



# Friends of the Office of State Archaeology

*Member Newsletter  
Spring 2001*

FOSA  
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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The latest act in the saga of funding OSA is the reappearance in the state legislature of the proposed Cultural Heritage Tourism act, with about the same amount of funding outlined last year for preservation institutions but in a much more politically-astute package. Check out Raised Bill No. 1257 on the legislative section of the state's web site ([www.cga.state.ct.us](http://www.cga.state.ct.us)), which is more user-friendly than it was during our last campaign. As the bill moves beyond the Commerce Committee, where easy passage is expected, we will be contacting the membership by e-mail when nudges to our elected representatives seem appropriate. FOSA is also exploring some other funding options for OSA, but the \$100,000 designated for the office in Bill 1257 is the best alternative presently on the table.

Our February 4, 2001 annual meeting was a great success, as reported elsewhere in this newsletter. Nick Bellantoni's talk on the now-infamous Voluntown rockshelter was the big draw, and FOSA garnered a few new members from the large (for us) crowd. The main issue Nick raised in his talk - how to know when an archaeological find is "real" - will also be the focus of the Archaeology Day sponsored by the Connecticut Museum of Natural History on April 1. Nick and the museum staff are working on a special, somewhat theatrical presentation designed to thaw out our snow-laden brains. Get yourself to the Jorgensen Auditorium for this one.

*Mike Raber*

## NICK'S NEWS

### *NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE ARCHAEOLOGY*

As most of you have heard, read, and watched, the archaeological site in eastern Connecticut that our office has determined is a hoax has been part of a major media blitz. At the FOSA Annual Meeting in South Windsor, the state archaeologist presented some of the preliminary findings from the field and laboratory analysis on this site. Although our anal-

ysis stage is not completed, the story broke and we have been attempting to stay on top of the situation.

The Cultural Heritage Bill (Raised Bill No. 1257) has been reintroduced to the legislature for the 2001 session. Thanks to the lobbying efforts of FOSA, the Archaeological Society of Connecticut and many of the regional societies, this bill can have a positive effect on our office. The bill to support economic development and tourism within the state through the promotion of history and cultural heritage has passed the Commerce Committee. Enactment of the bill will provide needed funds for archaeological collections and tourism, such as Archaeology Awareness Week.

Archaeological sites have become tourist destinations all over the world, attracting millions of people to single sites. While our sites are not on a par with the Egyptian tombs or the ancient pyramids, Connecticut has a rich and diverse archaeological heritage. The significance of that heritage has been undervalued because the resources to promote these sites for tourism have never been fully exploited. We know that there is an interest in the topic because our office provides over 80 talks and 20 workshops, as well as tours of archaeological sites each year that are always filled to capacity. The OSA receives calls on a weekly basis throughout the year from people requesting information on current "digs" that the public can visit. Sites that have been opened to the public have yielded wonderful attendance results. The passing of this bill will provide the resources for all of us to promote archaeology in the state, and, that will benefit all of our collective works.

As of this writing the bill is moving through various committees. We will need your support soon to phone, email, and write your legislative representatives in support of these actions. Feel free to contact OSA at (860) 486-5248 for updates and on how you can help. In addition, FOSA President Mike Raber will also be coordinating lobbying efforts.

*Nick Bellantoni*

## ANNUAL MEETING

Seventy-six people attended FOSA's largest annual meeting on February 4, 2001 at the Wood Memorial Library in South Windsor. As usual, Dr. Nick's presentation (on the Patchaug Forest Rockshelter) was excellent and anyone who has not heard it should try to (call Nick for the next date and place). Future archaeologist Tyson Nolf, a freshman at Westbrook High School, made an excellent, well-received PowerPoint Presentation "What it Means to Be an Archaeologist." Kristen Keegan of Keegans Associates brought maps of the state's reported archaeological sites for all to see.

Following the presentations, the business meeting and elections were held. Mike Raber briefly reported on FOSA's activities over the past year. He also indicated that April 1 had been designated Archaeology Day with programs at the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History. On April 28 the Archaeological Society of Connecticut will be holding its annual meeting at UCONN.

Kathie Kelleher reported that more than 3,684 hours were contributed by volunteers in the OSA office and in the field for the year 2000. She also reported on items that FOSA had purchased most recently for the Office of State Archaeology. FOSA obtained a cell phone and one year of service for Nick, four campus parking passes, a soil probe, and a rubber stamp for site collection bags for Nick's office.

The secretary's report indicated that FOSA had 79 members of which 21 had paid their dues for 2001. Because the Treasurer was unable to attend, there was no Treasurer's Report.

Mike Raber presented Gary Nolf, Bruce Greene, and Chris Noble as continuing members of the Board. There were no nominations from the floor. *Officers and Board of Directors:* Mike Raber, President; Ken Beatrice, Vice President; Dreda Hendsey, Treasurer; Kathie Kelleher, Recording Secretary; and Mae Johnson, Corresponding Secretary. The remaining Board Members are Bonnie Beatrice, June Cooke, Bruce Greene, Chris Noble, and Gary Nolf.

After the meeting Jean Klein, Education Director of Wood Memorial Library, conducted a guided tour of the library's collections of 18<sup>th</sup> century furniture, archaeological artifacts, and mounted birds.

The Annual Meeting was successful because of the many volunteers who assisted or brought some special treats for all to enjoy. A special thanks to Kathie Kelleher, June and Dave Cooke, Bonnie Beatrice, and Gary Nolf for his "Clam Chowder."

*Ken Beatrice, Mae Johnson*

## VOLUNTEERS

Soon the "White Stuff" will be gone and the soil will be more receptive to our trowels. It looks like a very busy spring with several prehistoric and historic sites to be investigated. Persons interested in assisting with any of the field work should contact Dr. Nick Bellantoni's office or Ken Beatrice, Volunteer Coordinator, 860-434-5114 or email [k.beat@worldnet.att.net](mailto:k.beat@worldnet.att.net).

This winter volunteers have been very busy in the preparation and cataloging of the artifacts from last season's digs. Many hours were donated by students of UConn, along with members of both FOSA and the Arthur Basto Archaeological Society. "Don't tell anyone," but this is a great way to help Dr. Nick's office and you get to touch and learn about both historic and prehistoric artifacts. If you are interested in helping out, please keep this in mind. No experience is necessary.

See you in the field and bring a lunch.

*Ken Beatrice*

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Angela Bellantoni, Newington  
 David Bingham, MD, Salem  
 Richard & Aileen Callahan, Willington  
 Joan Clapp, Manchester  
 Willey Collazo, Bridgeport  
 Jacqueline & Henri Coppes, MD, Westbrook  
 Betsy & John Corrigan, Washington  
 Gerald Lettieri, Rocky Hill  
 Bruce Marvonek, Stafford Springs  
 Cynthia Redman, Windsor  
 Cecelia Saunders, Westport  
 Paul Scannell, East Windsor  
 David Shortell, Farmington  
 Roger Thompson, South Windsor

### FOSA ANNUAL ACCOUNT 2000

	<u>Expense</u>	<u>Income</u>	<u>Balance</u>
<b>Beginning Balance 1/1/2000</b>			<b>\$3,285.52</b>
Office Expense			
FOSA Secretary	\$ 350.00		
US Postmaster-box & postage	77.20		
CT Sec. Of the State	25.00		
CT League of History Org.	30.00		
Service Charges	68.70		
State Archaeologist Expense	366.98		
Annual Meeting Speaker Fee	150.00		
Annual Meeting Expense	99.80		
ASC Donation	<u>100.00</u>		
	<b>\$1,267.68</b>		
Memberships & Donations		<u>\$2,463.00</u>	
		<b>\$2,463.00</b>	
<b>Ending Balance 12/31/2000</b>			<b>\$4,480.84</b>

### OSA AND THE PELTON KILN SITE (Bloomfield, CT)

In August 1999, Lon Pelton of Pelton Excavation Co. discovered this site while excavating the foundation of a new home. It is located about one mile north of Bloomfield center on route 189 and was the last available building lot left in a tract that was divided up back in the 1940s. The property's dimensions are approximately 130 feet frontage by 130 feet deep. Lon informed me of his find after he uncovered a large amount of stoneware shards and associated kiln furniture used in stacking the pottery when fired. After seeing the site and artifacts, I was satisfied that this was compelling evidence of a rare stoneware pottery manufacture site and notified State Archaeologist Nick Bellantoni. He visited the site and, being impressed with what he saw, decided to put a crew together to recover and record what we could before the foundation was poured and final landscaping was completed.

In September, Nick Bellantoni and crew met several times and recovered a deluge of stoneware shards, kiln furniture, and some glazed bricks and furnace slag. Much of the pottery was found in several of the surrounding mounds of topsoil that were scraped away before the foundation was dug. The artifact provenience was recorded relative to the mounds in which they were found and the stratified

layer that Lon initially discovered in the foundation wall. In the meantime, I was researching maps and land deeds at the Bloomfield Town Hall to gather historical information about the site.

By October the foundation was poured and hundreds of stoneware shards and associated kiln furniture had been recovered. Time was starting to run out but Lon held off the final landscaping as long as he could, allowing further site research and artifact recovery. I test pitted across the back part of the property but didn't find anything except for a layer of stones I thought was ledge, but further investigation by Lon with earth moving equipment revealed a feature that was possibly the partial remains of a building foundation. Also while moving earth in another part of the property, Lon ran into a dug out area filled with stone. From his description, this feature sounds like it could have been a dry well.

Despite all that was being recovered, the most exciting discovery was yet to come. Lon was digging by the street to connect up to the storm drain when two feet below the surface a dense deposit of large stoneware shards was uncovered. Further, many of the shards could be mated with others found in the vicinity. I was able to piece together about 70 percent of a beautiful salt-glazed, cobalt blue decorated, stoneware cooking pot. This ability to mate and reassemble is strong evidence of primary deposition

and not artifacts that have been trotted upon and scattered over time. Since they were laying close to the road, it is possible these shards were conveniently dumped here from another location nearby, without a connection to any of the previous property owners.

Many of the shards were from single-handle stove pots, plain and decorated jugs with incised and painted bird and flora decorations. They were all manufactured on a wheel and all are typically ovate in shape. The stylistic evolution, through the 19th century, of American stoneware goes from ovate to straight-sided forms manufactured in mass and formed in presses and molds. Therefore, from my research, I tend to attribute our artifacts to a pre-1850 style.

The kiln furniture themselves were interesting artifacts. They are props and tiles used to support the pottery in the kiln when stacking it for firing. All those found came in four different shapes and looked exactly like the examples found in stoneware pottery books.

Another surprising find was shards that had other shards embedded in them under a layer of glaze. This is a result of kiln explosions, possibly because the greenware (prefired pottery) had too much water content. After being formed on the wheel, pottery has to be put aside for days to thoroughly dry before stacking and firing it in the kiln. Explosions were a risk of the business and all the remains on this property may have come from this disaster. This must have been a very discouraging occurrence and may have put this venture out of business.

The pottery varies in quality. Some pieces have a high quality stoneware body with a beautiful cobalt blue decoration and salt glaze exterior. Others have a beautiful chocolate brown Albany slip glaze in its interior. But some had a high percentage of local clay mixed with the stoneware clay, evidently to stretch the potter's valuable supply of stoneware clay. I say valuable because this clay isn't found in New England and had to be shipped into the area from as far away as New Jersey or New York.

Connecticut had several stoneware potteries located in cities and towns along the shoreline or near navigable waterways where the stoneware clay could be transported. Hartford had several potteries in the 19th century, located near wharves on the Connecticut River. Transporting stoneware clay to

this area of Bloomfield is probably the most interesting aspect of this site because it is not located near a navigable waterway or railroad. There was no railroad in Bloomfield until the 1870s. One possible transportation option previous to 1850 other than overland was via canal. This area of Bloomfield is only a few miles from Simsbury where the Farmington Canal, between the early 1830s to 1847, handled freight inland from New Haven Harbor through the center of Connecticut. Therefore, before 1850 any stoneware clay brought to this site would have arrived by canal or overland from the wharves of Hartford that were 15 to 20 miles away.

Digging stopped just before Thanksgiving in 1999 because of heavy rains followed by final landscaping. I continue to research the historical record trying to find who the potter was and the scope of this enterprise. All property owners going back to 1850 are known and deeds and probates of these owners show no mention or connection to pottery.

We owe Lon Pelton a great deal of gratitude for his discovery and interest in the site, and for buying us time to accomplish this rescue archaeology. We think of archaeology as digging meticulously with small tools, such as hand trowels and dental picks, but this is a good example of a site that would have been probably lost forever if it weren't for large earth moving equipment.

*Jim Trocchi, FOSA member,  
Windsor Historical Society*

**ASC SPRING MEETING NOTICE**

The Spring Meeting for the Archaeological Society of Connecticut will be held on April 28, 2001 at UConn.

**ARCHAEOLOGY DAY IS APRIL 1st  
(NO FOOLING!)**

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