

LAS April 2017 Headlines:

Reexcavating The Collections

Researchers with the Cedar Mesa Perishables Project are working in museum basements and storerooms to bring thousands of ancient perishable artifacts to light.

By Wayne Curtis, American Archaeology Magazine, Mar 5, 2017

In the mid-1890s, a rancher and avid amateur archaeologist from southwest Colorado named Richard Wetherill stood accused of fabricating an entire culture. Digging for artifacts in and around newly discovered cliff dwellings in the Four Corners region, Wetherill announced that he had found evidence of a heretofore unknown people who predated the Native Americans who built the elaborate cliff dwellings. These predecessors were not pottery makers, Wetherill concluded, but they were highly adept at making objects of perishable materials—wooden implements, feather blankets, baskets, woven sandals, and cords. Wetherill had turned up numerous examples that were miraculously preserved for centuries in caches in rocky alcoves protected from the weather.



A feather bundle (upper right), a pair of tapestry-woven yucca sandals (below) and a woman's yucca-cordage apron with human-hair waistcord are some of the artifacts researchers have reexcavated. Credit: Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History cat. # H-13338; the Museum of Peoples and Cultures, Brigham Young University cat. #1992.30.1 and .2; the Field Museum of Natural History cat. #165246/Laurie Webster

Much of what is known today about the Basketmaker culture—a term coined by Wetherill—can be traced back to him and other ranchers, cowboys, and adventurers who set off on weeks-long expeditions, mining artifacts as if they were veins of silver, seeking items to resell to Gilded Age collectors. Once unearthed, these artifacts, some dating as far back as 500 B.C., traveled in boxes and barrels via mule, and then by rail to the cities, where the collectors gathered them up and often put them on display. (One of the more notable collections “premiered” at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, which also displayed meteorites and woolly mammoth models.) In subsequent decades, the collections were later sold or donated and ended up at a handful of museums, including Chicago’s Field Museum, which arose out of the Columbia Exposition.

In all, about 5,000 artifacts were unearthed and shipped out of the Grand Gulch region of southeast Utah during the 1890s—a practice that would be vilified today, but at that time was not unusual. Remarkably, the majority of these artifacts are still well preserved, but they are not often displayed and are largely unknown to the public. These collections are housed in the storerooms of six museums, and though researchers have access to them, they are generally poorly documented and rarely cited in scholarly published works. Nonetheless, the artifacts have stories to tell about the Basketmaker (500 B.C.-A.D. 700) and Ancestral Pueblo (A.D. 700-1300) periods in this region, and Laurie Webster is determined that those tales be told.

Excerpt. Read More in our SPRING 2017 Issue of American Archaeology, Vol. 20 No. 4.



Loveland Archaeological Society, Inc.

A Colorado Non-Profit Corporation

Gault Site Maintenance Day is here again!

Gault Site, 3439 Farm to Market 2843, Florence, Texas
Saturday, May 6th 8:30 AM - 1 PM

Once a year we ask for help with all the chores that are easier accomplished with many hands helping. We work on projects from 8:30 until noon and then the GSAR provides a "Thank You" BBQ picnic. After everyone eats more than they should you go home with a sense of accomplishment. We always have a good time and your contribution of a half day really makes a difference at the site.

We need your RSVP if you can attend so that we can plan for lunch. We ask that you wear good work clothes and good shoes/boots, bring gloves if you have them and water (we will have plenty of refills available). If you have a bow saw, limb loppers or a good hoe we could use more as we need to get rid of some juniper and prickly pear. We also could use a couple of people with pickup trucks to move limbs to our burn piles.

RSVP to cwernecke@gaultschool.org or via the office phone 512-245-8734



"Thank You" BBQ Picnic



Sorting in the shed



We try not to get as dirty as Dr. Williams

- Sponsor of the Annual Loveland Stone Age Fair -
www.stoneagefair.com



LAS Find of the Month, April 2017:

Members can bring an artifact to be entered into the competition at the monthly meeting, which will be judged based on the following rules:

1. Must be a member of LAS in good standing.
2. The artifact must be a personal find.
3. It must have been found within the specified time frame, i.e., within the month prior to the meeting.
4. The artifact doesn't have to be a Colorado find—all that matters is that it was found in the last month.

The Find of the Month for April 2017 was made by Louis Anich.

Type: Hanna, 1 3/8" in length

Material: Chalcedony

Location: Weld County, Colorado



LAS News and Upcoming Events:

Speakers Needed!

Really!! We need speakers for our 2017 meetings! If you would like to give a presentation or know of someone who would give a great program please contact Andy Coca, Jean Steinhoff or Kevin Zeeck. No experience is necessary, just a passion for our hobby and a willingness to share that passion. Thanks!

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| May 2, 2017 | May meeting. Program: Brian Carroll will give a presentation on the Smithsonian excavations at Lindenmeier. Mike Pearce was scheduled to give the program, but is home recovering from foot surgery. He will give the presentation at the June meeting. |
| May 27 – 29, 2017 | We are in the process of checking with the landowners to see if the Memorial Day field trip to the Harris Ranch in Bosler, Wyoming will be possible. We will have more information in the May newsletter. A map will be included in the May newsletter if we get permission. |
| June 6, 2017 | June meeting at the Rialto Theater. Program: Mike Pearce will give a presentation on High Country Artifacts, discussing artifacts found above timberline and their provenience. A map to the Rialto Theater will be included in the May newsletter. |
| July 4, 2017 | NO JULY MEETING due to Holiday. |