

Museum
CHRONICLE

**DR. LEE BERGER, WORLD-RENOWNED
PALEOARCHAEOLOGIST, SPEAKS AT UA MUSEUMS**

pg. 5

**ABOMINABLE SCIENCE COMES TO THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA
WHEN DISASTER STRIKES: SAVING ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE FACE OF NATURAL DISASTERS
MCKAIN PROPELS THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA'S HERBARIUM COLLECTION INTO
GENOMIC ERA • DISCOVERING ALABAMA STATE CAPITALS**

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA MUSEUMS • WINTER 2018 • NO. 58

*Alabama Museum of Natural History • Discovering Alabama • Moundville Archaeological Park • Office of Archaeological Research
Gorgas House • Museum Research and Collections • Mildred Westervelt Warner Transportation Museum*

Museum CHRONICLE

Published by The University of Alabama Museums

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ALABAMA | University Museums
Research and Collections

On the cover: Dr. Lee Berger pictured with Homo naledi skull found at the Rising Star site. (Photo courtesy of Lee Berger)

Winter/Spring 2018 **EVENTS CALENDAR**

february

3 Friday

GROWING UP WILD PRESCHOOL FRIDAY

\$2 per child/caregiver, Pre-K,
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

5 Sunday

MUSEUM MONDAY

\$8 per person, K-2, registration required,
3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

17 Saturday

FAMILY NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

Free, all ages, 5:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

22 Thursday

“SLAVERY AND THE GORGAS HOUSE”

Lecture by Dr. Hilary Green, free, 3:00 p.m.

27 Tuesday

**“WILLIAM C. GORGAS AND
THE GREAT WAR”**

Exhibit opening. Free general admission.

march

2 Friday

GROWING UP WILD PRESCHOOL FRIDAY

\$2 per child/caregiver, Pre-K,
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

5 Monday

MUSEUM MONDAY

\$8 per person, K-2, registration required,
3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

9-10 Friday-Saturday

KNAP-IN

Free with regular admission to Moundville
Archaeological Park, 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

12-16 Monday-Friday

SPRING BREAK

The museum will be open during Spring Break

april

2 Monday

MUSEUM MONDAY

\$8 per person, K-2, registration required,
3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

6 Friday

GROWING UP WILD PRESCHOOL FRIDAY

\$2 per child/caregiver, Pre-K,
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

april (continued)

12 Thursday

YURI'S NIGHT

Free, all ages, 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

21 Saturday

BIOBLITZ

Free, all ages, 7:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m.,
University of Alabama Arboretum

may

4 Monday

GROWING UP WILD PRESCHOOL FRIDAY

\$2 per child/caregiver, Pre-K,
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

7 Monday

MUSEUM MONDAY

\$8 per person, K-2, registration required,
3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

ongoing

**“WILLIAM C. GORGAS AND
THE GREAT WAR”**

2-27-18 through 4-27-18, free,
museum hours 10:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.,
Tuesday through Saturday

Location Key:

 Moundville Archaeological Park
(205) 371-2234

 Alabama Museum of Natural History
(205) 348-7550

 Transportation Museum
(205) 248-4931

 Gorgas House
(205) 348-5906

from the **DIRECTOR**

The staff of the University of Alabama Museums has been busy with a variety of important research projects and some large-scale engaging public programs as we transition to a new administrative reporting structure at the University. The Moundville Native American Festival was a huge success with around 10,000 people attending, including over 100 Native American artists, craftspeople, living history interpreters, and performers. We had over 500 people attend our Halloween event “Haunting at the Museum” at the Gorgas House and Alabama Museum of Natural History. Where else can you find chemistry students demonstrating “mad scientist” experiments, entomologists presenting a giant insect petting zoo, and over a dozen ghoulish docents giving a haunted tour of the Gorgas House?

The theme for this issue of *Museum Chronicle* is “transitions.” The study of biological evolution is of course a study of transitions. Recently, we had the great pleasure of presenting a lecture by my old college friend, Dr. Lee Berger of South Africa, famous for his discovery of not one, but two species of early human relatives. Lee was named one of Time Magazine’s “100 most influential people in the world,” and has been featured extensively in *National Geographic* and on *NOVA*. Last year, we recruited his son Matt to attend UA, so we are looking forward to more visits!

In past issues, we have told you about the important Caribbean archaeology projects undertaken by the UA Museums’ Office of Archaeological Research. In this issue, Dr. Brooke Persons, our Caribbean archaeologist, writes about the devastating effects of recent hurricanes on historic and prehistoric archaeological resources, and how this area is transitioning following these brutal storms.

Finally, this is a time of administrative transition for The University of Alabama Museums as we merge with the College of Arts and Sciences. We have had a long and positive relationship with Dean Robert Olin and many Arts and Sciences faculty members, many of whom are also curators in University Museums. This merger will strengthen these ties and lead to increased collaboration on collections-based research by faculty and students. In addition, starting January 1, 2018, The University of Alabama Museums will administer the College’s graduate certificate program in Museum Studies. Our staff is very excited about this new opportunity for the Museums to directly engage students!

As always, we thank you, our members, for your continued support, visits to our museums, and participation in our programs.

Sincerely,



William F. Bomar, Ph.D.



Dr. Bill Bomar
(Photo by Alice Wilson)

DR. LEE BERGER, WORLD-RENOWNED PALEOARCHAEOLOGIST, SPEAKS AT UA MUSEUMS

BY SARA BETH BOLIN, UA POLITICAL SCIENCE, ANTHROPOLOGY, AND JOURNALISM STUDENT

"I'm going to take you on a journey."

This is how Dr. Lee Berger, world-renowned paleoarchaeologist and National Geographic explorer-in-residence, began his lecture at The University of Alabama on Oct. 2. The journey? His award-winning career.

When Berger graduated with his doctorate from the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa, he decided to stay and continue his work at the Gladysvale site, just a few miles outside of Johannesburg. Within a year, Berger and his team found two teeth at the site. Over the next 17 years, Berger dedicated everything he had to the site, hoping to discover the origin of humans. They found nothing but antelope fossils.

"I remember calling in on a conference once and someone said, 'Have you ever seen someone go so far on two teeth?' That was not a compliment."

Berger struggled for years to find anything substantial. After spending millions of dollars on technology to find more sites, he ran out of funds and support from his university. However, after he accidentally opened Google Earth on his computer, he discovered a new, cheap way to find sites. Over the next few months, he discovered over 700 untouched sites.

When these sites were found, Berger took his team, along with his 9-year-old son, Matthew, out into the field and told them to look for fossils. Within minutes, Matthew called his father over and held up a rock containing a clavicle, jaw and tooth. This discovery would become one of the most complete skeletons ever discovered.



Wits University paleoanthropologist Professor Lee Berger, renowned for his discovery of *Homo naledi* and *Australopithecus sediba*, appeared on TIME magazine's 2016 list of the 100 most influential people in the world. (Photo courtesy of Lee Berger)

After months of excavating these sites, Berger and his team analyzed their findings and came to the conclusion that they had discovered a new ancestor of the human race: *Australopithecus sediba*. The discovery thrust Berger into the spotlight, allowing him to share his research with anyone who would listen. Soon, he was ready to go back to the field, and quickly began looking for his next opportunity.

Berger decided that if the *Australopithecus sediba* had been found in a spot that had been studied many times, the newest discovery could also be in plain sight. As a result, he turned to the cave system near Johannesburg where archaeologists were trained to go caving.

Berger himself could no longer go into the caves, so he hired two amateur spelunkers to climb around the caves for him. The caves were dangerous, as the floor could fall out from

“The 15 hominids that were discovered were unlike anything the team had seen before. They seemed to combine the primitive anatomy of the *Australopithecus* genus and the complexity of the human hands and feet. Because of the obvious disparities between these individuals and previously-discovered human ancestors, the species was given its own name: *Homo naledi*.”

underneath them at any point. The last cave the crew decided to explore was the most explored of all, Rising Star. There, after some of the roughest terrain the group had encountered, was the biggest archaeological discovery of the century.

The cavers sent pictures of their discoveries to Berger, who was dumbfounded. To confirm, he sent his then 15-year-old son Matthew down the seven-inch-wide chute into the site. When Matthew came up, he reassured his father that there were several fossils sitting in the chamber, waiting to be found.

Immediately, Berger formed a team of “underground astronauts,” or the scientists willing and able to spelunk into the depths to retrieve the fossils. Over 1,500 hominid remains were retrieved from a 20-centimeter excavation, making Rising Star the richest hominid site in the world.

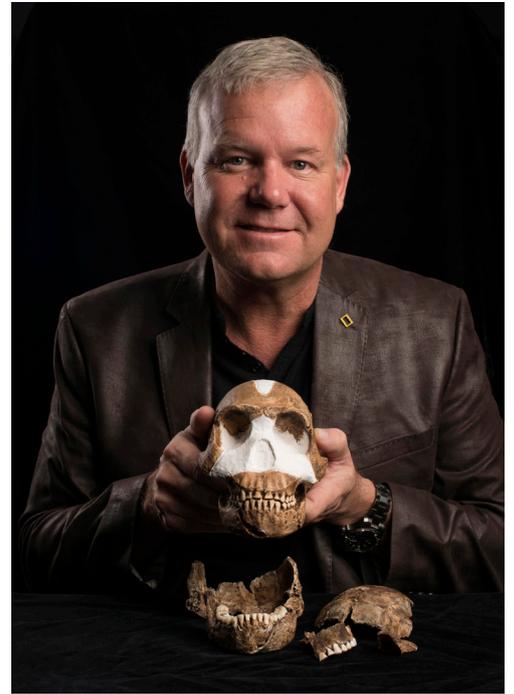
“We found pretty much every part of anatomy you could think of,” he said. “We had the most completed hominid foot ever discovered in Africa, and we had six of them. We had the most completed hominid hand ever

discovered in Africa, and we had eight of them.”

The 15 hominids that were discovered were unlike anything the team had seen before. They seemed to combine the primitive anatomy of the *Australopithecus* genus and the complexity of the human hands and feet. Because of the obvious disparities between these individuals and previously-discovered human ancestors, the species was given its own name: *Homo naledi*.

Scientists from all over the world flocked to the discovery site. Berger streamed the excavation on social media, allowing millions of people to view this once-in-a-lifetime discovery. Once again, Berger was in the spotlight. After this discovery was made public, Berger was named one of Time Magazine’s 100 Most Influential People of 2016.

There is still a large amount of research surrounding *Homo naledi* occurring at the Rising Star site. Recently, the team dated the individuals and found that they ranged from 230,000 to 330,000 years old. This is much younger than expected, as it conflicts with the



Dr. Lee Berger pictured with *Homo naledi* skull found at the Rising Star site. (Photo courtesy of Lee Berger)

emergence of modern humans in Africa. Berger emphasized that this could change all of archaeology, as introducing a new player to the field could change how the different species interacted, as well as who used what tools and where they lived.

In addition, the team examined the age of all the individuals and determined that none of them existed in the cave at the same time. After several months of research, the team concluded that *Homo naledi* disposed of its dead, which could also change how researchers look at the succession of human ancestry and the development of culture.

Although Berger is one of the most influential paleoarchaeologists of all time, he is encouraged by the number of discoveries that have not yet been made. Berger made it clear that his findings at Rising Star are not the last.

“The whole story is a whole lot more complex, and that’s where we’re going next,” he said. “Perhaps the greatest age of exploration is right now.” ■

EMPLOYEE Q&A WITH JANET WYATT, JONES MUSEUM MANAGER, MOUNDVILLE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK

BY KELLI HARRIS

What is your superpower?

I am The Finder of Lost Things. Just ask my family.

What would you tell someone who is thinking about volunteering at Moundville Archaeological Park?

Please come out and volunteer! We have volunteer opportunities year round such as working with school groups, office work, gardening and giving tours. You will have lots of fun and will meet a lot of nice people. We cannot function without our volunteers!



Janet Wyatt (Photo courtesy Janet Wyatt)

What is your favorite book?

A Prayer for Owen Meany by John Irving

What do you wish other people knew about Moundville?

Did you know that Moundville was the largest city north of Mexico City about a thousand years ago?! Also, you may not realize that today Moundville attracts visitors from all over the world!

NEW STUDENT STAFFER JOINS MILDRED WESTERVELT WARNER TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM

BY KATHERINE EDGE

The Mildred Westervelt Warner Transportation Museum is excited to welcome a new student staffer, Morgan Avery, to the UA Museums family. Avery is a junior at the university majoring in history and minoring in anthropology.

Originally from Maryville, Tennessee, Avery has always enjoyed visiting historic sites and museums, and her father, a self-proclaimed “big history buff,” took her family on vacations to places such as Gettysburg. Avery was even named after Alabama’s own Fort Morgan. Being raised in such a history-rich environment, Avery grew a love for history from a young age.

Avery is currently involved with field school at Moundville Archaeological Park, and her favorite history class thus far was “History of the South Since 1865,” taught by Kari Frederickson. Avery decided to work in one of the UA Museums to see if museum work is her calling as a profession.

Within her first two weeks at the Transportation Museum, she was giving tours during a scheduled middle school field trip and remarked that she loves it so far. Her favorite exhibit is the Penny Farthing bicycle. We are excited to welcome Avery to UA Museums. ■



Morgan Avery at the M.W. Warner Transportation Museum (Photo by Katherine Edge)

SUPPORTING VICTORY: A SUMMER IN ARMY LOGISTICS HISTORY

BY MATT CULVER, UA COMPUTER SCIENCE AND HISTORY STUDENT, UA MUSEUMS STUDENT MEMBER

The United States Army Quartermaster Museum in Fort Lee, Virginia, houses more than 24,000 artifacts and over one million documents preserving the history of the Quartermaster Corps, which is the army's logistical branch. Historically, the corps' missions revolved around general supply, housing, animals, forage, subsistence, and pay, and its modern missions are divided into seven functional areas including aerial delivery, field services, mortuary affairs, culinary services, petroleum, potable water, and supply management.

My affiliation with the Quartermaster Museum began in 2014 as a high-school volunteer during the summer. My initial tasks included greeting visitors and digitizing approximately 3,000 still photographs in the museum's collection. Despite the relative monotony of the assignment, I still found a sense of wonder working next to the artifacts that helped win America's wars for over 300 years—silent witnesses to stories of triumph and sacrifice.

My experience at the Quartermaster Museum piqued my interest in historical collection and preservation, which is one reason why I added history as a double major to my aerospace engineering degree at The University of Alabama. In 2016, I returned to the museum as an academic intern and assisted curator Luther Hanson in fulfilling research requests for various projects, including a Hollywood movie production. I also managed the photography and videography duties for the museum's online presence. This multi-faceted internship proved challenging and extremely rewarding, advancing both my technical and professional skillset in more fields than I anticipated. The next year I was asked to



From Left to Right: Brigadier General (Promotable) Rodney D. Fogg, 54th Quartermaster General; SFC (Ret.) Charles M. Culver, USA; University of Alabama student Matthew Culver; Quartermaster Museum Director Paul Morando stand in front of a banner of PFC Clarence L. Culver, Killed in Action 15 July 1918, Marne, France. (Photo courtesy of US Army Quartermaster Museum)

return as a full-time intern to assist with the development of an exhibit dedicated to the centennial anniversary of Fort Lee and the First World War.

The World War I project felt like jumping into the deep end without fully learning how to swim. When I entered the project, there was a mere month and a half until the ribbon cutting, and none of the exhibit had yet to arrive. Luckily, I had some experience in high-stress, short-term exhibition development from opening a pair of Great War exhibits

on UA's campus at the Gorgas House and Veteran and Military Affairs Office in Houser Hall. For those exhibits we had to select artifacts, do research, and design graphics, all while maintaining normal museum operations.

For the World War I project, I was assigned a corner of the new gallery dedicated to the Graves Registration Service, a unique mission of the corps in the years after the war. Due to technological and logistical limitations, around 70,000 of the American dead

“*Luckily, I had some experience in high-stress, short-term exhibition development from opening a pair of Great War exhibits on UA’s campus at the Gorgas House and Veteran and Military Affairs Office in Houser Hall.*”

were buried in France, 15,000 of them where they fell. The Graves Registration Service of the Quartermaster Corps spent nearly a decade after the armistice tracking down these battlefield internments, exhuming the remains, and conducting dignified transfers to the newly established American cemeteries in the United States. Once that was complete, the wooden crosses and stars of David were replaced by marble ones, in the style of Arlington National Cemetery. The Graves Registration Service proved astonishingly proficient in their task, achieving a 97 percent identification rate despite the lack of DNA testing or even terribly detailed medical records.

However, the Quartermaster Corps’ work was not done. Because America found itself faced with thousands of mothers whose sons had fallen on French soil, with no remains or grave to mourn, the government offered post-war repatriation to any family who wished it. Still, an overwhelming amount of families chose to leave their fallen in France, and in 1929, the American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. petitioned congress to fund “pilgrimages,” to transport mothers to the graves of their sons in France and England, instead.

The logistical challenges for conducting these pilgrimages fell on the Quartermaster Corps. The War Department instructed the corps to assess women for eligibility, then contact those eligible with pilgrimage offers. Those that accepted would then be provided travel accommodations to New York City, where they would be joined by quartermaster officers. The parties would then embark on United States lines vessels for the voyage to Europe. Upon

arrival, the parties would be welcomed in Paris, then transported to the cemetery to visit their loved one’s grave. Each mother was photographed next to her son’s headstone. The party would then depart back to the United States.

Special arrangements were made with the State Department and destination countries to provide free passports to each mother. The Quartermaster Corps also provided food, basic supplies, and laundry services in New York City and Paris. The army furnished medical care for the mothers during their pilgrimage and even made arrangements for Graves Registration Quartermasters to be on hand in anticipation that some would pass away during the journey.

Many of the passports and personal items from the pilgrimages recently found their way into the Quartermaster Museum’s collection. The story was far too moving and important to allow the



A section of the Quartermaster Museum’s World War I Gallery including an Army Nurse Corps “Norfolk” Uniform worn by a Camp Lee nurse. (Photo courtesy of US Army Quartermaster Museum)

artifacts and photographs to remain in their archive boxes, so my task was to research the details of the program and develop boards for the exhibit. I also curated artifacts to display in a case dedicated to the pilgrimage as well as the women that served in the Quartermaster Corps during the war.

Photos, usually difficult to choose for exhibits, proved to be the easiest part of this task. My director and I chose to prominently feature a photo of a mother weeping as she lay next to the grave of her son in the American cemetery outside of Paris, the Eiffel Tower in the background. The emotional impact of the subject with the iconic tower in the background powerfully conveyed the historic moment. The rest of the photos proved to be equally remarkable: a mother from the African-American pilgrimage signing France's "golden book" beneath the Arc de Triomphe flanked by American and French officers, including General Gouraud, and a Quartermaster woman in uniform sharing a laugh with General Pershing – each had their unique impacts.

Artifacts were in no shortage, giving a clear picture of just how much importance the army placed on this mission. Commemoration medals for the mothers were sourced from Tiffany & Co., and meticulous records were kept of nearly every movement and letter sent by the Quartermaster Corps during the three years it conducted the pilgrimages. Among the records was a large leather bound register of all mothers that were eligible for pilgrimage, including a Frances Bell Culver, my own great-great grandmother. Another surprise awaited deeper into this ledger: while flipping through the pages, I ran across the decomposed remains of a poppy, the symbol of remembrance of the fallen in WWI. This century-old flower provided a humanization to the subjects I had been studying for the past few weeks, and is now displayed prominently on the open page of the book.



A US Army Small Box Respirator in the WWI gallery. (Photo courtesy of US Army Quartermaster Museum)

The remaining work on the exhibit went quickly but smoothly, and the long days paid off with an extremely successful opening attended by the Quartermaster General and several gold star mothers, as well as my grandfather, a Vietnam veteran.

The remainder of my summer was filled with a chance to exercise my engineering and scientific education. The aging kiosk in the introductory gallery had displayed a rudimentary PowerPoint of the Quartermaster Generals, the Quartermaster Song, information on the regimental crest, and the corps' 33 Medal of Honor recipients. With some mentorship from a close friend and talented computer scientist at UA, I hired a local student developer and began development on a replacement program. This pet project,

which filled my last weeks of work, became one of the most impactful of my experience, sparking an interest in human-interactive digital exhibition that I would certainly like to explore further.

All said, I managed to learn more about myself and the museum field in ten weeks than I thought was possible; advancing my skills as a historian and software engineer, while at the same time contributing to a meaningful mission as part of the best team I have had the pleasure of working with. I would also like to include a personal nod to my director, Paul Morando, who often believed in me more than I believed in myself and pushed me to my full potential daily. ■

CONSERVATOR ANALYZES GORGAS HOUSE COLLECTIONS

BY LYDIA JOFFRAY

Late last year, the Gorgas House Museum received a Preservation Assistance Grant from the National Endowment of the Humanities. The grant funded the Gorgas Art and Works on Paper Conservation Project which was completed earlier this year.

David Goist, a conservator from North Carolina who had previously visited the University to assess the Gorgas House collections as part of the Collections Assessment Program in 2013, returned to Tuscaloosa to work on this project August 7–10. During that time, Goist analyzed every framed art, photograph, and certificate in the Gorgas House and collections. In total, Goist examined 111 pieces, documenting condition and wear, as well as recommending future preservation and care.

He determined that all of the items needed to be reframed because their current frames from the 1950s and '60s used materials that were not archivally correct, causing the art or paper to deteriorate over time.

Drawings made by Josiah Gorgas had previously been removed from the house because tape had been used to adhere the sketches to the mat. Tape and a non-archival mat damaged the drawings and made them turn brown. They were removed from their framing and placed in Hoole Special Collections Library, where Josiah's sketchbook is housed.

The Gorgas Art and Works on Paper Conservation Project served to prevent other such issues from happening with artifacts in the Gorgas Family Collection. Goist carefully inspected each of the framed pieces in the collection, identifying the problems with each item and prioritizing them in order of artifacts most in need of attention.

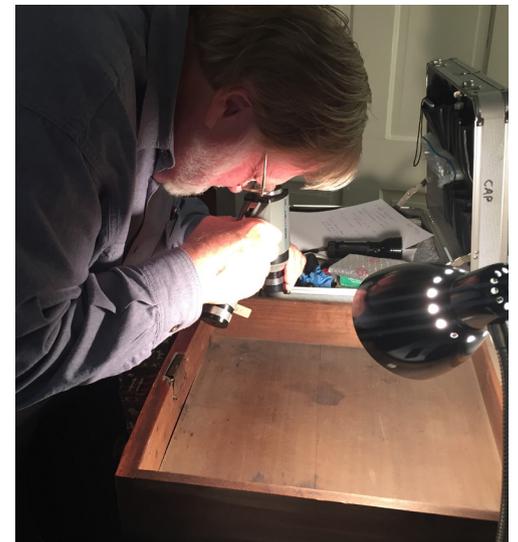


Collections Manager Bill Allen assists Conservator David Goist with the inspection of a painting from the Gorgas Family Collection. (Photo by Lydia Joffray)

The Gorgas House Museum will now seek a grant to take the items in greatest need of attention to a paper conservator who will remove the frames and performed a greater analysis for long-term preservation.

During his time on campus, Goist also made a presentation titled “The Best Conservation is Prevention” to museum staff as well as members of the University community.

While the care of the Gorgas family collection is a large undertaking, the Preservation Assistance Grant has gone a long way in preserving the artifacts in the Gorgas House for future generations. Through this assessment, UA Museums will be able to properly identify items in dire need and mitigate past damage and prevent future hazards. ■



Conservator David Goist inspects the signatures from several students who attended the University before the Civil War that are found in one of the desk drawers at the Gorgas House. (Photo by Lydia Joffray)

MUSEUM EXPEDITION 39 – OLD CAHABA ARCHAEOLOGY

BY JAMIE BYNUM, ANTHROPOLOGY AND MUSEUMS STUDENT MEMBER

Each summer, the Alabama Museum of Natural History invites youth and adults interested in getting their hands dirty to join UA researchers on a five-night field experience to an archaeologically significant site in the southern states. The annual event, known as Museum Expedition, gives participants hands-on experience with paleontology, archaeology, and practical ecology while working on an actual field project.

In 2017, the 39th annual Museum Expedition was held at the Old Cahawba Archaeological Park in Orrville, Alabama, and participants helped to uncover the corner of Alabama's first statehouse.

Though bid documents in the possession of archaeologists working at the site described a statehouse that was 58 feet wide, the team uncovered a 30-foot line of brick that made a 90-degree turn at each end. Current speculations are that the statehouse had some sort of porch that was not mentioned in the bid document.

The following story details the experiences of Jamie Bynum, one of the expedition's participants.



Public Camp Expeditioners at the Old Cahawba church for the group picture. (Photo by Allie Sorlie)



Expedition participants work alongside archaeologists from Old Cahawba Archaeological Park and the Alabama Historic Commission to excavate the statehouse building. (Photo by Allie Sorlie)

Museum Expedition 39 began Monday, June 19 at Old Cahawba Archaeological Park. Our campsite was about five minutes from the actual excavation, and I was told that it would be comfortable for anyone that had never been camping. That was completely true. There was a dining fly with plenty of table space and a kitchen fly with any kitchen equipment we might need to make food for 10+ people. The showers were fed by hoses, making it incredibly cold, but I would rather have a cold shower than no shower.

After arriving and getting everything put away into tents, we took a wagon tour of the park. The park was absolutely beautiful with its green grasses, worm webs in trees, and Spanish moss. There were several sites to visit in the park, from an artisan well that has been running since the early 1800s, to a church that has been reconstructed twice with the same materials.

It was also very interesting to hear about the history of the state's first capital, with many specific names that are still recognized today. Once our tour was over and we arrived back at camp, we had personal introductions. This really helped to get to know one another and made it easier to make friends.

The next day the park archaeologist Linda gave us a backstory to the statehouse and surrounding area, which helped set the tone for what exactly we were digging for. Tuesday was the only day that all the "expeditioners" got to excavate together, due to oncoming rain. After excavating for four hours, we took a visit to the Selma Interpretive Center. Although small, it was still full of information about the Civil Rights movement and very interesting.

Our problems with rain began on Wednesday. Our campsite was heavily flooded, some of us had to

“*The annual event, known as Museum Expedition, gives participants hands-on experience with paleontology, archaeology, and practical ecology while working on an actual field project.*”

eat in ankle deep water, and all of the expeditioners' tents were leaking except mine. I was fortunate to have a moat surrounding my tent.

With all the rain, we couldn't do any excavating, so we did lab work instead. Though others found the lab work interesting, I wasn't too invested because I had worked in a lab for six months.

We also took a visit to the Lowndes Interpretive Center, which was just as interesting and cool as the Selma Interpretive Center the day before. The front desk staff was extremely kind and knowledgeable, and the center was full of so much information.

Heading back to the camp, we realized the rain wouldn't be letting up anytime soon, so we slept in the on-site church next to the visitor center. This was when we found our camp pet, Howard Casio Bynum (H.C. Bynum). Howard, who is now living in the Alabama Museum of Natural History, is a stag beetle that was found in the rain and unable to get around due to the extreme water conditions. We took him in, and everyone fell in love. He even got more goodbyes than I did at the end of the expedition.

By the Thursday, the rain had still not let up and the pools of water at our camp were growing. The grounds were still very wet as well, and the excavation site had become extremely muddy. A few expeditioners volunteered to try and work with the mud, myself included, which was a big mistake. As it turns out, mud is impossible to screen. I even



Expedition participants get in a quick card game before the afternoon field trip. (Photo by Allie Sorlie)

overheard one of the archaeologists on site say, “how do you screen mud? I've never done it before.”

After a non-productive morning, we took a trip to the Alabama Department of Archives and History. There are several different rooms full of exhibits, so there is something there for everyone. It is a really nice place to learn about some of Alabama's history. Late that night, we gathered back in the church to hear of Old Cahawba's ghost stories from Linda. Along with ghost stories, we learned of the legend of the Wampus Cat, who is supposed to be around the camp of Old Cahawba.

On our last day, I didn't want to leave, but I was also ready to go home: bathing with hose water and living outside in the rain can only be tolerated for so long. A select few of us did more excavation, but with less mud this time. This was my most productive day. Along with a high-schooler named Sarah, we found nails, pottery, bricks, glass, three musket balls, and the base of a very old glass bottle. After getting back to camp from excavation, I began to pack; I was headed home early. Everyone was sad... that Howard was leaving. ■

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NEW ALMNH LOGO PAYS TRIBUTE TO ALABAMA'S STATE AMPHIBIAN

BY JOHN FRIEL, PH.D.

Observant readers may have noticed some new logos on the inside cover page of this Museum Chronicle. Several units of UA Museums, including the Alabama Museum of Natural History, Gorgas House, and Moundville Archaeological Park, recently collaborated with UA's Division of Strategic Communications to redesign their logos.

While the Gorgas House and Moundville Archaeological Park logos retained familiar graphic elements from their previous logos, the newest logo for the Alabama Museum of Natural History features a very special organism that reflects the unique biodiversity and natural history of Alabama.

In choosing a new design for the museum's logo, museum staff considered dozens of plant and animal species (including fossils) that were either unique to the state or were representative of organisms particularly diverse within Alabama. Ultimately, the staff chose a stylized silhouette of a Red Hills salamander (*Phaeognathus hubrichti*) for the new logo.



Red Hills salamander (*Phaeognathus hubrichti*). (Photo by Jim Godwin of the Alabama Natural Heritage Program)

Its common name refers to the Red Hills district of Alabama that includes portions of Butler, Conecuh, Covington, Crenshaw, and Monroe counties where the salamander is restricted to the Tallahatta, Hatchetigbee, and Nanafalia geological formations between the Alabama and Conecuh rivers. Here, these salamanders live in burrows found on steep, heavily shaded, hardwood- and shrub-covered slopes associated with one of these geologic formations.

Red Hills salamanders were first discovered in the late 1950s by Leslie Hubricht, a snail biologist who was collecting in south Alabama. It was subsequently formally described as

a new genus and species due to its uniqueness in 1961 by the herpetologist Richard Highton.

In 1976, the Red Hills salamander was listed as a federally threatened species due to its small range and habitat loss due to timber harvesting. However, in 2000, a third-grade class at Fairhope Elementary School successfully petitioned the state legislature to have the Red Hills salamander designated as the official state amphibian of Alabama.

For more information about this very special salamander be sure to check out the "Discovering Alabama" episode on this species which is available for free on iTunes (<https://goo.gl/TyGuZf>). ■

MILDRED WESTERVELT WARNER TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM WELCOMES SIXTH-GRADERS FOR WWI EXHIBIT TOUR

BY KATHERINE EDGE AND JAMES SCOTT

The Mildred Westervelt Warner Transportation Museum was excited to welcome sixth-graders from Rock Quarry Middle School on September 26. The class was the first to experience the guided tour designed for the exhibit “Lafayette, We Are Here! America Enters the First World War.”

“This year marks the 100th anniversary of America entering WWI,” said Katherine Edge, director of the museum. “We were thrilled to showcase this part of history to Rock Quarry students.”

The students participated in the tour by asking questions about the Great War and learning subtle details of Alabama’s history. They discussed how the United States mobilized, what conditions would have been like for soldiers fighting in the trenches, and how the infamous Rainbow Division was made up of many Alabama boys. The students were intrigued about how brave the soldiers from Alabama were as they fought with the Rainbow Division. The role of women in the war was also discussed. After the tour, the students participated in an immersive writing activity entitled “Letters from Home.”

They were asked to imagine that they were on the front lines in France and had received a package from home that included a letter describing events on the Alabama homefront and several vintage photographs. The boys pretended they were soldiers while the girls were nurses, stenographers, or translators. After reading the letter and viewing the pictures, the students composed a postcard to send home to their families about their experiences on the front lines. Several students openly remarked on how much they liked the tour and indicated a desire to bring their families.

Curated by students at The University of Alabama, the exhibit serves as a tribute to all Alabamians, and all Americans, who participated in the greatest conflict the world had ever known. Many unique artifacts from both the Allied and Central Powers are featured in the exhibit and honor the memory of those who fell in battle. The exhibit runs through the end of December.

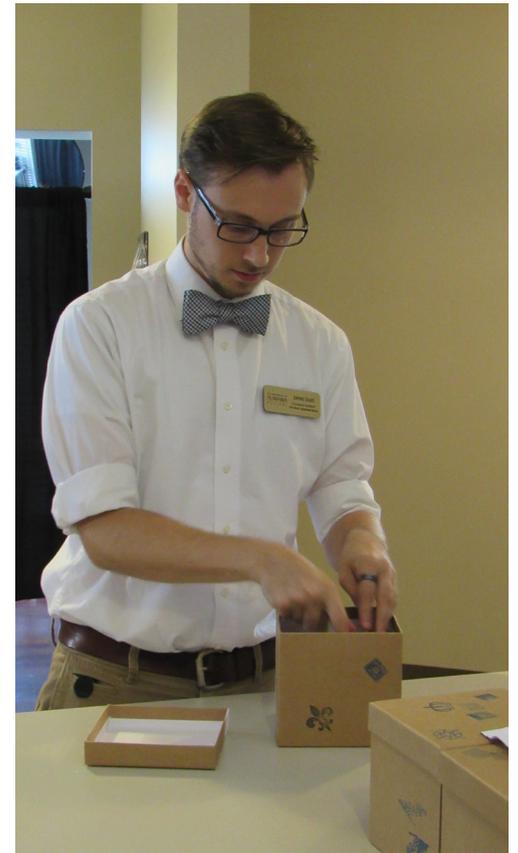
The museum is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. General admission is free. Guided tours of the museum are available for a small fee. For more information, call 248-4931 or visit www.warnertransportationmuseum.com.



Rock Quarry 6th graders listen as volunteer Tom Kallsen describes trench warfare during the WWI tour. (Photo by Kelli Harris)



Rock Quarry students proudly show off their WWI postcards from the tour activity “Letters from Home.” Many thanks to The National WWI Museum and Memorial for the postcard images. (Photo by Kelli Harris)



Museum staffer James Scott prepares the WWI tour activity “Letters from Home” for the next group of Rock Quarry 6th graders. (Photo by Kelli Harris)

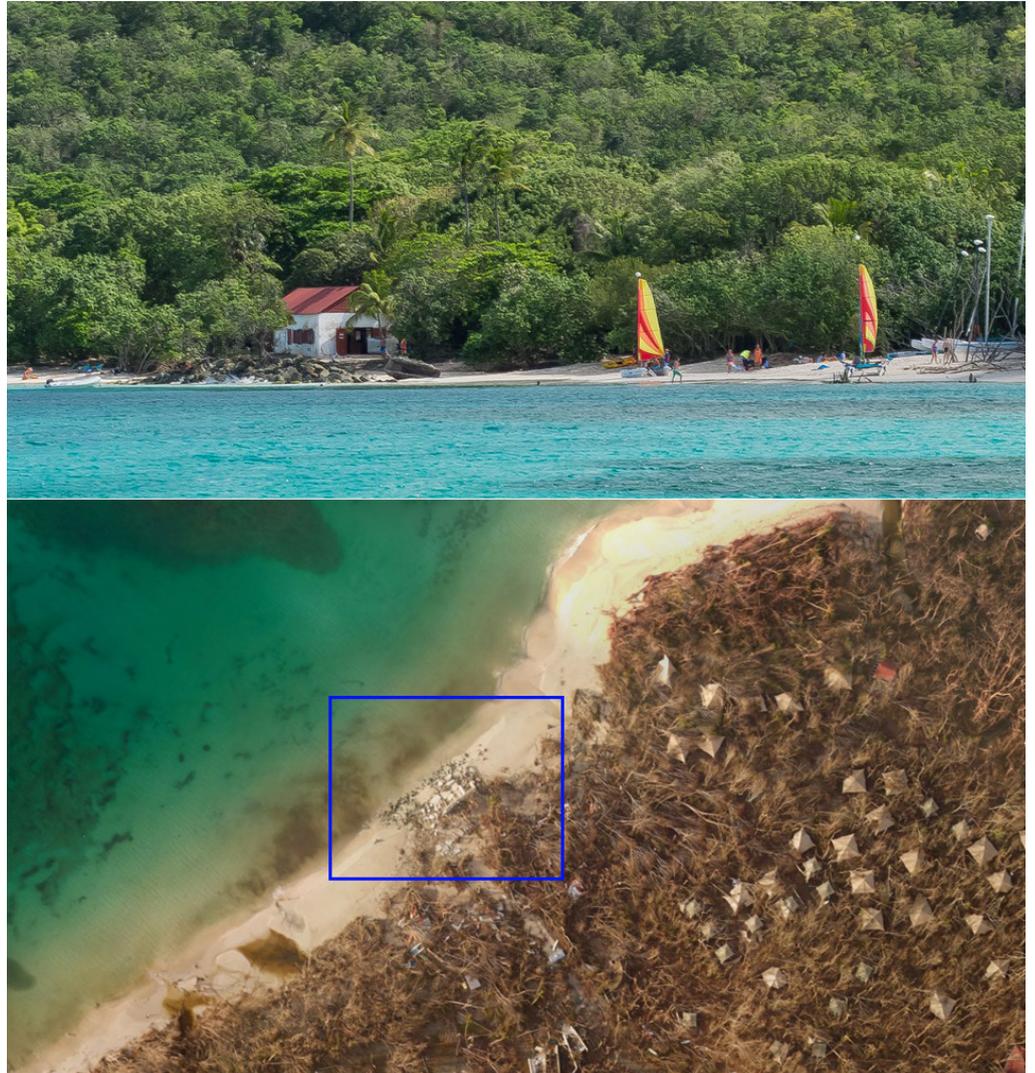
WHEN DISASTER STRIKES: SAVING ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE FACE OF NATURAL DISASTERS

BY A. BROOKE PERSONS, PH.D., RPA

The hurricane season of 2017 quickly became the most active in recent memory as hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria barreled through the Caribbean and the American Southeast, causing irreparable damage and affecting millions of lives. In the wake of such extensive natural disasters, our first thoughts always turn toward the various ways in which individuals, families, and local businesses are impacted by major storm events. As the scale of the damage becomes clear, our thoughts then turn to the monumental efforts of first responders, overall access to critical services, damage to infrastructure, and the sometimes glacial pathway towards recovery. Less visible, but equally important in damage assessment, is the impact that major storm events have on cultural heritage.

By cultural heritage, I refer to the numerous archaeological sites, standing structures, historic archives, archaeological collections, and historic architecture that reflect the cultural mosaic of thousands of years of human occupation of a region. Collectively, archaeological sites, historic districts, museums, and sites of memory provide a framework for understanding the prehistoric and historic past against the modern landscape, anchoring the legacy of what makes a particular community unique, memorable, and significant.

As an archaeologist studying prehistoric and historic peoples of the Caribbean, and working extensively in the United States Virgin Islands, or USVI, Irma and Maria have brought both my colleagues in the Caribbean and the threat to heritage sites to the forefront of my mind. While the full extent of the damage will only be determined by on-site assessments once the islands are stabilized, it is clear that numerous archaeological sites and



The NPS Education Center and Archaeology Laboratory at Cinnamon Bay, St. John, before the storm (above) compared with the ruins of the lab following Hurricane Irma (below). (Photo by NPS's Virgin Islands National Park and aerial imagery by NOAA)

historic structures in the USVI were impacted by the storms. Hurricane force winds, storm surge, overland water flow, flash flooding, displaced storm debris, disturbed vegetation, and coastal erosion damaged some of the most important archaeological sites in the territory. Undoubtedly, the same can be said of archaeological sites in Puerto Rico, Vieques, and Culebra.

For example, in the Virgin Islands National Park, which encompasses

approximately 60 percent of the island of St. John, the National Park Service's Education Center and Archaeology Laboratory at Cinnamon Bay, an archaeological lab and museum, was completely destroyed by Hurricane Irma. While the collections housed in the museum were removed prior to the hurricane, the museum itself was built on the historic foundation of a structure that was constructed in the early 1700s as a part of the nearby Cinnamon Bay sugar plantation, which included a



The historic Fort Frederik Museum and the nearby archaeological site on St. Croix following hurricane Maria, noting coastal erosion, downed trees, and soils deposited by flash flooding. (Aerial imagery by NOAA)

factory building, cook house, plantation home, a warehouse, enslaved worker quarters, and two cemeteries. The damage to the structure and the loss of the museum is a hard blow to the USVI, as it provided an important point of engagement for learning about the prehistory and history of the island.

Nearby, on the island of St. Croix, coastal erosion, storm surge, and flash flooding during Hurricane Maria took a serious toll on the Fort Frederik archaeological site, a historic site that The University of Alabama's Office of Archaeological Research, or OAR, is currently investigating. The Fort Frederik site is associated with the

historic use of the 1760s-era *Frederiksfort*, a two-story fortification built by the Danish crown while the island constituted part of the Danish West Indies. The Fort Frederik archaeological site was impacted in 2010 by Tropical Storm Tomas and by the installation of recreational facilities in nearby areas. However, flash flooding from heavy rain in the weeks since Hurricane Maria has continued to erode the site, which contains dense archaeological midden deposits and is purported to contain a historic cemetery. OAR is currently coordinating with our local colleagues and with territorial government agencies to determine the extent of the erosion and identify the best way to mitigate

any future damage to the site. The continued erosion of this site represents a significant loss of information regarding the colonial development of the fort and the quotidian life of the soldiers garrisoned there, while the possible disturbance of the cemetery is an irrevocable loss for the unknown individuals who were laid to rest in that locale.

These are merely two examples from the USVI, although the total number of sites damaged in the rest of the Caribbean likely number in the thousands. What happens next, though, is a rather interesting question that largely depends on the political status of the island and the relative access to relief assistance afforded by that political affiliation.

Broadly, local governments, agencies, and non-profit organizations coordinate to salvage threatened sites and engage in post-disaster mitigation, which can be defined as an effort to reduce the impact that a particular event has on an archaeological or historic site. Post-disaster mitigation seeks to salvage damaged resources, recover information from critically threatened sites, and strike a balance between the sometimes-competing demands of preservation and reconstruction. Post-disaster mitigation could mean conducting emergency excavations at an eroding site, documenting the historic architecture of a damaged structure prior to its demolition, or moving threatened collections or archives out of a compromised storage facility. The extent of the post-disaster mitigation depends on the type and extent of the damage to a particular resource and, as a result, approaches vary significantly relative to local needs.

Post-disaster mitigation functions differently in each island nation as a result of widely varying antiquities legislation, local policies, degree of independence, and the relationship between a territory or commonwealth and its governing nation. For example, independent nations, such as Haiti or Cuba, are often left to resolve their own issues, while protectorates, overseas regions, or territories will look towards their governing nation for assistance. In the United States and its territories, including Puerto Rico and the USVI in the Caribbean, the disaster response falls under the purview of federal assistance agencies and is pursuant to federal legislation. As in the 50 states, the disaster response is led by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, but incorporates the Army National Guard, local emergency management agencies (e.g. Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency), local government, and various branches of the military.

For the U.S. territories in the Caribbean, post-disaster heritage preservation is a two-prong approach spearheaded by local and federal coordination. At a local level, territorial government agencies, including the territorial State Historic Preservation Office, or SHPO, begin assessing the damage done to individual sites, historic structures, historic districts, archives, and archaeological collections. To that end, post-disaster aerial imagery acquired by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is a critical tool in assessing on-site damage or in identifying the areas that were heavily impacted by the storm. The SHPO also works alongside community organizations, nonprofits, and other stakeholders to identify community concerns and to isolate the spaces and places that need the most help. Once the general extent of the damaged is defined, the SHPO will reach out to the FEMA to identify potential avenues of

“*While the full extent of the damage will only be determined by on-site assessments once the islands are stabilized, it is clear that numerous archaeological sites and historic structures in the USVI were impacted by the storms.*”

collaboration and, if needed, request federal assistance for the sites, facilities, and historic districts that were heavily damaged.

For its part, FEMA will attempt to reach out to key preservation partners, including the various museums, artifact repositories, archival storage facilities, and historic preservation groups, to determine how federal assistance programs can be best applied. Other federal agencies with landholdings, including the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and the U.S. Forest Service, will conduct similar reviews and will reach out to FEMA, the Department of the Interior, and other coordinating agencies to assess the damage done to federally owned lands and institutions. At the end of this extended period of collaboration, local governments will work alongside federal agencies, preservation partners, academic researchers, and archaeological consulting firms to work towards the most reasonable solutions for addressing the damage and salvaging important sites and collections.

However, even these initial assessments will take months to complete, as many of the Caribbean islands are still very much in response mode rather than in recovery. It will take months for the communities in the Caribbean to regain a sense of normalcy, and it will

take years for communities to rebuild. For historic preservation professionals and archaeologists working in the Caribbean, we will continue to hold our breath that incoming weather does not cause more flooding, more erosion, or make it harder for the first responders to meet the needs of island residents. We look forward to being able to put boots on the ground and to assist in our own way, which is helping to preserve the spaces and places that provide a cultural context for understanding the modern-day Caribbean. We look forward to working towards the stabilization of sites that we know are impacted, and we strive for practical solutions for heritage management in the face of rising sea levels, global warming, and extreme storm events. However, in our academic teaching and our overarching approach to archaeology, it is critical that we begin to think of how our own individual efforts can promote the preservation of critical sites, collections, and places before they are lost completely to natural disasters or events that are out of our control. Essentially, we need to look to the future to make sure that we are preserving the past. ■

MOUNDVILLE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK WELCOMES KAYLA SCOTT

BY DR. ALEXANDER BENITEZ

Following the retirement of Betsy Irwin earlier this year, public historian Kayla Scott joined the UA Museums' Moundville Archaeological Park as the new education outreach coordinator. Scott hails from Tennessee, where she recently received her master's degree in public history from the University of North Alabama, or UNA. She received her bachelor's degree in history from Athens State University, also in north Alabama.

Prior to arriving at Moundville, Scott was a public historian at Fort Morgan State Historic Site, in Gulf Shores, AL. There, among a variety of duties, she led guided tours and performed archival research. While completing her master's degree, she was also a graduate assistant at the UNA Public History Center, working on various projects including educator resource packets for the Florence Indian Mound Museum.

"Traditional historians are mostly confined to the classroom as their forum for historical thought and discussion," Scott said. "Public historians have the opportunity to educate the public and guide public perception of historic events.

"While the general public may never have contact with a college history professor, they may visit museums throughout their life where their perception of the past will be shaped by their experiences."

Now that she has spent some time at Moundville and directed her first Native American Festival, she plans to expand the educational programs offered at Moundville and in schools around the region. ■



Kayla Scott (Photo by Joyce Scott)

GERMAN AMBASSADOR TOUR AT THE GORGAS HOUSE

Congressman Aderholt hosted a special luncheon at the Gorgas House Museum in September where German Ambassador Peter Wittig was the guest of honor.



University of Alabama President Stuart Bell greets German Ambassador Peter Wittig and Congressman Robert Aderholt at the Gorgas House Museum. (Photo by Carson Clark)



Gorgas House Museum Director Lydia Joffray (far right) relates the history of the House and campus to German Ambassador Peter Wittig, Congressman Aderholt and his wife Caroline, along with an aide to the Ambassador. (Photo by Carson Clark)

SOUTHEASTERN MUSEUMS CONFERENCE AND UA MUSEUM STUDIES 2017

BY ATHENA F. RICHARDSON

In September 2017, I had the honor of representing The University of Alabama's Museum Studies certificate program as a second-year American Studies master's candidate at the Southeastern Museums Conference, held this year in New Orleans, Louisiana. I represented the program in a dual capacity: first, as the graduate student travel scholarship recipient and second, as a presenter with the Student Work in Museums competition. SWIM is an annual contest where students submit museum projects and are selected to participate in one of four presentation slots. The other projects are selected for the poster session.



Athena F. Richardson, UA graduate student in American Studies and Museum Studies Certificate. (Photo by Laura Chramer)

Our group, consisting of graduate students Rachel Mohr (Geology), Kris Kallies (Library Sciences), and alumnus Devon Henschel (Anthropology), was selected to participate in both parts of the SWIM competition presenting our museum education and exhibition class project. We proudly showcased "One Kernel Can Change the World," a theoretical exhibit proposal to replace the existing Village Lifeways exhibit at Moundville Archaeological Park. Our group was well received and commended for our high level of professionalism in our presentation. One judge remarked that our work was at the level of a consultant agency.



SEMC 2017 Annual Meeting Scholarship Recipients including UA Museum Studies student Athena Richardson. (Photo courtesy of SEMC)

The range of sessions included topics such as “Tablets in the Gallery: More Attainable than You Might Think,” “Beyond the Field: Strategies for Long-Term Educational Collaborations,” and “Diversity Across the Museum: Staff, Trustees, Exhibitions, and Programs.” From technology to development and visitor studies, there was a wide range of workshops to choose from. I attended a variety of sessions and thoroughly enjoyed all of them. SEMC provided the opportunity to learn what pressing issues are in museums today, and how they are responding. Evening sessions allowed conference participants to visit the New Orleans Museum of Art and the National World War II Museum after hours, a unique opportunity to be in a museum after hours.

Next year’s SEMC will be October 8-10, 2018 in Jacksonville, Mississippi. It promises to be just as fun, engaging, and educational as the 2017 conference. I have encouraged other Museum Studies students to apply for the generous travel scholarship as well as network with other museum professionals in the southeastern region. Hopefully, The University of Alabama will continue to be strongly represented at future conferences. Many thanks to Dr. Alexander Benitez, who encouraged us to submit our project from his Museum Education and Exhibition class. ■

Athena F. Richardson is pursuing a Master of Arts degree in American Studies in addition to the Museum Studies certificate. She expects to graduate in May 2018. Her research focus is public memory, nineteenth century history of the American South, and its representation in popular culture.

“As a graduate student, I am always on the lookout for professional development and opportunities to interact with other museum professionals. SEMC was the perfect opportunity to begin engaging with the field before graduation.”



SEMC 2017 Student Work in Museums Poster Session, from L to R: Devon Henschel, Athena Richardson, Rachel Mohr, Kris Kallies (Photo by Dr. Alex Benitez)

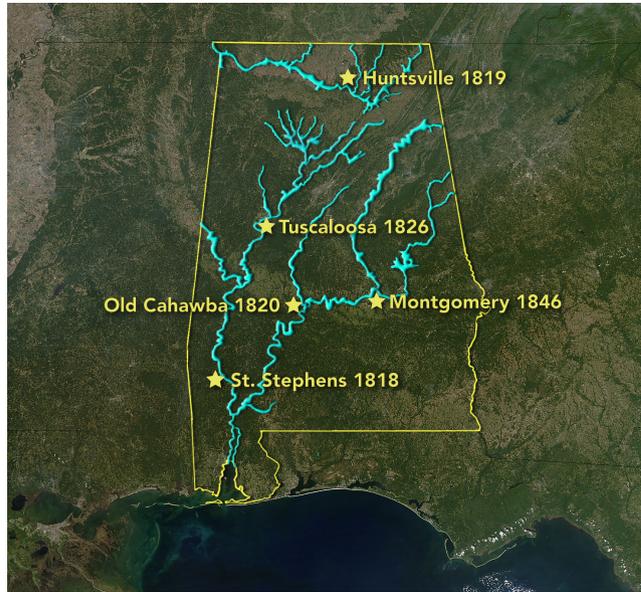


Student Work in Museums presentation, from L to R: Athena Richardson, Devon Henschel, Rachel Mohr, and Kris Kallies. (Photo by Dr. Alex Benitez)

DISCOVERING ALABAMA STATE CAPITALS

BY PAM SLOAN

Alabama's state capital was not always in Montgomery. In fact, during the nineteenth century it moved several times: St. Stephens was Alabama's territorial capital in 1817. Then Huntsville became home of the state convention in 1819. By 1920, Cahaba (Cahawba) became the first "permanent" state capital, but the seat of government moved to Tuscaloosa just six years later in 1826, until Montgomery became the final capital in 1846.



Historians identify five historical capitals in Alabama for which we have a written record: Old St. Stephens 1818; Huntsville, 1819; Old Cahawba, 1820; Tuscaloosa 1826; and Montgomery, 1846.

In the "State Capitals" episode of the Emmy-Award winning television series "Discovering Alabama," host and nature writer Dr. Doug Phillips explores why Alabama has had so many capitals, what the capitals have in common, how archaeological investigations are bringing to light new information about these sites, and more.

To celebrate the Alabama bicentennial, view Phillips' show online at video.aptv.org/show/discovering-alabama/ and learn about the legends, myths, and even ghost stories that haunt old capital grounds.

In the meantime, learn more about the controversies surrounding the capital's location in the timeline below.

Prehistoric: Moundville was a major cultural center of the southeastern United States before the arrival of the Europeans. While not labeled a capital, it was described by Virgil "Duke" Beasley, cultural resource investigator, as a "polity." A polity is a form or process of civil government or constitution where an area or region has political influence beyond its borders.

1820–1825: Cahaba (Cahawba) was selected as the capital on November 21, 1818 and considered the "permanent" capital until January 1825 when legislature moved the capital to Tuscaloosa. Cahaba was always meant to be the first state capital. Legislators only met in Huntsville to write the constitution while the capitol was being built according to Linda Derry, site director and site archaeologist at the Old Cahaba Archaeological Park. The first governor, William Wyatt Bibb, probably intended Cahaba to remain the capital. A stipulation in 1825 allowed legislators to decide whether to keep the capital in Cahawba or move the seat of Alabama's government for political reasons. It was eventually determined that it would be moved to Tuscaloosa according to Robert Mellow, professor emeritus of art history, at The University of Alabama.

1826–1846: Tuscaloosa (Tuskaloosa) served as the state capital. The capitol building was designed by architect William Nichols and built in 1829.

1846–present: Edwin C. Bridges, director emeritus of the Alabama Department of Archives and History explains that the next capital move was a fight between Wetumpka, Selma, and Montgomery. East Alabama, from the Montgomery county line to Georgia, was held by the Creek Indians after the Creek War in 1812. In the 1830s, the United States government and Alabamians seized that land known as the Creek Territory. In the 1840s, people wanted the capital to be more centrally located. In December 1847, the legislature met in the new capitol in Montgomery. ■

1790–1799: St. Stephens was founded in approximately 1790 and became United States property in 1799 when the federal government began to manage the southeastern frontier.

1817: Alabama Territory Created

1818: Legislators of the territorial government named St. Stephens the first capital of Alabama, according to George Shorter, the project archaeologist at Old St. Stephens.

1819: In July 5, 1819 Alabama's First Constitutional Convention began in Huntsville where 44 delegates from 22 counties in the territory met to frame a state constitution. It was accepted and signed August 2, 1819. Huntsville is considered the birthplace of Alabama according to Susan Carr, the operations manager at the Constitution Convention in Huntsville, Alabama.

Dec 14, 1819: Alabama became the 22nd state.

MCKAIN PROPELS THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA'S HERBARIUM COLLECTION INTO GENOMIC ERA

BY MARY BETH PRONDZINSKI

The Department of Biological Sciences welcomed Dr. Michael R. McKain to the position of assistant professor of biology and curator of The University of Alabama Herbarium this August. Though McKain is no stranger to southern culture or its plant diversity, as he received his PhD at the University of Georgia in Athens, he most recently worked at the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center in St. Louis, where he conducted postdoctoral research on polyploid genomics and phylogenomics of grasses, specifically the tribe Andropogoneae which includes maize, sorghum, sugarcane, and a number of important prairie grasses, like big bluestem.

McKain welcomes the opportunity to propel The University of Alabama's herbarium collection into the genomic era, using the collection as a valuable source of species diversity and population sampling for evolutionary studies.

According to McKain, Herbaria provide a chronological account of change within species populations from the past to the present, and advances in DNA sequencing allow researchers to use herbarium specimens in evolutionary genomic studies—a feat that was unobtainable until very recently.

“The herbarium houses almost 80,000 specimens, with primary emphasis on Alabama and the southeast,” McKain said. “Our oldest specimen—a sample of pondberry (*Lindera melissifolia*)—dates back to 1840. It is an endangered species, but we can learn about how it has changed over time using these older specimens— potentially to inform restoration and conservation efforts.”

In addition to research, McKain enjoys spending his time with his spouse, Sarah, and daughter, Kendalynn, who are very excited to be in Alabama and



Dr. McKain's research focuses on phylogenomics and genome evolution of flowering plants, with an emphasis on prairie grasses such as *Andropogon gerardii*. (Photo by John Hodge)

love the natural beauty of the state. They share their home with a menagerie of two dogs, a cat, and of course, plants.

McKain's office, located in Mary Harmon Bryant, is a testament to his wide range of interests from art to programming. Of note is his collection of superhero-themed knick-knacks. Always eager to provide a tour of the herbarium, he also keeps a bowl of candy available for the famished plant enthusiast.

Though only here since August, McKain has already plunged into academia, recruiting students to perform laboratory tasks relevant to evolutionary genomics, such as collecting Alabama plant species for isolating DNA. He also serves as consulting scientist for the University's Arboretum and is looking forward to sharing in his colleagues' academic pursuits. ■

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GIVING BACK *to* MAKE A DIFFERENCE

BY KELLI HARRIS

Bill Skinner is the kind of volunteer that every organization needs. I interviewed Bill at the Moundville Native American Festival where he was in charge of the Ancient Weapons Target Range, showing a young man how to launch an ancient weapon called an atlatl, a stick used early American Indians to propel a spear. “Move a little to the right. OK, hold this with your finger pointing up. Now aim for the middle.” Thirteen-year-old Kevin launches his atlatl at the target and hits it close to the bullseye with the atlatl’s spear. “Great job!” Bill Skinner congratulates and encourages enthusiastically. Kevin smiles at his new skill.

Bill wasn’t much older than Kevin when he joined the military at 17. I asked him, “So you were a Marine?” He said, “No ma’am, I AM a Marine. I’m just not presently on active duty since I retired after 22 years in.” The military has obviously shaped Bill’s life and an early retirement has provided him plenty of time to gain knowledge about ancient weapons.

Bill said about 18 years ago he was walking along a creek bed and came upon a large cache of arrowheads that had washed into a gravel bank. He couldn’t get the arrowheads out of his mind—he was fascinated with the skill and technical knowledge required to make them. He began to ask around—who could teach him to make his own arrowheads in the ancient tradition? A friend suggested that he contact Moundville Archaeological Park. Soon after, he made his first trip to Moundville and met Betsy Irwin, who was the park’s education coordinator at the time. Betsy had spent many years coordinating the park’s “Knap In,” an event where the region’s best flint knappers (people who make



Bill Skinner waiting for the next person to try the atlatl. (Photo by Kelli Harris)

arrowheads), met to hone and show off their skills. Bill joined a park flint knapping class and was hooked.

Since that first class, Bill Skinner has driven two hours each way, one to two days a week, from his Thomaston home, to volunteer at the Park. Eighteen years times one to two days a week is a tremendous amount of volunteer hours. Bill said he is happy to do it—“I like the people here and all they have to do is call me.”

Here at UA Museums, we appreciate Bill Skinner’s dedication. We are in awe of

the people who give their time to us, and effectively, to the public. Volunteers are the most valuable resource for The University of Alabama Museums in our efforts to educate the public. It is unlikely the Museums could reach the number of people it does without our wonderful, generous friends, coming out week after week, doing the important work of volunteering. ■

If you would like to have your own meaningful volunteer experience at Moundville Archaeological Park, contact Kayla Scott at 205-371-8732 or email her at kcscott1@ua.edu

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA MUSEUMS MEMBERSHIP GIVING LEVELS & BENEFITS

Much of the natural beauty of Alabama is found among its many rivers. To recognize the vital role these rivers play in making our state unique, The University of Alabama Museums has designated gift membership levels with the names of some of Alabama's best-known and beloved rivers. *All membership levels are important to the Museum. We hope you will be as generous as your circumstances allow.*

Note: Each membership level receives the benefits listed plus all benefits of levels that precede it.

Alabama River (\$40–\$99)

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- Membership newsletter
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- Membership card and decal
- Recognition in newsletter
- Invitations to special member events

Black Warrior River (\$100–\$249)

- Discovering Alabama DVDs
- 10% discount at University of Alabama Museum Shops

Cahaba River (\$250–\$499)

- Free admission to Moundville Native American Festival
- Unlimited admission to Museums for five guests
- A one-year gift membership at Alabama River level
- Additional 10% (20% total) discount at University of Alabama Museum Shops

Coosa River (\$500–\$999)

- Unlimited admission to Museums for two additional guests (seven total)
- Reduced rental rates for Museum facilities

Sipsey River (\$1,000–\$2,499)

- Unlimited admission to Museums for three additional guests (10 total)
- Two additional one-year gift memberships (three total), all at Black Warrior level

Douglas E. Jones Society (\$2,500–\$4,999)

- Unlimited admission to Museums for two additional guests (12 total)
- Special recognition in Smith Hall Foyer
- Three one-year gift memberships upgraded to Cahaba River level

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- Book on natural history from The University of Alabama Press
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