

VERMONT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Vermont Archaeological Society was held on Saturday, March 30, 1974, at the University of Vermont Living-Learning Center in Burlington. Registration commenced at 12:30 and a superb brunch was served. President H. N. Muller called the business session to order at 1:45 with twenty-six members in attendance. Three major topics came under discussion: the I-91 site survey; pending legislation to establish a State Archaeologist; the creation of a Task Force to investigate new directions for the Society.

I-91 Site Survey: Bill Haviland summarized the activities relating to the VAS-UVM Department of Anthropology Site Survey of Interstate 91 from Lyndon to Waterford. He briefly described the background of the contract with the State Highway Department and the work of the survey crew under Tom Vogelmann during the summer of 1973. The final report, prepared in September, 1973, recorded several sites, none directly within the right of way, but all certain to be affected by any earth-moving operations. Professor Haviland cited Tom Vogelmann for his fine work and called the report the best yet prepared on that region of Vermont.

State Archaeologist Legislation: Nick Muller described the status of House Bill 527, which provided for the reorganization of the Historic Sites Commission to

include a State Archaeologist. Existing Federal legislation requires such an addition by January 1, 1975. Commission Director William Pinney prepared the bill in closed consultation with the VAS Board of Trustees. The Board expressed reservations about portions of the measure and these were amended. The VAS will play an active role in the selection of a State Archaeologist.

Task Force on New Directions: Nick Muller addressed the group and proposed the creation of an open Task Force to assess the directions the Society should take over the next few years /Editor's note - See page 1 of this newsletter/. Bill Haviland moved that the group be chaired by Louise Basa; the membership approved the motion.

Richard Adams of the Vergennes chapter and Ed Bacon of the Burlington chapter presented chapter reports on their summer and fall activities. Ed Bacon also presented a Financial Report, which appears later in the Newsletter. Four technical reports were presented; these also appear in this Newsletter.

After the dinner, Louise Basa presented a report on the Adena-related site in Highgate, Vermont, an excavation which she directed during the summer of 1973. Over 40 members attended this part of the meeting which featured the finest presentation yet made to the VAS.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 p.m.

Jeffrey B. Aronson, Secretary

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FINANCIAL STATEMENT JANUARY 25, 1973 TO MARCH 25, 1974

<u>ACCOUNT</u>	<u>ORIGINAL BALANCE</u>	<u>INCOME</u>	<u>EXPENDED</u>	<u>BALANCE</u>
General Funds	\$424.70	\$ 588.40	\$ 738.89	\$274.21
*Highgate	\$.00	\$1,155.00	\$1,005.00	\$150.00
*I-91	\$.00	\$4,167.86	\$4,111.53	\$ 56.33
*Field School	\$.00	\$ 235.00	\$ 35.25	\$199.75
		Balance in checking account		\$680.29

* Restricted Funds

Ed Bacon
Treasurer

ABSTRACTS OF TECHNICAL REPORTS

SURFACE OBSERVATION

Utilizing the basic principle of surface observation of an archaeological site combined with extensive document research, a new concept of the extent of MacDonough's fortifications near Vergennes has emerged. Our chapter hopes another summer in the field will result in the confirmation of our theory.

It is a previously known fact that Fort Cassin at the mouth of Otter Creek, was a site of a small but important encounter. It is also a known fact that MacDonough built his fleet in the basin or harbor of Vergennes. Very little thought has been given to consideration of the fortifications needed to protect 177 tons of shot, approximately 60 tons of powder, side arms, rifles, food provisions, and all the other materials necessary to wage war.

We have located probable powder storage depots or berms at Fort Cassin, Ferrisburg and Vergennes. More research is necessary to positively identify the usage of these stone structures. Stone batteries, overlooking the harbor at Vergennes, appear to be of the vintage of the 1812 conflict. The Fort Cassin fortifications which are being mapped and measured, are more extensive than previously realized.

In the course of our research, a local legend has been questioned. A large ditch near the mouth of the Otter Creek has been lauded as a dugway in case MacDonough's fleet was bottled up by blockade in the river. We now have reason to assume that this was a protective moat to halt any advance of the British troops along the southern peninsula opposite Fort Cassin and thereby gaining control of the river. Two documented block houses, two and one half miles from Vergennes, have not been located but the search is on.

The northernmost defenses to prevent invasion by land from the North have not been located, although there was a battery erected near the mouth of Little Otter six

miles from Vergennes. The culmination of our endeavors will be published by the VAS.

Richard K. Adams
Vergennes

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THE NATURE OF A DIG

I have been asked to write a brief synopsis of my afternoon talk at the annual meeting.

The only part I will quote directly is a definition of archaeology: "It's a system of removing a volume of soil in such a manner that all its features and objects could be replaced exactly as they were before being disturbed, by reference to noted measurements and descriptions."

The main emphasis of my presentation was on a systematic method of controlling and keeping accurate records of what was done during excavation, the treatment and care of excavated materials in the field and away from the field. Mention was made of square size convenient to excavate and the advantages of using the metric system (it lends itself to ease in mapping and triangulation of features and artifacts), although measurement in feet and inches has been and still is in acceptable usage.

A grid numbering system based on cardinal compass points and basic grid units was explained and its advantages pointed out. The care in the field of artifacts of different materials was discussed, placing emphasis on keeping fragile materials intact and other materials from being altered which would make analysis difficult or misleading.

Methods of, and the importance of what samples (soils, flotation, C-14, etc.) should be taken was outlined. It was re-emphasized that records of artifacts, even if gathered by surface hunting, should be kept and their importance.

The background for this presentation was limited to personal experience, and source material from books. The most

valuable books are listed below. They contain much more than I've covered and are valuable for expanded reading on the areas discussed.

Dowman, Elizabeth
1970 Conservation in Field Archaeology. Methuen & Co., Ltd. London. (Available through Barnes and Noble, N.Y.C.)

Hume, Ivor Noel
1969 Historical Archaeology. Alfred A. Knopf, N.Y.

Robbins, Maurice
1973 The Amateur Archaeologist's Handbook. Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York.

Tite, M. S.
1972 Methods of Physical Examination in Archaeology. Seminar Press, London and New York.

Ed Bacon
Burlington

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION

As a working archaeologist, I learned some time back that the most common conception of an archaeologist is as a person who collects prehistoric artifacts. I think most people are aware by now that this collection does not consist of shovel and hoe work; what is not generally realized is that once an archaeological site has been meticulously excavated, in ways such as Ed Bacon has so ably described, the archaeologist's job really has just begun. For what the archaeologist really seeks to do is to reconstruct, as fully as possible, an extinct way of life or culture. In doing so, the archaeologist seeks to understand how human societies adapt themselves to different environments, how they secure the well being of their individual members, and how and why they change from time to time.

The archaeologist carries out cultural reconstruction by interpreting the recovered archaeological materials. That statement seems simple enough, but such interpretation is an exceedingly tricky business which cannot be adequately covered as briefly as required here. What will have to suffice are a few general observations, followed by a suggestion which may interest members of the VAS. For those interested in more thorough discussion of archaeological interpretation, the standard introduction is An Introduction to Prehistoric Archaeology (3rd edition), by Frank Hole and Robert F. Heizer (Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1973).

Artifacts, of course, are basic to the archaeologist's task. Their functions must be learned, and in some cases the form of artifact may suggest certain possibilities. For example, if it hasn't got a sharp edge, it cannot have been a cutting tool. Often, though, form alone doesn't tell you very much. A prime example is the so-called "bannerstone". Such artifacts are often so finely made that, for years, it was generally assumed that they were ceremonial objects or status symbols, perhaps analogous to a ruler's sceptre. As it turned out most, if not all, "bannerstones" were weights for spear throwers; in other words, utilitarian artifacts. This discovery was made on the basis of association. At a site in Kentucky, careful excavation revealed one of these artifacts in place on the remains of a spear-thrower. Associations are important, and that is one reason that meticulous excavation is a "must" at any archaeological site. If the archaeologist doesn't know what artifacts are normally found together, a correct diagnosis of function is unlikely to be made.

While analysis of form and associations are essential to archaeological interpretation, there are other available analytical techniques available. Micro-analysis of wear patterns may tell much about how an object was used. This cannot be carried out, though, if the objects have been banged around by the collector, scraped clean with a penknife or put in a dishwasher. Experimentation is another

important technique. There have been those who have gone to such lengths as shooting "mock-ups" of bone points into sides of beef in a slaughter house, in order to duplicate fracture patterns in similar prehistoric points. The information was useful in the reconstruction of past hunting practices.

By application of techniques such as these to artifacts and associated living debris, the archaeologist may learn much about subsistence and economic activities. But that is not enough, for cultural adaptation involves more than tools, food resources exploited and the like. For the way people organize themselves for day-to-day living is equally significant. And here, the archaeologist must fall back on knowledge of the ways living peoples organize themselves. From the archaeological remains, it can often be determined whether or not the prehistoric peoples were hunters and gatherers, or horticulturalists, or what. The archaeologist may then turn to ethnographic data on recent hunting and gathering, or horticultural, people to "flesh out" the account of the particular prehistoric group.

All of which brings me to the point I really want to make here. This is that an archaeologist really can't proceed very far without a solid grounding in ethnography, ideally in the particular region where the archaeology is being done. And here is my suggestion for any interested VAS members: There is a wealth of ethnographic information available for the Northeast in early documents such as the Jesuit Relations. A project to go through such sources to systematically "sack out" valid ethnographic observations, and organize these in a systematic, usable way, would be one of the most valuable contributions to the archaeology of Vermont that I can think of.

William Haviland
Jericho

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DISPLAY OF WESTERN EUROPEAN EXCAVATION SITES

Also at the annual meeting, Mrs. Durwood Smith of Burlington ably explained slides and a display prepared by her and her husband from information supplied by their son-in-law, Mattias Riedel, an archaeologist working in Germany. The display consisted of information on three excavations in which he participated: a Bronze Age fort in Portugal, a neolithic settlement in Switzerland, and an Iron Age Warrior's tomb in Germany. The Smiths have kindly loaned this display to the UVM Anthropology Department where it is on public display (fifth floor, Williams Hall).

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REPORT ON THE BOUCHER SITE (Vt-Fr-26), HIGHGATE, VERMONT

Some of our VAS members, particularly those in the Champlain Valley, may remember the announcement at the 1973 VAS Spring meeting of the exciting and endangered site in Highgate, Franklin County, Vermont. This site was discovered accidentally by a backhoe operator while he was excavating a cellar hole for a new house construction.

A salvage project, directed by Louise Basa for the Department of Anthropology of the University of Vermont, was mounted and work at the site was begun within 36 hours of its discovery. The site achieved much local publicity (Swanton Courier, Burlington Free Press, etc.) and many professional and non-professional archaeologists volunteered their services to help in the emergency excavation. The landowners generously agreed to delay construction of their dream house for 2-3 weeks. Even after the house foundation was completed, excavation continued on the site of garage construction (generously again delayed by the Bouchers) through the end of May. A second field session, working in front of the house and in the driveway, began the second week of July and ended on August 20th.

At the end of a total of 61 long, exhaustive field days, 7,500 sq. ft. had been excavated and approximately 35,000 cu. ft. of soil moved mostly by trowel and careful shovel-shaving techniques.

The site consisted of a burial ground with no evidence of habitations at any time. The burials, both inhumations (40) and cremations (20), and "deposits" consisting of artifacts but with no evidence of bone in the pits (20), belong to the poorly understood "Middlesex Culture" of the Northeast (William Ritchie, *Archaeology of New York State*, 1969, pp. 201-205), and related to the "Adena Culture" of the Midwest. On the basis of artifact typology, our site is dated somewhere between 500-0 B.C. In addition to the above-mentioned features whose function as burials or related deposits are known, "hearths" and "empty" pits, the function of which is yet unknown, were also excavated and carefully recorded.

Many thanks are due to those who assisted in this massive undertaking. Close to 200 individuals worked at the site, contributing a total of 6613 man-hours or 3.2 man-years of labor in the field. These individuals, too numerous to name here, included members of the Highgate-Swanton-St. Albans communities, students and staff of the University of Vermont, members of the Vermont Archaeological Society, the Adirondack Archaeological Association, the Massachusetts Archaeological Society, the New Hampshire Archaeological Society, the New York State Archaeological Association, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Rhode Island College in Providence, New York University, the University of Maine, Goddard College and Harwood Union High School. Dr. William Ritchie and Dr. Don Drago, who are the authors of the hypothesis of the eastern dispersal of the Adena People, visited and assisted in the excavation, as did Ronald Thomas, State Archaeologist of Delaware, who has a keen interest in the trade relations of the Adena People. This section would be incomplete without expressing thanks to Mr. Robert Sincerbeaux of the Eva Gebhard-Gougard Foundation through whom a small

grant was secured which enabled us to obtain some supplies and equipment and to some small degree buffer the expenses involved in this project. In addition, Dr. and Mrs. William Button of New York City have contributed to our C-14 dating fund. These funds are being administered through the Vermont Archaeological Society. Some 200 school children were guided through the site as well as hundreds of adults. Most of this "tour-guide" work was done by Ms. Mariella Squire, a VAS member and anthropology student at the University of Vermont. The public was well informed of our activities and their meaning.

Louise Basa, Burlington

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REGIONAL/CHAPTER NOTICES

ADIRONDACK ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION - This Plattsburgh based organization of amateur archaeologists will hold its monthly meeting on Friday, April 26th at Hawkins Hall on the campus of Plattsburgh State College. The meeting will begin at 8 p.m. and feature a slide lecture by Mark Cohen on his archaeological work in the Huru Valley of Peru.

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THE VERGENNES CHAPTER meets regularly on the second Thursday of each month at the Bixby Library, Main Street, Vergennes. VAS members interested in more information about this chapter and its activities should contact Mr. Richard K. Adams, Vergennes, 05491. Those in the Burlington area should contact the Burlington Chapter President, Dr. Robert Johnson, 73 Rivermount Terrace, Burlington 05401.

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FROM

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TO