

PRIVATE ENTERPRISE AND THE CRISIS IN AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

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Introduction.

As most present-day practitioners of the science will readily concede, archaeologists are, for the most part, a very disagreeable lot. This is not to say that they are particularly unpleasant as individuals, but only that they seem perennially unable to agree with each other about anything to do with the profession of archaeology. It may be taken as a sort of index to the gravity of the situation, then, that an increasing number of archaeologists practicing in North America feel the profession, on at least one level, to be in a state of profound crisis. Although all North American archaeologists do not agree on what constitutes the crisis, or on what the solution might be, the awareness of crisis is, nevertheless, a growing force within the profession at the present writing.

Actually, the crisis in North American archaeology is a complex and multi-faceted one; it is one in which each individual scholar sees the difficulties through the framework of his own specialization. This is a perfectly natural human tendency, and one that is strongly reinforced by the specialization to which we must all subject ourselves in the educational process of our professional training. However,

it produces an unfortunate degree of fragmentation in viewpoint, and leads to a distressing quota of internal disarray within the profession. That this internal disarray can be a source of intense personal resentment, and sometimes even great professional frustration, can be attested to by nearly any individual who practices archaeology in North America. Such private annoyances, however, are minor compared to the functional disadvantages which such behaviour produces for the profession as a whole. On a corporate level it should be pointed out that the fact that we are always fighting each other (for crumbs, in most cases) has left archaeology as a profession totally vulnerable to attack from the outside. Archaeology is literally scorned and neglected as a profession by the power wielding institutions of this nation. We follow the classic pattern of oppressed minorities everywhere, fighting among ourselves when we should be uniting to slay the real dragon. The dragon, of course, is the lack of adequate institutions and funding to carry out research while the very mainstay of the profession - the prehistoric sites - are being plundered, bulldozed, or paved over for profit at a geometrically expanding rate.

This paper makes a brief examination of North American archaeology not from a fragmentary or partisan point of view, but as a total system. This is, in a sense, a synergetic approach (in the usage of B. Fuller 1970) - one which tries to view the behaviour of the system as a whole, and one which is

premised on the assumption that there is nothing in the behaviour of any of the sub-systems or components (in this case, fields of study, or sub-disciplines) which will allow or permit predictions on the system as a whole. If we stand back and view North American archaeology as a total system, hopefully we will see that much of the current crisis, multi-faceted though it may appear at close range, is the result of one central reality, namely, that archaeology is dependent on, and must operate within the confines of the larger American economic and social matrix. This means that although archaeology operates within an essentially unrestrained private enterprise or profit motive system, it must rely, paradoxically, on fundamentally socialist funding mechanisms (like government grants). Archaeology produces no salable commodities, shows no profits, and the vast majority of its services are of interest only to other archaeologists, certainly not to the paying public on whose mercy and generosity the profession must rely for its own survival. Is it any wonder that archaeological research funds are ususally the first victims of budget slashes? It is basically contradictory for archaeology to exist as a system within a private enterprise economic sphere when it must rely primarily on public funding. This paper argues that herein lies the basic contradiction which is presently threatening the future and causing the crisis within the profession.

Examples.

Using the above perspective, it is instructive to touch briefly on several examples of crisis within the profession, observing what the common thread of continuity may be.

It should be noted that no "in-depth" analysis is attempted here. Rather a practical **perspective** is offered which brings us closer to a true definition of the problem, and hopefully, its solution.

"New" vs. "Old" Archaeology

All American archaeologists are familiar with, indeed, perhaps even tired of the controversy between partisans of these two polarized theoretical schools that now rages in the literature. This is particularly true of the great many scholars who would agree with F. Hole (1971) that professionally the need exists for both types of theoretical approach. I would submit that, when seen historically and from afar, the problem may be stated thusly: Only when there are more practitioners than there is money does one's theoretical school become as critical as it now appears to be in American archaeology. All of the more mature sciences have not two, but many schools of theory. This is precisely how they evolve. In archaeology it is not so much one's theoretical school as it is possible access to control of funding by partisans of a particular school that is generating so much heated verbage and channeling, wastefully, so much energy into philosophical controversy.

The Salvage Battle.

Due to a number of excellent articles and symposia over the past decade, we are all aware of a series of controversies centering around the problems of so-called salvage archaeology (for example, Heizer 1964; 1966; Schumacher 1966; Stephenson 1963; Hester 1963; Jennings 1963; King 1971). Debate centers on such questions as: Have the programs been worthwhile? Is the basic concept fiscally sound? Administrative problems? Etc. Without being partisan, it is instructive to point out in all papers on the subject the underlying tone is, stated colloquially, who gets the biggest piece of the pie! Indeed, the excellent summary paper by King (1971) is essentially a plea - though quite elegant and sophisticated theoretically - to more sensibly distribute the opportunities, share the funds, and cooperate in pursuit of research goals commonly articulated. Needless to say, though such a coordinated program would be the pride of any science, its current urgency in North American archaeology is dictated at least as much by funding shortages as it is by theoretical suitability.

Crux of Crisis: Site Destruction.

The above two examples are cases where "normal" theoretical differences have been promoted and exacerbated by funding shortages which are a logical correlate of the contradictory position occupied by archaeology in the American economic system. My final example, one which is also caused

by archaeology's ill-defined relationship to American economic reality, is one that, in a sense, will shortly make the other difficulties pale away into insignificance. Of course I am referring to the rapid destruction of archaeological sites, an activity which amounts to the taking away of the very bread and butter of the profession.

As any historian of North American archaeology can attest, the problem of wanton site destruction has persistently preoccupied professionals in this country. In a cyclic way, concern for the problem reaches periodic crescendoes (surely the Antiquities Act of 1906 was one of these "peaks"), but it is never really solved (cf. Judd 1929). We are presently in a peak period of concern which, while it is not the first such period, will in all probability be the last, simply because we are reaching the point where there will soon be no sites left for adequate testing. I make this statement as more than a simple personal opinion. In 1972 myself and several colleagues sent out a form questionnaire polling some 500 American archaeologists on the problem of site destruction. Among other things, they were asked: What percentage of sites (in their particular area of interest and knowledge) were protected by Federal law? How effective has Federal protection been for these sites? What percentage of sites have already been destroyed? How many years before site destruction will have reached such proportions that field projects will be

impossible due to lack of sites? Over 25% of the forms were returned, and the resultant answers are, to say the least, astounding. Broken down roughly by geographical area they are broadly summarized as follows.

Eastern United States

Less than 15% of eastern archaeological sites are protected by Federal law. Where protected, sites do well, but rate of destruction in most areas is over 50%. Even in large portions of Maine, 70% of the sites have been destroyed. In some areas, like around New York City, there will be no more sites left in 5 years. Most areas estimate that no more field work will be possible after 20 years. The only areas which presently appear to have a bright archaeological future are upstate New York, coastal South Carolina, and the DelMarVa peninsula.

Midwest

Consistently over 75% of the river valley sites in the American midwest have been destroyed. Roughly 40% of the sites in other areas are gone. In urban regions, destruction has reached nearly 90% of known sites. Federal protection of sites has largely expired in the process of salvage projects connected with dam building operations. Most respondents estimated no more than 20 years more of possible fieldwork.

Western United States

Federal law supposedly protects about 50% of the archaeological sites in the western United States, largely because the sites are located on Federal property. With some categories of Federal property, like National Parks, protection is superb, and very few sites are destroyed. In National Forests protection is less absolute, but real efforts are being made, and it is possible to assume that sites in the Forests are relatively safe from destruction. Other categories of Federal land, particularly the vast reaches under Bureau of **Land Management** jurisdiction have totally inadequate policies for preservation of sites. Destruction of sites on BLM land and on private property throughout the west has reached as high as 80% in most areas. Our poll reveals that few archaeologists think field work will be feasible in 10 years. Even the most optimistic feel that all the sites will be gone in 30 years. In urban areas, like Los Angeles (Moratto 1970:2) and **Portland** (Newman 1971: 1-2) published accounts report over 95% of all sites destroyed. On San Francisco Bay, 6 of 450 sites remain since 1908 (Moratto 1970: 2), and the whole of California loses over 1,000 sites annually (Ibid.). Even in remote areas of the Great Basin, numerous sites have been entirely destroyed (Clewlow, Hallinan, and Ambro 1971), and possible field work appears to have at best a 10 year life expectancy.

In short, our informal polling of practicing archaeologists seems to bear out the most dire prophecies of published accounts of site destruction in the United States (Davis 1971; 1972; Ford, Roligson, and Medford 1972) and Canada (Wright 1969). We also asked archaeologists to name those agencies or forces most responsible for destroying sites. In the East it was urbanization, private land development, industrial farming, and lastly, pot-hunters. In the West, urban sprawl, private land development, and pot-hunters are the prime culprits. It is worth noting in relation to the main theme of the paper, that all these destructive activities are private enterprise in one form or another. Private enterprise, particularly in those activities not covered by present Federal laws, must bear the heaviest burden of guilt for the destruction of American archaeology.

Response.

It is one thing to bemoan the existence of a problem, and quite another to respond to it constructively. In order to articulate a constructive response, we must break a problem into its component parts and proceed one at a time to analyze them for answers. There are two main components to the problem of archaeological site destruction; the one being large scale private land development, and the other being pot-hunting, or private collecting.

Pot-hunting has always been a problem for professional archaeologists, and there is no doubt that private collecting has reached enormously destructive proportions in many areas. J. H. Kelley, for example, has estimated "that 50% of the archaeological potential of the South Plains has been destroyed by amateurs, and most of it in the last 15 years" (1963: 394). While it is impossible to guess how many private collectors there are in the United States, Kelley (Ibid.) has noted that at least 50 such persons reside in all towns with a population of over 40,000. As vast as this army of plunderers must be, our survey shows that most archaeologists feel that they do less destructive damage than large scale land development. Archaeology in America has traditionally blamed pot-hunters for site destruction (cf. Judd 1929), and while they no doubt provide a yearly quota of spectacular examples, it now appears that the more quantitative damage is done less obtrusively and with more sophistication by land developers and their gigantic earth moving machines. Nevertheless, pot-hunting and private collecting are stubborn facts, and no amount of wishful thinking can will them away. Nor does it seem likely that "better enforcement of existing laws" will solve the problem in the near future. The combined efforts of Federal, state and local governments can no longer keep the streets of large cities safe from pillage, so it is unreasonable to expect them to do so for remote archaeological sites. It seems to me that

pot-hunting is a double edged sword. On the one hand its extent can be considered an index to the large number of persons who have a raw or unprogrammed interest in archaeology. All these persons are potential allies to professionals in many phases of their work. On the other hand they are an amazingly destructive force. The extent to which this negative potential is realized, it seems to me, is directly related to the effort that professional archaeologists devote to channeling the energy of amateur groups. Most American professionals are loathe to do this, and, granted, it is often a major headache. However, if we ever intend to really reach the "general public," it will only be done by consistent and patient professional contact with amateurs on a community level. A great deal of worthwhile literature exists on the subject (for example, Ferguson 1972; Nickerson 1962a; 1962b; 1963; Nelson 1962; Osbourne 1962; McGimsey 1972a), and it is no accident that areas like the San Francisco Bay area (Moratto, this volume; King 1968) and the state of Arkansas (McGimsey 1972), where damage from pot-hunting is minimal and local laws and cooperation strongest, are precisely the places where professionals have spent the most time and energy working at a "grass roots" level of contact. It would appear that there is no other logical response to this problem.

A similarly pragmatic and straightforward approach must be employed against large land developers. It is clear that

as a profession, as an organized group, we must go after the culprits. We must stop sites on private lands from being destroyed in a wholesale fashion. This means that each archaeologist must arm himself with all the legal weapons at his disposal and be prepared to go to court to win his points. Laws which deal with environmental issues are in a state of flux at present, and archaeology should seize the advantage and stem the destruction from the local level to the Federal. Fortunately, a number of excellent publications exist which can be utilized by archaeologists wishing to familiarize themselves with pertinent legal information on changing laws regarding antiquities (for example, Nelson 1960; King 1968; Rozaire 1969; Hallinan, this volume; McGimsey 1971a; 1971b; 1972a; 1972b). Many local journals and newsletters are also printing information on laws as available. Obviously, legal battles cannot be fought, nor laws changed, without broad community support. This is yet another reason to open up better communication with, and increase opportunities for participation by responsible amateur groups. Moreover (and this point has been made time and time again), as a profession we must produce more popular articles so as to include the public in issues which concern us. If we continue to crank out specialized reports for a few other interested specialists, to the exclusion of the general reading public, then we surely, as McGimsey (1971a)

suggests, will "publish and perish."

The following quotes are taken in excerpt from a real estate promotion newspaper published in 1972 by the Penn-Phillips Land Co. as an advertisement for prospective buyers in Klamath County:

"... Indian artifact hunting is a very popular activity for many local residents and some of the visitors to the great Klamath Basin. Many people have artifacts over years of hard and fruitful hunting... While the artifacts are harder to come by each year, it seems that the number of searchers continues to grow. Today, a good artifact hunter may spend all day finding a few, whole arrowheads. Because some days are just better than others, the good hunter will not be slowed by the bad day afield. He knows that the next streamside or foothill might prove to be what he has been looking for over the long years... And now, a warning. Once you have been "bitten by the bug" of hunting for Indian artifacts, you will never be able to shake the dream of finding the perfect piece of history's treasure."

Aside from the fact that it is disgraceful for archaeological resources to be destroyed as part of a real estate sales pitch, a quote such as the above points out two things. First, it shows that private land developers, for the most part, have no respect for archaeology if it stands in the way of profit, and it illustrates the scope of the problem we face. Certainly it will take more than an appeal to their "good will" to terminate such actions. Thus, the need for legal groundwork, as mentioned above. Secondly, the quote points to the fact that many or most Americans feel

a deep, if often misguided, interest in the country's prehistory. It is this common interest that archaeologists have failed to recognize, channel, or reinforce in our dealings with laymen. It is upon this interest which archaeologists, rather than real estate sharks, must capitalize to save sites. Simply saving sites, however, is probably not enough to capture the popular imagination or cooperation. We must also utilize sites in the public interest. Archaeology, to fit better into American economic reality, must have a "product" to sell, other than scholarly reports. And what better products than preserved sites, incorporated into local "open spaces," and accompanied by local museums and explanatory or educational displays? Americans, with expanded leisure time, are seeking "multiple use" of open spaces, and archaeology can provide a real public service, and save sites as well, by innovating in this area (cf. Shomon 1971). Lipe (1971) has explored the notion of a conservation theme for American archaeology, and Dixon (1971) has demonstrated the educational resource base of outdoor archaeological museums, pointing out that they are relevant to contemporary regional planning, and that they have immediate, visible public benefit as well as long-term value. I heartily endorse their efforts, and feel that now is the time for archaeology to get into the groundswell of the American ecology movement.

One final point should be addressed here, and that is the question of "Who pays?" I suggest that if private enterprise is destroying the sites for profit, then private enterprise should pay. Private enterprise should be made to pay for the adequate investigation of sites it destroys, and it should pay for the educational use of preserved sites in areas it develops. The government cannot afford to meet our professional needs. We must forge laws that force large companies to pay for the research of areas they intend to profit on. Ten years ago, Wendorf (1963) made a similar suggestion. If it is not actualized in the next ten years, it will be too late. Archaeology must now urgently work to generate a solidarity that will allow us to pool our resources (professional and amateur alike) against a common culprit, rather than battling each other as our ship slowly founders on the rocks of present day environmental profiteering.

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