

# Preservation Planning for Archaeological Resources at the University of North Carolina

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In a recent article on campus planning, the journal *Architecture* summarized some of the current issues facing academic institutions, forecasting that indicators of declining enrollment in the 1990s have made college administrators eager to improve their facilities as a means of attracting students (Anonymous 1991:37). This improvement often entails the construction of new buildings, particularly science and technology centers. While monographs and articles on university planning generally stress the need for master plans which take into account factors such as projected growth, costs, effective land management, visual uniqueness, and transportation (Dober 1992, Freeman et al., 1992, Junker 1990), preservation planning often receives little more than lip service. Pointing out this obvious oversight, Stephen Chambers (1990) has addressed the need for preserving structures, green spaces and archaeological resources of historical significance in his recent article on university preservation planning. While structures deemed to be of historic significance to academic institutions are more likely to receive consideration by university planners, archaeological resources are rarely given any attention.

Preservation planning became an important concept in the early 1980s, under encouragement by federal agencies concerned with cultural resource planning at the state level (Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, 1980). The model outlined by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service called for the creation of state resource protection plans which identify important cultural resources, formulate research

objectives, and create operating plans which make specific recommendations for managing these resources<sup>1</sup>. Although intended for a broader level of planning, the same model could be applied to preservation planning at a university level. This paper will demonstrate how this approach could be applied at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, by showing how a project currently underway there could be expanded into a preservation plan for archaeological resources on University-owned land.

## The Bicentennial Project

Between the fall of 1993 and the spring of 1994, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill will be celebrating its Bicentennial Observance, commemorating its position as the nation's first public university. While many people are aware of the historical importance of visible campus symbols, such as the Davie Poplar and the Old Well, few realize that a great deal of this history lies buried beneath university soil as archaeological sites. One project currently underway on campus illustrates the importance of identifying, recording and protecting the University's archaeological resources. This multi-phase project, conducted by the Research Laboratories of Anthropology in conjunction with the Bicentennial Observance, began with the identification of potential sites through preliminary background research of historical sources. Early maps of the campus, university records, secondary source materials and oral history<sup>2</sup> were used to provide a "short list" of potential sites of archaeological interest (Steponaitis, 1991). As a result, fifteen potential areas of interest which identify important cultural resources, formulate research objectives, and create operating plans which make specific recommendations for managing these resources were located, largely within the confines of the original campus (Carnes-McNaughton, 1991). Surface

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## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES ON THE UNC CAMPUS

Of the archaeological sites discovered during preliminary testing, three have been chosen for more extensive examination. In-depth background research has been conducted for these three sites, recovering information which reveals the close connection between the University and the community of Chapel Hill.

The village of Chapel Hill was chartered by an act of the General Assembly of North Carolina in 1789 in conjunction with the founding of the University of North Carolina. The location of the university was planned along the summit of a high plateau and the buildings included in the first campus plan were organized around an open green. While virtually all of these first planned buildings still survive and some have recently been restored to their original appearance, others survive only as archaeological sites. One of these was known as Steward's Hall. This building, which stood in the vicinity of New East and Davie, was the University's first dining hall. Renowned among the students for its terrible food and cockroaches, Steward's Hall was dismantled and moved in 1847. A second area for which excavation has been planned is in McCorkle Place. It is believed that artifacts and architectural remains associated with an encampment of Union troops at the close of the Civil War may be found there.

The site that is currently scheduled for the most extensive excavation, however, is the former location of the Eagle Hotel. Originally constructed between 1793 and 1797 as a tavern, this building, during its lifetime, served primarily as accommodations for visitors to the campus and as lodgings for university students. Taverns were an important feature of life in 18th and 19th century towns, serving as centers of communication and socializing, as well as places where lodging, food and drink could be provided to travelers and residents. The Eagle Hotel became particularly renowned under the ownership of Miss Nancy Hilliard. In addition to running a successful boarding house for students, Miss Hilliard was also hostess to President James Polk when he returned to the campus to give the commencement address in 1847. A special annex was added to the hotel to house the president and his party (Figure 1). After its demise by fire in 1921, the site of the Eagle Hotel remained largely untouched, providing archaeologists with an ideal opportunity for excavation. Testing here has revealed possible evidence of the fire, as well as pottery and glass dating from the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Excavations on one or more of these properties will begin in the fall of 1993, under the supervision of Dr. Vin Steponaitis, director of the Research Laboratories of Anthropology.

inspection of areas believed to contain sites was also conducted as part of the first phase of investigation.

The second phase of the project involved soil augering and test excavations at the locations identified in the first phase of research. Not only did this aid in more precisely determining the locations of the sites, but also their soil stratigraphy and general condition. In some instances, testing allowed certain areas to be ruled out as potential locations for future excavation due to damage incurred through more recent construction or landscaping. As a result of the soil augering and testing, the original list of fifteen sites was narrowed down to three sites which are currently under consideration for more intensive archaeological excavation. More complete documentary research has been undertaken for these three sites, focusing on recovering information detailing physical and functional changes to the properties through time, as well as the roles they played in the history of the university.

The third phase of this project, which will begin in the fall of 1993 and continue through the following spring, will be the excavation of one or more of these sites. The excavations will be run by the faculty, staff and graduate students of the Research Laboratories of Anthropology. Since the investigations will be held in conjunction with a two-semester class in historical archaeology, the excavators will consist primarily of UNC students, supplemented with local volunteers. (See box at left)

## Development of a Comprehensive Archaeological Preservation Plan

While this bicentennial project was not initially conceived of in terms of a comprehensive preservation planning tool for University of North Carolina land, it could easily serve as a springboard for developing such a plan, with the crucial first step being the creation of a comprehensive list of archaeological sites. This inventory would encompass not only the immediate campus, but University-owned lands such as the Mason Farm Tract located south of campus. While archival research would identify a large number of the sites dating forward from the time of the first European settlement in the area in the 18th century, references to prehistoric sites, as well as some historic period sites, would not be contained within documents. Therefore, the documentary research would have to be supplemented with an archaeological reconnaissance survey, which consists of placing small shovel test holes or soil augers at systematic intervals over the property in question. Such a survey would serve the dual purpose of locating undocumented sites, as well as verifying the presence of documented archaeological resources. More extensive testing at locations which contain sites would provide information on site function, dating, and boundaries, as well as the presence of intact archaeological features, such as



remains of building foundations, trash pits and burials.

Identifying and evaluating university-owned archaeological sites, however, is only an important first step. Merely knowing where archaeological sites are located does not provide for their protection. This inventory would be used in conjunction with other sources of information, such as primary and secondary historical documents, oral histories and site predictive models to develop a research design outlining archaeological preservation needs and research. The formulation of such a research design could be used to evaluate the significance of various types of sites. For example, archaeological excavation to date may have yielded a large body of information about certain types of sites, while much less is known about others. Prioritizing the sites based on this and other factors will simplify decision-making processes in situations where some archaeological sites may need to be sacrificed in order to save others. A preservation plan would provide archaeologists and planners with a framework for decision-making about archaeological resources on academic property.

A plan such as this, however, cannot work in isolation from other procedures or plans within the university. To date, relationships between archaeologists and planners have generally been uneasy at best and at times adversarial. Additionally, some planners still remain oblivious to archaeology. Archaeologists may appear in the latter stages of the planning process and are perceived as obstructionists standing in the path of development plans. As a result, some planners and developers resist working with archaeologists. Archaeologists, too, are often insensitive to the needs of planners. This does not have to be the case. Archaeologists will need to work in close conjunction with other departments, such as development and facilities maintenance, to formulate and implement an effective strategy for managing archaeological resources. If both parties took the time to learn the objectives and work methods of the other, some problems could be avoided.

The sometimes practiced policy of two or three day notification in advance of ground-disturbing activity, while providing archaeologists with the opportunity to record archaeological resources as they are being destroyed, is not a satisfactory arrangement for either the archaeologist or the planner. When important archaeological remains are encountered, costly construction delays often ensue while archaeologists record their findings. Archaeological sites are a nonrenewable resource--once they have been disturbed or destroyed, the information which they contained can never be reconstructed. Developing research strategies which can best address questions to be asked of the archaeological resources requires advance planning. When taken into consideration during planning phases, protecting or recovering archaeological information can usually be

accomplished at little or no cost to the developers.

This could be accomplished by involving archaeologists in the planning phases of development. This initial involvement generally opens several options for negotiation between planners and archaeologists. In some instances, utility routes or building positions can be altered to take locations of archaeological sites into account. If construction plans cannot be altered, involvement in the initial stages of planning allows archaeologists time to formulate and implement strategies for recovering archaeological information well in advance of actual construction. An important step would be plotting the locations of all known archaeological sites and archaeologically sensitive areas on a base map which would be used by planners. Additionally, attendance by a university-affiliated archaeologist at facilities planning meetings would be a way to begin implementation of this process. This procedure has been used successfully for some years in a large outdoor museum setting by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. As a result, a productive working relationship has evolved between the Department of Architecture and Engineering and the Department of Archaeological Research. Archaeological site locations are considered a factor in development planning and if future work cannot allow for the in-place preservation of a site, enough time exists for planning and executing the recovery of its information.

### **Preservation Planning: Two examples from UNC-CH**

Two recent examples at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill show how different approaches to the preservation of University archaeological resources can have very different results. The Mason Farm tract, located south of campus is the current location of the Finley Golf Course and the North Carolina Botanical Gardens. Although a systematic archaeological survey of this property has not been conducted to date, the Mason Farm property is very archaeologically sensitive, with nine known archaeological sites located within or adjacent to the property (Ward, 1992a). In the 1940s, Research Laboratories of Anthropology Director Joffre Coe partially excavated one of these sites (31Or4d). There, the excavations revealed a prehistoric Native American village containing significant pit features dating from the period AD 1000-1400 (Ward, 1992a). Sometime in the 1980s, a sewer line was placed through this known site, causing the destruction of unknown amounts of archaeological information. Although the site location was on file at the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, the environmental review process failed to protect this important site. Better cooperation between planners, developers, and archaeologists could have prevented this destruction.

A second example, however, illustrates how communication and cooperation between departments can result in satisfactory results for all parties involved. During planning stages for the construction of a new greenhouse on the Mason Farm property, the staff of the North Carolina Botanical Gardens contacted the Research Laboratories about determining the existence of any archaeological sites on the proposed building location. Prior to construction, the Research Laboratories of Anthropology inspected the proposed location and found no significant archaeological remains (Ward, 1992b).

The cost of implementing a preservation plan is sure to be an important concern. With rising costs and declining enrollment, university administrators can argue convincingly that excavating archaeological sites might not be the most effective use of university funds. However, while the benefits of a preservation plan would be immense in terms of educational and public relations opportunities, the cost to universities for the development of such a plan can be negligible. Much of the proposed archaeological reconnaissance survey and background research could be accomplished in conjunction with class requirements, providing educational opportunities to students as well as creating an impor-

tant database. In addition to providing information about the history of the university in question, and, more broadly, about local and regional development, preservation planning could be a potentially valuable public relations tool for the university. The placement of planned excavations, in some of the most public areas on campus, make them an ideal opportunity to educate the faculty, students, visitors and the public about archaeology and the importance of preserving archaeological resources. Local historical societies are a wealth of information and in many cases could provide volunteers for research or excavation. As discussed previously, working with archaeologists well in advance of actual construction will also avoid expensive delays.

Although subsequent university development will have damaged and in many cases destroyed these early archaeological remains, numerous archaeological projects in even the heaviest developed urban areas have shown that significant archaeological resources can still exist<sup>3</sup> It is almost certain that important archaeological resources, not only relating to the history of the university, but to the early history of Chapel Hill, have already been lost through construction and other similar damage. For example, the area of Chapel Hill first settled by



Figure 1. The Polk Annex of the Eagle Hotel built for President James Polk's 1847 visit.



European-Americans is believed to have been at the present location of the Carolina Inn. The creation of an inventory through archival research and archaeological testing would provide some indication of what resources have been lost in this fashion.

The focus of university preservation planning need not and should not be restricted to the history of the university. In the case of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, as with many other universities, the appearance of the area before the establishment of the University would also be of interest. In the late 18th century, this area was known as New Hope Chapel Hill and the only known development in the area at that time consisted of a mill, blacksmith shop and a chapel of the Church of England (Battle, 1907:27). Colleges in colonial America, while modelled after English medieval universities, were often placed in remote areas, where towns and cities grew up around them. This differed from their English counterparts, which were founded in established urban areas (Turner 1984:4). The effects of American universities on the growth and development of the surrounding area is an interesting and important topic of research, since an "awareness of history and culture is not merely a nicety in planning, it is basic to understanding the community" (Hartley 1993:30). The importance of understanding the growth and development of the university is an integral key to understanding the town of Chapel Hill, since it was in conjunction with the University that the town appeared.

## Conclusion

As the first public, state-supported university in the nation, the University of North Carolina truly occupies a unique position among academic institutions. At a time of increased likelihood of future campus development, university officials cannot afford to ignore its important and nonrenewable archaeological resources. This year of bicentennial observances, when the history of the university is at the forefront, is an ideal time to begin thinking about the assessment and long-term preservation of the university's archaeological resources. A properly conceived and executed preservation plan that includes the responsible management of archaeological resources can be beneficial for the institution, its students and the surrounding community. The time seems ripe for developing a university-wide program that could potentially be extended to other campuses

within the University of North Carolina system.cp

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## Notes

1. Cultural resources can include all sites, buildings, structures, localities and features which have been made, altered or used by humans. This paper addresses primarily archaeological resources.
2. William S. Powell, professor emeritus, of the UNC-CH History Department was interviewed on May 23, 1991.
3. A recent and important example of this is the large 18th-century African-American slave cemetery recently excavated in downtown Manhattan. Details of this excavation can be located in an article entitled "Bones and Bureaucrats; New York's Great Cemetery Imbroglio" in the March/April 1993 issue of *Archaeology* magazine.