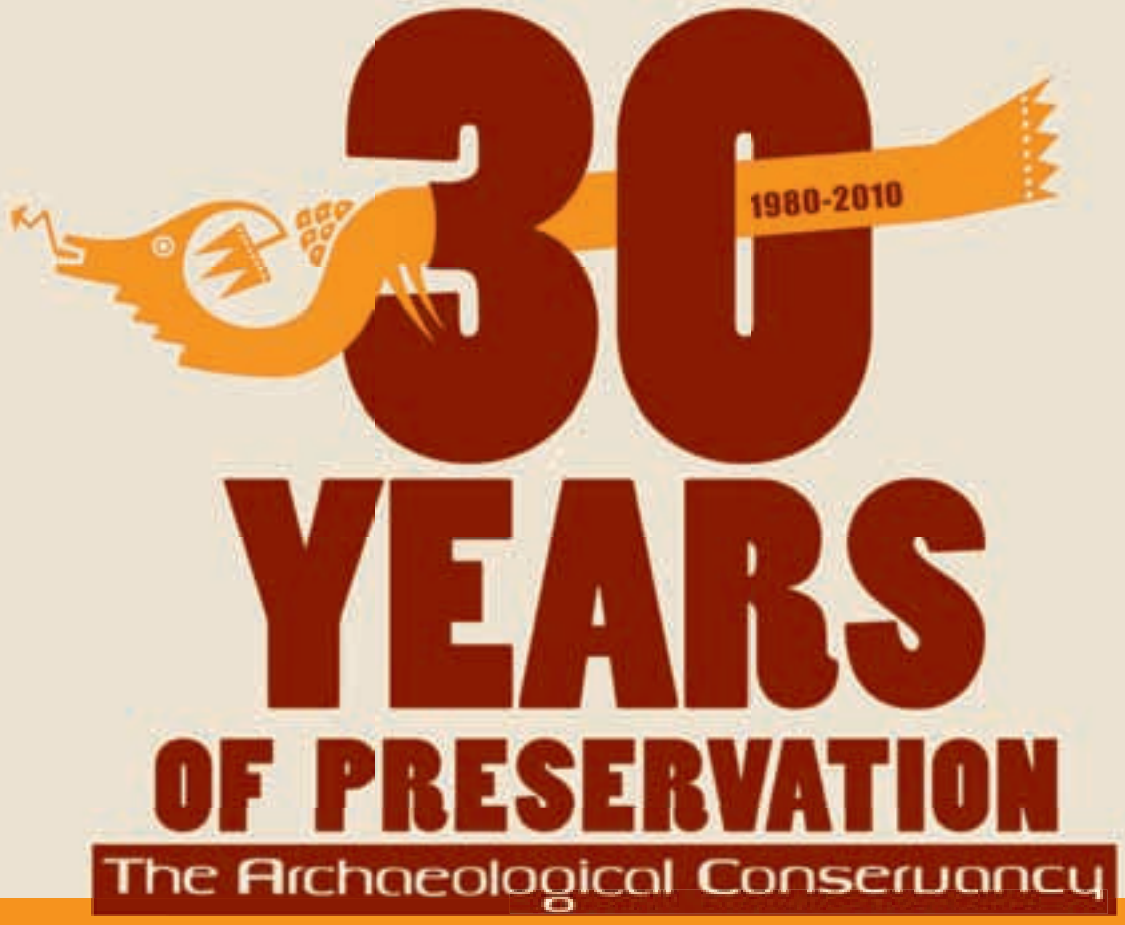



# THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSERVANCY CELEBRATES ITS 30TH ANNIVERSARY.

*By Tamara Stewart*

The founding of The Archaeological Conservancy 30 years ago was a response to the increasing destruction of archaeological sites across the country and the particular vulnerability of sites on private land. A federal court had just struck down the 1906 Antiquities Act, exposing the inadequacies of the nation's first federal law enacted to protect archaeological sites on public lands and prompting Mark Michel, then a private lobbyist, to help write and pass the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) in the late 1970s.

"Back then I was able to get good bipartisan support, something I wouldn't be able to get today," says Michel. The court's decision to strike down the Antiquities Act indicated it clearly was no deterrent against looting. In 1979, the Society for American Archaeology hired Michel to put together legislation to fix the problem. ARPA was passed that same year, with more detailed descriptions of prohibited activities and more substantial penalties for convicted violators than those called for by the Antiquities Act.

"The idea for The Archaeological Conservancy came out of this," says Michel. "ARPA protected sites on public and Indian lands, but how could we protect them on private lands?" Michel saw potential legislation in this area as a waste of time. "We needed a protection strategy that fit the U.S.," he says. Purchasing property containing important archaeological sites was a uniquely American approach to preservation, where there is such a strong private property ethic. "This was the only feasible approach. It was an idea whose time had come."

So in 1979, using the Nature Conservancy's model for

CHRISTINE PRESTON

*Mark Michel, Stewart Udall, and Jim Walker*

land acquisition and boasting $300,000 in start-up funds from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Ford Foundation, Michel, California inventor and businessman Jay Last, and Southwest archaeologist Steven LeBlanc founded the Conservancy to acquire important archaeological sites on private land. During its first year, the Conservancy acquired the famous Hopewell Mounds Group near Chillicothe in southern Ohio, which faced the threat of being subdivided into suburban housing tracts. This cluster of massive pre-Columbian burial mounds and earthworks is thought to have served as the civic-ceremonial center of the Hopewell civilization that thrived between 200 B.C. and A.D. 500.

In its second year, the Conservancy acquired a portion of San Marcos Pueblo, one of the largest pre-Columbian villages in North America. This 2,000-room pueblo in the Galisteo Basin of north-central New Mexico was occupied from the mid-13th century through the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 and contains a Spanish mission church and convento. Research has been undertaken at the preserve by various institutions nearly every year since its acquisition, including the American Museum of Natural History, the University of New Mexico, and Los Alamos National Laboratory. This acquisition required the Conservancy to engage in delicate negotiations with private landowners and developers and to establish partnerships with tribal and state entities. The remainder of the site was acquired 18 years later with a grant from the State of New Mexico and financial donations from several sources, including nearby Cochiti Pueblo, whose people claim ancestry to San Marcos.

Despite the generous start-up grants and the acquisition of two world-class archaeological preserves, the little-known Conservancy struggled to develop a national following during its early years. Then former Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall, a nationally known conservationist, became chairman of the Conservancy's board in 1982, giving the organization greater credibility and bringing in more funds. The Conservancy slowly built its membership, initially offering members a quarterly newsletter, and then in 1997 launching *American Archaeology,* an award-winning quarterly magazine that focused on news, research, and issues in North American archaeology, as well as the Conservancy's preservation work.

ARKANSAS ARCHEOLOGICAL SURVEY

*Visitors observe archaeologists excavating at Parkin Archeological State Park.*

The hard work and careful planning has paid off. The Conservancy now has five offices—it's headquartered in Albuquerque, New Mexico and has regional offices in Sacramento, California, Columbus, Ohio, Frederick, Maryland, and Marks, Mississippi—and over 22,000 members. It has also established more than 385 archaeological preserves in 40 states.

"I think it's incredible that the Conservancy has become a national organization, the only one of its kind in the country, and the popularly-written magazine *American Archaeology* is really invaluable for public outreach," says Udall, who is nearly 90 and still serves on the board, though no longer as chairman. "The Conservancy is a remarkable organization and every few years it breaks new ground. The recent looting busts made in Utah were due to federal laws against looting, laws that were passed in the late 1970s, pushed through by my brother [Morris Udall] and Mark Michel. Preservation law has great value, but it still doesn't help protect sites on private land.

MARK MICHEL

*The Zunis celebrate the transfer of the Box S site to their tribe.*

JAY JOHNSON

*Archaeologists have used remote sensing to guide their excavations at Parchman Place Mounds.*

Therefore, acquiring important sites on private property, the Conservancy's mission, remains critical."

The Conservancy's preserves range from Paleo-Indian sites to pre-Columbian mounds and villages to historical missions and forts. They're open to the public for tours and other educational opportunities, to Native Americans for traditional purposes, and to qualified professionals for research under controlled conditions. Many of the Conservancy's preserves have been acquired through years of negotiations with landowners and developers.

"We've been able to help a number of developers with their archaeological problems through the creation of permanent preserves," says the Conservancy's Southwest regional director Jim Walker. "Usually the developer is faced with either very costly excavation or preservation in place, which not only saves money, but saves time and the archaeological site. This is really the preferred mitigation alternative, and tomorrow's excavations will yield higher quality data through the application of new theories and excavation techniques."

Partnerships with landowners, developers, archaeologists, organizations, agencies, and tribes have been critical to the Conservancy's success. The Cedarscape site in northeast Mississippi, inhabited until 1735 and reoccupied after 1772, is one of the few historical Chickasaw villages to escape destruction by development. In 2005, the Chickasaw Nation gave the Conservancy a grant to purchase the 35-acre site, which contains a rare Chickasaw fort. In order to preserve it, the landowners John Ray and Lottie Betts Beasley sold 30 acres containing the site and donated an additional five acres to the Conservancy. A cooperative agreement was signed with the Chickasaw Nation whereby they will lease and manage Cedarscape as an educational preserve.

"It's one of the projects I'm most proud of because it brought together so many people who felt preserving the site was extremely important," says Jessica Crawford, the Conservancy's Southeast regional director. "It has been a pleasure to work with representatives of the nation. We share the same vision in which Cedarscape will educate and enlighten both present and future generations."

In 1989 Zuni Governor Robert Lewis asked the Conservancy to help protect the late 13th-century ancestral Zuni site of Box S, known to the Zuni as Heshodan Im'oskwi'a, or Emerging Village. The 1,100-room masonry village site in western New Mexico had suffered repeated looting. In 1999, after 10 years of negotiations with the site's landowners, the Conservancy acquired Box S. Two years later, after mapping, stabilizing, and backfilling the exposed rooms, the Conservancy sold the property to the Zuni Tribe, who received a Lannan Foundation grant to buy the 160-acre site. At a celebration of the transfer, Zuni Governor Malcolm Bowekaty addressed the attendees: "For you, this place represents the past. But for us, it is still living. Many important people are buried here, and we still turn to them when we need them." The Zuni Tribe maintains the site for tribal and spiritual purposes, allowing the public to visit in hopes that they will appreciate the importance of preserving ancestral sites.

RICHARD GREEN

*Jessica Crawford (second from right), Chickasaw Nation officials, and the former landowners at the Cedarscape site.*

A management committee of community members, government representatives, Native Americans, and archaeologists is assembled to design a long-term plan for each site's preservation and interpretation. Area residents can serve as site stewards and docents, and they also participate in fieldwork, such as the mapping and stabilization undertaken at Galisteo Pueblo, a Conservancy preserve in the Galisteo Basin in north-central New Mexico. Working in collaboration with like-minded agencies and individuals, the Conservancy succeeded in getting Congress to pass the Galisteo Basin Archaeological Sites Protection Act in 2004 to protect other important sites in the basin.

CROW CANYON

*An aerial view of Yellowjacket Pueblo, a huge site in southwest Colorado's Montezuma Valley.*

Several of the Conservancy's most significant preserves have been incorporated into state and national parks such as Chaco Culture National Historical Park in New Mexico, Petrified Forest National Park in Arizona, Hopewell Culture National Historical Park in Ohio, and Parkin Archeological State Park in Arkansas. Parkin, in eastern Arkansas, is one of the largest and best-preserved Mississippian culture complexes in the Mississippi Valley, most large sites in the area having been destroyed by looters or by agriculture. The State of Arkansas approved converting the site into a state park in 1967; however, numerous people owned portions of the land it sat on, and the state government failed to provide the necessary funds to purchase their properties, some of which contained homes and other buildings.

In 1983 the state government asked the Conservancy to acquire the various parcels of land and protect them until state funding for the park became available, and, beginning in 1986, the Conservancy obtained dozens of parcels, in some cases purchasing homes that were torn down or relocated. The state eventually purchased these parcels from the Conservancy, and in 1994 Parkin Archeological State Park opened, complete with a visitor's center and research station.

"Mark's calm demeanor and non-government status meant that he was able to negotiate fairly with the residents and landowners, many of whom were elderly," says Jeffrey Mitchem, the station archaeologist at the park. Mitchem believes the site, which includes a 17-acre village surrounded by a man-made moat and a 20-foot high temple mound, is the native village of Casqui, occupied from A.D. 1000 to at least 1550 and visited by the Hernando de Soto Expedition in 1541.

Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site in Collinsville, Illinois, a World Heritage Site, will soon incorporate several Conservancy acquisitions. One of the greatest pre-Columbian cities of the world and the largest north of Mexico, Cahokia was the political, economic, and cultural center of the Mississippian culture. While the central portion of the site is preserved within the park, Cahokia's outlying areas are still endangered by the industrial, commercial, and residential development of nearby East St. Louis.

"Working closely with Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site and the Powell Archaeological Research Center, the Conservancy has been successful in acquiring important parts of the Cahokia site as they come onto the real estate market," says Paul Gardner, the Conservancy's Midwest regional director. The Conservancy is currently under contract to purchase Mound 1, which marks Cahokia's eastern boundary.

Innovative research projects have been undertaken at many Conservancy preserves, greatly contributing to our knowledge of past cultures. In order to preserve sites for future advances in research, the Conservancy practices "conservation archaeology," making only a small portion of a site available for research. Non-invasive strategies such as

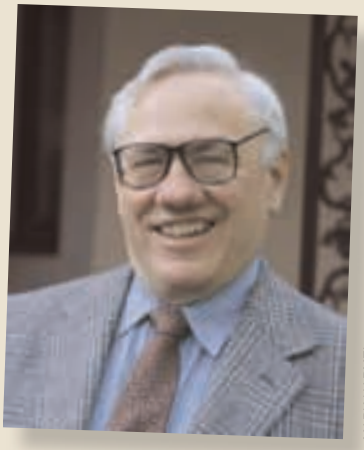
*Andy Stout and former landowners Raymond and Nancy Dickerson at the Pamplin Pipe Factory.*

WILL SHEPPARD

the remote sensing techniques employed at Parchman Place Mounds in Mississippi, are encouraged. The University of Mississippi spent several years conducting detailed tests at this Mississippian mound preserve. "Parchman Place has provided an excellent testing ground for cutting edge remote sensing and geophysical techniques and equipment," Crawford says.

At the Barton site in western Maryland, excavations led by Bob Wall of Towson University over the past 20 years have yielded evidence of occupation spanning some 12,000 years. This past spring, researchers with the University of Michigan's Museum of Anthropology conducted a magnetometer survey of the site, discovering three new palisade-enclosed villages.

In southwest Colorado, the Conservancy has acquired a variety of Mesa Verde Anasazi settlements, many of which have been the focus of years of research by Crow Canyon Archaeological Center in Cortez, Colorado. Yellowjacket and Mud Springs pueblos are two such preserves, both huge residential complexes in the Montezuma Valley that date from the 10th through the 13th centuries, just before the entire region was depopulated. Research at these sites has generated detailed maps and a better understanding of the villages' chronological history of occupation. A Crow Canyon investigation of the Conservancy's Albert Porter Pueblo in southwest Colorado yielded new information about the relationship between the Mesa Verde and the Chaco Canyon Anasazi peoples.



*Jay Last co-founded the Conservancy.*

MARK HARMEL

"Over the past 15 years, my organization has collaborated with the Conservancy on major excavation projects, stabilization-preservation projects, and mapping-survey projects at numerous preserves in southwest Colorado, southeast Utah, and northern New Mexico," says Scott Ortman, director of research at Crow Canyon. "The U.S. Southwest is one of the world's foremost outdoor archaeological laboratories, and the Conservancy is making a huge contribution to Southwestern archaeology by acquiring and preserving significant sites and by supporting research within these preserves, making an impact not only on our understanding of Pueblo Indian history, but on archaeological method and theory in general."

Despite tough economic times, the Conservancy continues to expand its acquisitions, recently adding new preserves in Oregon, California, Illinois, and its first in Montana. One of the few intact sites in California's central San Joaquin Valley, Lathrop Mound was recently leased from the Union Pacific Railroad to protect it from future development. Believed to have been inhabited by the Chulamni Tribe of the Yokuts after A.D. 1500, the site is a rare midden deposit with stone and bone tools and ornaments. "The lease we obtained from Union Pacific is just one example of the many creative solutions we use to preserve important sites," says the Conservancy's Western region field representative Julie Clark. "The strategies we use to acquire and protect

## Launching POINT-4


The Conservancy's POINT-4 Program—an effort to Protect Our Irreplaceable National Treasures—is a $2 million emergency acquisition program designed to ensure that virtually no nationally significant archaeological site is destroyed by development, looting, or the effects of the environment. The program will focus primarily on sites in five geographical regions representing particular cultures that are in great danger of destruction, and on one national culture. Those regions and cultures are the Algonquians and Iroquois villages of the Northeast; the monumental sites of the Mississippi Delta; the mound builders of the Ohio Valley; the Anasazi of the Four Corners; and the prehistoric and historic sites in California's Central Valley. It will also focus on the Paleo-Indian culture that spanned the country.

By taking this thematic approach, the Conservancy will ensure that some of these precious sites are preserved. The Conservancy may also use POINT-4 funds to purchase significant sites unrelated to these cultures and regions. Three earlier POINT campaigns raised more than $6 million to acquire highly endangered sites.

The POINT-4 Program will provide the Conservancy with the funds to continue the emergency effort to protect threatened archaeological sites nationwide. Board members, staff, and a member have made financial donations to the project. The goal is to have $1 million that will be matched by another $1 million.

each site are as unique as the sites themselves."

Last year the Conservancy acquired the original Pamplin Pipe Factory site in Pamplin City, Virginia from Raymond "Pipeman" Dickerson and his wife Nancy, who had maintained the site for decades, waiting to place it in the right hands for permanent preservation. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the site was once the world's largest clay tobacco pipe factory, producing a million pipes per month at its peak in 1935. The Conservancy is in the process of transferring the property to Pamplin City so that the site can be turned into a public museum. "Thanks to the Dickersons and local Appomattox historical organizations, the site will be preserved and interpreted to the public as an important piece of Virginia's, as well as the nation's, early industrial history," says Andy Stout, the Conservancy's Eastern regional director.

Lamoka Lake, a recently established Conservancy preserve in the Finger Lakes region of central New York, was the first site to be labeled "Archaic" in the U.S., referring to its occupation prior to the advent of pottery. Since then the term Archaic has been further defined and used to refer to the developmental stage that preceded horticulture and widespread pottery use by prehistoric cultures. In western Virginia, the Conservancy recently acquired the legendary Ely Mound, one of only two intact Mississippian platform mounds in the state.

ANDY STOUT

***Researchers work at the Barton site.***

Archaeological sites are often in imminent danger of destruction. Nine years ago, founding board member Jay Last responded to this dilemma by initiating the Conservancy's POINT (Protect Our Irreplaceable National Treasures) Program. "Archaeological sites are among the world's resources being most rapidly depleted," he says. Last offered the Conservancy a $1-million challenge grant to be used for emergency acquisitions, so that with matching funds raised from foundations, corporations, and the Conservancy's members, threatened sites could be purchased quickly. The success of the initial POINT Program has resulted in three subsequent phases of the project.

NATALIE GREEN, APERTURES, INC.

***Mark Michel (center) was recently given the Louise du Pont Crowninshield Award by Richard Moe (left) and Cliff Hudson of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.***

"As I look back over the past 30 years, I'm impressed with how many individuals have contributed to the Conservancy's success—the dedicated staff and board of directors, combined with the loyal membership, have built up an organization with an impressive record of accomplishments, well positioned for the future," says Last, who still serves on the Conservancy's board. "The Conservancy is the most effective organization I've ever seen," says Gord on Wilson, who now chairs the board.

The Conservancy has received numerous awards for its preservation efforts and last winter Mark Michel received the National Trust for Historic Preservation's highest accolade, the prestigious Louise DuPont Crowninshield Award. At the award ceremony, Michel was cited for his "energetic leadership [that] has built the Conservancy into a national organization with a strong and supportive constituency of more than 23,000 members."

"We cover the country, but still have sites in only 40 states, so there is much work yet to do," Michel says. "In any one day, we're probably working on a hundred projects, but these things take years and years to accomplish." The spark that ignited the organization 30 years ago still burns, and the race to protect America's invaluable archaeological sites continues.

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TAMARA STEWART *is the assistant editor of* American Archaeology *and the Conservancy's Southwest region projects coordinator.*