

# Alabama Archaeological Society

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## LETTER OF APPRECIATION

Last October 26-27, the first joint Alabama-Georgia archaeological societies' annual fall meeting was held at the Columbus Museum in Columbus, Georgia.

Several people expressed their appreciation to me following the Saturday session, and some podium time was spent by SGA President Dwight Kirkland and Columbus Chapter host Frank Schnell in thanking me personally.

All that made me wonder about all the people without whose input and special efforts none of this first-class get-together of two state societies would have come to pass. Their names, except for the program agenda, were not mentioned, so I will attend to that, with the hope that the newsletters of both organizations will publish credits where they are due.

For taking much time from a most busy schedule, I want to thank Pat Garrow for producing a quality agenda. He not only produced it on his own office equipment, but also edited it toward improving its quality and readability. Pat also manned the registration table during the morning session at the museum. Thanks for everything, Pat.

Thanks are due to Frank Schnell for making the resources of his new and beautiful museum available for both the meeting and separate business sessions. I know that many of us appreciated his efforts.

Without the support and cooperation from Phil Koerper of Jacksonville State University in Jacksonville, Alabama, very little could have been achieved in getting both organizations together. He did a great job in communicating with the Alabama Society during the planning phase of this event. We communicated continually and talked many times on the phone, pulling last-minute rabbits out of the hat. Thanks, Phil. For those who agreed to moderate each session: Dave Anderson, Eugene Futato, Jim Knight and Charles Ochs, many thanks for a fine job.

I also want to add Jim Langford's name to the list of special helpers. He was instrumental in lining up speakers from the Georgia contingent. My thanks, Jim, for your help in the final days of putting it all together. Finally, to all of those who made contributions, thus adding to a well-rounded program, thank you all.

Dave Chase  
Stone Mountain, Georgia

December 1990

## STATUS REPORT ON THE ALABAMA STATE SITE FILE

During FY 1990, the Archaeology Division of the Alabama State Museum of Natural History conducted the first phase of a program to upgrade the computer database for the Alabama State Site File. The project was jointly funded by the Museum and the Alabama Historical Commission. The project has been proposed as a several year effort, and Phase I was performed in 1990. The purpose of Phase I was to enter into the database all outstanding forms. No forms had been entered since 1983, when the computer file was initially established.

The initial file was on the mainframe Sperry computer at the University campus. This first file used a specially written COBOL program and included only coded data from the form. No comments or other text material was included. And no sites from several counties in the lower Alabama River or Mobile River-Mobile Bay areas were included. The limited data in the file, the limited ability to manipulate the file, and the logistics of access to a remote site restricted the usefulness of this first database. In 1988, the Archaeology Division obtained funding to transfer the coded data to an IBM compatible dBase III plus file, conforming to the National Park Service standards for cultural resource management databases. The coded data on 6697 forms were transferred to the dBase file and the comments and other text information, over six million bites, were typed in by a volunteer.

Still, no sites recorded since 1983 were in the computer, nor were any sites from most of southwestern Alabama. This meant that the computer file contained information on only about half of all the recorded sites. If the database was to be useful in a meaningful way, the remaining sites would have to be entered.

This data entry was accomplished in FY 1990. As of October 1, all site forms have been entered. The database now contains information on 12,483 sites, and takes up just under 19 million bites of storage. A copy of the database is maintained at the Alabama Historical Commission and is updated on a quarterly basis.

The Alabama State Site File database is now a much more useful tool for purposes of both research and cultural resource management but we hope to continue this program of upgrading. A proposal currently outstanding would initiate Phase II, a four year program to collect missing data for the site forms. For example, very few site forms list elevation, soil type, nearest water source, drainage basin, or other information. Many sites recorded on older versions of the form have practically no information other than the location to nearest section and a sentence or two of description. We hope over the next four years to use topographic maps, county soil reports, and other map sources to complete as much of this missing information as possible, or to indicate on the form that the information is not obtainable.

Then will we be done? No. The site file is never really done. There are always new sites being recorded. And there is new information to be gained for sites already recorded. In fact, we are already considering the merits of Phase III, a multi-year project to collect

information on site description, components present, and other text material. Phase II is a map search to obtain missing data, Phase III may be a literature search to continue this effort.

As each of these tasks is completed, the usefulness of the Alabama State Site File will be greatly increased. Phase I got all currently available information, especially site locations, into the computer. Determining which, if any, recorded sites are located in a given area and then getting basic information on those sites is the most common use of the file. When the environmental information from Phase II is added, we will be able to use the site file for much more detailed analyses of site locations. The additional information on site characteristics, components, etc. from Phase III will add still more detail to these analyses and allow us to study the distribution of certain kinds of sites, or sites of a certain archaeological phase or culture. The site descriptions, summary of investigations, and other text material from Phase III will provide a much fuller account of each site. And the bibliographic data will make it easier to locate additional information on the site.

So computerization of the Alabama State Site File is off to a good start. We hope that we will be able to continue to upgrade the database and increase its usefulness for both research on and management of Alabama's archaeological resources.

Eugene Futato, Keeper  
Alabama State Site File

#### CHAPTER NEWS

##### Birmingham Chapter

Our meeting for November was held Thursday, November 8th at 7 p.m. Our guest speaker was Dr. Stuart Harris from Selma, Alabama. Dr. Harris has written several books; one of the books to his credit is Dead Towns of Alabama. He spoke to us about early historical Indian towns in Alabama.

Bobby Hawkins

##### Cullman Chapter

The Cullman County Archaeological Society November meeting was the last one for this year. The Society met on the 19th at Room 210, Courthouse.

Eulis King

##### Huntsville Chapter

Dr. Harry Holstein from Jacksonville State University was the speaker at the Huntsville Chapter November meeting. Dr. Holstein spoke on the search for the village of Coosa.

The Huntsville Chapter meets the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Public Library on St. Clair Avenue. The public is welcome.

Dorothy Luke

#### ALABAMA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

In response to the increased level of public interest in science, archaeology, and nature programs, this Museum has created the Alabama Natural History Society.

The only magazine in the South devoted to a broad range of topics - biology, paleontology, archaeology, and cultural history, NATURE/SOUTH, is just one of the benefits of Society membership.

Affiliation with the Alabama Natural History Society means free admission of over 100 museums locally and nationally, fee discounts on the varied programs offered by this Museum, and access to a number of new field expeditions in Alabama and the Southeast. Finally, Society members have the opportunity to work with museum collections and to participate in a variety of scientific investigations in the laboratory and in the field.

For further information, contact Alabama State Museum of Natural History; Box 870340; Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0340.

Douglas E. Jones, Ph.D.  
Director

#### TRAINING AND USING VOLUNTEERS IN ARCHAEOLOGY (A CASE STUDY FROM ARKANSAS)

In this age of rapid transformation of the earth's landscape, our only hope for recovery of any major portion of this history (that is written in the soil) is by nearly total involvement of the public (McGimsey 1972:6).

Involvement of the public in archaeology can take and has taken many forms. The quote from McGimsey above reflects the philosophy of public archaeology that he espouses, and which has led many, both professional and avocational archaeologists, into cooperative endeavors of mutual benefit. There are pros and cons to such programs for both sides. There are professional archaeologists who condemn any archaeology done by anyone without an advanced academic degree and several years of training. There are avocational archaeologists (and I use this term to mean people who do scientific archaeology as a hobby, not as a profession) who have met with the above-mentioned kind of professional and as a consequence think all professional archaeologists are mean spirited and want all the sites and artifacts for themselves. There are also people of all persuasions, all degrees of training and experience, who wish to cooperate to record and preserve information from the past in a way that will be personally satisfying and rewarding, as well as scientifically appropriate.

Until the millenium comes, there will be pothunters and dealers in antiquities - those who are more interested in the artifacts as a commodity than in the information associated with them. There also will be, as there always have been, those interested in the past and in the techniques of archaeology who are not professionally trained but who wish to contribute to the accumulation and the preservation of information. Given the premise that prompted McGimsey's statements, that the land is being transformed and sites destroyed at an accelerating rate, it behooves all who are interested in archaeological preservation to find some satisfying and productive ways to achieve our goals of personal satisfaction and scientific advancement.

There have been and are archaeological training programs in many States. The Field School of the Texas Archeological Society is the largest and perhaps the oldest formal program for avocationalists. It began two years before the Arkansas program, it lasts nine days, and it attracts 400 participants at a minimum. The Arkansas Training Program for Avocational Archeologists was created in 1964 with two major goals: 1) providing interested citizens with the opportunity to gain information on how to do archaeology "right", and 2) multiplying manyfold the eyes and ears of the few professional archaeologists in efforts to preserve the State's past.

Field sessions for the Training Program are scheduled by the Arkansas Archeological Survey to coordinate with research and other obligations of the professional staff. From 1964 to 1971 these sessions lasted nine days - a full week and the weekend on each side. With the establishment of the Certification Program in 1972, the field session was expanded to 19 days - two weeks and the weekend on each end - in order to accommodate the teaching of seminars, which are at the heart of the Certification Program. All participants must attend a four-hour orientation program the first day of their first time in the program. If they attend every year, thereafter they attend a short orientation their first day at the site.

Attendance at the field sessions since 1972 has ranged from a low of around 80 in the heat-record year of 1980 to a high of 141, which is considered a maximum, in 1990. An effort is made to keep a supervisor/trainee ratio of 1 to 6.

The Training Program provides an opportunity for avocational archaeologists to gain experience in all phases of archaeological work - excavation, site survey, laboratory processing, and analysis, under professional supervision. The only prerequisites are: 1) membership in the Arkansas Archeological Society; 2) payment of an annual registration fee; and 3) agreement to abide by the rules and procedures for research set by the Survey. Anyone can take part in the Training Program, do field and lab work, and attend seminars provided he or she registers ahead of time.

(From "Technical Brief" No. 9, October 1990 - publication of the Departmental Consulting Archeologist and the Archeological Assistance Division of the National Park Service.)

## PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Available issues of <i>Journal of Alabama Archaeology</i> Vol. 20-29 each issue .....	(\$2.50 to Members) \$5.00 pp
<i>Stanfield-Worley Bluff Shelter Excavations</i> (Journal of Alabama Archaeology) Vol. VIII Nos. 1 & 2 - Reprint, each issue . . .	\$5.00 pp
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<i>Handbook of Alabama Archaeology Part 1, Point Types</i> .....	\$10.00 pp
Lively, Long, Josselyn - <i>Pebble Tool Paper</i> .....	\$3.00 pp
<i>Investigations in Russell Cave</i> , published by the National Park Service .....	\$7.50 pp
<i>Exploring Prehistoric Alabama through Archaeology</i> (Juvenile) .....	\$7.00 pp

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1 Mound State Monument, Moundville, Alabama 35474

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