

VIII. Book announcements

From **Andy Christenson**:

Picking the Lock of Time: Developing Chronology in American Archaeology. 2003. Edited by James Truncer. 176 pages 6 X 9. Cloth: \$55.00, ISBN: 0-8130-2678-4. University Press of Florida.

Overview

'Examines a fascinating and important period in the history of American archaeology, when archaeologists were beginning to consider questions of chronology and the measurement of time. The various chapters deal with some of the founding figures in the intellectual history of American archaeology and their major contributions.' — **John Scarry**, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Exploring the issue of chronology – the crucial determination of the age of an artifact or site – these essays document the contributions of early American archaeologists, both well known and obscure, who helped crack the 'chronology problem'.

The archaeologists whose central focus was chronology became known as 'cultural historians', and their work in the early 20th century transformed the status of the discipline: for the first time, those outside the field began to view archaeology as a scientific endeavor that attempts to explain human behavior in the past. By considering the intellectual concerns of pioneer archaeologists as well as the complex social and institutional environments in which they worked, the authors supplement the prevailing – and sometimes misleading – historical treatments of this formative time in American archaeology.

While many of their methods remain useful today, cultural historians had no theoretical basis for explaining the occurrence of some of the changes in archaeological records. Their off-the-cuff interpretations soon began to appear arbitrary, and their approach has fallen from favor. On the other hand, cultural historians were successful because they formulated testable hypotheses and viewed change as differences in frequency, not kind, of artifact forms. Addressing these challenging issues, the authors link the influential work of cultural historians with that of current archaeological research, contributing to an important discussion of the discipline's successes and failures as a fledgling science and its past, present, and future goals.

For those who practice and care about archaeology as well as the anthropology of science, *Picking the Lock of Time* offers a rich intellectual history of the discipline.

Contents

1. Introduction, by James Truncer
2. The First New Archaeology and the Development of Chronological Method, by Robert C. Dunnell
3. Origins of Americanist Stratigraphic Excavation Methods, by David L. Browman

4. Wissler's Gyroscope: Contexts for the Chronological Revolution, by James E. Snead
5. Nels Nelson and the Measure of Time, by Michael J. O'Brien
6. Leslie Spier and the Middle Atlantic Revolution That Never Happened, by James Truncer
7. George Langford at the Fisher Site, 1924–1928: Pioneer Stratigraphic Studies in the Midwest, by Andrew L. Christenson
8. Not So Talkative Tree Rings: Why did Archaeologists Wait for an Astronomer to Establish Tree-Ring Dating? by Stephen E. Nash

James Truncer is a lecturer in anthropological sciences at Stanford University.

IX. Books for review

James H. Simpson 2003 *Navaho Expedition. Journal of a Military Reconnaissance from Santa Fe, New Mexico, to the Navaho, Made in 1849*. University of Oklahoma Press.

Jennifer Owings Dewey 2003 *Stories on stone. Rock Art: Images from the Ancient Ones*. University of New Mexico Press.

Subscribers interested in reviewing these book please contact Tim Murray.

X. Research projects in the history of archaeology

Archives Breuil

Between European prehistory and Africanist research :

A XXth-century intellectual and institutional universe

– Call for information and collaboration –

2004–2006

Henri Breuil (1877–1961) was undoubtedly a crucial figure in twentieth-century human and social sciences: a major actor of prehistoric research in Europe and Africa, a tireless traveller,