

Northeast Historical Archaeology

Volume 43

Article 12

2014

Book Review: Historical Archaeology of the Delaware Valley, 1600–1850, ed. by Richard F. Veit and David Orr

Lu Ann De Cunzo

Follow this and additional works at: <http://orb.binghamton.edu/neha>

 Part of the [Archaeological Anthropology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

De Cunzo, Lu Ann (2014) "Book Review: Historical Archaeology of the Delaware Valley, 1600–1850, ed. by Richard F. Veit and David Orr," *Northeast Historical Archaeology*: Vol. 43 43, Article 12.

<https://doi.org/10.22191/neha/vol43/iss1/12> Available at: <http://orb.binghamton.edu/neha/vol43/iss1/12>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). It has been accepted for inclusion in *Northeast Historical Archaeology* by an authorized editor of The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). For more information, please contact ORB@binghamton.edu.

go on to demonstrate how such anthropological concepts of status, class and materialism can be read in the layout, structures and markers of these cemeteries. Part of this has to do with an explosion of new iconography in the early 19th century and attempts to use more symbolic motifs on the grave markers. During this period, iconography becomes less religious and trends toward more personal or materialistic designs. The authors also discuss the development of military cemeteries as a result of the Civil War and changes in the material and style of grave markers.

Probably the most interesting chapter from an anthropological perspective is Chapter 6 which looks at "Ethnicity, Race and Class" in American cemeteries. Here the authors review a wide range of tombstone studies relating to a multitude of ethnic and racial groups. Rather than lumping European immigrants into one category, they have separate discussions of Jewish, Italian and Romany burial traditions. Further, they distinguish Spanish Catholic traditions, dating to the Colonial period, from more contemporary Mexican American traditions. They briefly review Native American marker traditions including Aleutian and Hawaiian studies. Over all, this chapter demonstrates the wealth of anthropological data available from 19th and 20th-century American cemeteries.

The final chapter is a useful summary of what has been presented. Beyond the summary, the authors use this chapter to present what has not been done. They point out areas where more research is needed and suggest topics for new research. In addition, they comment that grave markers are only one way to memorialize the dead and point to a whole range of war and disaster related memorials that could be studied in the same way. In the same vein, they mention that with the rise of cremation, cemeteries have adapted by building columbaria to house the remains. This again is an entirely new area of study which has not been investigated. Further they summarize other on-going changes in American cemeteries and markers.

American burial traditions of all sorts have evolved over time, and this, as pointed out in the book, has archaeological implications. The one thing missing or perhaps underplayed in the volume is the growth and industrialization

of the American funeral establishment in the late 19th century. After the Civil War, the various supplies used for funerals and memorials went from craft activities to industrial products. While much of this trend is historical, it had impacts on what is found in the cemetery and in the ground.

This volume provides a very useful and long overdue introduction to the study of American burial customs from an archaeological perspective. As the authors state at the beginning, it is not comprehensive. Nor is it a how-to book for the investigation of cemeteries, burials or grave markers. But it does report on a wide variety of investigations and points to research questions currently being studied. This is and will be for a long time, a major contribution to this particular field of study.

Timothy B. Riordan
Historic St. Mary's City
timr@digshistory.org

HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE DELAWARE VALLEY, 1600–1850, ed. by Richard F. Veit and David Orr, 2014, University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, \$54.95 (cloth).

Reviewed by Lu Ann De Cunzo

This important volume is the first to survey the historical archaeology of "one of colonial America's great cultural hearths" (p. xiii), the Delaware Valley. The chapters present the diversity of archaeological research from early European exploration through the mid-19th century. The authors examine several themes in contemporary historical archaeological scholarship such as cultural interaction and exchange, public archaeology, identity and ideology, and class. Through diverse studies of sites on land and under water, sites at which people lived and those at which they worked, the authors develop arguments about the region's social and cultural diversity, religious tolerance, urban development, role in the American Revolution, and its peoples' intellectual contributions. The volume makes an important contribution to the growing scholarship in Atlantic World studies, situating the Delaware Valley in relation to the Chesapeake,

Plantation South, Dutch New York, New England, and Spanish Florida.

The work tests the applicability of popular models of regionalism which have dominated colonial and early national studies of Atlantic America (perhaps best represented by David Hackett Fischer's *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989], and in the archaeological literature by William Kelso's more recent argument in *Jamestown: The Buried Truth* [University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, 2008] that the capitalistic goals of the Jamestown colony's backers secured the Virginia colony's legacy as "America's Birthplace"). As in the best edited works, the volume's multivocality destabilizes the dominance of any one theoretical orientation and offers diverse perspectives on and concerns about the study of the past. Equally important, the authors understand that the past exists in the context of the present. They explain the politicization of archaeology historically and examine the nature and impact it has had on our understandings of different periods, types of sites, and most importantly, different groups of people. The bibliography provides readers with a very useful point of entry into the historical and archaeological scholarship and literature on the region. In essence, the volume is a primer on contemporary historical archaeology through the lens of the least known and valued region of Atlantic America, the Delaware Valley.

The book is aptly organized chronologically into 15 chapters, and the content offers broad coverage of time, space, topics, and site types. These include American Indians, 17th-century house sites in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, the first successful glasshouse in Wistarburgh, New Jersey, 18th-century Germans and Quakers and the institutionalized poor, national icon Benjamin Franklin, colonial Pennsylvania foodways, the wreck of a commercial ship in the Delaware Bay on the eve of the Revolution, the regional elite in the early Republic and antebellum eras (in particular the Hamiltons at The Woodlands in Philadelphia, and Joseph Bonaparte's Point Breeze estate in New Jersey), the city of Trenton, New Jersey's capital and 19th-century industrial center, and the 19th and 20th-century African American community of Timbuctoo in central New Jersey.

I present a more detailed review of four chapters to introduce readers to the quality and scope of this collection: R. Michael Stewart's essay on the archaeology of historic period American Indians, John Chenoweth's exploration of conformity and context in the construction of identity in 18th-century Quaker communities, Patrice Jeppson's work on the archaeology of Benjamin Franklin, and Richard Hunter and Ian Burrows' synthetic overview of archaeology in Trenton, New Jersey.

Stewart opens his essay with a reminder that Europeans "did not enter an empty world, but one populated and shaped by a variety of Native cultures with deep and complex histories" (p. 1). He mines the archaeological record for evidence of Delaware Valley native and European inter-cultural contact and, of greater importance to him, the processes that governed those interactions. In so doing, he largely sets aside the documentary record, setting the goal of integrating the two bodies of evidence for future researchers. The strength of his presentation is the concise, appropriately detailed portrayal of material life of Indian peoples across the region. He focuses on the traditional analytical strengths of American Indian archaeological studies: trade, technology and material culture, community and settlement patterns, and mortuary practices. Stewart argues that the evidence documents the persistence of Indian craft technologies, community structure, and social relations over 150 years of engagement with Europeans and their technologies. He locates the greatest site of change in mortuary patterns, arguing that the adoption or appropriation of selected Christian practices may indicate changing ideas about relations among the living and the ancestors in the face of European encounters.

Chenoweth also explores matters of religion in the colonial period. His study examines English and American Quakers' social contexts and their implications for the interpretation of archaeological sites. Of particular importance are the Society of Friends' tenets of pacificism, modesty, simplicity, a belief in human equality, personal industry, strong family and community, and commitment to daily enactment of this moral conscience. Contrary to previous archaeological interpretations, Chenoweth highlights the ways Quaker practices were

negotiated in local and regional meetings, producing diversity within the unity of religious belief. He also documents the importance of changes within Quaker belief and culture over time due to both internal and external circumstances. This understanding of The Society of Friends' religious organization and practice supports Chenoweth's critique of previous archaeologies of the Quaker "plain style" with their interpretations that divergence represented rejection, denial, or transgression of Society beliefs and lifestyle. These interpretations also deny individual, local negotiation in the context, for example in Pennsylvania, of Church of England values regarding acquisition, display, and uses of wealth. It is a cogent, well-argued position, concluded with a promise of application in future work.

Jeppson writes about Benjamin Franklin, conducting what she aptly terms "archaeology of the archaeology" (p. 231) of Franklin's Philadelphia house and domestic life. US National Park Service archaeologists probed the site regularly and extensively between the mid-1950s and mid-1970s, culminating in the famous Venturi-designed "ghost house" sculpture, archaeological interpretations in extant adjoining properties, and an "Underground Museum." In preparation for the 2006 celebration of Franklin's 300th birthday, Jeppson re-examined the archaeological collections. She treats readers to a re-interpretation of two unlikely yet compelling artifacts: a fossil mastodon tooth and a rat skull. The tooth re-emerges as more than "just an interesting curio" (p. 237). Readers learn how, in Franklin's time, the mastodon's size and ferocity lent it potency as a symbol of the new republic's national identity. The fossil also represents the development of science and study of natural history to which Franklin was so committed. Jeppson's argument that the rat skull demonstrates the power of popular culture to transmit history is even more tantalizing for untutored readers like me who are unfamiliar with the 1939 *Ben and Me* (Robert Lawson, *Ben and Me: An Astonishing Life of Benjamin Franklin as Written by his Good Mouse Amos*. [Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1939]) children's book about Franklin and Amos the mouse. Disney animated the story in 1953, which remains extraordinarily popular today, even in school curricula.

Hunter and Burrows offer a 30-year retrospective on historical archaeology in New Jersey's capital city, Trenton, demonstrating the importance of archaeology mandated by federal cultural resource law. In one of the longest, most in-depth chapters, Hunter and Burrows offer an excellent, comprehensive overview, synthesizing the results of more than 100 archaeological projects in the context of urban archaeology in the United States. They concentrate on the common research themes of urban landscapes and neighborhoods, institutions, gender, consumer behavior, and diet and foodways. The chapter concludes with a concise review of public archaeology in the city, which has consisted of diverse activities including mapping and database projects, exhibitions, historic site interpretation, urban walking and site tours, teachers' guides, and urban park design.

Historical Archaeology of the Delaware Valley's introduction to the region, comparative approach, historiographic content, and extensive bibliography all contribute to the volume's interest for a broad audience. Its scope and clarity of voice make it of great value to students, historians, architectural historians, cultural landscape scholars, material culture scholars, and museum professionals, as well as the interested public. It also offers a welcome overview and comparative volume for the cultural resources management community.

Archaeologists have a long tradition of obsessions over "firsts" and "bests." In Atlantic World historical archaeology, on the North American side of the ocean, the literature on New England, New Netherlands, the Chesapeake and Virginia, and Spanish Florida is rife with arguments about "origins," "firsts," and "bests." Most of these are cast in nationalist terms: New England is where our Anglo-centric, Christian American culture began, grounded in social compacts and freedom of religion. New Netherlands documents our origins in global mercantilism. Jamestown has been labeled the "birthplace of America," and in particular, American capitalism. Archaeologists of Spanish Florida argue with urgency that the Spanish were here first! We as archaeologists have become caught up in the construction of public memory in support of regional and nationalist agendas. To what end? Isn't our work to deconstruct and

demystify and analyze and evaluate these mythic histories? I applaud the editors and authors for highlighting the diversity and multivocality that characterize the Delaware Valley without entering the fray over origins. Those contests, I fear, result in histories that are too simplistic and overdetermined to be of much scholarly value.

Lu Ann De Cunzo
Department of Anthropology
University of Delaware

ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE WAR OF 1812, ed. by Michael T. Lucas and Julie M. Schablitsky, 2014, Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek, CA, 337 pp., 15 chapters with bibliographies, 52 figures, 10 tables, index, \$79.00 (cloth).

Reviewed by Joseph H. Last

As noted by Julie Schablitsky and Michael Lucas in their introduction to this volume, *Archaeology of the War of 1812* differs from previous collections on the War of 1812 in that the scope of this work is neither site type nor region specific. Within its 15 chapters, readers will find investigations of fortifications, encampments, battlefields, and shipwrecks. Geographically the volume is as varied involving studies in the North (Great Lakes and Lake Champlain-Richelieu River Valley), the Old Northwest, the Chesapeake, the Southeast, and the Gulf regions of conflict.

Although the study areas and site types are diverse, the methodologies employed by the contributors and their principle goals of research share a commonality that gives unity to the volume. Each investigation relied heavily on historic research during all phases of the projects and every chapter begins with an historic overview of the study area in question. This format is mirrored further by John Grodzinski and Ralph Eshelman's succinct review of the causes and primary campaigns of the War of 1812. Preceding the chapters on archaeological findings, the overview provides historical context for the volume as a whole.

The primary goals of the investigations were site specific but generally sought to answer questions regarding site location and

extent, resource integrity, intra-site activities and layout, soldiers' life style, and the influence of landscape on military activities, manoeuvres, and defence. Three of the chapters involve extant fortifications. Eva MacDonald, David Spittal, and David Robertson summarize 40 years of archaeological endeavour at Fort York, Toronto. While doing so, they describe their quest to find the crater formed during the April 27, 1813 explosion of the Grand Magazine. Arguably, one of the most evocative features created during the War in Canada, its discovery has enhanced public understanding of the devastation caused by this 'forgotten war.' Susan Maguire's chapter on Old Fort Niagara, Youngstown, New York, presents an in-depth account of the exploration of the Red Barracks and its successive occupation by American and British armies. She discusses, through material culture analysis, soldiers' use of domestic items, their uniforms and arms, and the difficulties in solely ascribing, save for uniform buttons, the assemblage to either American or British forces. In a fascinating study of the defensive alterations made to Fort McHenry, Baltimore, Charles Cheek, Joseph Balicki, and David Orr provide the rationale for the construction, modifications, and strategies employed, set within the larger context of coastal fortification design.

Two chapters focus on the investigations of encampments. Timothy Abel discusses work undertaken at Cantonment Saranac, Plattsburgh, New York. Employing metal detectors to recover diagnostic military artifacts, he and his crew spent three years investigating the charred remains of a soldier's cabin, possibly inhabited by an Officer of the 15th Regiment of Infantry. The 12 x 15 ft. log structure had two fire hearths, one at each gable, a patio or stoop, and apparently an earthen floor. Significantly, Abel's findings represent the only known archaeologically documented War of 1812 cantonment structure to date. Michael Lucas and Emily Swain, working in Nottingham, Maryland, also used a metal detector survey to retrieve and plot arms-related items (primarily 0.63 to 0.70 calibre musket balls, lead shot, musket worms, flint foils, and bayonets). Subsequent geophysical testing resulted in identifying a portion of the British 1814 encampment.

Five chapters of this volume are dedicated to battlefield archaeology. Each project utilized