

# AMERICAN ANTIQUITY

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## EDITORIAL

The first issue of this journal appeared 25 years ago under the editorial guidance of W. C. McKern. In his early editorials McKern set forth with vision and clarity the goals and purposes of the newly-formed Society for American Archaeology. He returns to these pages by invitation to offer his observations of the Society's efforts to achieve these aims during . . .

### THE FIRST QUARTER CENTURY

**A** HISTORICAL SUMMARY of the first 25 years of the Society for American Archaeology has, in my opinion, little purpose other than that it may serve as a measuring device by means of which to determine to what extent the original objectives of the organization have endured as important goals, and what progress has been made towards their achievement. The procedure here will be to present the factors motivative towards and productive of organization, selected highlights in the story of the Society's development, noteworthy accomplishments with consideration given to how they were accomplished, and the present status in comparison with original purposes. Complete lists of officers and committees, with dates of incumbency and other details, are space-consuming items that can easily be located in the reports of annual meetings published in *AMERICAN ANTIQUITY*, and will not be found here excepting in instances where they have a specific bearing on related events.

The original objectives of the Society were inherent in the problems and manifest needs that resulted in the birth of the organization. The recognition and formulating of these needs, however, with the suggestion of organization as a solution, came from two independent sources. The Committee on State Archaeological Surveys, created in 1921 by the National Research Council to stimulate greater interest and coordination of efforts among American archaeologists, had become increasingly aware of a lack of cooperation — in fact, basic misunderstanding — between professional archaeologists and non-professional workers with interests actively centering about archaeology or archaeo-

logical materials in various ways. It became the consensus within the Committee that archaeology could profit from the experience of such sciences as ornithology and astronomy in organizing the interests of laymen towards securing a broader web of information. At a meeting in 1933 the Committee endorsed the idea of a national organization to include both professional and non-professional members.

The following spring, at an anthropological convention in Columbus, Ohio, a group of archaeologically minded attendants were engaged in a "bull session" one evening — and accuracy compels me to add: in a smoke-filled room. P. F. Titterington, a St. Louis roentgenotherapist with amateur interests in archaeology, proposed the immediate founding of an organization including in its membership both professional and non-professional students of American archaeology. He supported his proposal with the argument that the amateur would profit from the training and experience of the professional personnel, and that the latter would benefit from the wider observance of the many with amateur interests. Such an association would tend to correct the errors of non-professional collectors and observers, and so render their productive efforts constructively useful rather than destructively harmful. Carl Guthe then reported the favorable reaction to such an organization by the Committee on State Archaeological Surveys, and others present joined in supporting the idea.

Following discussion, the group assumed the jurisdiction of a committee, with Fay-Cooper Cole acting as chairman. Guthe was authorized to circulate a letter of particulars and question-

naire to prospective members, and a committee to frame a constitution was appointed, consisting of A. V. Kidder (chairman), A. L. Kroeber, and Frank H. H. Roberts, Jr.

The response to the circular letter was favorable, and the organization meeting of the Society for American Archaeology was held on December 28, 1934, at the Hotel Roosevelt, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, following the annual subscription dinner of Section H, American Association for the Advancement of Science. Carl Guthe called the meeting to order. The committee's report on constitution and by-laws was received and adopted as revised. Thirty-one charter members signed the constitution. The following officers were elected: President, Arthur C. Parker; Vice-President, M. R. Harrington; Secretary-Treasurer, Carl E. Guthe; and Editor, W. C. McKern. Members elected to the first Council in addition to the officers were: E. F. Greenman, Emil W. Haury, Diamond Jenness, F. H. H. Roberts, Jr., Leslie Spier, W. D. Strong, George C. Vaillant, and William S. Webb. The Editor was authorized by the Council to proceed with the first issue of a quarterly organ of the Society, to be titled, *AMERICAN ANTIQUITY*, as soon as funds and material for publishing should become available.

It should be noted that the adventurous launching of this new organization, new in concept as well as in time, came in the middle of the great depression of the thirties. Money was never scarcer. Career students of anthropology, upon completion of their university training, were glad to accept low-pay positions such as helpers in museums or supervisory assistants on TVA and other reclamation projects. The new Editor faced the necessity of getting *AMERICAN ANTIQUITY* — the voice of the Society — out to the members at the earliest possible date. The growth, the continued existence of the Society, depended upon the success of its publication. But there was no publishable material at hand, and publication funds could not be provided until the gradual accumulation of dues adequately equipped an initially flat treasury.

In this emergency, Paul Titterington came to the rescue. He had prepared a well illustrated article on "Certain Bluff Mounds of Western Jersey County, Illinois," and he proposed that this, with such other material as could be collected and edited within a month, should make up the first number of the journal, the publication funds to be provided by Titterington. The

Committee on State Archaeological Surveys contributed Part 1 of its 1934 report on archaeological field work in North America, and these two items, with messages from the officers and four book reviews, permitted a first number of *AMERICAN ANTIQUITY* to be released in July, 1935, seven months after the organization meeting. By this time there remained no doubt that material and funds for the second number would be available.

The objectives of the Society were clearly expressed by its first officers. President Parker's message in the first number of *AMERICAN ANTIQUITY* cited the need for standardizations of purpose and methods acceptable to all students of American archaeology, and added: "Through the publication of *AMERICAN ANTIQUITY* it is hoped that literature may be provided for a more uniform nomenclature, for culture classification and for the common facts and methods needful for concerted action."

Secretary-Treasurer Guthe, noting in his message the upturn in archaeological interest occasioned by the Tennessee Valley and other salvage programs, concluded: "We feel that American Indian archaeology has many friends, and we are anxious to become acquainted with them. At the suggestion of one of them, the idea of a national Society for American Archaeology came into being. Its purpose is to make it possible for everyone, professional and non-professional alike, to become acquainted with the story in which all are interested. The Society has been so organized that the office of the Secretary-Treasurer may serve . . . as a means by which members of the Society may be kept in touch with activities and brought into contact with the men and the problems with which they are most concerned."

The Editor, in his message, expressed the hope that *AMERICAN ANTIQUITY* would ". . . become an instrument of value in coordinating the research efforts of all sincere students of American archaeology." Later, in his report at the first annual meeting of the Society (1935), he made the following policy statement: "The journal of any scientific society should have as a basic purpose the bringing of the geographically scattered members into a close circle of common interests and aims through serving as a ready channel for the dissemination of information and the exchange of ideas. This purpose is of increased importance in a society having both specialist and amateur members, . . . and

which proposes to establish a sympathetic understanding and mutually helpful cooperation between these two groups. If the Society and its journal are to succeed, the policy of the Editor must be that of serving the best interests of both the specialist and the amateur; which is but another way of saying, the best interests of American archaeology."

Thus conceived and created by a group of archaeologically interested students, including both those with vocational and those with avocational approaches to the field, and founded on the principle of mutual interests and benefits, the new Society got under way with the initial support about equally divided between the two elements in its dichotomy. In the 1935 total membership (442), the non-professional members held a slight majority over the professionals.

In addition to financing and improving its quarterly, the earliest efforts of the Society were directed towards standardizing archaeological terminology. For several years committees were appointed, and their various reports received and discussed at the annual meetings. These committees produced many valuable suggestions and fertile ideas. Actually, however, although the efforts of the committees frequently pointed out the way, the closer contacts and exchanges of data and methods provided for by the new organization did more to improve and standardize terminology than did the detailed recommendations of any committee. Such tools have a way of developing as the work broadens and progresses.

The first five years of the Society were years of basic establishment and initial experience, accompanied by growing pains and financial tightness. Archaeologists might be disposed to call this the "formative period." The growth had been continuous and encouraging. At the end of the first fiscal year the membership was 344, including 16 institutional members. By the end of the fourth year there were 783 members. The journal grew much more slowly. There were 340 pages in the first volume, and 392 in the fourth. However, the quantity of material submitted and the quality of the articles printed had improved steadily. Financially, the Society was successful year after year in meeting its growing budget demands. This initial success during years of national crisis was due in no small measure to the wise guidance and indefatigable efforts of Carl Guthe, who served as

Secretary-Treasurer during these five formative years. None of the early officers was neglecting his duties and responsibilities, but Guthe's constant attention to the young Society's needs far exceeded the call of duty.

The *Notebook*, intended to provide detailed presentations of those methods, equipments, and other technological aids that might prove of value to professionals and non-professionals alike, authorized in the original constitution, did not materialize until 1939. Its introduction aroused a considerable froth of interest. There were six issues in 1940, but only two the following year, for which a dearth of submitted copy was responsible. We hear Editor Douglas Byers complaining that, whereas the *Notebook* seemed to be popular, its Editor, Frederick Johnson, could only publish such material as was submitted; and later announcing that the publication would come out "irregularly as the quantity of material warrants." Almost immediately thereafter the *Notebook* expired, quietly but permanently.

The original constitution had served as a platform of fundamentals upon which the Society could take its original stand and grow. It successfully served that purpose, but by 1941 it had become inadequate to meet the requirements of the complexly expanding organization. A committee to revise the constitution worked under the chairmanship of J. Alden Mason, and a new constitution was adopted in 1942. It clarified financial procedures; defined more specifically the duties and responsibilities of officers; authorized committees; established and fixed the duties of the Executive Committee; added one Vice-President, a Treasurer, and an Associate Editor to the official staff; eliminated the controversial membership category of "Fellow," while adding three classes of special members; and in other ways modernized the instrument to meet new conditions.

A period of improvement and enlargement of AMERICAN ANTIQUITY had started when Douglas S. Byers took over the Editorship in 1939. At the time he took office there was on hand a backlog of material awaiting publication that promised a delay of as much as two years in printing, but some papers had timely significance that would make them out-of-date by the time they finally appeared in the journal. Byers sought ways to increase the capacity of the magazine, and to publish occasional contributions outside the covers of AMERICAN ANTIQ-

UNITY. The first *Memoir* came out in 1942, to start a continuous series of valuable contributions published in this category.

In 1945 the Editor's recommendation to change the format of the journal was accepted and, as a result, 75 more words could be printed on each page, or one more article on the average in each issue. This was accomplished by changing the format to a two-column page, by increasing the page size to the maximum that can be handled at minimum cost by the press, and by making a slight alteration in the type style.

As the Society grew, the non-professional members had maintained a majority status, as reported by the Editor in 1945. The problem of serving the best interests of all in the membership had become increasingly acute, since a large percentage of those contributing material to the journal were in the professional ranks of the membership. Reacting to complaints by some of the non-professional members that many of the articles on subjects of wide general interest made use of such highly technical terminology that they were understandable only to specialized students, Byers made an eloquent plea to professional contributors to express themselves, whenever possible, in language that all could understand. Of course, there would always be a type of article, important to good subject presentation and the archaeological prestige of the journal, that would require use of the most technical of terms.

During World War II, when many anthropologists were in the service, a scarcity of material for publication developed. The *American Anthropologist*, having difficulty in getting enough publishable material to maintain a journal of normal size, proposed that AMERICAN ANTIQUITY, which was experiencing less difficulty in this matter, restrict its subject matter to factual articles, and that archaeological contributions to theory be published in the *American Anthropologist*. Such a restriction, however, was deemed so unfair to members of the Society for American Archaeology that the suggestion was not accepted.

The new Editor assuming office in 1947, Irving Rouse, was confronted almost immediately with a rise in printing costs. He met the problem by restricting the scope of articles accepted, limiting the length of contributions, and raising standards of quality. It is noteworthy that, throughout its history, the Society has given its

Editors a rather free hand in policy matters, retaining its control of its publication primarily by holding the purse strings. True, all major issues were passed on by the Executive Committee, but there is on record no instance of a major request made by an Editor in the field of policy that was not granted. This attitude on the part of the Executive Committee and the membership, placing, as it did, primary responsibility for the direction of the journal on the shoulders of the Editor, and giving him a reasonably free hand to operate, has resulted in a continuously progressive magazine at all times alert to the possibilities for enlarging and improving its scope and value in the field of anthropological literature.

With the conclusion of World War II, the Society set about to enlarge and broaden its activities. The membership had increased to 927 by 1949. An optimistic sense of peace and prosperity prevailed, and the membership dues were raised from the original three to six dollars without a material loss of members. Material for publication again became plentiful. The Society widened its field of influence and prestige. It was selected as the agency to confer the Viking Medal and Award annually on deserving candidates in the category of American archaeology. The first to receive the award was A. V. Kidder. Due to certain ambiguities and conflicts in the constitution, particularly in regard to the duties and powers of the Executive Committee, the Council, and certain officers, it received a third working over. This had been a period of rehabilitation and preparation for higher accomplishment. On retiring from the Editorship, Rouse reported an increase of 21% in the size of AMERICAN ANTIQUITY during the preceding four years.

Upon assuming office, the next Editor, Jesse D. Jennings, had immediately to find a new printer, as the George Banta Publishing Company, that had printed the journal from its inception, found it impossible to continue after July, 1950. Jennings persuaded the University of Utah Press to take over, an arrangement that has proven most satisfactory.

In 1954 the Society accepted affiliation with the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The expanding influence of the Society during the years immediately following was demonstrated by the receipt of funds in sponsorship of seminars, for archaeological salvage operations at both river-valley and high-

way construction sites, and for publications — the latter generously financed by foundations, councils, and commercial establishments. By 1957 the total membership had increased to 1388, and the 1956 volume of *AMERICAN ANTIQUITY* boasted an all-time record of 460 pages.

The quality of the journal, at that time under the Editorship of Richard B. Woodbury, had been steadily improving throughout the period of its existence, and particularly during the preceding 15 years; and this without any appreciable decrease in contributions accepted from non-professional writers. At the 1957 annual meeting, Editor Woodbury reported the following statistics on authorship: During the preceding three years, 68 published articles (79% of those offered for publication) had been by professional authors, and 11 published articles (74% of those offered for publication) had been by non-professional authors; 113 contributions to Facts and Comments (73% of those submitted) were by professionals, and 28 (61% of those submitted) were by non-professionals. The latter had authored 14% of the major articles and 21% of Facts and Comments. That these percentages were not larger was due to the understandable fact that non-professional members had offered far fewer subjects for publication than had professionals, as demonstrated by the acceptance percentages.

The Society continues to grow, and if we may draw conclusions from statistics, continues to serve at least the minimum requirements of its non-professional members. The last available membership figure is 1468, including 346 institutional members, and the non-professionals still hold a small majority. According to new-member statistics covering the last ten years, there were 405 new professional members dur-

ing that period (including all members employed or with student status in anthropology, at any level), and 488 new non-professional members (including all individuals who list a non-anthropological occupation). During each of the last four of these years the number of non-professional new members has always exceeded that of the new professional members, with the exception of 1959 when they were even at 41. The trend represented by these figures has been a continuous one during the 25 years of the Society's existence. The last numbers of *AMERICAN ANTIQUITY* not only reflect the progressive efforts of the new Editor, Raymond H. Thompson, but serve as rather conclusive evidence that the journal continues to improve both in quality and size.

That the professional archaeologist is being served, and served well, is reflected in the growing membership and the recognition that the Society and its publications have received in anthropological and related scientific circles.

However, the picture is not one of storms receding over the horizon and prospects of all smooth sailing ahead. We have on hand unsolved problems, and there will be others developing in the years ahead. One problem that remains with us always is that of turning in a good performance for both categories of our membership, and one of our officers has listed this as the major problem of the Society. In the past, although there have been moments of dissension, peace has been maintained and a cordial spirit of cooperation now prevails. The success of the Society during its initial 25 years certainly stands as irrefutable evidence in support of the concept that created it.

W. C. MCKERN