

THE ONTARIO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

"ARCH-NOTES"



No. 66-1

January 1966

The protracted series of circumstances which prevented the Executive Committee from raising the required quorum to conduct its business and which extended our normal summer recess to include autumn as well, is finally over.

A good turn-out at our December meeting resolved much of the outstanding business and set up the machinery for future activities.

The first of these is the January meeting of The Ontario Archaeological Society. This will be held at 8 p.m., Wednesday, January 19th., in Room 251, Board of Education Centre, 155 College Street, Toronto.

All members are requested to attend this important business meeting. This is the time for the annual election of Executive Officers and Auditors, the submission of the various Committee reports and the setting of our annual fees. It is also the time to voice your opinion on several important motions concerning the future activities of our Society.

Nominations from the floor or by mail are in order, providing the member concerned has previously agreed to allow his name to stand. If you have a likely candidate in mind, please contact him (or her) before the meeting is called to order.

We intend to mix a little pleasure with all this business. Dr. R. Dean Axelson, Past President of the Archaeological Society of Western Ontario, will be our guest speaker for the evening. Dr. Axelson was instrumental in organizing this London, Ontario based group, which now has some 30 members, including Dr. Wilfrid Jury as technical advisor. They have set up a permanent school display for the London Board of Education, carried out several excavations in western Ontario, and are at present preparing their third archaeological publication. With the aid of colour slides, Dr. Axelson will describe some of the work carried out by this group and illustrate the type of artifacts it has uncovered.

Dr. Axelson's many friends in The O.A.S. will be pleased to know that he has recently taken up residence in Toronto and intends to actively participate in our future projects.

PUBLICATIONS

If you did not receive your copy of O.A.S. Publication #8, please contact our Corresponding Secretary, Mrs. Cecelia Finnigan, 57 Chesnut Park Road, Toronto 5, Ontario. She will see that the

oversight is corrected. Extra copies of this publication are now available at 50¢ per copy.

Publication #9 is well advanced and will soon be ready for printing. Our Publications Chairman, Dr. Churcher, would, however, prefer to have another small report submitted to maintain the present size of this series. If you have such a report ready (or in preparation) please contact Dr. Churcher immediately.

With the unanimous approval of the membership at our December meeting, The O.A.S. donated 10 copies of Publication #8 to the Agincourt Collegiate Institute. These will be used in their school library to compliment the permanent display of Elliot site artifacts set up by The O.A.S. in 1963.

NEWS OF MEMBERS

Included in Phyllis Bowland's African tour last summer were a visit to Dr. Leakey's excavations at Olduvai Gorge, in Tanzania, and the enigmatic ruins of Zimbabwe, in Rhodesia. At our December meeting, Phyllis showed a few of the colour slides she took during these visits.

In September, Mr. Kenneth Dawson assumed his new duties as Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Director of Northern Studies at Lakehead University, Port Arthur, Ontario.

Congratulations, Ken!

Late in October, Mr. William E. Renison was severely injured while returning to Toronto by car from a Museum Section Workshop, held in Kingston, Ontario. His many friends will be pleased to know that Bill is now well on the road to recovery at the Hotel Dieu Hospital, Kingston.

Two of our stalwart supporters have been temporarily restricted to vicarious participation through this newsletter. Father Russel (S.J.) left for a year's sojourn in Wales after assisting Dr. Emerson at the Cahigué excavation early last summer. Carol Spivack is in England and plans to visit several other European countries before returning to Toronto.

At our December meeting, Mrs. Eileen Balsky was appointed acting Recording Secretary for the balance of Miss. Spivack's term of office. Eileen is well versed in Executive Committee procedure, having held the office of Corresponding Secretary in 1961.

We would like to welcome and introduce the thirteen new members who joined the Society since the last issue of "Arch-Notes", namely -- Mr. D.A. Crofts, Mr. G.H. Gee, Miss L.M. Harris, Miss. L. Hoskins (the office of the Chief Archaeologist, Royal Ontario Museum), Miss. J.L. Johnston, Mr. R.D. MacDonald, Mr. A. Marks, Mr. H.R. Nathan, Miss. B. O'Donnell, Mr. Joseph O. Palacio, Mr. and Mrs. G. Reichert, Dr. W.M. Shaw and Mr. Charles F. Wray!

At least two of these new members have had more than a casual acquaintance with archaeology before joining our Society.

Joseph Palacio, who learned of our society through the Royal Ontario Museum, has had previous experience in Mayan Archaeology. This was a natural choice for him, for he is from British Honduras, part of their ancient homeland. Archaeology is Joseph's special interest and during his four year stay in Toronto as a student at the University of Toronto, where he will major in Anthropology, Joseph hopes to broaden his knowledge of the subject by learning as much as possible about Ontario's prehistory.

Charles F. Wray is a familiar name to students of Iroquoian prehistory, for it has appeared on a number of excellent archaeological reports published in New York and Pennsylvania. The archaeology of Western New York State is Mr. Wray's main field of interest and he is an authority on this subject. Since a great deal of Western New York's prehistory seems to be involved with that of Southern Ontario, we hope that he will consider "Ontario Archaeology" as a possible outlet for future reports.

VIEWS AND COMMENTS

This new department is intended to provide the membership, particularly those outside the Toronto area, with an opportunity to contribute to the exchange of ideas, information and constructive criticism, so vital to the health of any organization. We hope that you will make full use of it. Remember, it is YOUR Society and it is YOUR interest that keeps it alive.

In the May, 1965 issue of "Arch-Notes", an article appeared concerning the need to re-work MacNeish's Iroquois Pottery Types in the light of recent discoveries. Membership response revealed considerable interest in such an endeavor and the first contribution to Views and Comments is one such response.

Dear Sir:

I read with interest the article in the May 65 issue of Ontario Archaeological Notes suggesting the need to re-work MacNeish's "Iroquois Pottery Types" to reflect the state of the art. I agree, and I am sure most people interested in Iroquois pottery would also agree; most of all Scotty MacNeish who has always maintained his work was but the "first cut" which would require revision as material and experience became available.

What then do we who readily agree propose to do about it?

I suggest that The Ontario Archaeological Society (OAS) sponsor a programme to this end. In addition to making a major contribution to Iroquois archaeology it may provide the "problem oriented" approach our Society appears to lack as a cornerstone for its enthusiastic being. More selfishly it might prove to be a means to broaden Society membership in the various "Iroquois areas" of the Province where membership is now thin.

I think I can appreciate the administrative problems sponsorship would involve but I also believe that it could be accomplished under a committee of enthusiasts without too much fuss.

One approach might be for the OAS to obtain agreement from a number of competent, enthusiastic individuals to spark-plug a chapter each, e.g., Emerson for Huron, Lenig for Mohawk, Pratt for Oneida, Kenyon and/or Wright for Pickering, Ridley for Neutral, etc. Each could prepare their chapter in conjunction with other "experts" in their particular field holding meetings when necessary but obtaining secretarial clearance where practicable to reduce travel, particularly in the early stages. Chapters having a bearing on one another, e.g., Onondaga and Oneida, could be co-ordinated secretarially and subsequently at meetings, as necessary. Finally, when all chapters were complete they could be exchanged for study well in advance of a meeting of all authors where each could present his chapter for final coordination prior to publication.

Needless to say there would never be unanimous agreement. I need not remind you that there has not been anything near unanimous agreement on MacNeish's work. Nevertheless, it has served a most useful purpose, as Donaldson points out. Future works cannot expect much broader acceptance but this does not deny their value nor should it deter their preparation.

For example, Donaldson has brought up a major point of possible difference when he suggests future studies be based upon Marion White's approach using complete pots rather than rim sherds. Personally, I don't subscribe to this approach for two reasons which, put briefly, are:

- a. It is unlikely there will ever be sufficient complete or nearly complete pots to provide the statistical depth necessary to derive valid conclusions; and
- b. Any attempt to allot rim sherds to pots, or to alter the site sample, whether it be to include or exclude material on any basis, alters what is assumed to be a statistically random sample from the site and introduces hazardous subjective opinion. Attributing sherds to a single pot when sherds from the same pot frequently look unlike their mates is indicative of the subjectivity involved. To discard sherds because it is impracticable to allot them to a pot spoils the randomness of the sample and could materially alter the conclusions.

There are, in addition, those who suggest definition can be attained if the sample is analyzed in terms of attributes; i.e., shape, motif, and technique; thereby avoiding the pitfall of generalization inherent in creating pottery types based upon classic combinations of attributes. And there are also those who prefer pottery types based upon the combination of at least two classic attributes.

Be all this as it may, the OAS could, as sponsor, select the method to be used and seek authors who are prepared to write a paper on that basis. Acceptance of the responsibility for a chapter would not necessarily mean that the author supports the method selected, but rather that he is prepared to describe his material under the terms of reference specified by the sponsor. (Needless to say the OAS must be prepared to investigate various methods and designate one as that

to serve as the basis for the project.) It may be that a division of the experts on this point will in itself be advantageous. Parallel studies using different methods will permit comparison and possibly produce deductions beyond those arising from any single approach.

Failure to obtain the required number of competent authors who agree on the method selected is not in itself fatal. Individual chapters prepared using different methods of analysis would still provide infinitely more information than would be the case were the subject to be dropped because tidy unanimity proved to be impracticable. By the same token, it may be necessary in the early stages to approach the problem piecemeal, accepting chapters for publication as they become available. Providing a standard format was used, they could be placed in a binder as they appear.

But ideas are cheap!

If our Society is serious about the need for this work, and I take the publication of Donaldson's article to be indicative of such interest, I suggest a committee be formed to draft a general plan as the basis for determining the amount of financial support required, vis-a-vis that which might be available. In seeking funds, governments, industries, trusts, foundations and individuals should all be tapped as is frequently the case in areas more advanced archaeologically than ours. An indication of the funds likely to be available will make the feasibility of a programme, or partial programme, quite clear.

It goes without saying that a sizeable sum in addition to that required for research must be available for expeditiously publishing the results of the study for wide distribution, for it is only when it is widely distributed will it be of value-- and then only as a basis for revision in the light of subsequent material and experience.

It can, of course, be argued that such a project would take considerable time to complete, particularly when a number of authors in different locations are involved. I agree it would be a bird-dog's nightmare, but it is equally clear that if the work is never begun we will never improve the situation -- in fact it is likely to get worse. If it is as important as Donaldson suggests in his article, and I support his view, there is no time like the present to get started!

May I offer my services?

James F. Pendergast

There was an omission in the May, 1965 issue of "Arch-Notes". The last line in paragraph 3, page 3 should have read: "types, yet only 19 of the 100 vessels represented by this sample were typical Ontario Horizontal types, a discrepancy of over 5%."

May the year 1966 see the best of your wishes fulfilled.

Bill Donaldson, Editor,
111 Riverside Drive N.,
Oshawa, Ontario.