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THE COUNCIL FOR NORTHEAST HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY: THE EARLY YEARS

Budd Wilson

Budd Wilson, one of the founders of CNEHA, served on its Executive Board from 1966-1986. What follows are Budd's personal reminiscences of the development of CNEHA over its first 20 years.—Ed.

The Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology celebrated its 20th anniversary in 1986. The council was the outgrowth of a meeting between Col. Frederick P. Todd, of National Temple Hill Association and the New Windsor Cantonment, and John H. Mead, the director of Trailside Museums Palisades Interstate Park, Bear Mountain, New York. Mead contacted William Cornwall and Charles F. Hayes III of the Rochester Museum. Together they planned a meeting to be held at the Hotel Thayer in West Point, New York. This was called a Symposium on Historic Site Archeology. The date was April 2nd 1966. This symposium developed into the Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology.

The focus for the Hotel Thayer meeting was military history. Mead had archaeological work in progress at the New Windsor Cantonment (the last encampment of the Continental Army, 1782-1783), and had corresponded with others working in the field. Several people wanted a format to discuss the artifacts they were finding and to go over the results of their excavations. Mead realized that it was an archaeological problem that went beyond military sites.

As part of the April 2nd meeting the decision was made to form an executive board. This meeting took place at the cantonment after an inspection of the site. It was held in the recently reconstructed Temple Building, the site where George Washington had dismissed his troops at the end of the American Revolution. The building was

without light and very cold. Those who were present sat on very hard benches which did not have any backs. Jack Mead and Ed Lenik presided over the meeting. Mead and Lenik were selected as chairman and vice-chairman, respectively. In the course of the afternoon thirteen others were nominated to the first executive board. In order to replace five people per year, people were elected for a one, two, or three-year term. The three-year term has been the pattern since then.

Mead was a naturalist turned archaeologist. Lenik was Personnel Director of a manufacturing company. Others in that group included a teacher, a landscape architect, a publisher, and a couple of historians.

Wallace Workmaster had a background in history and was working for the New York State Education Department. Gilbert Hagerty, the teacher, had recently taken a job with Old Sturbridge Village in charge of school services. Gordon DeAngelo worked as a landscape architect for the New York State Department of Transportation. Gordon had some experience in prehistoric archaeology. I had finished school and had expected to be teaching history. Paul Huey and I were enrolled in John Cotter's course at the University of Pennsylvania entitled "Historical Archaeology." Huey would become one of the first replacements on the executive board.

Through the board the symposia were expanded to include both a spring and fall meeting. The spring meeting would be held at the Bear Mountain Inn. The fall meeting would be held at some other location where there was an active interest in historic sites archaeology. We limited ourselves to the northeast because there was already an active group in the southeast. Stanley South had called the first meeting of that group in November 1960.

The board was active during the year. It selected a program chairman and a secretary/treasurer. There was a nominal registration fee for the meeting. The board would meet on the Friday night before the meeting in order to go over the agenda for the meeting. When the meeting was to be at Bear Moun-

tain Inn, the board met in the corner of the Cub Room (bar). Here the format was finalized for the Saturday morning general meeting.

The meeting was conducted by the chairman. There was the usual reading of the minutes and the treasurer's report. All people present at the meeting were qualified to vote on matters that came to the floor. The location of the fall meeting was decided in this fashion. New members were nominated to the board and the nominated slate was voted upon by the raising of hands.

In addition to the charge for the meeting, there was also a charge for a dinner. In most cases there was an after-dinner speaker. The registration fee covered the cost of the meeting. The cost of the dinner went to the restaurant. There were no dues.

The fall meetings were usually held in October. In the course of the early years these were held in several states. In each of these places the meeting was sponsored by a museum, a historical society, or a restoration program. There were fall meetings in Newark, Delaware; Ringwood, New Jersey; Rome, New York; Paterson, New Jersey; Oneonta, New York; and Ligonier, Pennsylvania.

From the beginning the purpose of the executive board was to promote historical archaeology and to encourage the collection, preservation, advancement, and dissemination of knowledge. Through the symposium the members of the board recognized a need for a set of ethical standards. An Ethical Standards Committee was formed from within the board. This subcommittee drafted a list of ethical standards, and the board had these printed. The list was made available as a hand-out at the meetings. The ethical standards have subsequently been updated. The committee still exists.

By 1970 it was recognized that there was a need to have a publication. Another committee was therefore formed in order to create a journal. An editor for the journal was selected from the executive board. Money for the journal was appropriated from the treasury, and journals were sold for a nominal

fee. There were to be two journals a year. The first journal was printed in the spring of 1971. By this time the organization was known as the Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology. The council and the executive board were synonymous. There was no membership in the council.

The first journal contained articles on clay pipes, iron manufacture, and the "Joys of Urban Archaeology." Subsequent journals attempted to follow a theme. As time progressed some of the sponsors of the meetings also helped financially in order to cover the rising cost of the journal.

In addition to the symposium evolving into the council, the concept of northeast was also changing and expanding. Originally "Northeast" meant from Ontario to Maryland. Primarily because of the work at Fortress Louisbourg in Nova Scotia, "Northeast" came to include Quebec and all the Maritime Provinces of Canada. The first Canadian on the board was the late Iain Walker. Walker, trained at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, worked as Staff Archaeologist at Fortress Louisbourg.

The membership on the board was also changing. Walker had a background in archaeology. Paul Huey was now working in the field. Ed Rutsch, a school teacher, had become a museum director. He was now working in contract archaeology. Bert Salwen, initially a mechanical engineer, had changed to anthropology and had entered the field of historical archaeology.

The board was also changing in another way. Margaret Fields, who had done extensive work at Fort Ligonier and Hannastown, was the first woman on the board. By 1976 Sarah Bridges and Jo Ann Cotz would be on the board. By 1978 almost half of the board members would be women.

By now the early years were drawing to a close. The Mead years were past. The Workmaster years were ending.

The year that the council was formed the National Historic Preservation Act was passed. This act created the National Register and the Section 106 review process for federally funded projects. In 1967 the Soci-

ety for Historical Archaeology was formed. It became an international society. Within SHA there was the Foley vs Vogel debate over whether the study of above-ground remains should be called *archaeology*. Because of the persistence of Robert Vogel, the Society for Industrial Archaeology was formed in 1972.

In the late 1970s the journal became a heavy burden. There were papers that were ready to be published, but there was not enough money to do so. Some money had been collected for one journal that was not forthcoming. There were problems.

In order to survive, the council made two major changes. The first was obvious, while the second was more subtle. The council, against the wishes of some, became a dues-paying organization. The subtle change was in orientation. The orientation changed from a service oriented council to a regional society. The major membership of the council changed from avocational archaeologists to vocational archaeologists.

Much of the early historic sites archaeology had been done with volunteers. Mead, Lenik, Rutsch, and, even Stanley South had used volunteers or untrained laborers. The major work at Fort Ligonier had been done by volunteers. Fortress Louisbourg was started as a "make-work" project in a depressed area. The Ethical Standards were written with volunteers in mind. The early journals were supported by a corps of volunteers. [N.B.—Despite CNEHA's shift in organizational focus from avocational to professional, all CNEHA Executive Board activities, including those of the journal editor, continue to be performed on a voluntary basis.—Ed.]

What emerged from the late 1960s and early 1970s was a group of people with more than an avocational interest in archaeology. New laws coupled with new needs required a multilevel archaeological work force. In both Canada and the United States there were people who could respond to the challenge. There was still a need for people who could dig. There was also a need for specialists in artifact analysis and in the emerging field of archaeological conservation of objects excavated from historic sites.

Many of those who started as volunteers or unskilled laborers are now in charge of archaeological research. The children of volunteers are now in graduate school in historical archaeology.

The first chapter in the history of the Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology is past. The second chapter is in progress. In this computer age, archaeological data is being recorded at a rapid rate. In speeding up the archaeological process we must not forget that archaeology does not end with artifacts. Archaeology, historical or prehistoric, is about people. As a friend has said, we must continue to be the storytellers.

An archaeological laborer was once asked what he was digging for. His reply was, "\$4.00 an hour." In this new archaeological age, is our first standard still our quest for knowledge about people?

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