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The Buried Past: An Archaeological History of Philadelphia, by John L. Cotter, Daniel G. Roberts, and Michael Parrington, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1992. xxv+524pp. ISBN 0-8122-3142-2. \$39.95 (cloth).

by

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Having been involved in both contract and academic archaeology in recent years, I have heard (and sympathized with) a pervasive lament. It seems increasingly common that even the best contract archaeology is rarely published, but compiled into reports that disappear into state repositories and contract firm offices, never again to be thought of except (maybe) when it comes time to write the next report. There is an increasing body of both gray literature and gray excavation: work that is done in compliance with state and federal laws but which never reaches an audience of more than a dozen or so readers. Given this discouraging trend, the compendious *The Buried Past* is a welcomed synthesis of several generations of academic and CRM investigations into the historical archaeology of the Greater Philadelphia region.

Given the breadth of its coverage, the title of this volume might have been "An Encyclopedia of Philadelphia Historical Archaeology." The first of its four "Parts" consists of two introductory chapters, respectively providing overviews of the prehistory and history of the Philadelphia region. The real substance of the book, however, concentrates on the historical archaeology of Philadelphia and the surrounding region. Part II focuses on districts within the Philadelphia metropolis and its immediate environs while Part III considers the surrounding counties. The fourth and final part consists of two chapters which provide, respectively, a brief synthetic interpretation of the material covered in the book and a prospective view into future research.

Part II, "Archaeological Sites in Downtown Philadelphia and Philadelphia County", and Part III, "Archaeological Sites in the Surrounding Counties", comprise the principle body of the volume. Each of the chapters in this section of the book provides succinct discussions of the history and results of archaeological investigations of sites located within the various districts in and around Philadelphia. Chapter 3, the first chapter of Part II, focuses on Independence National Historical Park, the site of the first large scale excavations in Philadelphia. Reflecting the quality of the entire book, the discussions on the specific sites within the park are both concise and informative. For example, the authors summarize the investigations into "Benjamin Franklin's Lost House." One of the priorities in the development of Independence National Historical Park, according to the authors, was the identification of the spot where Benjamin Franklin had built his house. The authors provide an informative summary of the architectural and historical research that was compiled during the investigation, which suggested both the form and plan of the long disappeared house. Based on various Franklin family correspondence, the authors discuss the range of material culture known to have been in the family's possession. These discussions serve as an introduction to the synopsis of the archaeological investigations. The authors provide a succinct discussion of the results of various excavations which took place over the course of several years. They include a description of the types of features uncovered, as well as an analysis of the material found within them.

One of the strengths of this volume is its conscious effort to incorporate work that is not traditionally published or cited. Many of the sites incorporated into the book were excavated by consulting firms. For example, in chapter 9 (“Montgomery County”), the authors describe in some detail the excavations conducted by Barbara Liggett known as Hope Lodge. The discussion is based on Liggett’s report on file at the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission in Harrisburg. The authors regularly refer to such contract reports throughout the book. In the bibliography under Liggett’s name alone, the authors list twelve unpublished reports. The authors also refer to other types of archaeological sources that are usually overlooked, including unpublished undergraduate theses and group projects completed by students at the University of Pennsylvania.

A significant attraction of the volume is the authors’ revelation of the history of the political nature of Philadelphia archaeology. The volume discusses, for example, why and how the federal government and the city of Philadelphia, with the assistance of archaeologists, chose to raze dozens of historic buildings in the downtown area. The purpose of this early example of urban renewal (termed “urban renaissance” in the text, p. 78) was the creation of an urban park which celebrates the lives and buildings of pre-eminent men, including William Penn, Bishop William White, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin. Reflecting the interests of the National Park Service, the chapter on Independence Park concentrates on the archaeology of the “great men” who dominate the mainstream history of colonial America. Indeed, the authors further reveal the relationship between political power, archaeology and historical restoration in brief anecdotes about the Graff House and the Kosciuszko House. The Graff House was the place where Jefferson is reputed to have drafted the Declaration of Independence. When the vacant site of this house was donated, the National Park Service decided to build a replica of only half of the house—the half in which Jefferson lived in the 1770’s! The authors suggest that the Kosciuszko House, the temporary home of a Polish officer who served in the Revolutionary War, would not have been incorporated into the park at all if it had not been for the “force of Polish patriotism in Philadelphia in the 1970’s” (p.127). According to the authors the “Park Service resisted the [donation] of the Kosciuszko House...as long as it politically could” (p. 127).

The excellent summaries of excavations and their results are augmented well by such anecdotal insights into the machinations of Philadelphia archaeology. For example, one of the most interesting discussions in the book concerns the archaeology, exhumation and reburial of the Unknown Soldier of the American Revolution which took place in the 1950’s. This unknown soldier now rests in a park at Washington Square. The impetus behind creating this memorial, according to the authors, was the desire by nearby businesses to clean-up the square, which had become “a scene of total neglect; below ground, a public lavatory seemed to be a particularly attractive magnet for social deviants of all kinds” (p. 205). The executives of these businesses created the Washington Square Planning Committee, which financed and directed the project. The archaeology required to locate, identify and exhume the remains of a Revolutionary War veteran from the mass graves found within Washington Square was politically charged. As the state government at that time was dominated by Republicans, while the city of Philadelphia was Democratic, the State Archaeologist in charge of the excavations agreed to conduct the project only after it was established that his identity could be concealed and that “all legal and political safeguards were taken to protect the work from disruption” (p. 207). When the safeguards did not work, and the press moved in to explore the excavation, the State Archaeologist abandoned the project.

The Buried Past is a comprehensive record of historic sites archaeology in the Philadelphia region. The authors make a significant contribution to the literature not only by compiling concise summaries on specific sites, but by utilizing what are usually inaccessible and forgotten sources. This text will prove useful to students, academics and consultants working in Greater Philadelphia and serves as a model for others who may wish to shed light on the vast bodies of gray literature accumulating in anthropology departments, state libraries and CRM firm offices.