# AN EARLY EXAMPLE OF PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE UNITED STATES: NAUVOO, ILLINOIS, 1962-1969

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Although public archaeology has become increasingly popular since the 1980s, there were archaeologists engaged with the public well before this time. Yet, there have been very few attempts to document these early examples of public archaeology in the United States. Many of these early examples were associated with historic site restorations. One such example comes from the archaeological program at the historic Mormon city of Nauvoo, Illinois, during the 1960s. Here, J. C. Harrington, his wife Virginia, and others continued a longstanding tradition of interpreting excavations to the public by utilizing various illustrative methods. The program of interpreting archaeology to the public in Nauvoo is in many ways a forerunner to much of what has since been promoted as noteworthy examples of public archaeology.

# **PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY'S PAST**

There have been several attempts to outline the history of public archaeology in the United States (Ascherson, 2000; Chambers, 2004; Jameson, 2004; Merriman, 2004; Smardz Frost, 2004). Most accounts begin in the 1960s with the passage of important pieces of federal and state legislation that fundamentally changed the discipline by thrusting it into the public sphere. Out of these laws emerged a publicly mandated archaeology, or what Charles McGimsey first called "public archaeology" in 1972. More recently, however, and partly due to the advent of postprocessual archaeology, the term has expanded to encompass a wide variety of

seemingly disparate topics. Indeed, everything from the sale of looted artifacts and the presentation of archaeology in the media, to the role of archaeology in primary and secondary education and in the development of tourism, has been placed under the umbrella of public archaeology. The range of topics has become so broad that new labels have emerged, each of which corresponds to a component of the totality known as public archaeology. Thus, we hear of "public interpretation of archaeology" (Jameson, 1997), "educational archaeology" (Smardz Frost, 2004), and "applied archaeology" (Shackel, 2004) to name a few. At the same time, what McGimsey (1972) first deemed "public archaeology" is now commonly referred to as contract archaeology or Cultural Resource Management (CRM).

This relatively recent expansion of meaning, however, has created some confusion about the history of what is now called public archaeology. That is, although the practice of public archaeology has drastically changed since McGimsey first coined the term in 1972, our understanding of its history has remained the same. Indeed, most accounts, as noted above, continue to trace its origin to the beginnings of contract archaeology and cultural resource management in the 1960s. Such accounts are misleading, as they uncritically assume public archaeology was born in the events immediately leading to its first designation as a specialization. The present conception of public archaeology reframes how we trace its history. The truth is that the practice of what has since become known as public archaeology preceded the coining of the term by at least 50 years. That such misconceptions persist supports the fact that, although the more recent contours of public archaeology's past are welldocumented and understood, the early history of public archaeology in the United States remains to be written. There have been but few attempts to document specific case studies of the early and, in many ways, groundbreaking efforts at what we now call public archaeology (see Jameson, 2004; Linebaugh, 2005; South, 1997).

This misunderstanding has resulted in a dearth of knowledge concerning the actual roots of public archaeology. Adding to Chambers' (2004) recent call for more case material related to contemporary public archaeology, I argue that it is imperative for archaeologists to uncover and reflect upon early public archaeology in the United States. It is time to "flesh out" the skeleton of public archaeology's past.

The only way this can happen is for archaeologists to begin researching and writing about specific archaeological projects of the past that incorporated components of what is now known as public archaeology. Such case studies, once compiled in sufficient number and quality, will provide a meaningful context in which similar case material can be placed and interpreted. Only then will the actual history of public archaeology be more fully understood. Tracing the history of public archaeology is crucial because, as Sabloff (1989) has argued,

To toss aside the history of archaeology is to promote inefficiency because the apparent ignorance of the historical roots of many current intellectual positions in archaeology seems to be leading to dead ends and to the inefficient repetition of past mistakes. To archaeologists committed to an efficient, productive development of the discipline, history and historical analyses cannot be bunk. They are essential (p. 35).

If present endeavors in public archaeology are to be efficient, if they are to build on the past by understanding the circumstances and details of previous successes (and failures), then the history of public archaeology in the United States and elsewhere must truly be comprehended. The purpose of this article is to help satisfy this need for historical knowledge by presenting a historical case study of public archaeology in the United States, drawing on the archaeological program connected to the restoration of Nauvoo, Illinois in the 1960s (Figure 1).

# HISTORIC SITE RESTORATIONS AND THE EMERGENCE OF PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY

Many of the early examples of public archaeology in the United States come from archaeological investigations associated with the restoration of historic sites in America (Fry, 1969; Jameson (ed.), 2004). Although not the collaborative type of public archaeology advocated by some archaeologists today (Shackel and Chambers, 2004), in which the public plays important roles in various decisions regarding archaeological practice, the public archaeology at historic sites is exemplary of what is now referred to as "educational archaeology" or "public interpretation of archaeology." According to Jameson (2004), this branch of public archaeology "focuses on the methods and techniques of conveying archaeological information to the lay public in an engaging, informative, and accurate manner" (p. 21). Public archaeology of this kind is normally understood to have emerged in the 1980s with a number of individual educational projects and programs, which have since grown into the large coordinated and cooperative educational archaeology programs of today (Smardz Frost, 2004). Again, however, such a chronology is misleading in that it inaccurately presents the historical reality of organized efforts to interpret archaeology to the public. A more accurate history of the public interpretation of archaeology will take into consideration the history and objectives of historic site preservation in the United States.

The history of America's historic sites is rooted in the preservation movement in the United States. Although it began as a grass-roots effort in the mid-nineteenth century and remained the domain of amateurs until the early 1900s, historic preservation in the United States was primarily motivated from its inception by "a desire to educate the American people into a deeper regard for their history . . ." (Hosmer, 1965:298). The emerging preservation movement of the early twentieth century was codified through the passage of the Antiquities Act in 1906. This Congressional Act did much to cement a preservation ethic in the minds of the



Figure 1. Map of Illinois, showing the location of Nauvoo on the east bank of the Mississippi River.

American public by giving the president of the United States authority to designate public lands as national monuments, while at the same time requiring federal permits to conduct fieldwork at such sites. Although relatively few historic sites came under federal jurisdiction by way of this law, a decade after its passage government officials created the National Park Service (NPS) and assigned the new organization the management of federally owned historic properties. Charged with this responsibility, NPS officials were the first to formulate federal policy for historic sites (Hosmer, 1981:469).

The National Park Service became even more involved in the development and interpretation of the nation's historic sites in 1935 with the passage of the Historic Sites Act. Among other things, this legislation called for a national survey of historic sites and authorized the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the NPS, to designate federally owned properties as national historic sites independent from any act of Congress. In terms of this discussion, however, the most important element of the Historic Sites Act was its educational component, which authorized the Secretary of the Interior, through the NPS, to develop educational programs that utilized the nation's historic sites to illustrate major themes in the history of the United States (Wallace, 1986). Specifically, the NPS was to "Develop an educational program and service for the purpose of making available to the public facts and information pertaining to American historic and archaeologic [sic.] sites, buildings, and properties of national significance" (Historic Sites Act: sec. 462-j). Because the timing of this legislation coincided with the widespread unemployment of the Great Depression, the Department of the Interior was able to fill its ranks with professionally trained historians, architects, and archaeologists who collectively set out to create and implement such public education programs at the nation's historic sites.

Taken together, these early acts of Congress firmly established a preservation ethic in the minds of the American public and helped pave the way for later legislation that would further shape the practice of public archaeology in the United States. Indeed, the 1960s and 1970s witnessed the National Historic Preservation Act (1966), Nixon's Executive Order 11593 (1971), and other important pieces of legislation that expanded government sponsored archaeology beyond the nation's historic sites by establishing the legal framework in which federally mandated contract archaeology and cultural resource management programs would develop and ultimately thrive (Ascherson, 2000; Jameson, 1994). It was in response to these later changes in the discipline that McGimsey first coined the term "public archaeology" in 1972.

More recently, however, Stanley South (1997) has proclaimed that "For the past 50 years, historical archaeologists in America have been...effectively interpreting historic sites to the public . . ." (p. 55). In reality, South's time frame is too conservative as the public interpretation of archaeology at historic sites in America extends back to at least the 1930s. This recalibration should not be surprising as "The extensive work in historic site restoration . . . has always had a significant public education objective" (Smardz Frost, 2004:62) in that historic sites primarily exist for the purpose of interpreting the past to the public. The Historic Sites Act of 1935 declared, "it is a national policy to preserve for public use historic sites, buildings, and objects of national significance for the inspiration and benefit of the people of the United States (sec. 461, emphasis added). Put another way, as Alderson and Low (1996) have stated, "historic sites are a part of the national heritage and . . . consequently they should be run for the benefit of the public at large" (p. 7). Indeed, it is precisely because historic sites in the United States have

always had a public education objective that archaeological investigations associated with the restoration of these sites have also been oriented to the public. Thus, the emergence and practice of interpreting archaeology to the public at historic site restorations like Nauvoo is a direct function of the role and objectives of the historic sites movement in America.

# NAUVOO RESTORATION, INC.

Under authority granted by the Historic Sites Act (1935), which empowered the Secretary of the Interior to "Erect and maintain tablets to mark or commemorate historic or prehistoric places and events of national historical or archaeological significance" (Historic Sites Act: sec. 462-g), the National Park Service designated the historical district of Nauvoo, Illinois a National Historic Landmark on January 20, 1961. This designation indicated that Nauvoo was believed to possess exceptional value in illustrating and interpreting the heritage of the United States. Specifically, given the site's significance as the starting point for the Mormons' trek to what is now the state of Utah, NPS officials saw Nauvoo as a strategic base from which to interpret the overland migrations that characterized the westward expansion of the United States throughout the nineteenth century.

Bolstered by the national historic landmark designation, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, on June 28, 1962, decided to take formal steps to restore the historic site of Nauvoo by forming a non-profit organization known as Nauvoo Restoration, Incorporated (NRI) with the express purpose:

to provide an historically authentic physical environment for awakening a public interest in, and an understanding and appreciation of, the story of Nauvoo and the mass migration of its people to the valley of the Great Salt Lake; and to dramatize the interpretation of that story, not only as a great example of pioneering courage and religious zeal, but also as one of the vital forces in the expansion of America westward from the Mississippi River (NRI, 1962:3).

Since that time, the Church-sponsored corporation has restored or reconstructed more than 30 historic buildings—over 20 of which are open to the public for tours—recreating a historical village on the banks of the Mississippi River (Figure 2). Although archaeology has all but ceased at present, Nauvoo is still a major tourist destination, especially for Mormons.

Since its inception, NRI officially operated under the direction of the Church hierarchy. However, the original Board of Trustees consisted of powerful and influential men who initially experienced a great deal of autonomy in their work. Under their direction, and with the influence and suggestions of engaged staff members, including interested archaeologists, an expansive program of public archaeology was established at Nauvoo.



Figure 2. Aerial view of the Nauvoo peninsula.

# WHY PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY AT NAUVOO?

Public archaeology at Nauvoo was not "public" in the sense that it was publicly funded. The entire Nauvoo restoration program, which included the archaeological excavations, was privately supported by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which still owns and operates the historic site. However, the archaeology associated with the restoration of Nauvoo during the 1960s is an early example of the public interpretation of archaeology (Jameson, 1997) in that excavations at the site were interpreted to the visiting public in a variety of ways and for various reasons.

In fact, there were at least three specific motives for interpreting archaeology to the public at Nauvoo at this time. First, as with most organizations responsible for historic sites, NRI needed to garner public interest and support, as its very success and survival depended on the acceptance and approval of its public visitors. Thus, NRI sought ways to publicize itself. The officials quickly learned that archaeological excavations "proved to be of great interest to visitors, and constitute one of our best opportunities for 'selling' Nauvoo and the restoration program to the public" (Harrington, 1967a:11). "[D]igging in archaeology is most exciting to the people," observed J. C. Harrington, NRI's chief archaeologist, in 1965. "They really like to get excited about it. . . . The publicity it receives in the newspapers and magazines pays off" (NRI, 1965:13). The perceived benefits of interpreting the archaeological excavations to the public was so great that even the resulting drawbacks of doing so were seen as advantageous in terms of generating public interest and support. "We hear many good reports on the whole archaeological program and how it is carried on," wrote the president of NRI in 1968, "and that it creates more interest than any other part of the project, so the 'slowness' is an advantage even though it holds up some of the rest of the work" (Kimball, 1968).

As the institution sponsoring the restoration, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also had a vested interest in the publicity revolving around the restoration project. Here was an opportunity to make their history and beliefs known to the public at large. Both Church and NRI officials sought to make the project "a worthwhile phase of the Church's presentation to the American public" (Lyon, 1967). This strategy is reflected in the comment of one NRI employee quoted as saying, "We believe we are helping break down prejudices. People have a different concept of the Church and its members once they have been here" (Noyce, 1967:9). Thus, because the restoration project had "great potential as a missionary proselytizing tool" (Noyce, 1967:9), and because the public interpretation of archaeology at Nauvoo garnered good publicity for the project, officials of both the Church and NRI encouraged and welcomed such efforts.

The second motive behind the practice of public archaeology at Nauvoo was embedded in a desire for the public to accept the project as an authentic and legitimate historic site restoration. Archaeology, again, was seen as one means of achieving this end insofar as it was viewed as a scientific endeavor. This sentiment is captured nicely in the minutes of a meeting of NRI's Board of Trustees, during which Harrington, the chief archaeologist, declared,

We must get an image across that this is a scientific scholarly project, not only something which memorializes Brigham Young and his followers. The public is expecting it and will welcome what we are able to do, making a name for Nauvoo and this type of work which will be emulated just as Colonial Williamsburg is emulated (NRI, 1965).

Harrington again expressed the same view a few years later when he wrote, "the archaeological work offers a golden opportunity to put across the point that Nauvoo is being restored <u>authentically</u> [emphasis in original]—that every step in the restoration is based on careful research.... This is excellent public relations for the project, and will bear good fruit" (Harrington, 1969). Fundamentally, this second motive was related to the first in that it too was concerned with gaining the public interest and support that was perceived as crucial to the success of the historic site and restoration project while concurrently garnering academic merit.

Of course, Church leaders also understood the value of authenticity for the thousands of Mormons who would visit the site. Nauvoo would serve as a three-dimensional witness of the Church's historical claims and beliefs (Olsen, 2004). But if it was to be convincing, the restoration had to be perceived as authentic. In this way, the public archaeology Mormons experienced in Nauvoo served to bolster their faith as long as it supported a belief that the recreated Nauvoo was indeed authentic.

Finally, a third motive for practicing public archaeology at Nauvoo in the 1960s concerned the promotion of the budding field of historical archaeology. Unsurprisingly, the desire to promote historical archaeology stemmed primarily from the archaeologists themselves. The 1960s was a decade of emerging professionalization for historical archaeology in America with the key event being the organization of the Society for Historical Archaeology in January 1967. While employed by NRI, J. C. Harrington (Figure 3), commonly regarded as the "father of historical archaeology" (Jelks, 1998), participated in this founding meeting and was elected to the original six-man governing board. In a letter to his colleagues in Nauvoo written shortly thereafter, Harrington told them of the "Some 120 professional people (mostly archaeologists) gathered there, primarily for the purpose of organizing a new association dealing with historical archaeology." He continued, "This shows how the interest and active participation in this field has grown, as ten years ago I doubt if we could have garnered a dozen people" (Harrington, 1967b). The growing support and enthusiasm for historical archaeology in the 1960s must have been especially poignant to Harrington, who had personally experienced scholarly condescension earlier in his career. In reference to these early years, he wrote, "it had become clear that the American

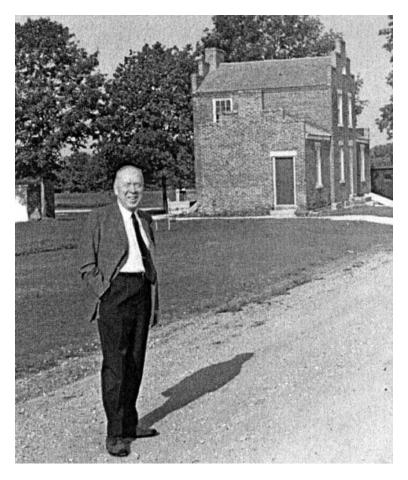


Figure 3. Jean Carl (J. C.) Harrington (1901-1998) in front of the restored home of Brigham Young, Nauvoo, Illinois, 1969.
Courtesy of the Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as Church Archives).

archaeological fraternity was not going to accept this new use of archaeology without a struggle," referencing, among other things, some of the "disparaging epithets of that time, such as 'tin-can archaeology'" (Harrington, 1994). Having witnessed first hand such disapproving attitudes, Harrington sought to use the excavations in Nauvoo to promote the emerging field of historical archaeology to professional colleagues and to the public at large.

With these three motives driving their actions, NRI officials, with the encouragement and guidance of their archaeologists, established and operated a

remarkably sophisticated public archaeology program at Nauvoo. Although the term 'public archaeology' had yet to enter the scholarly literature, the multifaceted program of public interpretation at Nauvoo foreshadowed many of the practices and methodologies that have since been published as prominent examples of educational archaeology. The archaeology at Nauvoo throughout the 1960s stands as an overlooked early example of public archaeology in America.

# **PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY IN NAUVOO**

Full-scale archaeological excavation in Nauvoo began in the summer of 1962 when the Church hired Melvin L. Fowler of Southern Illinois University (SIU) to direct excavations at the site of the Nauvoo Temple. By September of that year, the excavators had successfully uncovered most of the Temple's foundation (Figure 4) (Green, 1962a; Green and Bowles, 1964). However, due to misunderstandings concerning the extent of archaeological work to be performed at the site, the Church never renewed its contract with Fowler and SIU. Additional full-scale excavations were not initiated again until the summer of 1965, when J. C. Harrington was hired as NRI's chief archaeologist. Nevertheless, the 1962 excavation of the Temple site set an important precedent in regard to the public interpretation of archaeology at Nauvoo. In his report to the Church submitted at the end of the season, Dee F. Green, graduate student at SIU and field supervisor for the 1962 Temple site excavations, wrote of the first attempts at public interpretation of archaeology in Nauvoo. He reported on the work of "Mr. Jay Allen, who for the first part of the season was responsible for showing tourists about the site" and expressed his opinion that Mr. Allen "was very effective as a public relations officer." He then recommended "that on any future excavations of this scale and where tourists are so abundant that a public relations officer be appointed to handle the tourist problem" noting that "It is especially important that he [the public relations officer] be participating in the actual excavation since this adds immeasurably to his effectiveness" (Green, 1962b:5).

Although Green's recommendation to employ an actual public relations officer was never met, the Board of Trustees did share a desire to publicize Nauvoo and the restoration project. Late in 1962, in private meetings with the editor of the local newspaper, NRI officials discussed the possibility of obtaining a "top-flight publicity director" and setting up a publicity committee, which could, among other things, issue a series of newspaper and magazine stories on the restoration of Nauvoo (Miller, 1962). Although their publicity efforts eventually took a different shape, the idea to employ a professional public relations specialist and put together a publicity committee is similar to what has since been done in Annapolis, Maryland by Mark Leone and others, who hired a media professional to devise an effective method by which they present their excavations to the public (Leone, 1983).

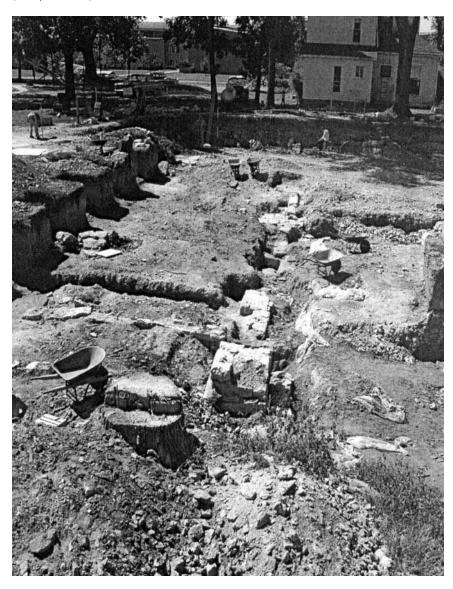


Figure 4. Overview of the 1962 Nauvoo Temple excavation showing exposed foundation stones.

Courtesy of the Church Archives, Salt Lake City.

### **TOURS AND GUIDES**

The resulting Annapolis tours, in which an actual student excavator introduces the public to the practice of archaeology within the context of the ongoing excavations, is surprisingly reminiscent of the public archaeology efforts in Nauvoo nearly 20 years earlier. Official tours of Nauvoo began in 1964 when NRI arranged for a few married couples to come to Nauvoo and serve as guides for the summer. The following year, NRI hired a number of young college students to serve as tour guides to the swelling number of visitors. The success of this student-guide program ensured that the interpretive tours continued, in expanded form, for the next several years (Figure 5).

In addition to a small honorarium, the student guides, former proselytizing missionaries of the Church and typically majors in history and archaeology, received college credit for a course they were required to attend in the early mornings before the public tours began. Dr. T. Edgar Lyon (Figure 6), professor of history from the University of Utah, taught the course, which was an in-depth review of the Mormon history of Nauvoo. As NRI's official historian, Lyon worked closely with Harrington and the project's other archaeologists (Lyon, 1966a). He was also somewhat of an amateur archaeologist in his own right, having completed courses in archaeology at the University of Chicago while pursuing a graduate degree in the early 1930s (Lyon, Jr., 2002:128). Lyon even conducted small-scale preliminary excavations in Nauvoo before Harrington was hired in 1965 (Lyon, 1964:3). Lyon drew upon his background and interest in archaeology to teach the young guides about the importance of archaeology and its role in the restoration project, thus ensuring that archaeology's contributions to the restoration of Nauvoo were incorporated into the student-guided tours (Hilton, 1969; Lyon, 1966a).

When full-scale excavations were renewed in 1965, the guide program formally subsumed the on-going archaeological investigations and the student excavators who were hired to assist in the work (Figure 7). Early in the season, the entire NRI staff and all of the student guides were given "a full briefing on archaeological procedures, techniques, and goals," resulting in one observer's comment that "Since then, both visitor and guide interest has soared" (Dollar, 1965a). At the beginning of the following season, Lyon reported on having conducted the guides on tours of some of the historic houses "to acquaint them with the archaeological and historical research being done, and the architectural investigations to lay a foundation for authentic restoration" (Lyon, 1966a).

Beginning in 1966, during the summer evenings and weekends when the excavations were idle, the student excavators served as regular tour guides, directing visitors around Nauvoo and introducing them to the historic site as well as the archaeological research of which they were a part. Later that year, Harrington expressed concern that this program was too physically taxing on the excavator-guides and excessively distracting to the archaeological program he

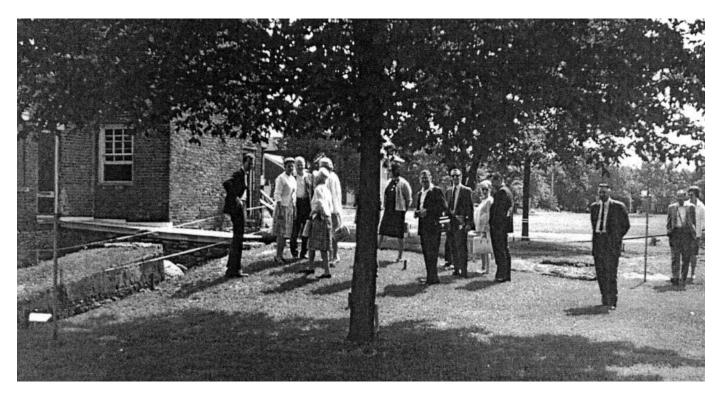


Figure 5. A tour group visiting the Brigham Young Home, Nauvoo, Illinois, during the course of excavation and restoration, 1967. Courtesy of the Church Archives, Salt Lake City.

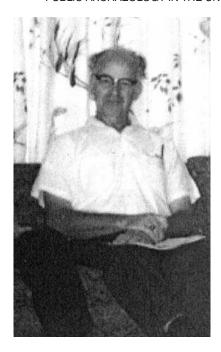


Figure 6. Dr. T. Edgar Lyon (1903-1978), professor of history at the University of Utah and historian for Nauvoo Restoration, Incorporated, 1967. Courtesy of the Church Archives, Salt Lake City.

was directing. As an alternative, he stated a desire to find a way to develop "better training for the guides who escort parties to the excavations." In particular, he articulated his belief that he and other NRI officials "should be able to work out a plan in which all members of the archaeological staff can participate in the training program of the guides and in providing better interpretive service at the excavations" (Harrington, 1966a:4).

# **VIRGINIA HARRINGTON IN NAUVOO**

Harrington's desire to interpret the excavations to the public in Nauvoo originated some 30 years earlier with his pioneering work at Jamestown, Virginia where Harrington first began to interpret archaeology for visitors to the site. In reality, it was Harrington's wife, Virginia, an archaeologist in her own right, who not only initiated such work in Jamestown, but also converted her husband to the practice there and elsewhere. In 1937, when Virginia was put in charge of the interpretive program at Jamestown, one of the first things she did was to develop a program called "This Week at the Excavations," which involved a



Figure 7. J. C. and Virginia Harrington (front row, 1st and 2nd from right) and Dr. Dale L. Berge (front row, 3rd from right) with student excavators behind the Jonathan Browning Home and Gunshop, Nauvoo, Illinois, 1968.

Courtesy of the Church Archives, Salt Lake City.

weekly exhibit of the archaeology work being performed and daily guided tours of the excavations (Figure 8). This innovative outreach program had a profound impact on her husband. "It taught me something," he remarked, "I'd never had that experience before dealing with the public. But what a pleasure it was to do something like this with the general public and particularly with school children that we encouraged to come" (Harrington and Harrington, 1971:12).

Thirty years after developing the public archaeology program in Jamestown, Virginia directed the excavations at the site of the Temple in Nauvoo, during which time she again tailored public programs catering to the obvious interest the visitors had in the Nauvoo Temple and its archaeology (Figure 9). Her husband admitted that while he had encouraged the guided tours to make stops at the excavations, he personally was not able to give too much attention to the visitors. "Virginia, on the other hand," he observed, "was running a small crew [at the Temple site] and went out of her way to meet and talk with visitors" (Harrington, 1967c). Indeed, Virginia herself reported that these visitors "seemed to welcome the opportunity to ask questions informally and hear about the archaeology, the Temple, and Nauvoo Restoration" (Harrington, V., 1967:1). As a result, she submitted a "Report on Interpretation at the Temple Site" to the president of NRI, in which she related the evident public interest in the site and proposed that a "trailside" exhibit be constructed for the purpose of interpreting the excavations to the public. The exhibit, she wrote, "would, primarily, be used for displaying some of the more interesting artifacts, such as melted glass, a series of nails, and some of the sculptured and moulded stone" (Figure 10). "There should," she continued, "be brief identifying labels, and probably a simple plan of the [Temple] basement with the visible features marked" in addition to "photographs of the excavations . . . if the space permitted" (Harrington, V., 1967:2). The idea to create a temporary on-site exhibit, although not entirely novel, anticipated similar efforts that have since become popular among advocates of public archaeology (see contributions to Jameson, 1997; Jameson and Kodack, 1991; Rogers and Grant, 1991). Finally, consistent with the established motives for public archaeology in Nauvoo, Virginia closed her report by noting that such work "is a glamorous and fascinating activity, and also an impressive demonstration of the scholarly and sound approach being taken by Nauvoo Restoration, Inc., in its program to interpret the city and life of the Mormon period" (Harrington, V., 1967:2).

# J. C. HARRINGTON IN NAUVOO

Virginia's experience in, and enthusiasm for, the public interpretation of archaeology was clearly shared by her husband. Beginning with his early experiences in Jamestown, and continuing for the next 30 years in the National Park Service, J. C. Harrington developed a strong belief in, and philosophy of, public service as an archaeologist. He later recalled how his predecessors at



Figure 8. Virginia and J. C. Harrington (on excavation floor) interpreting their excavations to visitors at Jamestown, Virginia, 1938. Courtesy of the National Park Service, Colonial National Historical Park.

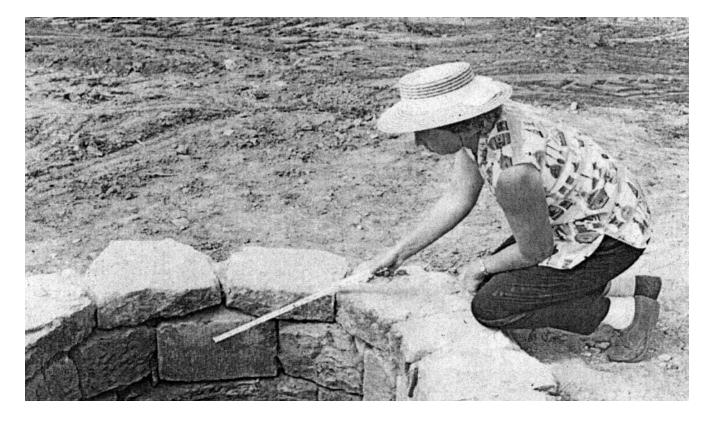


Figure 9. Virginia Harrington (1913-2003) interpreting the Nauvoo Temple well, 1966. Courtesy of the Church Archives, Salt Lake City.



Figure 10. Virginia Harrington (1913-2003) displaying a portion of a carved stone ox leg, which was originally part of the Nauvoo Temple baptismal font, 1969.

Courtesy of the Church Archives, Salt Lake City.

Jamestown felt the public should not be admitted to view the archaeological excavations (Harrington and Harrington, 1970:1). Such exclusionary behavior soured Harrington. Upon arriving on site he remembered saying to himself, "This is not the Park Service. We're here for the public, not just to dig Jamestown," and he immediately began to take measures to make the archaeological work accessible to the public (Harrington and Harrington, 1971:11).

Harrington took a no-nonsense approach to public archaeology in Nauvoo. He believed archaeological excavations could be interpreted to the public without adversely affecting the archaeological program. This belief was manifest early on in his work with NRI. Indeed, one of the very first things he did in Nauvoo prior to commencing his first season of work was issue a press release, "thinking

it might be a good thing to keep the public informed of what is happening" (Lyon, 1965a). Likewise, before even turning a shovel in Nauvoo, he communicated his desire for public interpretation of the excavations to NRI's Board of Trustees in his "Prospectus for Archaeological Investigations." Under the heading "Procedures and Guidelines for Archaeological Field Work" he wrote, "In so far as practicable, and when not detrimental to archaeology, visitors will be permitted to observe work in progress." He continued, "The archaeologists will cooperate in explaining the project to visitors and will assist in training programs for guides, if desired" (Harrington, 1965:4). These early statements set the tone for public archaeology in Nauvoo under Harrington's tenure, and paved the way for involving the archaeological program in the guided tours of the historic site.

As the excavations got under way in Nauvoo, Harrington (Figure 11) continued to express a desire to interpret the archaeology to the public and suggested ways in which this part of the program could be improved. He was sincerely interested in seeing the public interpretation of archaeology succeed in Nauvoo. In his report at the end of the 1966 season he wrote:

Archaeological excavations in progress offer a wonderful opportunity to provide a memorable and valuable experience to visitors. I am convinced that a great deal more can be done along this line than in the past, and without affecting the efficiency of the archaeological program. But it will take a little more planning and more concerted effort on the part of both the archaeological and interpretive staffs. It will require better and more frequent training sessions with the guides, and possibly the use of special supplementary (mimeographed) materials (Harrington, 1966b:10).

Harrington's 30 years of experience culminated in his work at Nauvoo where his approach to public archaeology was straightforward and pragmatic. Midway through his Nauvoo career he plainly stated his views of public archaeology, outlining the role he felt it should play in the restoration of the city, while also describing the benefits thereof. "Of course," he wrote, "we do not look on archaeology as a 'side show,' but its proper and intelligent employment as an educational medium is entirely justified, and certainly can pay good dividends in public interest and support" (Harrington 1967d:1).

Perhaps the most concise summary of Harrington's attitude towards public archaeology in Nauvoo came at the end of his tenure with NRI. Drawing on more than three decades of interpreting archaeology to the public, he declared,

I am a strong believer in giving groups only a very short explanation [emphasis in original] of what is going on—just enough to get across the point that a well-rounded restoration program calls for archaeological work. . . . Then give the visitor a limited opportunity to watch the digging, which most people are fascinated by; with an invitation to come back to the dig after the tour and watch to their heart's content (Harrington, 1969).

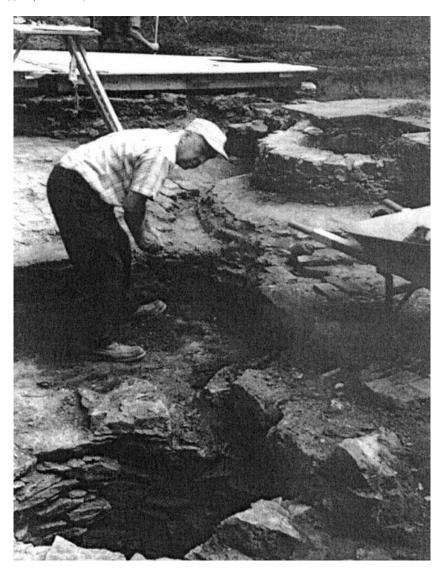


Figure 11. J. C. Harrington (1901-1998) excavating behind the Brigham Young Home, Nauvoo, Illinois, 1966. Courtesy of the Church Archives, Salt Lake City.

# SLIDE SHOWS AND PUBLIC LECTURES

The Harringtons' practice of public archaeology in Nauvoo was not limited to guided tours and on-site exhibits alone; they advocated additional means of public outreach and education as well, including slide shows and public lectures. In outlining specific goals for his first season of work in Nauvoo, Harrington included his wish to secure "A good series of color transparencies . . . illustrating archaeological methods and results of explorations, for use in future educational programs and for public relations purposes" (Harrington, 1965:2). By the following season, much had been accomplished toward this end, mostly due to the efforts of a young archaeologist named Clyde D. Dollar (Figure 12).

In 1965, Harrington's first season in Nauvoo, Dollar was employed as a field archaeologist. Harrington handpicked Dollar at short notice not only because he knew Dollar's flexibility as a "freelance" archaeologist, but also because he knew of Dollar's experience and knowledge of nineteenth-century material culture. Prior to accepting Harrington's invitation to Nauvoo, Dollar had been working in Arkansas at the site of the first Fort Smith (built in 1817) under private contracts with the National Park Service. Dollar's expertise in nineteenth-century material culture and his association with Harrington are both tied to his work for the NPS at the Fort Smith site (Dollar, 1966a).

Dollar's assignment for the 1965 season was to conduct excavations at the site of Brigham Young's Nauvoo house. His excavations at the site generated interesting and useful knowledge about the original house and its outbuildings. But it

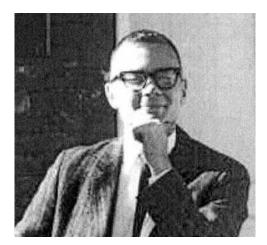


Figure 12. Clyde D. Dollar (1932-1983), material culture specialist and historical archaeologist, circa 1964.

Courtesy Fort Smith National Historic Site.

was his photographic work that contributed greatly to Harrington's previously outlined objective of securing a series of color slides for educational and publicity purposes. During the four months of excavation at the Brigham Young site, Dollar, a self-acclaimed amateur photographer, took hundreds of photographs of Nauvoo and of the archaeology he was conducting (Figure 13). NRI's historian described Dollar's slides as "fantastically beautiful" and told of how "oh!s' and 'Ah!s' punctuated the[ir] showing" (Lyon, 1965b).

Even more important to the public archaeology of Nauvoo at this time was the annotated slide show Dollar created with his images. Entitled "Light Into The Darkness," the show consisted of over 100 color slides, more than half of which highlighted the archaeological work at Nauvoo. In particular, the slides and the accompanying script described and illustrated the excavation process at the Brigham Young house, emphasizing the role of stratigraphy, excavation plots, and artifacts in dating and interpreting the site. In addition to explaining archaeological method and technique, the show's script promoted archaeology as a scientific endeavor with substantial public benefits. "The Nauvoo plain will yet again live," declares the script's concluding paragraph, "and with the help of the historian's pen, the archaeologist's trowel, and the architect's plans, our knowledge of the past will strengthen the ties with our forefathers and our heritage, and we will more firmly appreciate our present, and face our future with increased faith and confidence." In a dramatic finale the script concludes, "This is the Light into the Darkness" [emphasis in original] (Dollar, 1965b).

Not surprisingly, Dollar was the biggest advocate of the archaeological slide show he created. He consistently sought opportunities to show it to the public. Less than three months after scripting the show he reported that he had already presented it to a number of public groups in Arkansas, including the assembled staff of the Museum and Anthropology Department at the University of Arkansas. Of the latter, he wrote, "The impact at the U[niversity] of Arkansas was really something!" Observing the effects of historical archaeology's emerging professionalism in the 1960s, he explained how "There have been mutterings and slight attempts from some of the staff to get involved in a bit of historic digging," adding, "it seems that such an approach is becoming academically fashionable these days" (Dollar, 1966b). Ironically, one of the archaeologists at the University of Arkansas in 1965 was Dr. Charles McGimsey, the man who coined the term "public archaeology" seven years later (McGimsey, 1972). Understandably, Dollar proudly recounted how "Dr. McGimsey's expressed impression of the technique of the dig at B[righam] Y[oung]'s home was most gratifying" (Dollar, 1966b).

Dollar's slides received widespread public circulation through other venues as well. T. Edgar Lyon (NRI's historian) for example, extensively showed the slides during numerous public lectures of his own. In November 1965, he wrote to Dollar and reported, "I've been showing your slides two, three and even four times a week" (Lyon, 1965c). These public lectures were directed at groups of all

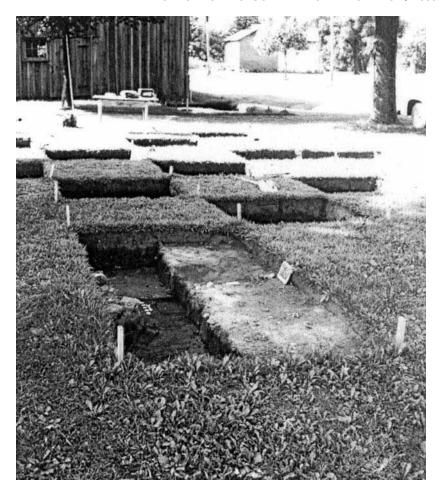


Figure 13. One of Clyde Dollar's photographs of his 1965 excavations at the Brigham Young Home in Nauvoo, Illinois. This photograph appeared in Dollar's 1966 Interim Report of the Historical Archaeological Excavation Conducted by Nauvoo Restoration, Incorporated On the Brigham Young Site with the following caption: "The 'checkerboard' method, a comparatively new technique in archaeological excavations, allows large areas to be comprehensively explored in a relatively short time." Courtesy of the University of Central Arkansas Archives, Conway, Arkansas.

ages, from schoolchildren to adults, and were a remarkable means of publicizing the restoration project, and its archaeological component, to large numbers of people (see Lyon, 1966b).

The Harringtons also gave public lectures on various occasions. Particularly impressive was the lecture delivered by Virginia Harrington to the assembled body of the Nauvoo Historical Society in 1968, entitled "Why Archaeology at Nauvoo." Significantly, the lecture was later published in the women's magazine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which enlarged its circle of influence considerably. In answer to the title's question, Virginia identified three reasons for doing archaeology at a place like Nauvoo. First, she noted that archaeology gives a certain amount of prestige to historical restorations. "It is the thing to do," she said. "It makes for status in State and National organizations" (Harrington, V., 1968:732). Second, as Virginia had championed throughout her career, she explained how archaeology is of great interest to the visiting public. Specifically, she stated how archaeology "makes a good show" for visitors who "tell you that they have heard and read about this kind of thing, but never supposed they would have an opportunity to see it going on, right here in this country" (p. 732). She continued by stating that these two reasons for doing archaeology in a place like Nauvoo are really secondary benefits behind the third and real reason for doing such work. "The most obvious reason [for doing archaeology in Nauvoo]," she declared, "is that archaeology provides information that is not otherwise available in spite of all the records, books and historical research" (p. 732). To support this assertion, she continued by discussing specific examples from Nauvoo that illustrate how historical archaeology contributes to our knowledge of the past, concluding that "in spite of the recency of the time and the extent of the historical records, archaeology is necessary to make the data complete" (p. 734). By arguing such, Virginia was, in reality, endorsing and justifying the emerging field of historical archaeology in general. Finally, in the true spirit of public archaeology, Virginia ended her lecture by again highlighting archaeology's intrinsic public appeal and educational potential: "What the visitor can see with his own eyes, touch with his fingers, and know with assurance were the actual surroundings and possessions of real people, help him to understand better than written or spoken words how their owners played their part in the Westward Expansion of the United States" (p. 737).

# WRITING FOR THE PUBLIC

In addition to their public lectures, the Harringtons endeavored to share the results of their Nauvoo excavations with the general public by way of popular writings. The best example of this is their book, *Rediscovery of the Nauvoo Temple: Report on the Archaeological Excavations*, in which they describe what they found and explain its significance in a language free of jargon and comprehensible to the lay public (Figure 14). In the introduction to this volume they

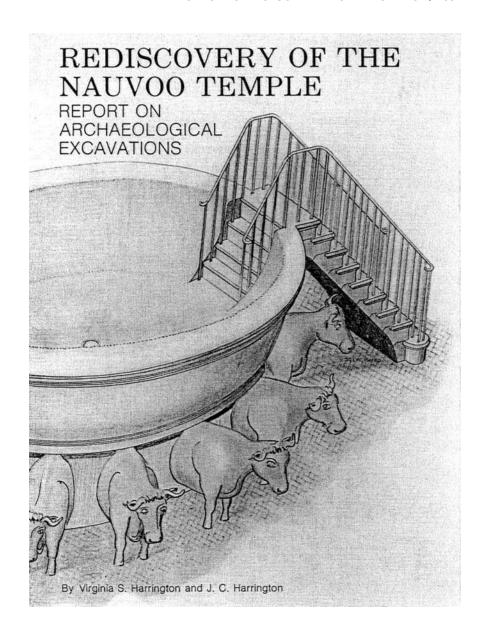


Figure 14. The cover of the Harrington's popular report on the Nauvoo Temple excavations (1971) showing an artist's reproduction of the baptismal font that sat in the Temple's basement. Remnants of the stone font were found in the course of excavation.

wrote, "Though this publication is a professional archaeological report, it has been prepared with the interests of visitors and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in mind" (Harrington, V. and Harrington, 1971:2).

By writing in a colloquial style, assuring that the contributions of their investigations were readily understood, the Harringtons were striving to fulfill an obligation that has more recently been articulated by proponents of public archeology. Consider Fagan's (2000) declaration that archaeologists "have failed to fulfill a primary responsibility, which is to inform the wider audience of the importance of archaeology in the contemporary world" (p. 193). This is reminiscent of Sabloff's (1998) call to change archaeology's professional value system "so that public outreach in all forms, but especially popular writing, is viewed and supported in highly positive terms" (p. 874).

The Harringtons introduced historical archaeology and the restoration of Nauvoo to literally thousands of individuals in the 1960s through their public lectures and popular writing. Although it is nearly impossible to measure the actual influence these efforts had on either the public's support for or perception of historical archaeology, they succeeded in disseminating knowledge and awareness of the growing discipline and its contribution to historic site restorations like that of Nauvoo to wider segments of the general public.

# **NAUVOO ARCHAEOLOGY IN FILM**

The use of multimedia technologies to present archaeology to the public at Nauvoo went beyond Dollar's self-styled slide show. There was also concern for generating a motion picture record of the restoration project. "A motion picture record should be made of each step in the archaeological digging," declared T. Edgar Lyon, NRI's historian, at the beginning of the 1966 season. "[Such a] presentation," he argued, ". . . will be an important part of the public relations of the foundation" (Lyon, 1966c). One of NRI's architects made a similar appeal at the same time, arguing that "For tourists and students alike, a living film documentation showing the exciting findings step by step, will probably be equally important as the other two major elements of the restoration storyinterpretation and the restored site" (Millard, 1966a). On similar grounds, Harrington encouraged NRI officials to purchase a movie camera with which to document the restoration process, contending that this "is a most important responsibility; one for which we will be thanked many times in the future, or severely criticized if we neglect it" (Harrington, 1966c). So great was the perceived need to document the project on film that both Lyon and Harrington offered to pay for all or part of the professional movie camera with surplus funds from their respective budgets (Harrington, 1966c; Lyon, 1966c). Given such enthusiastic support, color movies of the restoration process, including footage of the archaeological excavations, were indeed produced at Nauvoo (Millard,

1966b). These motion pictures contributed not only to the visual representation but also to the historical documentation of Nauvoo archaeology.

Although this archaeological footage was primarily made for internal circulation, these early attempts to create movies of the restoration process reflect a general concern to have the means with which to document and interpret the restoration work, including the archaeology, to the public. NRI officials were motivated by the potential of motion pictures to publicize their project and provide documentary proof of their meticulous scientific work. As Lyon put it, film documentation "will be an important part of the public relations of the foundation" and "would become an incontrovertible record of the reasons for the decisions which led to the restoration as it was being done." He concluded, "It would be a shame to reach that stage of the project, when a need exists, and have no adequate motion pictures available" (Lyon, 1966c).

Such a need for archaeological motion pictures arose only a few years later, when NRI officials decided to produce a new interpretive film to be shown in a Visitor Information Center being planned for the historic site. The film, entitled "All Our Yesterdays Were Once Tomorrows: Nauvoo," was intended to introduce the visitor to the Mormon history of Nauvoo and promote the ongoing restoration program of NRI. Here, again, was an opportunity to publicize and validate their work. Cognizant of archaeology's public appeal and its perceived scientific image, the Nauvoo excavations were highlighted at different times in the new film. In one particular sequence, viewers were shown images of archaeological excavations in Nauvoo, while the film's narrator announced,

Archaeological diggings begin the on-site work of restoration. It is fascinating to watch as history is literally dug from the earth. And the location of foundation remnants of an abandoned well or cistern, of the vault of an old privy, or of early fence lines contribute important information for the physical restoration of the site or the interpretation of its cultural or economic history (NRI, 1970:6).

Although not a strictly archaeological film, the Visitor Center movie effectively communicated to a non-archaeologist audience the role and contributions of archaeology to the restoration of Nauvoo. At the time, films like this, which highlighted the process and results of archaeology, were rather innovative. The Nauvoo film was certainly not the first of its kind and was undoubtedly influenced by a similarly motivated film shown to visitors at Colonial Williamsburg since the 1940s (Greenspan, 2002:68; for another early and notable example see Hawkes, 1946; and Finn, 2000). The use of film to record and document fieldwork for primarily archaeological purposes, as at Nauvoo, however, was a rather exceptional practice for the time.

Although amateur cinematography was possible since the 1920s, archaeology as a discipline was just beginning to realize the potential of this technology in the late 1960s. In fact, it was not until 1975 that Struever published one of the first commentaries on the subject, in which he outlined the two major roles of film in archaeology: "(1) to document field research, and (2) to communicate the activities and results of archaeological research to a broader audience" (Struever, 1975:201). As indicated above, this is precisely the ways in which film was used in the archaeological program at Nauvoo several years earlier. More recently, other archaeologists have begun to creatively use film (and now video and the internet) in their work (see for example Childs, 2002; Hanson and Rahtz, 1988; Hodder, 1997; Nixon, 2001), although in many ways this medium of documentation and public education is still underutilized. The fact remains, however, that the efforts in Nauvoo during the last half of the 1960s are an early and, in one sense, novel example of using film to interpret archaeology to the public.

# THE COSTS AND RISKS OF PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY IN NAUVOO

Even though the Harringtons supported the public interpretation of archaeology throughout their careers, they were aware that not all archaeologists shared their same enthusiasm for such work. Indeed, Harrington recollected how his predecessors at Jamestown had erected a "high board fence that you couldn't see over around the archaeological project" because they believed "the public not only was a nuisance to archaeologists, but there was a possibility of vandalism and stealing artifacts" (Harrington and Harrington, 1970:1). Rejecting this attitude toward the visiting public, the Harringtons removed the high board fence around the excavation area. This action, coupled with Virginia's guided tours of the excavation, signaled a reversal of philosophy with respect to the public and archaeology at Jamestown, and set the stage for the public archaeology at Nauvoo 30 years later.

That the Harringtons remained ardent supporters of public archaeology throughout their tenure in Nauvoo does not mean there were not experiences during that time that could have altered their attitudes. For example, in 1965, following the first full season of excavation under Harrington's tenure, Dollar reported, ". . . I have had 'uninvited callers' on at least two different occasions during the past two weeks. Their object seems to have been to gain entry into the [archaeology] lab, not malicious destruction . . ." (Dollar, 1965c:1). Fortunately, nothing was stolen from the archaeology lab at this time. Nonetheless, the attempted robberies compelled Dollar to take measures to secure the lab and its contents. After all, even though Dollar knew that "These artifacts have no re-sale value," he admitted, "I don't like the idea of trying to tell someone this after he's broken in to get them" (Dollar, 1965d). In addition to nailing shut the lab's windows and padlocking its doors, he requested increased surveillance and a firearm from the Nauvoo City Marshall (Dollar, 1965c).

The attempted lab burglaries were in part due to the high public visibility of the artifacts being processed therein, which was a direct result of NRI's open-lab

policy, yet another component of the overall philosophy of public archaeology in Nauvoo at the time. Permitting visitors to view the workings of an archaeological laboratory was not unique to Nauvoo. Beginning in January 1960, Colonial Williamsburg, NRI's east-coast exemplar, periodically hosted public tours of their archaeological laboratory in an attempt to increase the number of visitors during the off-season (Greenspan, 2002:117). Although such practices surely increased the public visibility of the full archaeological process, an archaeological laboratory open to the public had its disadvantages as well. In a letter to T. Edgar Lyon (NRI's historian), Dollar mentioned how one NRI associate "was by four times this past weekend with vips [sic.] who wanted to see the broken dishes from the dig!" He lightheartedly continued, "I'm going to be forced to repair some of them for display just to keep the lab from being turned into a museum!" (Dollar, 1965d). A week later, Dollar again reported on the tremendous public interest in the archaeology lab. In a report to NRI officials he wrote (with some hyperbole, no doubt), "The flow of town and tourist visitors through the lab has increased to the point where, had c25 admission be charged, we could have recovered a substantial amount of this past season's archaeological expenditure." Then, revealing the sometimes overwhelming reality of the time and energy commitment involved in such efforts at public outreach, he confessed, "In the interest of my primary responsibility, I have asked all concerned to discourage such visitations except in rare and justifiable cases" (Dollar, 1965c:1).

The concerns over the possible destructive consequences (e.g., looting and vandalism) of public outreach like that at Nauvoo are legitimate. Indeed, in his seminal work *Public Archaeology*, McGimsey (1972) simultaneously acknowledged and tried to refute such concerns by criticizing those archaeologists who believe "that extensive involvement of the nonprofessional and the public is a mistake . . . [because] amateur societies or public lectures simply increase pothunting" (p. 6). Like McGimsey, however, those that support the practice of public archaeology believe that "the potential benefits in informing society at large must surely outweigh such concerns" (Stone, 1997:28). Numerous professionals have tried to demonstrate that the public benefits of archaeology are numerous and diverse, and conclude that any attempt to realize such benefits through interpretation and outreach is well worth whatever costs or risks that may be incurred (Little, 2002). Harrington agreed, saying about the efforts to interpret archaeology to the public in Nauvoo: "It takes the time of archaeologists but it pays off a hundred times over" (NRI, 1965:13).

# CONCLUSION

The successful program of public interpretation at Nauvoo, which included guided tours of the excavations, on-site exhibits, illustrated lectures and films, publications written for a popular audience, and a laboratory open to the public, in many ways foreshadowed the developments of what is now known as public archaeology. Indeed, the public archaeology practiced by the Harringtons and others in Nauvoo, was continued by their successors for more than a decade after their departure (Figure 15). Although this work was influenced by even earlier examples of public archaeology, the public interpretation of archaeology in Nauvoo throughout the 1960s represents a significant and early chapter in the history of public archaeology in America.

If, as Jameson (1994) has argued, "Archaeologists have a moral and legal obligation to encourage and participate in programs that attempt to effectively explain technically generated information to the lay public" (p. 1), there is much to learn from these early examples of public archaeology in the United States. The enthusiastic and sincere efforts of the Harringtons and others to interpret archaeology to the public in Nauvoo and elsewhere are a direct consequence of the responsibility they genuinely felt to engage the public in their work. A large part of this sense of responsibility was in turn a direct result of the public nature of the nationally recognized historic sites they were excavating. Nonetheless, if all archaeologists, regardless of where they are digging, felt the same obligation and responsibility to the public as did the Harringtons at Nauvoo and elsewhere, then conceivably the discipline would more fully achieve its potential relevance to the many different publics available to engage (Sabloff, 1998). Perhaps it is the realization of a lack of such public responsibility among archaeologists that have led some to point out that, regardless of whether or not they are excavating a nationally recognized historic site, all archaeologists "have a responsibility to give back to the public that provides [them] with grants, or contracts, or jobs" (Sabloff, 1998:873). Even if a fiscally created obligation to the public does not exist, the reality is, as Ascherson (2000) has argued, that public archaeology, in all its varied forms and practices, is a matter of archaeological ethics. Indeed, as the Society for American Archaeology has recently declared, archaeologists have an ethical responsibility to "reach out to, and participate in, cooperative efforts with others interested in the archaeological record with the aim of improving the preservation, protection, and interpretation of the record" (Kintigh, 1996:17).

If nothing else, above all the early efforts at public archaeology in Nauvoo serve to illustrate the historical reality that much of what is now known as public archaeology preceded the coining of the term. As similar examples of early efforts to interpret archaeology to the public are explored and published, the true history of public archaeology in the United States will become more evident. This more complete picture of public archaeology's past will be of great value to archaeologists today as they continue to strive, while standing on foundations laid decades before, to effectively and efficiently engage the public in their work.





Figure 15. Dr. Dale L. Berge (far left) was the Harrington's successor as NRI's chief archaeologist. A professor of anthropology and archaeology at Brigham Young University, Berge followed in the tradition established by the Harringtons and continued to interpret Nauvoo archaeology to the public until the early 1980s. Photograph is from 1970. Courtesy of Dale Berge.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I wish to thank the staff at the Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah for granting access to the primary sources on which this study is based. I am also grateful to Robert L. Schuyler and William C. Canning, who read earlier versions of this work and provided helpful commentary. Any errors in judgment or interpretation are rightfully mine.

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