

MUSEUM

Chronicle

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MUSEUM

Chronicle

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From the DIRECTOR

As I began thinking about this edition of the *Museum Chronicle*, I looked back at what I wrote in last year's edition. Part of my message jumped off the page at me! I had announced that we would be placing much greater emphasis on our online presence in 2021. I went on to describe how we had already been active on various social media platforms, but we were beginning to create engaging educational video segments and had created a YouTube Channel. I wrote this shortly before the global pandemic found its way to our corner of the world and I had no idea just how important our new online emphasis would be, or how quickly it would be needed. In mid-March, we closed our doors at all four of our public museums and they stayed closed for over four months. Like us, many thousands of museums around the world found themselves struggling to stay connected to their audiences through "virtual" alternatives to in-person visits. This represented a profound shift for museums, institutions whose core purpose is education through authentic experiences with real objects, which is in fact the very opposite of "virtual."



Photo Credit: Mary Kathryn Carpenter, Strategic Communications, The University of Alabama

While this shift involved a lot of hard work by a UA Museums' staff whose talent, commitment to mission, and resolve never ceases to amaze me, I would not say it was a struggle. We were ready for the challenge. With the decision made that we would be closing, I pulled the staff together immediately for Zoom meetings, some of us using this now ubiquitous platform for the first time. I stressed to the staff the importance of staying connected with our members and museum audiences. It was my hope that during this difficult time, our audiences across Alabama and beyond would take advantage of our educational resources and see our museums as a source of enrichment and comfort. The staff fully agreed and

worked long hours to make it happen. Just four days after closing our doors, we launched the *Museums from Your Home* initiative with daily one-hour livestreams by scientists, historians, archaeologists, and naturalists from UA Museums. We soon expanded to include faculty members from across the University and other guest speakers from across the United States as well as Canada and England. Besides the daily livestreams, UA Museums' staff created many short, fun video segments such as *Isolation Observations*, *Moundville Mondays*, and even museum trivia nights in the formats of *Hollywood Squares* and *Jeopardy!*

In August, after carefully developing reopening plans that would keep our visitors and staff safe, we opened back up for in-person visits. With autumn upon us, our focus was on our biggest annual program, the Moundville Native American Festival. An event such as this, usually attracting over 10,000 people, could not be held as usual with COVID-19. For months, the staff had been planning for multiple scenarios so they were ready when we decided to go completely virtual for the 2020 Festival. It was logistically complicated, but for five days, we presented a full schedule of live online performances, demonstrations, and discussions with Native American performers, demonstrators, artists, and even an astronaut, Commander John Herrington, the first Native American in space. Audiences across Alabama, the United States, and even some from abroad actively participated and interacted with our staff and Native American guests.

Our hearts go out to all who have suffered from COVID-19 in various ways, especially those among our UA Museums family of members, supporters, and regular museum visitors. I hope that we were able to enrich your lives and provide some comfort through a very difficult year.

BILL BOMAR, PH.D.

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Getting to Know REATA STRICKLAND

THE GRAPHIC DESIGNER BEHIND *MUSEUMS FROM YOUR HOME AND DISCOVERING ALABAMA*

What do you like about working with UA Museums and *Discovering Alabama*?

The people. UA Museums and *Discovering Alabama* offer such diversity in subject content and the people who are experts in their field. You can work on a project about Bama Bugs and then cover Fossil Friday. Or come up with ideas for a new premiere show, Mound Trails, birding, or conservation. There isn't a typical area, but many, each with outstanding people. I have worked for *Discovering Alabama* for a long time and think it is a priceless program. The shows offer a view into the diversity, wildlife, people and landscape of Alabama that I believe is second to none. Along with the shows, there are extended interviews from world-renowned experts that offer amazing insight and wisdom. I learn something new each time I work on a project. The challenge is to present the graphics and material in a way that attracts a new audience as well as serving our current audience. To keep the look current even though we may be talking about something that took place hundreds of years ago can be a challenge. I happen to like a challenge.



How did you come up with your idea for the *Museums From Your Home* logo?

For *Museums From Your Home*, I came up with an overall look. Something different yet something that could be recognized as UA and Museums. This was the first time this program was offered and needed to be unique. *Museums From Your Home* could be presented to viewers on all types of devices...smart phones, tablets, laptops, and smart TVs. Presenting a great deal of information in a small size can become too busy. You need a focus. I wanted to keep it clean and simple. Especially at a time when things were so difficult and unknown, due to

COVID-19. I wanted to present this in a way that showed we (UA Museums/*Discovering Alabama*) were doing our best at a difficult time. You, as a viewer or student, are not missing anything and we are here to do what we do best. The overall look needed to be easily updated from week to week or from topic to topic while keeping a similar design with all the different departmental identifiers.

What did you like about UA Museums' online programming during 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic?

I discovered so many new things about UA Museums during the "From Your Home" program. New people, new programs, new information, and the ability to go back and watch recorded interviews was tremendous. These may not have been "new" but they were new to me. Often, when I work on a project, I focus on the project at hand and seldom get to talk with the UA Museum staff concerning the areas in which they are experts. Viewing the YouTube and Facebook live presentations, I was able to experience the excitement each person shared concerning their

field. In a way, I learned more during the COVID-19 pandemic about UA Museums than any time previously.

What inspires you as an artistic person?

I am inspired by people who use creativity in their everyday. It doesn't have to be someone who is an artist. I am impressed when someone looks at something and approaches it from a different angle. That can be photographers, filmmakers, writers, directors, builders, gardeners, bakers, and children. These people think differently and come up with new ways to do things. ■

Getting to Know KENDRA ABBOTT

MEET THE NEW RESEARCH & OUTREACH COORDINATOR AT THE ALABAMA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

As the Alabama Museum of Natural History Research Outreach Coordinator, Kendra Abbott, will be assisting the museum staff with management of new programs that promote the broader impacts of the research done by University of Alabama faculty through exhibits, events, and other public outreach activities. In this new role, Kendra is already working on 18 different projects and grants with five of those grants funded totaling \$52,710 coming into the museums for exhibits and outreach. These projects are in collaboration with UA faculty and staff in Museums, Biology, Anthropology, Geology, and Modern Languages. In addition, when funding is successfully awarded, she will oversee the production and delivery of the funded broader impact exhibits and programs.

Question: What do you do as the Research & Outreach Coordinator?

One of the cool things about exhibits is that they do all sorts of things. They communicate. They educate. They excite. As research and outreach coordinator, I work with faculty and staff to communicate their science to the general public. When faculty write proposals for their research to the National Science Foundation, they usually have to have a section called Broader Impacts and that is where I come in. I learn what research they are doing and then, I give them options like mini exhibits that can go out to the public and then come back to the museum or full museum exhibit or K-12 programs. I often work with Allie Sorlie (Education Outreach Coordinator, Alabama Museum of Natural History) to see if there are existing programs that might fit into the research topics. I help faculty and staff create budgets and then when they get funded, I help implement their broader impacts.



How long is it take to create and build an exhibit?

The faculty would take six months to a year to work on a research proposal to get funded and they would get me involved at that point. A lot of times, it takes yet another year to get funding so we're at two years now. And once they get the funding, I usually have a year to plan, execute, and create the exhibit so that's three years. At the end of that third year, if everything has gone as planned, then we will install the exhibit.

I like to get the University of Alabama folks involved in helping me create an exhibit, whether it's an artist, or the facilities, or the cabinet shop, or students. Students are a great help. A lot of times, they can pinpoint things that are really cool to students that I might have missed, and we can incorporate those into exhibits.

Questions: What are some of your goals in the position?

Some of my goals are to be able to utilize more of the amazing resources and expertise on campus. For example, I look forward to collaborating with the education department and the art department to create exhibits. There are endless ways for me to collaborate with different groups on campus.

Questions: What are some of your favorite things about what you do?

Getting to show the public the amazing things that researchers are doing here on campus at The University of Alabama. I am an ecologist so I love keeping up with what the faculty and staff are doing on campus. I love seeing how excited people get when they learn about all of the fun science happening on campus and working with students to help brainstorm some of the most fun ways to communicate the science. ■

UA MUSEUMS GOES VIRTUAL

Written by REBECCA JOHNSON and BRYANT WELBOURNE

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN MUSEUMS NEED TO CLOSE THEIR DOORS DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC?

On March 24, 2020, members of The University of Alabama Museums held a Zoom meeting to brainstorm how the museums could best respond to the closure of the Alabama Museum of Natural History, The Gorgas House Museum, the Mildred Westervelt Warner Transportation Museum, and Moundville Archaeological Park due to COVID-19. Zoom, a web tool for online conferences, was new to UA Museums at the time and quickly became one of the ways the museum staff would stay connected and discover solutions for staying in touch with the Tuscaloosa and University communities. What UA Museums

dreamed up that day would result in *Museums From Your Home*, an ambitious project that would provide the public with daily educational programming that could be watched from the comfort of home.

Three days later, on Friday, March 27, 2020, UA Museums began livestreaming educational content from the UA Museums YouTube channel and Facebook accounts with the aid of web-based streaming platforms StreamYard and Zoom that allowed the museums to share PowerPoint presentations and take comments. Being live made it possible to stay



“It was my hope that during this difficult time, our audiences across Alabama and beyond would take advantage of our educational resources and see our museums as a source of enrichment and comfort.”



engaged with the audience Mondays through Fridays at 10:00 AM Central, offering Q&A time for viewers.

Since the audience was unable to visit the museums during this effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19, Dr. William Bomar, UA Museums’ Executive Director, understood that people were looking for quality content that could be both educational and entertaining.

“While our four public museums were closed, we used a variety of platforms such as daily livestreams by scientists, historians, archaeologists, and naturalists from UA Museums. It was my hope that during this difficult time, our audiences across Alabama and beyond would take advantage of our educational resources and see our museums as a source of enrichment and comfort,” Dr. Bomar said.

In addition to the introduction of livestreaming, UA Museums created short-form content with three new video series: *Isolation Observations*, *Moundville Mondays*, and *History From Home*, highlighting the Alabama Museum of Natural History, Moundville Archaeological Park, and The Gorgas House Museum.

The idea of *Isolation Observations* came from Natural History Collection Manager, Mary Beth Prondzinski, as she took morning walks during quarantine and it expanded out to other UA Museums staff members as they encountered the nature around them in their own backyards. These videos incorporated fun facts about plants, birds, and insects that can be found in the Tuscaloosa and Birmingham areas, demonstrating the incredible biodiversity of Alabama.

Lindsey Gordon, Education Outreach Coordinator at Moundville Archaeological Park, had conceptualized *Moundville Mondays* months before COVID-19 shut down the park so she was ready to put it into action.

Lindsey Gordon served as host and gave behind-the-scenes looks at the Mound B construction and how the park is maintained, shared stories from her experience as an archaeologist, and provided information about artifacts and Native American culture. These webisodes were so popular that even after Moundville Archaeological Park re-opened, staff continues to produce *Moundville Mondays* as a way to connect with park visitors.

While its front doors were closed on campus, The Gorgas House Museum ramped up its online activity by starting a “Gorgas House Artifact Series” (a series of social media posts presenting facts about artifacts that can be found inside The Gorgas House Museum) and a digital dialogue with The Urrbrae House in a video series they called *History From Home*. Much like The Gorgas House Museum and its connection to The University of Alabama, The Urrbrae House is an historic home located at The University of Adelaide’s Waite Campus. Brandon Thompson, Director of The Gorgas House Museum, and Lynette Zeitz, Manager of the Urrbrae House, recorded videos of questions, asking each other about their respective museums and programs.

In addition to all of the newly created video elements for UA Museums, Dr. Adiel Klompmaker, Curator of Paleontology, joined Twitter’s weekly dose of #FossilFridays posts, which aim to share information and images about fossils, bringing attention to research, and foster an interest in paleontology.

The challenges of COVID-19 resulted in tremendous virtual growth for The University of Alabama Museums. Despite the museum closures, event cancellations, and procedures, UA Museums found ways to rise to the occasion and remain a vital part of the local community while also drawing an international audience of over 30,000 views across the globe. ■



(FACING PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM) An example of one of Dr. Adiel Klompmaker’s #FossilFriday posts.; Lindsey Gordon developed a web series titled #MoundvilleMondays to educate the public about Moundville Archaeological Park while the park was closed due to COVID-19. (ABOVE) Museums From Your Home social media posts



History From Home with Lynette Zeitz, Manager — Urrbrae House Historic Precinct



History From Home with Lynette Zeitz, Manager - Urrbrae House Historic Precinct

From April 9, 2020 until June 15, 2020, Brandon Thompson (Director of The Gorgas House Museum) engaged in a digital back-and-forth on Instagram with Lynette Zeitz, Manager of the Urrbrae House, a community museum and part of The University of Adelaide's Waite Campus in South Australia. UA Museums asked Zeitz to share her thoughts about the experience in sharing information about the similarities and differences between the two museums during a time when they were both closed to the public.

1. What was the overall experience like, that is, participating in an online & at-distance international conversation?

In a difficult year for everyone working in galleries, libraries, archives and museums (GLAM) across the globe, it was a very rewarding and positive experience to be involved in this online international conversation. Given that time differences between the US and Australia made live streaming difficult, the short video question and answer format was a very effective platform for sharing information and ideas.

2. What is something you'd like our audience in the United States to know about the Urrbrae House?

Urrbrae House (built 1891) is the historic and cultural heart of the Waite campus of The University of Adelaide. The heritage-listed house surrounded by beautiful gardens exists today as part of the University because of the philanthropic generosity of a Scottish migrant, Peter Waite, and his family. We respect that legacy by maintaining a strong commitment to education and community engagement within the museum.

3. Why did you want to participate in History from Home?

As our museum was forced to close its doors due to Covid-19, the History From Home conversation via social media provided a wonderful mechanism for disseminating our stories to new audiences. The conversation also helped me to reflect on what we do at the museum on a daily basis.

4. What did you get out of the exchange of information and videos?

Besides learning more about the rich history of the Gorgas House, the exchange gave me a heightened sense of connection within the museum sector. Historic house museums based on University campuses are rather distinctive entities. These University buildings, originally constituted for domestic purposes, present unique opportunities and challenges in terms of historic interpretation and community outreach. It was heartening to learn of shared experiences and approaches to storytelling within these two house museums. The conversations with Brandon Thompson from The Gorgas House Museum also gave me new ideas for further engagement with our academic community and student volunteers. I look forward to future collaborations between Urrbrae House and the Gorgas House. ■

(TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT) Brandon Thompson responds to Lynette's video about The Gorgas House Museum's events, outreach, and storytelling; Lynette Zeitz posts a video to Instagram about the Urrbrae House Schools' program.; (INSET) The Urrbrae House, a community museum and part of The University of Adelaide's Waite Campus in South Australia.



Expedition Singers



Museum Expedition 42: Where No Expedition Has Gone Before!

Written by ALLIE SORLIE and REBECCA JOHNSON

Since 1979, the Museum Expedition has traveled all over the state allowing the public to work with scientists and researchers to discover the past. Given the COVID-19 pandemic and the inability to meet together, Camp Director, Allie Sorlie created livestream Expedition programming that was broadcast every weekday from June 8–June 26.

songbook gathering, which is an important part of the experience. Allie Sorlie was glad that the program could still deliver all of the things that make Expedition, Expedition. Just virtual.



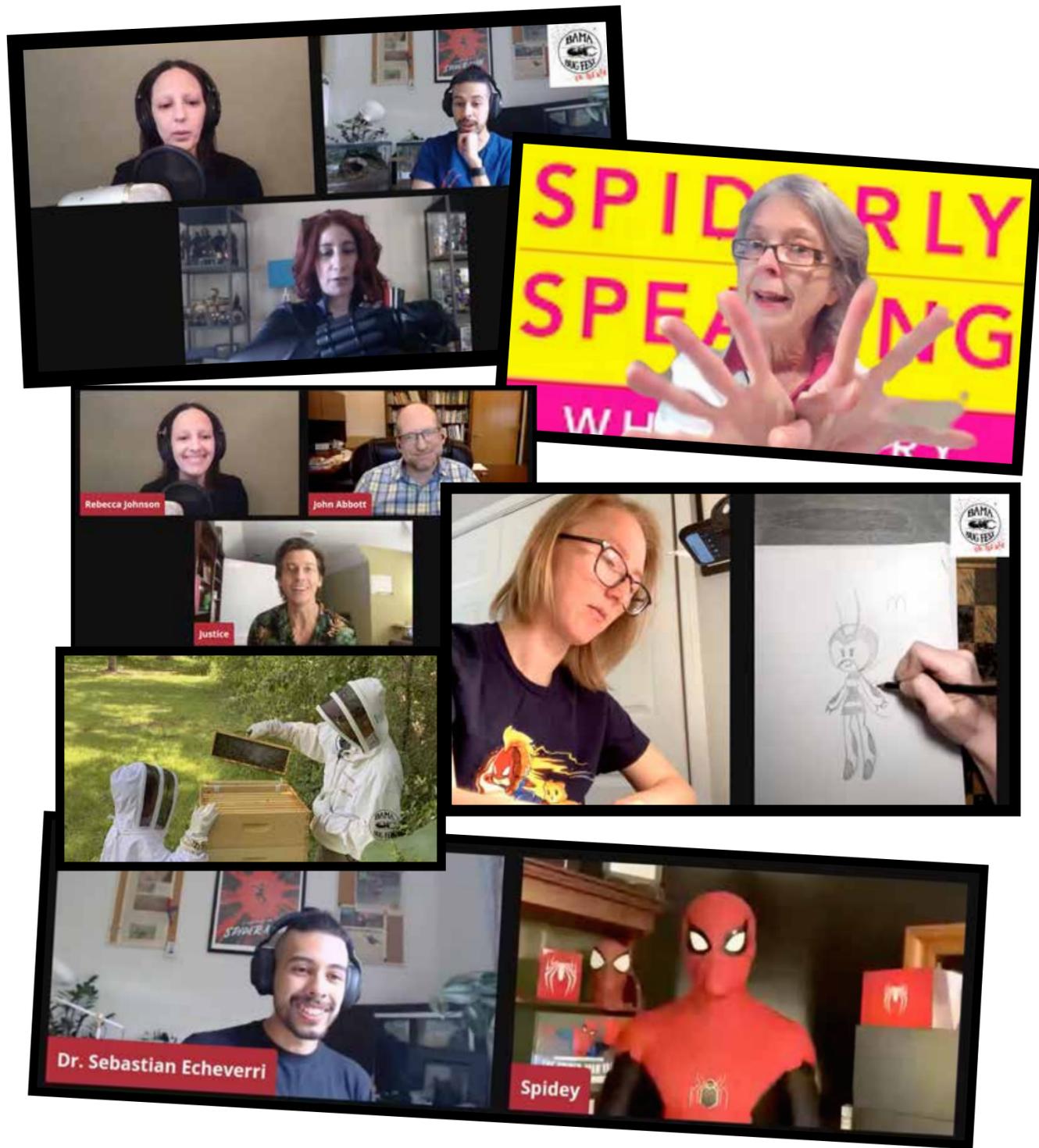
"I am most proud of the way virtual Expedition connected past Expedition participants to each other."

The topics for the three-week event were chosen to highlight beloved parts of the program. Sorlie wanted to recreate a week at camp with all of the programs, gatherings, and traditions that are familiar to past participants and, hopefully, enticing to potential ones. Livestream presentations talked about the history of the program, the cooking, history of the t-shirts, and made virtual versions of some of the evening programs done at camp. There was even a Friday night

"I am most proud of the way virtual Expedition connected past Expedition participants to each other. It started as a way to keep Expedition going during a pandemic and grew into a reunion that reached participants all across the United States and even into other countries," Sorlie said. "It was rewarding to see everyone interact over chats and in comment sections."

Campers were unable to see each other face-to-face this year, but the spirit of the Expedition was alive and well with Museum Expedition 42: Where No Expedition Has Gone Before! ■

(TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT) Monica Moore, Allie Sorlie, Rosa Hall, and Brian Rushing sing songs out of the Museum Expedition Songbook inside the Grand Gallery at the Alabama Museum of Natural History. (MIDDLE) Camp Director, Allie Sorlie, talks about Museum Expedition t-shirts during a Museum Expedition 42 livestream.



(ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT) UA Museums' Communication Specialist, Rebecca Johnson (left), Science Educator, Dr. Sebastian A. Echeverri (right), and Black Widow cosplayer Andrea towers (center) admire Black Widow's costume, Spiderly Speaking featuring Mary Beth Prondzinski as Dr. Ruth, Actor Justice Leak (center) discusses hellgrammites with UA Museums' Communications Specialist Rebecca Johnson (left) and Director, Museum Research & Collections, Dr. John Abbott (right), DC Comics' artist, Sarah Leuver, teaches the viewing audience how to draw the comic book character known as Bumblebee, Amateur Beekeeper, Jackson Peebles, assists Mike Johns with his hive, Science Educator, Dr. Sebastian A. Echeverri (left) Spider-man cosplayer Andrew McLean (right) talk about how Spidey's abilities can be found in real world spiders.

BAMA BUG FEST

Goes on the Web

Written by REBECCA JOHNSON, DR. JOHN FRIEL, and ALLIE SORLIE

Bama Bug Fest: On the Web crawled online in July 2020! This virtual, all-things-bug event had a little something for all ages and took place every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday from July 7 to July 25. Though the event was social distanced, it didn't miss out on any of the bug fun, which included interactive video elements, interviews with experts, lessons on how to draw insect characters, and bug-themed storytelling. Despite the pandemic restrictions, Bama Bug Fest continued its mission to educate the public about insects and their invaluable roles in many aspects of our daily lives.

The virtual Bama Bug Fest in 2020 served as a successful collaboration between University of Alabama Museums units, University of Alabama Rogers Library, University of Alabama College of Human Environmental Sciences, Tuscaloosa Public Library, and Schoolyard Roots. While some pre-recorded video elements featured local Tuscaloosans, being broadcast on Facebook and YouTube provided ways to interact with and reach people outside of the state of Alabama. Content included terrarium building with *Discovering Alabama's* Pam Sloan, insect fashion with Dr. Marcy Koontz of The Fashion Archive, baking Chocolate Chirp Cookies with Arthropod Apothecary, Mary Beth Prondzinski as Dr. Ruth, a Build-a-Bug Workshop, Insect Iconography with Dr. Jim Knight (UA Museums' Curator Emeritus, American Archaeology), Eric Marcus Workman and Justin Snipes from The Comic Strip, family-friendly bug-related stand-up comedy, interviews with amateur beekeepers, Mike Johns and Jackson Peebles, The University

of Alabama Arboretum, Dr. Milt Ward (UA Museums' Curator Emeritus of Entomology), world-renown Science Educator, Dr. Sebastian A. Echeverri, and the Mildred Westervelt Warner Transportation Museums' virtual summer exhibit titled *Details Unseen: The Hidden Secret of Bugs*.

A new approach to gain the attention of those who may not be bug-friendly was suggested by Dr. John Friel, who hoped to bridge the gap between the natural world and pop culture. Livestream guests included experts from The Comic Strip (a Tuscaloosa comic bookstore), actor Justice Leak (Hellgrammite from The CW's *Supergirl*), Spider-man cosplayer Andrew McLean, Black Widow cosplayer Andrea Towers, and DC Comics' artist, Sarah Leuver. This allowed participants and attendees to speak scientifically about insects, but also talk about pop culture references related to a specific insect like Marvel Comics' characters Spider-Man and Black Widow or the DC Comics' characters Hellgrammite and Bumblebee.

"The intersection of bugs, comic books, and cosplay was an original idea I have not seen replicated in similar bug-themed festivals and it proved very successful for us," said Dr. John Friel, Director of the Alabama Museum of Natural History. "I hope that everyone who gets to view the online content for our virtual Bama Bug Fest will learn something new about bugs that they did not know previously, and as a result will develop a greater appreciation for the biodiversity, beauty, and importance of bugs in our world." ■

Despite the pandemic restrictions, Bama Bug Fest continued its mission to educate the public about insects and their invaluable roles in many aspects of our daily lives.



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS OF OUR BAMA BUG FEST: ON THE WEB ART CONTEST!
 (LEFT TO RIGHT) Magy, age 11, Grade 6, Sharony, age north of thirties, Grade adult, Max, age 8, Grade 3, Lily, Grade 9-12



Festival Emcee, Grayhawk Perkins

32nd Annual
MOUNDVILLE NATIVE AMERICAN FESTIVAL

Written by BRYANT WELBOURNE, DR. ALEX BENITEZ, LINDSEY GORDON, and REBECCA JOHNSON

While 2020's Moundville Native American Festival was not held in-person, the park staff developed a virtual experience, hosted by Festival Emcee, Grayhawk Perkins, that included Native American performers, demonstrators, living history teachers, and even a Native American astronaut! Online content taught and celebrated Native American culture through interactive experiences, livestreams, and prerecorded videos.

Lyndon Alex performs Hoop Dancing for the Virtual Moundville Native American Festival



“I was really excited to go virtual this year because I believe that we were able to reach more people and encourage them to explore southeastern Native American heritage.”

With the help of The University of Alabama’s eTech staff from the College of Arts & Sciences (Lisa Yessick, Amy Garner, and Franklin Kennamer), Moundville Archaeological Park designed and built a brand-new website (festival.museums.ua.edu) to host the Virtual Festival. Intentionally set up to simulate the in-person event, visitors could stop by the website’s Native American Stage to find the schedule of programs, peruse the Artists & Performers Market to learn more about participating performers, shop in the online Knotted Birds Gift Shop, enter the Coloring Contest, and bid on bundles of merchandise in our live auction!

Virtual Festival ticketholders and school groups were granted special access to demonstrations and performances, virtual tours (featuring Dr. Bill Bomar’s tour of the Jones Archaeological Museum and Dr. Wayne Ford’s Dendrology tour of Moundville Archaeological Park), children’s hands-on activities, the Teacher’s Corner, and Archaeological Horizons, which included a lesson on archaeology with Office of Archaeological Research Director, Matt Gage, and a Curation Tour with Bill Allen.

Online content taught and celebrated Native American culture through interactive experiences, livestreams, and prerecorded videos.

“I was really excited to go virtual this year because I believe that we were able to reach more people and encourage them to explore Southeastern Native American heritage,” said Lindsey Gordon, Education Outreach Coordinator at Moundville Archaeological Park. “Even though we went on the web, we still lined up the same great performances and demonstrations as well as some new components like NASA’s Commander John Herrington, comedian Tatanka Means, and park-focused lectures and video series.”

The performance portal included Chikasha Hithla Troupe, Mystic Wind Choctaw Dancers, Amy Bluemel, Lyndon Alec, Billy Whitefox, Injunuity, the Grayhawk Band, Charlie Mato-Toyela, and award-winning comedian, Tatanka Means.

Demonstrators including Tammy Beane (Copperwork), Bill Skinner (Tools and Weapons), Sehoy Thrower (Garden Demonstration), the Alabama Wildlife Center (Birds of Prey), Rosa Hall (Creek Life), Monica Moore (Twining), Michael Billie (Choctaw Language), Mary T. Newman (Pottery), Tony Garter (Stickball), Juanita Gardinski (Beadwork), and Guy Meador (Flint Knapping) taught traditional pottery firing, weaving, beadwork, and other aspects of Native American life.

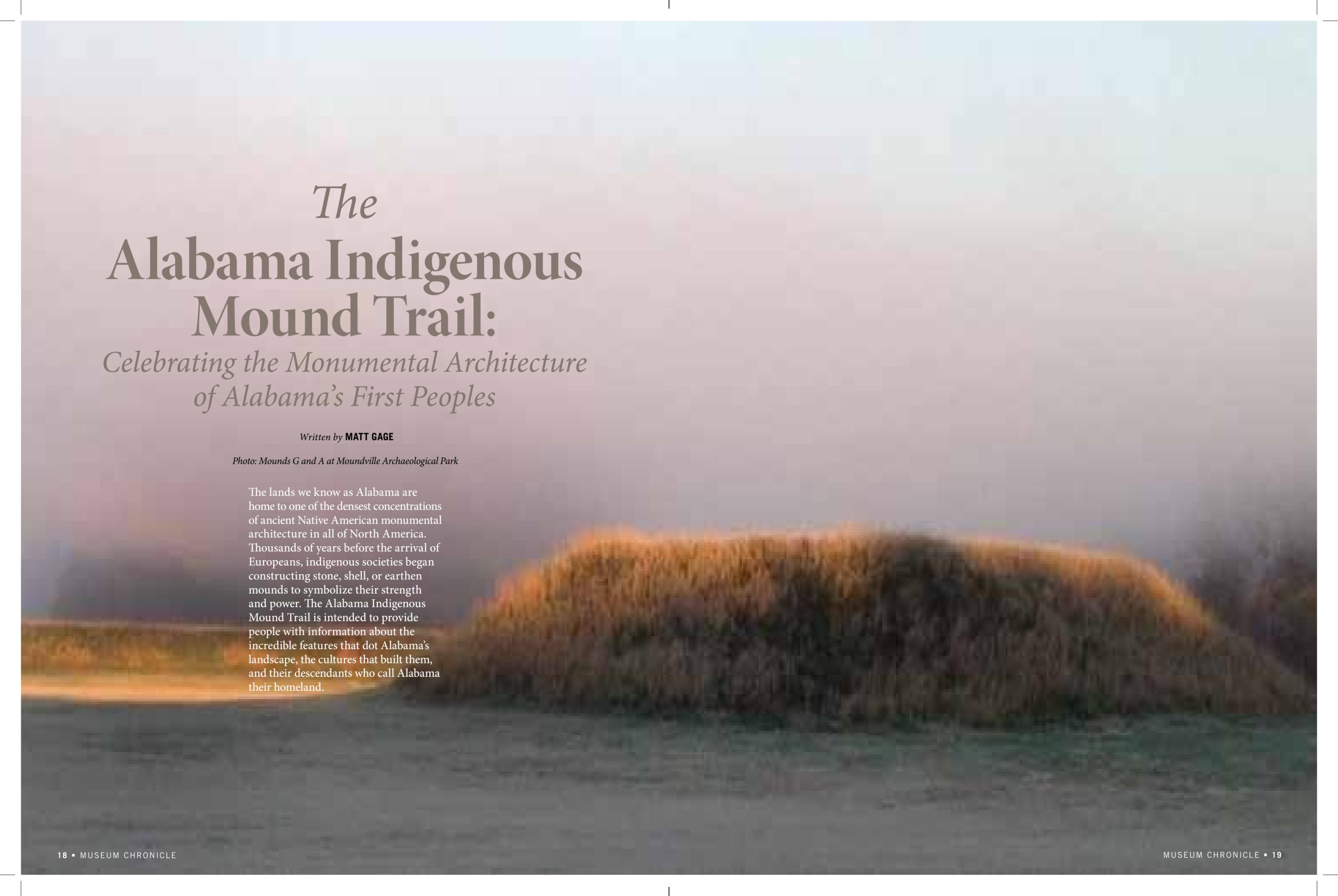
The Moundville Native American Festival was a different experience in 2020, but it reached an audience of over 23,000 views and displayed the staff of Moundville Archaeological Park’s determination to continue

hosting the Festival, despite the circumstances surrounding the Coronavirus. They rose to the challenge to find an alternative to the outdoor event, which opened up new opportunities to educate about and bring awareness to Southeastern Native American culture.

“I am extremely proud of our Native American Festival committee, supporting UA Museums staff, and many of our regular Festival performers,” said Dr. Alex Benitez, Director of Moundville Archaeological Park. “They all worked so hard to make sure that our longstanding festival tradition continued!” ■



(OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM, LEFT TO RIGHT)
The Mystic Wind Choctaw Dancers perform and demonstrates their dances for the Virtual Native American Festival; Festival Demonstrator, Juanita Gardinski, teaches beadwork; Festival Performer, Billy Whitefox, plays Native American flute music; Guy Meador demonstrates Flint Knapping for the Virtual Moundville Native American Festival; Dr. William Bomar gives a tour of the Jones Archaeological Museum for the Virtual Native American Festival; Sehoy Thrower of the Muscogee Creek Native gives a presentation about Native plants and their uses; Monica Moore demonstrates twining for the Virtual Native American Festival; Commander John Herrington describes his experience as the first Native American in space!

A large, grassy mound in a field under a soft, hazy sky. The mound is the central focus, with a path leading towards it. The sky is a mix of light blue and white, suggesting a bright but slightly overcast day. The foreground is a flat, grassy area.

The Alabama Indigenous Mound Trail: *Celebrating the Monumental Architecture of Alabama's First Peoples*

Written by **MATT GAGE**

Photo: Mounds G and A at Moundville Archaeological Park

The lands we know as Alabama are home to one of the densest concentrations of ancient Native American monumental architecture in all of North America. Thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans, indigenous societies began constructing stone, shell, or earthen mounds to symbolize their strength and power. The Alabama Indigenous Mound Trail is intended to provide people with information about the incredible features that dot Alabama's landscape, the cultures that built them, and their descendants who call Alabama their homeland.

Mounds often served as symbols of a culture's beliefs and power both within and between indigenous communities. They represent the far-reaching control of a political leader or mark the final resting place of the people most important to a society. As markers on the landscape they may show territorial boundaries, the location of civic-ceremonial gathering sites, commemorate an event significant to the history of a community, or reflect the spiritual beliefs of a culture. They often served to raise the elite above those who saw them as powerful leaders both in life and after and indicated gathering sites where socially aligned groups, like clans or sects, could come together.

As anyone who has grown up in Alabama knows, leaving a simple pile of dirt exposed on the ground is not going to result in a well-defined mound. The first Alabama rainstorm will cause it to deflate into a mass of mud. Instead, the people who built the mounds used engineering techniques learned over centuries to build lasting monuments, many of which exist today. Some of these monuments are likely tied to cosmology, tracing the path of souls across the sky while others are linked to solstices and equinoxes, and planting and harvesting times.

Initiated near the end of the Early Archaic, mound building may have had its origins in simple necessity. Shell mounds in the Tennessee Valley began around 8,900 years ago with the initial deposits of shells discarded at seasonal aggregation sites. These deposits grew through time and likely began to take on new meaning for the inhabitants of the region, marking the places where people remembered significant events, such as marriages and feasts. Shell mounds like those at Indian Shell Mound Park on Dauphin Island and the Fuller site in Spanish Fort were likely started during this time. These mounds grew to be large white markers along the river valleys and coastal waterways of Alabama showing where people lived and marking the territories they called home.

By the Late Archaic around 5,500 years ago, people began building earthen mounds in Alabama. One mound from this time was built along the Tennessee River near Huntsville and consisted of a low red clay feature about four feet high and 30 feet in diameter. It would have

contrasted strikingly with the white shell of the shell midden that lined the riverbank and marked an important location in the center of a large gathering site. Hunter gatherers of the Late Archaic likely practiced seasonal rounds, similar to people from previous times. However, population numbers were becoming greater and evidence suggests people were becoming more territorial. Sites like this would have served as gathering places where people could come together at a specific time of year to exchange ideas, cement their alliances, and trade materials.

In the Woodland Period, mound building flourished. Single large mounds like the Florence Mound and mound complexes like the stone mounds at the Coker Ford site and Gulf State Park Sand and Shell Mounds were built across the region and included shell, sand, stone, and earth.

The zenith of monumental construction in Alabama took place between 1000 A.D. and 1500 A.D. when the Mississippian mound complexes of the Tennessee, Coosa, Alabama, Tombigbee, Tensaw, Black Warrior River Valleys, and Alabama's Gulf Coast dominated the landscape of the region. Each site was a bustling center of cultural activity, with tribute and goods from half a continent away pouring in as part of complex economies and belief systems. Moundville, Oakville Indian Mounds, the Hamilton Mounds site, the Bessemer site, and Bottle Creek all represent massive power centers that controlled vast territories and influenced politics and belief systems for generations prior to European Contact.

Archaeologists know that several mound sites were still being occupied at the time of initial contact with Europeans. The Mound at Old Cahawba was a late manifestation of the Pensacola phase which, although likely aligned with the inhabitants of Moundville, had its origins along the Gulf Coast. European contact had a dramatic impact on the indigenous cultures of the Southeast. The introduction of diseases that spread rampantly across the Southeast decimated local populations who had no natural defenses to viruses such as smallpox or chickenpox. Even with the loss of more than 75 percent of their populations, people continued the old ways and carried on their cultural beliefs at several sites like Choccolocco Creek Archaeological Complex and the Mound at Fort Toulouse-Fort Jackson Park.



“Mounds often served as symbols of a culture’s beliefs and power both within and between indigenous communities.”

Watch the bicentennial special of *Discovering Alabama* featuring the Alabama Indigenous Mound Trail!

discoveringalabama.org



Mounds and village at Fort Toulouse—Fort Jackson.

The Indian Removal Act of 1830 led to many of the indigenous peoples of Alabama being forcibly sent west to the Oklahoma Territory. The people of the removed tribes and those few fortunate enough to remain behind retain much of the culture and tradition of their ancestors.

There are hundreds if not thousands of Native American mound sites across Alabama, most of which lie hidden away in forests and fields. However, their story and the story of the people who built them is an important part of our collective heritage. That heritage needs protection and preserving these sites is important to all Alabamians.

Today, with the help of state, federal, tribal, and municipal partners, the Alabama Indigenous Mound Trail seeks to enhance public understanding of the purpose and significance of these sites by highlighting those that are (with minor exceptions) open to the public. We encourage everyone to visit each site to experience their uniqueness as cultural landscapes, and to learn more about the people who created them. Learn more about each site, find out how to visit them, and read information about existing tribes, towns, and nations, by visiting our website: <https://alabamamoundtrail.org/>. ■



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The Alabama Indigenous Mound Trail received an Alabama Bicentennial Legacy Award from the Alabama Bicentennial Commission.



Alabama Bicentennial Legacy Project Awards

Written by **REBECCA JOHNSON**

In April 2020, the Alabama Bicentennial Commission announced the Alabama Bicentennial Legacy Awards and Commendations, which included *Discovering Alabama's* Bicentennial Specials.

The awards recognize outstanding projects by communities and organizations that were part of the commemoration of the statehood anniversary. Awards were given in two categories: commendations for outstanding bicentennial programs and projects and legacy awards for projects of exceptional and lasting impact. Forty-one commendations and 21 legacy awards were given, representing more than 40 municipalities in 35 counties.

Discovering Alabama was honored when State officials requested they produce a couple of “specials” to help celebrate Alabama’s Bicentennial. The series has been producing educational programming about Alabama’s remarkable cultural and natural history for decades. In addition to reflections on Alabama’s past 200 years of statehood history, *Discovering Alabama* also encourages thoughtful consideration for the state’s future. As the South continues increasingly to develop and populate, what will be the impacts to Alabama’s lands, waters, and rural qualities in the next 200 years? Stay tuned for the upcoming *Discovering Alabama* program, “Alabama Quadricentennial”. ■

RUBY THE TREE-REX

Written by **REBECCA JOHNSON** and **ALLIE SORLIE**



Allie Sorlie's concept sketch of Ruby the Tree-Rex's head.

The University of Alabama Museums' entry for 2020 was a Tyrannosaurus Rex-inspired Christmas tree, lovingly named Ruby the “Tree-Rex”, who was made out of wire coat hangers, tulle, hot glue, poster tube, yard sign metal, and foam found in the basement of Smith Hall. Ruby and UA Museums won Tinsel Trail's Signature Theme Award, which is given to the local Tuscaloosa organization that best represents their business. ■



Ruby the Tree-Rex lights up the Tinsel Trail.

The Alabama Avocational Paleontologist Award

Written by **DR. ADIEL KLOMPMAKER**

Alabama employs about a dozen professional paleontologists, but there are many more people who search and study fossils as a hobby. These avocational or amateur paleontologists uncover a vast amount of knowledge about Alabama’s prehistory each year. To honor such an individual who has made outstanding contributions to Alabama paleontology, the Alabama Avocational Paleontologist Award has been created.

The Alabama Avocational Paleontologist Award honors an individual who has made outstanding contributions to the field of paleontology in Alabama. This person is an avocational (amateur) paleontologist defined as someone who does not have a formal education in paleontology and does not have a paid job in this field. The individual does not necessarily have to live in Alabama. In rare cases, the award may be offered to multiple people at the same time, where deemed appropriate.

A committee has now selected a winner for the very first Alabama Avocational Paleontologist Award, a statewide award. The committee consists of UA Museums’ curator Dr. Adiel Klompmaker and one representative each of both paleontological societies in the state, the Alabama Paleontological Society and the Birmingham Paleontological Society. This award is made available by the Alabama Museum of Natural History and the Department of Museum Research & Collections, both of which are part of The University of Alabama Museums.

This year’s winner is Dr. T. Prescott Atkinson, who has spent five decades collecting and donating many thousands of fossils to multiple museums, including vertebrates, invertebrates, plants, and tracks. Among his many discoveries in Alabama are a Late Cretaceous dinosaur egg from Harrell Station and rare insect wings from the Pennsylvanian of northern Alabama. Furthermore, Prescott Atkinson has played a key role

in the preservation and management of the Stephen C. Minkin Paleozoic Footprint Site (Union Chapel Mine) in Walker County, Alabama. Prescott Atkinson is the vice-president of the Alabama Paleontological Society, arranging monthly talks. He is also an author of multiple scientific and popular papers in paleontology, and he has participated in various outreach events. In sum, the committee concluded that Prescott Atkinson is a very worthy first recipient of this award.



“I think this recognition of amateurs in paleontology represent an important recognition of the contributions that nonprofessionals can make by finding important specimens and locating and preserving important sites. I hope that it will encourage kids and adults alike to pursue avocational paleontology and seek engagement with specialists when they find interesting or enigmatic fossils,” Atkinson said.



(ABOVE, TOP): Dr. Prescott Atkinson with the plaque of the Alabama Avocational Paleontologist Award

(ABOVE, BOTTOM) Top Left—Dr. Adiel Klompmaker, UA Museums’ Curator of Paleontology, Top Right—Allie Sorlie, Education Outreach Coordinator, Alabama Museum of Natural History, Bottom Right—Ashley Allen, President of the Alabama Paleontological Society, Bottom Left—T. Prescott Atkinson

The award consists of an engraved plaque and it was presented online during this year’s virtual edition of National Fossil Day on Wednesday, October 14th, 2020.

While the main goal of this award is not inspiration per se, Dr. Adiel Klompmaker hopes that the news of this award will inspire young or older people to look in their backyard or property for fossils and/or become a member of a paleontological society in the state.

“The rocks and sediments exposed in Alabama contain a variety of fossils such as vertebrate, invertebrates, and plants from very different periods in Earth’s history. As a result, many people in Alabama are drawn to fossils! Avocational paleontologists have been active for many decades and have proven to be incredibly important for paleontology in Alabama,” Dr. Klompmaker said. “They all do it for the love of fossils and spend countless hours and money on their hobby. Their role in Alabama paleontology cannot be underestimated and should be acknowledged even more. This annual award celebrates their vast contributions.” ■

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA College of Human Environmental Sciences

#ColorOurCollections

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA University Museums Research and Collections

During the week of February 3-7, 2020, The University of Alabama Museums and The Fashion Archive of the College of Human Environmental Sciences teamed up to participate in #ColorOurCollections for the first time in University of Alabama history.



#COLOROURCOLLECTIONS COLORING BOOK, 1970S DAY DRESS



#ColorOurCollections

Written by REBECCA JOHNSON

During the week of February 3-7, 2020, The University of Alabama Museums and The Fashion Archive of the College of Human Environmental Sciences teamed up to participate in #ColorOurCollections for the first time in University of Alabama history. #ColorOurCollections is an annual coloring festival launched by The New York Academy of Medicine to encourage libraries, special collections, archives, and other cultural institutions from all over the world to post coloring content based on objects in their collections to social media using the hashtag: #ColorOurCollections.

“The #ColorOurCollections project is a fantastic way to unite and highlight just a few of the vast millions of objects and specimens held in our collections across campus.”

“I talked with Dr. John Abbott about #ColorOurCollections, after seeing it on various social

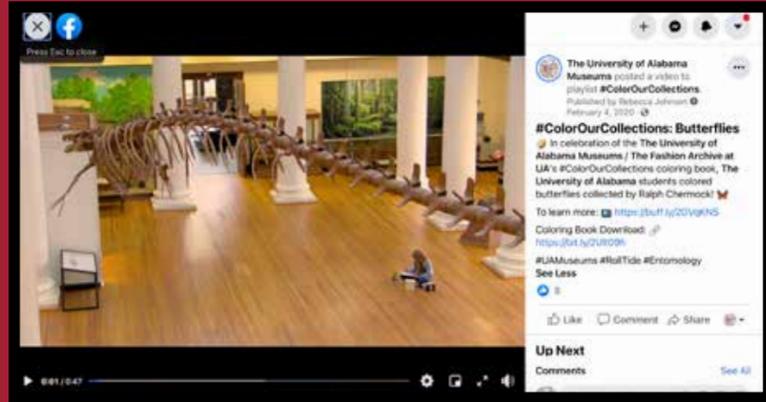
media platforms, and he presented the idea at the UA Council of Curators meeting. Everyone thought it was a fantastic project,” said Dr. Marcy Koontz, Curator of The Fashion Archive.

For UA’s coloring book entry in this event, Dr. Marcy Koontz, Curator of The Fashion Archive, Dr. Amanda Thompson, Associate Professor in the Department of Clothing, Textiles, and Interior Design, and Dr. John C. Abbott, Chief Curator and Director of UA Museums Research and Collections enlisted the skills

of Mingyi Bi, a graduate student in the Department of Clothing, Textiles, and Interior Design. The concept of this international social media driven campaign, combined



(OPPOSITE PAGE, LEFT TO RIGHT) #ColourOurCollections Coloring Book, 1970s Day Dress, as colored by a University of Alabama student (ABOVE) Katherine Edge (Director of the Mildred Westervelt Warner Transportation Museum; Left) and James Scott (Museum Education Assistant at the Mildred Westervelt Warner Transportation Museum; Right) color pages from the UA Museums’ #ColorOurCollections Coloring Book. Photo Credit: Rebecca Johnson, UA Museums Communications Specialist, University of Alabama Graduate Student, Mingyi Bi, drew coloring book pages for UA Museums’ #ColorOurCollections Coloring Book. Lindsey Gordon (Education Outreach Coordinator at Moundville Archaeological Park) colors the Rattlesnake Disk that can be found inside the Jones Archaeological Museum.



“My idea was to show the people who will draw in the coloring books what kinds of collections we have at The University of Alabama.”

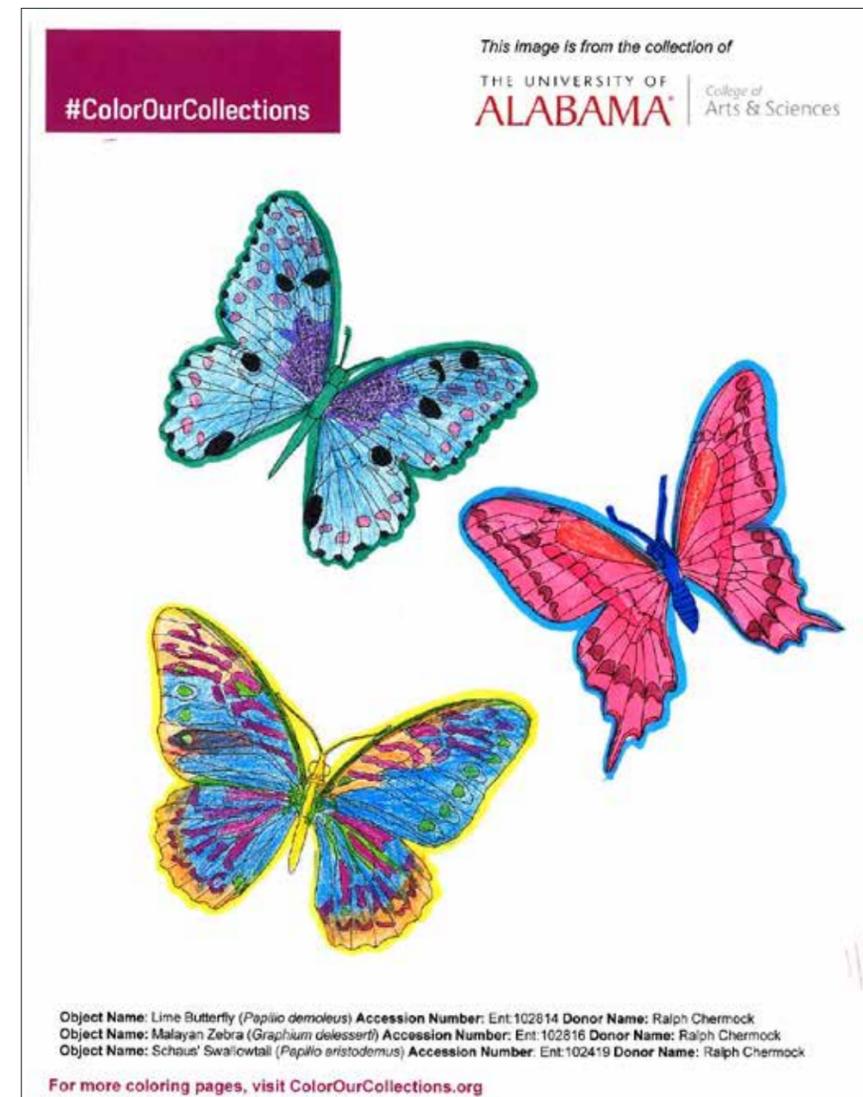
with education and outreach, checked all the boxes for her. Due to the vast volume of objects in both the UA Museums and The Fashion Archive collections, selecting what to include in the #ColorOurCollections coloring book required consideration.

“We tried to find things that were very meaningful and important,” explained Mingyi Bi. “My idea was to show the people who will draw in the coloring books what kinds of collections we have at The University of Alabama.”

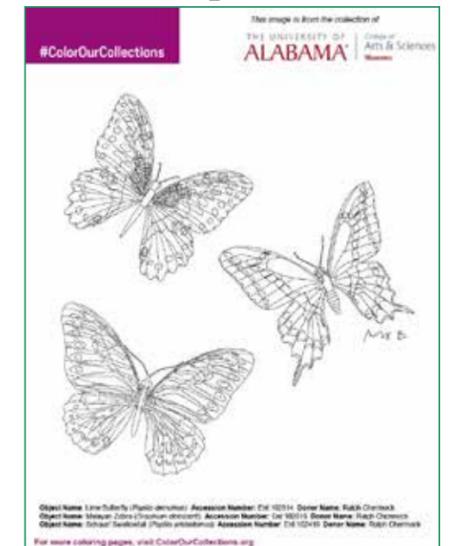
Starting on Monday, February 3 and ending on Friday, February 7, UA Museums and The Fashion Archive shared images and video of University of Alabama

faculty, staff, and students coloring the pages of their #ColorOurCollections entry. Each day, a different collection (Fashion, Entomology, Archaeology, History/Ethnology, and Earth Sciences) was showcased on the UA Museums and Fashion Archive social media platforms.

“The #ColorOurCollections project is a fantastic way to unite and highlight just a few of the vast millions of objects and specimens held in our collections across campus. Through the artistic talents of the College of Human Environmental Sciences’ graduate student, Mingyi Bi, we hope to reach a whole new audience that will be interested in our collections,” said Dr. John C. Abbott. ■



#COLOUROURCOLLECTIONS
COLORING BOOK
RALPH CHERMOCK BUTTERFLY COLLECTION



(OPPOSITE PAGE) An example of a #ColorOurCollections post on The University of Alabama Museums’ Facebook page, Photo Credit: Rebecca Johnson, UA Museums Communications Specialist (ABOVE) #ColourOurCollections Coloring Book, Ralph Chermock Butterfly Collection, as colored by a University of Alabama student



From the Collections: An Obsidian Projectile Point

Written by **WILLIAM R. ALLEN**, *Archaeological Collections Manager*

Browsing through the Archaeology Collections of The University of Alabama Museums shows that the Mississippians of Moundville and the Native Americans of the surrounding area sat in the middle of an extensive trade network, one that stretched throughout the eastern

“Points of this type are found throughout a great portion of the western United States and were used from approximately AD 900 through the historic period.”

part of the continent. Copper used for ornamentation moved south from deposits in the upper Midwest and Great Lakes area, while conch shells and shark’s teeth used for beads and utensils travelled northwards from the Gulf Coast and Florida. Samples of mica from Appalachia (or even further away) have

been found at Moundville, and sherds of pottery from Moundville have been found in archaeological sites in Arkansas, Georgia, and Tennessee.

Occasionally, an artifact is found that expands the geographic reach of this network. Pictured here is a projectile point donated to the Archaeology Collections by Mark R. Norton of the Tennessee Department of Archaeology. The point was found by an amateur collector in Limestone County, Alabama, on a known Native American village site close by the banks of the Tennessee River.

This projectile point is made of obsidian, a naturally-occurring volcanic glass that produces extremely sharp edges when fractured. Stone tools made of obsidian are

found in archaeological sites wherever the material is available; the edges produced while knapping obsidian are often sharper than those produced by working flint or chert, and modern physicians have experimented with obsidian scalpels as an alternative to steel.

When analyzed using x-ray fluorescence, the obsidian was found to have originated in Coglan Buttes, Oregon, over 1800 miles away from where the point was found. Hydration analysis, which measures the depth to which moisture has penetrated the surface of the obsidian and can be used to date artifacts such as this one, found a relatively thin hydration rim of 3.0 microns. That, plus the small size of the point, indicated to archaeologists that it was manufactured relatively recently. (Sampling for the hydration analysis produced the rectangular notch seen on the left of the piece.)

The shape of the point places it into the Western Triangular Cluster type. Points of this type are found throughout a great portion of the western United States and were used from approximately 900 A.D. through the historic period.

We cannot say with any certainty how the projectile point ended up in Alabama—whether it was passed hand-to-hand along the trade routes or carried along by some far-wandering individual is something that this piece alone cannot tell us—but, the presence of this and other obsidian tools from sites in the Southeast are a good indication that obsidian can be added to the list of exotic materials that moved through the Native American trade networks across the continent. ■

(ABOVE) Projectile Point donated to the Archaeology Collections by Mark R. Norton of the Tennessee Department of Archaeology. Photo Credit: William R. Allen



From the Collections: Civil War Memorabilia and the Ravages of War

Written by **MARY BETH PRONDZINSKI**, *Natural History Collections Manager*



One of our grislier acquisitions is the prosthetic peg leg donated by the Yarbrough family, which belonged to their second great-grandfather who lost his leg fighting for the Confederacy in the Civil War. Private William Alexander Stewart was wounded at the Battle of Resaca, Georgia in 1864. His right leg was amputated above the knee and while convalescing at home on furlough, the war ended without his official discharge. In 1867, he applied to the State of Alabama for an artificial limb. Unfortunately, I could not access the auditor’s online records to verify the outcome. Perhaps he was rejected, hence the peg leg was fashioned from a wagon wheel.

Indeed, this piece of historical memorabilia, comes with a sobering pedigree that illustrates how far we’ve come in the technological advancement of prosthetics! How were prosthetics made in the 19th century and from what kind of need did the industry evolve? The loss of a limb was often looked upon as moral recompense and loss of manliness. If the amputee survived the operation, he had the added misfortune of trying to fit back into a society that revered “wholeness”.

Our prosthetic leg was fashioned from the spokes of a wagon wheel, with a side extension that a belt could be laced around the waist in order to hold the leg in place. Peg legs were not the prosthesis of choice, however, as more realistic limbs were already being fashioned for the amputee. Before the Civil War, 34 patents for prosthetic limbs had been issued. By 1873, over 133 patents were in effect for artificial limbs. And by 1867, James Edward Hanger, himself a Civil War amputee, had already invented the first hinged-at-the-knee prosthetic modeled on the human leg! In 1861, Hanger was commissioned to design limbs for Confederate soldiers maimed by the war. The “Hanger Limb” forever changed the prosthetics industry and later became a key provider during World War II’s artificial limb resurgence. Today, Hanger, Inc. is the primary designer of advanced orthopedic prosthetics of the 21st century. ■

“This piece of historical memorabilia, comes with a sobering pedigree that illustrates how far we’ve come in the technological advancement of prosthetics!”

(ABOVE, TOP & INSET) This prosthetic peg leg donated by the Yarbrough family is a new acquisition for UA Museums’ Natural History Collections. Photo Credit: Mary Beth Prondzinski; Private William Alexander Stewart was wounded at the Battle of Resaca, Georgia in 1864. Photo Credit: Ancestry.com

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MAJOR WEBSITE UPDATES FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSEUM RESEARCH AND COLLECTIONS

In 2020, the website of the Department of Museum Research and Collections has undergone major updates. For most collections, information on the history and contents of each collection is now available online when visiting: collections.museums.ua.edu. Furthermore, new webpages about UA's Harrell Station Paleontological Site and the Paint Rock Forest Research Center site were launched. Finally, 2016–2020 publications using specimens or objects from our collections have been compiled, showing the lasting and growing importance of our collections for scientific research by UA staff/faculty, students, and outside researchers.

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THANK YOU TO OUR MEMBERS WHO HAVE GENEROUSLY
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- Moundville Archaeological Park

STITCHING TOGETHER TUSCALOOSA'S HISTORY

- ENDS MARCH 27, 2021
- Mildred Westervelt Warner Transportation Museum

BIRDFEST

- APRIL 9-10, 2021
- Moundville Archaeological Park

VIRTUAL BAMA BUG FEST

- APRIL 22-24, 2021
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CELEBRATE BIODIVERSITY POETRY LESSON WITH KEENAN HOLMES

- MAY 12, 2021
- Alabama Museum of Natural History