

## IV. Publications by subscribers

Murray, T. 2007. *Milestones in Archaeology*. Santa Barbara and Oxford: ABC-Clio.

## V. Book reviews

Lawrence Keppie 2007. *William Hunter and the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow 1807–2007*. Edinburgh University Press. xvi, 190p. ill. ISBN 9780748628056.

Reviewed by Tim Murray

This interesting book celebrates the bicentenary of the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow, which (among other items) contains the treasures collected by the eighteenth century Scottish physician William Hunter. Given the spirit of the late eighteenth century Hunter's collection was extremely broad spanning anatomical and pathological preparations, coins and medals, books and manuscripts, paintings and prints, shells, coral, insects, stuffed animals and antiquities (classical and otherwise). Notwithstanding the breadth of the collection, and the impression that Hunter seemed to be insatiable in his pursuit of everything from Egyptian mummies to stuffed deer, very little Scottish material could be found among the 30,000 coins and medals, 10,000 books, 650 manuscripts, 7,500 insects, 1,500 minerals, 3,000 anatomical specimens, 5,000–6,000 shells and 200 'South Seas Curiosities' that he had accumulated by his death. This is a 'cabinet of curiosities' to conjure with!

Of greatest interest for the historian of archaeology are the antiquities (including pieces recovered from the excavation of Etruscan sites and Pompeii and Herculaneum) and the ethnographic collections of material culture from North America, East Asia and the Pacific (some items of which were brought back by crew from Captain James Cook's voyages of discovery).

Lawrence Keppie gives a thorough and at times diverting account of the history of the museum and its collections (particularly their expansion through the donation of paintings by James McNeill Whistler by his heir and furnishings, drawings and designs owned or made by the Scottish architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh). As a result we have a sound understanding of the forces that shaped Hunter's objectives, and those of his successors. Keppie concludes with an excellent summary of the importance of the collection and of the institution itself:

The Hunterian Museum and its collections have endured many vicissitudes of fortune over the last two hundred years. Indeed we must applaud the fact that the institution survived at all... William Hunter's collections have come down to us largely intact, apart from the impact of time and natural decay, an achievement in itself, since many eighteenth century libraries and natural history collections were dispersed or have been lost... (p. 135).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/bha.17207>

David La Vere 2007. *Looting Spiro Mounds: An American King Tut's Tomb*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. 256 pp., 17 b & w ills; 2 maps. ISBN: 978-0-8061-3813-8

Reviewed by Melody Herr

In the summer of 1933, in the depths of the Great Depression, two men from Oklahoma and one from

Arkansas formed the Pocola Mining Company. Together, they headed for the Kiamichi Mountains in hopes of finding gold. They found a little ore but quickly lost it to the swindler who promised to extract the gold for them. Still dreaming of riches buried in the ground, the Pocola Mining Company they headed for Le Flore County, Oklahoma.

Over the years, pot-hunters had unearthed artifacts from a cluster of earth mounds near the small town of Spiro. As the Pocola men knew well, the trade in so-called “Indian relics” was thriving. The buyers ranged from wealthy individuals to casual hobbyists to highly respected museums, all eager to add to their collections. Moreover, at a time when few states had antiquities laws and Native Americans had no legally recognized claim to the artifacts and remains of their ancestors, the relic trade was a very democratic enterprise. Anyone could be a digger or a dealer.

In spite of this wide open market – or perhaps because of it – the founders of the Pocola Mining Company took precautions to ensure that no one would cheat them of their treasure this time. They chose the largest of the Spiro Mounds and for \$300, secured a lease from the landowner granting them the privilege to excavate there for two years and sell whatever they found. Believing they had a legal, airtight claim to Craig Mound and its contents, they hired a team of unemployed locals and set to work. As soon as the men began unearthing artifacts, relic dealers arrived.

So did Forrest Clements, the chairman of the Anthropology Department at the University of Oklahoma. His colleague, Carl Guthe, had spotted dealers’ ads for spectacular rare artifacts from Spiro and asked him to investigate. As head of the National Research Council’s Committee on State Archaeological Surveys, Guthe represented a growing cadre of university-trained archaeologists who were trying to establish archaeology as a profession. To this end, they called for state protection of prehistoric sites, advocated standard excavation methods, and insisted that artifacts should belong to universities or museums. Not surprisingly, these professionals considered pot-hunters their greatest adversaries.

Clements immediately realized the potential significance of Spiro Mounds as a key to North American prehistory and offered to buy the mining company’s lease. When the Pocola men refused to sell, he appealed to the Oklahoma Legislature. In the summer of 1935, legislators passed an antiquities law that required the permission from the chair of the University of Oklahoma’s Anthropology Department – that is, Clements himself – for any archaeological excavation within state boundaries. At Clements’ prompting, the Le Flore County sheriff hastened to enforce the new law and evicted the Pocola Mining Company. Assured that Spiro Mounds were safe until he had time for his own excavation, Clements left to teach summer school in California.

The Pocola men were outraged. In their view, they had every right to excavate Craig Mound. They had found the site, they had signed a lease, and they had already spent eighteen months digging. How, then, could a college professor force them out? With Clements in California and the clock on their lease running down, the men decided to tunnel directly into Craig Mound and extract as many artifacts as quickly as possible. Twenty-six feet into the northeast side of the mound, the miners reached a burial chamber containing the largest, most exotic pre-Columbian collection ever discovered at one site. Elated, they began hauling out artifacts by the wheelbarrow load: engraved conch shells, freshwater pearls, woven baskets, ceremonial maces, decorated pottery, ritual points, effigy pipes, carved beads, and copper work.

In their haste the Pocola men carelessly broke or discarded thousands of artifacts. They were interested only in what they considered to be saleable items. In November 1935, when the lease expired, the vengeful miners set off an explosion in the heart of Craig Mound. By this time, though, their discovery was national news. Dealers, private collectors, professional archaeologists, and museum representatives, as well as curiosity seekers, flocked to the site. Craig Mound became known as the “Great Temple Mound,” and a journalist declared it the “American Tutankhamen’s Tomb”.

Again, Clements arrived late on the scene. Despite the pot-hunters’ pillaging of the mounds, he still

hoped to conduct a scientific study. Pooling donations from various institutions and individuals, he purchased the land where Craig Mound stood for \$600. Between June 1936 and October 1941, with labor supplied by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and a team of graduate students, he supervised the excavation of Spiro Mounds. When the United States entered World War II, Clements closed up shop, literally. He wrote only one article on Spiro. Kenneth Orr, one of the graduate students who participated in the excavation, published the first substantial studies of Spiro artifacts in the late 1940s and 1950s.

Both contemporaries and later archaeologists criticized Clements for his destructive excavation methods, his failure to keep the Spiro collection together, and his meager publication record. Some even blamed him for the ruin of Craig Mound because, supposedly, he could have found a way to collaborate equitably with the Pocola men.

In *Looting Spiro Mounds*, David La Vere recounts both the history of Spiro Mounds, from 800 to 1450 CE, and the rediscovery of the site in the 1930s. Both are engaging stories. Unfortunately for the reader, however, La Vere tells the stories in alternating chapters. He would have done better to present the history of Spiro as a continuation of the site's rediscovery. By showing how professional archaeologists of the late twentieth century worked out the development and decline of Mississippian culture at the site, La Vere could have further emphasized the tragedy of the looting and reinforced his message about the value of professional techniques and laws to safeguard sites.

Dean J. Saitta 2007. *The Archaeology of Collective Action*. Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida. xx, 140p. ills; maps. ISBN 9780813030708.

Reviewed by Tim Murray

The University Press of Florida lists this as the first in a new series "American Experience in Archaeological Perspective" which will be under the editorship of Michael Nassaney. Part of the goal of this new series is to make archaeology accessible to the public and to show how archaeological interventions can be meaningful (and potentially valuable) in the lives of others. For Nassaney (and indeed Saitta) the strength of engagement has the capacity to transform (reform?) archaeology from a discipline of middle class concerns that needs to be dragged back from the brink of irrelevancy (Saitta's words). Indeed Saitta wholeheartedly embraces engagement as a means of getting the discipline onto a new footing:

As emphasized throughout this book, the battle today is first and foremost for the hearts and minds of citizens having pressing existential concerns and relatively short memories. A better understanding of collective action in history – one focused on meaningful differences, deepened and enriched by archaeological knowledge, and better translated as a piece of public memory – promises interventions that can benefit society and help perpetuate our craft a distinctive contributor to public discourse and debate (p. 112).

Weighty aspirations indeed.

Saitta uses an exercise in community archaeology to define and describe what he calls the 'archaeology of collective action'. This comprises 'collective action' amongst a group of archaeologists associated with the Colorado Coalfield War Archaeological Project (that also engaged with people outside professional archaeology), and an archaeological exploration of 'collective action' at the industrial level – particularly Colorado Coalfield Strike of 1913–1914. The book is roughly divided into two – chapters devoted towards developing the theory of the archaeology of collective action that overlie a foundational discussion of the socio-political context Saitta wants to traverse, and chapters that discuss the history and archaeology of the Ludlow tent colony, which was the focus of a violent clash between the strikers and the state militia. The outcome of this short, but at times fascinating, book is pretty predictable. The theoretical sections are much less powerful and interesting than the