

Chapter 2
A History of Archaeology in Tennessee

By
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“Like the Dachshund that is a dog and a half long and half a dog high, the state of Tennessee has peculiar proportions.”
- Madeline D. Kneberg 1952: 190

Introduction

As Kneberg pointed out in the above quote, the geography of Tennessee is based on a political design not shared by its prehistoric inhabitants. This east-west elongated political boundary spans many environmental zones and created a tripartite division across the state. This geographical division is symbolized by the three stars of the state flag: Knoxville in the east, Nashville in the middle, and Memphis in the west. The wide range of environmental regions has influenced the conduct of archaeology in the state.

Temporally a history of archaeology in Tennessee reads much like a history of the state, beginning sporadically with early Euro-American settlement in the region and slowly growing over time. In this way, one may think about the history of archaeology in any state as entwined with a state's development. People established in an area invariably become curious about those that came before them, especially when there are visible traces on the landscape. It is therefore understandable that many early pioneers of Tennessee archaeology were private citizens and not academics. As we discuss the history of archaeology in the Tennessee area, it may be appropriate to consider changes in society that coincide with changes in the way archaeology is conducted.

Within this chapter we try as best as possible to cover as much of the history of Tennessee archaeology as we can. This is a daunting task and one that warrants a considerable amount of space. If we have failed to mention sites or individuals it is due to time and space constraints, not to the lack of importance of these people, sites, or projects. This chapter is arranged in chronological order beginning with the earliest documented excavations up to the

present day. Subdivisions have been made to differentiate between changes in field methodology and theory over time. Understanding the history of archaeological investigations in the state provides a foundation for understanding the development of archaeology in the state. A sense of where we have been is needed to clarify where we are headed. A history of Tennessee archaeology also gives insight into areas of intense work, as well as areas where work needs to be considered.

Early Explorers

The state of Tennessee played an integral part in early American history since the first European explorers lead by Hernando De Soto trekked through its wilderness in 1540. Subsequent incursions by Europeans explorers and early American colonists documented the diverse natural and aboriginal landscapes of the state. These early travelers did not perform any archaeological investigations but their accounts are important for documenting site locations and for ethnohistorical information.

Hernando De Soto and Juan Pardo were some of the first Europeans to observe native peoples in Tennessee. Hernando De Soto probably arrived in late May or early June of 1540 (see Clayton et al 1993) and Pardo came to Tennessee on or around October 6, 1567 (see Hudson 2005). These earliest accounts were descriptions by military campaigns seeking fortune in the form of precious metals and jewels. These military accounts, while sometimes exaggerated, offer some direct observations of native customs and behavior in the region.

Beginning in December 1761 British Lieutenant Henry Timberlake observed native Overhill Cherokee living in the Little Tennessee River Valley. Timberlake stayed with the

Cherokee three months at Tomotley until March of 1762 (Williams 1927). Timberlake's account is one of the first detailed descriptions of native life ways of the Cherokee in eastern Tennessee.

Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Investigations

With colonization of Tennessee in full swing by the early nineteenth century, local settlers and explorers began to notice, investigate, and write about the curious earthen mounds that dotted the landscape. The southeastern United States, including Tennessee, was an area where these earthen mounds were certainly numerous. The rich floodplains that were formed by major rivers in this region became attractive locations for many historic and prehistoric peoples. Rivers in the state (Tennessee, Mississippi, Cumberland, and others) were home to native tribes that constructed numerous burial and platform mounds, earthen enclosures, as well as villages. The news of this rich archaeological region quickly made its rounds among circles of early archaeologists in the east and north. This fascination with the area led some of the earliest archaeological investigations in the Southeast to focus on sites across Tennessee. Federal archaeology also was initiated during the latter part of this century with the founding of the Bureau of American Ethnology in 1879. However, the line between a private collector and professional archaeologist was not clear. Both parties were intent on acquiring fantastic and rare artifacts, and they both produced scanty publications of their findings.

This early period of exploratory archaeology in Tennessee was conducted primarily by private individuals who had an antiquarian interest in the past. They acquired collections through excavations and sometimes published short descriptive notes about what they had found. There was little interest in interpretation and explanation during this time, although certain individuals occasionally theorized about the origins and meaning of sites and artifacts they had discovered.

The earliest *published* documentation of aboriginal mounds in Tennessee was by John Kain in a letter to the editor of *The American Journal of Science* in 1818 (Kain 1819). Kain was a Knoxville resident who investigated mounds on the Holston and French Broad Rivers. He investigated two groups of mounds, excavating into one but finding nothing that suited his interest. Kain believed the earthworks were old, based on old tree growth on top of them, but did not put forth a theory as to who built them. Kain also explored caves in eastern Tennessee. He described a cave near the mounds on the Holston River that contained what he considered Cherokee paintings. The red paintings depicted symbols such as the sun and moon as well as human and animal figures (1819: 430).

Aside from simple observations, some curiosity-seekers took a more systematic approach in their excavations. In this way, Moses Fiske may be considered the original authority on Tennessee archaeology. His letter to the American Antiquarian Society in April of 1815 described in great detail the material culture of aboriginal remains in the state (Fiske 1820). He determined that circular, cone-shaped mounds served for burial purposes and that rectangular flat-topped mounds served as a platform for buildings. Fiske also defined structure patterns nearby a platform mound, which provided evidence of villages surrounding platform mounds, sometimes being enclosed by a palisade wall. The structures he uncovered were not all the same either; some had a depressed floor while others were elevated, and most contained central fire pits or hearths (Fiske 1820: 301). Fiske accurately described some of the distinctive pottery vessels found at these villages, including the “salt boiler”, a basin shaped ceramic vessel constructed from clay mixed with crushed mussel shells. This vessel is often found at Mississippian sites and is still referred to as a “salt pan.”

One important feature of Fiske's documentation of eastern Tennessee aboriginal remains is that he did not believe Europeans were responsible for building the mounds (the so-called "mound builders"). He made a call for more research in the area before that question could be answered. This deference is still a response used by researchers in archaeology for unresolved matters. Fiske also used an ingenious method of accurately determining the duration since mounds had been in use in the region. He located large trees that had grown on top of mounds or structures and counted the growth rings in their stumps to see how old the trees were. He mentions:

I have counted three hundred and fifty concentric (sic) layers in a poplar (loriodendron) I presume, upwards of fifty were lost by internal decay. This rule of chronology is recognized in courts of judicature, in deciding contests about landmarks.... If correct, these places were vacated at least five or six centuries ago [circa AD 1215-1315] (Fiske 1820: 306-307).

While not scientifically valid by today's standards, this chronology would be the most accurate dating of mound sites in eastern Tennessee for the next 130 years, until radiocarbon dating became available in 1950. This early observation of annual tree-ring growth and its application to dating archaeological sites arguably makes Fiske one of the earliest dendrochronologists, or at least dendroarchaeologists in the New World. In concluding his description of his investigations, Fiske relates the inherent paradox of archaeology, "valuable artifacts are *lost* by being *found*" (emphasis original, Fiske 1820: 307).

The allure of Tennessee antiquity also struck the fancy of academics in the state. Gerard Troost, the state geologist of Tennessee, became interested in aboriginal remains during his many wanderings across the state. Although a geologist by trade, Troost observed many aboriginal burial practices in central and eastern Tennessee (Troost 1845). In the end, Troost and his contemporaries still believed that the earthen burial mounds so often encountered in the state

were the result of an extinct race of people. Troost believed that they originated from tropical regions, based on the abundance of marine shell tools and ornaments in the mounds.

Considered by others to be the pioneer of Tennessee archaeology (Faulkner 2002: 173; Thruston 1890: vii), Joseph Jones investigated aboriginal sites in Middle Tennessee under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution. His 1876 monograph studied the prehistoric inhabitants of Tennessee from excavations of numerous stone box graves. The intention of Dr. Jones' study was to accurately describe the native remains and collect evidence on the possible origins of the population.

Jones identified certain cultural practices, such as cranial deformation, in the mound burials. This was consistent with known Native American Indian practice. He also believed the mound population was somehow connected with southern Mississippi River groups such as the Natchez. It was clear there were long-distance contacts between the Tennessee mound builders and those of the Mississippi Valley and Gulf of Mexico because of the related iconography and use of marine shell in the Tennessee mounds.

Also conducting fieldwork in central Tennessee, Frederick Ward Putnam worked for the Peabody Museum of Harvard University. He excavated stone box graves in the vicinity of Nashville in the fall of 1877. His report includes detailed information concerning burial placement and accoutrements along with a few sketch drawings of significant artifacts. Putnam only excavated at sites with large mounds with graves and produced only one map of a mound group and enclosure he visited. Just as Jones had done in his monograph in 1876, Putnam derived conclusions from his investigations concerning the ancestry, culture, and age of the people who built the mounds. He posited that the natives from central Tennessee shared a common ancestry with groups from the central Mississippi River Valley. This conclusion was

based on ceramic vessel affinities between the two areas and similar iconography depicted in shell. Putnam also believed that the mounds in central Tennessee accrued through the accumulation of stone box graves, which was the singular inhumation technique for the central Tennessee area. Referring to the people who buried their dead in stone box graves, Putnam considered that the “Stone Grave People” did not come in contact with Europeans based on an absence of trade goods from the graves.

In 1890 Gates P. Thruston published a manuscript on the general character of aboriginal remains in Tennessee. During this process he produced the first comprehensive analysis of distinct classes of artifacts in the state. His manuscript started as a publication for the Tennessee Historical Society on a stone box grave cemetery unearthed in Nashville, but soon grew to much larger proportions with the incorporation of comparative materials from across the state. Thruston compiled the manuscript while president of the State Insurance Company of Tennessee, juggling paperwork and antiquities in his office.

“In all these years, Tennessee, infolded in her ancient forests and mountain barriers – in her insulation, remote from ocean, lake, and gulf – was as unknown to the outer world as Central Africa. France claimed her territory by right of discovery as part of Louisiana and Illinois. Spain called it Florida and set up her right. England assumed sovereignty over it as part of Virginia and Carolina, but none of them took possession. Even its Indian claimants had to fight for their titles” (Thruston 1890: 7).

Thruston’s intention was to document the remains of native peoples in Tennessee in order to gain a better understanding of their “race relation, their tribal affinities, and their culture-status in the scale of civilization as represented by their monuments and art” (Thruston 1890: 9). His primary focus was on the “Stone Box Grave” race in Tennessee. He defined these people based on burial customs and the artifacts associated such as pottery, tools, and jewelry. Based on these artifacts, Thruston believed there were exotic contacts between the Tennessee peoples and other

groups in the Eastern U.S. the arrangement of villages and fortified towns in Tennessee was considered in a broader context and related to other fortified towns in adjacent states. Thruston concluded that these mounds were constructed by a race of “mound builders”, superior to the current Indian population. The excavated materials in his report were then used to support the “superior race and advanced culture” theory.

The myth of the mound building race was quickly becoming passé in the late nineteenth century, mostly from the investigative efforts of Cyrus Thomas who was one of the early federal archaeologists. Thomas was born on July 27th, 1845, in Kingsport, Tennessee (Anonymous 1910). In 1887 he wrote a short article in the Bureau of American Ethnology on mound building in the northern sections of the United States, namely Tennessee, North Carolina, and Ohio (Thomas 1887). His section on the Cherokee was simply entitled “The Cherokees Probably Mound Builders.” His evidence was based on artifacts recovered from mound excavations, namely structures and shell gorgets. The structures were similar in form to those encountered by explorers, such as Lt. William Timberlake, during their travels among the Cherokee in historic times (Thomas 1887: 92). Thomas observed that areas were occupied by different mound building groups, and that each was culturally distinct from others. However, Thomas discounts the use of tree ring counting to accurately determine the duration since mound and village sites had been abandoned, but still places the commencement of mound construction sometime after the 5th or 6th century AD.

Thomas put forth a book entitled “The Cherokee in Pre-Columbian Times” in 1890 to trace the historic tribe back into prehistoric times. The primary pretext of his work was to determine who the mound builders were. Thomas came up with three possibilities: first, the mound builders may have died out prior to European contact, or second, the mound builders and

modern Indian groups jointly occupied the region for a time, or third, the mound builders and modern Indian groups were one and the same people. Thomas implemented the “direct historical approach” to trace the ancestry of modern Cherokees. This entailed a detailed description of early documentation of the Cherokee and their culture. Thomas concluded that the Cherokee were indeed the mound builders based on the use of shell gorgets by the Cherokee in historic and prehistoric times and burial similarities between historic Delaware tribes and the prehistoric Cherokee. Thomas concludes “the historical, traditional, and archaeologic [sic] testimony is decidedly in favor of the theory that our prehistoric works are attributable to the Indian tribes found inhabiting this country at its discovery, and their ancestors” (Thomas 1890: 97).

Although Thomas had long argued against the mound builder myth, the report on mound explorations in the Southeast from 1890-1891 has been known as the final nail in the coffin of the myth. Thomas himself did not conduct the excavations in Tennessee, rather his field supervisor J.W. Emmert was in charge of organizing field parties and reporting finds back to Thomas. One find in particular, known as the Bat Creek Stone has had a controversial history (Faulkner 1992). Thomas initially interpreted the symbols engraved on the stone as Cherokee, a written version of which had been in existence since 1821 (Thomas 1894: 393). However, later researchers considered the symbols to be Hebrew, which represented a migration to the New World sometime in the first century AD (McCulloch 1988). Further investigation of the controversial find has determined that the tablet does not present unequivocal evidence of ancient Mediterranean contacts with aboriginal populations in the New World (Mainfort and Kwas 1991). The stone, which has become an artifact in its own right, most likely represents the lasting power of the myth of the “mound builder” race. The fact that people have postulated that

ancient contacts existed between Europe and Tennessee prior to AD 1540 tells much of the desire for some to believe in a much romanticized version of Native American history.

In all, Thomas reported on the remains of aboriginal mounds in 10 counties in eastern Tennessee. The focus of his work was, obviously, on the visible earthen constructions and cemeteries along the Tennessee River. Unlike earlier investigations in the area, Thomas provided maps for many of the locations of mounds and descriptions of individual features and burials along with their associated artifacts. It is interesting to note that Thomas' focus in Tennessee was on the eastern part of the state and specifically the northeastern region. This area was where Thomas originated (Anonymous 1910) and may be the reason why he chose to investigate this small part of the state.

The lag between federal archaeology conducted under the Bureau of American Ethnology and later published studies is probably not due to a lack of work, but rather a lack of scholarly contribution. Clarence Bloomfield Moore, a socialite-scholar from Philadelphia noted in his survey of the upper Tennessee River that “[h]ad anything of any consequence been found in all this digging in these mounds, it is certain that they all would have been torn to pieces long ago, since Tennessee river is thickly populated throughout its length and scarcely a mound on it is out of sight of some habitation” (1915: 177). Clarence Moore continued the tradition of extensive archaeological survey in Tennessee through the comfort of his shallow draft steamboat. Moore's *Gopher of Philadelphia* riverboat expedition along the Tennessee River from the spring of 1914 to the spring of 1915 did not differ greatly from earlier surveys in the region. What sets Moore apart from his contemporaries was his *systematic* survey of the entire Tennessee Valley, with the addition of distributional maps along with a more detailed analysis of his finds. In addition, the work was conducted under his direct supervision, which was not the case with the Cyrus Thomas

report (1894). The sites investigated tended to be the more visible vestiges of native occupation (i.e., mounds), but also included a large number of village sites. Even though an avid photographer himself, one finds a curious absence of site photographs in his reports and a general lack of site maps, except for more extensive earthwork sites. Even with these shortfalls, Moore's expeditions along the Tennessee River provided meaningful data on site location and associated cultural affiliations to subsequent Tennessee River reservoir surveys in the 1930s and 1940s.

In Moore's 1915 monograph on the Tennessee, Green, and Ohio River expeditions, he notes that, at the time, the archaeology of Tennessee had already been widely described. Moore only considered two sites along the Tennessee River to be of any importance. One was the Tick Island (?) site (1LU10) near Florence, Alabama and the other was the Shiloh Mounds (40HN7) in the Shiloh National Military Park in Tennessee. Much like the earlier investigators, Moore was enthralled by the numerous stone box graves in central Tennessee. His distribution map of sites with different forms of stone graves distinguished between those typical in the middle of the state and those in the upper valley and adjacent northern Alabama. He also advanced the idea that Tennessee peoples were affiliated with those along the central Mississippi River Valley based on pottery similarities. Moore further distinguished the section of river between Hiwassee Island and Lenoir City in eastern Tennessee for its many blunted cone burial mounds, today considered part of the Hamilton burial mound complex (Cole 1975). However, at the time of his survey, Moore (1915:181) noted that permission to dig on private property was sometimes difficult because earlier digging parties had been disrespectful of the landowners, or the landowners had "an exaggerated idea of the value of Indian objects."

Unfortunately, Moore did not provide the concluding and comparative notes found in his other river survey publications (Polhemus 2002). Most archaeologists may think of Moore's survey standards and excavation techniques as unsavory, but some of site reports encompass the *only* published source of information to this day. Magnified in importance by site loss from the numerous reservoirs constructed on the Tennessee River in the twentieth century, Moore's reports may be the only reference available for some sites, ever.

Interpreting the Past: The Speculative Period 1919-1933

Archaeology in the state of Tennessee had become popularized by the 1920s. This period marks the very beginnings of professional archaeology not only in the state of Tennessee but in the eastern U.S. The investigations went beyond simply collecting antiquities; there was an intention to interpret and explain what was found and relate observed phenomena to a theory about the different cultures that abounded in the state of Tennessee. The occurrence of federal archaeological projects in the state had increased since the time of Cyrus Thomas' mound exploration report in 1894. Expeditions funded by the Smithsonian Institution and Heye Foundation (the latter now known as the National Museum of the American Indian) produced more detailed reports of sites than before. The work by Clarence Moore on the Tennessee River was by no means a definitive study of prehistoric inhabitants in the region. Scholarship in Tennessee during the period between the end of World War I and prior to the Great Depression was marked by an interest in going beyond the artifacts as curiosity pieces towards an attempt to understand what information they could provide through contextual studies.

One of the earliest attempts to reconstruct prehistoric lifeways through archaeological excavation was conducted by Mark R. Harrington in eastern Tennessee. Harrington was advised to investigate the upper Tennessee River by Clarence B. Moore, then a trustee of the Heye

Foundation. It is surprising that Moore advised Harrington to focus his efforts on this stretch of river because Moore himself considered this section of the river not to contain any sites of particular importance (Moore 1915: 177). However, due to the somewhat rushed work carried out by Moore in 1914-1915 on the eastern portion of the Tennessee River, in the fall of 1919 Harrington was sent to “procure further data on the subject.” The subject in question was the curious string of conical earthen mounds that lined the Tennessee River from north of Chattanooga to Lenoir City.

Harrington’s journey down the Tennessee River literally continued the work of his predecessors but incorporated the extra dimension of interpretation. Harrington employed archaeological techniques still practiced in modern archaeology. His use of stratigraphy to interpret occupational histories of mound and village occupations enabled him to construct testable theories concerning the temporal ordering of cultures. Harrington’s ordering of cultural groups was based on different types of stone and ceramic vessels, chipped and ground stone tools, bone tools, and, most of all, methods of burial.

The earliest culture Harrington described in his report was the “round grave people”, which is now considered a Late Archaic through Late Woodland culture group (circa BC 3000 to AD 900). Harrington then defined a successor of the “Round Grave people”, the group responsible for constructing most of the mounds in the region and now known as the Mississippian culture (circa AD 900 to 1540). He considered this “Second Culture” as possible ancestors of the Cherokee. However, the artifacts used by the mound builders were so different from their precursors that population migration from Middle Tennessee was postulated for their origin. The latest culture identified by Harrington was the Cherokee. These were the people explorers first encountered in the Tennessee area and occupied many of the same sites of the

earlier cultures. Harrington considered the material culture affinities of the Cherokee with Middle Mississippi and Southern Appalachian ceramic groups (Holmes 1903) as evidence of the many influences, or a possible origin, of the Cherokee nation.

William E. Myer worked mainly in central Tennessee and is known particularly for his work at Pinson Mounds (40MD1), Gordontown (40DV6), and Fewkes (40WM1). These were all large mound sites in the Middle Tennessee area and have continued to provide archaeologists with data on Woodland (at Pinson) and Mississippian lifeways (at Gordontown and Fewkes). Meyer first worked at Pinson in 1916 and then later, in 1920, he returned to the Nashville area for work under the Bureau of American Ethnology (Meyer 1922, 1928). There he excavated the remains of two large mound and village sites called Gordontown in Davidson County and The Fewkes Group in Williamson County. Meyer also surveyed large mounds in the area of Nashville, including the “Great Mound” on the Harpeth River in Cheatham County, now known as Mound Bottom (40CH8). This mound group was similar in layout to the Pinson Mounds, including a large platform mound, numerous smaller mounds, a palisade wall, but also contained a stone box cemetery.

Meyer initially referred to the Pinson Mounds located in Madison County as the “City of Cisco.” The site was so large that Meyer described it as a “central city and capital of a large region; that it had a population of several thousand, and was built by some conqueror king” (1922: 142). Today archaeologists recognize that these mounds were built by Middle Woodland cultures (circa AD) and served primarily as a ceremonial center, not the seat of kingly authority (Mainfort 1986). Meyer produced a detailed map of the site noting the locations of identified mounds and embankments, but did not excavate during his first visit in 1916.

Comment: Need Middle Woodland Dates from Woodland Section.

Gordontown was a large, fortified mound and village site, which is indicative of a Mississippian culture settlement. Meyer defined an earthen embankment that a palisade wall was built upon along with 8 of the over 80 structures at the site. His description of the structures and related materials at Gordontown far surpassed in detail the excavations by archaeologists 15 years later in the Norris Basin on the upper Tennessee River. If that is not impressive enough, Meyer also counted tree rings on stumps growing over features at the site and calculated that the site had been abandoned for at least 300 years (circa AD 1620).

The Fewkes Group consisted of five mounds, four of which surrounded a central plaza area, with a small village area and a stone box cemetery peripheral to the mounds. Meyer recognized that two different peoples may have occupied the site. He defined the earlier culture as those who built the mounds and buried their dead tightly flexed in hexagonal or circular stone graves. The later group at the site was smaller and buried their dead extended on their backs in rectangular stone slab graves. Meyer discussed the material culture of each group in detail and provided detailed reconstructions of pottery and plan drawings of structures. Meyer, however, took this information one step further and compared the material cultures of the two sites.

The detail-oriented work of Harrington (1922) and Meyer (1922, 1928) represents a split between the collecting and curiosity focus of antiquarians and the interpretive potential of professional archaeology. Much of the work during this time, especially conducted by Meyer (1928), was far superior in detail and interpretive reasoning than professionals working years later in the Tennessee Valley. Also in the late 1920s, an archaeologist named Fay-Cooper Cole started an archaeology program and field school at the University of Chicago that would develop field techniques that further advanced archaeology in the Southeast. Among one of Cole's greatest accomplishments within the field of archaeology was the training of a great many of the

practicing archaeologists in America. Names like James B. Griffin and Madeline Kneberg became part of the history of the discipline. After the death of Cole in 1961, Jessie Jennings related how influential the man was to archaeology in the United States.

“He held the organizational meeting for the Society for American Archaeology in his office. He participated in the formulations resulting in the Midwestern Classification of prehistoric cultures to which McKern’s name is closely linked. He insisted that dendrochronology was possible in the Middlewest and arranged that it be studied. He encouraged students to go into archaeology at a period in American anthropology when to aspire to be an archaeologist was deemed something less than first-rate intellectual ambition.” [Jennings 1962: 574]

The Works Progress Administration/Tennessee Valley Authority and the “Golden Era of Archaeology” in Tennessee 1933-1942

The Wall Street crash in 1929 led America and the world into a major economic recession. Inaugurated as President of the United States of America in March of 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt was faced with governing a nation suffering from the effects of the Great Depression. President Roosevelt set out to establish a serious set of reforms to turn the American economy around. These new reforms became known as the New Deal. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) established on May 22, 1933, the Civil Works Administration (CWA) established on November 8/9, 1933, the Works Progress Administration (WPA)

established on May 6, 1935, and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) established on May 18, 1933 were some of these monumental relief programs created during the New Deal.

An essential aspect of most New Deal programs was the use of the largest portion of funding for labor. This requirement avoided costly overhead in equipment and other expensive matters, while providing monetary aid directly to the American public. Archaeology became a prime target for allocation of monetary distribution under this WPA philosophy as it allowed most funding to go directly to wages of laborers and supervisors of the projects (see Figure 1). Archaeology required little more than paper, pencils, shovels, and wheelbarrows to go along with the manpower funded by the WPA.

The CWA provided immediate relief for the winter of 1933/1934 and ended in March of 1934 (Fagette 1996:20). While this program was short lived it did provide funding for the first archaeological work in Tennessee during this period. On December 21, 1933 Frank H. H. Roberts, Jr. from the Bureau of American Ethnology at the Smithsonian began excavations at the Shiloh National Military Park (Lyon 1996:37). Roberts and his crew excavated a burial mound, platform mounds, several house structures, and parts of the palisade at the site. Excavations produced pottery, animal bones, human burials, and Civil War artifacts (Welch 2005).

The Tennessee River had a long history of severe flooding and this area was particularly hard struck by the Great Depression as cash income per family averaged less than \$100 per year (Lyon 1996:37-38). Control of this flooding was seen as a first step in economic expansion for the region. Archaeology became a prime allocator of resources when the many reservoir construction projects were initiated across the Tennessee Valley

“It was recognized that the construction of dams and the consequent flooding of large areas adjacent to such construction would destroy all records of prehistoric occupation and forever prevent future archaeological investigation of such inundated regions.”
(Webb 1938:1)

The first TVA excavations in Tennessee and also the first large scale archaeological survey and testing by the WPA was the Norris Reservoir in eastern Tennessee. Construction on Norris Dam began in October of 1933 along the Clinch River, just five months after TVA's founding. Norris Dam was named after Senator George Norris of Nebraska, chief author of the legislation that created the Tennessee Valley Authority. Norris Dam was built to control floodwaters, improve navigation, and generate hydroelectric power for the region. The dam was completed in March of 1936, less than three years after construction began. Norris was the first in a series of nine dams along the Tennessee River and its tributaries to be built by the TVA.

William S. Webb was selected as the director of archaeology for TVA after W.C McKern of the Milwaukee Public Museum refused the same offer. Webb began his career in archaeology the University of Kentucky Department of Anthropology and Archaeology. He was appointed chairman of the department upon its creation. He was previously a professor of physics at the same university. His lack of formal training in archaeology was a point of criticism, but his leadership and organization largely made up for these shortcomings.

Archaeological survey of the Norris Basin began on January 8, 1934. Webb selected Thomas M. N. Lewis as supervisor for the Norris project with George D. Barnes and A. E. Wilkie as field supervisors. Lewis was recommended to Webb by McKern. The 1934–1936 projects in the Norris Basin identified and excavated twenty-three archaeological sites. The resulting archaeological report (Webb 1938) involved several individuals that would go on to make their mark on archaeology. James B. Griffin analyzed the ceramics (Griffin 1938) and used them for the subject of his Ph.D. dissertation (1936), William D. Funkhouser (1938) reported on the skeletal remains, and Florence M. Hawley (1938) studied the dendrochronology. Hawley (see

Figure 2) is one of the first women to appear in the line of female archaeologists that would make their mark on the Tennessee.

Women were on staff in many of the labs that analyzed artifacts from WPA excavations, but were notably absent from the field. One exception to this lack of female presence during the WPA period is the Irene Mound in Georgia. At Irene Mound a large number of both black and white women worked in the field excavations (see Claassen 1999 for more information on the women at Irene Mound). Fagette (1996:113) states “Archaeology in the postwar period successfully recruited large numbers of women, but this was not the case in the 1930’s”.

In 1935 Thomas M. N. Lewis replaced William S. Webb as director of TVA archaeology in Tennessee. Webb headed back to Kentucky to direct reservoir projects in his home state. Lewis needed someone to direct the archaeology lab in Knoxville. Madeline Kneberg was highly recommended to him by Faye-Cooper Cole. Madeline arrived in 1938 and would later end up marrying Lewis. Madeline Kneberg-Lewis, stands as one of the most influential individuals in the history of Tennessee archaeology. Sullivan (1999) crowned Madeline as “The leading lady of Tennessee Archaeology.” Tom and Madeline would carry out several major projects across the state. One of these major projects was the Chickamauga Basin.

The Chickamauga Basin was one of the largest and most significant projects carried out by WPA-TVA archaeologists in the state. For a detailed discussion of the Chickamauga Basin see Lewis and Lewis (1941) and Lewis, Lewis, and Sullivan (1995). Lewis, Lewis, and Sullivan (1995:xvii) state that the project excavated, mapped, and photographed five platform mounds, eight burial mounds, ten villages, 165 structures, nearly two thousand burials, 360,000 pottery sherds, and some 100,000 stone, bone, shell, and copper artifacts. Additional reporting on the Chickamauga reservoir can be found in Lewis and Kneberg’s seminal 1946 work on the

Hiwassee Island site. This volume is devoted to the Hiwassee Island site and stands as one of the great publications for its time. Excavated during the Chickamauga project were the Dallas, Hixon, Ledford Island, Mouse Creek, and Hiwassee Island sites. All of these sites are critical in understanding the culture history of the Late Period in east Tennessee and remain as the archaeological “yard-stick” for phases in the area.

On September 11, 1940 excavation began at the Eva site in west Tennessee (Lewis and Lewis 1961). This site would become one of the best examples of Archaic period occupation in the state, but due to the onset of World War II the report would not be published until 1961. One of the hallmarks at Eva for the state of Tennessee is radiocarbon dating and the insight into culture history. The first radiocarbon date from an archaeological site in the state of Tennessee is from the Eva site. This date became critical in documenting the long span of human occupation in the state and region. Archaeology was conducted on several additional reservoir projects during this period, but the publications were never completed or exist only in draft formats. Field notes, maps, and artifacts exist and have become the subject of several masters’ theses projects. Some of these other reservoir projects include Watts Bar in 1940 (see Koerner 2003), Douglas Lake 1942 (see Harle 2003), Fort Loudon, and Kentucky Lake. Additional reservoir projects were conducted in the Guntersville, Pickwick, and Wheeler Lakes in Alabama.

Some of the major innovations in archaeology for this period included photography, feature forms, surface striping that revealed features and postholes, as well as mound excavation techniques that profiled the entire mound construction sequence (See Figure 3). Additional long lasting legacies of the WPA in Tennessee include the establishment of an anthropology department at the University of Tennessee and the Frank H. McClung Museum, current repository for all of the WPA collections from the state. WPA projects involved large numbers of

unskilled laborers supervised by ambitious young graduate and undergraduate students in archaeology (See Figure 4). These motivated supervisors became the next generation of archaeologists and directly or indirectly trained many of the modern archaeologists of today. The experience they gained during the WPA excavations would be fundamental to their training. Some of these individuals include J. Joe Bauxar, Charles Fairbanks, Jesse Jennings, Charles Nash, Robert Neitzel, Georg K. Neumann, Douglas Osborne, Chandler Rowe, Wendell C. Walker, and Andrew Whiteford (Faulkner 2002:175).

This flurry of archaeological activity ends with onset of World War II in 1941 although the WPA approves project continuation until June of 1942. The core staff of each excavation carried out subsequent lab work for these projects, but labor and funding for large projects in Tennessee would not reappear until 25 year later during the Tellico Archaeological Project. Field methods were exceptional for this time period, but a noteworthy sampling bias is becoming apparent in Tennessee archaeology. Like the previously discussed periods in Tennessee archaeology the river valleys and adjacent flood plains are the location for most of the excavations during the WPA. Earlier archaeologists with their steamboats were drawn by easy access to these valleys, but flooding during reservoir projects is the motivator during this time period.

Archaeology Under the Radar 1942-1966

The period 1942 to 1966 represents a phase in Tennessee archaeology in which a decrease in activity across the state occurs. With the onset of World War II funding and labor were in short supplies. This period is a stark contrast to the flurry seen in the previous WPA period, but several important projects were conducted. Many reservoir projects occur during the period from 1942 to 1966. Many of these archaeological investigations were no less important

than previous excavations, but the lack of funding often led to archaeology being conducted without publication of the report. Many times the materials were analyzed and written up only in draft form. Few formal publications exist from this time period and the only report produced by many projects is the one submitted to the National Park Service to satisfy stipulations of the contract.

One way that archaeologists working in Tennessee dealt with the lack of funding and labor was to further develop the Tennessee Archaeological Society (TAS) already in place. TAS had begun in 1925 under earlier Tennessee State Archaeologist P.E. Cox. The society's first publication came out in December of 1944 and by the 1945 membership had increased more than three fold (Sullivan 1999:76). The *Tennessee Archaeologist* became one of the primary means of getting published materials out. The journal and TAS also provided a medium in which to educate and involve amateur archaeologists. During most of the war period Lewis and Kneberg were not teaching at the University of Tennessee due to the lack of students (Sullivan 1999:75). This allowed them to direct attention elsewhere and they became co-editors of the journal. These two individuals stand out as the "dynamic duo" of Tennessee archaeology and their contributions to understanding the prehistory of the state is vast. Madeline's contributions to Tennessee archaeology include coauthoring numerous publications with Tom Lewis, as well as several on her own (Kneberg 1952 in the "green bible" and her gorget sequence 1959). She also paved the way for later women to get more involved with archaeology in the state.

One project of great importance in Tennessee archaeology during this period is the Chucalissa site near Memphis. Charles Nash began this project in 1955 and it was in full swing by 1958 (Nash 1972). This site became one of the type-sites for late prehistory in west Tennessee. Also during this period is the arrival of several individuals that have made great

contributions to archaeology across the state. Charles H. McNutt accepted a position at the University of Memphis in 1964 and Charles H. Faulkner accepted a position at the University of Tennessee in the same year. Faulkner would take charge of the Nickajack reservoir (Faulkner and Graham 1966a, b; Bachman 1966), the Tims Ford Reservoir (Faulkner 1968), as well as the Normandy Reservoir project later in the 1970's with the help of Major C. R. McCollough. The work of Charles McNutt was focused in west Tennessee and included Kentucky Lake in 1965 (McNutt and Graham 1967). Not only are Faulkner and McNutt responsible for a large amount of great archaeology across the state of Tennessee, but also for educating many students at these two universities who now hold teaching and research positions across the United States themselves.

While the careers of Faulkner and McNutt in Tennessee archaeology are long, there are two individuals that made several important contributions to Tennessee archaeology during their short residence. Dan and Phyllis Morse arrived in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1962. Dan accepted a position as assistant professor with the anthropology department at UT and Phyllis was a lecturer in the same department (Kwas 1999:3). While the Morse's were in Tennessee for only two years (until 1964) they worked on several major projects. Dan was in charge of the Cordell Hull and Lake Barkley Reservoirs (Morse 1963a; 1963b). Dan and Phyllis both directed work on the J. Percy Priest Reservoir (Morse and Morse 1964) and Dan used the Robinson site as a basis for his Ph.D. dissertation, which he completed in 1967 at the University of Michigan. Dan and James Polhemus made a huge contribution to Tennessee archaeology when they did their initial archaeological survey of the Pinson site (Morse and J. Polhemus 1963). The Pinson site (40MD1) would become critical in understanding the Woodland period in Tennessee. Fred Fischer and Charles McNutt had done some prior work at Pinson in 1961 (Fischer and McNutt

1962) and laid the foundation for this and other subsequent studies on Middle Woodland ceremonialism (see Mainfort 1986).

This period as well as the previous WPA period in Tennessee archaeology produced huge artifact assemblages from a large number of sites. These collections are still used today and are the subject of numerous master's theses and doctoral dissertations from universities across the state. These collections also became the basis for constructing cultural histories still used today for most of the state and stand as a reminder of archaeology in the past.

Cultural Resource Management and the Modern Period 1966-2007

Legislation and Organization

The period from 1966 to the present is characterized by federal legislation enacted to protect and preserve archaeological resources. While these laws require that archaeology be conducted if impacts will to sites are inevitable, they have also stipulated proactive measures such as management plans for public lands, burial laws, and other legislative measures.

One of the most important laws is the enactment of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) in 1966. Prior to this law the federal government funded and performed archaeology out of concern for these resources, but not because it was mandated. This legislation mandated that archaeology be conducted prior to federal and state projects. While the scope of the NHPA is beyond this chapter, Section 106 of NHPA is one of the primary means of justifying archaeological excavations. Under Section 106 anything deemed potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places be preserved or documented. During the previous periods state institutions such as universities and museums performed most work, but during this period the bulk of archaeology is conducted by Cultural Resource Management (CRM) firms. Publications most often consist of technical reports submitted to the governmental agency

owning the land, which required the archaeology. An interesting point of the NHPA is that upon the recommendation of *With Heritage so Rich*, orchestrated by First Lady Claudia “Lady Bird” Johnson, a national historic preservation plan was outlined. This national historic plan was ultimately enacted as the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966 (King 2004: 22).

Additional laws enacted to protect archaeological resources are the Department of Transportation Act (DOT) in 1966, the Archeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) in 1979, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1991. Many of these laws are currently changing how archaeology is performed. The future will hold the final say on these transformations.

The Tennessee Archaeological Advisory Council and Tennessee Division of Archaeology (TDOA) began a state meeting in 1989. This annual meeting (*Current Research in Tennessee Archaeology* or CRITA) is intended to provide a medium in which to present recent research on archaeology in the state that professors, students, private contract firms, and the TDOA are currently working on. The first CRITA meeting took place on January 14, 1989 in Garland Hall on the campus of Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN and is held at the Ed Jones Auditorium in Nashville today.

In 1976 the Tennessee Anthropological Association (TAA) was formed. A growing sense of animosity had developed in the earlier Tennessee Archaeological Society (TAS) and a split occurred. The *Tennessee Anthropologist* began being published by TAA in the spring of 1976 and continued to be published until 2000. The *Tennessee Archaeologist* published by the TAS would continue to be published until 1981. From 2000 to 2003 no state journal was produced. More recently the state journal was replaced by *Tennessee Archaeology*, an online journal under the authorship of the Tennessee Council for Professional Archaeology (TCPA). TCPA was

established in 1992 to “facilitate, assist, and advocate for the practice of professional archaeology in this state” (TCPA 2007). All three of these journals have produced large numbers of publications on archaeology conducted in Tennessee.

Reservoir projects in the Modern Period

Initiated by Alfred K. “Ted” Guthe in 1967 the Tellico Archaeological Project (TAP) produced an incredibly large amount of archaeological literature. The publications include numerous master’s theses and doctoral dissertations along with books, articles, and technical reports. Much of the archaeology done in the Tellico Reservoir was crucial in the development of the cultural chronology used today in eastern Tennessee and adjacent areas. During the excavations in the Tellico, Normandy, and Columbia reservoirs some of the earliest subsistence data in Tennessee was produced. This early subsistence record includes some of the oldest maize in the southeast. At the Icehouse Bottom site in the Tellico Reservoir a maize kernel was AMS dated to 1775 +/- 100 B.P. (Chapman and Crites 1987:353).

Federal expenditure for the project was estimated to be around 2.5 million dollars (Chapman 1988:47). TAP produced critical data for Archaic through historic occupation in the upper Tennessee River Valley. Some of the resulting summary publications include Chapman (1980), Gleeson (1970, 1971), Kimball (1985), and Salo (1969). The Tellico Project also produced a wealth of knowledge on the prehistoric inhabitants of eastern Tennessee from specific sites. Some of the more notable sites are Rose Island (40MR44, Chapman 1975), Icehouse Bottom (40MR23, Chapman 1973; Cridelbaugh 1981), Bacon Bend (40MR25) and Iddins (40LD38) (Chapman 1981) and Patrick (40MR40, Schroedl 1978) for Archaic and Woodland occupations. Martin Farm (40MR20, Schroedl et al. 1985) and Bat Creek (40LD24,

Schroedl 1975) were important for defining Early Mississippian occupation in eastern Tennessee, while Toqua (40MR6, Polhemus 1987) defined Late Mississippian. Tomotley (40MR5, Baden 1983; Guthe and Bistline 1981), Chota (40MR2) and Tanasee (40MR62)(Schroedl 1986) were central in understanding Overhill Cherokee occupations.

University of Tennessee Department of Anthropology staff under the direction of Charles Faulkner performed work in The Tims Ford reservoir in 1966. Tims Ford, in south central Tennessee, represents one of the few projects not confined to the Tennessee River Valley proper. Tims Ford is located on the headwaters of the Elk River in Franklin County, a major tributary to the Tennessee River. During this project sixteen sites were investigated. The emphasis of the report (Faulkner 1968) is on the Mason (40FR8), Brickyard (40FR13), and Tucker Rock Shelter (40FR16) sites. Archaic through Mississippian period occupation was recorded during excavations in the Tims Ford Reservoir.

An interest in placing a dam in the upper Duck River Valley led to initial archaeological survey and testing in the region starting in 1970 (Faulkner and McCollough 1973). Detailed studies of plant and animal remains from sites dating from the Archaic through Mississippian periods were used to determine how humans adapted to their local environment. Although a survey was conducted for the entire basin, investigations at the Banks complex (sites I-VI) received most of the attention. The Banks complex was significant because it was relatively undisturbed and could be intensively investigated (Faulkner and McCollough 1978). The Banks V site (40CF111) defined the late Middle Woodland Owl Hollow Phase (AD 400-600) and the emergent Mississippian Banks Phase (AD 800-1000) in the Upper Duck River Valley area.

The Normandy Archaeological Project was funded by the TVA and National Park Service as a survey of the prehistoric occupations located along the upper Duck River Valley.

The project provided a circumstance where archaeologists could study prehistoric lifeways along a transitional environmental zone. The project area was divided into a lower and upper area. The lower area was located within the Nashville Basin, characterized by alluvial floodplain valleys, while the upper area was situated within the Highland Rim, characterized by dissected uplands. Each area offered different resources to prehistoric peoples and may have slightly different occupational histories. How the aboriginal inhabitants of the Duck River adapted to their surroundings was a primary concern of research for the Normandy project. The principal investigators felt that earlier surveys in the region, such as the Elk River drainage in the Tims Ford Reservoir survey, precluded any serious investigation of human adaptations to their environment (Faulkner and McCollough 1977). The Normandy Archaeological Project would reverse this absence of data by developing a localized cultural chronology and implementing new excavation recovery techniques, like water sieving and flotation, to make available new data on the human ecology of central Tennessee.

In 1978 and 1979 archaeology was conducted in the Columbia reservoir under the direction of Walter Klippel. While the dam was never completed and funding was cut, a report on the Cheek Bend Cave site was produced (Klippel and Parmalee 1982). This report is invaluable for its contribution in pointing out the necessity of environmental reconstruction. Klippel and Parmalee used not only the materials recovered in direct association with archaeological deposits, but also the additional paleobotanical and faunal remains to further enhance knowledge about Paleoenvironment in the region. The oldest evidence for domesticated sunflower in the United States was recovered at the Hayes site in the Columbia Reservoir. An age of 4265 +/- 60 B.P. was acquired from a carbonized sunflower seed at Hayes (Crites 1993).

The focus of archaeological inquiry during this time was on culture process. This theoretical approach led to new fine-grained data recovery techniques for the field. Specific to Tennessee archaeology was the use of flotation to recover archaeobotanical specimens (McCullough and Faulkner 1973: 61-62), water-screening of sediments to recover micro faunal and lithic remains, deep testing for buried alluvial sites, and mechanical field stripping of plowzone overburden. The resulting datasets provided a perspective of Native American culture processes that had been either overlooked or underrepresented in previous investigations.

“Gender-fication” during the Modern Period

During this period many women would contribute to Tennessee Archaeology. This list includes the likes of Elizabeth Baldwin Garland, Bettye Broyles, Patricia Cridlebaugh, Maria O. Smith, and Lynne P. Sullivan. Garland wrote her dissertation in 1966 on the Obion site (which was finally published in 1992). Bettye Broyles grew up in Tennessee and performed archaeology in the Watts Bar Reservoir (Broyles 1955) before taking jobs elsewhere (see Davis 1999). Patricia Cridlebaugh wrote her Ph.D. dissertation on excavations in the Little Tennessee River Valley (Cridlebaugh 1984). She became the first female archaeologist to complete a dissertation at the University of Tennessee, which began the doctoral program in 1976. Maria O. Smith received her Ph.D. a year before in 1983 but the emphasis of her work was on physical anthropology. Several other female students had also received Ph.D.’s from UT, but also focused on physical remains. Lynne P. Sullivan has done a tremendous amount of work on the Mississippian period in east Tennessee, including her dissertation on the Mouse Creek phase in East Tennessee (Sullivan 1986). While the list of women in the history of Tennessee archaeology is short, the contributions by these women are immeasurable.

Conclusions

While we have presented the history of archaeology in the state of Tennessee in some detail, the reader should recognize certain trends over time. Antiquarians interested in exotic curiosities conducted early work in the state. An interpretive approach was begun in the early 20th century that moved beyond merely collecting artifacts. Following the Great Depression, numerous federal programs fostered an increasing amount of archaeological projects in the state. This period is often referred to as the “Golden Era of Archaeology” in Tennessee as well as many other states in the southeast.

The onset of World War II in the early 1940’s adversely impacted funding and labor for archaeology in the state. Federal Legislation in 1960s and 1970s promoted archaeology again, establishing a new generation of archaeologists with new methods and theory. Archaeology is now conducted in academic and private arenas by a growing number of diverse archaeologists that often specialized in specific methods or time periods.

The archaeological training of the individuals discussed here as well as others not mentioned applied and elaborated on their experiences in Tennessee contributing to the establishment of archaeology in government, academia, and professional practice.

For a discussion of what the future may hold, see the chapter on the Future of Tennessee Archaeology (Moore, this volume).



Figure 1
Field crew at the Fains Island Site:
1JE1(B) Fains Island Site 1JE1, Jefferson County, Tennessee. Crew photograph.; Frank H.
McClung Museum WPA/TVA Archive (fhm01452)



Figure 2

Florence Hawley studying dendrochronology samples:
N-1 Norris Basin, Tennessee. Miscellaneous: Dendrochronology study sample. Florence Hawley
studying dendrochronology sample.; Frank H. McClung Museum WPA/TVA Archive
(fhm01866)



Figure 3
Example of mound excavation techniques at the Bell Site:
1RE1 Bell Site 53RE1, Roane County, Tennessee. Mound 1, Partially excavated.; Frank H.
McClung Museum WPA/TVA Archive (fhm01391)



Figure 4

Thomas M. N. Lewis, George W. Neumann Charles H. Nash, Charles J. S. Parsons, and O. C. Ogle at the Slayden Sites:

HS1(B) Slayden Sites 1HS1, 2HS1, 3HS1, 4HS1, 5HS1, 6HS1, 7HS1, A8HS1, and B8HS1, Humphreys County, Tennessee. General 2.; Frank H. McClung Museum WPA/TVA Archive (fhm00931)



Figure 5
Jefferson Chapman (left) and Gerald Schroedl (right) during the Tellico Archaeological Project,
negative on file Frank H. McClung Museum



Figure 6

Water Screening at 40MR002 during the Tellico Archaeological Project, negative on file Frank H. McClung Museum



Figure 7
Deep-testing at 40MR035 during the Tellico Archaeological Project, negative on file Frank H. McClung Museum

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