

EDITOR'S CORNER

On the History of Archaeology and Archaeologists

If it takes about a century for an institution to develop a sense of history, then American archaeology may legitimately claim 100 years of dedicated archaeological scholarship without straining to document a legitimate birth. There is no longer the need to invoke Thomas Jefferson's special genius for fatherhood to give American archaeologists a respectable intellectual beginning. Furthermore, archaeologists no longer need be self-conscious in gatherings of anthropologists, where once they were figuratively branded with the scarlet letter *A* for antiquarian—"fact-grubbing antiquarian" to Clyde Kluckhohn. As we near the end of the twentieth century most American archaeologists have made a reasonable accommodation with their anthropological colleagues; they understand the broad sweep of New World prehistory; and they can take a long, hard look at their own history to divide it, too, into periods and phases. Gordon Willey and Jeremy Sabloff, currently revising *A History of American Archaeology* for a third edition, must surely add a fourth phase to their "Explanatory Period," which began a mere 30 years ago! Archaeologists, at their best when subdividing and labeling blocks of time, have taken up the challenge to provide explanatory narrative for the intellectual concepts and currents that typify major developmental periods. A recent plethora of books, collections of readings, and an increasing number of symposia scrutinize pieces of the history of American archaeology. The commentaries of Bruce Trigger, Jane Kelley and Marsha Hanen, and Guy Gibbon as well as the papers edited by Andrew Christenson (reviewed by Trigger in this issue) and C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky join Willey and Sabloff to proclaim beyond any reasonable doubt that the examination of the intellectual history of American archaeology is in capable hands.

Of more immediate concern, however, are the men and women who pioneered American archaeology, the people who brought you the past as we know it today. Among the most valuable archaeological resources being lost today are these pioneer archaeologists. And with their passing goes that direct connection with the first generation of practitioners. This loss has rarely been so apparent as last summer when death came to three prominent archaeologists—Cynthia Irwin-Williams, Robert Lister, and Albert Spaulding—each of whom had been president of the Society for American Archaeology. Personal loss reminds us, albeit too late, that *people* do archaeology, reconstruct prehistory, present papers, squabble over interpretations, and teach other people to do the same, but, we hope, a little bit better. And these same people have biases, preconceived notions, personal experiences and agendas—dare one call it a subjective element—that must be comprehended at some level if we are to treat the whole past fairly. We must know more of these archaeologists before they depart.

An enhanced knowledge of people can play an additional role. I sense a need in the discipline for authentic heroes and heroines, not for leadership, which we have aplenty, but for models of the qualities that have brought advancements in knowledge.

Gordon Willey's *Portraits in American Archaeology* is a recent example of one prominent scholar's quest for the personal influences that served to structure his career. To what extent Willey is a composite of Cummings, Kelly, Kidder, and 13 other "distinguished Americanists" is unclear from the book; Willey or his biographer must tell us more about that. Clearly, Willey has given us a special, personal narrative that informs on archaeologists—himself and other luminaries—as people. And though we leave his book knowing much of Gordon Willey, we are still far removed from a full appreciation of the person. I had the pleasure recently of attending my first two lectures by Professor Willey, one before a public audience and the second, a "master seminar," before a packed lecture hall of Arizona graduate students and faculty. And what a seminar it was! I was captivated by the elegance and polish of his delivery, by the command and breadth of subject matter, and by

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the clarity and precision of his argument. The print medium can only bring you the paper, published in this issue, and not the personal qualities that make the whole scholar. In an era of increasingly sophisticated communication technologies we must view the printed word as only one means of preserving the personal past.

At *American Antiquity* we are limited to the print medium. Even so, we are striving to build a heightened awareness of the importance of the history of archaeology and of archaeologists. Toward this end Douglas R. Givens has joined the editorial staff in the new position of Associate Editor for Obituaries and History of Archaeology. It is his mission to assist in targeting interesting historical topics to be examined and people to be profiled and to cajole and pester authors.

Significant pieces and processes of the past may be described and accounted for without consideration of the context of history and people. I believe, however, that the whole past—as whole as it will ever be in the present—is attainable only through an understanding of the personal and historical context in which it was formulated. But regardless of one's current beliefs or paradigmatic stance regarding people, history, and context, we must recognize and record the important role of our great scholars in bringing archaeology to where it is today. We owe them no less.

J. Jefferson Reid
Editor

**SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY
CALL FOR NOMINATIONS AND PROSPECTIVE EDITORS
SOCIETY ELECTIONS AND EDITORIAL APPOINTMENTS 1992**

Please note that editors for *American Antiquity* and *Latin American Antiquity* are not being elected in 1992, but under the new Society bylaws will be selected by the executive board on the basis of submitted proposals. Interested parties should contact Jerome A. Miller, Society for American Archaeology, 808 17th St., N.W., Suite 200, Washington, DC 20006, to obtain a copy of the request for proposal.

The Society for American Archaeology (SAA) will hold its 1992 annual elections for the following offices:

- President-elect (1 year), who succeeds to the office of President for a 2-year term (1993–1995).
- Secretary-elect (1 year), who succeeds to the office of Secretary for a 2-year term (1993–1995).
- Executive Board, Place 3—3-year term (1992–1995).
- Executive Board, Place 4—3-year term (1992–1995).

Please note that the chairperson of the nominating committee for the 1992 elections is now Don D. Fowler, Department of Anthropology (096), University of Nevada, Reno, NV 89557-0006. The other members are Alison S. Brooks, Department of Anthropology, George Washington University, Washington, DC 20052; Ruthann Knudson, Archeological Assistance Division (436), National Park Service, USDI, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; Ann Ramenofsky, Department of Anthropology, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131; Barbara L. Stark, Department of Anthropology, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287-2402. The executive board nominating committee liaison is Robert L. Bettinger, Department of Anthropology, University of California, Davis, CA 95616-8522.

The 1992 elections will be held in March–April 1992, but nominations are to be presented to the SAA Executive Board at their November, 1991, semiannual meeting. In order to avoid initiating a call for nominations during the summer field season, such a call is first presented here. This is a particularly critical election since these officers and board members will be responsible for leading the Society through the planned transition from a contracted executive service to a full-time executive office. **SAA members are urged to suggest to any member of the committee names of candidates for the offices listed above by October 1, 1991.**