

NYSAA Newsletter

Winter 2007



From the President

I am pleased to report that membership in the association increased in 2006. At the Oct. 28 Executive Committee meeting in Albany, Bill Bouchard, Corresponding Secretary, reported that we have a total of 523 members, up from 454 in 2005. This figure includes institutional memberships (\$30), up from 26 to 40. We can significantly increase our institutional memberships if we all encourage our local libraries to subscribe to The Bulletin. Also, I note that we have only three Sustaining Members. The Sustaining Membership (\$50) was created as a way for individuals to provide additional support for the association. When it comes time to pay your dues, consider becoming a Sustaining Member. In 2007, Sustaining Members will receive an Informational Handbook, formerly reserved for state and chapter officers.

Don't forget that we have an e-mail discussion list, NYSAA-list@yahoogroups.com. This list is a useful way of disseminating information including announcements of chapter programs. You can find it by first typing "yahoo groups" into a search engine like Google, then at the prompt, type "NYSAA-list". If you encounter difficulty signing up, contact our moderator, Ann Morton, at amorton@rochester.rr.com or Doug Mackey at douglas.mackey@oprhp.state.ny.us.

In the spring issue of this newsletter, I would like to include a list of volunteer dig opportunities in New York State. Please send me information by April 1.

Thanks,
Bill Engelbrecht, engelbwe@buffalostate.edu

Daniel H. Weiskotten Scholarship Fund

This award of \$500 is given to a New York State college student planning a career in archaeology. The application process is described on the NYSAA web site, <http://nysaaweb.bfn.org/>. The recipient will be announced on April 21 at the annual meeting during the banquet. For an informational flyer on the scholarship, contact Barbara De Angelo, Box 351, Chittenango, NY 13037 or at arch.dea@worldnet.att.net. This fund is supported by contributions. These may be sent to Barbara De Angelo with checks made out to "Daniel H. Weiskotten Scholarship Fund."

Mary Ball: Queen of Boardinghouse Widows

Kevin Moody, Hartgen Archaeological Associates, Inc.

From 1987 to 1999, Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc. conducted several archeological surveys of the State Comptroller Office complex (SCO) at 110 State Street and 40 Howard Street in downtown Albany. These blocks were part of the nucleus of Albany's boardinghouse district during the first half of the 19th century.

Boardinghouses became an integral element of Albany's 19th century social structure, as the city attempted to house its burgeoning wage-earning workforce while also isolating it from more genteel neighborhoods. The boardinghouse district endured because every need of this transient population was made available within its limits. Food, clothing, shelter, employment, medical care and a wide variety of consumer goods and services were among the necessities of life readily available.

The niceties of life were available as well, although these were provided through passive accommodation on the part of the Albany Common Council. By judiciously overlooking certain activities that occurred in the boardinghouse district, local government tacitly encouraged the residents to stay within the district. Many activities that occurred in the district – gambling, drinking, and promiscuous sex - were regarded as vices among polite society, but they were the staples of the sporting life pursued by many residents of the district.

In the course of gathering data on the boardinghouse district and its residents, one name kept appearing in the city directories. Mary Ball, or the widow Mary Ball, was listed as a boardinghouse keeper in 51 consecutive directories, published from 1813 through 1863. At first we enthusiastically bestowed the title "Queen of the Boardinghouse Widows" on Mary. Further research has indicated that she merits a more dubious title.

During her fifty-year reign, Mary relocated her establishment 17 times but never attracted a loyal boarder clientele. Mary Ball was neither an actuarial anomaly, nor a pitifully inept businesswoman. Not to put too fine an edge on it, Mary Ball was a prostitute, actually several prostitutes, who identified themselves and their trade by the not-too-subtle code name, Mary Ball. It was a pseudonym, apparently used by 19th century prostitutes in New York City as well as Albany.



None of Mary Ball's Albany establishments were located within the SCO complex. However, by comparing the artifact assemblages recovered from supposed boardinghouses on the SCO site with known brothel assemblages from NYC, it was possible to identify one of Albany's 19th century bordellos.

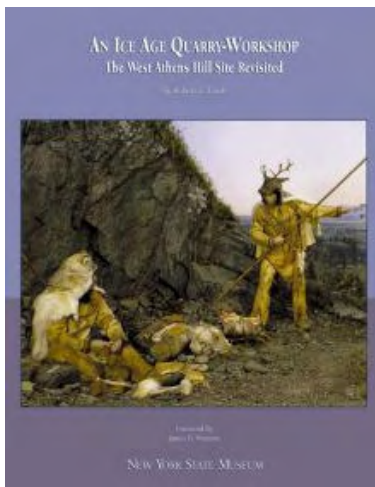
Albany's boardinghouses and brothels were instrumental in maintaining a social equilibrium between the transient, wage-earning workforce and the "respectable" members of the community. The archeological record of these institutions offers a unique perspective on the inner workings of 19th century Albany.

Archaeological Potential at Site of Proposed Albany Convention Center

The preferred area for a new Convention Center lies at the center of historic Albany, an area bounded by Broadway, State St., South Pearl St., and Madison Ave. A major attraction that can draw events and people to the proposed Center is the story of the city itself. This is the perfect place to explore how Albany grew and changed over several hundred years. However, this story can be told only if we know it and much of the key information lies buried. Only through intensive archaeological testing and excavation can this part of Albany's past be preserved and interpreted for present and future generations to enjoy.

James Bradley and William Bouchard

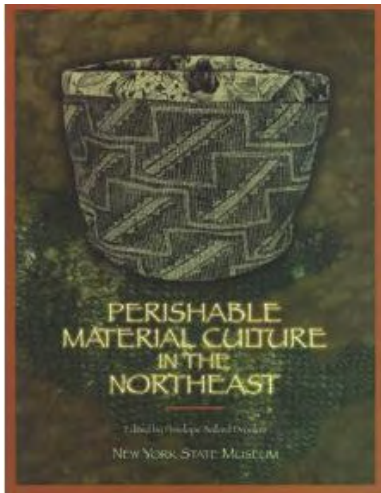
Recent New York State Museum Publications for Sale



New York State Museum Bulletin 504

Funk, R.E. with a foreword by J. B. Petersen. **An Ice Age Quarry-Workshop: The West Athens Hill Site Revisited.** 142 pp., 46 figs., 47 tpls. 2004 \$24.95

This book is the final report of three years of excavations by Dr. Funk at this important Paleo-Indian period site. Previously reported excavations at the site are summarized and supplemented with descriptions of additional excavation and analytical results. The site's three occupation areas and the recovered artifacts are detailed and compared using tables summarizing extensive metric data. The report offers interpretations that reconstruct the activities of the ancient inhabitants. In addition to archaeological finds, the report describes the site's environmental setting including regional geography and geology. The artifact assemblages recovered at the site are also compared with assemblages from eleven other Paleo-Indian sites in New York. A lengthy forward by James Petersen places research at West Athens Hill in the larger context of Paleo-Indian studies in the Northeast. Forty six figures illustrate the excavations at West Athens Hill and the recovered artifacts.



New York State Museum Bulletin 500
Drooker, Penelope Ballard (editor) **Perishable Material Culture in the Northeast.** 240 pp., 99 figs., 21 tpls., 2004 \$29.95

This volume focuses on the widespread use of organic materials by Native Americans in the Northeast, highlighting the most recent research on perishable material culture in this region, and illustrating how to obtain as much information as possible about perishable objects from the meager archaeological record. Early Euroamerican sites also are included. As the first publication devoted to the production and use of objects made from perishable materials in the Northeast, it brings together a wide range of relevant studies that typically have been difficult to locate because they have been scattered throughout the archaeological, ethnohistorical, textile history, and conservation literature.

All orders and questions should be directed to: Publication Sales, Room 3140, Cultural Education Center, Albany, NY 12230, Phone: (518) 402-5344, Fax: (518) 486-2034.

Old New York State Museum Publications Available

The New York State Library is digitizing historic government documents, including the New York State Museum Bulletins. Several classic archaeology texts can be freely downloaded as pdf files from the New York State Library site. These include Arthur Parker's The Archaeological History of New York (Bulletins 235-238) and the Ripley Site report, Bulletin 117. These can be found at <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/scandocs/historical.htm>. Museum memoirs, such as Robert Funk's Hudson Valley Prehistory (#22) and Ritchie and Funk's Aboriginal Settlement Patterns (#20) may be found at <http://nysl.nysed.gov/uhtbin/cgiirsi/Yz4BK1DY2B/290690082/503/10327>.

Submitted by T. Cregg Madrigal, Cregg.Madrigal@dep.state.nj.us

Photo Gallery

Front to back: Ed Gibson (Chenango Chapter), Vicky Jane (Beauchamp Chapter), and Tom Weinman (Beauchamp Chapter) working on lithics for the Great Swamp Conservancy. Photo courtesy of Gordon DeAngelo (Beauchamp Chapter).



2007 Annual Meeting

The 2007 annual meeting will be hosted by the Adirondack Chapter and will be held April 20-22 at the Gideon Putnam Hotel in Saratoga Springs (518) 226-4700. To present a paper or for program information, contact Dr. David Starbuck. P.O. Box 492, Chestertown, NY 12817 or e-mail: dstarbuck@frontier.net.

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