



Friends of the Office of State Archaeology

Member Newsletter
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FOSA
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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

In addition to our continuing volunteer efforts to assist OSA projects, summarized elsewhere in this newsletter, FOSA remained focused this spring and summer on the continuing struggle to secure adequate funds for OSA operations. The legislative effort to pass a bill supporting cultural heritage and tourism, including \$100,000 for OSA, died in committee due to lack of support from the General Assembly leadership and the Governor's office. With widespread support for the bill throughout Connecticut's historic preservation community, and the positive reaction of a large number of individual legislators who voted for the bill in several committees, efforts to pass another version of the bill will continue in the next session.

FOSA participation in this campaign enhanced awareness of archaeology's contribution to Connecticut's cultural history among other preservation activists. In May, Nick Bellantoni, about half the FOSA board, and director Ellen Censky of the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History attended a reception at Mystic Seaport hosted by the Connecticut Humanities Council to gather all supporters of the heritage and tourism legislative effort.

FOSA will continue to coordinate our lobbying and education efforts for the bill with the CHC, including conversations with key legislators and gubernatorial staff and advisors.

Our less visible efforts to get legislative support for OSA funding were probably somewhat more successful. FOSA treasurer Dreda Hendsey worked with a legislator last Spring towards adding funds to the Natural History Museum budget for immediate OSA staffing needs. A commitment, less formal than we wished for, was made to increase the UCONN contribution to the OSA budget by \$15,000. After some delays, this sum was recently transferred to the museum, and Nick is now planning how best to use it. We hope this becomes a minimal annual UCONN commitment, but continuing uncertainties about universi-

ty support for OSA only re-focus our efforts to secure explicit, permanent funding through mechanisms such as the cultural heritage and tourism bill.

Election season is a good time to get the attention of our state legislators on the cultural heritage and tourism bill. Elsewhere in this newsletter, you will find a short letter which we hope you will re-use and send to your local representatives in the House and Senate. Feel free to use your own words, and try and get a few friends to do likewise.

FOSA will be heavily involved in organizing what has become an annual introduction to archaeology for Glastonbury 7th-graders in October. After orientation sessions led by Nick Bellantoni and Dave Cooke at Gideon Welles School, students will be allowed to excavate in the upper inches of plowzone at the Morgan Site under the supervision of avocational and professional archaeologists. Students will also learn to screen, wash, and catalog artifacts. The richness of the site assures everyone will find and learn something, but there will be no damage to undisturbed archaeological deposits. Last year's event was a great success, and FOSA gained some new members.

Mike Raber

PIPELINE THROUGH THE PAST

To thank FOSA's current members, we are pleased to enclose with this newsletter the booklet "Pipeline Through The Past: Archaeology and the Iroquois Pipeline Project," published by the Iroquois Gas Transmission System. Extra copies will be available for pickup at the Annual Meeting.

IN THE FIELD, FAR AND WIDE

Field work this year has taken Nick and his volunteers to the far reaches of the state. We have worked on projects in Guilford, Wethersfield, Middletown, Bethany, Manchester, South Woodstock,

Trumbull, New Milford, Salem, Greenwich, Voluntown, Coventry, East Hartford, Brooklyn, and probably your town too.

These projects involved both prehistoric and historic sites and we also delved into a little forensic archaeology occasionally. The diversity of these projects makes for constantly changing new adventures. Time in the field is never boring. You see new places and meet new people.

The nucleus of Nick's field team is still the Arthur Basto Archaeological Society, but any and all persons interested in "hands on" archaeology are more than welcome. In South Woodstock, many members of the local historical society joined in the dig and thoroughly enjoyed it as did more than 100 students from a local prep school located there.

In Voluntown, the dig took on the aspects of a Sherlock Holmes mystery. Strange artifacts were uncovered there that need to be analyzed thoroughly in many different ways before any conclusions can be made. A most perplexing site.

Middletown and Wethersfield had us working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and their ground penetrating radar equipment seeking burials at Wethersfield while at Middletown we were looking for, of all things, nude statues. Who says archaeology is dull?

As you can see, we never know what the next phone call will involve. Be it a prehistoric Indian village site, a historic 18th century tavern, an isolated burial, or a mystery that would intrigue Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the field work volunteers are ready. Those of you that want a "change of pace" -- come join the team. To volunteer for field work, email Kathie Kelleher at dkelle2358@aol.com or call the Office of State Archaeology on Mondays at (860) 486-5248.

Dave Cooke

A LETTER FOR LEGISLATORS

Here is a short letter which you can send to your state legislators, encouraging them to support the bill on cultural heritage and tourism. You can find the

names and addresses of your legislators in the blue pages of your phone book, under Connecticut State Legislators.

During the last legislative session, Senate Bill 566 proposed long-overdue, permanent support for Connecticut's cultural heritage and tourism. The bill did not reach the House and Senate floors, but will be re-introduced in the next session after more discussions with legislative leaders and gubernatorial advisors.

The proposed funding addresses critical needs of public and non-profit institutions which provide the foundation for tourist visits to historical structures, archaeological sites, and museum exhibits. This bill will allow the State Archaeologist to begin meeting his office's mandate to manage Connecticut's archaeological collections, preserve unmarked burials, identify and protect archaeological properties, and educate the public about the state's archaeological resources (10a CGS 112).

The state-owned archaeological collections are a large and valuable resource for exhibit development and research. Archaeological education promotes the heritage industry: a public which understands and values archaeology is a public which will spend money protecting and visiting archaeological resources. Connecticut's archaeological sites are not all underground, but include hundreds of structures, landscapes, and ruins. These sites, many on state land or on publicly-accessible properties of various land trusts, attract students and other visitors now.

With modest investments, archaeological sites can be interpreted and promoted for visitation. I urge you to support this bill when it re-emerges.

VOLUNTEERING: AS GOOD AS IT GETS

It is difficult to pick the most interesting thing you could become involved in as a volunteer in the Office of State Archaeology. This summer has been "abuzz" with activity. One of the highlights was working with four high school age young women who were participants in a UCONN mentoring program. Nick was their mentor and the volunteers got to work with the students both in the field and in the office.

