



Symposium on the

ARCHAEOLOGY of NEW YORK CITY

SPONSORED BY PROFESSIONAL ARCHAEOLOGISTS OF NEW YORK CITY
IN ASSOCIATION WITH
THE MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

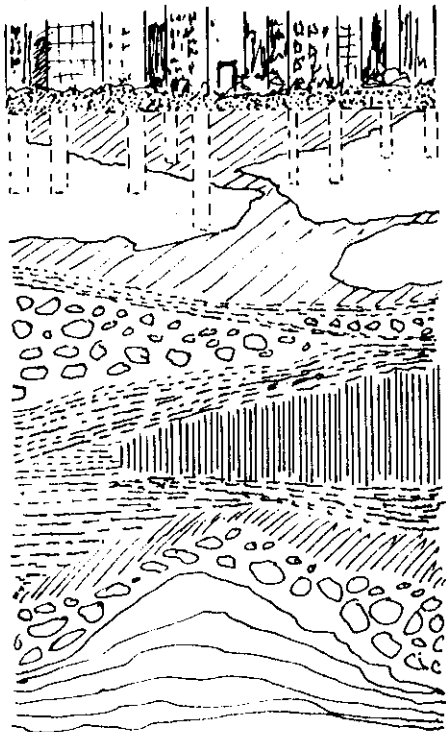
SATURDAY, MAY 9, 1931

1:30 - 4:30 P.M.

AT THE MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

FIFTH AVENUE AT 103RD STREET, NYC

open to the general public



AN AFTERNOON OF REPORTS OF CURRENT
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK IN NEW YORK
CITY WITH SLIDES AND DISCUSSION
BY THE ARCHAEOLOGISTS THEMSELVES

*Professional Archaeologists of New York City
(PANYC) is an organization of local professionals
concerned with discovering and conserving our
cultural heritage*

PROFESSIONAL ARCHAEOLOGISTS OF NEW YORK CITY

SYMPOSIUM ON THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF NEW YORK CITY

Museum of the City of New York
May 9, 1981 1:30-4:30
Dr. L. Ceci, Queens College

Opening Remarks:

There has been until fairly recently some kind of principle in operation that makes exotic places and archaeology more interesting than that of your own backyard. Indeed, there is almost a tradition for archaeologists trained in local institutions to "move on" to Mesoamerica, South America, or the Near East to carry out "real" archaeological research. Many of these professionals learned their field techniques on local sites which were considered uninteresting, therefore expendable.

Not so today. There is a new trend of high quality research -- as you shall see today -- devoted to archaeology in and of the City of New York. As a mark of this trend, New York now has its first Urban Archaeologist on the payroll, Dr. Sheren Baugher-Perlin, who is employed by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. This new interest in our own "backyard" - a renaissance, if you will, - is not simply the result of decreasing opportunities overseas; rather it is the product of developments in the field of archaeology which has expanded tremendously in the past few decades. There is now available a great variety of sophisticated techniques and methods for measuring time, for example, for detecting the composition of artifacts, and for analyzing site content (-- as you will see today). Paralleling these new technical developments are the new kinds of theoretical questions archeologists now can and want to investigate. Old goals of simply identifying site locations and recovering artifacts as "curiosities" are no longer satisfying or even acceptable among professionals. Now archaeologists design their excavation procedures so as to recover all kinds

of environmental data that might help explain why this site was chosen in space and time. What kinds of resources were available? What human strategies lay behind a particular settlement pattern? What kind of subsistence can be reconstructed from fragments of bone, shell, and perhaps microscopic specimens of plant debris? How does the distribution of ceramics reflect the social, economic, and political organization of the societies that produced them? And how do these cultural systems change through time?

From this perspective, New York City is an exciting "new" frontier in archaeological research. Literally, beneath our feet lies a sweep of history and prehistory perhaps 10,000 years old or more. From the period when the last glaciers receded, man (and woman) was in the Northeast. As the environment improved and shellfish beds were established, prehistoric Indians came to the area to exploit this important new food resource, leaving a sequence of camp sites and artifact assemblages that mark the passing of the centuries and the development of new tools and cultural adaptations. When European visitors first reached these shores in the 16th century, and later the traders and colonizers, the impact on Indian life is recorded in their sites.

By the 17th century, the New York City is actually a "frontier", a dynamic region of cultural systems meshing: Indian and European cultures influencing each other, and in a way setting a foundation for a pattern of economic, social, and political life that characterize modern life. It is no accident that the Dutch Ft. Amsterdam, based on the exchange of native furs and wampum for European trade goods - a central place for redistribution of profits across an ocean - lies near the foundation of the present World Trade Center.

In this early century there was also established the pattern for attracting peoples of diverse background to the area. By 1643, according to one visitor, there were "4-500 men" of "different sects and nations" in Manhattan and its environs; "18 different languages" were then spoken in the colony barely 25 years old. Thus the trend for cultural diversity in New York is nearly 400 years old; most importantly, the evidence for it is not only present in the few documents but in the ground.

Indeed, the new field of historic archaeology has expanded greatly because scholars have increasingly recognized the bias in histories built solely on the writings and activities of the literate and the "big Men." The history of the nation and of our city must also be based on the activities of the "little people," - the laborers, tradesmen, seamen, women, and dozens of other ethnic or economic groups who have contributed mightily to our past growth and development. From the presentations given today you will see that we are just beginning to "catch" some of this critical evidence not only for various cultures but for the process of urbanization itself.

Finally, I wish to identify the speakers and myself and others in the audience as members of the new organization, the Professional Archaeologists of New York City. The anagram for this organization, PANYC, properly reflects our real concern for the rapid destruction and loss of this area's archaeological evidence by whatever means. This evidence represents the cultural heritage of us all, - and it contains potential answers for hundreds of new questions about our "roots" as well as for the anthropology of humankind.

PROFESSIONAL ARCHAEOLOGISTS OF NEW YORK CITY/MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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PROGRAM

Opening Remarks and Introductions: L. Ceci (Queens College, CUNY)

3000 Years of City Life: Archaeology in the Bronx, Queens, and Lower Manhattan:
N. Rotschild (Hunter College, CUNY)

South Street Sespport: W. Harris (NYU)

Sandy Ground: Archaeology on Staten Island: W. Askins (CUNY Graduate Center)

Weeksville: R. Henn (CUNY Graduate Center)

Empire Stores Site: Industrial Archaeology: J. Gaisnar (Columbia)

Alternative Archaeology in Brooklyn: I. Berman (Brooklyn College, CUNY)