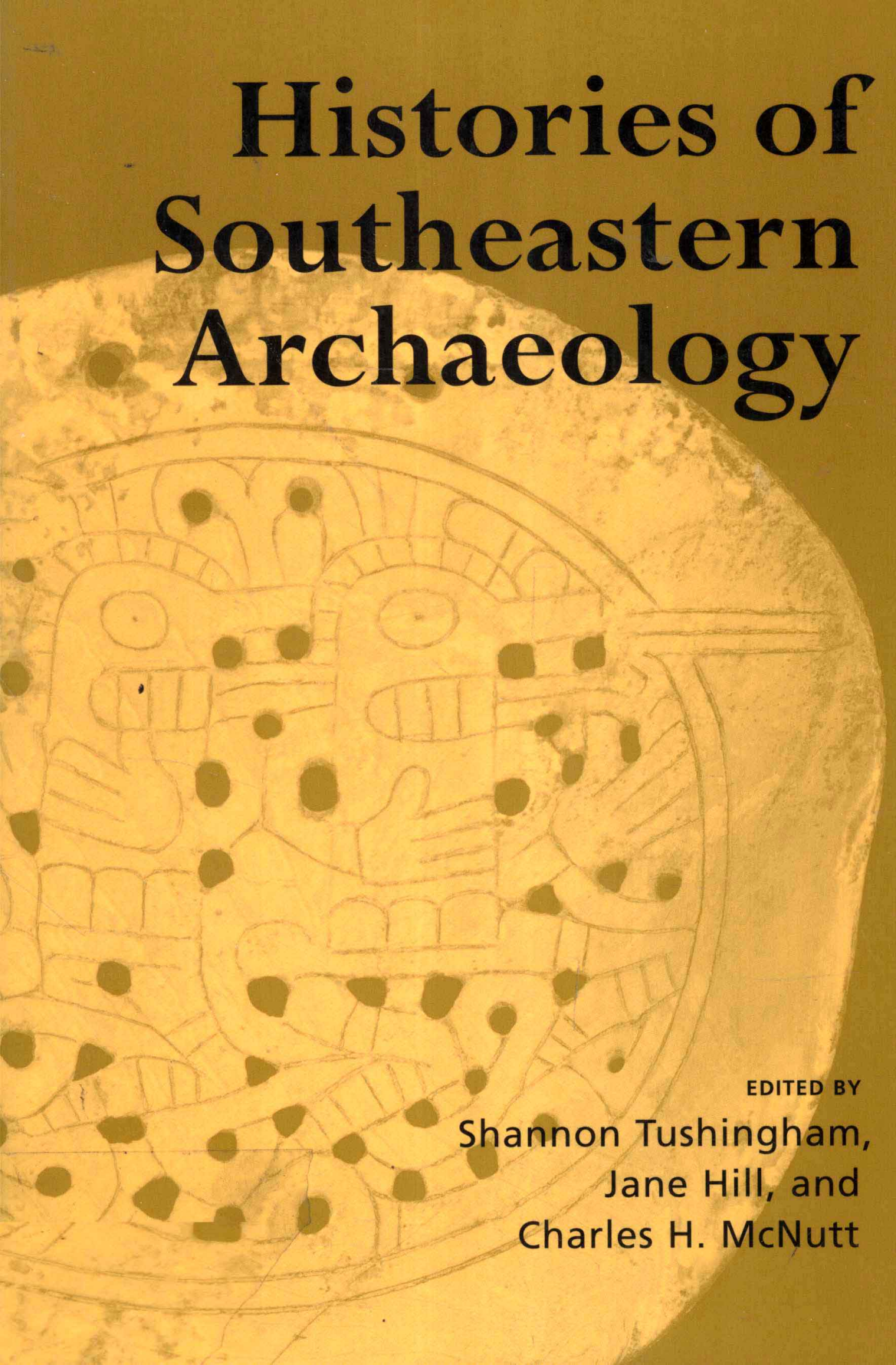
Histories of Southeastern Archaeology



EDITED BY
Shannon Tushingham,
Jane Hill, and
Charles H. McNutt

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Précis

Charles H. McNutt

This volume has grown from seeds planted by two of my past graduate students, Jane Hill and Shannon Tushingham, who wished to organize a session at the Southeastern Archaeological Conference in my honor, featuring senior scholars giving their personal views of the history of Southeastern archaeology. I made some of the initial contacts; responses were more than anyone could hope for—a real geriatric happening.

Hill and Tushingham followed up in all phases of organization and also laid the groundwork for publication of our efforts by the University of Alabama Press. I am sufficiently honored to be a participant in the project.

As you all know, one of our most highly respected and fondly regarded contributors, Roger Saucier, was not able to present his paper at SEAC in person. It is our good fortune that Roger had completed his critical contribution to our volume before his untimely death.

My colleague Charles Faulkner discusses the history of archaeology in Tennessee. This leaves me free to add a brief personal note told, it is hoped, against a background of more than three decades of Southeastern archaeology.

My first association with Southeastern archaeology came when I was a graduate student at the University of Michigan. I accompanied Jimmy Griffin and Al Spaulding to Poverty Point in 1955, I think, where we joined such other notables as William Haag, Junius Bird, George Quimby, Clarence Webb, Stu Neitzel, and Robert Greengo to discuss the puzzle of Poverty Point with Jim Ford. The Michigan contingent returned by way of Nodena Plantation, where I met the Hampsons; from there we went to see Cahokia, which I refused to believe was a mound. In 1957 Griffin and Spaulding also took me to the fourteenth SEAC in Macon, Georgia. In those days, professors took graduate students to sites and went out of their way to introduce them to other professionals.

As auspicious as this was, I was an ingrate. I had gotten my master's degree in the Southwest and could not understand why people would dig among roots, mud, poison ivy, mosquitoes, and chiggers. I still don't really understand it.

After passing my preliminary doctoral exams and digging my "dissertation site"—in the Southwest—I went to work for Robert Stephenson in 1957 at the River Basin Surveys located in Lincoln, Nebraska. My position was absolutely

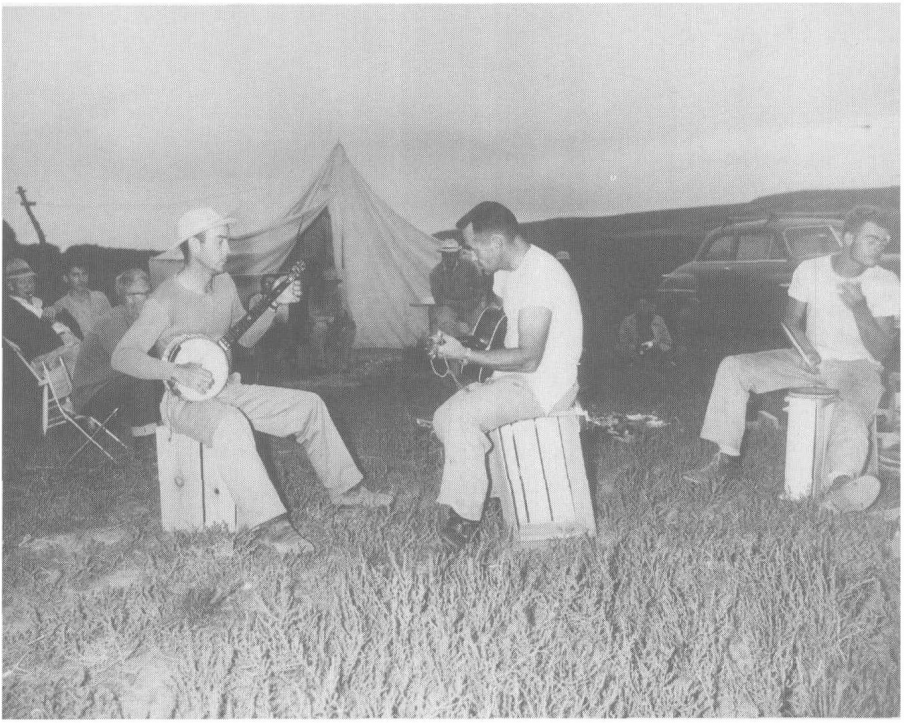


Figure 0.1. Charles H. McNutt (playing the banjo) and Bill Dunson at Sully Field Camp, South Dakota, 1958. (Courtesy of Robert W. Neuman)

ideal—an excellent boss, stimulating colleagues, no publish-or-perish pressure, incredible research opportunities, a lab such as only Bob Stephenson could organize, and a very open intellectual atmosphere. Inexplicably, I decided to leave Lincoln in late 1959 and enter academia. In those days, you could do this easily; it was a seller's market, unlike today.

I ended up at the University of Tennessee, with some encouragement from Jimmy Griffin. Lewis and Kneberg had been at Tennessee since the 1930s and would soon retire; they needed a successor. I went to Knoxville, did a great job teaching, conducted and published excellent research in Melton Hill Reservoir, and gave resounding speeches to the public. But for some reason I was not regarded as a desirable successor. I still don't know what went wrong. Lewis was followed by Ted Guthe as Chairman, and when I found that Guthe somehow feared the distant wrath of Madeline, I resigned. It was still a seller's market in the spring of 1962. My wife was not enthusiastic about my prideful behavior.

After two years' R and R with Bob Euler at Northern Arizona University, I returned to Tennessee in 1964, this time to Memphis State University. Mindful

that my career had consisted of disjointed two-year stints in Lincoln, Knoxville, and Flagstaff, I resolved to become more sedentary. I did; I am still here.

In Memphis, the only other person on the staff was Charles Nash, who was teaching a course in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and also directing activities at the nascent Chucalissa museum. The program at Memphis State University, now unfortunately named The University of Memphis, has grown since that time from an undergraduate specialization in anthropology to an "applied" Master of Arts program that has graduated well over one hundred M.A.s in archaeology, urban, and medical tracks. Our archaeology graduates have been very successful in finding positions with cultural resource management firms; many others have gone on to study for their doctorates.

I have been particularly successful in collaborating with many graduate students on numerous research projects: in Decatur County, Tennessee, with Steven Adamson (McNutt et al. 1989); in Tipton County, Tennessee, with Drew Buchner (Buchner and McNutt 1989); in northern Mississippi with Jamie Brandon (McNutt and Brandon 1995) and Tim Pugh (McNutt and Pugh 1991); in Carroll County, Tennessee, with Shawn Chapman and Harold Smith (McNutt et al. 1990); at the Shelby Forest site with Eda Fain (McNutt and Fain 1990); in northeast Arkansas with Keith Keeney (Keeney et al. 1999) and with Christopher Koeppel and Scott Shaffer (McNutt et al. 1992); at Chucalissa and in the Hartsville area east of Nashville with Lisa Lumb (Lumb and McNutt 1988; McNutt and Lumb 1987, respectively); in Sumner County, Tennessee, with Patricia Quillian (Quillian and McNutt 1981); in west and central Tennessee with Richard Walling (Walling 1987a, 1987b; McNutt and Walling 1989, respectively), and, alphabetically last but hardly least, with Guy Weaver in west (Weaver and McNutt 1977, 1979a), middle (McNutt and Weaver 1983, Weaver and McNutt 1979b) and, joined by Glenda Maness, east (McNutt et al. 1984, 1985) Tennessee, as well as Little Bear Creek in northern Alabama (McNutt and Weaver 1985). After this orgy of self-citation, I feel obliged to note that I did do some things on my own.

During these years I attended virtually all meetings of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference. This is unquestionably the major arena of interaction among prehistoric archaeologists working in the Southeast. At these meetings I made a great number of acquaintances and received much encouragement and advice. My new colleagues came from all parts of the Southeast, and others even came from Massachusetts; all drank beer, and most smoked heavily. An incredible number of these people are still alive.

As SEAC has grown into a multisession affair, smaller local conferences such as the Mid-South Archaeological Conference have become increasingly impor-

Figure 0.2. Phoebe McNutt, Charles H. McNutt, James B. Griffin, and Stephen Williams in Memphis at the Thirty-ninth Southeastern Archaeological Conference meeting, Memphis, 1982. (Courtesy of Charles H. McNutt)

tant in maintaining the type of interactions that once characterized SEAC. The publication of contributed papers, such as characterizes the Mid-South Conference, is exemplary. In the future, as the Society for Historic Archaeology continues its growth, we may well see comparable developments at the local level in historic archaeology. Indeed, the process of segmentation may have begun already in Memphis with the 1999 meeting of the South-Central Historical Archaeology Conference (SCHAC).

I think that the collegium maintained by professional meetings has been particularly important to Southeastern archaeology. It has encouraged cooperation by disparate scholars to contribute to regional syntheses; certainly this is the case in the region with which I am familiar (McNutt 1996; Morse and Morse 1983; O'Brien and Dunnell 1998). And again, this present volume must be regarded as a major tribute to the superorganic entity of Southeastern archaeology. It must be observed that two of the contributions cited above have been made possible by the University of Alabama Press and its publications editor.

In closing, I would add a comment on the apparent hiatus in the Southeast regarding New Archaeology. Cultural processes can be understood only when based on a firm grasp of chronology and content: something called culture history. We are quite aware that we lack satisfactory grasps of culture history in most parts of the southeastern United States. The sequence is too long; there has been too little work, too much destruction, and too little publication; and reliable chronology has been difficult to come by. There are even argu-

ments about how to attain a basis for understanding culture process—O'Brien's rather nonscientific version of "materialism," what appears to me as a more scientific attempt that the same author brands "essentialism," or an approach that attempts to explicate process in Darwinian terms (cf. O'Brien and Lyman 1999a:225–226). Regardless of one's stance, most of us seem to realize that we just aren't ready to jump ahead into the processual realm; the evolutionary archaeologists are showing dangerous tendencies, however. I suspect that segments of Southeastern archaeology may even make the saltation from preliminary culture histories to post-processualism. That, I feel, would not be a productive development.

It is time to close with a note of hope. I can do this without qualm. I foresee continued work in prehistoric archaeology under the new governmental strictures. We will need better opportunity to work with Native Americans without compulsive meddling from certain government agencies. Historical archaeology will grow dramatically, in part because of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, but even more so because of the ease with which its subject matter can be conveyed to the general public. The demand for skilled graduates will, if anything, increase. These things, I suspect, will happen as a result of forces that exist at present. Increasing efforts to stimulate legislative and public interest in archaeology and museums will not just happen; these must be of major future concern.

Introduction

The History of Histories

Shannon Tushingham and Jane Hill

At the Fifty-sixth Annual Southeastern Archaeological Conference a series of papers were presented at a symposium titled "Histories of Southeastern Archaeology." We organized this symposium to honor Charles H. McNutt, Professor Emeritus at the University of Memphis, who retired from the classroom in 1998. Dr. McNutt exerted great influence on our education, as he has with hundreds of anthropology students attending the University of Memphis over the last three decades. We thought that the semiretirement of our mentor called for something more dynamic than the traditional handsome plaques and hearty handshakes. We decided that a symposium involving senior scholars talking about the history of archaeology and how they had "grown up" in the field would be a fitting tribute to Dr. McNutt's career.

The path that led us to this choice of symposium topic was certainly not direct. Several different subjects were considered and rejected. Ultimately, we were inspired by our interest in the history of archaeology in the Southeast and a keen desire to hear the personal stories and reflections of archaeologists who had worked through these developments over the last several decades. This interest is an outgrowth of our relationship with Dr. McNutt, whose ability to fuse changing theoretical perspectives with personal experience in the practical application of anthropology enabled us to bridge the gap between theory and practice in our own work. Like others of his generation, he personally knew many of the archaeologists about whom we had only read. For example, as a student it is one thing to read about the Ford-Spaulding debate but quite another to listen to it described by someone who experienced it firsthand. We found it enlightening and entertaining to hear Dr. McNutt describe himself as a graduate student in the late 1950s, happily mixing in a moonlit discussion between James Ford and Albert Spaulding. Stories such as these make the history of archaeology come alive.

In our introduction to the "Histories" symposium at SEAC, we gave tribute to Dr. McNutt by describing some of the landmarks of his career. It was a difficult task considering his modesty and all that he has accomplished. With the help of former students and longtime friends, we also were able to tell some good jokes and show some humorous photographs, so in that sense, for us it

was a success. Without embarrassing him any further we would simply like to make the point that it is our impression that Charles McNutt is a remarkable scholar, a gifted teacher, and an enduring friend.

Initially, we promised Dr. McNutt that he would not have to lift a finger to bring this symposium to fruition. As is typical of him, however, he was not content to sit on the sidelines waiting for laurels to be laid at his feet and instead became an active participant. So as the project developed we found that instead of having a professor on a pedestal we had gained a senior partner. The response and enthusiasm for the project from those we contacted have been greater and more satisfying than we ever expected.

On November 11, 1999, at the SEAC meetings in Pensacola, Florida, the authors of this book gathered to present their papers. At the close of the "Histories" symposium, there was a screening of "Bringing the Past Alive," a fascinating interview with William Haag and George Quimby conducted in 1989 by Ann Ramenofsky at Louisiana State University. In chapter 1 we have provided selected excerpts from the sixty-five-page transcript of this interview. We hasten to add that we left the difficult task of choosing these excerpts to Dr. McNutt, a process he described as "brutal." This experience left us with even greater respect for Dr. Ramenofsky, who edited more than six hours of videotaped interview to an hour-and-a-half-long program for public television. We encourage anyone interested in the history of Southeastern archaeology, and specifically Depression-era archaeology, to view this tape. It contains invaluable firsthand information, and we have to agree with Dr. Ramenofsky that Drs. Haag and Quimby *do* tell a good story.

The symposium generated a lot of excitement, brought several people out of retirement from SEAC meetings, and gladdened the hearts of bartenders in the greater Pensacola area. We were encouraged by many to be sure the papers presented were published, and we resolved to do so as soon as was humanly possible.

Initially, we proposed discussing the history of archaeology in the Southeast by culture area. We soon realized, however, that modern American archaeology in this century has been practiced predominately along political borders rather than culture areas, so we settled on a state-by-state format, retaining several specialist topics that cross state lines. This format required a larger number of contributors, and, consequently, limits had to be placed on the length of papers to be published. Because these constraints were as tiresome as they were unavoidable, we commend the authors for their understanding and brevity.

Each chapter gives a different perspective on what it was like to be an archaeologist in the southeastern United States over time. Individual authors took differing approaches to the subject, each guided by personal experiences as well as by the vagaries of personalities, location, funding, and legislation that

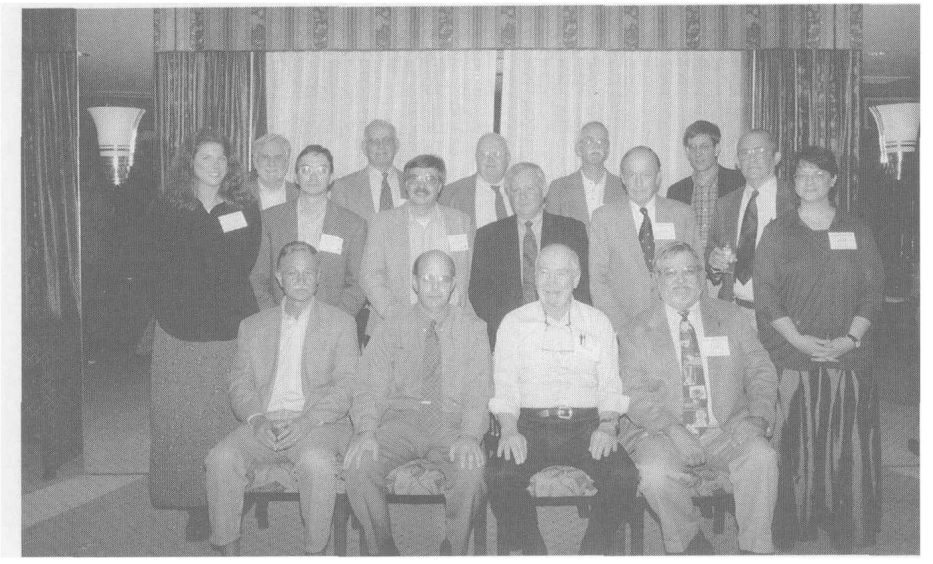


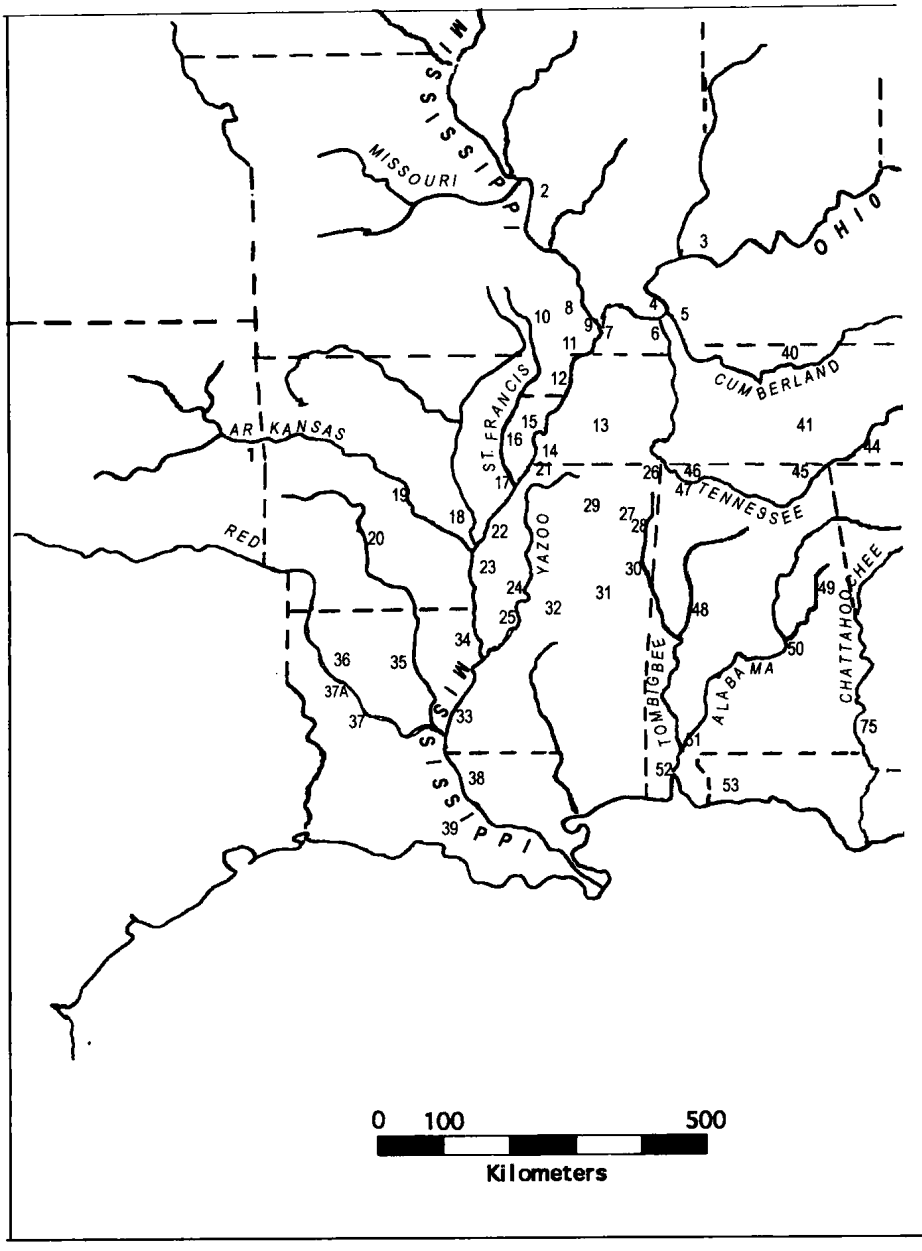
Figure 0.3. Symposium participants at the Southeastern Archaeological Conference, Histories/Lower Mississippi Survey reception, November 12, 1999. Back row, left to right: John A. Walthall, Howard MacCord, Lewis Larson, Jay K. Johnson, Gregory Waselkov. Middle row, left to right: Shannon Tushingham, Kenneth E. Sassaman, David G. Anderson, David Brose, Stephen Williams, Robert W. Neuman, Jane Hill. Seated, left to right: Jerald T. Milanich, Vernon J. Knight, Charles H. McNutt, Jon Muller. (Courtesy of M. M. Peach)

had a hand in shaping the discipline through time. Despite this profusion of differences, common themes do emerge in the book. These include the effect of changing theory (or the lack thereof) in Americanist archaeology; the explosion of contract archaeology and its relationship to academic archaeology; research goals that were, or have yet, to be achieved; and the common ground of SEAC meetings, where the discipline seeks to find one voice. So if your interest is in early fieldwork in Florida, do not stop at Jerald Milanich's history of that state. There is a wealth of information to be gleaned from other Southeasternists whose research and experiences had a hand in shaping the discipline as a whole. For an entertaining account of shoestring budget fieldwork in the 1940s and 1950s, read Lewis Larson's reflections on his early experiences in Georgia. Jon Muller provides a compelling account of how applied theory and research conducted at the University of Chicago's field schools influenced many who dominated Southeastern archaeology for almost half a century. Contrast Jay Johnson's history of Mississippi archaeology's "third world" status, dependent on research by northern universities, with Stephen Williams's accounts of his research for Yale, the University of Michigan, and

Harvard's Lower Mississippi Survey. Read Hester Davis's personal accounts of a female archaeologist's experiences in Arkansas seeking funding, building coalitions with amateur archaeologists, teaching field schools, and synthesizing research. Whatever your interest, we believe you will find the contributions in this volume valuable.

When this project was in its infancy in the spring of 1999, Charles McNutt imparted these words of foresight and wisdom: "You do realize that if you don't follow through on this you could have a couple dozen of the most prominent archaeologists in the southeastern United States mad at you?" We gulped, said "yes," and never looked back. Our enthusiasm for this project has never wavered, partly due to our interest in the subject matter but also thanks to the support, guidance, and encouragement of Charles McNutt, the authors of this book, and a great many others.

Histories of Southeastern Archaeology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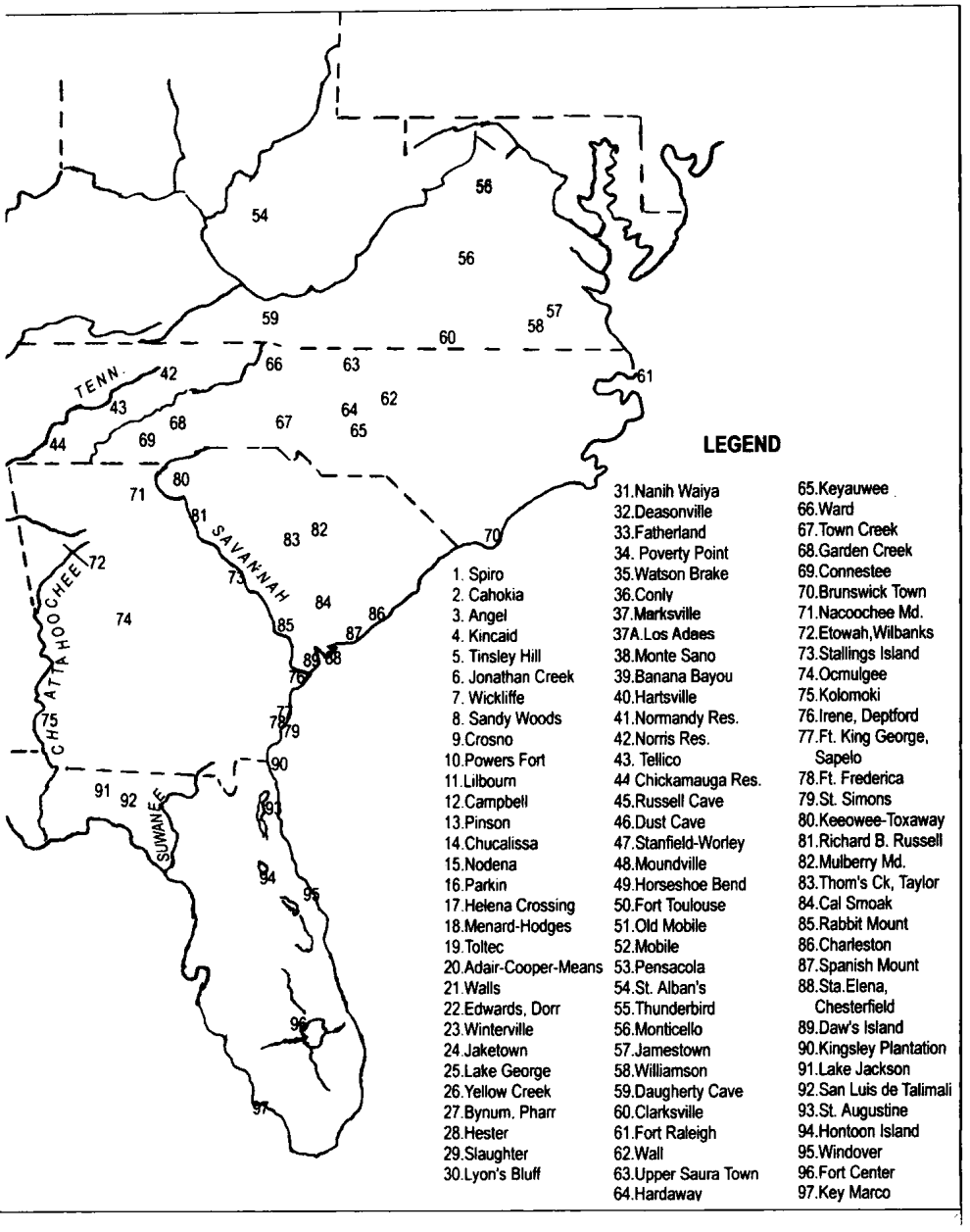

Figure 0.4. Map of southeastern United States archaeological sites. (Courtesy of Charles H. McNutt)

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