



New Perspectives
on the Origins
of Americanist
Archaeology

*Edited by David L. Browman
& Stephen Williams*

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Edited by
DAVID L. BROWMAN AND STEPHEN WILLIAMS

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA PRESS
Tuscaloosa and London

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9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01

Typeface: Trump Mediaeval

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The paper on which this book is printed meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Science—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

New perspectives on the origins of Americanist archaeology / edited by
David L. Browman and Stephen Williams.

p. cm.

"This volume grew out of the Second Gordon R. Willey Biennial Symposium on the History of Archaeology, held at the annual meetings of the Society for American Archaeology in Seattle, Washington, in 1998, where eight of the twelve papers in this volume were initially presented"—Pref.

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.

ISBN 0-8173-1128-9 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Indians of North America—Antiquities—Congresses. 2. Archaeology—United States—History—Congresses. 3. Archaeology—United States—Methodology—Congresses. 4. Anthropology—United States—History—Congresses. 5. Indianists—United States—History—Congresses. 6. Women archaeologists—United States—History—Congresses. 7. United States—Antiquities—Congresses. I. Browman, David L. II. Williams, Stephen, 1926– III. Gordon R. Willey Biennial Symposium on the History of Archaeology (2nd : 1998 : Seattle, Wash.)

E77.9 .N48 2002

973'.01—dc21

2001003856

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data available

Preface

David L. Browman and Stephen Williams

This volume grew out of the Second Gordon R. Willey Biennial Symposium on the History of Archaeology, held at the annual meetings of the Society for American Archaeology in Seattle, Washington, in 1998, where eight of the twelve papers in this volume were initially presented. It seems only fitting that we should dedicate this collection of works on the intellectual roots of American archaeology to our old friend Gordon. He was a major professor and mentor for David Browman while he was a graduate student at Harvard and also a longtime friend and close colleague of Stephen Williams during his own nearly 40-year stay at Harvard's Peabody Museum. Gordon's interest in the history of the field has not abated, and we hope that he will find these efforts in that field both enlightening and important additions to an aspect of archaeology in which he has long had a strong interest.

We also wish to thank the members and staff of The University of Alabama Press for their efforts on our behalf in this exciting adventure into the history of Americanist archaeology. Nicole Mitchell, the Director, has led that effort for which we are grateful. Judith Knight is not only Acquisitions Editor, but was also our ever-present contact with the Press—she is also a cherished friend of Stephen Williams. Project Editor Jon Berry, copyeditor Jonathan Lawrence, and indexer Anne R. Gibbons have all helped our project in a most expeditious manner, for which we are most grateful.

That we are also able to thank two old friends, James B. Stoltman and Charles McNutt, for their careful readings of the volume and their perspicacious suggestions for useful changes in the text gives us great pleasure too. The two of them helped us make it a better volume. Other such help came from the many responses to our special research needs

that came from Sarah R. Demb, Museum Archivist of the Peabody Museum. Her sources were a substantial aid to David Browman, especially in his Putnam research. Finally, some very important help of another kind came from a longtime friend of Stephen Williams—Albert H. Gordon of New York City, who, via a gift from the Gordon Foundation to the Peabody Museum, made a certain publishing enterprise possible: the hiring of the indexer of this volume.

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Introduction

David L. Browman and Stephen Williams

This volume evolved out of a conversation the two of us had at a Society for American Archaeology (SAA) meeting in 1996. We observed that recent discussions on the history of Americanist archaeology as it was perceived to have evolved a century ago seemed to aggregate into predictable clusters: first, contributions from the early work in the American Southwest, and second, contributions from the work of researchers at the government agencies such as the U.S. National Museum, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Bureau of (American) Ethnology. While there is no question that these aggregates identify crucial components of the development of Americanist archaeology, other important early contributors not linked to these groups seemed to be consistently overlooked.

One solution to this issue that appealed to us was to directly address this oversight by recruiting a number of scholars interested in the history of Americanist archaeology to cover some of the institutions and individuals we thought were overlooked. The first step in developing a volume would be to get us all together to discuss the issues, and the simplest way to do that would be to organize a scientific session. Williams had participated in the SAA's History of Archaeology Committee for a number of years, sometimes as its chairperson, and Browman more recently had become a member. That committee proposed a biennial symposium on the "History of American Archaeology" at the SAA meetings, to be named for Gordon R. Willey in recognition of his longtime interest in the subject. The inaugural Willey Symposium was held in New Orleans at the annual SAA meeting in 1996. This symposium appeared to be the ideal forum to employ, and consequently the two of us organized a group of scholars for the Second

Wiley Symposium in Seattle in the spring of 1998 as the mechanism by which we secured first drafts of manuscript chapters and had a chance to interact with the writers.

Intellectual Histories of American Archaeology

Interest in the intellectual history of the field of American archaeology, and volumes and articles on that topic, are hardly new. As early as 1856, Samuel Foster Haven (1806–1881), a Massachusetts scholar educated at both Harvard and Amherst, produced a lengthy and heavily researched volume on *The Archaeology of the United States*, published by the then recently founded Smithsonian Institution (Haven 1856). Haven's breadth of intellectual probing was startling—the running bibliography, not collected, is daunting. His subtitle—*Sketches, Historical and Bibliographical, of the Progress of Information and Opinions Respecting Vestiges of Antiquity in the United States*—gives some notion of the range.

Strangely enough, despite its fairly wide availability both in the original and reprint, this volume has never been thoroughly debriefed by modern scholars. Tackling the running, uncollected footnote bibliography would surely be a huge task, but one that would be of great value. Even detailed citation of Haven's information seems quite infrequent, but as will be seen, such treatment for this work and others like it is not uncommon in some areas of contemporary scholarship. There are some problems with the work; for example, Haven errs in suggesting that the Spanish missionaries Acosta and Garcia were in agreement on origins (1856:13). He also identifies them incorrectly as both being Jesuits, whereas only Acosta was. But these are minor problems in a sweeping overview very worthy of more study.

Haven was followed some 30 years later by another New Englander, also not surprisingly with a Harvard education, Justin Winsor (1831–1897). A longtime librarian at Harvard, Winsor published his eight-volume *Narrative and Critical History of America* (1884–1889) from that post. He was well known by his contemporary Harvard colleagues such as Frederic W. Putnam and others with an interest in archaeology. The first volume of the series was dedicated to *Aboriginal America*, and the authors cited range from Abbott and Acosta to Worsaae and Zeisberger. We can make such a detailed statement because the Winsor volume on archaeology and linguistics, which also originally had an uncollected bibliography, has now been reprinted with such a finding tool by John H. Ryan and Anne Paolucci (Winsor 1889/1995). This volume should

be required reading for anyone posing as a scholar of North American archaeology, as also should the appended "Review Article" by Richard C. Clark and Henry Paolucci, who, though historians rather than archaeologists, have an interesting view of Winsor's accomplishment. We might add that knowledge of Winsor's work did seep out as far west as Ann Arbor, because James B. Griffin was well aware of it—perhaps through his long-term interaction with Philip Phillips of Harvard.

There is another gap, this one of nearly 40 years, until the next volume that deals extensively with the history of American archaeology, and it is even more rarely cited or read than Winsor's. This book is the 1930 Yale doctoral dissertation by Panchanan Mitra entitled *A History of American Anthropology*, published in Calcutta in 1933. Mitra was a student of Clark Wissler, and his scholarship is extraordinarily thorough. He was a late-1920s foreign exchange student who had done his undergraduate work at the University of Calcutta, to which he returned in 1930 as head of their anthropology department, regrettably to die a few years later. How thorough was he? The volume is over 200 printed pages, and the collected bibliography has more than 240 references, again from Acosta to Zeisberger.

Of course, Mitra thought highly of his mentor, and he discussed the "great synthetic schools" embracing Boas, Wissler, and even Dixon. There is also an extraordinary chapter, some 22 pages in length, on anthropologically important institutions and societies in the United States. Mitra was a careful scholar under Wissler's guidance, and there is no question that he really knew the sources. Yes, he does cite chapter and verse, and even often provides direct quotations. We certainly have learned a great deal from his work.¹

Another 30 years would pass before the next major effort in the field of the history of American archaeology. Again, like Mitra, Alfred Irving Hallowell (1892–1974) would tackle the history of the *whole* field of anthropology. Hallowell's "The Beginnings of Anthropology in America" is the lead article of 90 pages in the *Selected Papers from the American Anthropologist: 1888–1920*, edited by Frederica de Laguna in 1960. Although certainly cited more frequently than Mitra's volume (which, by the way, is cited by Hallowell), it has never to our knowledge been the subject of any critical professional judgment in archaeology. Perhaps one reason for this, and we say this not in jest, is that it had reverted, for reasons known only to the author, to the non-collected footnote-style bibliography (as in Haven and Winsor). Thus there are many *ibid.*'s, some of which can only be tracked down by turning a dozen or more pages to find the referenced source.

All that aside, Hallowell's view is important for the postwar 1960s period. One critic has said it was not valuable for archaeology, but we do not share that view. Yes, there are some mistakes; for example, Hallowell (1960:4, n. 7) credits Acosta and Garcia with similar views on Indian origins. He apparently was using Haven's comment for this incorrect observation, but he does not cite him for this statement. We would certainly like to see the article reprinted with a collected bibliography and an index. It would be much more valuable and easier to use in that format, and would certainly be worth that effort.

When Hallowell's article appeared, Stephen Williams was beginning to take serious interest in the study of the history of the field (Willey and Sabloff 1993:11, n. 6). He was teaching the subject (Williams 1964, as cited in Willey and Sabloff 1974:9, 248) and even putting together classroom materials such as *The Foundations of American Archaeology* (Belmont and Williams 1965, cited in Willey and Sabloff 1974:9, 212). Thus began Williams's commitment to the history portion of the field that has only grown through some 35 years, and he has inoculated his former student, Browman, with the same passion.

Following Hallowell's important work by some seven years was another obscure work, at least to many students of the field—*Origins of the American Indians: European Concepts, 1492–1769*. This 1967 volume was the work of a University of Texas-trained scholar, Lee Eldridge Huddleston, who seems to have left this field of interest very soon thereafter. Huddleston was a historian with a substantial background in the European scholarship on the topic of Indian origins, and his work remains by far the most comprehensive study of this time period. While not well known in the field of archaeology, it is cited briefly in all editions of Willey and Sabloff (1974, 1980, 1993). Without attention to this work, questions about basic origins hypotheses during this period will not be well researched.

Although it appeared in a journal, not a book, Edwin Wilmsen's rather comprehensive article "An Outline of Early Man Studies in the United States" appeared during the same period, in 1965. It begins with early Spanish scholarship and quickly covers many of the important sources from Acosta and seventeenth-century Dutchmen to Thomas Gage and Pfefferkorn, the latter on the topic of the Bering Strait. Wilmsen's coverage on the later periods is also quite complete, from Jefferson and Benjamin Barton Smith to Atwater and Lyell. His sources include Haven and Winsor as well as minor journal articles, but not Mitra or Hallowell. This article is not often cited. Perhaps because Wilmsen was associated with Paleoindian field research, many recent

scholars may have thought it was more about Clovis than arcane arguments of origins. It remains an important source on that topic. The 1960s were a period of foment in archaeology, with the "New Archaeology" set forth by Lewis Binford and colleagues almost taking over the national journal *American Antiquity*, which Wilmsen edited for much of the decade. Antihistorical attitudes were certainly part of that "new" view of the field, but clearly that did not include Wilmsen.

In more recent decades (1970 through 2000), study in the history of the field has flourished. First there was the small (in format) volume *The Development of North American Archaeology*, edited by James E. Fitting in 1973. Eight individual scholars, including Williams's student James B. Stoltman, wrote the separate chapters. Again it is an important source, but rarely cited in detail (perhaps the modest length of the chapters has something to do with that treatment). Fitting (1973:3) mentions that the individual authors were supposed to hold to a 30-page limit; apparently few or none followed that advice, and thus they were heavily edited to fit a 290-page printed text.

In his introduction, entitled "History and Crisis," Fitting notes that there was a current "crisis" in American archaeology which he expected to change the face of the field. From the perspective of 30 years, one can reasonably say "change," yes, but not a whole new paradigm for everyone, as some expected in the 1970s. Even archaeologists age, and their revolutions fade to less importance than when one stands on the battlements of a presumably dangerous conflict of ideas. These intellectual changes can be followed, of course, by looking at the widely read and cited Willey and Sabloff classic, *A History of American Archaeology*. For a specific view of these happenings, see "Consolidating and Broadening the New Archaeological Agenda" and "Mainstream Accommodations to the New Archaeology" (Willey and Sabloff 1993:242-297).

We have neither the courage nor the time to continue this review of the treatment of the history of American archaeology much further into more recent times. We will only note that there have been a number of recent treatments of various aspects of the history of the field by a group of well-known and prolific scholars, including, for example, Bruce Trigger, Curtis Hinsley, Jacob Gruber, and the Missouri duo of Michael O'Brien and Lee Lyman. Each has his own agenda and point of view. Perhaps it is best to lay aside further comment thereon until a later time. Less well known is the fine volume by Williams's friend and Peabody colleague Joan Mark, *Four Anthropologists: An American Science in Its Early Years* (1980), which discusses both Frederic Ward Putnam and William Henry Holmes. We commend it to your reading.

The Eighteenth- to Mid-Nineteenth-Century Pioneers, to the Civil War

Our initial stated focus in the Willey Symposium held in Seattle had been "Historical Views on American Archaeology's Connections to Europe before World War I." Thus the papers in this volume cover American scholars prior to 1915, and most of them focus particularly upon the European influences on early Americanist archaeology.

Especially important in setting up the influences are Stephen Williams's "The Straits of Anian" and "From Whence Came Those Aboriginal Inhabitants of America?" These two chapters provide the intellectual background of research on the origins of the Precolumbian American populations up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, and they include particular detail as well as a wealth of new information on the early perspectives of scholars from the seventeenth through the early nineteenth centuries.

The Walam Olum was a hotly debated document when it first appeared, and while continuing to be controversial, it was generally accepted through most of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although it is today no longer of much relevance to archaeological research, the origin of the manuscript and its influence on ideas regarding American archaeology in the nineteenth century are important for understanding the contexts of many early debates. David M. Oestreicher's exegesis of this "manuscript" in his chapter (along with his book in press) should finally put to rest any questions regarding the authenticity of this document. Rafinesque was a colorful character, and he made a series of important contributions in natural sciences of the Mid-South; his legacy should now be shifted to that venue.

Ephraim Squier is well known to most scholars of the history of American archaeology, but as archaeologists we have generally focused on the accuracy of the descriptions and illustrations of the mound complexes in his publications. Terry A. Barnhart, however, brings a historian's perspective in assessing Squier's work and its genesis. Barnhart considers Squier a transitional figure from the earlier types of research, perhaps as represented by Rafinesque, and the later, more scientifically focused studies as initiated by scholars in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Diffusionism was a popular explanation in nineteenth-century archaeology, but Barnhart points out that contrary to the often-made assumption that Squier was a diffusionist, based on his perhaps best-known joint work with Davis on the Mound Builders, that this was not the case.

Charles Rau was a government archaeologist, one of the earliest of this genre, and in reviews of the origins of the discipline he is frequently dealt with in one or two sentences. John E. Kelly has dug into archival corners to provide a new perspective on the depth of Rau's contributions to Americanist archaeology. Kelly is best known for his work on Cahokia, and thus his chapter on Rau ferrets out the information most relevant to Rau's early career, which was the period of his major contributions to Midwest archaeology. Kelly traces Rau's movement from St. Louis to New York and ultimately to Washington, D.C.

Daniel Wilson should be best known for coining the term "prehistory" in 1851, although as Alice B. Kehoe points out, this contribution is often overlooked. Wilson began teaching the first archaeology in Canada, but because of his administrative abilities he was "lost" to archaeology, eventually becoming the president of the University of Toronto during its formative years. The archaeological works he produced after leaving Scotland for Canada were mainly syntheses; as is typical with syntheses, new research outdates them, and as with much of Wilson's work, such syntheses became obsolete and forgotten historical documents. In this article, Kehoe attempts to restore to Wilson the credit he deserves as an important scholar of prehistory by contrasting Wilson's work with that of some of his contemporaries, such as Lubbock, Morgan, and Powell.

Civil War to the Turn of the Century

One common thread that seemed to recur in our discussions on the papers that make up the second part of this volume was the underappreciated importance of Frederic Ward Putnam (1839–1915) of Harvard University's Peabody Museum. Either Putnam or the influence of his work at the Peabody Museum seems to be a significant part of the chapters by Bruce J. Bourque, Hilary Lynn Chester, Harvey M. Bricker, and David L. Browman. Hinsley (1999:144) recently characterized Putnam's interaction with individuals during the early period of his tenure at the Peabody Museum as "his correspondence school in archaeology that functioned simultaneously as a collecting arm for the Peabody Museum." The interactions among William Baker Nickerson, Frances Eliza Babbitt, and Albert Tarr Gamage discussed in the various chapters are excellent examples of this "correspondence school."

Bruce J. Bourque's chapter provides a summary of the beginnings of more methodological work in Maine archaeology, especially shell mound research. Bourque focuses on the great importance of the En-

glish translations of Adolphe von Morlot's summaries of European concepts and methodologies in doing prehistoric archaeology, which were published by the Smithsonian Institution (Morlot 1861, 1863). Bourque argues for a "second generation" of coastal shell midden work based on these pioneers.

Frances Eliza Babbitt, one of the important women practitioners of archaeology of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, has been rescued from obscurity in the chapter by Hilary Lynn Chester. Chester is interested in the context of the work of women in archaeology in general, so she focuses upon what she perceives as the reasons for the lack of visibility of women in archaeology during the formative years of the discipline.

Henry Chapman Mercer is best known to students of historical archaeology and of early-twentieth-century folk art restorations. Browman points out Mercer's important contributions to the development of prehistoric archaeology at Pennsylvania. In addition, in his evaluation of the new archaeological techniques Mercer championed, Browman suggests another avenue of European archaeological influence upon Americanist archaeology, through the contributions of Albert Gaudry and Marcellin Boule in their reinterpretation and expansion of the work of William Pengelly.

Several additional themes were suggested in our discussions at the Second Willey Symposium, but in the next two chapters Browman has elected to enlarge on only two of them. The first is the frequently overlooked issue of women's contributions to nineteenth-century Americanist archaeology. Many of the women involved in Americanist archaeology from 1875 to 1900 were either directly or indirectly recruited by Frederic W. Putnam's activities. Their number may be a surprise to most readers, as most histories of Americanist archaeology have overlooked their participation. Second is Putnam's underappreciated importance to several researchers of the nineteenth century and to the development of the Peabody Museum method of excavation. In doing the initial work on Putnam, Browman stumbled across an important linkage between Putnam's "Peabody Museum method" and Fay-Cooper Cole's "Chicago method," one that seems to have come about through Putnam's "correspondence school" strategy.

George Grant MacCurdy developed his archaeological interests in the context of the methodologies developed by Putnam and his colleagues. In the final chapter of this volume, Harvey M. Bricker does an exquisite job of detailing the development of MacCurdy's training, as

well as the transfer back to Europe of an Americanized version of archaeology through the American School of Prehistoric Research.

Concluding Remarks

The history of Americanist archaeology is a critical topic for the practitioners of North American archaeology today. While the study of the history of the field goes back at least 150 years, it has been rather particularistic. As scholars in archaeology, we must know where we have been intellectually in our profession in the past at some deeper level of involvement, rather than just looking briefly at a list of scholars of the past and a sample of their ideas. As Croissant (2000:193) cogently observes, the “number, strength, and density of intellectual lineages and schools greatly affects the framing of research questions” in archaeology today.

Well-known discussions of the origins of Americanist archaeology such as Trigger (1989) and Willey and Sabloff (1974, 1980, 1993) cover so much background that they by necessity have become almost historical dictionaries or surveys of intellectual endeavors, rather than detailed inquiries into individual participants or concepts. We have felt it necessary to support a more comprehensive approach toward ideas, concepts, and intellectual positions through more detailed scholarship than has often been presented in past works. Our focus on several of the underappreciated contributors to the roots of Americanist archaeology prior to 1915 begins the process of a more thorough “sociology of knowledge” of our field. We hope that such an approach, exemplified by the chapters in this volume, will indeed move the studies of our intellectual disciplinary past forward in a positive fashion.