

The 2010 Gordon Willey Symposium on New Deal Archaeology at the SAA Annual Meeting, St. Louis, Missouri, and Other Activities of the SAA's History of Archaeology Interest Group

Report by **Bernard K. Means** (*bkmeans@juno.com*)

The Biennial Gordon Willey Symposium on the History of Archaeology at the 2010 Society for American Archaeology (SAA) meetings this past April was well received and was one of three featured sessions at the SAA meeting. As reported in an earlier Bulletin (Means 2009), the Willey Symposium was sponsored by the SAA's History of Archaeology Interest Group (HAIG) and was entitled 'Shovel Ready: Archaeology & Roosevelt's New Deal for America'.

The focus of this session was on the legacy, current research potential, and future of, archaeology associated with federally funded work relief projects in the United States (U.S.A.) during the Great Depression (1929–1942). Other featured sessions at the 2010 SAAs were the opening session, 'Archaeology Now: Intersections of Theory, Method, and Practice', and the Ethics Bowl. I was informed, somewhat unofficially, that the Willey Symposium was added as a featured session because few other sessions provided as clear a retrospective on the early years of the SAAs – a somewhat surprising omission at the 75th anniversary of the society.

An edited volume on this New Deal archaeology session is planned, with expected publication by the University of Alabama Press in late 2011, or more likely, in early 2012 – in time for the next Biennial Gordon Willey Symposium to be held as part of the SAAs in Memphis, Tennessee. The 2012 symposium will focus on the archaeological legacy of the Tennessee Valley Authority, and is chaired by David Dye of the University of Memphis.

Here, I present a few highlights from the 2010 SAA session.

In my opening paper for the session, 'Brother, Can You Spare a Dime ... for Archaeology? The New Deal and American Archaeology', I stressed how archaeologists across the nation took advantage of virtual armies of relief workers to move tons of soil and uncover thousands of archaeological sites, ranging in size from ephemeral hunter-gatherer camps to large villages and major mound complexes. I briefly discussed the New Deal work relief programs that funded the majority of this archaeology, including the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), Civil Works Administration (CWA), Works Progress Administration/Work Projects Administration (WPA), and National Youth Administration (NYA). I also talked about how Gordon Willey, our session's namesake, started his career working as a New Deal archaeologist.

Next, **Mary McCorvie** (*Shawnee National Forest*) and **Mark Wagner** (*Center for Archaeological Investigations, Southern Illinois University Carbondale*) provided an introduction to 'The New Deal in Illinois Archaeology'. Many of the New Deal projects in Illinois were directed by archaeologists trained through the University of Chicago's field school, and included three women: Gretchen Cutter, Nan Edwards, and Harriet Smith. This is especially notable considering the rarity of women in archaeology at that time, and not just on New Deal projects.

John Doershuk and **John Cordell**, both of *the University of Iowa Office of the State Archaeologist*, talked about 'Project 1047: New Deal Archaeology in Iowa'. Iowa relief archaeology started very early with a FERA-sponsored project at the New Galena mound group. Workers received the princely sum of thirty cents an hour and could work no more than three days in a given week.

Gregory Lattanzi (*New Jersey State Museum*) followed with 'New Jersey's First Stimulus Package: The Indian Site Survey 1936 to 1941'. These investigations were supervised by Dorothy Cross, who was probably the most prominent, and the longest serving, of the few female archaeologists in charge of New Deal archaeology in the U.S.

Janet Johnson (*The State Museum of Pennsylvania*) covered 'The Foundations of Historical Archaeology in Pennsylvania', which began as an outgrowth of projects, large and small, across this state. Major attention was directed toward British and French forts associated with the mid-eighteenth century French and Indian War, as well as toward the 'trails' that connected the forts.

While these lectures focused largely on the legacy of New Deal archaeology, the next group of presentations emphasized what we can still learn from a reconsideration of these past investigations.

Amanda Regnier, **Patrick Livingood**, and **Scott Hammerstedt**, all from *the University of Oklahoma*, looked at 'The End of WPA Archaeology in Southeast Oklahoma: The Clement and McDonald Sites'. Numerous structures and graves were excavated at these two sites, producing some very elaborate pottery.

Moving to the east, **David Dye** (*University of Memphis*) examined 'An Early Mississippian Mortuary Complex at the Gray Farm Site (40SW1) in Stewart County, Tennessee'. Here, New Deal excavators discovered a burned structure that appeared to contain the remains of burned bundle burials. These were placed on a scaffold that was crushed when the clay roof of this burning charnel house collapsed. Keeping within the same state, **Anna Lunn** (*Weaver & Associates, LLC*) reviewed 'Archaeological Investigations at the Slayden Site (40HS1), Humphreys County, Tennessee'. Drawing on period field records and a new analysis of the artefacts from the site, Lunn provided a brief summary of the Slayden site's social organization. I found that Lunn's separation of individual house clusters from multiple overlapping occupations, and originally all drawn on a single map by New Deal excavators, was particularly innovative.

Scott Hammerstedt then examined 'Works Progress Administration Archaeology in Western Kentucky: Excavations at Annis Village'. Hammerstedt contrasted the WPA excavations with those conducted by Penn State from 2002 to 2004. While the Penn State excavations used more refined techniques, he noted that modern archaeologists simply are not able to conduct archaeology on the same scale as the WPA workers, because of cost considerations alone.

Keeping our focus on Kentucky, **Sissel Schroeder** (*University of Wisconsin*) emphasized 'Jonathan Creek and the Interpretive Potential of New Deal-era Collections'. Her examination of structural remains from this site showed that there were important distinctions between rectangular and circular post-mold configurations, with the former being secular in function and the latter likely reflecting cosmograms.

Stephen Nash (*Denver Museum of Nature & Science*) showed how New Deal funds were not expended simply on excavations but were also directed toward museums in 'Gender Role Reversals, Big Digs, and Myriad Exhibitions: New Deal Archaeology at the Field Museum'. Ironically, as indicated in the title of his presentation, New Deal funding led to a decrease in the proportion of women working at Chicago's Field Museum during the Great Depression; sexist administrators of New Deal monies saw men as the 'true' providers for families. Numerous exhibits by these workers were produced at the Field Museum during the Great Depression.

The session closed with three papers on archaeology at CCC camps created during the New Deal to help restore, or create, 'natural areas' for public recreation. The construction of camp-grounds, trails, and picnic areas were intended to make nature more readily accessible to everyday Americans.

Mason Miller (*Hicks and Company*) and **John Campbell** (*Center for Archaeological Studies – Texas State University*) considered 'The CCC at Garner: The Archaeology of Depression-Era Park Planning and Construction from the Survey of Garner State Park, Uvalde County, Texas'. To make the park appear as natural as possible, the CCC labored successfully at Garner State Park to remove most of the traces of their work camps; this was good for the park, but left few physical traces to be recovered by modern archaeologists.

A similar situation occurred in California, as discussed by **Mark L. Howe** (*Tonto National Forest*), **Tim Kelly** (*Sequoia National Forest*), and **Karen Miller** (*Sequoia National Forest*) in ‘The Civilian Conservation Corps in California: Uncovering Our History’. The meager archaeological evidence for CCC camps in California was contrasted with the rich documentary record.

Finally, **Carole Nash** (*James Madison University*) reviewed ‘The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Archaeology of the Recent Past in Virginia’. A combination of GIS, GPS, and the excavation of shovel test pits enabled her to locate traces of Camp Robert Fechner, named after the director of the CCC from 1933 to 1939. Her blending of modern archaeological techniques to explore this CCC camp was noteworthy.

Edwin Lyon (*Tulane University*) provided some concluding thoughts about the session. Based on his experience in cultural resource management (CRM) archaeology, and his research on New Deal archaeology (Lyon 1996), he viewed New Deal archaeology as an early but incomplete form of CRM. Lyon also noted that New Deal-style archaeology probably would not work well today. During the New Deal, labor was cheap and the tools needed to conduct archaeological investigations were few; this is certainly not the situation today.

On a final note, **Stephen Nash** of the *Denver Museum of Nature and Science* turned over the chair of the History of Archaeology Interest Group to Bernard Means at the 2010 SAAs. Stephen has to be thanked and commended for his many years of steering the History of Archaeology Interest Group, which was not always an easy task, and for the excellent Gordon Willey Symposiums that he helped to make possible. Stephen was co-chair of HAIG from 2000 to 2006 with **James Snead** (*George Mason University*), and then sole chair from 2006 to 2010. Working from the strong foundation that Stephen built, I look forward to serving as chair of HAIG for the foreseeable future.

References

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- Means, B. 2009. Shovel Ready – Archaeology and Roosevelt’s New Deal for America: The 2010 Society for American Archaeology Biennial Gordon Willey Session in the History of Archaeology. *Bulletin of the History of Archaeology* 19(2): 40–42.

New Historiographical Approaches to Archaeological Research Workshop. 9–11 September 2010, Berlin

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Recent developments in the historiography of the sciences have led to a call for a revised history of archaeology, and a move away from idealized presentations of scientific process as an inevitable progression. Historians of archaeology are beginning to use state of the art historiographical concepts and tools to trace how archaeological knowledge has been produced, and to reflect on the socio-historical conditions and spatial contexts under which this knowledge has been generated. This conference workshop, promoted by the Excellence Cluster TOPOI in Berlin, assembled scholars to discuss innovative approaches and new methods for writing histories of archaeology.

The keynote lecture by **Marianne Sommer** (*Zürich*) opened the workshop with a paper on controversies surrounding scientific evidence of the so-called eoliths in eighteenth and nineteenth-century archaeology. Eoliths were thought to be the earliest artefacts created by prehistoric men, but their form could not be clearly categorized as artificial. Sommer’s lecture illustrated that debates about the eoliths mirrored the social structure of a time when archaeology was not yet established at universities. Applying the approach of Ludwik Fleck, Sommer stressed the impact of popularized scientific knowledge, which, she claimed, could not be seen as a top-down phenomenon, but as a transmission of