carbon, oxygen, and strontium—which offer information about a person’s diet and place of origin. Isotope ratios can be discerned in a person’s adult teeth, which emerge during childhood.

Carbon isotope ratios, for example, can indicate if a person ate maize, which at that time was grown only in the New World, or millet, which was grown only in Africa.

The isotopic composition of water sources can vary depending on their latitude and proximity to the ocean; consequently the general locations where people got their drinking water can be discerned in their oxygen isotope ratios. Strontium isotopes pass from bedrock to soil and then to plants and animals that are ingested by humans. Since strontium isotopes vary depending on the location of the bedrock, they can offer information about a person’s place of origin.

Most of the individuals appear to be Europeans, but Price believes one of them was an African. Historical documents state that Columbus was accompanied by his personal slave while exploring the Americas. “The African is important largely because it confirms the historical accounts and because these would be the oldest known human remains from Africa in the New World,” Price, who is now conducting research in Denmark, wrote in an e-mail message.

Before they left Spain, the sailors’ names, ages, and places of birth were recorded. Price added that he’s hoping to “identify some of the sailors by distinctive isotope signals from their hometowns,” but there’s no guarantee the strontium analysis, which is still underway, will be that precise.

—Barbara Ann Kipfer
Archaeologists have recently uncovered two large panels that depict a scene from the Popol Vuh, the Maya creation story. The panels, which are about 26-feet long and date to about 200 B.C., were discovered in the Central Acropolis at El Mirador, a large Preclassic Maya city in northern Guatemala. (See “Saving the Mirador Basin, American Archaeology, Fall 2007.

It took three months to uncover the panels, which were found in an ancient “water collection system,” said archaeologist Richard Hansen, who directs the investigation of El Mirador. “It’s like finding the Mona Lisa in a drainage system.”

The Popol Vuh explains how the Maya gods created the world, and the panels portray its protagonists, the Hero Twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque, who eventually became the sun and the moon. The original Popol Vuh, which was likely written in Maya hieroglyphic script, no longer exists. The Spanish friar Francisco Ximénez translated the Maya script into Spanish in the early 18th century. Some scholars suspect that, in the course of being translated, the Popol Vuh was corrupted by the insertion of Christian metaphors. But the panels, Hansen said, prove the general authenticity of the ancient text.

The panels are also further proof of the sophistication of the Preclassic Maya. It was once thought that the Maya’s spectacular art and architecture were produced during the Classic period (A.D. 250-900). But El Mirador and numerous other major sites in the Mirador Basin have impressive structures, including one of the world’s largest ancient pyramids. Hansen called the network of causeways that link many of the major sites “the first freeway system in the world.”

Hansen, who has worked in the Mirador Basin for 30 years, refers to it as “the cradle of Maya civilization.” He has been investigating the origin, cultural and environmental dynamics, and eventual collapse, of this complex society. One of the reasons El Mirador enjoyed great success was that its leaders “maintained the society by a cohesive, organic ideology,” he said, and the fundamental concepts of the Popol Vuh were tools for achieving that cohesiveness. “This was an ideology that bound them together.”

El Mirador had a large population and no nearby lakes or rivers, so Hansen and his team have been studying how the Maya collected rainwater. He’s concluded that they collected water from the roofs and plastered surfaces of their structures by channeling the runoff into cisterns and artificial reservoirs. The panels lined one of these channels, and he can tell that there are more panels to be excavated there. “They had the means and the wealth to do this,” Hansen said, explaining why they lined the channel and the flanking causeway with such exquisite panels.

Centuries of this kind of extravagance and the resultant abuse of the environmental system, he believes, led to El Mirador’s decline and ultimate collapse. —Michael Bawaya
Researchers with the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) have uncovered some 70,000 beads at the Mission Santa Catalina de Guale, the northernmost outpost of the Spanish empire, located on St. Catherines Island off the Georgia coast. The Franciscan mission was founded in the 16th century and served as the capital and administrative center of the Province of Guale in Spanish Florida until its abandonment in 1680. The beads, which are made of Italian, French, and Chinese glass, Dutch layered glass, and Baltic amber, are revealing information about early historic trade routes, the mission’s role in the Spanish empire, and the social structure of the native society, which the Spanish also named Guale.

The researchers found about 130 different types of beads on the island. Nearly half of the beads found in the mission’s cemetery were buried with a few native individuals, whose graves were located closer to the altar, indicating that these individuals, some of whom were children, were of high status.

“Historic sources and the patterning of beads in the church, many with children, suggest Guale society was highly ranked, with ascribed status,” said Lorann Pendleton, Director of the North American Archaeology Laboratory at AMNH. “Bead placement in the church near the altar” may suggest the individual’s religious status, or status within the Guale community.

The beads reflect Spain’s power during the 17th century. The fertile island served as a major source of grain for the Spanish’s east coast empire, and it’s presumed the grain was traded for beads. The archaeologists have discovered segmented beads—an old Moorish technique whereby a glass tube is put into a carved mold and formed into connected bead segments—that could be the earliest evidence of Spanish bead-making. They have also uncovered gold and silver medallions, glass bottles, iron nails and spikes, mirrors, plaques, majolica ceramics, and other European items.

Since the late 1970s, David Hurst Thomas, curator of anthropology at AMNH, has been investigating the 14,000-acre island. He uncovered the mission site under 14 inches of sand in the early 1980s and has excavated there for the past 15 years. “The archaeology on the island is intact in a way I’ve never seen anywhere else,” said Thomas. “Additionally, private ownership and funding has made it possible to apply new technologies to our investigations.” The researchers continue to investigate the island, focusing on its rich Late Archaic remains, which include some of the earliest ceramics north of Mexico. — Tamara Stewart
Archaeologists Say Site Critical to Texas Independence Found

Battle of San Jacinto freed Texas from Mexico.

Archaeologists believe they have found the place where the largest group of Mexican soldiers surrendered to Texas troops in the Battle of San Jacinto in 1836. Texas was a Mexican territory at the time, and the victory led to its independence. In an area about 20 yards wide and 200 yards long, researchers with Moore Archeological Consulting discovered musket balls, bayonets, uniform buttons, and other artifacts.

In the Battle of San Jacinto, which took place near present-day Houston and occurred six weeks after Mexican forces overran the Alamo, Col. Juan Almonte and approximately 450 Mexican soldiers surrendered after the brief skirmish. The “disposition of the artifacts we found in combination with the topography” indicates this was the site of “an organized surrender,” said Roger G. Moore, the company’s president.

The artifact scatter suggests that the weapons were dropped by troops standing in rows. The musket balls were unfired. Moore hypothesizes that the Mexican troops, who were retreating pell-mell, ran into a gulley that afforded them some protection. Almonte managed to regain control of the troops and organize them into formation for a formal surrender.

Historians had previously thought the surrender took place about a mile away. —Michael Bawaya

Galisteo Basin Archaeological Sites Protection Act Finally Funded

The act, which protects important New Mexico sites, was unfunded for five years.

Congress recently passed an appropriations bill allocating $500,000 in fiscal year 2009 to fund the Galisteo Basin Archaeological Sites Protection Act. This act, passed by Congress in 2004, calls for the preservation, protection, and interpretation of 24 nationally significant sites in and around the Galisteo Basin of north-central New Mexico. The Basin contains several of the largest known Ancestral Puebloan settlements, stunning concentrations of petroglyphs, Spanish Colonial missions, prehistoric and historic quarries, agricultural features, and trail systems.

The basin faces threats from urban sprawl and oil and natural gas drilling, and last year the State of New Mexico awarded $85,000 for an initial assessment of all 24 sites, seven of which are owned by The Archaeological Conservancy. Coordinated by the Museum of New Mexico’s Office of Archaeological Studies, the assessment focused on the sites’ boundaries and preservation needs.

The money will be used to prepare a general management plan for the area, begin emergency preservation projects, develop cooperative agreements with landowners, recruit a project manager, and educate the public about the sites’ significance.

“We are all very pleased that Congress is pressing ahead with this important preservation project,” said Mark Michel, the president of the Conservancy. “There is much to be done this year and in the years to come.” —Tamara Stewart
When the Russians Were Coming

The English, Spanish, and French weren’t the only Old World powers to colonize America.

By Paula Neely

Researchers excavate a workshop at the bottom of Castle Hill in Sitka, Alaska, a Russian fort once stood at the top of this hill.
Blue onion domes rising above Russian Orthodox churches in villages along the coast of Alaska are among the few visible reminders of Russian colonization along the Pacific Coast of North America. Russian American has largely been forgotten. “People are very aware of Russian American history in Alaska,” said Aron Crowell, Alaska Director of the Smithsonian Institution's Arctic Studies Center, “but elsewhere, it’s a little known chapter of America’s colonial past.” During the past few decades, however, archaeologists have excavated dozens of sites in Alaska, California, Hawaii, and Russia, revealing new insights into this important period.

Russian America began in the mid-18th century, after Russian fur hunters and traders, known as the promyshlenniki, depleted the supply of ermine and sable in Siberia and went east to find more furs. When Vitus Bering, commissioned by Peter the Great, succeeded in crossing the North Pacific in 1741, he officially claimed what is now Alaska as Russian territory. The first Russian to discover the Aleutian Islands, he also found an abundance of sea otters and fur seals. The promyshlenniki wasted no time island hopping across the Aleutians to the southern coast of Alaska in the rush for pelts. Supported by wealthy moguls, these well-armed entrepreneurs established trading posts and settlements along the way, exploiting, dominating, and at times slaughtering the native people.

“The Russians could do anything they wanted. They killed the Aleuts, right and left,” said Herbert Maschner, an archaeologist at Idaho State University who has excavated several sites in western Alaska that were visited by Russian explorers. Although the Aleuts frequently fought back, the Russians had superior weaponry. Written accounts state that on Unimak, one of the Aleutian Islands, a Russian lined up 15 Aleutian men to see how
The answer was eight.

Brian Hoffman, an archaeologist at Hamline University, in St. Paul, Minn., excavated the remains of a dwelling on Unimak Island that may have been the scene of a massacre that occurred in the 1760s. According to written accounts, Russians were invited to a dwelling on the island, and in the middle of the night, they killed everyone there.

Hoffman discovered five musket balls on the floor of the house, as well as broken and burned tools, remnants of burned basketry, harpoons, and a wooden bowl in the hearth. A cache of about 50 small white pebbles used for gaming also indicated a catastrophic incident. “They would have taken those with them if this was a planned departure,” he said.

Maschner said archaeological evidence suggests that there were as many as 28,000 Aleutian Islanders around 1600, but by 1800 census documents state they had dwindled to about 2,500. Entire villages were wiped out by diseases transmitted by the Russians and European traders that native immune systems were defenseless against.

In some instances the Russians and native leaders engaged in the peaceful exchange of beads, tobacco, and other goods for furs; but more frequently the Russians forced the indigenous people into working for them, sometimes taking children of the leaders as hostages to ensure that the native hunters would meet their quotas. The Russians had to rely on natives to hunt sea otters because it required a mastery of kayaking and traditional weapons including the dart, bow and barbed harpoon arrow. The Russians’ firearms frightened sea otters away.

As the Russians continued eastward, Native resistance prevented them from establishing a base close to the mainland of Alaska until 1784, when Grigorii Shelikhov, a successful fur merchant from Irkutsk, built an outpost at Three Saints
Bay on Kodiak Island. It was a crucial location for exploring and conquering the Alaskan mainland. Anticipating a struggle, Shelikhov came with a large mercenary force and attacked the Sugpiaq residents by land and sea. The Russians fired their cannons at a steep rock promontory, now known as Refuge Rock, where 1,000 to 2,000 Sugpiat had gathered just off the coast. Archaeological evidence shows that the Native fighters were armed with bows and arrows and lances.

Historical accounts and Sugpiaq oral traditions record that men, women, and children were killed by musket and cannon fire; others were trampled or fell to their deaths from the high cliffs. The Russians executed the surviving men with spears. “There were corpses floating everywhere. (Shelikhov) killed at least 300 people, probably more.” Crowell said.

“Shelikhov made an impression. Within two to three years, he had complete control,” Crowell continued. “Sugpiaq leaders had to provide their daughters to him as hostages to ensure peace.” About 8,000 inhabitants of the island were forced into servitude. Thereafter, the Sugpiaq called the island “Awa’uq,” which means “to become numb.” The Russians identified it as “Razbitoi Kekur,” or “rock where we broke them.”

From then on, Shelikhov required most able-bodied men, women, and children to hunt, fish, trap, harvest birds, prepare food, make clothing, or tan skins for Russian use. In return, the Russians, according to Crowell, said, “Here’s some fish that you caught, and some parkas that you made, and a few beads.”

Crowell noted that the Russian approach to colonization was different compared to that of the English and Spanish: “The Russians were commercially-minded. They weren’t much interested in displacing people or imposing an external cultural system.” Archaeological evidence from excavations at Three Saints Bay and other sites indicates the natives “continued to hunt the same animals using the same weapons and tools they always had…. It was to the Russians’ advantage to continue the native way of life.”

In fact the lower class Russian workers became like natives in their lifestyle and relationships: “They dressed, ate, and lived like natives,” said Crowell. They wore bird-skin parkas, waterproof gut skin rain jackets, and boots made by native women. Excavating the workers’ barracks at Three Saints Bay, he discovered that they lived in earthen dugouts with dirt floors. Food remains indicated a diet of locally harvested sea mammals, birds, fish, shellfish, and berries. Native women’s tools such as boiling stones, slate knives and sharpening tools, and ceramic cookware suggest they were in the barracks. Shelikhov encouraged cohabitation and intermarriage since there were very few Russian women in Alaska. The resulting offspring formed a new class of people, the Creoles, whose social status was above the natives and below the Russians.

The Russian elite, however, maintained their identity. Historical accounts, supplemented by an excavation of Shelikhov’s headquarters building, indicated that top officers lived in a log structure with tile stoves, mirrors, wallpaper, and glass windows. Archaeologists also found fancy ceramics, broken liquor bottles, and the bones of domesticated European livestock among their food remains.

Shelikhov’s success at Three Saints Bay led to the formation of the Russian-American Company (RAC), a quasi-governmental monopoly established by Russia in 1799 that controlled the fur trade and ruled the colony. The Russians established numerous forts and major settlements, but they were not all occupied at the same time. According to Dave McMahan, the Alaska state archaeologist, there were usually fewer than 500 Russians in Alaska at any one time, and never more than 820, and most of them lived in Sitka, where the RAC was headquartered.

Early on, Russia had trouble supplying the distant colony. Trade goods and supplies had to be transported 2,000 miles overland, then shipped on the Lena River, and finally caravanned to the port of Okhotsk in northeastern Siberia, where merchants built ships and sailed across the North Pacific to reach Kodiak or Sitka. “It could take two or more
years and the ocean voyage had to be timed to avoid fall and winter storms,” said McMahan.

To keep it going, the Russians had to build and manufacture everything—“houses, ships, ropes, candles, iron, bricks, everything you could think of. This was like Siberia’s Siberia,” said Ty Dilliplane, the former historic preservation officer for the state of Alaska. “They were tough times. Sometimes the Russians moved villages to different areas where they needed people to work. It was pretty ruthless.” “The vast majority of the work was done by natives and Creoles,” McMahan said.

Treatment of the natives improved after the RAC was

established and the Russian empress Catherine the Great outlawed the system that required fur quotas from native communities. Nevertheless, in 1821, the RAC charter permitted the Russians to conscript half of the male population between the ages 18 and 50 for up to three years of sea otter hunting, undermining the natives’ ability to provide for themselves. Crowell said indigenous populations throughout southern Alaska declined by as much as 90 percent in some areas due to epidemics, malnutrition, and social disruption.

There were also some areas, particularly the Tlingit region of southeastern Alaska, where the natives were able to resist Russian attempts to control them. In other areas, there were so few Russians that they had to obtain furs through trade rather than forced labor.

Crowell said the quantity of imported goods that archaeologists find at village sites in those areas reflects more active trade with, and presumably less control by, the Russians. Crowell’s recent excavations at the Early Contact Village site in Aialik Bay on the Kenai Peninsula suggest that it was a place where Russians and Sugpiaq engaged in trade. Archaeologists discovered an abundance of glass beads, a 1748 Russian half-kopeck coin, and a forged iron knife in a native dwelling. Crowell was surprised by the knife because they were initially prohibited trade items and, since iron was a scarce commodity, especially valuable. Coins were also in very short supply and were rarely used to pay native hunters.

The archaeologists also uncovered a large quantity of sea mammal remains that, according to Crowell, “suggest both an abundance of food and the ready availability of male

Aron Crowell at Aialik Bay in southern Alaska, where he was conducting a coastal survey.
labor. There is no hint of the food shortages and outright starvation induced on Kodiak Island by the forced summer-long absence of most able bodied men for service in the sea otter fleets."

In 1799, a few years after Shelikhov died, Alexander Baranov established a fort near Sitka in the Alaskan panhandle, where the Tlingit lived. But by 1802, relationships between the Russians and the Tlingit had deteriorated, and the Tlingit burned the fort and drove out the Russians. Baranov recaptured the settlement during the Battle of Sitka in 1804, and the Tlingit moved to the other side of the island. The Russians built a new fort near the battlefield and called it Novo-Arkhangelsk. This area later became known as Castle Hill, and it’s now a state park.

Several years ago, National Park Service archaeologists discovered the 1804 battlefield, which is now part of Sitka National Historical Park, and what appears to be a fort the Tlingit built. Led by William Hunt, the archaeologists discovered cannon shot and musket balls around an area that matches descriptions of the fort site. They also found depressions in the ground that may have been shelters that the Tlingit dug inside their houses for protection against Russian cannon fire.

In 1997 and ’98, McMahan and other archaeologists excavated the hilltop where the Russian fort once stood and

Archaeologists excavate Russian barracks at Three Saints Bay in 1991. They recovered beads, metal tools, musket shot, and other Russian items. They also found native tools such as gravel-tempered ceramic pot fragments, boiling stones, and slate knives. The native tools suggest Sugpiaq women may have resided or worked in the barracks.

A group of projectile points recovered from Castle Hill. Points A through D are made of slate, and E and F of obsidian. Item G is a wooden arrow foreshaft.
Russia’s Southern Outposts

Fort Ross, located in Kashaya Pomo territory on the coast of northern California, was established in 1812 as an agricultural center and base for trading with the Spanish. Alaska natives were sent here to build a fort and hunt for sea otters. The Kashaya Pomo and nearby Miwok were recruited as laborers for farming, manufacturing bricks, and shipbuilding.

There were as many as 300 men, women and children living in or near the fort, including Alaska natives, Californians, Russians, and Creoles. Kent Lightfoot, an archaeologist at the University of California Berkeley, who has investigated the area, said the Kashaya’s resistance to foreign cultural practices is clear in the archaeological evidence despite intermarriage between the natives and Russians. “There is a long line of continuity in native practices,” he said, despite the fact that they incorporated new foods and materials into their daily lives. For example, they fashioned foreign materials such as glass and metal into pendants, gaming pieces, amulets, and other traditional items.

Although it was a relatively successful settlement, by 1820 the sea mammal population in California was depleted, and the Russians had problems growing crops because of gophers, fog, and their lack of farming experience. Native laborers were difficult to recruit, so the Russians sometimes captured and enslaved inland Indians. Breck Parkman, a California state archaeologist, said archival documents indicate that some of the California natives may have resorted to guerilla warfare to resist the Russians, who sold the struggling settlement in 1841 to a private rancher.

Russia was thought to have established a base at Fort Elisabeth in Kauai, Hawaii in 1816 and 1817 where Hawaiians, allied with RAC representatives, built a large star-shaped stone fortification. But recent excavations have revealed that the Russians probably didn’t live at the fort, according to Peter Mills, an archaeologist at the University of Hawaii at Hilo. Mills didn’t find any domestic refuse directly associated with the Russians, but he did uncover evidence of Hawaiian occupation through the mid-19th century, and a series of graves and other ritual features that indicate the Hawaiians considered the fort site a sacred place and they would not have given it to the Russians. Mills suspects the Russians lived near Fort Alexander, an earthen structure on the other side of the island. —Paula Neely

Researchers from the University of California at Berkeley investigate a residential area near the Fort Ross stockade complex. The archaeologists unearthed a diverse range of faunal remains and native Alaskan, native Californian, and European artifacts dating to the 1820s and ‘30s.

also a workshop complex at the bottom of the hill that was used for various activities. They found over 300,000 artifacts related to fur processing, food preparation, and woodworking as well as firearms and ammunition, personal and household items. Some of the more exotic items in the collection came from Hawaii, Europe, Asia, and various locations along the West Coast.

Because it was so difficult to get supplies from Russia, McMahan said they were surprised at the amount of Russian objects they found, including samovars, Turkish-style pipes, uniform accoutrements, Russian coins, religious items, and a large quantity of pottery. Sitka’s workers had a more abundant and varied material culture, which also included toys and hand-etched, leaded glass tableware, than previously thought. The native workers also refashioned discarded Russian goods into native objects. “A lot of what we found in the workshop showed that the natives were reusing things such as crystals from chandeliers for pendants, bottle glass chipped to make tools for scraping or cutting, lead glass decanter stoppers chipped into labrettes, and broken ceramics shaped into disks that were probably also labrettes,” McMahan said.

Crowell said the Russians eventually adopted a more enlightened attitude toward Alaska natives. Missionaries of the Russian Orthodox Church, who began arriving near the end of the 18th century, advocated for more humane treatment of the natives and complained to Russian authorities about abuses. The missionaries converted natives through kindness and personal example rather than coercion or

Myriad Russian trade beads were found at the Early Contact Village, a Sugpiaq settlement dating to around 1790 in southern Alaska. The beads were made in Europe and China; the largest were handmade by threading a strand of molten glass around a wire.
bribery. Priests also developed a system for writing native languages using Cyrillic and they created bilingual versions of the scriptures. Their efforts are still remembered by native people. “It’s one of the top religions in rural areas of southern Alaska today, especially in coastal areas settled by the Russians,” said McMahan.

The Russians also provided health care and education. They tried to inoculate natives against smallpox, but many of them refused the vaccine during the first epidemic in the 1830s. They were successfully inoculated during the next outbreak in the 1860s. Many Creoles were sent to Russia to be educated, and the Russians also built and operated schools in the colony. Some Creoles received training in navigation and others became clerks and priests.

After the Crimean War ended in 1856, Russia struggled financially. Fur trading was no longer profitable as the sea otter population was depleted and the market for furs had dwindled. Attempts to profit from coal mining and the ice trade were unsuccessful. Consequently, Russia sold Alaska to the United States for $7.2 million in 1867. After the sale, most of the Russians returned home, but many of their descendants remained.

When the U.S. took control, the natives received better compensation for furs, and some went to work in new salmon canneries. “The first few decades were actually a fairly prosperous time for native communities in southern Alaska,” according to Crowell. But American control also took its toll on the native cultures. American missionaries attempted to eradicate native spiritual practices and the Russian Orthodox religion. Government schools were segregated by race and native students were forbidden to speak their languages; even present-day elders remember being shamed and beaten by teachers for violating this rule. As a result, many native languages nearly became extinct. Crowell said the U.S. policies were directed toward forced assimilation rather than accommodation, as Russia’s had largely been. Prior to 1922, an Alaska native could gain the right to vote as a U.S. citizen only by proving that he had abandoned all tribal customs and relationships; a board of white schoolteachers and a federal judge had to certify that he had been sufficiently “civilized” to earn this privilege.

In spite of the traumas inflicted by the Russians and Americans, Alaska natives have succeeded in keeping their languages and cultures alive. Many still live on their ancestral grounds and they share a keen interest in the archaeological evidence of Alaska’s colonial past.

PAULA NEELLY’s work has appeared in nationalgeographic.com and DIG magazine. Her article “Responding to Disasters” appeared in the Spring 2009 issue of American Archaeology.
Montpelier’s Other Half

James Madison was the principal author of the Constitution of the United States. But he and his wife Dolley kept slaves at their Montpelier estate. An investigation is uncovering evidence of how the Madisons treated their slaves.

By Tony Reichhardt
Like many of the Founding Fathers, especially those born and raised in the South, James Madison was a walking contradiction when it came to the vexing subject of slavery. The Father of the Constitution, the man who gets chief credit for the radical document on which American rights and freedoms depend, owned other human beings as property. At the time he became President in 1809, Madison counted more than 100 slaves among his possessions. Eight years later, having finished two terms in the White House, Madison and his wife Dolley retired to Montpelier, their family estate in Orange County, Virginia.

With panoramic views of the Blue Ridge Mountains to the west, Montpelier was, and is, one of the most beautiful properties in Virginia. And it was there that the ex-President spent the rest of his life, with a small community of enslaved African-Americans to support him.

Montpelier subsequently passed through several owners until, in 1901, the DuPont family bought it as a country retreat and greatly expanded the original house. Today the estate is owned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In 2003, the Montpelier Foundation, which manages the property for the Trust, began a $24 million restoration, tearing down 24,000 square feet of living space that the DuPonds had added and bringing the neoclassical mansion and landscape back to the way they looked at the time the Madisons lived there. The restoration was completed last September, and the mansion is once again open for visitors.

Matt Reeves, Montpelier’s director of archaeology, recalls a weekend in June 2007 when descendants of the slaves who had lived and worked on Madison’s estate two centuries earlier were invited to see the work in progress. “They saw the main house being restored, and looked down from the terrace to see that the [slave] quarters from that time were outlined only by dead grass,” says Reeves. “They said, ‘Matt, you’ve restored the house, but our ancestors’ homes are marked by dead grass. What’s up with that?’ And they had a very good point.”

Archaeologists excavate Montpelier’s South Yard, where domestic slaves resided. The Madisons’ restored home is seen in the insert photograph.
On a crisp day in October, during the last week of the 2008 field season, Reeves shows me around the property as he explains what the Montpelier Foundation is doing to help redress the imbalance. As we walk, members of the archaeological staff and a handful of volunteers are busily screening dirt, logging artifacts, and attending to other details in an area adjacent to the mansion, known as the South Yard, where the Madisons’ household slaves once lived and worked. Reeves takes seriously his obligation to interpret the lives of Montpelier’s less famous residents. “Without their labor, folks like Madison wouldn’t have been able to be politicians. Without plantation slavery, the U.S. through its early years wouldn’t have survived,” he says, explaining that slavery was a crucial component of the South’s agricultural economy, the exports from which benefited the entire country.

The excavation of the Madison-era slave buildings represents “a serious investment on Montpelier’s part,” says Douglas Sanford, chair of the Department of Historic Preservation at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia, and an expert on the archaeology of slavery: The work on the South Yard is part of a trend in modern plantation archaeology to “interpret the broader context” of plantation life and not just focus on the wealthy owners, says Sanford.

Archaeological surveys of the 2,650-acre estate began in 1985, shortly after the DuPont family turned Montpelier over to the National Trust. Although most of the work since has focused on the mansion and its immediate surroundings, the archaeologists have also identified locations around the property where the slaves lived and worked, including the site of a field hands’ quarter situated between the mansion and the Madisons’ earlier house, known as Mount Pleasant. Nails and door hardware were recovered from the field hands’ quarter in 2003, and excavation turned up traces of paths, work areas, and an outdoor hearth suggesting a simple log building with a dirt floor and a “stick and mud” chimney. Ceramics, buttons, glass fragments, and other artifacts revealed that the field hands who lived there, while of very modest means, bought many of their household goods at local markets. Using metal detectors, archaeologists also found a cache of tools hinting at the location of cooper and carpenter shops in a wooded area between the present-day visitor’s center and the mansion.

The South Yard, adjacent to the mansion, was home to the domestic servants who waited on the Madisons, prepared their food, and attended to their guests. In 1990, the researchers uncovered a brick chimney base about 100 feet from the mansion that was identified as part of a duplex house typical of the kind that domestic slaves occupied.
Researchers recovered these artifacts from the South Yard. In addition to the ceramic sherds, there’s a piece of a glass medicinal vial (upper left) and cow and pig teeth (center right). The bamboo and peony-patterned fragment (bottom right) came from a set used by the Madisons. The archaeologists think that the slaves could have taken the chipped pieces that the Madisons discarded.
during the Madison’s time. But only in the last field season did they start piecing together the overall layout of buildings, fences, and brick paths in this part of the property. And even now, Reeves figures that only about 15 percent of the South Yard has been explored. “In a lot of ways, we’re just beginning,” he says.

The archaeologists have a copy of a hand-drawn 1837 insurance map, prepared a year after James Madison’s death and before Dolley sold the property in 1844. It shows the location of three duplex “dwelling houses for servants,” and two smoke houses, with distances and angles from the mansion clearly marked. When the map was discovered in 2003 in an archive at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the archaeologists assumed it would show them exactly where to dig. “We started off thinking it was dead accurate,” says Adam Marshall, who’s directing the field work. But it hasn’t been that easy.

In fact, much of the work last season was puzzling out the discrepancies between the map and what the archaeologists were finding. It now appears that the distances and angles in the drawing are just ballpark estimates, and that the actual locations are off by 20 feet or more. “That’s why we need the archaeology,” says Reeves.

He shows me a partly excavated slave quarters discovered in 2008 next to the one found in 1990—just as the map shows, though the location is incorrect. At the newly found duplex, the archaeologists uncovered a stone chimney oriented in the same direction as the brick chimney of the first house. Why stone instead of brick? For now, that’s a mystery.

The archaeologists are confident that the recently discovered duplex is the second of the three slave quarters on the map. The duplex measures 30 feet long by 20 feet wide; each of the one-room houses would have been half that long. Reeves describes the buildings as “cookie cutter” slave houses. “You see these style duplexes all over central Virginia,” he says.

Based on the glass fragments found at the duplex, the archaeologists believe the house had glazed windows, consistent with a higher class of construction than would have been used for the simple shacks of field laborers. Because there is no evidence of burned clay suggesting a floor-level hearth, the archaeologists assume the hearth sat inside a raised crib, which means there would have been wood floors, another mark of fancier construction.

The excavation in the South Yard—and Montpelier in general—has been made much easier by the property’s history. In the nearly two centuries since the Madisons left, the land has never been farmed. As a result, says Marshall, it “has not been disturbed by plowing, which is very unusual in Virginia.”

Inside the archaeology laboratory, located a few hundred yards away in a cluster of buildings built by the DuPonts...
early in the 20th century, lab supervisor Kim Trickett shows me some of the artifacts recovered from the South Yard this season. Meanwhile, interns seated at long tables enter the items in a catalog. Some of the artifacts were recovered from under the slave quarters, some from a small trash deposit located just behind it. The items range from clay pipestems to wine bottles to a jew’s harp. Some things are what you might expect to find in the house of a domestic servant: a bone bobbin used to hold thread for sewing and some straight pins.

There are pewter buttons—“poor man’s buttons,” Trickett calls them—and one button with a naval insignia. That artifact “literally got whisked off to the lab” as soon as it was dug up, she says. The archaeologists thought they might have found a button from the early Marine Corps, which was sent to “the shores of Tripoli” to fight pirates when Madison was Thomas Jefferson’s Secretary of State. At this point it’s not certain whether it’s a Marine or more common Navy button.

The archaeologists have also found ceramic sherds “everywhere, all over the yard,” says Trickett. One type of china that regularly turned up is a Bamboo and Peony pattern made by W. Davenport & Co. in England between 1815 and 1825. The archaeologists found fragments of tableware ranging from a covered tureen to creamers, platters, and plates. Hundreds of sherds from this same set had previously been recovered from a huge Madison-era trash dump excavated on the other side of the mansion in 2007—what the Montpelier researchers named “Dolley’s Midden.”

How these china fragments got in the slave quarters, or what that says about the household economics of the Montpelier slaves, is not certain. Reeves wonders if they may have been pieces discarded by the Madisons when they became chipped or cracked. But that’s just speculation. As archaeologists and historians learn more about plantation culture, they’ve come to appreciate that slaves also bought and sold goods beyond what their masters gave them. “In this time period, in the late 18th and early 19th century, we see slaves becoming consumers,” says Sanford. Reeves says that tracing the distribution of ceramics farther from the South Yard, in the areas where field hands lived and worked, may help shed light on how slaves traded goods among themselves.

If it turns out there are three duplexes in the South Yard as the 1837 map shows (the third has yet to be uncovered), should we assume that six slave families lived there during the Madisons’ time? Based on research at other plantations,
says Sanford, “We’re finding that in a lot of cases, it may not be families [in a duplex]. We’ll use the term ‘household’ because it may be some mixture of slaves that the planter decided to put together.” But figuring out relationships among the individuals who lived in these duplexes solely from the archaeological evidence will be “almost impossible,” warns Reeves.

Another structure uncovered in the South Yard last year was a path, made of brick in some places and stone in others, that appears to go right under the newly found duplex. As luck would have it, the path also goes under a gigantic Spanish fir tree dating from the DuPont era that sits smack in the middle of the South Yard. “The fir tree is really, really in the way,” laments Marshall. Unfortunately, it’s a landmark in itself. So Montpelier’s governing board will have to decide whether the tree comes down, or whether the archaeologists will have to find a way to work around it. It’s “not a light decision,” he says.

Reeves and his team spent a fair amount of time during the 2008 season tracing a line of fence postholes that runs behind the newly discovered slave quarters. There were two fences, in fact: a rail fence that would have marked the perimeter of the Madisons’ formal grounds, and a paling fence outside that, with smaller posts spaced closer together. The postholes can be difficult to identify, and sometimes initially appear only as subtle variations in soil color.

Outside the paling fence, there typically would have been a larger area where heavier farm work was done. That area has yet to be explored. This year the archaeologists plan to move to the opposite side of the mansion to excavate the detached North Kitchen, where slaves cooked food for the Madisons and their guests.

The North Kitchen is noted on the 1837 insurance map. But, says Reeves, “When we first saw [where it was], we thought, ‘Great, the DuPont kitchen is right on top of it—it’s been destroyed!” In fact, the DuPonts, when they added to the mansion in the early 1900s, had built their kitchen in the same spot that the Madisons had theirs. But, says Reeves, “When we jackhammered up the concrete [from the DuPont kitchen last year], we found the intact Madison-era kitchen [foundation] below it.” Luckily, the DuPonts had covered the older structure with fill dirt before pouring their own floor.

Excavating the North Kitchen will help the archaeologists round out the story of Montpelier slave life, since this was a principal work place for the servants who lived on the other side of the mansion.

Reeves hopes to continue his research in the South Yard.
in 2010 to better understand the relationship between masters and slaves at Montpelier. The slaves’ daily activities of cleaning, cooking, butchering, and the like were in conflict with the Madisons’ aesthetics, and the archaeologists will be searching for evidence of how this conflict was resolved. Thus far their research indicates the trash pits and work areas were behind the slaves’ quarters, hidden from the mansion. “What we need to explore is those areas between the duplexes that are in direct view of the mansion—will there be intensive activity areas there?” he wonders. “If so, what sort of activities took place, and how frequently?” If they find vestiges of slave activities, this would suggest how accepting the Madisons were of their slaves.

Reeves says that by locating “this picturesque slave village” inside their formal grounds—that is, rather than outside the fence, as in most Virginia plantations—the Madisons signaled that slave life was “something natural, to be seen.” Indeed, the ex-President and his wife often took guests to meet the servants in the South Yard. “You have visitors talk about Madison’s older slaves living in ‘a salubrious atmosphere,’” says Reeves.

By most accounts, James and Dolley Madison treated their slaves well. Yet they remained conflicted in their role as masters. Dolley’s father, a Quaker, had freed his slaves out of principle when she was a teenager, causing financial hardship for the family. But Dolley kept hers, or at least some of them, until the day she died. James Madison grew up with slaves, including one named Billey, whom he took with him to Philadelphia when he joined the Continental Congress in 1780 at the age of 29. Three years later, Madison wrote to his father back in Virginia, “I have judged it most prudent not to force Billey back to Va. even if it could be done… I am persuaded his mind is too thoroughly tainted [by political ideas] to be a fit companion for fellow slaves in Virga” (sic).

Such were the compromises and contradictions of plantation life. Some of the enslaved African-Americans who lived and worked at Montpelier, about 40 of them, are buried in a cemetery downhill from the mansion where the Madisons lived. None of the graves are marked. But two centuries later, even if their names aren’t known, pieces of their story are again coming to light.

TONY REICHHARDT is a writer in Fredericksburg, Virginia. His article “Searching For Pirates” appeared in the Summer 2007 issue of American Archaeology.

For more information about archaeology at Montpelier, visit the Web site www.montpelier.org
It used to be that most archaeology was done by universities, museums, and other institutions. Now cultural resource management is the name of the game.

By Mike Toner

Boxes stacked to the ceiling along one wall hold nearly 100,000 artifacts excavated from the site of a planned waterfront development on the Savannah River in west-central South Carolina. Archaeologist Tom Whitley says the previously unknown site was once a large town, complete with palisade walls, dating to the Early Mississippian period, around A.D. 900. It was also occupied in the 1600s, during the early years of European contact.

“We're always busy around here, Whitley says. “Right now we have active projects in 20 states. We have from 80 to 90 people on staff, but that can vary.” The Brockington firm is an example of how American archaeology has changed over the last several decades. The field had been dominated by universities, institutions, and museums that pursued their...
research interests as time, resources, and manpower permitted. Now most work is done by private firms hired to survey, excavate, analyze, and curate archaeological resources that would otherwise be destroyed.

“At least 90 percent of the archaeology in the country today is done as cultural resource management,” says Francis P. McManamon, manager of the National Park Service’s archaeology program. “Archaeology is so labor intensive and so expensive that most academic institutions simply can’t cover the costs. Almost all big time archaeology is now CRM.”

Though precise figures are hard to come by, it’s thought that CRM archaeology is now a one billion dollar-a-year business in the United States. A new, unpublished survey by the American Cultural Resources Association estimates that there are 1,600 to 1,800 CRM firms that employ approximately 10,000 people. These firms range from large companies, like Tucson-based Statistical Research Inc., which has 28 Ph.Ds and 150 other employees, to small firms with two or three employees.

The Interior Department’s latest report to Congress counted more than 380,000 CRM projects from 1998 to 2003. But officials say there are many other projects not accounted for in those statistics. “CRM archaeology is now clearly the dominant mode of archaeology in America, says Boston University archaeologist Ricardo Elia, former editor of the Journal of Field Archaeology. “Traditional archaeology, in the sense of digging up sites purely for research, is really dying out—or at least fading out—in the world today.”

**HOW CRM BEGAN**

The roots of CRM archaeology can be traced back to the New Deal’s programs, such as the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration, and the massive public works projects the government launched after World War II. In recent decades, the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation have spent millions on “rescue” archaeology to salvage cultural information from thousands of sites destined to be obliterated by dams, reservoirs, flood control structures, and other projects.

Most cultural resource management, however, is now performed by private sector, for-profit firms. The stage for
today’s CRM industry was set in 1966 when Congress, alarmed by the destruction caused by urban renewal and highway construction, passed the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 of that act required federal agencies to consider the effect of their decisions on “sites listed on, or eligible for listing on, the National Register of Historic Places.”

“The original language of Section 106 only stated that federal agency heads had to consider properties in the National Register, not those, like most archaeological sites, that were not so obvious,” says Elia. “Then in 1971, President Nixon issued Executive Order 11593, clearly requiring agencies to consider sites that might qualify. Once the issue became potential sites, it changed the focus of cultural resource management to finding sites that might be affected by federal actions.”

Over the next two decades, a succession of laws and revisions to the National Historic Preservation Act emphasized the importance of archaeological resources. In 1969, the National Environmental Policy Act required that federal agencies, when making decisions, assess the impacts of those decisions on cultural resources and the environment. In 1979, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act strengthened the protection of archaeological items on public lands. The act was amended in 1988, mandating that federal agencies develop plans and schedules to survey archaeological resources on all lands under their control, especially those most likely to contain scientifically valuable resources. In 1990, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act required that decisions regarding Native American human remains and related artifacts be coordinated with the culturally affiliated tribes and that burials and important cultural objects be returned to them.

With the government owning nearly 30 percent of the land in the country and federal regulations mandating the identification and evaluation of significant cultural resources as part of public project planning, cultural resource management became a growth industry. It is hard to overstate the industry’s impact on American archaeology. According to reports from federal agencies compiled by the National Park Service, from 1998 to 2003, CRM archaeologists found more than 300,000 archaeological sites, including 54,729 eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

“Most of the major developments in Southwestern archaeology in the last few years are due to major CRM projects or synergies among several projects,” says Arizona State University archaeologist Keith Kintigh, a former president of the Society for American Archaeology. For example, some 5,500 archaeological sites, ranging in age from 300 B.C. to A.D. 1450, were uncovered as a result of the Bureau of Reclamation’s Central Arizona Project, which required the construction of pumping plants, dams, and aqueducts to deliver Colorado River water to central and southern Arizona.

“CRM has definitely been a major vehicle for archaeological discovery,” agrees Carol Griffith, who heads the
archaeology section of Arizona’s State Historic Preservation Office. “Much of what we know today about the Hohokam (the culture that dominated central Arizona from around A.D. 300 to 1500) and about the earliest agriculture in the Southwest has come from CRM work done in response to the expansion of Phoenix and Tucson, especially the highways.

“One of our biggest projects was the 19.8 mile Phoenix-Tempe-Mesa light rail project, which is just going into service,” says Griffith. “We knew the project had the potential to affect a large number of sites because it passed near the Pueblo Grande National Historic Landmark.”

Archaeologists from Tempe-based Archaeological Consulting Services monitored the backfill as paved streets were ripped to make way for the rail system. Beneath the asphalt, they found the remnants of at least 82 Hohokam canals, dozens of pithouses, walls, ceramics, an undisclosed number of burials, and, in the shadow of Arizona State University’s Sun Devil Stadium, a surprisingly large village that had been occupied from 800 to 1450.

DISCOVER, CONSULT, REPORT

“Archaeologists in universities and institutions are problem oriented and they are severely limited by the size of their budgets,” explains Michael Polk, president of the American Cultural Resources Association and the owner of Sagebrush Consultants in Ogden, Utah. “When academics have a particular interest to satisfy, they pretty much have to go to areas where they expect to find something. CRM archaeologists go where the project—whether it’s a pipeline or a road—requires them to go. As a result, they often wind up finding things in places no one expected to find anything.”

If, in the course of a survey, a CRM firm finds archaeological items, the firm has to consult with the appropriate government agencies, including the state historic preservation office, to determine if the items are “significant,” meaning they are potentially eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Should that be the case, the agencies may advocate that the project be altered so as to preserve the archaeological items. This process “certainly causes heartburn” for the CRM firm’s client, says Jeffrey Altschul, the chairman of Statistical Research.

He notes that one of the problems with the consultation process is that the government agencies involved may lack the resources to adequately scrutinize the myriad projects. For example, Arizona’s historic preservation office, with a staff of only three archaeological compliance reviewers, assess as many as 3,000 projects a year.

If the archaeological resources are considered to be
significant and are certain to be affected by the project, the CRM firms mitigate the impact of any planned development by excavating, recording, and analyzing the material. They’re also obligated to report and curate their findings.

“Cultural resource laws have helped create a billion dollar industry and made it possible for us to document many pieces of the country’s human history that would otherwise have gone undocumented,” says Altschul. “But you have to remember that the goal of the law is not to stop projects, it’s for the project to move forward. That means that CRM archaeologists are constantly pressed for time and, when they’re finished, the project goes forward and the resource is gone.”

“Academic archaeologists sometimes accuse us of destroying sites, but the process of doing archaeological excavation, in and of itself, destroys sites. In the case of compliance-driven archaeology, unless a site can be avoided, it will be destroyed anyway,” says Polk. “We have to get what we can out of it and move on. If you only have so much money and so much time, you have to make tradeoffs. We make them all the time. Most people in this field are honest and truly interested in contributing to our understanding of past human behavior. But we have our bottom feeders and low-ballers too. This has led to some pretty bad archaeology at times. I know of cases where some people have falsified reports—saying they surveyed a project area when they didn’t.”

“CRM archaeology requires a very different set of skills from traditional archaeology,” says Elia. “And unfortunately, even though it is the dominant type of archaeology in the country, a lot of academic archaeologists are still teaching students to be what they are themselves—academic archaeologists.”

Academic archaeologists tend to gauge success by the quality of their work and its publication in peer-reviewed articles and books. That’s often not the case with CRM archaeologists. “We generate huge amounts of data and all of our digital data—maps, charts, etc., goes into curation along with the artifacts themselves,” says Whitley, adding that the general quality of CRM research matches that of academics. “When it comes to publishing, however, we tend to do a lot of presentations at conferences, and publish less in academic journals. Many of our contracts call for public outreach, but it takes so long to get something published in a journal that CRM professionals tend to move on. We have a shorter span of attention than academics.”

Whitley does what he can to remedy this problem. After he finishes research on the newly discovered Mississippian village on the Savannah River, he intends to write a book on his findings, which is not a requirement of his job. “If you are a tenured professor, publishing is part of your job description, but few CRM companies have that incentive,” Altschul says. “Even so, I feel the public should still benefit from what we do. I encourage my staff to publish, but I don’t necessarily pay them to do it.”

Last year, Altschul co-edited a 700-page collection of research on the Western Papagueria—a remote, arid region in southern Arizona and northern Mexico once thought to hold little of archaeological value. Dozens of researchers contributed to the volume, titled Fragile Patterns, but the seed of the idea grew out of CRM work Altschul did for Luke Air Force Base. Most CRM findings, however, get far less exposure. Small projects may result in a few pages filed with the client, the overseeing agency, and the state historical preservation office. Even reports on large projects are printed in limited numbers and vanish into relative obscurity.
DISAPPEARING DATA

“An explosion of data has emerged from these many projects, most of it published in what is called ‘gray literature’—reports of limited circulation or in cyberspace, which, despite efforts to the contrary, are effectively inaccessible to most archaeologists,” wrote archaeologist and noted author Brian Fagan in the Getty Conservation Institute’s newsletter. “Many CRM archaeologists have made determined efforts to publish their work in academic settings and to produce books or monographs. Many academic archaeologists have also completed valuable research as part of a CRM project. But while sites may have been investigated and compliance reports written, the basic archaeological data from them remains unvetted.”

“CRM archaeologists have done a lot of terrific work, but it doesn’t get the attention it deserves because of the volume of reports and their format and because archaeologists who would benefit from it may not even know it exists,” says Kintigh. “Some of these reports are 2,000 to 3,000 pages, but despite this huge effort it’s often difficult for other archaeologists to find the information they need. And if the records are not disseminated, we’re not living up to our public responsibility.”

With more than two million dollars in grants from the National Science Foundation and the Mellon Foundation, Kintigh is heading a collaborative effort he hopes will help change that, as well as solve an even bigger problem—the loss of data. He is coordinating an initiative to develop a digital repository governed by a multi-institutional collaborative organization—Digital Antiquity—that would make gray literature and digital archaeological data accessible on-line in a form that would always be readable.

“Federal regulations dictate that digital materials be curated to contemporary archival standards, but when it comes to digital data, in practice it is rarely done,” says Kintigh. “Few traditional artifact repositories are set up to effectively archive digital data. My guess is that if you give them a CD with data, they are going to treat it like an artifact and stick it on a shelf.”

But the media on which data is stored—witness computer punch cards and floppy disks—are constantly evolving. Kintigh worries that this kind of creeping obsolescence could preclude future access to vast amounts of data. “We’re already having problems recovering some of this. Some key data from one big University of Arizona project, the excavation of part of the Hohokam village of Las Colinas, which now lies underneath a massive highway interchange in Phoenix is only available on those big print out sheets that used to come from mainframe computers. We’re having to re-key some of that information just to make sure it is preserved; and this is not a rare event, it’s a common one.”

He has no illusions about solving the problem overnight. “Our goal is within four years to capture maybe 10 to 15 per cent of the field research being done at the time,” he says. “If we can do that, we can contemplate controlling a large fraction of the data now being generated. However, the data from past projects present an even greater challenge for preservation—and for funding.”

“If we don’t do something, there is a very real danger of losing a lot of this information,” he says. “We’ve already lost these sites to development. If we don’t do something about the data, we risk losing them—or at least the information from them—a second time.”

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In 2004, Congress passed the Galisteo Basin Archaeological Sites Protection Act to preserve and interpret the nationally significant archaeological resources of the Galisteo Basin of north-central New Mexico, a fitting legacy for the region where, in the early 20th century, Nels Christian Nelson revolutionized the way archaeology is conducted in America.

Born in 1875 on a farm in Denmark, Nelson, the oldest of many children, moved to Minnesota in 1892 to work on a relative’s farm. It was in America that Nelson began his education, graduating from high school in 1901 at the age of 26, and then riding a cattle car to California, where he worked as a laborer to save money to attend Stanford University. After two years at Stanford, Nelson transferred to the University of California, where he finished his undergraduate studies in 1907. Nelson was introduced to archaeology the previous year when, at the invitation of paleontologist and geologist John Campbell Merriam, he assisted in the survey of shell mounds along the northern California coast.

San Francisco Bay was encircled by deep middens—large mounds of shells, artifacts, and cultural debris deposited over hundreds of years by native peoples. Nelson spent most of his summers over the next four years identifying and excavating shell mounds around the bay and nearby waterways while teaching courses and working at the University of California’s Anthropological Museum during the fall and winter. Merriam, a meticulous scientist who insisted on careful observation and recording, worked alongside Nelson on some of the shell mound excavations.

Nelson was also influenced by German archaeologist Max Uhle, whose 1902 report on the excavation of the Emeryville Shellmound in California emphasized stratigraphic relationships, in which younger deposits overlay older ones, revealing a chronology of deposition. While working at the Ellis Landing site, Nelson cut a straight, clean profile at one side of his trench and charted the details and location of all artifacts as his excavation proceeded, an innovative technique for the time.

Deciding to pursue graduate studies in archaeology rather than the seminary, as he had originally planned, Nelson received his Master of Letters in 1908, writing his thesis on the shell mounds of the San Francisco Bay area. He had located about 400 mounds in the course of surveying countless miles of coastline. The following year, Nelson accepted the position of assistant curator in the Anthropological Museum of the University of California, Berkley where he became an instructor in anthropology in 1910.

Meanwhile, ethnologist Clark Wissler, the curator of anthropology at the American Museum (subsequently renamed the American Museum of Natural History) in New York, was rebuilding the anthropology department and negotiating with philanthropist Archer Huntington to fund a...
long-term research and collection program in the American Southwest. Close ties between the University of California and the American Museum enabled Nelson to transfer to New York in 1912 as assistant curator of anthropology, but not before proposing marriage to Ethelyn Hobbs Field, the secretary of the Anthropological Museum’s director, Alfred Kroeber. The timing was perfect, and upon Nelson’s arrival in New York, Wissler immediately tapped him to head up the Huntington Southwest Survey, with his new wife accompanying him as a paid, part-time field assistant.

In addition to obtaining artifact collections for the American Museum and improving the anthropology department, Wissler wanted to advance anthropology as a science, so he sent the Nelsons to the Northern Rio Grande Valley of north-central New Mexico in 1912 with specific instructions to construct a chronology of Puebloan cultural development. After a quick survey of sites along the Rio Grande from Albuquerque to El Paso, Texas, Nelson and Wissler decided to focus on the large pueblo sites of the Galisteo Basin, south of Santa Fe, that were abandoned after the native uprising known as the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. The similarities between these prehistoric settlements and the still-occupied Rio Grande pueblos made for what appeared to be a clear connection between the area’s past and present.

Shortly after the start of the Southwest project, Nelson was sent to Europe to work with archaeologists Hugo Obermeier and Henri Breuil, who were excavating Paleolithic sites in which deep cultural strata were evident. For two months Nelson helped excavate Castillo Cave in Spain, where the 45-foot deposit contained clear layers representing culture change through time. Years later he wrote to archaeologist Richard Woodbury: “… my chief inspiration to search for chronological evidence came from reading about European cave finds; from visiting several of the caves, seeing the levels marked off on the walls, and in taking part in the Castillo Cave in Spain for several weeks in 1913.” The stratigraphic method had been developed in European geology and adapted to European and Mediterranean archaeology. However, it hadn’t caught on in North America, where archaeologists, assuming then that the New World had been occupied for only a few thousand years, tended to dig shallow units that exposed thin cultural deposits with little in the way of discernable physical strata.

The extensive rolling grasslands of the Galisteo Basin are broken by canyons and occasional spring-fed valleys that hold well-preserved settlements of past peoples known as Tano, or southern Tewa, who once thrived in the area. Beginning in 1912 and continuing for the next four years, Nelson excavated 1,562 rooms in 45 sites along the Rio Grande, including more than a dozen in the basin and surrounding areas. He searched for deep, undisturbed cultural deposits where he could apply the stratigraphic excavation techniques he’d seen in Europe, but these proved to be elusive.

By 1914, Nelson guessed the chronological order of the various types of pottery found across the area’s sites, “but tangible proof was still wanting,” he wrote. He focused on San Cristóbal Pueblo, a massive site in the eastern Basin with multi-storied roomblocks arranged around open plazas and
adjacent masonry remains of a Spanish mission. The Nelsons set up camp on a hillside, with a nearby rockshelter serving as a kitchen. Supplies were brought in by wagon from the nearby village of Galisteo, whose ranches provided men for labor. Ethelyn helped with correspondence and record-keeping, as well as crew supervision when Nelson was called away.

When investigating middens, Nelson previously noted that different types of pottery fragments had greater densities at different levels; however, he didn’t record this data since he thought the middens could have been disturbed, making the stratigraphic information of little use. But having worked nearly three seasons in the Galisteo Basin with no conclusive results, he decided to excavate a deep midden he’d previously ignored at San Cristóbal at the end of the 1914 season. “A visibly stratified section of the refuse exposure showing no evidence of disturbance was selected and a block of this measuring 3 by 6 feet on the horizontal and nearly 10 feet deep was excavated,” Nelson wrote. “I performed this work with my own hands, devoting fully three days to the task.”

But most of the midden was not stratified, so Nelson excavated it in one-foot segments. He counted and segregated pottery sherds from each segment, or level, and classified them into five types that he had defined. Nelson assumed the midden was built up over time and the style of artifacts found within it should reflect change, with the oldest on the bottom and youngest on top. By comparing the ceramics found in the various levels, he was able to place the different types in chronological order. Having established this chronology, he was also able to discern the temporal relationships of the sites in the region based on the types of ceramics they contained.

This work led to Nelson’s 1916 article “Chronology of the Tano Ruins, New Mexico,” which combined the San Cristóbal stratigraphy with regional data collected during previous field seasons, suggesting a sequence of occupation for several Galisteo Basin sites. Wissler announced the new chronological method in the 1917 Museum Journal, calling it the “New Archaeology” to distinguish it from the old, unscientific methods that preceded it. Nelson’s innovative approach immediately led to an emphasis on regional chronology building in the American Southwest.

The noted archaeologist Alfred Kidder called Nelson’s stratigraphic method “the most valuable discovery yet made in the Southwest and one which will be of tremendous importance.” Kidder quickly adopted the method and began applying it to his excavations at Pecos Pueblo just northeast of the Galisteo Basin. He then incorporated the method into a regional strategy of cultural and chronological study.

“Nels Nelson was a critical figure in the development of American archaeology,” says archaeologist James Snead of George Mason University, whose book Ruins and Rivals is a study of Nelson’s era. “The Galisteo work not only provided a solution to the vexing problem of studying time in the archaeological record, but also identified the Southwest as the premier region for the development of archaeological method and theory. Nelson literally set the stage for the work of A.V. Kidder at Pecos, Neil Judd at Chaco Canyon, and the entire research network that developed with them. It’s also important to note that he was a hands-on ‘field scholar’ in the best sense. Nelson was happiest standing in a trench, looking at stratigraphy, trying to understand what it meant. His fieldwork in the Galisteo Basin represents one of the first truly problem-oriented research projects in our history. I think that he believed the five years he spent working in the Southwest were the best of this life.”

Nineteen-sixteen was one of Nelson’s last field seasons in the Southwest, after which time he became so swamped with curatorial duties he had little time for fieldwork, a situation he found very frustrating. He briefly worked at Chaco Canyon and Zuni Pueblo, and also at Mammoth Cave, in central Kentucky, where he interpreted excavation results in terms of a sequence of different prehistoric cultures. This interpretation, published in 1917, provided the initial breakthrough in studies of temporal change and cultural process in that region.

The Nelsons traveled to Mongolia, where, in 1925, they joined Ray Chapman Andrews on his third expedition to search for the “birthplace of mankind.” Nelson suggested
relationships between Alaska and Mongolia in a landmark publication on the archaeology of Alaska that appeared in 1937. In the 1940s, Nelson worked in the Pryor Mountains of Montana, publishing a series of popular and scientific articles on his excavations there.

He remained at the American Museum of Natural History for the rest of his career, serving as associate curator of North American archaeology from 1921 to 1923, associate curator of archaeology from 1923 to 1928, and curator of prehistoric archaeology from 1928 to 1943. Over the years, Nelson served as president of the American Anthropological Society, the Society for American Anthropology, and the American Ethnological Society, and vice president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. After retiring from the museum in 1943, he continued to regularly visit his office to read, consult, and do research. He died in 1964 in New York at the age of 89.

“Nels Nelson has been my top archaeo-hero for decades, and as fate would have it, I’ve been fortunate enough to follow (from afar) in Nelson’s footsteps,” says David Hurst Thomas, curator at the American Museum of Natural History. “Nelson was the first curator of North American Archaeology at the American Museum of Natural History—I’m the fourth to hold that title. From the very first edition of my textbooks, I’ve extolled the contributions of Nels Nelson, lionizing his pivotal role in understanding how in-the-ground stratigraphy relates to changing material culture. A few years ago, I even followed him into the field, quite literally walking in Nelson’s footsteps as we continued his initial mapping of the church and convent at Mission San Marcos in the Galisteo Basin. Several years back, we named our sixth-floor turret workspace ‘The Nels Nelson Laboratory of North American Archaeology.’”

Nelson generated a great sense of excitement during the early years of the 20th century. His innovative chronological research in the Galisteo Basin inspired young archaeologists who rejected the unscientific approach of the older generation and their focus on the collection of museum-quality specimens. A series of papers at the 24th Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology held in 1959 was devoted to Developments in Dating Technique and dedicated to Nelson “in recognition of his pioneering role in establishing the technique of stratigraphic excavation in America.”

As Thomas observes, “The man’s career and contribution continue to amaze.”

TAMARA STEWART is the assistant editor of American Archaeology and the Conservancy’s Southwest region projects coordinator.
We were headed south out of Nashville by the time the sun crept over the horizon. Because we were driving the Natchez Trace Parkway from south-central Tennessee to southern Mississippi, we had a carload of binoculars and maps, notebooks and cameras. Our route would later cross paths with the fabled Blues Highway—the environs of U.S. 61—so we were playing Otis Spann’s version of “The Blues Don’t Love Nobody.” I traveled with Denny Adcock, a Nashville-based photographer and former curator at the Country Music Hall of Fame, who provided background information about the Trace, as well as how the blues grew out of the troubled history of this region.

You can comfortably tour archaeological sites along the Trace in three or four days. The Parkway roughly parallels the original Natchez Trace, which began as the ancient path of large game and the various native groups who hunted them. Bison and deer originally wore the path by following a natural ridgeline southward, establishing a route between the lush grazing of the Mississippi Delta and the salt licks of the Tennessee central basin. Humans then established trade routes along the game trails.

Later, the Trace became the route of the “Kaintuck” migrants. These Ohio River Valley farmers and merchants flat-boated their goods down the Mississippi, sold them in Natchez, tore down the boats and sold them for lumber, and walked or rode back up the Trace with gold in their pockets—unless they had the misfortune of encountering the ruthless bandits who worked this area. The Trace has seen Choctaw and Natchez and Chickasaw, settlers from Spain and France and England, Civil War battles at nearby Vicksburg and Shiloh, and countless slaves from Africa and the Caribbean.

Nowadays it winds near giant burial mounds, early settlers’ inns, and the modest birthplace of Elvis Presley.

The northern terminus of the Parkway is south of Nashville, in Williamson County—supposedly the birthplace of the notorious Natchez Trace bandit John Murrell. The Tennessee leg of the Parkway offers fewer historical sites than the Mississippi leg, so you can start out simply enjoying the drive through rolling hills. Gradually the archaeological and historical sites increase until they culminate in the Trace’s point of origin at Natchez. You can walk along sections of the original Trace at various places.

Maintained by the National Park Service and designated a National Scenic Byway, the Parkway winds across parts of three states, 444 miles long but at times only a few hundred yards wide. It was under construction from 1937 to 2005.
The Trace’s mileposts begin at Natchez, so the numbers run backward from Nashville, serving not only as a guide to sites but as a countdown toward the Mississippi River. There are mileposts, numbered to the nearest tenth of a mile, at every destination mentioned in this article, so you shouldn’t have any trouble finding them.

Think of the Trace as a time machine. The most dramatic modern contrast you will see on this trip occurs immediately, at Mile 438, where an award-winning double-arch concrete bridge soars over Birdsong Hollow. It’s a powerful reminder of how easily we now traverse a road that originated as a narrow path through dangerous woodland.

Stop at the Gordon House and Ferry site at Mile 407.7, near Columbia, Tennessee. Most of the white-shuttered, two-story red brick house has been standing here since 1818. Headquartered in this house, the Gordon family ran a ferry across the nearby Duck River during the Trace’s heyday, beginning in 1801. Looking back at the red house from the woods and the river, you can imagine the isolation such settlers felt—and also how glad travelers would have been to find the ferry here at the river’s bend.

At Mile 438, an award-winning double-arch concrete bridge soars over Birdsong Hollow. It’s a powerful reminder of how easily we now traverse a road that originated as a narrow path through dangerous woodland. The Gordon House was built in the early 1800s.

At Mile 385.9, the Meriwether Lewis gravesite commemorates the more tragic half of the Lewis and Clark partnership that explored the Louisiana Purchase (and beyond) at the behest of President Thomas Jefferson. Lewis was governor of the Louisiana Territory when, in 1809, he met his death here at Grinders Stand; its site is marked nearby, but the building is gone. Lewis died of two gunshot wounds during the night. His documented state of mind, along with earlier suicide attempts, have led most scholars to conclude that Lewis’ wounds were self-inflicted. A rustic cabin contains exhibits about his career.

Just across the Alabama state line, where the Trace crosses the Tennessee River at the mouth of Bear Creek at Mile 327.3, is Colbert Ferry, which was operated by Chief George Colbert, who was half Chickasaw and half Scot. A shrewd businessman, he ran a stand (as inns on the Trace were called) and once notoriously charged Andrew Jackson $75,000 to ferry the Tennessee Army across the river. Soon Jackson’s Military Road, along with steamboats plying the river in both directions, would help make the Trace obsolete.

None of the buildings survive, but the site marks their locations and includes information about the era. The view of the river is magnificent. Travelers through here recorded interactions, both convivial and violent, between soldiers, Indians, settlers, and itinerant traders. Colbert was also involved in negotiations between the U.S. government and the Chickasaw for decades.

Many significant events in the Civil War took place along the Trace. At Buzzard Roost you can take Highway 72 west off the Trace and out of Alabama to Corinth, Mississippi, and the Corinth Civil War Interpretive Center, which is part of Shiloh National Military Park. Then follow the signs a few miles northward, back into Tennessee, to the Shiloh battlefield itself. On the east side of the battlefield you’ll find Shiloh Indian Mounds National Historic Landmark, which features numerous Mississippian mounds that date to approximately A.D. 1200.

At the Alabama–Mississippi state line, at Mile 308.8, you will find Bear Creek Mound and Village. This Mississippian site, which dates from A.D. 1100 to 1300, consists of a single eight-foot-high mound about 85 feet-square. The mound was restored after it was excavated in the mid-1960s. Prior to that it had been greatly reduced by decades of plowing. Burned daub, sherds, flint chips, trash pits, and postholes

This double-arch bridge at Milepost 438 is one of the Trace’s modern attractions.

The Gordon House was built in the early 1800s.

The Tennessee Monument at Shiloh National Military Park commemorates the thousands of Tennesseans who served on both sides in the Battle of Shiloh.
1. Gordon House and Ferry
2. Meriwether Lewis gravesite
3. Colbert Ferry
4. Shiloh National Military Park
5. Bear Creek Mound and Village
6. Cave Spring
7. Pharr Mounds
8. Confederate Gravesites
9. Parkway Visitor Center
10. Chickasaw Council House
11. Owl Creek
12. Bynum Mounds
13. Lois Dowdle Cobb Museum of Archaeology
14. French Camp

15. Boyd Site
16. Rocky Springs
17. Grindstone Ford
18. Mangum Mound
19. Sunken Trace
20. Windsor Ruins
21. Mount Locust Inn
22. Emerald Mound
23. William Johnson House
24. Rosalie
25. Natchez Museum of African-American History and Culture
26. Grand Village of the Natchez Indians
27. Natchez Under-the-Hill

Nashville
TENNESSEE

MISSISSIPPI

ALABAMA

Montgomery

Jackson

Natchez
were found in the mound. Only half a mile away, amid acres of level fields, is Cave Spring. Follow the paved, curving path and you will find a cool grotto that shelters an ancient spring thought to have been frequented for centuries by natives and settlers.

The Pharr Mounds site, at Mile 286.7, is comprised of 90 acres of almost flat land beside the Parkway, surrounded by mixed woodland, and boasts eight impressive mounds—six of them visible from where you park your car hundreds of yards away. Archaeologists have determined that they were built between a.d. 1 and 200. Excavations of four of the mounds revealed a great deal about their construction and the people who built them. The domed mounds, consisting of many tons of soil, contain both gravesites and cremated remains. There are also personal and ritual artifacts fashioned from copper, mica, greenstone, and other minerals obtained by trade, that reflected the individual’s status.

You can walk another stretch of the original Trace at Mile 269.4, this time to the small woodland clearing where Confederate Gravesites, a line of weatherworn grave stones, remember 13 unknown soldiers. Historians don’t know the story that led to these anonymous graves. Then just down the road you’ll want to stop at the Parkway Visitor Center, which includes the park’s headquarters, at Mile 266 near Tupelo. This smallish one-story building provides informative exhibits, including one of nearby Tupelo National Battlefield, a gift shop, and restrooms.

A few sites offer little for the traveler to see, but they are still significant in the history of the Trace. The Chickasaw Council House, at 251.1, is a single historical marker where once stood Pontotak, the capital of the Chickasaw. Go another mile and a half farther and you will encounter a sign for Tockshish. This evocative Chickasaw word, meaning “tree root,” marked the relay station and post house for travelers between Nashville and Natchez, where mailbags were exchanged and travelers could get a fresh horse. Nashville was five days’ journey northward, Natchez seven days to the south. The buildings no longer exist.

Leave the Trace at Mile 243.1 (the Davis Lake exit) and drive about 2.5 miles west on Davis Lake Road, through the Tombigbee National Forest, to the Owl Creek site, which
features five Mississippian platform mounds dated between A.D. 1100 and 1200. Excavations in the early 1990s revealed that Mound I was built atop remains of the foundation of a temple or perhaps a different kind of elite structure.

Return to the Trace and continue southward to Bynum Mounds, at Mile 232.4. These two mounds are preserved by the National Park Service, and you can stroll along paved, tree-shaded paths between them. Archaeologists consider them to have been part of a larger Woodland-period site that included at least six mounds that have been dated between 100 B.C. and A.D. 100. Researchers have traced the origins of many of the artifacts found in these mounds, and they demonstrate the widespread trade networks of that time. Marine shells came up from the Gulf Coast, while flint came down from Ohio. The Alabama–Tennessee piedmont provided greenstone for ceremonial axes.

If you’re as interested in the ancient cultures of the Middle East and Mediterranean regions as well as the American Southeast, go cast on Highway 82 to Starkville, where you’ll find the Cobb Institute of Archaeology on the campus of Mississippi State University. Within the institute is the Lois Dowdle Cobb Museum of Archaeology. In addition to its impressive Old World collections, the museum offers interpretative exhibits on Southeastern pottery manufacturing and chronologies of pottery and flint tool types.

Get back on the Trace and go to French Camp, at Mile 180.7, which includes a number of restored buildings around the site on which a settler named Louis LeFleur built a stand in 1812. His wife was a daughter of the Choctaw chief Pushmataha, and a decade later the Presbyterian Church established a mission school for the Choctaw. Today the French Camp Academy still exists as a Christian school. A building constructed of adze-hewn oak in 1820 now houses a small restaurant. This is the only site we visited that regularly hosts costumed recreations of a historical period, in which participants make everything from pottery to sorghum.

Most known burial mounds in Mississippi date to the Middle Woodland period (circa 100 B.C.- A.D. 400). However, the six small burial mounds at the Boyd Site at Mile 106.9, were built during the Late Woodland and Early Mississippian periods (A.D. 800-1100). One of these, Mound 2, is accessible to visitors. Archaeologists discovered that Mound 2, which is 110-feet long, 60-feet wide and four-feet high, is in fact three mounds. Two mounds were built side by side during the Late Woodland period, then, during the Mississippian period, both were covered with more earth to create a single, oblong mound. The remains of 41 individuals were found in Mound 2, but there were few accompanying artifacts.

At 54.8 you will come to Rocky Springs. In the 1790s this town blossomed as explorers were drawn to the region’s many springs and fertile soil. Now it’s a ghost town. Follow the footpath through gnarled cedars draped in Spanish moss and resurrection fern to the original town site, which now has only a church, a cemetery, an iron cistern cover, and a huge iron safe that sits rusting in the woods. The red-brick Rocky Springs Methodist Church, built in 1837 to replace the circuit-riding preacher who visited too seldom, still hosts services every Sunday. The town was thriving until the Civil War, yellow fever, and the boll weevil took their toll.

Grindstone Ford, at Mile 45.7, is your next stop. In the early days of the Trace, returning Kaintucks, as well as soldiers headed north, considered this ford, where the Trace crosses Bayou Pierre, to be the line beyond which lay only wilderness until Nashville. Archaeological surveys of the tall, hill-like Mangum Mound, at the same site, have found many skeletons, revealing everything from a high infant mortality rate to the ritual of killing a deceased leader’s servants so that they could accompany him into the afterlife.

Next, watch for signs directing you to the Sunken Trace at Mile 41.5. Walking slowly along the bottom of this section of the original Trace, I felt the hair stand up on the back of my neck. As I peered up at 16-foot walls of earth dense with tree roots writhing like snakes, I thought how easy it would have been for the infamous bandit John Murrell and his men to ambush travelers. Vicious gangs, including former river pirates, thrived in the untamed wilds of the Trace. The depth of the Trace here seems to be the result of countless travelers wearing down the loess, the fine-grained soil that was originally deposited by wind during the Ice Ages.

At Port Gibson, take a detour on Highway 552 and follow...
The remarkable Windsor Ruins are all that remain of a 19th-century mansion that was destroyed by a fire.

The signs to the visually stunning Windsor Ruins, the remnants of a 19th-century antebellum mansion. The grand Windsor plantation was destroyed by a fire in 1890, and 23 huge columns were essentially all that remained. The columns, which have been featured in a number of movies, still stand.

The rooms at Mount Locust Inn are filled with period artifacts.

Take Highway 552 back to the Trace. At Mile 15.5, near the end of our journey, we found the original Trace running right through the front lawn of the blue-shuttered, rustic Mount Locust Inn and its surrounding plantation site. The only inn still standing of the 50 or so thought to line the Trace during its prime, it was also a working plantation. Part of it has been reconstructed, but at least a quarter of the building is original. The rooms are filled with period artifacts ranging from powder horns to spinning wheels, and the grounds include family and slave cemeteries. The biggest surprise was not the inn itself but the identity of the ranger who gave us a tour of the house and grounds—Eric Chamberlain, a descendant of the founding family. He was born there 69 years ago and expects to retire in 2010.

A short distance south, at Mile 10.3, you will encounter Emerald Mound. It’s the second-largest mound in the continental U.S., behind only Monks Mound at Cahokia in Illinois. You can park at the base of it, from which a walkway zigzags up the first level. Two smaller mounds rest atop the large base mound. From the top of the lower mound you can take steps, complete with handrail, to the top of the larger second-tier mound. The mountainous size of this complex—the magnitude of the effort to build it—is dazzling. The base mound is 435 feet wide, 770 feet long, and 35 feet tall. The larger of the two minor mounds reaches another 30 feet in height. Emerald Mound was built by transporting soil to pack around an extant hill, creating an artificial plateau. It’s a Mississippian structure, built and occupied between A.D. 1250 and 1600 by the ancestors of the Natchez. Smaller mounds that once surrounded the base have disappeared due to plowing and building; across the road from Emerald is a cluster of small houses and trailers.

Emerald Mound is a huge Mississippian structure that dates to A.D. 1250.

The Parkway ends south of here, on the north side of Natchez. I arrived in this beautiful riverside town with the feeling that I had glimpsed the ghosts of slaves throughout our journey down the Trace, but I had never once heard their voices. At Mount Locust, for example, the family cemetery is full of handsome gravestones and guarded by a wrought-iron fence and a chalk-white angel. The slave cemetery, in contrast, is a roughly delineated space in the nearby woods, claiming a single gravestone that was not visible. A nearby sign names the slaves who may have been buried there.

Then, at the end of the line in Natchez, we found the missing voice. In the William Johnson House museum you can find the words of a diary-keeping freed slave literally hanging in the air, incised on hanging glass panels alongside artifacts, documents, and photographs from his life as a hardworking barber. Johnson was born in 1809, the same year as Abraham Lincoln. At the height of the Trace’s importance, in 1820, he was legally freed by his owner, also named William Johnson, whom scholars suspect was his father. The greatest surprise for me in his diaries—a fat volume of which are available in the museum’s gift shop—was that, as a successful businessman, this former slave wound up buying slaves of his own.

While you’re in Natchez, walk the town’s beautiful streets and admire the many historic homes, such as the grand columned mansion Rosalie, perched seemingly unchanged above the ever-changing Mississippi River. Check out the Natchez Museum of African-American History and Culture. Look up the many venues where you can hear blues and gospel and other music that grew out of the lives and history of this fascinating region.

The Grand Village of the Natchez Indians is a 128-
And finally there is Natchez Under-the-Hill, an area below a bluff and next to the Mississippi, where Natchez was born. A number of early 19th-century buildings still stand at this place that was then the starting point for Kaintucks and others headed up the Trace. The Trace’s former travelers—the wild game, the boatmen, the Choctaw and Natchez, are long gone, and most of the original Trace has vanished back into the woods. But the Natchez Trace Parkway can still take you time-traveling past the mounds and inns, past the silent artifacts and the stories they tell.

MICHAEL SIMS’s latest natural science book is In the Womb: Animals from the National Geographic Society.
The Patricia Campbell sites, the Conservancy’s latest acquisitions in Oregon, lie at the bottom of Rock Creek Canyon, in the north-central part of the state. The two rockshelters were recorded in 1938 by Alex Krieger of the University of Oregon, who was surveying other well-known sites in north-central Oregon. He noted black and red pictographs at the larger of the two sites and flakes in both. “These rockshelters undoubtedly contain much interesting material,” he wrote.

Wanting to preserve the sites in the name of his deceased sister, Patricia, who previously owned the land, Mac Campbell, the current landowner, contacted Catherine Dickson with the Cultural Resources Protection Program of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Dickson and her colleagues visited the sites in 2006.

Rock Creek was used as a travel corridor from the Columbia River to the uplands, according to oral histories from tribal members and local residents. It once offered a variety of fish and game, and the surrounding rocky hillsides produced edible roots. The great-grandparents of today’s tribal members fished and lived at nearby Celilo Falls and traveled up Rock Creek between salmon runs to gather roots and berries and hunt deer and elk.

The pictograph rockshelter is roughly 400 feet wide, and as much as 24 feet deep and nine feet tall. Dickson found fragments of mammal bones, many of which were burned, and river mussel shells there. She and her colleagues also noted more than 100 flakes, as well as fragments of an obsidian biface and a pestle.

The anthropomorphic and zoomorphic rock art images are generally of a style known as North Oregon Rectilinear. This style is thought to have originated more than 2,000 years ago and extended into the historical period. The majority of the site is intact, although some looting and vandalism to the rock images has occurred.

Approximately 50 flakes were found in or near the other rockshelter, which is about 100 feet wide and 20 feet deep. A section of that site was badly looted.

Dickson told the Conservancy about the sites, and it is in the process of purchasing them from Campbell.

—Julie Clark

Conservancy
Plan of Action

SITE: Patricia Campbell
STATUS: The sites are endangered by looters.
ACQUISITION: The Conservancy has an option to purchase the sites. The purchase price and costs of stabilizing and fencing the sites is $35,000.
HOW YOU CAN HELP: Please send contributions to The Archaeological Conservancy, attn: Patricia Campbell, 5301 Central Ave. NE, Suite 902, Albuquerque, NM 87108-1517

This panel contains some of the pictographs found in one of the rockshelters.
Around 1845, a number of Tennessee slaveholders, experiencing a change of heart, released their slaves. These freed slaves took up residence at Miller Grove, in the southeastern portion of the free state of Illinois, where their former owners purchased land for them.

In many ways, Miller Grove was a typical 19th-century Midwest community. It is comprised of a number of dispersed farmsteads focused on small-scale, mixed agriculture. The principal crops were wheat, corn, beans, peas, and tobacco. Cattle, sheep, and horses were kept in small numbers, and butter was made to be sold at market. The community was centered on its church, which also served as its schoolhouse.

Miller Grove is unusual in that it was created mainly by freed slaves who managed to establish and maintain an independent community in a time of great racial oppression. It's also thought to have been a stop on the Underground Railroad, as might be expected given the racial make-up of the community and its location only 12 miles from the slave state of Kentucky. It is known that two of the founders of the town were subscribers to an abolitionist newspaper, and documents of The American Missionary Association, a leading Abolitionist organization, listed them as “Active Friends of the Society.”

Miller Grove’s population peaked about 1900, when 20 families totaling 108 people resided there. It then declined as soil exhaustion made farming difficult and people moved north for jobs in coal mines and factories. By 1930, the community had largely disappeared. Subsequently, the Shawnee National Forest was established and much of Miller Grove was incorporated into it.

Since 1998 the National Forest Service, working with students from Tennessee State University, has conducted volunteer excavations through its “Passport in Time” program at Miller Grove, where young and old alike have aided the archaeologists in revealing the story of the community. The research has focused on the homes of the original families, as well as the church and school. Future plans include establishing a hiking trail linking the archaeological sites.

In the Spring of 2009, Shawnee National Forest officials informed the Conservancy that Wilbert McClure, a descendent of the founder of Miller Grove and the community’s last African-American landowner, had passed away. The Forest Service asked that we purchase McClure’s 20-acre parcel with the intention of selling it to the Forest Service at a future date so that it can be subsumed into the Shawnee National Forest. The parcel contains a cistern and remains of the house foundation.

The Conservancy contacted Alma McClure, Wilbert’s widow, and negotiated the purchase at fair-market price. “This land was always important to Wilbert as a legacy from his mother,” said Alma. “I’m happy that we’ve been able to preserve it for the future.” —Paul Gardner
Seaside lies at the southern end of massive sand dunes on Oregon’s north coast known as the Clatsop Plains. Four thousand years ago people settled this area, establishing three major villages. The Conservancy has recently acquired a portion of one of those villages, known as the Avenue site.

The site was first recorded in the early 1950s by archaeologist Lloyd Collins, and in the 1960s it was investigated by amateur archaeologists. Tom Connolly, a University of Oregon archaeologist, evaluated and mapped the site in 1988. He returned there in 2002 with another University of Oregon archaeologist, Guy Tasa, at the request of the Oregon Department of Transportation to conduct test excavations in advance of a proposed highway relocation project.

Their investigations revealed cultural deposits over five feet in depth. The recovered artifacts included projectile points, bifaces, dentalium beads, fishing gorges, and bone whistle fragments. Their data indicated that the Avenue site was first occupied around 2000 B.C. But the site’s dense midden deposits, which are one of the hallmarks of a large village, date to A.D. 300. It appears to have been continuously occupied for the next 700 years. “The site was finally abandoned due to dramatic changes in the geomorphology in the area,” according to Connolly.

The diversity of the Avenue site’s faunal assemblage indicates that the inhabitants took advantage of both marine and terrestrial resources. The test excavations recovered mollusks that were known to inhabit calmer waters, like those in bays. Since there is no bay at Seaside, the faunal evidence indicates the area has undergone significant geomorphological change over the years.

The cultural assemblage from one of the neighboring village sites contains artifacts that resemble those of an artistic tradition from the Lower Fraser River area in southwestern Canada; consequently Connolly wrote “This link suggests that regular long distance contacts, feasible only by oceangoing watercraft, were taking place between these coastal cultural centers.” Future excavation at the Avenue site could yield information to support this interesting hypothesis.

“The three sites in the Seaside area reflect a level of cultural complexity not observed anywhere else on the Oregon coast, and in fact anywhere else on the entire southern portion of the Northwest Coast culture area,” said Rick Minor, senior archaeologist for Heritage Research Associates.

Neal Maine, the director of the North Coast Land Conservancy, informed the Conservancy that a portion of the site was going to be sold. Recognizing the value of the site, the Conservancy used POINT funds to quickly acquire it. —Julie Clark
The Conservancy saves a mound from a 1,400-year-old site in Louisiana.

The Conservancy has acquired part of Troyville, a mound group that was once believed to have been largely destroyed. Named for the 18th-century plantation on which it was located, Troyville was situated at the confluence of the Tensas, Ouachita, and Little rivers. It is the type-site for the Troyville culture and dates to approximately A.D. 600.

Troyville’s large, elaborate, platform mounds were presumably used for public rituals or ceremonies. The earliest descriptions of Troyville indicate it held as few as six and as many as 12 mounds, but all accounts agree that the site was dominated by what was called the Great Mound, which stood approximately 80 feet high and consisted of three levels—two rectangular mounds, crowned by a conical mound. The Great Mound was surrounded by smaller mounds ranging in heights from 12 to 20 feet. Troyville also had an embankment on its southern and western sides.

Troyville suffered as the region was settled. In 1871, the town of Jonesville was established on top of the site, and by 1896 one of the smaller mounds on the riverfront had been graded to allow better access to the steamboat wharf. Several other mounds served as foundations for buildings and houses. At that point, the Great Mound had been reduced to about 45 feet. By 1931, most of the mound was sold as fill dirt that was used in a bridge construction project.

The Smithsonian Bureau of
Ethnology's Walker Winslow visited the site a few months after the Great Mound was nearly leveled and determined that Troyville still contained valuable information, so he excavated the site in 1932. His "discoveries included split-cane domes 25 feet in diameter, wooden planks up to seven feet in length, palmetto covered floors, a palisade wall at the base of the mound, log steps up the corner of the mound, and layers of cane matting secured to the mound with wooden stakes," says Joe Saunders of the Louisiana Division of Archaeology. "His 1936 report included 12 photographs of his phenomenal finds."

Winslow identified the smaller mounds, the remains of which were scattered among neighborhood yards, churches, and other buildings. Years later, Saunders and his colleague, archaeologist Reca Bamburg-Jones, identified a large part of Troyville that was hidden beneath the modern town of Jonesville, including the remains of one of the mounds, known as Mound 4, in the backyard of an old house. Saunders dug a test unit in the mound and uncovered a pit with over 1,100 pottery sherds, suggesting that, although it's been reduced to a height of about five feet, it still contains valuable information.

With the help of a memorial fund established for Louisiana's late State Archaeologist, Tom Eubanks, the Conservancy purchased the site from C.R. Craddock, whose wife's family owned the property for many years. The old house was recently torn down, and the Conservancy will landscape and fence the site. Mound 4 will now serve as a research preserve that suggests the glory of ancient Troyville.

—Jessica Crawford
CONSERVANCY

Field Notes

Soil Core Reveals Data About Bates Mound

SOUTHEAST—A team of archaeologists recently took soil cores from the Conservancy’s Bates Mound, which is located in southwestern Mississippi near the city of Natchez. This procedure can help determine how many building stages a mound has, provide samples for radio carbon dating, and recover small diagnostic artifacts that can indicate when the mound was built.

An examination of the soil’s qualities, such as color and texture, can indicate the degree of weathering of the soil since the mound was constructed. While additional testing is required to confirm a mound’s age, soil core analysis can provide a great deal of information and has played a large role in the identification of Middle Archaic period (ca. 3700 B.C.) mounds in Louisiana.

The archaeologists had been uncertain about Bates’ age, as very few artifacts had been found on the mound itself or in the pasture around it. So they decided that taking soil cores would be a quick, non-destructive means to obtain more data about the mound.

Chip McGimsey, Louisiana state archaeologist, and Joe Saunders, an archaeologist with the Louisiana Division of Archaeology, conducted the coring with the assistance of

Jessica Crawford, the Conservancy’s Southeast regional director, retired Natchez archaeologist Joseph V. Frank, and Vincas Steponaitis, director of the Research Laboratories of Archaeology at the University of North Carolina.

The core, which was nearly eight feet in length, was taken from the center of the mound.

Examining the core, the archaeologists discerned the foundation of the mound at a depth of about six feet, meaning Bates was about six feet high. The core showed no break or drastic change in soil color or texture that would suggest a pause in mound construction, indicating that it was a “single-stage mound” built in one episode.

The soil at the top of the core seemed weathered and aged, resembling that found in mounds that were built approximately 2,000 to 3,000 years ago. If further testing corroborates this suspicion, Bates will be acknowledged as the oldest known mound in the area.

Recovery Work at Pamplin Pipe Factory

NORTHEAST—Last February, the staff of the Conservancy’s Eastern Regional Office conducted work at its newest preserve in Virginia, the Pamplin Pipe Factory. The site, which was in operation from the 1860s to the 1950s, was once the largest tobacco pipe producer in the world, turning out a million clay pipe bowls a month at the factory’s peak.

This vast production also generated a vast amount of waste. For a single firing of 200,000 bowls, 20,000 might be discarded due to deforming or breaking. Consequently, the grounds surrounding the factory and brick kiln were covered with pipe bowls and fragments.

In an effort to discourage looting and trespass, the Conservancy’s staff conducted a controlled surface collection at the site to recover the visible artifacts. The process consisted of mapping and photographing each of the kiln features, and the careful removal of all exposed artifacts.
a single day, approximately 20 pounds of pipe bowls and pipe-making material were recovered from the site. The Conservancy donated these items to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, where they will be permanently curated.

In addition to the controlled surface collection, the Conservancy is also fencing the site and awaiting an architectural assessment of the factory.

Research Resumes at the Carson Site

SOUTHEAST—In January, the University of Mississippi’s Center for Archaeological Research resumed work at the Conservancy’s Carson site near the Mississippi River in northwest Mississippi.

The Center worked on a portion of the site where the Conservancy holds an archaeological easement. The work consisted of remote sensing surveys, mapping, and excavating wall trenches, postmolds, and storage and garbage pits. These features were exposed when the landowner removed approximately a foot of topsoil to improve the drainage of an agricultural field.

A map of the site published in 1894 shows 80 mounds, one of which was enclosed by a large embankment. Though only six mounds remain, the site still contains a wealth of archaeological information. At last count, 1,214 postmolds, 103 pits, and 13 wall trenches had been recorded.

The research is providing new insight into the types of structures that once stood at Carson and the types of activities that took place there. Archaeologists Jay Johnson and Gabe Wrobel of the University of Mississippi and John Connaway of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History plan to continue working at the site for the next several years.

Numerous pipe bowls fill the center of the kiln chamber. The discarded bowls were used to cover the down draft flue of the kiln.
First Peoples In A New World: Colonizing Ice Age America
By David J. Meltzer
(University of California Press, 2009; 464 pgs., illus., $30 cloth; www.ucpress.edu)

For the past 30 years, a debate has been raging among archaeologists and other scientists as to the discovery and colonization of the Western Hemisphere by Native Americans. In 1977, archaeologists led by Tom Dillehay discovered a site at Monte Verde in southern Chile that was reliably dated to 14,500 years ago, almost 1,000 years before the accepted date for American colonization. Many other discoveries in several scientific disciplines followed, and the argument continues to pick up steam.

This book tells the story of the new claims and discoveries that have appeared in the last 30 years or so as told by one of the leading participants, David Meltzer, an archaeologist at Southern Methodist University. He examines the various lines of inquiry—genetics, geology, linguistics, physical anthropology, and, of course, archaeology—to provide a cutting-edge synthesis of our understanding of the settlement of the Americas.

Meltzer focuses on two themes. The first is what’s known about the original Americans and the physical, climatic, and ecological conditions of the last Ice Age in which they lived. There is also a lively chapter on the megafauna of the Pleistocene that went extinct at about the same time humans arrived in the New World. The second theme examines the methods of these researchers and their development of new, often contradictory, models.

This is an insider’s account of the leading controversy in American archaeology today. Written in a lively style for the general reader, it is both informative and full of entertaining descriptions of the sites, personalities, and ideas that fuel the debate. Richly illustrated and well produced, it is an outstanding contribution to the literature on this compelling topic.

—Mark Michel

Speaking with the Ancestors: Mississippian Stone Statuary of the Tennessee–Cumberland Region
By Kevin E. Smith and James V. Miller
(University of Alabama Press, 2009; 280 pgs., illus., $38 paper, $60 cloth; www.uapress.ua.edu)

The stone statuary of the Mississippian cultures of the Southeast represents perhaps the most enigmatic artifacts of that region. Archaeologist Kevin Smith of Middle Tennessee University and the late James Miller, an independent Choctaw scholar, have in this volume compiled the history of 42 of these fascinating statues from the Tennessee and Cumberland River systems. They obtained data from early documents and public and private collections, and they measured, analyzed, and photographed the statues.

Early European visitors noted temples and shrines of Native Americans that were decorated with idols made of wood, pottery, and stone. The authors conclude that both the ethnographic and archaeological evidence suggest that these statues were created to use in shrines for the veneration of ancestors. The two most definable themes in this region are the male-female pairs and the Old Woman. The pairs, which may represent progenitors, are largely restricted to the central Tennessee and north Georgia areas. The most spectacular example of a pair, carved from white marble and painted, is from the famed Etowah Mounds in Georgia. The Old Woman is more widely distributed and may represent the “earth mother” common in oral traditions across North America.

The authors remind us that most of these extant statues have no archaeological context and they hope that new examples will be discovered that offer greater insights into these fascinating works of art.
American archaeology

Reviews

The Great Basin: People and Places in Ancient Times
Edited by Catherine S. and Don D. Fowler
(School for Advanced Research Press, 2008; 158 pgs., illus., $25 paper; www.sarpres.sarweb.org)

The Great Basin and neighboring western Colorado Plateau occupy most of Nevada and Utah, as well as portions of California, Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming, and Colorado—an incredibly diverse region that remains one of the United States’ most sparsely populated.

Two recently published books provide up-to-date syntheses of the past inhabitants and changing environments of the Great Basin. Steven Simms’ well-illustrated book gives a detailed yet highly readable synthesis of human adaptation to the ancient environments of this region. Frequent sidebars serve to explain and highlight important concepts, and extensive end notes provide additional detail and support for his interpretations, making the book accessible and providing a great deal of information for those wishing to delve deeper into the topic. Stunning original artwork with detailed captions convey the diversity and dynamics of past Great Basin peoples and their adaptations.

Catherine and Don Fowlers’ edited volume offers 19 short chapters by knowledgeable researchers about how people lived in this challenging environment. The topics range from the region’s paleo-environments and its early peopling, to the Archaic period, to the Fremont culture and their rock art. While focusing on archaeology, many of the authors use ethnology to flesh out their interpretations of the uses and meanings of Great Basin artifacts and landscapes. The book contains gorgeous color photos and excellent maps and illustrations.

These Great Basin volumes are among the few to focus specifically on this often-ignored region, and they are particularly timely given the amount of work done in the region in the past 20 years. Both are highly relevant to modern times, as they relate how the great flexibility and resilience of these peoples helped them cope with tremendous climatic and environmental changes. —Tamara Stewart

Ancient Peoples of the Great Basin and Colorado Plateau
By Steven R. Simms
(Left Coast Press, 2008; 288 pgs., illus., $26.95 paper, $65 cloth; www.LCoastPress.com)

The Ancient Southwest: Chaco Canyon, Bandelier, and Mesa Verde
By David E. Stuart
(University of New Mexico Press, 2009; 152 pgs., illus., $19 paper; www.unmpress.com)

In 1982, University of New Mexico archaeologist David Stuart began writing newspaper columns on Southwestern archaeology. Readers were quickly hooked. This delightful volume reprints many of these columns. It is a layman’s primer, filled with delightful anecdotes about the fantastic ruins of the Southwest and the archaeologists who study them.

Stuart demystifies the famous sites of Chaco Canyon, Bandelier, and Mesa Verde, but more importantly he focuses on little known sites and cultures like the Mogollon and Mimbres. Each column unravels a small part of the Native American legacy, from the Paleo-Indians of Clovis and Folsom, New Mexico to the modern Pueblos. Hunter-gathers evolved into ancient farmers who tended crops of corn, beans, and squash. Settlements became larger and more complex, culminating in the Chacoan system of the 12th century A.D. that included many towns connected somehow to the center.

Stuart’s Ancient Southwest combines science, legend, and adventure to immerse the reader in the 13,000 year history of the American Southwest.
Cahokia and the Middle Mississippian Culture

**When:** September 17 – 20, 2009  
**Where:** Missouri and Illinois  
**How Much:** $795 ($145 single supplement)

Join us on our exploration of the phenomenal earthworks of Cahokia and the central Mississippi and Illinois River Valleys. Inhabited around A.D. 700 to 1400, Cahokia was the premier Mississippian town and the center of the most sophisticated prehistoric Indian civilization north of Mexico. This ancient city, located across the Mississippi River from what is now St. Louis, covered nearly six square miles and was home to thousands of people. Monks Mound, the great platform mound in Cahokia’s central ceremonial area, is the largest prehistoric earthen construction in the New World.

In addition to Cahokia, you’ll visit Mastodon State Historic site, which has provided evidence of humans hunting Ice Age elephants, and Dickson Mounds, a Mississippian mound and village center that flourished 800 years ago and today boasts a state-of-the-art interactive museum. Midwest archaeological experts will join you on this fascinating trip.

Chaco Canyon in Depth

**When:** September 19 – 27, 2009  
**Where:** New Mexico, Colorado  
**How Much:** $1,995 ($230 single supplement)

Explore the vast cultural system of Chaco Canyon and the extensive network of outlying communities that developed in northwestern New Mexico and southwestern Colorado from A.D. 800 to 1140. We’ll visit Pueblo Bonito and other spectacular great houses in Chaco Canyon as well as the great kiva at Casa Rinconada. We’ll hike to some of the most spectacular and remote sites in the canyon. We’ll also have the unique opportunity to visit many of the most important outlying communities that are integral parts of the entire Chacoan complex still being uncovered by researchers. Scholars are still struggling to understand how this vast system developed and operated, and why it suddenly collapsed around 1140. To complete the experience, we’ll spend two memorable nights camping in Chaco Canyon, and we’ll also tour Acoma Pueblo. Some of the leading Chaco experts will join us.
Master Potters of the Southern Deserts

When: October 2 – 12, 2009  
Where: Arizona, New Mexico, Mexico  
How Much: $2,495 ($350 single supplement)

Join us for a magical journey through time studying some of the world’s most beautiful pottery crafted by people from the Hohokam, Mimbres, and Casas Grandes regions, and replicated by modern masters today. The trip includes Hohokam ruins and pottery from the Phoenix and Tucson areas, Spanish missions and presidios, and a behind the scenes look at the Arizona State Museum. You’ll also see New Mexico’s Gila Cliff Dwellings, extensive collections of Mimbres pottery, northern Mexico’s Casas Grandes, and the potters of Mata Ortiz. Archaeological experts will join us throughout the trip.

This stunning example of Casas Grandes-style pottery came from the village of Mata Ortiz in northern Mexico.

Oaxaca

When: October 24 – November 3, 2009  
Where: Mexico  
How Much: $2,495 ($350 single supplement)

Join us in Oaxaca, Mexico during one of the most unusual festivals anywhere—the Day of the Dead. On this day, people prepare home altars and cemeteries to welcome the dead, who are believed to return to enjoy the food and drink they indulged in while alive. The Day of the Dead is a time of celebrations.

You’ll have the opportunities to explore Oaxaca’s museums and markets. Our tour also explores the Mixtecan and Zapotecan archaeological sites in the region, including Mitla, Monte Albán, San José Mogote, and Dainzú. You’ll also visit several crafts villages featuring weaving, pottery, carved animals, and other local art.
Patrons of Preservation

The Archaeological Conservancy would like to thank the following individuals, foundations, and corporations for their generous support during the period of February through April 2009. Their generosity, along with the generosity of the Conservancy’s other members, makes our work possible.

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The Anasazi Circle is an elite group of members who contribute $2,000 or more annually to The Archaeological Conservancy’s ongoing efforts to permanently preserve America’s cultural treasures. Since its inception in 1993, participation in the Anasazi Circle has increased by over 267 percent.

Anasazi Circle member support is essential to the Conservancy’s ability to continually expand its preservation goals. It is crucial to preserve information regarding our nation’s past so we can better understand it. Cultural evidence is often destroyed before proper analysis can be done and the knowledge is lost forever. The Conservancy uses donations to act quickly to protect a site and prevent significant information from being destroyed.

Benefits of Anasazi Circle membership include discounts on tours, recognition in American Archaeology, an award-winning magazine, and an invitation to an exclusive seminar weekend. This year’s Anasazi Circle Weekend will explore the archaeology of the Chama River Valley in September. By sending in your donation of $2,000 or more today, you can ensure your invitation to the Conservancy’s 2009 Anasazi Circle weekend.
HISTORY
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113 Lincoln Avenue, Santa Fe  505-476-5200
Ottens Pueblo on Sugarloaf Mountain
A Conservancy preserve since 1991

Rooms with a view 600 years ago.
Part of our cultural heritage today.

Make your mark in time.
Some Conservancy members think the only way to help save archaeological sites is through membership dues. While dues are a constant lifeline, there are many ways you can support the Conservancy’s work, both today and well into the future. And by supporting the Conservancy, you not only safeguard our past for your children and grandchildren, you also may save some money.

Place stock in the Conservancy.
Evaluate your investments. Some members choose to make a difference by donating stock. Such gifts offer a charitable deduction for the full value instead of paying capital gains tax.

Give a charitable gift annuity.
Depending on your circumstances, you may be able to make a gift of cash and securities today that lets you receive extensive tax benefits as well as an income for as long as you live.

Leave a lasting legacy.
Many people consider protecting our cultural heritage by remembering the Conservancy in their will. While providing us with a dependable source of income, bequests may qualify you for an estate tax deduction.

Whatever kind of gift you give, you can be sure we’ll use it to preserve places like Sugarloaf Pueblo and our other 375 sites across the United States.

Mail information requests to:
The Archaeological Conservancy
Attn: Planned Giving
5301 Central Avenue NE
Suite 962
Albuquerque, NM 87108-1517
Or call:
(505) 266-1540

Yes, I’m interested in making a planned-giving donation to The Archaeological Conservancy and saving money on my taxes. Please send more information on:

☐ Gifts of stock  ☐ Bequest  ☐ Charitable gift annuities

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