

NYSAA Newsletter Spring 2007



Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the New York State Archaeological Association will take place April 20-22 at the Gideon Putnam Resort and Spa in Saratoga Springs. The program is available on our web site at <http://nysaaweb.bfn.org/>. Walk-in registration is accepted.

Recent Publications

The Bulletin of The Chenango Chapter of The New York State Archaeological Association, Volume 29, No. 1, December 2006. This Bulletin contains 5 articles on Oneida sites authored or co-authored by Monte Bennett, Francis Hailey, Gerald Hayes, Richard Hosbach, Gail Merian, Alexander Neil, and Daryl Wonderly. To purchase a copy, make out a check for \$15 (includes postage) to Chenango Chapter, NYSAA and mail to Dr. Gerald Hayes, Treasurer, PO Box 21, Earlville, NY 13332.

The Native Forts of Long Island Sound Area. Expected Spring 2007. Publications of the Suffolk County Archaeological Association, Vol. VIII (\$40 + \$5 Shipping). This includes a reprint of Dr. Ralph Solecki's 1950 report on Fort Corchaug and a more extensive Epilogue on the site. Send check to S.C.A.A., P.O. Box 1542, Stony Brook, NY 11790. Tel. (631) 929-8725

Volunteer Digging Opportunities in New York

The following listing does not constitute an NYSAA endorsement. The field schools listed accept volunteers.

Western

Hull House, Lancaster, Historic. Dates to be announced. Contact: Dr. Doug Perrelli, SUNY/Buffalo Archaeological Survey, perrelli@buffalo.edu

McKendry Site, Irving, Prehistoric. Dates to be announced. Contact Kate Whalen, SUNY/Buffalo Archaeological Survey, kwhalen2@buffalo.edu

Hiscock Site, Byron, Paleontological/Paleo. July-August. Contact Dr. Richard Laub, Buffalo Museum of Science, rlaub@sciencebuff.org

Bittner Farmstead, Rochester, Historic, July 9-24. Monroe Community College, contact Ann Morton, amorton@rochester.rr.com

Blacksmith Shop, Canandaigua, Historic, Aug. 6-16. Finger Lakes Community College. Contact Ann Morton, amorton@rochester.rr.com

Mills Mansion, Mount Morris, Historic. Six Saturdays and Sundays, July 7- Aug. 12. Contact Justin Tubiolo, St. John Fisher College, jtubiolo@sjfc.edu

Central

Wyns Farm, Prehistoric, SE Cortland Co., May 23-June 27, Cortland Field School, Contact Ellie McDowell Loudan, LOUDANE@cortland.edu

SUNY/Binghamton's Community Archaeology Program, week of July 16th. See <http://cap.binghamton.edu/>

Eastern

Guinea Community Archaeological Project, Historic, July 9 – Aug. 3. Contact Christopher Lindner, Bard College, lindner@bard.edu

West Point Foundry, West Point, Historic, May 14-Aug. 3. Contact Patrick Martin, Michigan Technological University, pemartin@mtu.edu

Northern

Storrs Harbor Shipyard, War of 1812, July 9-13, Jefferson County Historical Society and Jefferson-Lewis Counties BOCES with the Thousand Islands Chapter. Other dates with the Thousand Islands Chapter to be announced. Contact Tim Abel, director@jeffersoncountyhistory.org

Fort Edward, Historic, July 2-13, July 30-Aug.10, Adirondack Community College, contact David Starbuck, dstarbuck@frontiernet.net

Long Island

Joseph Lloyd Manor, Lloyd, Historic. July 2 – Aug. 3, Contact Christopher Matthews, Hofstra Univ., Christopher.N.Matthews@hofstra.edu

Blydenburgh Co. Park, Eastern Suffolk BOCES field school, July 23-26, July 30-Aug. 2. Contact Gaynell Stone, gaystone@optonline.net

THE HERRICK HOLLOW PREHISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISTRICT **Nina Versaggi, Christopher Hohman, and Timothy Knapp** **Public Archaeology Facility, Binghamton University**

During the planning stages of a United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) superfund project in the Town of Masonville, Delaware County, New York, crews from the Public Archaeology Facility (PAF) searched the uplands between the Susquehanna and Delaware Valleys for evidence of cultural resources. Archaeological testing identified a series of seven Native American sites on an upland divide that separates the two valleys. On this divide, small streams drain a series of wetlands that eventually feed the West Branch of the Delaware River and the Susquehanna.

The Herrick Hollow sites were named for the creek that drains the wetlands in this rugged region. These small sites began as low density lithic scatters, but each phase of investigation produced an amazingly diverse assortment of artifacts, including pottery.

Diagnostic artifacts and radiocarbon dates showed that people used this landscape mostly during the Early and Late Woodland periods.

This landscape offered abundant resource reasons for visits by small groups involved in the procurement and processing of small game, deer, edible plants, such as nuts and tubers, and other resources, such as reeds and bark. Although remotely positioned, this landscape was revisited repeatedly. Archaeologists recovered thousands of artifacts from the seven sites. Debitage (chipping waste) from the production of stone tools, pottery fragments, and botanical remains (seeds, nuts, and corn) were all buried by centuries of soil deposition in this area. Analysis revealed the presence of formal tools and expedient flake tools from all seven sites.



Projectile points and/or other bifaces in various stages of completion were found in abundance. However, the lithic assemblage from the Early Woodland component stands out dramatically from the other sites. Excavations produced over 5000 pieces of lithic debitage and 32 unfinished bifaces, but no thermal features. Most of the lithics clustered within 1-2 meters of a glacial boulder, which may have been used as a seat for a flint knapper producing Meadowood points or cache blades. Each of the units around the glacial rock contained more than 200 pieces of lithic debitage. **[Photo 1]**



The Late Woodland sites produced several hearths (fire pits) as well as pottery and lithics, but no house patterns. **[Photo 2]** Points, unfinished bifaces, and expedient flake tools dominated the assemblages. Flotation of soil samples from the hearths yielded small amounts of plant remains, unlike the more dense and diverse botanicals found on camps and villages in the valley bottoms.

The botanical data contributes significantly to our interpretation of this upland landscape. Regardless of time period, nut and seed harvesting appears to have been low at the Herrick Hollow sites. The most common seed is from the deciduous ironwood tree, which yields a small nutlet that ripens in the fall. The remaining seeds all come from edible fleshy fruits such as pin cherry, elderberry, and bramble, most of which ripen before September. Ethnohistoric accounts indicate that Native Americans in the Northeast dried both pin cherry and bramble fruits for use in the winter and for travel foods.

Two of the five Late Woodland sites contained maize, almost all of which were kernels, suggesting that maize was carried in hulled form to these remote upland sites. Therefore,

most of the subsistence foods suggest visits in the Fall, with people using “travel food” rather than conducting large-scale procurement, processing, and consumption of local edible plants. Wood carbon in some Late Woodland features was classified as Ash. Black Ash is an important species for Iroquois basket making, another reason for visiting this area.

It would be easy at this point to conclude that the Herrick Hollow sites are ancillary camps created within a larger settlement system anchored by nearby residential sites. However, are we missing other interpretations by not looking more closely at the evidence, both negative and positive?

First, this remote location was not easy to access from the two main valleys to the north and south. Second, there is no evidence (feature or botanical) that these are long-term camps (for instance, occupied for several weeks or more). So, why would people visit this area for short periods of time. Was this drainage divide important for reasons in addition to subsistence?



The Early Woodland site provides a good case to examine this point. Here, there is a boulder encircled by broken bifaces and high densities of debitage. Some of the unfinished bifaces are Meadowwood blades. **[Photo 3]** Meadowwood cache blades carry highly charged ceremonial meaning since they tend to be deposited in human graves. It follows that the production of these blades would also carry religious or symbolic significance.

Meadowwood sites are rare in this section of the Susquehanna and Delaware Valleys. A person or group had to travel scores of miles to reach this area where they only stayed for a short period of time. The absence of hearths could mean a stay of less than a day. Here, the significance of the landscape, and probably the symbolic and historical memory of this spot marked by a boulder, trumps economic interpretations for this site. It is plausible that the symbolic pull of this landscape adds another dimension to the interpretation of land use.

Similar arguments could be proposed for the Late Woodland camps. While it is clear that short overnight stays occurred at this time, the lack of anything more than travel food indicates that food was not the main reason for visiting these spots. These areas may have been targeted for non-edible resources, such as basket staves, or as convenient stop-overs during trips between the two valleys. Upland divides may have constituted neutral territory, safe for any traveler to use.

The Herrick Hollow sites demonstrate that there is more to prehistory than what people collected and consumed. This drainage divide is one example of a landscape that may have meant more to Native American groups than subsistence alone.

Charles Fisher, 57

New York State archaeology suffered a great loss in February with the death of NYSAA Fellow Dr. Charles L. Fisher, following a battle with cancer. In addition to his scholarly acumen and fieldwork savvy, Chuck brought sharp intelligence, creativity, collegiality, and humor to his work in the archaeology of New York State. He will be sorely missed, but his contributions will serve to inspire current and future generations of archaeologists in our state.

After receiving his BA from SUNY New Paltz, Chuck went on to earn his Ph.D. from SUNY Albany. While his dissertation research focused on a prehistoric site at Beacon Bridge, Chuck is best known for his contributions to historical archaeology. Chuck taught at SUNY Albany and Rensselaer Polytechnic, but his most important teaching took place outside of the classroom as he mentored many young archaeologists in his positions at the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Bureau of Historic Sites, and later, at the New York State Museum. Most recently, Chuck served as Curator of Historical Archaeology at the museum, where he organized a new exhibit, "Beneath the City: An Archaeological Perspective of Albany." The exhibit is scheduled to open in June 2007 in the newly named "Charles L. Fisher Hall of Albany Archaeology."

Chuck was an active scholar and researcher, and is particularly respected for his expertise on the archaeology of military sites and domestic landscapes. He published many well-received articles in professional archaeological journals. In addition, Chuck edited several books for the New York State Museum, including volumes on the historical archaeology of Albany, on Fort Montgomery State Historic Site, and, with Dr. John Hart, a publication on the archaeology of domestic sites.

Chuck and his wife, NYSAA past-president Karen Hartgen, made one of New York State's most prominent archaeological couples. In fact, they met as students of Dr. Bob Funk, working on a 1970s highway survey project for I-88. Chuck is survived by Karen, and by their children, Rob, Kate, and Sarah. In addition, Chuck is survived by his parents, his sister, and close friends and colleagues too numerous to count.

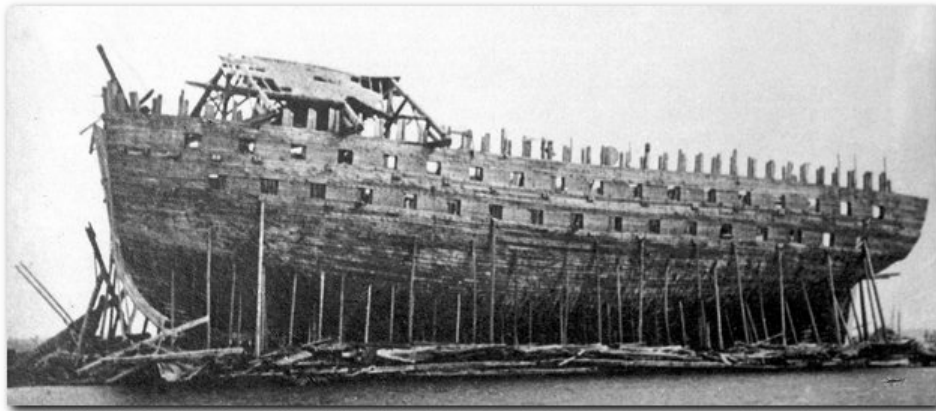
In mid-February, the New York State Museum paid tribute to Chuck with a Celebration of Life, where family and friends remembered Chuck with both tears and laughter. Those who worked with Chuck over his long career in New York State archaeology consider themselves very fortunate to have had that opportunity. Donations in Chuck's memory may be made to the Fisher Fund for Historical Archaeology, c/o Dr. John Hart, New York State Museum, CEC, Albany, New York 12230.

Elizabeth Peña

Beth Wellman, 61

Passed away on Thursday, March 29, 2007 of cancer. She was born in Provincetown, Mass. and was the daughter of Robert R. Wellman and Glenda Miller Wellman of Chadwicks, N.Y. Beth was senior scientist (Archaeology) at the New York State Museum in Albany. She was a member of the New York State Archaeological Association and the Society of Industrial Archaeology. Ms. Wellman earned degrees from the Fashion Institute of Technology and Syracuse University. She worked for 37 years in the Archaeology section of the state museum with eminent Northeast archaeologists, Drs. William A. Ritchie, Robert Funk, and John Hart. She made significant contributions to the advancement of the archaeological knowledge of the Susquehanna River Valley, the Southeast Adirondacks and Fishers Island off the coast of Connecticut. Her duties at the state museum included intensive studies of archeological collections, maintaining the state museum's vast archaeological site file, and mentoring dozens of university students. She also authored more than 15 articles and other publications on New York archaeology. Beth enjoyed hiking, gardening, and traveling.

She is survived by Dan DeMicco, her significant other, and by her brother, Thomas R Wellman of Glorietta, N.M.; Jean Kolasky, her sister; and her husband, Carl Kolasky and their daughters, Catherine and Elizabeth of Anderson, S.C. Donations in Beth's memory to support research in New York archaeology can be made to the Robert E. Funk Foundation, c/o New York State Museum Institute, 3025 Cultural Education Center, Albany, NY 12230. (from the Albany *Times Union*, 3/30/2007)



The USS New Orleans at Sackets Harbor. Construction ceased at the end of the War of 1812.
(photo courtesy of Tim Abel)

The excavations at Storrs Harbor this summer (see Volunteer Digging Opportunities) seek work areas related to this construction.