

PREFACE TO SPECIAL SECTION

THE PUBLIC MEANING OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE

Barbara Little and Paul Shackel

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The public meaning of archaeology and the roles that archaeology plays in communities are increasingly recognized as integral to the practice of archaeology in the United States. Archaeology is often a vital component in the creation of national, ethnic, and community identity. Archaeology presented and discussed in public places has tremendous potential to broaden both national and local dialogue about the past and develop more inclusive histories.

The following articles are an outgrowth of a seminar on the "Public Meaning of Archaeological Heritage" held at the University of Maryland. The seminar was part of training developed by the National Park Service (NPS) and the Center for Heritage Resource Studies to reach those interested in and responsible for programs in archaeological research, interpretation, and education in our nation's public parks and historical sites. The articles discuss the public meaning of archaeology and show how archaeologists can create strategies to develop a more visible and inclusive past. They show not only how communities play important roles in the stewardship of heritage, but also how archaeological interpretation can be made relevant to descendant and local communities.

Federal agencies have a mandate for public outreach about archaeology in the Archaeological Resources Protection Act. In her article, Barbara Little describes the "shared competency" for archaeologists and interpreters in the NPS and offers a set of tools available on the Internet. Francis McManamon highlights the long history of public outreach in U.S. national parks and emphasizes how archaeology can provide visitors access to the long-term reality of diversity in the American past.

Archaeological places of many kinds are recognized as having national or international importance, and these same places

often have local meanings and contexts that are broader than that conveyed by archaeological research. In pushing archaeology to address broader stories and meaningful context, Paul Shackel urges persistence and partnerships for the hard work of public outreach. In her discussion of Copan, Lena Mortensen illustrates the complexity of interwoven international, national, and local meanings and economic realities. Jeffrey Hantman describes his work with the Monacan Indians in Virginia, illustrating how archaeology takes on extraordinary public meaning by reversing historical invisibility. Cheryl LaRoche writes of several sites with deep and persistent meaning including the African Burial Ground in Manhattan, Underground Railroad sites, and the shipwreck of the *Henrietta Marie*, a critically important discovery that had the misfortune to have been found by Mel Fisher and the good fortune to have been championed by the National Association of Black Scuba Divers. From the perspective of county government, Kirsti Uunila describes how demonstrating complex social relations in the past and framing discussions of inequality in the present use archaeology explicitly as a tool to confront racism.

Archaeology in these public places has tremendous potential to broaden our national dialogue about the past and develop more inclusive histories. Archaeology can be a vital component in the creation of national, ethnic, and community identity. These authors push the discipline into the realm of civic engagement and illustrate how archaeology has public meaning far beyond what most of us once imagined.

Some of the presentations from "The Public Meaning of Archaeological Heritage" are now available on the Center for Heritage Resource Study's website: <http://heritage.umd.edu/CHRSWeb/nps/training/papers.htm>. 