

Gleanings from the First Fifty Years of Teocentli. Gleaned by Charles R. McGimsey III. Occasional Papers No. 1, *Bulletin of the History of Archaeology*. 1998. 131 pages, \$20.00

by

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Archaeological reports and monographs tend to follow a fairly formal style and it is the rare author who includes recollections of life in the field, budget cuts, or such problems as finding enough work space in the museum or department. Also, a significant amount of fieldwork never gets reported, although the Current Research section (and Notes and News before it) in *American Antiquity*, provided a great deal of valuable information not available elsewhere, until it was killed off by the editor in 1994.

For informal, personal accounts of research and many other matters, *Teocentli* is a gold mine. It was created in 1926 by Carl E. Guthe as a means for archaeologists (later others, too) to communicate with each other about their recent activities, "an informal chat around the dinner table," as Guthe said in his invitation to 45 people (39 responded!) *Teocentli* is still thriving, with about 110 contributors at present. Participation is open to all. For more on the history of *Teocentli* see *Bulletin of the History of Archaeology*, 4(2) 1994.

For the publication reviewed here McGimsey has gleaned short excerpts from fifty years of comments and observations, ranging from "got married" to "the first volume is now in press" types of entry. It is tempting to quote many of them, but a few will have to give 2 an idea of the entertainment and information that is here.

Carl Guthe (1926) "The many small jobs incident to organizing and building up our recently created Museum of Anthropology have somewhat delayed my research work."

Neil M. Judd (1926) "Just now back in the desert again, beginning the sixth season of explorations of Pueblo Bonito....This morning brought a steady five hour rain; at this moment, in midafternoon, a sandstorm is blowing. "

Alfred M. Tozzer (1926) "The most interesting thing that has happened at the Peabody Museum for a long time was the visit of the Crown Prince of Sweden."

Frank H. H. Roberts, Jr. (1927) "After that [the Pecos Conference] I went to Raton, New Mexico, to view Figgins' latest find of projectile points in association with bones of an extinct species of bison."

E. B. Renaud (1928) "I attended the Flagstaff meeting of the S. W. Division of the A.A.A.S. I seemed to have been the only defender of the Pecos chronology and terminology, against the violent attacks of older colleagues from Arizona and New Mexico."

Arthur C. Parker (1928) "Will A. Ritchie, assistant archaeologist, did some fine scouting and located several sites for future exploration."

Frank H. H. Roberts, Jr. (1928) "The summer was an unusually pleasant one [on the Piedras River in SW Colorado] because...I picked a site where there is plenty of shade and a nice cool mountain stream. Yes, the fishing was good and the trout delicious."

A. V. Kidder (1929) "In October Ricketson and I had the opportunity of putting in several days in air reconnaissance with Colonel Lindbergh over the Maya country."

Fay-Cooper Cole (1930) "The past six months have been spent in the wilds of the city of Washington, where I have hunted big game with Judd, Stirling, and other Teocentlists."

Frans Blom (1930) "The object of the expedition [to Uxmal] was to measure, cast and photograph the Nunnery Quadrangle, in order to reproduce it in full size as a Museum building at the Anthropological section of the Chicago World's Fair in 1933."

N. C. Nelson (1931) "Recently I revised and condensed our two largest and most valuable storage collections, one comprising ca. 28,000, the other 23,000 specimens. The first was accessioned in 1891, the other in 1901...they had never been gone over since first they arrived."

A. R. Kelly (1932) "The hearths of the Illini are cold and deserted; their lodges abandoned....The long winter of depression is upon us."

Charles Amsden (1932) "I hear it rumored that some of our best archaeologists have lately been on the point of sitting down and writing up field notes in sheer despair. Hard times, hard times !"

Arthur C. Parker (1932) "...the City Council has decreed that a 90 percent cut in our budget should go into effect Jan. 1, 1933."

Carl E. Guthe (1933) "In January a friend of archaeology gave the University a fellowship for research in Aboriginal North American Ceramics. When I caught my breath again, we imported Jimmy Griffin from Chicago who has been juggling potsherds in the Ceramic Repository ever since."

Arthur Woodward (1933) "Beginning March 1 and continuing through June, the Los Angeles Museum is scheduled to close its doors. The supervisors couldn't find money to keep it open."

M. W. Stirling (1933) "During the past winter I was busily engaged in supervising...archaeological projects under the Smithsonian, utilizing CWA labor...six such projects in the state of Florida....We were able to employ labor on a scale such as American archaeologists sometimes dream about but never actually experience."

Oliver LaFarge (1936) "...packing to leave for the Hopi country where I have taken on the somewhat rash job of helping the Hopis form a Tribal Council and written constitution under the Reorganization Act."

J. C. Harrington (1936) "I am undertaking the unconventional task of digging up 17th Century American Colonial history by archaeological methods. I hope to...convince some of my skeptical

acquaintances that there is a field for archaeologists in America other than that of the lowly Indian.”

“E. F. Greenman (1937) “...getting ready to go into the field...For the first time we are on a co-educational basis, with six women and the same number of men, all students of anthropology.”

Arthur R. Kelly (1937) “Exploration continues on Macon Plateau with...25 enrollees of high school education, operating under the direction of Gordon R. Willey, archaeologist and dendrochronologist who first came to the southeast last summer as a student of the Laboratory of Anthropology.... Willey is now archaeological foreman.”

“A. L. Kroeber (1938) “...a highly stimulating spring quarter at the University of Chicago, where it proved that the dialect introduced by Radcliffe Brown and that in which we teach at Berkeley are sufficiently diverse to require a month for full mutual intelligibility.”

Thorne Deuel (1941) “Thanks to the inflexibility of WPA regulations, I had to abandon the exploration of Cahokia Mound now being destroyed by commercial operations....”

Donald Scott (1942) “Twelve members of the [Peabody Museum] staff are in the service and already gone and others may go: Andrews, Coon, Emerson, Kidder, Lockard, Movius, Oliver, Phillips, Pleasants, W. Smith, Tozzer, and Miss Brues.”

A. V. Kidder (1943) “Harry Pollock is an Air Corps major in North Africa...Edwin Shook is growing quinine in Guatemala; Karl Ruppert driving an...ambulance in India; Gustav Stromsvik in the Norwegian Navy....”

“Walter W. Taylor (1945) “...three months in some filthy Italian hospitals and some better German hospitals and then five months in prison camps near Munich and Bremen....”

J. Wrench (1945) “Carl Chapman who was lost over Austria last summer in a bomber has just been reported rescued by the Russians from a German prison camp and is in good health.”

“Harold S. Colton (1950) “In October the El Paso Gas Co. started construction of their 24” pipe line across northern Arizona. Through the efforts of Jess Nusbaum, a clause was written in the contract with the Interior Department requiring archaeologists survey the line and salvage archaeological evidence ahead of the bulldozers.”

Gordon F. Ekholm (1951) “I have been working ...on the whole problem of Asiatic influences in the high cultures of the New World. I am becoming more and more convinced of the possibility that contact across the Pacific did occur....I postulate some contact between Southeast Asia and Mesoamerica at about 700 A.D.”

“Frank Roberts (1953) “Funds for the [River Basin Surveys] for the next fiscal year have been so reduced that ...[it] will prevent investigation at a number of sites which will go under water late this summer and early in the autumn....”

William A. Ritchie (1954) “Working with amateur groups and individuals is an acknowledged part of my duties....[T]he amateur archaeologist is here to stay, and is in fact growing rapidly in

number..When we add to his legions the increasing hordes of highway, housing and dam builders, the situation seems akin to bailing the sea.”

Marjorie F. Lambert (1959) “Some of the Pueblos who sell their wares under the Palace [of the Governors] portal are thinking of taking up a collection to clothe and cover the great American public—shorts, bull fighter pants and halters look more like diapers or underwear to them, so they say.”

Carlyle S. Smith (1960) “Four days were spent..between Bourges and Tours [France], where ~int was worked in the 1920s..I was able to purchase a complete collection of the iron tools used in the manufacture of gun flints and strike-a-lights....”

Melvin L. Fowler (1962) “All of this extensive amount of data pouring in has caused me to think more and more about systems for recording, storing and analyzing this information. We are following the lead of others and using edge-punch cards for some ceramic analysis...”

Ralph Solecki (1963) “We found the Department of Antiquities of Turkey very cordial and helpful, and the country quite a pleasant and inexpensive place to work in. Our dinner checks for seven people 7 (including beer) in the hinterlands seldom went over two dollars for the whole bill.”

Betty Meggers Evans and Clifford Evans (1963) “Under the auspices of the Fulbright Commission of Brazil, we are running an intensive training course in archeological classification and interpretation, especially with reference to pottery, at the University in Curitiba for 15 young professional archeologists from various parts of Brazil...”

Charles C. DiPeso (1966) [In preparing the Casas Grandes report] “...we are closer and closer to the use of computers to take the place of charts....”

Frederica de Laguna (1966) “Please note that we are now a separate department, having cast Sociology adrift.”

William G. Haag (1967) “In March, Jim Ford came through Baton Rouge with the intention of staying over night, but there was a pair of mounds in the city threatened with destruction in the expansion of a chemical plant, so Jim stayed for two weeks and we dug the mounds. Actually, the digging was done by a skilled operator of a ‘Scoopmobile’”

E. Mott Davis (1973) “At the urging of students and staff we have tried to shrink the size of the student body a little by raising admission standards, but the effect has been merely to improve the quality of entering students, not diminish their numbers. We warn all students that the job situation is rough, but they come just the same....”

Stanley H. Boggs (1974) “...~Vlomen haven’t been employed very consistently in field operations in Latin America, although they should have been because their work equals or exceeds that 8 of the machos—these last more propense to doping off.”

Frederick R. Matson (1972) “I returned to Afghanistan...to tie up many details on the village potters at work....But aluminum cups and pots and now gaudy plastic water jars and flower pots are usurping the place of the potters’ wares in the bazaars...”

It is tempting to add more to these abbreviated excerpts from McGimsey's gleanings, but these should suggest the variety of the contents of *Teocentli*. McGimsey has also provided "A Master List of *Teocentli* Contributions" for 1926 through 1997 which lists every contributor with the years of their appearances. For anyone fortunate enough to have access to a full set of *Teocentli* this will be a valuable research tool as well as fascinating browsing.

Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums, Patricia West. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press. 256 pp.

by

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The standard works on the origins of the historical preservation movement in the United States are Hosmer's two volumes (1965, 1981). West takes a slightly different approach in this work, using the development of four specific house museums (Mount Vernon, the Orchard House of Louisa May Alcott, Monticello, and the Booker T. Washington National Monument) as foils to by which to develop more of the social context of the respective periods of formation, and the political institutions involved. She argues (p. xii) that "house museums are products as well as purveyors of history", that "house museums are and always have been about politics" and that as scholars we must understand that actual histories of house museums have often been superseded by "creation myths" which have evolved associated with the museums as part of the cultural politics of the context of their formation. This has clear implications for the history of archaeology, not only in terms of the context and worldview of the 19th century development of museum theory, but also in terms of the use of archaeology in the 20th century as part of the myth building process. The 180 pages of text developing this theme are well-documented by 70 pages of supporting notes.

The first chapter reviews the work of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association establishing that property. West argues that Ladies Association success affirmed the social fact that the rescue of "sacred" historic houses was within the proper, domestically based sphere of women's activities. While 19th century women were to know their place, the definition of the house museum as an apical, shared common ancestral home and shared common sacred heritage, situated the political activities relating to establishing it within the realm of acceptable women's domestic roles. The mythologizing associated with Mount Vernon, the development of a romantic narrative lore regarding the house and Washington, began the trend of ancestral creation myths for the nation.

The second chapter deals with the establishment of Orchard House, a house that even at its outset was part of mythologizing, as it memorialized the characters of Alcott's novel "Little Women". In setting up her argument in this chapter, West traces the evolution of the house museum from strictly part of a romanticized American past, to one that involved education purposes, such as the use of the house museum with "period rooms", or, in one sense, the shift from the house museum as purely shrine to its use as a model home. In doing this, West starts out with a brief summary of the "Sanitary Fairs", the popular fund-raising fairs held in many northern cities during 1863 to 1865. The Sanitary Fairs had "curiosity rooms", which included a bit of the cherry tree Washington allegedly