

# ASM Ink



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Newsletter of the Archeological Society of Maryland, Inc.

[www.marylandarcheology.org](http://www.marylandarcheology.org)

## Important: Change to Annual Meeting

The specter of covid flashing up again has forced this month's Annual Meeting to go virtual. It still will take place Saturday, October 23, starting at 9 a.m. But because of the late change other details were being worked out, such as the length of the meeting and the number and names of speakers.

The session begins at 9 a.m. with the business meeting portion of the program, updating members on the status of the organization and its activities.

The name of the winner of the William B. Marye Award, honoring someone for outstanding contributions to Maryland archeology, still will be announced.

Some other good news. If you are not normally masked, you don't have to be masked to take part. And the admission fee is waived. You can use that saved money to order out for lunch, to be served at a time of your choosing.

Updates on the program and information on how to join the Zoom meeting will be sent to you as soon as possible.

## Upcoming events

**October 23:** ASM annual meeting. SERC

**December 4:** ASM board meeting. All welcome.

## Volunteer opportunities (non-covid)

The following volunteer opportunities are open to CAT participants and other ASM members:

**ASM Volunteer Lab, most Tuesdays:** The lab in Crownsville. Contact Charlie Hall at [charles.hall@maryland.gov](mailto:charles.hall@maryland.gov) or Louise Akerson at [lakerson1@verizon.net](mailto:lakerson1@verizon.net). It is currently working on cataloging artifacts from the Levering Coffee House Site, Baltimore (a mostly late 18th/early 19th Century site).

**The Smithsonian Environmental Research Center** seeks participants in its Citizen-Scientist Program in archeology and other environmental research programs in Edgewater. Field and lab work are conducted Wednesdays and on occasional Saturdays. Contact Jim Gibb at [jamesggibb@verizon.net](mailto:jamesggibb@verizon.net)

**Montgomery County** for lab and field work volunteers, contact Heather Bouslog at 301 563 7530 or [Heather.Bouslog@montgomeryparks.org](mailto:Heather.Bouslog@montgomeryparks.org)

**The Anne Arundel County Archaeology Program** and the Lost Towns Project welcome volunteers in both field and lab at numerous sites. For diggers, the Linniston site on Gibson Island Fridays from 8 to 3. The lab will be open some weekdays at the Anne Arundel collection facility at 7409 Baltimore-Annapolis Blvd. in Glen Burnie. For more information email Drew Webster at [volunteers@losttownsproject.org](mailto:volunteers@losttownsproject.org) or call 410 222 1318.

**Mount Calvert.** Lab work and field work. 301 627 1286.

**Jefferson Patterson Park** invites volunteers to take part in its activities, including archeology, historical research and conservation. Contact 410 586 8554.

**The Archaeological Institute of America** provides an online listing of fieldwork opportunities worldwide. Call up [www.archaeological.org/fieldwork](http://www.archaeological.org/fieldwork) to get started.

**UPAG/Howard County Recs and Parks** invites volunteers interested in processing collections and conducting historical research to contact Kelly Palich at [Kpalich@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:Kpalich@howardcountymd.gov) or 410-313-0423.

**CAT corner:** If you have signed up for the CAT program and have not received an email from Tom McLaughlin contact him at [mclaugh01@verizon.net](mailto:mclaugh01@verizon.net)

For other information on CAT program, contact Tom at [mclaugh01@verizon.net](mailto:mclaugh01@verizon.net)

# Glyph-filled MO cave sold to private buyer

By Isabella Grullón Paz

*Condensed from the New York Times, September 16, 2021*

A Missouri cave considered to be the most important rock art site in North America was sold at auction on Tuesday to a private buyer, devastating leaders of the Osage Nation tribe who had hoped to buy the cave to "protect and preserve our most sacred site."

The buyer, who remained anonymous, agreed to purchase what is known to historians as the Picture Cave, along with 43 acres of hilly surrounding land, for \$2.2 million, outbidding tribal representatives at the auction.

"Picture Cave is our most sacred site," Andrea A. Hunter, director and tribal historic preservation officer for the Osage Nation, said in a statement. "It is a burial site, and it is a sacred ritual site. Picture Cave is invaluable and irreplaceable."

The cave contains approximately 290 glyphs, some around 1,000 years old, the auction firm said, making it the largest collection of Native American polychrome paintings in Missouri. The land it sits on, which was used by the previous owners as hunting grounds, is about 50 miles west of St. Louis.

"It was really heartbreaking going through this process," Hunter said in an interview. "We've been trying to work with the landowners for many months. It was just unfortunate that they decided to take this to auction and try to get as much money for it as they could."

No conditions were set to be able to purchase the site, but a Missouri statute threatening a felony charge to anyone who "knowingly disturbs, destroys, vandalizes or damages a marked or unmarked human burial site" was read aloud before the bidding began, he said.

The previous owners were concerned with the protection and preservation of the cave, and they wanted to ensure that the next "steward" was someone with the financial means to establish further research of the site, an auctioneer spokesman said. He added that although he could not share the buyer's identity, he knew that the person was a "cave conservator" who owned a vast collection of caves and actively worked to preserve them.

According to Hunter, the family that owned the land since 1953 had been in negotiations with the tribe in the months before the auction and originally asked for \$1 million — "quite a bit of money" for the Osage Nation, even after it received additional support from the Conservation Fund and Native Land Conservancy.

For the Osage Nation, the Picture Cave — whose array of glyphs constitutes one of the largest and most detailed depictions of Native American life of its kind in the United States — is a place of genesis. It is where Osage ancestors performed sacred rituals to make and memorialize crucial decisions for the tribe. It is also a sacred burial ground, Hunter said.

"Osage elders have called the cave the womb of the universe," James R. Duncan, an archeologist and anthropologist who studies the Osage and Native American ethnography, said on Wednesday.

He and his wife, Carol Diaz-Granados, of the anthropology department at Washington University in St. Louis, spent 20 years researching the cave and its art through an agreement with the previous owners. They said they were devastated by the sale and believed the land should be returned to the Osage Nation.

Diaz-Granados said the cave contained some of the most detailed depictions of ancient Native American clothing, weaponry, symbolic accouterments, headdresses and ceremonies available anywhere. "There are things here that are not in any other site," she said.

Laughlin said there had been "some concern" about the future of the cave, adding that people had suggested that the land be donated.

"While I do not disagree with that, how do you do that?" he said. "We even looked into it, with the family." He said after communicating with experts, it was decided that "the only way to establish the value of the property was to vet bidders and allow the person that cared about it the most to be the next stewards of it."

According to Hunter, the process of donating land to Native American tribes is fairly straightforward. "All they would have had to do is ask," she said. "They would have even gotten a tax write-off."

Hunter, who has never seen the site herself, says she hopes to find out who the new owners are, and to work with them to protect the site and ensure that Osage Nation members have access to it.

# Climate change changing ‘bog bodies’

By Nathaniel Scharping

*Condensed from Sapiens August 31, 2021*

In the southernmost tip of Sweden, just over an hour from neighboring Denmark, is the ancient peat bog of Ageröd. For nearly a century, this waterlogged landscape has been revealing its secrets to archeologists, including glimpses into the lives of the area's inhabitants some 8,000 years ago.

But in September 2020, the bog led to a different kind of discovery. Adam Boethius, an archeologist at Sweden's Lund University, and his colleagues published a comparison of bones collected in Ageröd in recent years to those gathered in the 1940s and 1970s.

What they found confirmed a pattern that archeologists in Europe had noticed for years: In comparison to bones from similar sites in decades past, modern finds looked significantly more beaten and weathered.

A little deterioration may not sound surprising when working with millennia-old bones. But in peat bogs, the wet environment typically offers a nearly peerless level of preservation, which is how they can famously safeguard objects and human remains with minimal decay over millennia.

Boethius found that bones from the wettest areas had all but dissolved, prey to increasingly acidic conditions. Disturbances to the soil had begun catalyzing plant decay as well.

If these trends continue, Boethius estimates that bones at the site may disappear within a few decades. The collagen they contain, key to conducting analyses of DNA and other chemical signatures, could be gone even sooner, by the mid-2030s, he thinks.

Something similar may be happening in peat bogs around the world. A range of threats, all traceable to human activities, are in the process of erasing peat bogs and all that's within them. The threats are multifold: peat excavation and draining, rising acidity from greenhouse gas emissions, and more.

But the end result is the same. Everything the bog has preserved—from microscopic bits of pollen to entire human bodies—is likely disintegrating, soon to disappear.

"We don't know what we will want to know in the future. That's always the problem with archeology," Boethius says. "But if we lose the original record, then we know we cannot extract anything from them anymore."

Though Northwestern Europe is renowned for its bogs, these landscapes are found in cool, damp climates the world over. Because they're perpetually wet, bogs possess a unique set of properties that prevent the decay of what scientists call "organic" materials.

In many bogs, high concentrations of *Sphagnum* will acidify the environment so that bones are quickly eaten away. But the same acidity helps preserve materials like skin and clothing in a process analogous to tanning.

As low-oxygen environments, bogs are natural time capsules. In some of the most ancient bogs, the bottom layers can be more than 10,000 years old. Within those layers can lie the remains of people, animals, and more. "All the organic side of life that we usually lose because things decay are preserved in the bog," Giles says.

In Northwestern Europe's bogs, archeologists have found wooden statues and tubs, vats of preserved butter, and animal offerings from a wide swath of time periods. Perhaps most significant to archeologists are the hundreds of human remains, some so well-kept they were initially assumed to be recent murder victims.

These "bog bodies" range in age from around 10,000 years to just decades old. Peat cutters or construction workers uncovered many of these remains accidentally. Because remains cannot be returned to bogs, nor have these bodies been claimed by descendants, archeologists in Europe focus on respectfully conserving and, in some cases, displaying these bodies.

Looking at bog bodies, archeologists have been able to study facets of life they'd otherwise have to imagine, like clothing or hairstyles. A woman who lived in the Iron Age in what is now Denmark, for example, was buried with a wool skirt and scarf, and two animal-skin capes. Another Iron Age body from Denmark, called Elling Woman by scholars, had her hair plaited in an elaborate braid.

Also evident, sometimes painfully so, is the cause of death. Lindow Man, found in Northwest England and dating back 2,000 years, had been strangled and bludgeoned, and had his throat slit before being thrown into the bog's dark waters. Researchers think he may have been a sacrifice.

## Book review: Stratifying archeologists

**A History of American Archaeology (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)**, By Gordon R. Willey and Jeremy A. Sabloff, W. H. Freeman and Company, 330 pages, used price varies

Let me begin by saying that I asked my eldest daughter for this book for Fathers' Day. What I didn't remember to ask her for was the third edition (1993). I didn't know that a fourth edition is coming and Amazon is taking advance orders for it. So, what I got, read and am reviewing is the second edition (1980) (I also got a really nice shirt (not used)).

The authors give a history of the Speculative Period (1492 - 1840) that sought answers to archeological questions that were fueled mostly by imaginative exercises; e.g. the ancestors of the Native Americans of the 17<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries could not possibly have built the great earthworks in North America or the great cities of Central and South America. Thus they thought that these monuments had to be the work of an advanced lost race. The Lost Tribes of Israel were often named as culprits during the Speculative Period. Just think of all of the digging that this kind of speculation saved.

Apart from being *a priori* racist, such assumptions (if taken seriously) would have made the story of the American Indian entirely different. No longer could American Indians be studied by ethnologists, anthropologists, linguists and others as representing a theoretically linear progression from hunter/gatherer groups, to farmers, to post-ceramic cultures, to literate high cultures.

The Speculative Period was followed by the Classificatory-Descriptive Period (1840 -1914) that sought to meaningfully describe cultural materials recovered archeologically. During the latter period, archeologists worked to develop typologies that took the attributes and changes in attributes in various classes of material culture as possible markers of culture change.

Around 1914, American archeologists became more focused on the development of chronologies. Prior to this period, many American archeologists showed little interest in developing chronologies, largely because most held the belief that human occupation of the New World was relatively recent and that apparent stratification in the archeological record was not meaningful.

After 1914, most American archeologists became convinced after irrefutable evidence (points found in context with the bones of extinct Ice Age mammals) of a much deeper time frame for the peopling of the New World.

This realization, however, did nothing to solve the problem. Without the methodology of carbon-14 dating, there was, until about 1948, no way to provide an absolute date or a range of absolute dates. Hence, the Classificatory - Historical Period (1914 - 1940) was spent in refining the use and understanding of methods for determining the relative age of cultural materials such as stratigraphy, seriation and other methodologies for measuring time through changes in some of the attributes of certain classes of artifacts.

So here are the limitations. The book carries the reader through the 1960s and 1970s, arguably the first and second decades of the New Archeology as championed by Lewis R. Binford. While describing advances in archeological theory and technique attributable to the processual focus of the New Archeology, the authors state their (prescient) opinion that greater advances are to be expected as new scientific fields, technologies, liberal arts disciplines, etc. are "absorbed" into archeology.

On the bright side, there is no discussion of the post-processual argument that posits that anything that cannot be ascertained from the archeological record is fair game for the imagination as long as the product of such "thought" makes someone feel better about themselves. Also, copies of the second edition are dropping in price faster than a disappointed investor from the top of the Chrysler Building. -- **Claude Bowen**

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BY WILEY**



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## Pre-Clovis footprints found in New Mexico

*Condensed from Heritage Daily, September 24, 2021*

Archeologists conducting research in the White Sands National Park in New Mexico have identified the oldest known human footprints in the Americas.

The findings provide the earliest unequivocal evidence of human activity in the Americas from over 23,000 years ago, a period during the height of the Last Glacial Maximum.

Archeologists have debated for decades when the first people arrived in the Americas, but Vance T. Holliday from the UArizona School of Anthropology and Department of Geosciences said:

"Few archeologists see reliable evidence for sites older than about 16,000 years. Some think the arrival was later, no more than 13,000 years ago by makers of artefacts called Clovis points. The White Sands tracks provide a much earlier date. There are multiple layers of well-dated human tracks in streambeds where water flowed into an ancient lake. This was 10,000 years before Clovis people."

The team used radiocarbon dating of seed layers above and below the footprints to determine their age, which showed human presence at the site lasting two millennia, and the oldest track dating back 23,000 years.

Kathleen Springer from the U.S. Geological Survey said: "Our dates on the seeds are tightly clustered and maintain stratigraphic order above and below multiple footprint horizons - this was a remarkable outcome".

An analysis on the size of the human footprints suggests that they were mainly teenagers and younger children, whilst other tracks indicate that they were left by mammoths, giant ground sloths, dire wolves and birds.



## Chapter News:

Check with your local chapter to see what activities will take place.

### Central Chapter

All Meetings will be held on Zoom the third Tuesday of the every second month. For more information and to be added to the Zoom list contact: Katharine Fernstrom at [kwfappraising@gmail.com](mailto:kwfappraising@gmail.com)

**Nov 16:** Cheryl Fogle-Hatch, "Designing An Accessible Archaeological Exhibit."

### Charles County

Meetings are held at 7 p.m. on the second Thursday (September-May). The next few will be virtual. Contact President Carol Cowherd at [ccasm2010@gmail.com](mailto:ccasm2010@gmail.com) for Zoom access information. Website [ccarchsoc.blogspot.com](http://ccarchsoc.blogspot.com) and Facebook [@ccasm2010](https://www.facebook.com/ccasm2010)

### Mid-Potomac

Until further notice, all meetings will be by Zoom starting at 7 p.m., the talk at 7:30, the third Thursday of the month. For up-to-date information, including links to Zoom meetings, check Chapter website at [www.asmmidpotomac.org](http://www.asmmidpotomac.org); or contact Don Housley at [donhou704@earthlink.net](mailto:donhou704@earthlink.net) or 301-424-8526.

**Oct. 21** (Zoom or in-person to be determined): Don Housley on the field session held at the Billingsley site.

**Nov. 18** (Zoom or in-person to be determined): Chapter member Harry Iceland, a Smithsonian researcher, on "The First Americans."

### Monocacy

The chapter meets in the C. Burr Artz Library in Frederick the second Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. For more information, visit the chapter's web page at [digfrederick.com](http://digfrederick.com) or call 301-378-0212. **NOTE:** Because the library is closed for meetings, the chapter will not meet until further notice.

### Northern Chesapeake

A business meeting at 7 is followed by the presentation at 7:30. Contact Dan Coates at 410- 273-9619 or [dancoates@comcast.net](mailto:dancoates@comcast.net) Website: <http://sites.google.com/site/northernchesapeake>

### St. Mary's County

Meetings are the third Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Joseph D. Carter State Office Building in the Russell Conference Room, Leonardtown. For information contact Chris Coogan at [Ccoogan@smcm.edu](mailto:Ccoogan@smcm.edu)

### Upper Patuxent

Meetings the second Saturday or Sunday of the month, virtual or at the Heritage Program Office, 9944 Route 108, Ellicott City, unless otherwise noted. [www.facebook.com/pages/Upper-Patuxent-Archaeology-Group/464236446964358](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Upper-Patuxent-Archaeology-Group/464236446964358) or [www.upperpatuxentarchaeology.com](http://www.upperpatuxentarchaeology.com) or call Kelly Palich, 410 313 0423.

### Western Maryland

Programs are the fourth Friday of the month, at 7:30 p.m. Unitarian Fellowship Hall, 211 S. Lee Street in Cumberland, unless noted. Contact Roy Brown, 301-724-7769. Email: [wmdasm@yahoo.com](mailto:wmdasm@yahoo.com) Website: <http://sites.google.com/site/wmdasm>

**The Archeological Society of Maryland Inc. is a statewide nonprofit organization devoted to the study and conservation of Maryland archeology.**

ASM members receive the monthly newsletter, ASM Ink, the biannual journal, MARYLAND ARCHEOLOGY, reduced admission to ASM events and a 10-percent discount on items sold by the Society. Contact Membership Secretary Ethan Bean, 765-716-5282 or [beans32@comcast.net](mailto:beans32@comcast.net) for membership rates. For publication sales, not including newsletter or journal, contact Dan Coates at ASM publications, 716 Country Club Rd., Havre de Grace MD 20178-2104 or 410-273-9619 or [dancoates@comcast.net](mailto:dancoates@comcast.net)

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