

Allegheny Chapter #1

of the

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Officers 2015 - 2017

President: Brian Fritz
Vice President Bill Johnson
Secretary/Treasurer: Amanda Valko

Meeting Information

First Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m.,
February through June and September through
November. Holiday Dinner is in December at
an alternate location.

March 2018 – Archaeology Films: *Bog Bodies*
and *Neanderthal at Bruniquel* provided by
chapter member Jean Guilleux.

April 2018 – To be announced.

May 2018 – To be announced.

June 2018 – To be announced.

*Meetings are held at Michael Baker International,
100 Airside Drive, Moon Township, PA in the first
floor presentation room. Parking is free. Building
is locked so please buzz the security guard to get in
and sign in at the reception desk.*

President's Letter

Desecration

One July evening I was giving a tour of the Boswell Rockshelter to a group of teenage boys from the Greystone Juvenile home. About a dozen boys and three councilors were in attendance. I described the archaeology that was conducted at the site, talked about the importance of learning about our past, and showed some of the artifacts from the dig. Several of the boys were very attentive and asked many questions.

About half way through the two hour session one boy asked, "Isn't digging up graves desecration?" He seemed very sincere. As I paused to ponder this question, it suddenly struck me that I was totally unprepared to provide an answer. I tried to cover myself with the usual archaeology speak, such as, the bones can tell us what people once ate, what diseases they suffered, how old they were when they died, etc., etc. Despite my effort, I could sense that my feeble defense of grave excavation left the issue unresolved in the minds of my audience.

Webster's New World Dictionary defines desecration as, to desecrate; to take away the sacredness of; treat as not sacred. The word sacredness firmly throws this issue into the realm of religion. Archaeological excavation of graves is one of those debates where religion, science, and politics clash. It is a sensitive public issue regardless of what race or era the remains belong to. The archaeological community and our political institutions have been struggling with the problem of human remains and sacred artifacts for many years. What is or isn't sacred? A question that will likely never be completely resolved by laws and policy statements. Legal battles that ensued over claims to the 9,200 year old Native American Kennewick Man from Washington State and Otzi, the 3,400 year old "ice man" found at the top of Austrian Alps are prime examples. Neither case brings satisfactory answers to a teenager's poignant question.

In my experience, most archaeologists believe that excavation of a human grave is not desecration, if the grave does not have a clear cultural or ancestral connection to modern ethnic groups or descendants. The problem arises when an ethnic group claims ancestry of a grave or sacred artifacts based on their oral

tradition and mythologies. Simply ignoring such claims, even when cultural ascendancy cannot be established, could be construed by some as denying that ethnic group's religious expression. How can you scientifically disprove cultural ascendancy when the ethnic group's philosophical position does not recognize the science? There will always be someone who considers archaeological excavation of human remains as desecration despite the best arguments that archaeologists put forward.

"Isn't digging up graves desecration," the young man asked? After much thought and deliberation, I would now answer yes; it is a form of desecration. But, when we carefully uncover, document, and ask questions of the bones, I feel that we are honoring that person's life and memory. We are interested in who that person was, what his beliefs were, who his relatives were, and how he lived his life. If the individual were alive and with us today, I believe he would be honored by such attention and inquisitiveness. But, he is no longer able to tell his life's story, and in most cases his family and his people did not keep a written history of their life and times. All he has left to tell us lies in a carefully buried time capsule called a grave. To deny the information contained in his sacred time capsule is to desecrate the memory of him and his people.

--Brian L. Fritz

Archaeology Films

Bog Bodies



Director: Rébecca Boulanger
Producer : Scientifilms
France, 2015, 26 min.

Since the 17th century, more than a thousand mummies, mostly from the Iron Age between 800 and 100 BC, have been discovered in the bogs of northern Europe. This acidic, moist and organic soil promotes the conservation of bodies, hence their exceptional state of conservation, which allows scientists to better understand these

civilizations, which have left no written traces. The men of the peat bogs are bodies offered to the gods, the only witnesses in Europe of human sacrifices, men of the people, but also kings. (Les Docus, 2016).

AWARDS and SCREENINGS: Best Short Film Award, Amiens Archaeology Film Festival, France, 2016.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR: Dr. Rebecca Boulanger has directed more than 75 documentaries all focused on a very common topic: discovering the value of human beings wherever they live. As a director, she wants to tell stories about ordinary people, as a universal inspiration in terms of hope and humanism.

Neanderthal at Bruniquel



Director: Luc-Henri Fage
Producers : Felis Productions, CNRS Image
France, 2016, 8 min.

The recent discovery of broken stalagmites arranged in circles in the Bruniquel Cave (southwestern France) indicate that humans started occupying caves much earlier (more than 100 millennia) than previously thought. These man-made structures also rank among the very first in human history and traces of fire show that Neanderthals knew how to use it to navigate dark and enclosed spaces, well before Homo sapiens.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR: Luc-Henri Fage, born 1957. Documentary filmmaker, cameraman, editor. Photographer, journalist. Caver, explorer. Many expeditions in Indonesia since 1988 (crossing west/east Kalimantan, crossing south/north Papua), discover of the rock art of Kalimantan (many expeditions from 1992 to 2006). Rolex Award in 2000 for the discovery of Kalimantan Rock Art. Author of many documentaries movies (science and exploration) and books.

David Alsobrook Visits Scripture Rocks Heritage Park

By Jess Weible



Since it opened in 2016, Scripture Rocks Heritage Park has attracted thousands of visitors from near and far to wander through its trails and admire the landscape, the geology, the birds and the many rock engravings done by one of Brookville's most enigmatic figures, Douglas Stahlman. Recently the park had a very special guest, Douglas Stahlman's great grandson, David Alsobrook.

David grew up in the Atlanta suburbs and has lived there for most of his life. He graduated from Florida State in Tallahassee and married his wife, Debbie, with whom he has four boys. Alsobrook has worked most of his career at Cisco Systems in product management and business development.

Until recently, he knew nothing about the mystery behind his lineage. In fact, it wasn't until Brian Fritz, co author of *The Scripture Rocks: Why Douglas Stahlman Carved His Legacy in Stone*, called David one day offering a manuscript copy of the book, claiming that he was the grandson of a man he never heard of. "I will say it was really cool when Brian called me on the phone," Alsobrook said. "It was completely out of the blue. Most people don't get that kind insight into something like that."

Alsobrook's grandfather was Stahlman's younger son, James. It was shortly after giving birth to James that Stahlman's wife, Marion, died of blood poisoning. According to the local newspaper, Stahlman had dismissed his wife's doctor in favor of the practices of faith healing to cure his wife. He was arrested on charges of being insane and dangerous. His wife's brother, James Alsobrook, ultimately won custody of Stahlman's two sons, Glen and James. It was soon after

that Stahlman returned to Brookville and began to formulate his "rock plan."

Today, Scripture Rocks Heritage Park has had thousands of visitors, and in 2017 was recognized with the American Association of State and Local History's 72nd Annual Leadership in History Award. Fritz had told Alsobrook about the plans to build the park and the History Center updated him with its progress, but once he saw his great grandfather's work on a Roadside America's list of travel destinations in Pennsylvania, he decided it was time to take a tour for himself.

The History Center's Director, Ken Burkett and the JCHS Board President, Eric Armstrong, guided Alsobrook and his wife on their tour, explaining their process for uncovering the rocks as well as piecing together from their extensive research the context behind each of Stahlman's engravings in the park. Alsobrook and his wife noted with admiration the size and spacing of the lettering and the beauty of the landscape. "You read about the extent of it, but it's different when you actually see it," he noted. "This was a lot of work. The fact that he did all of this in about two years, it's amazing the amount of intense focus and effort."

Alsobrook added that despite the dismissive language that many people have used in describing Stahlman as "crazy", his commitment and faith in his work and in God was evident. "Most people don't have a masterwork, but you can definitely say this is a masterwork," he said. "I think people appreciate it more now. He is like an awful lot of people throughout history who were not appreciated until after they died."

Although Stahlman seemed to be very troubled, David says he connected with his great grandfather's ability to find spiritual understanding through the contemplation of the natural world. "I'm a Christian and have usually felt my strongest connection to God when I'm out in nature," Alsobrook revealed. "So I certainly appreciated and enjoyed taking advantage of the opportunity my great grandfather wanted to create for me and many others this week in Brookville."

David and his family enjoy travelling across the country and around the world. Every time they visit an area, he likes to find museums or hiking trails to learn about the geography and history of the area. However, he admitted that he'd never seen anything quite like Scripture Rocks Heritage Park. "This is unique," he said. "I've been around the U.S a lot and many other places in the world and this is pretty unique. And it's even more incredible when the history is also connected to you."

His experience visiting the park sparked his curiosity to know the rest of the story, particularly how Stahlman lived out the rest of his days at the Dixmont Hospital and how Ella Alsobrook raised Alsobrook's grandfather, James, and his older brother, Glen, on her own after the passing of her husband in 1909. "How did she end up going to Nashville and then Atlanta?" he wondered. "I assume part of it was trying to get away. How did she do that? I would love to hear that part of the story. A lot of people have their bootstrap stories. They, effectively, start a new life. My grandfather and great uncle both did well for themselves. So, it struck me, how did they do that?"

Though Alsobrook wishes he had the opportunity to ask his grandfather these questions, he remains grateful for the information he has gotten due to the efforts of Ken Burkett, Brian Fritz, Eric Armstrong, and many others who made Scripture Rocks Heritage Park possible. "Most of the time when you see a big park like this, you think the state runs it. But this is a small town effort to put this together. Someone just said, 'We're going to go do this.' And then a bunch of people took their time to do it. It's really cool."

NOTE: Jess Weible is a writer for the Jefferson Democrat and a board member of the Jefferson County Historical Society.

Adventures in Archival Archaeology 58: Have Scanners, Will Travel

by Bernard K. Means

I've been absent from these pages, and generally not doing much writing of any kind, because I have been traveling about doing some 3-D scanning. In addition to my faithful NextEngine Desktop 3-D scanner, which some of you have seen at past SPA meetings, I now have a new scanner, the Go!Scan 50. This scanner is also portable and compliments the NextEngine. It does not quite have the same resolution as the NextEngine, but it is easier to use on large items. The first major item I 3-D scanned with this was a mummy's sarcophagus at the Boonshoft Museum of Discovery in Dayton, Ohio. It also works great on shipwreck fragments! Monday I travel to the Smithsonian Institution to continue my Ice Age megafauna 3-D scanning. The new scanner has already done some mammoth, mastodon, dire wolf, and giant ground sloth, mostly at the aforementioned Boonshoft Museum of

Discovery. If I can figure out the insurance angle, I'll take the 3-D scanner to India in May. Not that Pennsylvania archaeology will be forgotten! I plan to travel up to The State Museum when my schedule allows and 3-D scan the rock art panels that are on exhibit, and probably a few other things as well. Here is a link for further information: <https://skfb.ly/6wBoH>.



Dr. Bernard Means 3-D scanning the lower jaw of a baby mastodon at the Boonshoft Museum of Discovery.

Society for Pennsylvania Archaeology Annual Meeting

The 89th Annual Meeting is fast approaching and is being held April 6-8, 2018 at the Comfort Suites, 10 Lakeside Avenue, Dubois, PA, 15801. The theme for the 89th annual meeting will be "Of the Past, For the Future: Current Contributions to Pennsylvania Archaeology." There will be three open sessions, Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning. Anyone wishing to participate should send abstracts of 150 words or fewer for papers and posters to the Program Chair

by March 4, 2018. Ken Burkett is the program chair and his email address is kburkett-jhc@windstream.net. Papers are reviewed and accepted by the Program Chair on a first come, first served basis. Students please send a scan or copy of your student identification when you submit your abstracts. All speakers must be members of the SPA. As of the compiling of this newsletter, there are 15 papers submitted to date. There will also be the Friday afternoon PAC symposium and the theme for this is Archaeologists Have History Too: Oral History of Pennsylvania's Archaeology Site Survey. The banquet speaker is Dr. Michael Gramly presenting: *Ritual Hunting of Proboscideans in the New World: Its Character, Inception and Disappearance*.

For meeting accommodations please identify yourself as being with the Society for Pennsylvania Archaeology. Single room rate is \$79.00 plus tax. PLEASE NOTE - **This rate is in effect only until March 3, 2018.** Please make your reservations directly with the hotel at (814) 375-6028 for this discounted rate. A complimentary hot/cold buffet breakfast is served daily.

For more information go to the SPA web site at www.pennsylvaniaarchaeology.com.

Early Archaic Points from Western Pennsylvania

By Brian L. Fritz

The point base in Figure 1 was found by Dennis Stahl in June 2001 approximately 20 meters from the Casselman River near the borough of Garrett, Pennsylvania. It appears to be a Thebes or Big Sandy type point which could place it in an Early Archaic context. The point is beautifully made of tan and grey Flint Ridge lithic material. Basal width is 2.9 cm; max width, 4.3 cm; and length, 5.0 cm. According to Noel Justice's book on point typologies, Thebes points date to about 10,000 to 8,000 years before present (B.P.).



Figure 1. Thebes Point.

Justice also dates the St. Charles point type to about 10,000 to 8,000 years B.P. The example in Figure 2 was found by Allen Fritz in Somerset County. The point appears to be made from fossiliferous O'Bryan chert from Vinton County, Ohio. The point was found on a path within a wooded area that was never subjected to modern cultivation. A scattering of stone piles indicate that the surface may have been scratch plowed by the earliest Euro-American settlers. An archaeological shovel test is planned for this area later this summer in hope of finding additional artifacts and features with dateable charcoal.



Figure 2. St. Charles Point

2018 MEMBERSHIP FORM

To become a member of Allegheny Chapter #1, SPA, complete this form and send it to Amanda Valko, Secretary, Allegheny Chapter #1. Thank you!

NAME _____ DATE _____

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EMAIL ADDRESS _____

PRESENT CHAPTER AFFILIATION (IF ANY) _____ STATE MEMBER? _____

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY (CHECK ONE):

<input type="checkbox"/> LIFE	\$150.00	<input type="checkbox"/> ACTIVE HUSBAND/WIFE	\$16.00
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