

**P**ROFESSIONAL  
**A**RCHAEOLOGISTS OF  
**N**EW  
**Y**ORK  
**C**ITY



NEWSLETTER NO. 19  
MAY 1984

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Next PANYC Meeting  
Wednesday, 16 May 1984, 7:30 PM  
New York University  
25 Waverly Place  
Room 213

Material for inclusion in the PANYC Newsletter should be sent to Sydne B. Marshall,  
Envirosphere Company, 2 World Trade Center, New York, New York 10048.

MINUTES OF THE MARCH 28, 1984 PANYC MEETING HELD AT NEW YORK UNIVERSITY  
Klein called the meeting to order at 7:35 P. M.

Secretary's Report: The minutes of the January meeting were accepted.

Treasurer's Report: Geismar reported that there is a \$942.56 balance in PANYC's account.

President's Report: Klein reported that he wrote to Ben DeBose of the Canarsie Historical Society explaining that it is not our policy to sponsor organizations and expressing our interest in cooperating with DeBose. Klein also wrote H. Stern of the City Parks Department suggesting a meeting. Stern has yet to reply. Klein also suggested that PANYC contact G. Norman of Landmarks Preservation Commission to discuss recent changes in Federal and State regulations. Klein reported that Rothschild will contact the U.S. Army Corps about a proposed Westchester project that Winter had noted might affect NYC resources. Klein also that Baugher had noted that the Atlantic Avenue Tunnel might be used for Brooklyn publicity. Klein added that it appears that several hundred cubic feet of tunnel fill with associated artifacts have been removed from the tunnel.

Newsletter Report: Marshall reported that not all of the newsletters were mailed out on time due to a severe fracture of her arm. She also reported that Envirosphere will no longer serve as the sole sponsor of the PANYC Newsletter. Salwen volunteered to assume responsibility for mailing the next newsletter. A discussion was held on alternate and inexpensive ways to produce and distribute the newsletter.

Action Committee: No report.

Research and Planning Committee: No report.

Legislation Committee: Salwen urged the membership to write in support of the Shipwreck Bill (HR 3194; S 1504). He also called attention to New York's Draft Procedures for the Certification of Local Governments and for the Transfer of Funds to Qualified Local Governments (see March newsletter No. 18 pages 6-22 for details). These procedures could change historic preservation in the city and Salwen urged the membership to read and consider these proposed procedures.

Public Program Committee: Marshall reported that Pickman, Geismar and Brouwer will present papers and Grossman, Bodie and Herbert and T. Klein will present field reports. Additional papers may be presented. Perhaps the Sheridan Square film will also appear on the program. B. Kearns has helped with radio station advertising.

State Plan: Cantwell reported that although several study units of the State Plan have been distributed for comment by the SHPO, the NYC unit has been held up for review pending the final preparation of the maps. Baugher reported that the maps are now ready for distribution.

Nominations Committee: The results of the PANYC election are as follows: President-N. Rothschild; Vice President-J. Geismar; Treasurer-F. Winter; Secretary A-M Cantwell; Executive Board-R. Henn, D. Wall, S. Marshall, A. Pickman, B. Salwen. Klein will serve as Past President.

New Business: Rothschild took over as President and proposed a motion, unanimously passed, that the previous officers be commended. Geismar raised the question of membership dues for new members. Klein noted that since an offer of membership is good for 1 year, a membership begins in the year in which the dues are paid. A new member, therefore, has a choice when to begin paying dues.

Nurkin discussed possible problems with the proposed Shipwreck legislation and its enforcement and urged the consideration of NY state legislation. Salwen and Rothschild suggested that the role of the state might better be considered after the federal legislation is passed.

Rutsch distributed sherry (Fino and Amontillado) to the membership and several motions to thank him were unanimously passed.

Salwen suggested that we consider seriously our position on city authority to act on historic preservation issues (see comments above under Legislation report and March Newsletter). He urged that we comment on these proposed procedures and emphasize the importance of archeological resources. Baugher noted that Landmarks Preservation Commission has been doing an ongoing historic structures survey.

Winter raised the question of PANYC's role and interest in projects outside NYC limits (see discussion of Westchester project in President's report above). After some discussion it was moved that PANYC will consider cases affecting the archeological and historical resources outside New York City on an ad hoc basis at the discretion of the President. The motion was passed unanimously.

Nurkin noting that committees meet infrequently raised the question of the function of PANYC committees. Rothschild will bring in a proposal for the next meeting to consider reorganization of the committees.

Rutsch reported on the proposed "Boring" Workshop. His report appears elsewhere in this (May) newsletter. Suggestions were made for the format of this workshop which will be held May 23rd at NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission 1-5 P.M.

The next PANYC meeting will be held May 16 at New York University Room 211. The Executive Board will meet at 6:30 and the general membership at 7:30.

The meeting adjourned at 8:44.

Respectfully submitted,



Anne-Marie Cantwell  
PANYC Secretary

MEMORANDUM

To: PANYC Members

From: Ed Rutsch, Arnold Pickman, and John Vetter

Date: March 27, 1984

Subject: Report from the Committee Organizing the Workshop on  
Deeply Buried or Inundated Cultural Resources in the  
Metropolitan New York Area

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The three-person committee organizing the above-referenced workshop has the following to report on this endeavor:

1. Time: A date should be set by the PANYC membership. A weekday afternoon in early May is suggested.
2. Place: The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission has offered their meeting room as the workshop location.
3. Attendees: PANYC membership and invited representatives from the following agencies, institutions, etc.:

SHPO Offices of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut  
Army Corps, New York District  
USEPA  
NY Dept. of Environmental Protection  
NY State Dept. of Transportation  
Others

and guests from

Queens College Radiocarbon Laboratory  
City College, Dept. of Geology  
Lamont Labs, Columbia University  
Mueser, Rutledge, & De Simone (boring engineers, NYC)

4. Program: A two-part format is suggested--(1) presentations, and (2) discussions:
  - A. Three 20-minute presentations
    1. Edward Johannemann, the Cedar Creek Site
    2. Arnold Pickman, the use of borings on the Ridgewood Aqueduct site, Queens, and in the West Side Highway study, Manhattan
    3. John Vetter/Ed Rutsch, the shell midden at the sewerage treatment plant site, Coney Island

B. Discussions

1. Methodologies and potentials of use of data from soil borings
2. PANYC Support or efforts on behalf of this line of research
3. PANYC Support of a symposium on this methodology at a future professional meeting
4. Other

UPDATE

Workshop on Deeply Buried or Inundated  
Cultural Resources in the Metropolitan New York Area  
(The Boring Conference)

Time: 1 - 5 P.M.

Date: Wednesday, 23 May 1984

Place: Landmarks Preservation Commission  
20 Vesey Street  
New York, New York 10007

For  
Further  
Details: Ed Rutsch  
Historic Conservation and Interpretation, Inc.  
Box 111, R D 3  
Newton, New Jersey 07860  
(201) 383-6355

Abstracts of Papers to be Presented  
Before PANYC's Annual Symposium on the Archaeology  
of New York City

May 12, 1984  
Museum of the City of New York

Coring The Apple  
Testing for Deeply Buried Archaeological Sites in New York City

Arnold Pickman  
New York University

Two processes of land modification in New York City - the natural rise in sea level since the end of the last glaciation and the filling-in by man of marshy and submerged land - can result in the burial and preservation of archaeological sites. To detect the presence of such sites, archaeologists have made use of core drilling equipment. Data gathered for engineering purposes has been used to reconstruct the past shoreline of the Hudson River and determine the most likely locations of prehistoric habitation on land which is now submerged. In other locations in the City, archaeologists have used core drilling equipment to locate archaeological sites which are now buried beneath deep deposits of landfill.

What Do We Find and Where Did It Come From?  
Some Engineering Techniques Found at 175 Water Street

Joan H. Geismar, Ph.D.  
Independent Consultant

Excavation on the 175 Water Street block in lower Manhattan revealed several 18th and early 19th century engineering techniques that are not clearly documented in our city's historic literature. Research suggests ancient roots for the methods of landmaking and stabilization found on the block. It also suggests the resourcefulness of our city's early "engineers". And, finally, one facet of this engineering process graphically illustrates the interaction and cooperation occurring between members of New York City's 18th century merchant elite.

Marine Archaeology of the New York Harbor:  
An Introduction

Norman Brouwer  
Curator of Ships and Marine Historian  
South Street Seaport Museum

This paper discusses finding surviving evidence of types of vessels which were important to the development of New York and for which plans or detailed information no longer exist. Usually the wide variety of crafts used were illustrated in prints and early photographs. For many, little more will be known other than these prints and photographs without viewing the actual specimens. The focus of this paper is on the working craft to which little scholarly attention has been paid and about which little is known.

The History of Two New York City Afro-American Communities:  
Historical Archaeology and the Public

Roselle E. Henn  
CUNY - Graduate Center

Two modern city neighborhoods are actively pursuing their histories. Archaeology has provided an important focus for historical research involving community members on many levels. This paper will recount the development of local interest and involvement in archaeological investigations in two 19th century Afro-American communities, Weeksville (central Brooklyn) and Sandy Ground (Staten Island).

Buried 17th Century New York:  
The Rediscovery of the Dutch West India Company Warehouse  
at Pearl Street

Joel W. Grossman, Ph.D.  
Greenhouse Consultants

Seventy archaeologists working through the winter of 1984 under heated plastic domes 8 feet beneath Pearl Street used high speed infrared computer transits, overhead stereo photography and advanced conservation techniques to record the layout and stratigraphy of the original shoreline settlement of New Amsterdam, over a four week period during January '84. Sealed beneath eight foot deep 19th century brick basement floors and buried under layers of 18th century rubble was the original 1625 land surface which revealed the remains of four stone buildings, wooden and yellow brick structures, and a total of 42,529 historic artifacts which included Contact Period Indian pottery, beads and a unique bark basket filled with both Dutch and Indian goods together with marbles and a wooden Chinese checkers-like game board.



A Report on Field Investigations  
at the GSA Site, Jamaica, Queens

Debra C. Bodie  
New York University

Phase III excavations at the GSA site were conducted between July 6 and July 29, 1983. The purpose of these excavations was to further sample archaeological evidence of the historic occupation of the block, particularly as this was reflected in deposits dating to the 19th and 20th century commercial growth of the block. The 19th century development of the block was principally oriented toward the creation of hotels and related commercial enterprises, such as taverns, livery stables, and blacksmith shops. As anticipated, backyard and stable yard deposits were found, as well as several pits containing 19th century hotel and tavern-related refuse. The archaeological information for the GSA site, therefore, adds to our knowledge of the commercial and ultimately suburban growth of Jamaica, Queens.

Deep Holes and High Finance on Wall Street:  
Archaeological Investigations of the Barclays Bank Site, Manhattan

Bertram Herbert and Terry Klein  
Louis Berger & Associates, Inc.

The construction of a major banking center at Wall, Water and Pearl Streets has provided an opportunity to study life along New York City's 18th century waterfront. The location of this new banking center was the site of businesses and homes of merchants and druggists. Archaeological study of this site has produced artifacts and remains of buildings once used by these entrepreneurs. Artifacts recovered during excavation included large quantities of ceramics, glass, clothing items, jewelry, and food remains. Study of these artifacts and building remains will contribute to our understanding of life in the 18th century city, and how it changed as a result of historical events and processes. This archaeological study was financed by the London and Leeds Corporation for Barclays Bank International.



New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
The Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza  
Agency Building 1 Albany New York 12238

518-474-0456

April 24, 1984

Dear Sir or Madam,

New York State has limited federal historic preservation funds available for transfer to local governments to undertake projects involving the identification, evaluation and protection of historic properties.

Although this program will eventually require that local governments become officially certified with the Department of the Interior before they can apply for funds, we have been instructed by Interior that certification will not be required for funding in 1984-1985.

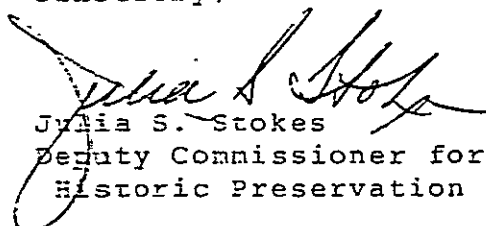
Applications for funding should be submitted on the enclosed form. In lieu of item 2, applicants must demonstrate that they meet the general requirements for certification or that they have made substantial progress toward meeting these requirements.

Funds will be awarded as 50% matching grants on a competitive basis according to the enclosed selection criteria. Highest priority will be given to projects designed to complete surveys of older structures and neighborhoods and to preparing National Register nominations, especially those for multiple resource areas or historic districts.

Applications must be received by this office by June 15, 1984. Grants will be awarded within four weeks and applicants will be notified by letter concerning funding decisions. All projects that are funded must be completed and all payments to local governments must be made by August 31, 1985.

A fact sheet on the certified local government (CLG) program is enclosed for your reference. Procedures and further information is available upon request, should you not have received the mailing of same dated February 6, 1984. Please feel free to call Kathleen LaFrank (518-474-0479) if you have questions.

Sincerely,

  
Julia S. Stokes  
Deputy Commissioner for  
Historic Preservation

## FACT SHEET - CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROGRAM

### Definition and Purpose -

The certified local government (CLG) program was authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act Amendments of 1980. Under this legislation, states were directed to reserve 10% of their annual federal Historic Preservation Fund grants for transfer to qualified local governments which would assist the states in carrying out the purposes of the National Historic Preservation Act. The intent of Congress was to incorporate the concerns of local governments into the federal and state planning processes, thus ensuring efficient and equitable preservation planning. The amendments provide a specific role for local governments that are certified to participate in the national program. As specified by Congress, this must include formal participation in the process of surveying, evaluating, and nominating properties to the National Register of Historic Places; however, states have also been authorized to develop procedures by which qualified local governments can become certified to participate in other aspects of the national historic preservation program as well. Governments will be certified by the State Historic Preservation Officers after filing an application and review by SHPO staff. The states will be responsible for periodic review and monitoring of certified local governments to ensure that each government is fulfilling its responsibilities.

### General Requirements for Certification -

To qualify for the CLG program, local governments must have certain administrative and legal capacities. In general, local historic preservation programs must include the following:

1. a local historic preservation ordinance that substantially achieves the purpose of designating and protecting historic properties;
2. an adequate and qualified historic preservation review commission;
3. a system for the survey and inventory of historic properties;
4. a process to ensure adequate public participation in the local historic preservation program.

### Selection Process and Priorities for Funding -

All CLG's will be eligible to apply for funds from the 10% reserved share of the state's total annual Historic Preservation Fund award. In 1984-1985, funding is available to local governments that substantially meet the above criteria, although not formally certified. There is no requirement that a government actually

become certified to receive 1984-1985 funding. This condition applies to 1984-1985 funds only. In general, eligible activities will include all projects that further the goals of identification, evaluation, nomination, and protection of a community's cultural resources. These include survey, nomination of properties to the National Register, public education programs, planning studies, research and the development of comprehensive historic preservation plans. Selection will take into account national and state preservation priorities, effects of projects on local historic preservation activities and equitable geographic distribution of funds. The state is not required to award funds to all governments that apply.

In evaluating projects for funding, priority will be given to those which:

- A. are designed to complete local surveys, evaluation and/or designation of historic properties for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places;
- B. demonstrate broad community support or endorsement, particularly support of local planning agencies;
- C. show careful project planning and an appropriate methodology;
- D. demonstrate objectives which can be achieved within the prepared budget and time allocated while meeting established standards;
- E. involve staff and/or consultants who are professionally qualified to achieve the project goals;
- F. use matching funds which are in the form of cash rather than services, overhead or other indirect costs;
- G. will not duplicate the work of others.

APPLICATION AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION FUND  
ASSISTANCE TO CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Part I THE PROGRAM: The State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), who is the Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, is required under the National Historic Preservation Act Amendments of 1980 to reserve 10% of New York's annual federal Historic Preservation Fund apportionment to assist "certified local governments" (CLG's) in carrying out programs designed to identify, evaluate, register and protect historic properties within this state. The program for certifying local governments and awarding funds is administered by the Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau. During calendar year 1984, the SHPO will make available \$128,162 for up to 50% funding for eligible projects which are consistent with the goals of the state historic preservation planning program. Funds will be awarded on a competitive basis.

ELIGIBLE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES: The New York State historic preservation planning program addresses the identification, evaluation, registration and protection of historic resources. In general, any project which advances these goals is eligible for funding assistance: eligible projects include survey, nomination of properties to the State and National Registers, public education programs, planning studies, research, and development of local historic preservation plans. Priority will be given to projects designed to complete local surveys of historic properties and designation of such properties to the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

FUNDING AMOUNT AND METHOD OF PAYMENT: The amount requested must be matched by an equal share from the CLG. Applicants should be aware that 10% CLG share funds may not be used as a match to secure other federal funds nor may they be used for capital projects.

Ten percent CLG funds will be awarded to CLG's on a reimbursement basis. The grant is payable to the recipient upon approval of completed work and receipt of financial documentation required for reimbursement. This means that for every dollar spent, the recipient will be reimbursed fifty cents for all allowable costs up to the amount of the grant.

DURATION OF GRANT: Generally, projects must be completed and reimbursement made by the end of federal fiscal year in which the funds were appropriated, unless otherwise provided.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES: The chief elected official of any CLG must submit an application to the SHPO including a total budget estimate which details projects proposed for funding.

Applicants must fully complete and return Part II, Request for Historic Preservation Fund Assistance to Certified Local Governments, along with the completed certification of matching funds form to the SHPO by deadlines to be announced annually. Incomplete applications will be returned.

SELECTION: All applications will be reviewed and evaluated by SHPO. The SHPO will determine the final disbursement of funds to CLG's.

In selecting projects for funding, priority will be given to those which:

- A. Are designed to complete local surveys, evaluation and/or designation of historic properties for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places;
- B. Demonstrate broad community support or endorsement, particularly support of local planning agencies;
- C. Show careful project planning and an appropriate methodology;
- D. Demonstrate objectives which can be achieved within the prepared budget and time allocated while meeting established standards;
- E. Involve staff and/or consultants who are professionally qualified to achieve the project goals;
- F. Use matching funds which are in the form of cash rather than services, overhead or other indirect costs;
- G. Will not duplicate the work of others.

Consideration will also be given to equitable geographical distribution between rural and urban areas.

NOTIFICATION: All applicants will receive written notification of approval or rejection from the SHPO.

Part II

REQUEST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION FUND ASSISTANCE TO CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Date of Request \_\_\_\_\_

1. Applicant/Political Subdivision \_\_\_\_\_
2. Certified Local Government        yes        no  
If yes, date of SHPO Letter of Certification \_\_\_\_\_
3. Summary of Program Activities Proposed for Funding (include pertinent information about the nature of the project, what historic preservation issue will be addressed, how work will be accomplished, what annual state funding priorities are met, etc. - attach additional sheets)

4. List Project Staff and/or Consultants, indicating professional credentials (enclose resumes if appropriate)

5. Estimated Total Project Cost \_\_\_\_\_  
(Attach detailed, comprehensive itemized budget.)

6. Amount Requested from SHPO \_\_\_\_\_

7. Local Matching Funds:

<u>Sources</u>	<u>Amount</u>
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Is Match Currently Available? \_\_\_\_\_ If not, when? (be specific) \_\_\_\_\_  
(sign and return enclosed certification of matching funds form with this application)

8. Proposal Submitted by:

Chief Elected Official (name, title, signature): \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person if different from above \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Return to: NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
Agency Building I, 13th Floor  
Empire State Plaza  
Albany, New York 12238

## Scholarship

# On an Archaeological Battlefield, It's Scholars vs. 'Shovel Bums'

Despite criticism, contract archaeology has led to a boom in North American field work

By ERIC STANGE

When Harvard University's Peabody Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography announced last year that it had decided to close its Institute for Conservation Archaeology, a unit of the museum devoted to archaeological projects in North America, a long-simmering debate among archaeologists boiled to the surface—though not for the first time.

The Institute for Conservation Archaeology—or I.C.A., as it's known in the field—was established seven years ago as a "contract" operation—that is, it bid on contracts to carry out archaeological surveys and excavations that are required on federally financed building sites prior to construction.

Environmental and historic-preservation legislation of the late 1960's and early 1970's, which spawned what is now termed "contract archaeology," requires that an archaeological survey be completed and a report filed as part of the environmental impact statement on any construction project using federal funds or land.

### New Legislation an Ally

With the sudden demand for archaeological services following enactment of the laws, Harvard's I.C.A. and many similar organizations were established, some for profit and some not, to compete for the large number of new projects connected with the construction of roads, transit systems, buildings, dams, sewers, and anything else receiving federal dollars. Domestic archaeology became a booming business.

The protective federal legislation was generally welcomed by archaeologists as a long-overdue ally in their struggle to document and preserve the vanishing historical record of our continent. But the accompanying boom that it sparked in the field cre-

*Continued on Following Page*



Harvard archaeologists dig at the site of future highway construction in Charlestown, Mass.



# Debate over Contract Archaeology: Scholars

January 18, 1981

Continued from Preceding Page  
ated a host of unforeseen problems, not the least of which is a schism—in some cases wide and in others almost indiscernible—between those archaeologists who work exclusively within the scholarly community and those who contract their services out to federally financed projects.

In that pulp lie a number of crucial questions concerned with everything from the possible waste of public moneys to a debate over a seemingly simple query: What, in fact, is the role of an archaeologist?

The boom in North American archaeology caused by the tremendous increase in contract work is difficult to quantify, in terms of dollars spent or number of archaeologists working in the field.

## Over \$100-Million a Year

Charles R. McGimsey, III, president of the Society of Professional Archaeologists and a part-time Washington lobbyist for the profession, estimates that in 1971 between \$2-million and \$3-million in state and federal funds was spent on archaeological projects in the United States. A dozen years later, he estimates, the figure is between \$100-million and \$200-million. The lack of any central coordinating authority makes a definite figure impossible, but the increase has been phenomenal.

Until 1970, Mr. McGimsey adds, an estimated 90 per cent of the nation's archaeologists worked for universities, museums, or foundations involved in scholarly projects. The growth of contract work has substantially changed that figure as well, although by how much no one can say.

All that is known for sure is that the decade just past created a whole new generation of archaeological practitioners, including some without advanced degrees and others who came into the field just to fill the huge demand for bodies. One contract expert estimates that only about one quarter of those who are primarily contract archaeologists have Ph.D.'s.

Although little is known about the size of this new generation, its impact on what had been in many respects a stable, old-boy network was profound. The rules changed rapidly, and in some cases, recalls Mr. McGimsey, "graduate students found themselves reviewing project proposals from their full professors."

Resentment began to mount, and archaeologists complained that federal money that had previously gone into research grants was held back on the grounds that so much was now being used to fulfill the requirements of environmental legislation.

## 'Rip-Off Archaeology'

Scholars often cast doubt on the findings of contract work, charging that the hurried conditions under which it was carried out made the recovery and analysis of truly meaningful data unlikely. Contract archaeologists without advanced degrees were characterized as "shovels for hire" or "shovel boys."

And, of course, the fact that contract archaeology was done for money was never forgotten.

"In some cases," says Michael Roberts, the founding director of Harvard's I.C.A. and now a private consultant, "it was heavy-duty stuff. There was a professor of archaeology at Harvard who, passing me in the

hall one day, asked, 'So, how's rip-off archaeology?'"

Nevertheless, many universities established contract units to bid for projects, sometimes through separate entities such as the Center for American Archaeology/Archaeological Contract Program at Northwestern University, the Center for Archaeological Research at the University of Texas at San Antonio, the Arizona State Museum's cultural-resource-management division (affiliated with the University of Arizona), Harvard's now defunct I.C.A., and Brown University's Public Archaeology Lab, which has also recently been shut down.

In other cases, faculty members bid on projects individually, taking graduate students along as a team.

Often, as at Brown and Harvard, the income from contract work helps pay the overhead for the unit, and any profits go into the general coffers.

In theory, such a setup seems an ideal way to put academic expertise into public service and cover costs as well. Mr. Roberts estimates that at least half of the anthropology departments in the country are doing some kind of contract work (although it may involve a lone faculty member), and many departments find it to be an asset as a teaching tool, research source, or moneymaker.

In practice, however, contract work has proved less than ideal in many places. The closing of both Harvard's and Brown's contract operations appears to be part of a trend in which universities are pulling away from formal, institutional involvement in contract archaeology.

## 'No Real Research Concept'

C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, director of Harvard's Peabody Museum and a specialist in Near Eastern archaeology, was frank in his explanation of the decision to close I.C.A.

"The overwhelming majority of the archaeological work done under contract was the type that was, to a certain extent, processing dollars. It was very flimsy. There was a kind of entrepreneurial spirit present, and research programs were being undertaken where there was no real research concept involved."

In addition, notes Mr. Lamberg-Karlovsky, he and his colleagues feared that too much emphasis on contract work skewed students' perceptions of the field. "We felt reticent to expose our students to this atypical type of research."

Furthermore, financial projections suggested that the number of available contracts might drop substantially.

While he stresses that there were some important finds made during the I.C.A.'s seven-year history, Mr. Lamberg-Karlovsky says that, while millions of dollars flowed through the institute, "the commensurate reward for dollars spent was very limited."

It was not just the large amount of federal money being spent on contract archaeology, but the lack of supervision over how the money was spent that galled Dr. Lamberg-Karlovsky and his colleagues. He says the contracts required no peer review to determine a project's worth, either financially or from a scholarly point of view, and the reports on the research were often superficial and amounted to little more than a term paper in their contributions.

"It's an extraordinary situation" to have such large amounts of public

money spent without supervision. Mr. Lamberg-Karlovsky says. The federal government is at fault, he charges, for poaching the field under the protection of legislation and then failing to provide review and supervision.

"They established the law, and then they walked away from it."

Mr. Lamberg-Karlovsky is not alone in charging the federal government with laxity in the administration of the law. Virtually every one of more than a dozen archaeologists interviewed decried the shortage of trained personnel in the Department of the Interior, which is the overall supervisory agency involved, and other federal agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of Energy.

## Bureaucrats Don't Understand

State and local agencies also appear to lack expert help. Dena F. Duncanson, associate professor of anthropology at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and the editor of *American Antiquities*, the journal of the Society of American Archaeologists, says she doesn't detect bad faith on the part of the government, just bad administration.

"It occurs at many levels," she says. "But we have to be sympathetic with bureaucrats who don't understand archaeological data recovery. The laws are often being administered by people who are not qualified to do it."

For every critic of contract archaeology there is a passionate defender—many of whom speak from well within academe. One point virtually everyone involved agrees on, for example, is that the growing public awareness of urban archaeology in the United States is due in large part to the highly visible and well-publicized contract work of the past decade.

"In the old days—during the 1960's—if you asked someone if you could dig a hole in his backyard, he'd usually be pretty perplexed and ask why you weren't in Egypt or somewhere," says Greg Laden, a staff archaeologist with the I.C.A. "But chances are nowadays he would have heard of urban archaeology. The public awareness is much, much greater."

Mr. Laden says contract work has also drawn students into North American archaeology, creating vast new areas of knowledge in that field.

The difficult conditions under which contract work is often carried out—the constraints of time, weather, pressure from developers to get out of the way, and, of course, the fact that it is so often taking place in a complicated urban environment—have had an impact on archaeological methodology that affects the whole field, according to contract archaeologists.

Thus speed, efficiency, clear thinking, a sense of priorities, and a newly learned ability to explain the importance of archaeology to those previously unaware of it are cited among the positive effects of the past decade's boom in contract work. Of course, it is exactly the conditions that have bred those effects that academic archaeologists—long used to taking their time on projects—point to with skepticism and sometimes scorn.

Russell J. Barber, an assistant professor in the archaeology department at Boston University and a former director of the I.C.A., explains that

# vs. the 'Shovel Bums'

January 18, 1984

each side has a favorite stereotype of the other. "The contract archaeologists say the academic types don't know how to do field work, and the academics say the contract archaeologists don't know what to do with it once they get it out of the ground." He is only half-joking.

At the core of the debate is a question of archaeological imperative: Is a dig that is undertaken without a specific research goal in mind worth doing?

According to the general rules of thumb, archaeological excavations should proceed on the basis of a research model: A site should be dug when there is reason to believe it will produce data.

Proponents of contract archaeology agree that proceeding with a research model in place is the ideal course, but, they add, when a nearby bulldozer insures that any archaeological features that may or may not be beneath a given piece of ground will cease to exist in a matter of hours anyway, even the most hurried and unorthodox excavation is better than none at all. That is particularly true when, by law, a small, relatively unimportant find can furnish enough evidence to merit postponing construction long enough for a more substantial excavation.

In addition, academics complain that the quality of documentation of contract archaeologists' projects is abysmally low, and the reports are not disseminated widely enough to be of use.

## Writing Called Superficial

Supporters of contract archaeology generally agree that the level of writing is superficial. One reason, they say, is that the building contractors who hire the archaeologists are paying only for the documentation necessary to fulfill federal or state requirements; they're not interested in paying for academic research. For a contract archaeologist to produce a report that meets academic standards means working without pay—although most of them stress that anything of real importance does get reported, regardless of financial considerations.

Charges and countercharges pass back and forth like tennis balls across a net. But most observers agree that federal legislation has made contract archaeology a permanent fixture. Indeed, contract projects have proved useful for many academic archaeologists.

"I think contract archaeology is extraordinarily valuable," says R. E. W. Adams, professor of anthropology at San Antonio and a former president of the Society of American Archaeologists.

Contract digs carried out during the past 10 years at federally financed road and dam projects in southern Texas have "resulted in amassing huge amounts of information we would have otherwise lost," he says. "We have enough data built up—mainly through contract archaeology—that we can build a picture of prehistoric Texas we didn't have before."

Nan A. Rothchild, assistant professor of anthropology at Barnard College, uses animal bones excavated during contract digs in Manhattan in her research on the eating patterns of the island's early settlers. New York City contract digs have provided her with some of her best data.

"That, to me, is a good example of how contract archaeology and aca-

ademic archaeology can complement each other," she says.

Nevertheless, Ms. Rothchild and many of her counterparts around the country concede that there are basic incompatibilities between the aims of contract archaeology and pure research archaeology that will forever put the two at odds.

Ms. Dincauze of the University of Massachusetts fears that, despite improvements in the quality of contract work, the conditions of haste, mechanization, and automation under which it is carried out will always interfere. "Archaeology depends on serendipity, and there is practically no room for that in contract work."

Peter F. Thorbaba, a professor of archaeology at Brown and former director of the university's Public Archaeology Lab, says the incompatibility of the two approaches also makes for a mismatch between universities and contract operations. He says the expectations that Brown put on its Public Archaeology Lab were unrealistic and inhibited the laboratory from being able to compete in the contract marketplace.

## 'Twain Could Just Not Meet'

"We were expected to perform in a much more academic way than we could," he says. "Contract archaeology has very little to do with training students or producing papers for other archaeologists. The twain could just not meet—at least at Brown."

Mr. Thorbaba says he is not bitter about the closing of the Public Archaeology Lab, but he is worried by the recent trend of universities' withdrawing from contract work instead of trying to change to accommodate it. The two sides share a fundamental goal, he says: to conserve and preserve cultural resources. "To have universities pulling out, does not speak well to university commitment to those goals."

Indeed, the "boom" in contract archaeology appears to be slowing. There is disquiet and not a little uncertainty now among North American archaeologists.

Although the federal legislation that created contract archaeology is considered safe, most archaeologists would say that effective administration of those laws is a low priority in the present Administration.

And, because the interstate highway system is virtually completed and the financial support of other federal building projects is decreasing, the economic future of contract archaeology is uncertain at best.

As a result, many archaeologists who depended primarily on contract work are leaving the field. One effect of that, predicts Mr. Barber, former head of the I.C.A., may be that more academics will take occasional contract jobs—a move he hopes will bring the two sides closer together.

The prevailing attitude among North American archaeologists may be summed up best by Ms. Dincauze, an academic who also has much experience in the contract world.

"These are very difficult times," she says. "I'm anxious about the future; there is nothing right now to celebrate. I was very optimistic between 1970 and 1980, but now I don't know what will come to the field."

"I'm not feeling pessimistic, exactly. But I am feeling beleaguered."

Eric Stange is a free-lance writer in Somerville, Mass.



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