



Special Points of Interest:

Tributes to Don Rankin

His Beloved Aunt Polly

And So The Tomb Remained (New book by Dr. Nick)

Fall 2021

FRIENDS OF THE OFFICE OF STATE ARCHAEOLOGY, INC.

Member Newsletter



President's Letter

Greetings,

After a COVID truncated 2020 field season, the 2021 field season saw FOSA volunteers making up for lost time supporting OSA sponsored or approved projects. Our members have worked on the Templeton site (Washington – Paleo-Indian), Hollister site (South Glastonbury – Historic), Two Wrasslin' Cats Coffee House (East Haddam – Paleo-Indian), Cesar Peters Homestead (Hebron – Historic), Mary and Eliza Freeman Houses (Bridgeport – Historic), Thomas Lee House (East Lyme – Historic) and St. Platon's Russian Orthodox Church (Danbury – Historic). FOSA members have also provided support for several ground penetrating radar surveys and a hardcore group of volunteers are still in the field working on processing features at the Hollister site. As you can imagine this level of field work generates a tremendous quantity of artifacts, paperwork and soil samples. Thankfully, UConn has established COVID protocols for on-campus volunteers and FOSA volunteers are already on-campus many Mondays and Tuesdays washing, sorting and processing all the material collected in the field this year. On behalf of State Archaeologist Dr. Sarah Sportsman and the FOSA Board of Directors, I would like to thank each and every volunteer for their participation. These projects would not be possible without your help.



You can make a difference if you shop on Amazon.com. FOSA is a registered charity with Amazon's foundation, Amazon Smile.

For qualified purchases, a portion of your purchase (.5%) will be donated to the Friends of the Office of State Archaeology, CT. You may register for this program at www.smile.amazon.com

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President's Letter, Continued from page 1

In conjunction with the Archaeological Society of Connecticut (ASC), we have started a new series of Zoom presentations focusing on topics directly or indirectly related to Connecticut archaeology. With the first presentation completed, we will keep you apprised of additional talks, as well as when previous shows become archived, via email and on our Facebook page. The earlier presentations were very well received and we are confident the new series will be just as exciting and informative.

I would like to take a moment to wish two dedicated volunteers on our field crew - Lori Kessel and Patty Jubinska - continued best wishes in their recoveries. You were both missed in the field this summer and look forward to working alongside you both in 2022.

We hope that you continue to feel you have received a good value for your membership dollars. We are committed to providing you additional volunteer and educational opportunities and, as always, we will continue to ensure your contributions continue preserving Connecticut's archaeological heritage.

Scott Brady,

FOSA President

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Friends of the Office of State Archaeology, Inc. (FOSA) is a volunteer not-for-profit organization founded in 1997. The organization was formed by people concerned about support for the Connecticut Office of State Archaeology (OSA), which has a minimal budget for staff other than the State Archaeologist's salary.

FOSA's mission is to enhance the efforts of OSA to help meet the numerous state-mandated responsibilities of the Office of State Archaeology and to enable the office to provide additional services to the state's towns, students, and other citizens.

FOSA meets these goals by:

- > Developing and facilitating educational activities to increase public awareness of the OSA and archaeological issues in general.
- > Encouraging participation by communities, institutions, corporations and individuals in supporting the mission of the OSA.
- > Encouraging partnerships between OSA scientific research initiatives and local communities.
- > Developing permanent sources of financial support and other public assistance for OSA efforts.

"The active participation of volunteer organizations, particularly FOSA, are critical to the ability of the Office of State Archaeology to accomplish its mission of preserving the rich archaeological heritage of the State of Connecticut. Their efforts are greatly appreciated."

- Dr. Sarah Sportman, CT State Archaeologist



News from the Office of State Archaeology

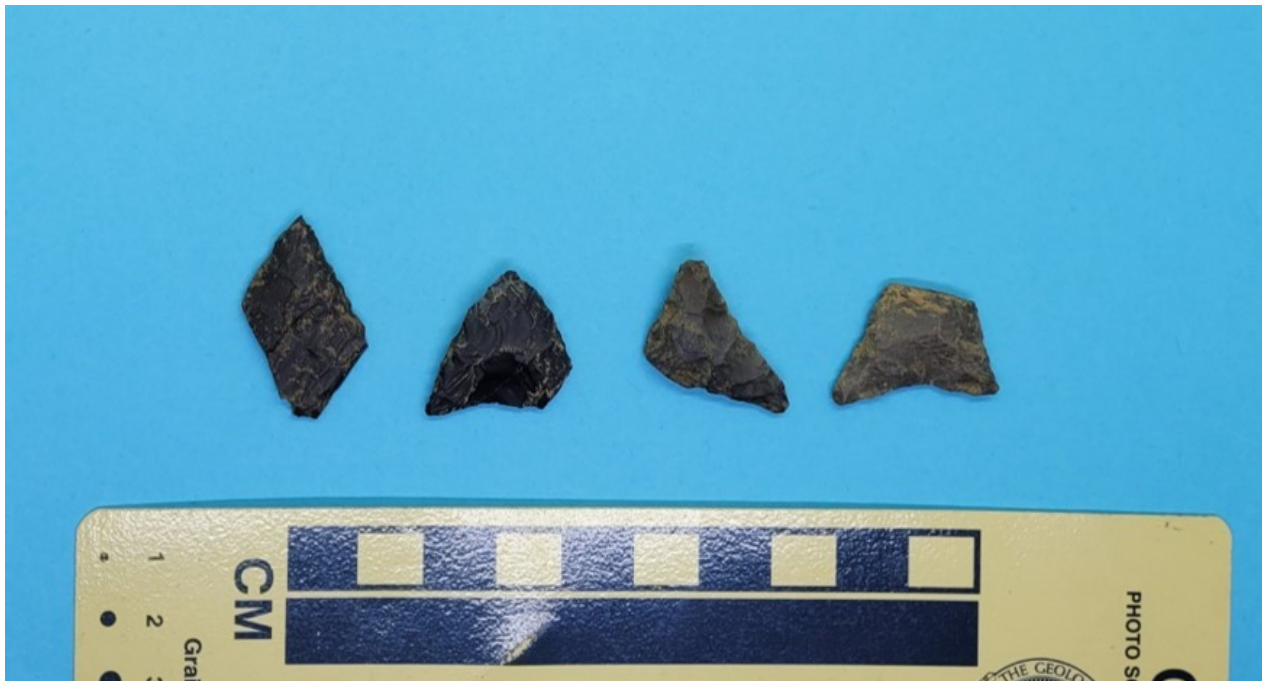
Greetings FOSA members:

We've had a busy fall with fieldwork, lab work, and events!

In late August and early September Nick Bellantoni and I participated in three days of training for Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) staff on standing stone structures. We visited several properties with stone wall systems, cellar holes, mill remains, and stone piles and groupings, to familiarize NRCS staff with the variety of stone features on the landscape. This will help them identify culturally-sensitive areas when they assess properties for agricultural development projects, timbering, habitat establishment, and similar activities.

We returned to the Cesar and Sim Peters Site in Hebron in mid-September and completed a couple of days of fieldwork, finishing up the work we started over the summer. Unfortunately, our planned field day with the Peters family descendants had to be cancelled, but we are hoping to reschedule the visit in the spring. I am working on a paper about the site history and archaeology to-date with John Baron, the historian working with us on the project. We hope to publish it in the next issue of the ASC Bulletin. We have also been working with John, teachers from the Hebron public schools, and the Witness Stones program to memorialize the site and create educational activities on the history and archaeology.

In late September we returned for two days to the probable Paleoindian Two Wrasslin' Cats Site in East Haddam. We found more likely channel flake fragments, and four projectile points/fragments. Two of the points are the rebased tips of larger fluted points, suggesting that people at the site were making projectile points and repairing old ones for reuse. There is now little doubt that we have a Paleoindian component at the site. I'll be presenting the results of the work to-date at the Eastern States Archaeological Federation annual conference (virtually this year) on November 6 in a session on Paleoindian research with co-authors Mark Clymer, David Leslie and G. Logan Miller (use-wear specialist).



Projectile Points and fragments recovered from the Two Wrasslin' Cats Site in September. The point fragment on the left refits with a channel flake fragment and the second point from the left is a re-based fluted point.



Field Crew at Two Wrasslin' Cats, September 2021.

On October 5, we did a small one-day dig with the Essex Land Trust and Essex Historical Society on land trust property in Ivoryton, on the grounds of the former Comstock and Cheney Ivory factory. Our testing was located in an area near the former ivory drying houses. The drying houses were usually built on footings rather than foundations, so we weren't sure what we might find. Although we targeted a GPR anomaly, we did not recover very much, except for some broken glass and soil evidence of several large floods that swept through the area in the 20th century.

On October 23, Nick Bellantoni and I, along with Ruth Shapleigh-Brown, Michael Carroll, and Keegan Day, participated in an all-day workshop in Pomfret as part of the Waking the Dead series through the Pomfret Historical Society. We gave presentations on archaeology, historic cemeteries and gravestone restoration in the morning, and in the afternoon we visited the Lost Village site and cemetery, where Nick gave a tour of the sites and Ruth, Michael, and Keegan demonstrated proper methods for cleaning and repairing gravestones in the cemetery.

We also returned to the Hollister Site in October to expand the area around the South cellar where we were digging this past summer. The goal was to take more units down to the base of the plow-zone and expose additional features related to the earth-fast architecture of the structure. We re-exposed a linear feature and several posts we found this summer and found evidence of a long linear feature that runs roughly east/west along the southern end of the cellar and extends out in both directions. We got an excellent drone photo of the excavations, and we're now working to explore some of the features. In addition to the earth-fast architecture, we also found several intriguing artifacts and other features this summer, including a Jesuit or iconographic ring, a chunk of coral, and a probable Native-crafted brass projectile point. To learn more about the recent developments at the site, please join me on November 17, when I will give a talk in the ASC/FOSA fall lecture series that summarizes the work at Hollister to-date and presents the results of the 2021 field season.



Drone photo of the 2021 excavation block around the South Cellar at the Hollister Site. The photos shows architectural features related to the earth-fast architecture of the structure. The photo also shows plow scars from centuries of plowing (long, skinny dark stripes) and a rodent burrow (hole visible in the feature on the right).

Finally, Scott Brady and I had the privilege to host a few more episodes of the Archaeology of Connecticut Radio show on iCRV Radio. In September we were joined by Dr. David Leslie for a discussion about the Farmington Mastodon and the possibility of humans and mastodons and mammoths co-existing in New England. Our October show focused on the Connecticut ivory industry in Essex and Deep River, and we had a great conversation with Melissa Josephiak and Jim Powers about their research into the subject as part of the Follow the Falls project through the Essex Historical Society. In November, we'll be speaking with Dr. David Landon of the Andrew Fiske Memorial Center for Archaeological Research/UMASS, Boston, about a long term project on the archaeology of Plymouth, Massachusetts. That project includes several years of excavations on Burial Hill, the location of the original Pilgrim settlement.

It has been great to be out in the field so much this fall, but I am looking forward to a quieter winter season. There is a lot of work to do in the lab, processing the materials from the summer/fall work, getting them inventoried, and analyzing and reporting on them. FOSA volunteers began coming in to work in the lab in early September, washing and organizing the materials from this summer's fieldwork, and we've had several productive lab days so far. However, we still have A LOT of material to process from the Freeman Houses, and Peters and Hollister sites, so if you would like to volunteer, please contact Scott Brady. Generally the lab is open on Mondays and Tuesdays and we'd love to see you there!

A Celebration of Life Don Rankin



**Don Rankin with Nick Bellantoni at the Manstan
Rock Shelter Site in Killingworth CT.**

Photo by Bonnie Beatrice

For the membership of FOSA Don Rankin was an energetic supporter of FOSA. He loved working in the field with fellow diggers, contributing his knowledge of geology and how Connecticut's physical shape was formed by glaciers millions of years ago. Among his many favorite subjects Don often gave public lectures about local archaeology and its importance and Native American beliefs and their culture.

Friends of Hammonasset held a two day "Celebration of Life" for Don. On Saturday October 2nd several of the organizations that Don had been active with presented outreach tables displaying materials depicting their projects or activities. FOSA was represented with a display of Native American artifacts along with a demonstration of the atlatl. A presentation was also given by Meigs Point Nature Center on local amphibians and reptiles.

The Celebration of Don Rankin's life continued on Monday October 4th with his family in attendance at the Meigs Point Pavilion that was decked out with Fall decorations. All items that Don would have sold at his Fall Plant Sale. Native American music was being play by a flutist.

Opening remarks were made by the President of Friends of Hammonasset Christine Koster followed by:

Russ Miller, Meigs Point Nature Center

Susan Whalen, Former Deputy Commissioner - DEEP

Gary Nolf, Friends of the Office of State Archaeology

In the closing a Hawk that had been rehabilitated at "A Place Called Hope" was released into the Park in memory of Don Rankin. (*See photo at right.*)

It was a wonderful celebration of Don's life - he will surely be missed by all.

Ken and Bonnie Beatrice



“His Beloved Aunt Polly”



Once a well-recognized yacht on Long Island Sound and the Connecticut River, the Aunt Polly was the pride and joy of William Gillette a very popular portrayer of Sherlock Homes. In 1932 the Aunt Polly unfortunately suffered the fate of fire and the ravages of time and tides.

The Aunt Polly was remodeled in 1903 to an overall length of 140 feet. The beam, (the boat’s width), was 19 feet with a top speed of about 10 knots and had a crew of 8. The main saloon had a piano and a redbrick fireplace.

Among Gillette’s guests onboard were Charlie Chaplin, Helen Hayes and Albert Einstein.

Very little survives of the skeletal remains, now in the Connecticut River’s splash zone (shoreline). However, it can still be recognized as what was once a unique vessel. The Aunt Polly was moored at her dock at the shoreline below the Castle. During the winter months kerosene heaters were placed throughout the boat to maintain warmth to the interior. William Gillette loved cats and had many of them. Some were said to have been onboard the Aunt Polly and one may have overturned a heater that caused the fire and loss of the boat.



Bonnie Beatrice taking inventory and notes at the wreck of The Aunt Polly



Photo shows the keel, ribs with planking and gunwale

A field inspection was conducted in 2003 with now retired Connecticut State Archaeologist Dr. Nickolas Bellantoni and Historical Perspectives Inc. of Westport, Connecticut, among others with field assistance provided by FOSA members.

An exceptional booklet was written and published by Historical Perspectives Inc. of Westport, Connecticut titled “His Beloved Aunt Polly”. This booklet provides the history and detailed description of the luxurious Aunt Polly. “His Beloved Aunt Polly” is available at the Friends of Gillette Castle gift shop.

As an ongoing effort to maintain updated documentation of the Aunt Polly, observations and photographs were taken on August 11, 2021 by Ken and Bonnie Beatrice.

The Aunt Polly is a State Archaeological Preserve. It can be seen along the Connecticut River shoreline during low tide near the Chester-Hadlyme Ferry Dock park/picnic area in East Haddam. To visit the site, walk to the Northern end of the park to the small sandy beach. The Aunt Polly’s remains are along the shore’s edge looking Southward.

Bring a picnic lunch and Enjoy the Day.

“Her Beauty is lost but not Forgotten”

*Respectfully submitted,
Ken and Bonnie Beatrice*

FOSA Membership Update

New FOSA Members

(Since 6/15/2021)

Craig Chartier

Cameron Clegg

Nico Dellavalle

Sandi Heigelmann

Christine Lamprey

Michael Paul

Madison Rybak

Bailey Sheppard

Beginning in late March 2020, we have introduced and fine-tuned electronic membership services on the FOSA website. This allows new and renewing members to enter their membership information and volunteer activity preferences, and to pay via PayPal if desired. An increasing number of members are using this service, including over 60% of those who renewed or joined since mid-June 2021.

We have had an excellent membership renewal response, thanks in part to the on-line talks co-sponsored with the ASC, and to the revival of summer fieldwork.

Since early December 2020, over 100 members have renewed. For a current map of where our members live, you can find it on our website at:

https://www.fosa-ct.org/Photos/FOSA_Members_20210527_Pict.jpg

Mike Raber, Membership Chair

What Is Archaeology?

Archaeology is the scientific study of peoples of the past: their culture and their relationship with the environment. The purpose of archaeology is to understand how humans in the past interacted with their environment, their material culture (artifacts), and each other; and to preserve this history for the present and the future.

A Summary of What Archaeologists Do

- We RESEARCH our site and come up with important questions we need to answer.
- We SURVEY the land by walking and/or digging test pits to help determine where and how to conduct further testing.
- We EXCAVATE the site according to our research design using proper scientific archaeological techniques.
- We PROCESS the artifacts in the laboratory by cleaning them and recording all of the information about exactly where the artifacts were found.
- We ANALYZE the artifacts to see what they are, how they were made and used, and how the artifacts relate to each other.
- We REPORT our findings by writing a site report, magazine articles, and sometimes documentaries.

We PRESERVE the artifacts so future archaeologists using new techniques may discover something new in the future.

What's New on the FOSA Website?

1. We've continued to record the "Archaeology of Connecticut" interviews given at iCRV radio, and to incorporate them, along with brief overviews of the subjects, into the website, at http://www.fosa-ct.org/iCRV_Slideshow_1.htm. At this writing (late October), 31 shows have been identified thru October, 2021 (32 dates are shown, but one show had to be rescheduled due to power failures associated with Tropical Storm Isaias).

2. Early this year, Nick Bellantoni's latest book, "And So the Tomb Remained", was published. One picture in that book showed a large QR code associated with Center Cemetery in East Hartford ... which didn't work (the Library was updating their QR codes, a process beginning after the photo was taken. Since then work on their web site has been completed. So a new page link has been added to the Skeletal Diagrams at <https://www.fosa-ct.org/tombs.htm>, (also accessible under "Research Aids").

NOTE: At this writing, the Center Cemetery website is not available, though it may be back up by the time this Newsletter is published.

3. Dan Cruson and Don Rankin have been added to the "Remembrances" page, at https://www.fosa-ct.org/SpecialFeatures/FOSA_Remembrances_Index.htm.

4. Added a map of Connecticut, showing all of the towns in it, as well as a grid to allow you to quickly find a town on it. It's accessible as part of the "About Us" page, it can be directly accessed at https://www.fosa-ct.org/FOSA_AboutUs.htm#FindATown. In the Site Map page (https://www.fosa-ct.org/FOSA_SiteMap.htm) it's under "**Find A Town.**"

5. Made updates to the "Selected Videos" page, including one (by FOSA member Ryan Hollister has put together a You Tube video of one of his ancestors, Josiah Hollister, who fought in the American Revolution. Readers who have been working at the Hollister Site in Glastonbury can appreciate what Ryan has produced and the history behind it. You can access it at https://www.fosa-ct.org/FOSA_YouTube.htm#101.

6. The Spring 2021 Newsletter is now available online, on the Newsletters page, at https://www.fosa-ct.org/FOSA_Newsletters.htm. (We've been asked to wait 3 or so months after publication before moving them onto the website for non-members to access them.)

7. SUGGESTIONS REQUESTED: To reiterate from above and from previous "What's New..." articles: While the web site has many things on it, it's very possible that there are dozens of other things which haven't crossed either my mind or that of the Board which might be included. SO: If you have ideas or suggestions for layout changes, or new features, or changes to existing ones, or things we should drop, please let me know! Please email me at jamesh52@comcast.net with your suggestions.

Jim Hall

NOW AVAILABLE FOR PRE-ORDER

CASEMATE | academic

AND SO THE TOMB REMAINED

Exploring Archaeology and Forensic Science within Connecticut's Historical Family Mausolea

Nick Bellantoni

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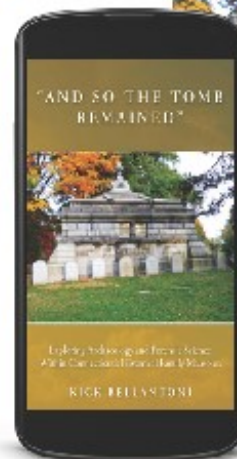
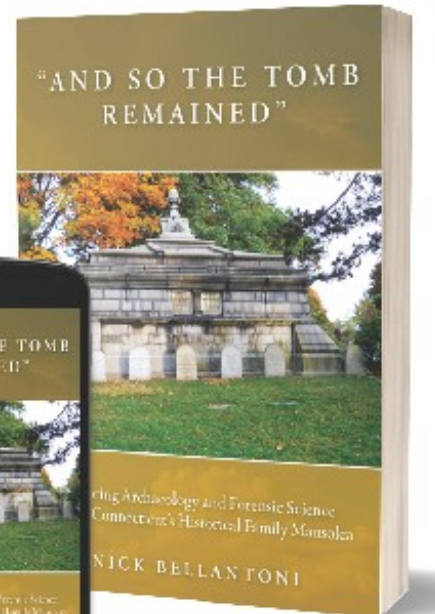
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And So The Tomb Remained tells the stories of the Connecticut State Archaeologist's investigations into five 18th/19th century family tombs.

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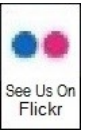
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Jerry Tolchin and Gary Nolf at FOSA Outreach Table. Celebration of Don Rankin, Meigs Point Nature Center Oct.2, 2021

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- Photography: Sites, Artifacts, Drones



We would like to hear from YOU! Please send your comments and ideas related to FOSA or the FOSA Newsletter to the Editor: Jerry Tolchin, at jerrytolchin@sbcglobal.net

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