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Remembering New Deal Archaeology in the Southeast: A Legacy in Museum Collections

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On October 29, 1929, the stock market of the United States crashed. This day, also known as Black Tuesday, signaled not only the beginning of the Great Depression, but a new era in southern archaeology. Federal relief programs, hailed as the “New Deal,” were initiated by the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration throughout the United States during the 1930s and ’40s to employ millions of workers left jobless by the economic collapse (Figure 3.1). The New Deal pro-



Figure 3.1. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Arthur E. Morgan (first chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority) visit Norris Dam construction. (Photo courtesy of the Tennessee Valley Authority.)

grams required a majority of funds to be used for labor so as to provide aid directly to the unemployed through “make work” programs.

Archaeology became a prime vehicle for allocation of money because it was labor-intensive and required little more than paper, pencils, shovels, and wheelbarrows to go along with the manpower funded by the New Deal programs (Lyon 1996; Fagette 1996) (Figure 3.2). The South in particular provided an excellent location for New Deal archaeology projects because of its year-round temperate climate and deeply buried sites that required a lot of labor to excavate. The location of many of these sites in the rural South and Appalachia also made strategic economic sense. In many southern rural areas, poverty was endemic even before the Depression; and with the impact of the Wall Street collapse on southern economies, local governments could scarcely provide relief to the rural poor (Fagette 1996).



Figure 3.2. New Deal-era crew at the Fains Island Site (40JE1), Jefferson County, Tennessee. (Photo courtesy of the Frank. H. McClung Museum, University of Tennessee.)

The New Deal archaeological projects not only provided jobs and monetary support for needy southern families, but made long-lasting impacts within the fields of archaeology and anthropology. The establishment of museums and anthropology departments at southern universities was one significant result of these federal projects. A second was the training ground federal relief programs provided for a generation of influential archaeologists. A third was the generation of vast collections, which continue to be curated by several university museums whose genesis is itself tied to the New Deal projects. These collections chronicle not only the lifeways of the prehistoric American Indians whose histories are embedded in the excavated materials, but also people of the Great Depression era, including the archaeologists who directed the projects, the rural poor employed on field crews, and a mix of white- and pink-collar laboratory workers.

The New Deal-era archaeological collections thus are a legacy of life in the South for many groups at many points in time. Following a brief survey of the New Deal programs that involved archaeology, this article first discusses connections among the New Deal archaeological collections, southern museums and anthropology departments, and the development of modern archaeology. It then introduces the anthropologists and everyday people who directed and worked on these projects and highlights their contributions. Finally, it provides an idea of ongoing research about ancient Native Americans that is being conducted with the New Deal collections, and then concludes with a summary of current efforts to preserve and make these collections accessible to a wide audience.

The main focus here is on the New Deal archaeological projects conducted in conjunction with the construction of Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) reservoirs because of the enormous scope of these projects. The collections from these projects are curated by the Alabama Museum of Natural History (AMNH) at the University of

Alabama (UA), the William S. Webb Museum at the University of Kentucky (UK), and the Frank H. McClung Museum at the University of Tennessee (UT). As part of the increasing effort to make these collections more accessible to many audiences, digital identification (DID) numbers are provided for relevant photographic images (in addition to those images published here). These photographs can be viewed on the Internet in a searchable archive of original images from the New Deal-era archaeology collections that are curated by the McClung and Webb Museums, and the AMNH.¹ The url for the website is: diglib.lib.utk.edu/wpa/index.htm.

THE NEW DEAL ARCHAEOLOGY PROGRAMS IN THE SOUTH

New Deal excavations across the South provided jobs for numerous people, but this was highly variable between states. Nine states received approximately sixty percent of New Deal funds for archaeological research. These were Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas (Milner and Smith 1986, 13). Milner and Smith (1986, 62) estimate 281 people a month were employed for archaeology projects in Kentucky at the peak of New Deal activities. In contrast, South Carolina did not participate in any New Deal archaeological projects.

Although many programs existed, five became the primary providers of New Deal archaeological funding. The detailed structure and form of these enormous bureaucratic programs can best be understood as a two-pronged approach. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), Civil Works Administration (CWA), and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) were essentially changing forms of one program directed toward providing jobs for the unemployed, while the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and TVA were focused on natural resource development and regional development, respectively.

The first of the New Deal programs to perform archaeology was the CCC. These archaeology projects were located across the United States, but at smaller scales than later New Deal programs. The CCC was established on March 19, 1933, with the primary focus of providing employment to young men who were required to live in camps with strict rules of work hours and assignments, coupled with meal schedules and recreation activities. Requirements often were placed on workers to send a portion of their earnings home to their families. CCC labor was used at the Jamestown site in Virginia, one of the few historical archaeology sites investigated during the New Deal (Lyon 1996, 188). Recently archaeologists have excavated some of the CCC camps to learn more about the lives of the people that were part of these projects (Smith 2001).

The second New Deal program that funded archaeology was FERA, which granted 500 million dollars directly to states (Lyon 1996, 27). The Marksville site in Louisiana, sponsored by FERA, was probably the first New Deal archeology project, even though the CCC was established before FERA (Lyon 1996, 28). The Marksville project, run by Frank Setzler, proved to the Washington bureaucracy that archaeology could be a prime candidate for relief aid; but generally, the FERA program was a failure and did not alleviate the national unemployment crisis. President Roosevelt then signed the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act in 1935 which allocated \$4.88 billion to the relief effort and created the WPA. Archaeology jobs under the WPA far outnumbered those of the previous FERA and CWA programs.

The final New Deal program to sponsor archaeology was the TVA, which was established in 1933. TVA was created not only to provide jobs for the unemployed, but also to improve navigation, control flooding, and generate cheap electricity in an area that was struggling with the effects of the Great Depression. Cash income in the

Mid-South averaged less than \$100 per year per family (Lyon 1996, 37-38) in portions of Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. Ten of the forty-nine TVA reservoirs of today were constructed between 1933 and 1945, nine of which were surveyed for archaeological sites.

The previously discussed New Deal programs, such as the CWA and WPA, provided wages for the archaeological workers during TVA projects. Often, the term “WPA” is used to describe New Deal programs in general; however, in this article the terms “New Deal,” “WPA,” and “TVA” are used relatively interchangeably since these programs were often interwoven, as was the case with TVA projects utilizing WPA and CWA labor.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN NEW DEAL ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECTS, SOUTHERN MUSEUMS, AND ANTHROPOLOGY DEPARTMENTS

The establishment of several southern museums and anthropology departments was connected to New Deal programs. The archaeology program at the AMNH was greatly expanded in the 1930s by the Wheeler (Webb 1939), Pickwick (Webb and DeJarnette 1942), and Guntersville (Webb and Wilder 1951) reservoir projects that employed CWA labor. The WPA also funded excavations at the Bessemer site in Jefferson County, Alabama (DeJarnette and Wimberly 1941), and numerous sites in Baldwin, Mobile, and Clarke counties (Knight 1993). The Webb Museum at the University of Kentucky (UK), the McClung Museum at the University of Tennessee (UT), and the Louisiana Museum of Natural History at Louisiana State University (LSU) all can trace their roots to WPA excavations.

The William S. Webb Museum of Anthropology was founded in 1931 and, as is discussed below, was named for one of the principal architects of New Deal archaeology. The Museum of Anthropology

was founded by Webb and his collaborator William D. Funkhouser specifically to house the multitude of artifacts and excavation records generated by New Deal-era projects in Kentucky; it was later named to honor Webb. At the time of the New Deal projects, UK was one of the few universities in the United States to have an independent department of anthropology.

Although not officially established until the 1960s, the creation of the Frank H. McClung Museum was a direct result of advocacy by New Deal-era archaeologists at UT for a museum to curate collections from the TVA/WPA projects. The Department of Anthropology at UT originally was established as the “Division of Anthropology” in the history department. Collections from excavations by UT archaeologists in the Chickamauga (Lewis, Lewis and Sullivan 1995), Watts Bar, Norris (Webb 1938), Douglas, Ft. Loudon, and Kentucky Lake reservoirs are curated at the McClung Museum, as are collections from several other New Deal projects, including the Ft. Loudoun and Chota sites in the Little Tennessee River Valley and the Chucalissa site near Memphis.

Excavations at the Chucalissa site established a WPA-constructed park that includes a reconstructed Mississippian period village; the remnants of an earthen platform mound are enclosed by a building and are visible to visitors. The museum at the park is named for Charles H. Nash, the supervisor of New Deal-era excavations who continued research at the site in the post-Depression era.

While not part of the TVA reservoir projects, the Louisiana WPA archaeological project was one of the largest and most influential, especially the surveys and excavations that were conducted in the Lower Mississippi River Valley (Lyon 1996, 78-95). The collections from this work now form the major archaeological holdings of the Louisiana Museum of Natural History at LSU.

In addition to the genesis and growth of museums and anthropology departments across the South, New Deal programs also led to the creation of a regional archaeology conference. The Southeastern Archaeological Conference (or SEAC) was created in 1938 as a platform for archaeologists to report on New Deal excavations, discuss findings, synthesize broad trends, and coordinate regional efforts [DID uam02009].

NEW DEAL ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTIONS AS CHRONICLES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN ARCHAEOLOGY

One of the most prominent implications of the New Deal funding on archaeology was the 1938 Society for American Archaeology meetings. Almost every paper at these meetings reported results of WPA projects. New Deal achievements also formalized archaeology in the South and created a stepping-stone for federal archaeology programs today. William Haag (1985, 278), in his reflections on WPA archaeology, wrote, “New Deal archaeology did more than produce archaeologists. It took Americanists forever away from an ethnogenetic view of our prehistory. It developed our thinking to where even a gas pipeline could not be strung across the nation without considering the damage to the prehistoric record.”

The artifacts and records generated by New Deal-era archaeological projects are primary documentation not only of archaeological sites but also of the innovations in archaeology fostered by New Deal projects. As noted above, the New Deal projects employed new techniques and methods, some learned from Chicago field schools and then altered to fit southern sites and the New Deal crews. These procedures enabled the collection of new kinds of data, which led to new understandings of prehistory. These systematic field techniques and the related documentation provided by maps, field records, preliminary reports, photographs, artifacts, and catalogs form an

irreplaceable record that makes the collections derived from the New Deal-era excavations extraordinarily useful for ongoing research because they provide a depth and span of information on the ancient Native American cultures of the South that cannot be duplicated.

Stratigraphic excavation techniques that emphasized vertical control were not widely used in the South before the 1930s. The lack of vertical control led to a poor understanding of prehistoric time depth. The stratigraphic techniques used in the New Deal investigations added new perspective to the temporal development of Native American cultures [DID fhm01391, wsw04571]. The collections include carefully drawn profiles of mound and site stratigraphy as well as photographs and manuals showing the techniques used to expose the deposits [DID wsw02122, fhm01517]. The mound excavated by WPA crews at the Hiwassee Island site in the Chickamauga Reservoir near Chattanooga, Tennessee was one of the first in the eastern United States to be investigated using the “peeling” technique which exposed entire horizontal surfaces or summits (Willey and Sabloff 1974, 130). (See Figure 3.3).



Figure 3.3. Example of “mound-peeling” technique used at the Hiwassee Island Site (40MG31), Meigs County, Tennessee. (Photo courtesy of the Frank. H. McClung Museum, University of Tennessee.)

Other New Deal innovations included photography as a standard recording technique and the use of standardized data collection forms, including excavation unit, feature, and burial records that required those who completed them to collect certain categories of data systematically, in a uniform fashion. This innovation not only aided in the management of large WPA crews, but it also made it easier to use the records because of the consistent format of the records. Grid systems with standardized square units were employed in surveying, mapping, trenching, and excavating sites, and detailed maps were made of the excavations. Artifacts were carefully cataloged with field specimen numbers keyed into this systematic provenience system.

Material culture, previously relegated merely to trait lists, was carefully studied in WPA laboratories. Changes in subsistence practices, ceramics, and other material culture began to be discussed in terms of culture change. The excavation of entire sites, not only mounds, provided new interpretive potential for settlement patterns, including site plans and structure patterns. Houses, storage pits, and other features, relatively undocumented prior to the 1930s, became important components of archaeological data in New Deal archaeology [DID fhm00210]. Some WPA crews conducted experiments the better to understand prehistoric architecture. At the Thompson Village Site in Henry County, Tennessee, WPA workers reconstructed a prehistoric house based on the archaeological structure pattern (Sullivan 2007a) [DID fhm01027]. Later, similar reconstructions were made at the Chucalissa site near Memphis as part of an interpretation for the site museum (Nash 1968; Sullivan 2007a, 131-132).

Innovative interpretive perspectives allowed artifacts and archaeological deposits to be placed in human behavioral contexts and made it possible for southern museums to display artifacts and provide interpretations. In contrast, before the New Deal projects,

archaeology in the South was dominated largely by amateur archaeologists and curiosity seekers. Professional archaeologists conducted excavations in the South before 1930, but many of these projects focused on obtaining exhibition-quality specimens for northern museums. These specimens, rarely a representative sample, did little to promote understanding of large-scale cultural traditions and the day-to-day lives of prehistoric Native Americans.

THE NEW DEAL ARCHAEOLOGISTS AS SEEN IN THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVES

The numerous New Deal projects employed hundreds, possibly thousands, of people to excavate archaeological sites in the South [DID wsw01993, uam01107]. Many of the archaeologists who were employed as supervisors to run these projects became well known in the field, but the names of most of those who worked on the large excavation crews and in the laboratories are not known. The little that is known about these men and women comes mainly from brief comments in archaeological field reports and accounts from the archaeological field directors. The extensive photographic record made by the supervisors and workers does, however, provide a visual documentation of the important role that everyday individuals outside the archaeological discipline, including disenfranchised groups (e.g., the rural poor, women, and African Americans), played in these projects. Within this collection, hundreds of photographs document the field and laboratory workers performing their assigned duties, as well as the field laborers' living and working conditions. In most instances these photographs are the only documentation of these workers.

As noted above, this photograph collection is now accessible to the general public on the Internet, an arrangement that allows the

descendants of these men and women to witness the contributions their ancestors made in preserving the past. Most of the descriptions of these photographs are unaccompanied by names of those pictured. Finding out more about these people is difficult with this crucial information lacking. One of the desired outcomes of the on-line photo project is that more stories of these women and men will come to light and that the names and experiences of many of these individuals may be documented.

It is important to note that gender and race were often factors in the type of employment one could have on the New Deal projects. Jurisdiction of women's work in the WPA in general fell under the branch of the "Women's and Professional Projects" (Claassen 1999). For the most part, these jobs consisted of domestic activities in the public domain; but inequality, especially in the southern states, characterized the allocation of relief work between white and black women. The distribution of work for archaeology projects also reflected gender, class, and racial lines. As a result, many African American women were assigned to "pick and shovel" jobs (Whalen 2008). African American women also contributed to laboratory work [DID uam02346], but they were not restricted from fieldwork as were white women. Educated women in general, and especially white women, were confined to laboratory and museum projects [DID uam01974]. Harriet Smith, a University of Chicago graduate student in archaeology, was one of the few women, if not the only one, allowed to supervise a WPA excavation. It took her four years to convince the WPA archaeology bureaucracy that she was capable of doing this job. She supervised the excavation of a mound at the Cahokia site in Illinois (Claassen 1999, 109-111; Sullivan 1999, 64-65).

THE FIELD SUPERVISORS

Each state that received New Deal funding for archaeology eventually had its own organization to manage the projects. The TVA projects also had a central administration through TVA. One of the most important figures in New Deal archaeology was Major William S. Webb, who served as director of the TVA archaeological program, initially oversaw the TVA projects in Tennessee, and was responsible for New Deal-era excavations at many sites in Kentucky that used both WPA and CCC labor (Figure 3.4).



Figure 3.4. William S. Webb. (Photo courtesy of the William S. Webb Museum of Anthropology, University of Kentucky.)

Webb was selected as the Director of Archaeology for TVA after W.C. McKern of the Milwaukee Public Museum refused the offer (Lyon 1996, 40). Although Webb was appointed chairman of the Anthropology Department upon its creation at UK, he was previously a professor of physics. His lack of formal training in archaeology was a point of criticism, and by some accounts his field techniques were horrid (Jennings 1994); but his passion, leadership, and organizational skills largely made up for these shortcomings (Jennings 1994; Lyon 1996; Haag 1985).

Thomas M. N. Lewis (Figure 3.5) replaced Webb as director of TVA archaeology in Tennessee in 1935, and Webb headed back to Kentucky to direct projects in his home state (Webb and Haag 1939, 1940, 1947a,b). A graduate of Princeton, Lewis was recommended to Webb by McKern, and he was hired originally by Webb to direct the fieldwork at the first TVA archaeological projects on the Norris Reservoir in Tennessee (Lyon 1996, 40; Sullivan 1999, 67-68). All of the New Deal work in Tennessee was subsequently run through UT after Lewis established the archaeology program there. Differences between Lewis and Webb revolved around how to manage cultural resources in an area that spanned several states and where to focus funding. Webb preferred the larger regional approach and spending money on labor; Lewis preferred the state approach. At the same time, Lewis was quickly realizing the daunting task of analyzing, curating, and publishing on the large collections produced by the excavations, and he preferred to spend money on a lab and necessary supplies (Lyon 1996, 144; Sullivan 1999). Lewis oversaw WPA/TVA archaeological work in the Chickamauga, Watts Bar, Kentucky Lake, Ft. Loudoun, and Douglas reservoirs, as well as the Chucalissa site near Memphis.

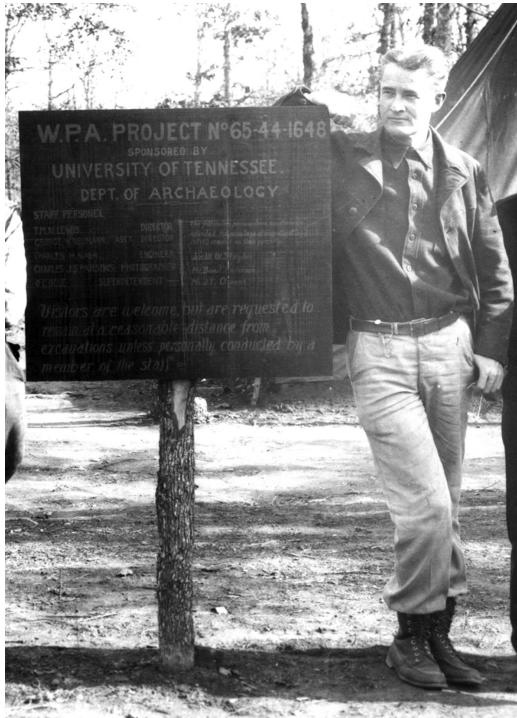


Figure 3.5. Thomas M. N. Lewis. (Photo courtesy of the Frank. H. McClung Museum, University of Tennessee.)

In Alabama, David L. DeJarnette oversaw the large-scale excavations sponsored by TVA and the CWA on the Tennessee River in the Pickwick, Wheeler, and Guntersville basins between 1934 and 1939 (Webb and DeJarnette 1942, 1948a, 1948b) (Figure 3.6). DeJarnette was a “loaner” from the AMNH to TVA to supervise these excavations (Knight 1993). Alabama was a leader in archaeological research from the beginning of the twentieth century, and DeJarnette had joined the museum staff in 1929 as a full-time archaeologist although he was an electrical engineer by education. DeJarnette went on to assume the direction of Mound State Monument in 1953, received his

Master's degree in archaeology in 1958 from UA, and was appointed to the faculty in 1956. He conducted twenty field schools between 1957 and 1975, training a "generation of archaeologists, many of whom practice the craft today" (Knight 1993, 623).

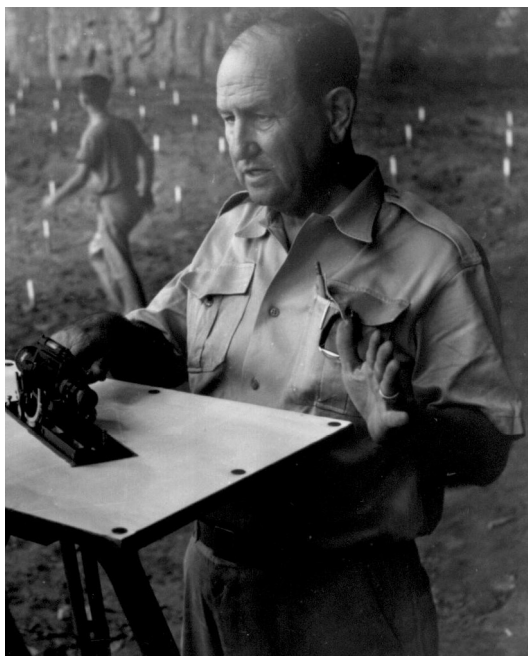


Figure 3.6. David L. DeJarnette. (Photo courtesy of the Alabama Museum of Natural History, University of Alabama.)

The lack of formal training among archaeologists working on New Deal-era projects initially hindered excavation organization and final reporting (Lyon 1996, 23). For example, Webb, who had no formal training in archaeology, resisted establishing laboratories and structured his archaeological reports as a summary of artifact descriptions and site traits (e.g., Webb 1938). This situation changed somewhat with the influx of trained archaeologists to the WPA projects. By 1938 the WPA archaeological programs included about 200

archaeologists. A significant number of these young field supervisors were alumni of the University of Chicago field school under the direction of the famous anthropologist Faye-Cooper Cole. These ambitious, highly motivated graduate and undergraduate students in archaeology supervised the large numbers of unskilled laborers. The experience they gained during the WPA excavations would be fundamental to their training. They became the next generation of archaeologists and, like DeJarnette in Alabama, directly or indirectly trained many of the modern archaeologists of today.

Lessons and techniques learned from the University of Chicago field schools were applied to southern New Deal excavations and molded to fit southern projects. New excavation methods and techniques coupled with refined anthropological theory produced some of the most important archaeological research and collections in the region to date. The scientific methods that Cole taught are a major reason for the lasting importance of these collections for research.

Field supervisors such as George Neumann, Jesse Jennings, Stuart Neitzel, Charles Nash, James Ford, William Haag, and Charles Fairbanks would go on to have illustrious careers in archaeology (Haag 1985; Jennings 1994; Taylor 2008) [DID fhm00931]. While many may have started their education at the University of Chicago, their real training was through the WPA. Many supervisors describe showing up for the first day of work with little prior experience—only a field school—to face hundreds of untrained men waiting to be told what to do (Jennings 1996; Haag 1985; Walker 1994). Although these professional archaeologists were not employed directly by the WPA per se, in many ways they also were on relief. As one field supervisor, John Elliot, said, “This was the only opportunity I had to practice my profession. It looked like a lost cause...during the start of the Depression. Farming was bad enough, but archaeology was worse” (Kentucky Heritage Council 2002).

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD LABORERS

Laborers worked year-round, often in bad conditions. In the winter months, crews set fires in barrels to keep warm and soften the ground. During the summer, they were confronted by occasional flooding (Kentucky Heritage Council 2002). Laborers carried out excavations under severe time restrictions while the threat of inundation worried at their heels. A member of one Douglas Reservoir field project describes working as the floodwaters began to come in (Andrew H. Whiteford, personal communication 2002). Living conditions were rustic, to say the least [DID fhm01867]. Workers slept in tents or in temporary shacks [DID fhm01451, fhm00932, fhm01505]. For some excavations in the Chickamauga Reservoir, the crew slept in house boats, which were merely corrugated-tin-covered sheds on ancient leaky barges (Jennings 1994).

Laborers were not always happy with these conditions or with the pay scale. Jesse Jennings (1994, 86-87) recounts an amusing tale of an especially ornery crew of former union coal miners from Soddy, Tennessee, who were employed in the Chickamauga Basin. From the start the workers formed a “grievance committee” and constantly threatened to strike for better pay and working conditions. They eventually raised enough money to send someone to Washington to plead their case, but the man they selected absconded with all of their money.

A field manual for the Division of Anthropology at the University of Tennessee provides some insight regarding the division of labor of the New Deal workers: the general foremen assisted the archaeologist in charge; house and burial foremen supervised the work of house and burial crews [DID fhm00645]; measure men were skilled with measuring rods and plumb bobs [DID fhm00281, fhm01856]; and the laundry crews were responsible for washing artifacts [DID fhm01859] (Lewis, Lewis, and Sullivan 1995, 605-609). On the

assignment to the laundry crew, Lewis writes, “the men selected for this work should have a reputation for honesty, and it will be advisable, where possible, to select men who are physically unfit to perform hard labor” (Lewis, Lewis, and Sullivan 1995, 607). Field excavators were divided into select categories such as shovel men who were paid 30 cents an hour, trowel men who were paid a little more, and wheelbarrow men. In the manual, Lewis recommended, “those who have a criminal record should be assigned to wheelbarrows or other work which will provide them least opportunity to steal artifacts” (Lewis, Lewis, and Sullivan 1995, 608). Laborers who were quick learners and especially adept excavators were promoted to general foreman or house and burial foreman.

Fears about the potential disadvantages of using unskilled laborers were mostly unwarranted. In fact, some field innovations developed during the WPA may not have come from the lead archaeologists but from the untrained workers. As one field supervisor, John Elliot, recounts, “[these laborers] were used to working in old-fashioned coalmines on their knees with picks and shovels. In other words they were used to working with tools. They were dexterous and ingenious in solving little problems such as making fine tools and blowing dowels to dust away nooks and crannies...not only were they ingenious, they were hard workers” (Kentucky Heritage Council 2002). As a whole, many field supervisors would describe the New Deal laborers as “hardworking,” “cautious,” and “enthusiastic of their finds,” who quickly “caught the spirit of mystery and interest of the work” (Fagette 1996, 30; Jennings 1994: Kentucky Heritage Council 2002).

Field supervisors taught these men archaeological excavation techniques, while the New Deal laborers taught some of these young middle-class academics about rural southern culture. Lead archaeologists had to quickly learn southern Appalachian vernacular: “poke”

for bag, “stob” for stake, “croker sack” for burlap bag (Jennings 1994, 76). The archaeologist Jesse Jennings fondly recalls that it was because of these New Deal laborers that he went to his first rooster fight, first tasted moonshine, and learned how to square dance (1994, 76-77).

As shown in the photograph collections, laborers represented a cross-section of groups most affected by the Great Depression [DID uam01436, wsw00726]. Many of the workers, especially in the earlier CWA years, tended to be older men who had lost their savings in the Great Depression, and those with disabilities—basically those ill-suited for other New Deal jobs [DID fhm01868]. Other laborers were younger men fresh out of school with no skills and few family responsibilities (Fagette 1996) [DID wsw01325]. Several sites, especially in Kentucky, made use of the CCC, which consisted of entire field crews of extremely young men. At the Town Creek site in North Carolina and the Jonathan Creek site in Kentucky, some crews consisted entirely of boys (Lyon 1996) [DID wsw07312].

There was an especially large labor pool of out-of-work African American men. Political pressure from Washington, D.C., pushed for the employment of African Americans; and, in fact, most archaeological field supervisors had no reservations regarding the employment of these men (Fagette 1996). Many New Deal projects in the South were segregated, and so it is remarkable that many photographs of the archaeological crews show whites and blacks, sometimes including African American women (see below), working alongside each other [DID uam00818, uam01368, uam01578]. In the South in particular, African American men on WPA payrolls were paid substantially less than their white counterparts (Fagette 1996). Whether this was the case for archaeological fieldwork is uncertain. While racist attitudes probably did persist in the field, the depiction

of some of these men excavating burials and features suggests that at least some of them were promoted to higher positions in the field hierarchy. The photographic documentation of African American men is especially noteworthy, since their depiction in all facets of New Deal work was often ignored within the popular press (Natanson 1992).

Several sites, including Whitesburg Bridge and Flint River in Alabama, Swift Creek and Irene in Georgia, and Town Creek in North Carolina, also employed African American women as archaeological field workers [DID uam01060, uam01223]. Approximately 160 women were employed on these projects in the states of Alabama and Georgia (Hays-Gilpin 2000). The opportunity to work was a blessing for some of these women, whose husbands were gone or disabled. According to one account, when African American women were turned away from fieldwork because of rules barring women from pushing wheelbarrows, they countered that they could instead tote the soil in baskets on their heads (Claassen 1999; White 1999, 8). The photographs show that even in the field, what was deemed acceptable for women still dictated limitations of what these women could and could not do. Whereas men wore standard field clothes, women were expected to wear dresses as they performed heavy labor [DID uam01232]. Clearly, these women were willing to do whatever it took to feed their families.

A well-documented excavation employing African American women was at the Irene Mound along the Savannah River in Georgia (Claassen 1999; Whalen 2008; see images at: www.sip.armstrong.edu/Irene/Irene.html). Not all of the women employed as field workers at Irene were uneducated workers. Some, such as Gussie Smith and Anna Scott, were educators prior to the Depression. Oral histories of the children of these women indicate that their mothers

expressed deep interest in their work at Irene, although some would express misgivings about the excavations of burials. One daughter stated that her lifelong interest in Native American culture was stirred by her mother's experience at Irene. The granddaughter of Hattie Coleman, another worker at Irene, recalled that her grandmother valued her work at Irene as the greatest intellectual stimulation in her adult life (Whalen 2008).

By some accounts, these attitudes about acceptable female roles in archaeology persisted as late as the 1970s. Many woman archaeologists today cannot but view the workers at Irene with a sense of pride and validation. Yet, their presence in the field was in many ways consistent with racial attitudes at the time. Their work in the field represented inequalities in the distribution of jobs and perhaps racist views of African American women as "less respectable" or perhaps not as "feminine" as white (Claassen 1999). Nonetheless, oral histories of the women at Irene Mound suggest pride in their work.

THE LABORATORY WORKERS

Large-scale WPA excavations unearthed millions of artifacts that needed to be analyzed and curated. Laboratory analysis of New Deal collections became important under the direction of Vincenzo Petruccio, who was appointed head anthropologist of the WPA in 1938 (Lyon 1996, 70). He envisioned central state laboratories and implemented this plan first in Birmingham, Alabama, where Eleanor Roosevelt made a visit to see the program (Figure 3.7).



Figure 3.7. Eleanor Roosevelt visits WPA central laboratory in Birmingham, Alabama. (Photo courtesy of the Alabama Museum of Natural History, University of Alabama.)

This lab was the model for later labs in Louisiana, Tennessee, and Texas. The photographs of the laboratory in Alabama show that most labor was done by women, both African American and white (Figure 3.8) [DID uam01971]. There are no photographs of the Tennessee lab, but the records indicate that it employed forty workers and six supervisors at its peak and that more men worked in the lab than did in the Alabama lab. The supervisors included four graduate students in anthropology. Three were University of Chicago students—Madeline Kneberg, J. Joseph Bauxar², and Andrew Whiteford—who were the lab director, project ethnohistorian, and artifact analyst, respectively. Alice Hendrick, a University of Michigan student, supervised pottery cataloging and analysis. Doc Goins, an ex-pharmacist, supervised a group of elderly men to clean human bones (Sullivan 1999, 70-71).



Figure 3.8. African American women cleaning artifacts in the central lab in Birmingham. (Photo courtesy of the Alabama Museum of Natural History, University of Alabama.)

While most male University of Chicago archaeology students got their start as WPA field supervisors, their female counterparts typically were expected to take jobs as laboratory workers and supervisors. Joan Gero (1985, 44) has characterized lab work as “archaeological housework.” Perhaps Gero’s characterization is a bit unfair, though, because it perpetrates the notion that laboratory processing and analysis are of less consequence than fieldwork. Nonetheless, as we noted previously in reference to Harriet Smith, the role of woman archaeologists was limited by prevailing attitudes of the time.

If laboratory jobs are considered “archaeological housework,” then one woman in particular stands out as being an archaeological “domestic goddess.” Madeline Kneberg was one of the most influential women in the history of southern archaeology (Powell et al. 2006; Sullivan 1999) (Figure 3.9). Like many other WPA-era

archaeologists, Kneberg got her start in anthropology at the University of Chicago, where she was trained mainly in physical anthropology. In 1938, upon the recommendation of Faye-Cooper Cole, Thomas Lewis hired Kneberg to supervise the newly formed UT Archaeological Laboratory in Knoxville. There, she excelled at supervising the processing, analysis, and eventual curation of thousands of artifacts and human remains that were generated by TVA excavations.

Along with Lewis, whom she later married, Kneberg was instrumental in the reconstruction of the prehistoric culture history of Tennessee. Their work in the Chickamauga Basin, especially at the Hiwassee Island site and at the Eva site in Kentucky Lake, produced two of the most important monographs on Tennessee archaeology to come out of this era: *Hiwassee Island: An Archaeological Account of Four Tennessee Indian Peoples* (Lewis and Kneberg 1946) and *Eva: An Archaic Site* (Lewis and Kneberg 1961). This work also propelled archaeology from a purely descriptive phase to one of interpretation. Lewis and Kneberg's interpretations from the Chickamauga Basin and Eva have stood the test of time and remain at the core of modern culture histories for the region (Kimball and Baden 1985; Schroedl 1998; Sullivan 2007b). Throughout her career, Kneberg wrote many articles, including several with Lewis. In some respects her contributions to the field would come to outshine Lewis's work. Her fellow archaeologist Jesse Jennings, whose opinion of Lewis was rather low, went so far as to give Kneberg sole credit for the success of the Eva and Hiwassee Island reports (Jennings 1994, 89).



Figure 3.9. Madeline D. Kneberg. (Photo courtesy of the Frank. H. McClung Museum, University of Tennessee.)

In contrast, Florence M. Hawley, one of the first women to appear in the line of female archaeologists in the South, did not receive recognition and appreciation for her work until after her death [DID fhm01866]. Hawley conducted dendrochronological studies in the Norris Basin (1938). Her work was never accepted by the male scientific hierarchy, although modern research has shown that their denial of the validity of her work hindered the growth of dendrochronology in the eastern United States for decades (Nash 1999, 243).

In 2000, the Georgia Women's History Committee of the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation and the Georgia Commission on Women hosted a ceremony at Spelman College to present Georgia Resolution 985. The Resolution honored and commended the women workers at Irene Mound and Swift Creek for their significant

contributions to Georgia historic preservation. Like the women at Irene and Swift Creek, women of all races and classes should be commended for their roles in preserving the cultural heritage of the Southeast. In the face of the limitations imposed on them, women nevertheless managed to change the field of archaeology by establishing proper curatorial and analysis techniques, advancing specialized fields such as dendrochronology and bioarchaeology, and demonstrating that they could do fieldwork just as well as men.

THE NEW DEAL ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTIONS AS SOURCES FOR NEW STUDIES

Even though the New Deal projects established significant milestones in the conduct of archaeology and interpretation in the United States, the onset of World War II prohibited reporting on many of the massive projects. After the United States became involved in the war in the winter of 1941, labor was no longer a surplus and money was needed elsewhere (Sullivan 1995a, xxv). Except for the Norris Basin report compiled by Webb (1938), no other New Deal-era collections were systematically reported in Tennessee until 1946 (the Hiwassee Island site report) and 1961 (the Eva site report). A comprehensive Chickamauga Basin report was limited to a preliminary publication (Lewis and Kneberg 1941) until an edited form was published in the mid-1990s (Lewis, Lewis, and Sullivan 1995). Reports on projects in other states faced similar fates.

Although the lack of reports for many sites and projects hindered the wide dissemination and incorporation of much information into archaeological interpretations, the collections derived from New Deal-era excavations provide a depth of information on Native Indian cultures that would be difficult to duplicate today. The New Deal-era project directors had to do the best possible job on a tight schedule with meager resources, and they chose to perform very detailed

investigations at a few sites instead of obtaining small samples from many sites (Lyon 1996, 143). They focused their attention on large, monumental sites and sites with well-defined stratigraphic records because all archaeological resources in the area of impact would be destroyed (those below the reservoir pool level).

New Deal archaeology in the South recovered millions of artifacts. Valuable information includes not only the artifacts themselves, but also all of the associated contextual information such as photographs, field records, excavation maps, and even preliminary interpretations. As an example of the scope of these projects, the Chickamauga Reservoir project alone generated over a half a million artifacts, and it was responsible for the excavation of thirteen significant mound and village sites. The Chickamauga Basin archaeologists excavated, mapped, and photographed five platform mounds, eight burial mounds, ten villages, 165 structures, nearly two thousand burials, 360,000 pottery sherds, and some 100,000 stone, bone, shell, and copper artifacts (Sullivan 1995, xvii). The Norris Basin project, also in eastern Tennessee, identified and excavated twenty-three archaeological sites. Another highlight of the New Deal projects is the unique information that was collected about previously unknown aspects of American Indian culture. For example, the Eva site in the Kentucky Lake reservoir in western Tennessee would become one of the best examples of Archaic Period (6000-1000 BC) occupation in the South, documenting an extremely long span of human occupation in the region.

The fact that the New Deal collections were made over a half century ago does present some challenges for contemporary researchers. Anthropologists and archaeologists of the early twentieth century asked somewhat different questions than do modern professionals. The New Deal archaeologists did not intentionally collect information pertinent to the organization of technology and subsistence

practices, and the New Deal emphasis on chronology-building emphasized collection of formal tools and complete specimens, largely excluding the manufacturing debris and broken tools that now are useful for technological analyses. Today's standard practice of sifting all excavated soils for small artifacts was not practiced in the 1930s, either; nor was flotation, a technique that enables the collection of small bones, seeds, and charcoal. For these reasons, among others discussed below, several kinds of materials were not systematically collected and curated by New Deal archaeologists.

Even though all excavated materials were listed in field and laboratory records, some were not curated in perpetuity. Most decorated ceramic sherds were retained, but many of the plain, undecorated sherds were discarded. Retention of lithic artifacts was limited to tools and not debitage. Animal bones and shells were seldom kept except for formal tools or ornaments. Botanical remains were kept only if they were exceptional samples, such as burned architectural elements or corn cobs. Contrary to most other aspects of New Deal-era excavations, human burials were investigated with more vigor than most other cultural features. Great detail was obtained regarding the sex, age, stature, location, and grave associations of each burial. In fact, the human burial remains and records from New Deal excavations are the basis of much modern research on Native American health and biological diversity.

Although few botanical samples or artifacts were curated, many valuable architectural samples such as intact wooden posts, steps, or rafters were preserved and curated. Dendrochronology, as pioneered by Florence Hawley, is a means of using intact wood to produce absolute dates for archaeological sites. Samples collected in the 1930s for Hawley are proving invaluable today for constructing a regional sequence. Dendrochronology assigns annual growth rings of wood to the exact year of formation; cut dates thus document the years trees

were harvested. The application of dendrochronology as an absolute dating technique in archaeology is common in the American Southwest, but it has been more difficult in the Southeast because of preservation issues and difficulties in establishing a prehistoric reference chronology (Koerner, Grissino-Mayer, and Sullivan 2007; Braly et al. 2008). Dendrochronological studies using New Deal-era collections are now yielding promising results for dating late prehistoric sites in the Upper Tennessee Valley, and they may provide a proxy of ancient climate in the region.

New Deal-era investigators also sometimes varied in the quality and organization of their excavations. Working with large labor pools for short amounts of time was a novel situation and, as such, some excavations produced very different data and records than later projects. The earliest work in the Norris Basin in 1934 was not recorded with as much detail as later projects in the Watts Bar and Chickamauga Basin. In some cases, now-outdated excavation strategies used in early excavations significantly complicated interpretive research. For example, the excavation of the Hixon mound (40HA3) in Hamilton County was done entirely in vertical sections (like a loaf of sliced bread) that have confounded attempts to line up the vertical profiles into discernable horizontal surfaces [DID fhm00846]. Nonetheless, the well-defined stratigraphy in this mound has been used to seriate shell gorgets associated with burials (Kneberg 1959; Sullivan 2007b).

Despite these issues, the New Deal-era collections, with their extensive and intensive coverage of major sites, have been useful for answering an array of questions about the past (but there are certainly others). These questions include: (1) socio-political organization; (2) human health and demography (including issues of migration and resource stress); (3) artifacts studies, such as technological and stylistic studies of pottery, bone, stone, and shell tools, and ornaments; (4)

gender relations; (5) the prevalence of warfare as identified through skeletal trauma; and lastly (6) relations among regional groups, including correlates with ethnic boundaries and the extent of interaction spheres in prehistory.

The discussion here focuses on the New Deal collections from Tennessee as examples of the research accomplishments and potential of these materials because these are the collections with which the authors are most familiar (but see Peebles et al. 1981). The Tennessee collections have become a data source for numerous thesis and dissertation projects. New Deal collections housed at the University of Tennessee's Frank H. McClung Museum alone have been the subject of over 65 theses and dissertations. New Deal-era collections have been used extensively in syntheses specific to Tennessee also.

In the Upper Tennessee Valley, James Hatch (1974) used strictly New Deal-era collections to study mortuary practices as a means to interpret societal organization at Middle and Late Mississippian sites (c. AD 1100-1540). He found that not all of these societies were similarly structured, and that the ranking of persons was expressed differently through time. The distinctions between high-status men and women based on burial data raised important questions about the validity of neo-evolutionary models (e.g., Service 1962) in the Southeast. Syntheses in the late 1970s and early 1980s expounded on the Hatch study. Patricia Cole (1975) investigated burial mounds of the Hamilton Complex (Lewis and Kneberg 1946) that were the focus of many New Deal-era excavations along the Upper Tennessee River. Cole found a continuation of egalitarian social organization dating to the Late Woodland-Early Mississippian transition (c. AD 700-1100) (Schroedl 1978). In the early 1980s, Lynne Sullivan investigated Late Mississippian (c. AD 1400-1550) social organization and settlement patterns in southeastern Tennessee. Sullivan (1986, 1987,

1989) studied New Deal-era collections from coeval sites known as the Mouse Creek Phase (Lewis and Kneberg 1946; Lewis, Lewis, and Sullivan 1995). She was able to assert that Mouse Creek culture was significantly different from antecedent Mississippian phases and presented a model of cultural progression in the region (Sullivan 1995, 2007b).

A current research emphasis focuses on using New Deal-era collections to make large-scale comparisons that are lending support to the possibility of sub-regional ethnic and socio-political differences among late prehistoric societies in eastern Tennessee. In 2003, Michaelyn Harle used collections from the Douglas Reservoir in northeastern Tennessee to define Late Mississippian mortuary practices in that area. Her analysis showed that the burial practices in the mound at Fains Island (40JE1) were those of a more egalitarian society than Hatch (1974) proposed for the region. In 2007 Juliette Vogel investigated Late Mississippian mortuary traditions at the Cox Site mound and village (40AN19) in the Norris Reservoir, also in northeastern Tennessee. She discovered a mortuary tradition there similar to that at Fains Island. Comparisons of mortuary practices between northeastern and southeastern Tennessee suggest variation that may correlate with differences in ethnicity (Sullivan and Harle 2010).

Another important research topic has been assessing biological relationships through human physiology. Using multivariate craniofacial measurements, Hugh Berryman (1975) tested Lewis and Kneberg's (1946) hypothesis that Mouse Creek Phase people in southeastern Tennessee actually originated in the Middle Cumberland area of central Tennessee. He was able to find significant affinities between the two physiographic regions that hint at ancestral connections. In 1984, Donna Boyd revisited this model with a study of overall health and genetic distance using cranial measurements. Boyd found slight affinities between Middle Cumberland and Mouse Creek men, but

not among women (Boyd and Boyd 1991). In a related study in 1985, Criss Helmkamp used mortuary and skeletal data from Late Woodland and Mississippian sites in the Upper Tennessee Valley to test biosocial markers and population interaction boundaries through time. His study distinguished social boundaries among Late Woodland groups of the Hamilton Complex, and it demonstrated a high level of regional integration among Mississippian communities. These higher levels of social interaction include a perceived increase in warfare during the Mississippian period. Maria Smith's (2003) study of interpersonal conflict in the Chickamauga Basin correlated skeletal trauma with low-intensity violence (ambushes and raiding) and possibly sanctioned violence against women.

PRESERVATION OF AND ACCESS TO THE NEW DEAL ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTIONS

As can be inferred from the previous discussions, the archaeological collections from the New Deal projects include many types of objects and records. Some are suitable solely for basic archaeological research; others are of interest to a wider audience, including persons whose family members worked on the projects. Preservation of fragile objects, while providing appropriate access, is a challenge for all museums. A problem faced (and this is universal in museum collections) is the ongoing lack of adequate funding in accredited repositories for care of the New Deal-era collections. A recent *Science* article discussed curation difficulties at the McClung Museum and other institutions (Bawaya 2007). Although most New Deal-era collections are federally-owned or administered, and thus fall under federal curation regulations (36 CFR Part 79), federal agencies are reluctant to provide funds for their care, and many granting agencies will not award grants for "preservation, organization, or description of materials that are the responsibility of an agency of the federal

government” (NEH Preservation and Access: Humanities Collections and Resources Grants Guidelines).

Nevertheless, museums are being creative about funding sources and are making it possible to negotiate the often conflicting goals of preservation and access so that some of these significant materials can be widely used for a variety of purposes and by diverse audiences. The online photo archive that we refer to throughout this article is one example of these projects. A complementary project was digitization of the original WPA excavation maps curated by the McClung Museum. These maps are extremely detailed drawings of all cultural features uncovered in the process of archaeological fieldwork. With help from the University Libraries and a large format scanner lent by TVA, some 500 New Deal-era maps now are scanned and archived. Although not online, digital copies of the maps are available for scholars to use, thus saving wear and tear on the original, now fragile, maps. A next step would be to make manipulation of the maps by researchers possible with Geographic Information System (GIS) software (O’Gorman 2007). But to digitize every post-hole, pit, burial, stratigraphic level, and elevation point from every site map would require a new New Deal-sized workforce! Another project, funded by the Save America’s Treasures grant program, is rehousing approximately 50,000 of the most fragile and temporally diagnostic artifacts in the WPA/TVA collections at the McClung to modern curatorial standards and creating a searchable, electronic database inventory of the collection. The new archival housing will help ensure that these materials will be available for generations to come, and the database will allow users to view photographs of objects and more easily find artifacts of interest.

THE LEGACY

The New Deal-era archaeology collections chronicle an important period in the histories of archaeology and of the United States, and they document the cultural heritage of the region's Native American peoples. That people of nearly every walk of life—coal miners, the rural poor, professionals, college students, politicians, agricultural workers, people of color, men, women, young people, the old and disabled—became involved in archaeology and in making these collections is an amazing story. The fact that the New Deal-era collections are of such high quality and are still adequate for answering provocative questions in archaeology and anthropology is a testament to the efforts of these people and their dedication and interest in this work. The New Deal collections represent a collective effort to learn about the past that will probably never be duplicated. The story of the making of these collections deserves to be better known and the wonderful materials they include to be more accessible to many people.

In the light of modern sensitivities about the injustices wrought by western cultures on American Indian cultures, some of the interests and methods of the Depression-era archaeology projects may now appear at odds with the values of the very cultures whose heritage the projects sought to preserve. We now know that the excavation of burial mounds and grave sites shows a lack of respect for many American Indian traditions, and the very curiosity that fueled the desire to learn about these ancient cultures can be attributed to a western intellectual tradition that may not be valued by others. These were not considerations of the New Deal archaeologists, nor were they considerations of the many laborers, the majority of whom were happy just to have a job. But, judging from the few available accounts, many of the workers were truly fascinated by the intellectual aspects

of the archaeological research and the information it provided about ancient Native American life. As William Haag noted in 1985, it may well have been this appreciation of, and intellectual respect for, the past that led to the passage of modern historic preservation laws. These laws now require archaeological investigations before any federal land-altering projects. The fact that so many people had literally gotten their hands dirty on New Deal archaeology projects could only have helped with support for passage of such laws.

NOTES

1. Photographs for which the image numbers are provided in the text can be found by entering the DID number in one of the search boxes on the website's search page (do not include "DID"). This online archive was made possible by a grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to the UT Libraries and the McClung Museum. IMLS is not responsible for the content of the website or of this article.

2. Bauxar's original surname was Finkelstein.

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