A WINTER CROSS QUARTER DAY SUNRISE – Polly Midgley

CAPTURED IN this photo taken by Dale Saltzman is a beam of light entering North Salem NY’s Old Road Chamber at sunrise this past November 7th. A twice-a-year event, this alignment marks the position of the sun midway between the winter solstice and the equinoxes. It occurs as the sun moves toward and then away from its winter solstice position.

This winter cross quarter day is celebrated by the ancient festivals of Samhain and Imbolc, later represented in Christianity as All Hallows Eve and Candlemas and known to us today as Halloween and Ground Hog Day. Here, it marks the same solar event as Halloween once did. In earlier times, this day, as Samhain, marked the end of the harvest and the beginning of winter. It became associated with the Festival of the Dead and the beginning of the spiritual new year.

Dale Saltzman and I walked into the North Salem woods at sunrise on this day to check this alignment because off-center alignments had been seen on previous winter solstice visits to the chamber. Our suspicions were confirmed.

The Old Road Chamber and the ruined chamber beside it are on a slope that descends to a wetland area below. They sit below the edge of a path that leads to the ruins of some 19th century buildings. Opposite and across the wetland is a very high ridge. Here east of the chamber the sun rises over this ridge. The peaks and indentations of the ridge help mark the sunrise. The swampy area below connects to a stream that flows west, southwest to the West Branch of the Croton River. Polmidge@gmail.com

NEWPORT TOWER ON THE SOLSTICE Steve Voluckas I followed my solstice tradition of going to the Newport Tower to again observe and video tape the dagger shape. It appears shortly after sunrise near a stone with a radius cut into it, then moves toward and disappears as it crosses the west window, reappearing as a rectangle before striking and illuminating the "egg shaped" stone in the west arch. The sunrise did not disappoint, and the dagger appeared on schedule within the west portion of the radius. If the sun were not blocked by modern buildings, the dagger might have appeared a few moments earlier, fully within the radius. Clouds near the horizon caused the dagger to disappear and reappear before reaching the west window.
I captured good video of the dagger formation starting within the radius, both from a close up shot and a view showing both the west edge of the south window illuminating as the dagger forms near the radius. Also captured was a view from a camera near the south window, showing exactly where the sun first appears.

Another interesting aspect of the Newport event was the number of people observing. I arrived at 6:30 am and there was already a person from Connecticut who informed me that Scott Wolter would be there at around 7:30 (about 20 minutes after sunrise). By sunrise, there were at least a dozen people, including Jim Egan, and there was mention of the number of people who had observed the sunrise at Stonehenge. Jim began to lecture about the series of events that occur, including the sun visible through both the south and west windows, and the egg stone illumination. After the dagger disappeared, Jim took the crowd, now about 25, to the point in the southwest corner of Touro Park, where the light can be seen through both windows. Meanwhile, another crowd of Scott and his followers, including Dave Brody, gathered near the Tower, awaiting the egg illumination. There were various discussions about the Tower.

At one point Jim's group returned to the Tower, and it almost appeared as two armies clashing in battle. Someone mentioned that there were competing theories being offered. Scott gave his interpretation, and Jim gave his John Dee theory. Scott challenged Jim that if he produced a document that conclusively proved the origin of the Tower, would Jim concede? This exchange went on for some time, with Scott claiming to be in possession of the document that would be made public in six months, maybe in one year. Scott still pressed Jim to concede, but without knowing what the document was, nor its origin or provenance, he could not. By now there was a crowd of around 70 people.

Matthew “Doc” Perry from Fort Adams talked of his research that showed a fire in the fireplace, shining through the west window, could be seen only from the channel into Newport harbor (between Fort Adams point and Goat Island). His conclusion is that the Tower was a navigational beacon.

Just before the egg illumination, Chief Black Eagle Feather and some followers of the Pocasset Wampanoags arrived, having been invited by Scott. Scott had him talk of who his people thought built the Tower, and he said whoever built the Tower would have needed an agreement from the native peoples. They controlled Aquidneck Island, a boundary between the Wampanoags and the Narragansetts. He also described names within their traditions for white men in white coats with red, but this description seemed more to deal with conflict periods during the colonial times. Another person from another tribe had a different perspective.

After the illumination, I spent time with Jim, and he told me that he had recently seen in the newspaper that the city of Newport had finally received the report from Grey and Pape (CRM company) about the Chronognostic Research Foundation digs in 2006 & 7.

Later that evening I called Jan Barstad, President of the Board of Chronognostic. She was unaware of the report having been turned over to the city. Chronognostic had had differences with G&P over the content of the report. Jan was also surprised to think of Newport Tower in the same league as Stonehenge, but in some ways it makes sense. It was an interesting and eventful winter solstice day!

Voluckas@hotmail.com

Larry Mulligan, our Pennsylvania coordinator, has proposed an investigation of a stone circle found not too far from Jasper Park at the junction of two streams. The circle, in the photo below, is about 18 meters in diameter and includes some smaller circular features inside it. Visiting archaeologists have called it a ritual encampment or a seasonal base camp. There are traces of a similar circle nearby, although its above-ground stones were removed long ago for creating a lawn. The landowner is enthusiastic about doing the investigation.

The NEARA Research Committee promotes research by soliciting and recommending projects, setting guidelines and standards, and maintaining site information. Three committee members visited the circle and reviewed the available documentation that Larry had put together as well as our own investigations. We believe that this represents an excellent opportunity to study a “lithic feature” in detail, and we hope to learn something about who created the circle and when.

An experienced local archaeologist will perform a Phase I investigation, do background research (with access to files that we are unable to acquire), create a detailed map, dig 12 shovel test pits inside and around the stone circle, analyze artifacts and soil stratigraphy, and write up a letter report.

The committee has voted to proceed with funding and participation in the project. The background research is starting now. We will also have the opportunity to observe and help with the dig when it happens. If you are interested, contact us at research@neara.org or PA-coord@neara.org

I’m currently working on my own presentation for the conference, in which I will share amazing findings from my trip to Iceland last September. Valdimar Samuelson graciously hosted my visit. Many of you know Valdimar, as he is active on a number of online groups that interest NEARA members, and he attended a NEARA conference a couple of years ago, traveling all the way from home in Reykjavik.

Valdimar has spent a lifetime searching the ancient stone relics of Iceland’s human history, especially the ones that have not been adequately addressed by mainstream historians and archaeologists. We covered a lot of ground in the week I was there, including the remote seashore with a concentration of ruined stone huts (one shown in the picture below), which are in marked contrast to the traditional turfed-wall building practice generally known from Iceland’s early settlement period.

I’m very excited to have the opportunity to share these findings with you at the conference. president@neara.org

COORDINATORS’ REPORTS

ATLANTIC CANADA - Terry Deveau As I’m writing this update at the beginning of February, the TV show, Curse of Oak Island, is getting a lot of attention as it continues to build suspense towards the season finale later this month. In the latest episode they have excavated wood that is carbon dated to AD 1675 ± 20 years from a depth of 105 feet below ground. This pre-dates by almost 100 years the earliest recorded settlement on Oak Island. They’ve also uncovered what appears to be a type of French drain about 10 feet under the beach, beneath layers of clay and coconut fibers, that a professional archaeologist has identified as quite probably man-made, although it also defies explanation.

Although we’re just learning about these developments as the episodes go to air, the work and filming took place last summer and fall. In one of the recent episodes, I showed them this previously unknown elevator-sized block of granite (a glacial boulder) that looks a lot like a head and face; we’re calling it the Peggy’s Cove Stone Head, since it is located fairly close to that tourist attraction. Although most of the features of this effigy stone are the result of natural processes, some parts of the face appear to have been “improved” by pecking with a stone hammer, evidenced by a rougher texture on the stone surface in just those spots. There are also some shim stones under the boulder, keeping it properly oriented.

I’m very excited to have the opportunity to share these findings with you at the conference. president@neara.org

PRESIDENT’S NOTES - Terry Deveau I know many of you have already sent in your registration and made your booking for the 2017 Spring Conference April 21-23 in Groton, CT. If not, there is still time to make your arrangements. You can find the full details on the front page of the NEARA website neara.org and in the meeting notice you will receive by mail soon. There are going to be all kinds of really exciting presentations and field trips that you won’t want to miss!
and holding it in place, that look like they may have been deliberately selected and positioned. The face is looking due west, out to sea, and it can probably be seen from the water. The features of this stone put me in mind of a Mi’kmaq face, and I’ve suggested that it could be a depiction of their cultural hero, Glooscap. The Mi’kmaq were very active along this section of the coast in ancient times, and the aptly-named Indian Harbor is only a couple of miles to the north.

The Curse of Oak Island also had a couple of episodes this year where Zena Halpern presented some of her research. Zena was a NEARA member for many years and has presented at our conferences. It turns out that some of the cryptic maps and documents that she has been investigating have a direct relation to the Oak Island mystery.

One of the side benefits of the publicity of these TV appearances is that people across Atlantic Canada, who have come across strange stones of different sorts, have been contacting me to see whether I would be interested in having a look at them. Some of these new reports may eventually turn out to be quite interesting. Stay tuned. deveau@chebucto.ns.ca

C ONNECTICUT EAST – Doug Schwartz

One of the most important things we can do for preservation and understanding is to create 3D models of fragile and unique ceremonial structures. This can be done through photogrammetry, using various computer applications to assemble a collection of photos into a precise model. If a construction is subsequently destroyed, its structure is preserved for posterity. This is not a causal process, requiring many hours in the field to remove obstructing vegetation, acquire a complete set of photos, and to process on a computer. This cannot be easily accomplished on an underpowered computer. As computing costs decline and the availability of dedicated proprietary and open source applications increases, it becomes increasingly practical to accomplish this task. As smartphones increase in power, mobile applications are also appearing.

3D models of structures (and even extensive landscapes) can be constructed from either photo collections or LIDAR data, but the cost of laser scanning normally makes the latter impractical. In photogrammetry the camera becomes the 3D scanner. The use of photos and video collected from the ground and drones is rapidly being adopted for archaeological preservation efforts around the world. Turnkey solutions are appearing to provide reasonably priced packages offering uploading of images and video to powerful remote servers where processing is performed remotely. Online 3D models of European megalithic structures can be viewed and manipulated at tinyurl.com/17transit.

Candidates for modeling can range from macro subjects such as petroglyphs (or portions of complex petroglyph compositions), to chambers, cairns, walls and on up in size to any structure practical to photograph. Larger structures require hundreds of photos. Massive constructions such as Knowth and Newgrange have been modeled using this method. As computers become powerful, the hours required for processing complex photo sets become increasingly reasonable. Those wishing to experiment can find many options, including a free PhotoScan demo version available at AgiSoft.com. Those lacking powerful computers can try a cloud based option, which Autodesk offers in free and paid versions of their Remake application for desktops and their 123D for smartphones. The availability of 3D printing now makes it possible to create accurate models of stone constructions. CTeast-coord@neara.org

C ONNECTICUT WEST – Teresa Bierce

In 1996 when NEARA member Tom Paul first discovered a 5-foot high, neatly constructed, whale shaped stone structure in his backyard, he had no idea it would take him on a 20-year journey of research and discovery. Since then Tom has documented hundreds of stone sites located along an ancient solar alignment. He named this alignment the Hammonasset Line. It starts at Council Rock in Montauk NY and extends through Western CT, Upstate NY, and beyond. Who built these structures and why remains a mystery.

Part of the Hammonasset Line from Montauk to Litchfield CT
There will be a field trip this spring to explore this ancient alignment. The focus will be a lithic complex on a 7-acre parcel which is filled with stone walls that align during the solstices with stone structures in the shape of snakes and turtles, white quartz boulders, prayer seats, an aligned chamber, and many carefully constructed cairns. This will be an all-day field trip and there will be many sites to see in one day. Starting in Madison CT, Tom will show us the stone structures that first sparked his curiosity and started his extensive research of this fascinating line.

Space is limited and reservations are necessary. If you are interested, email me, and you will be notified of the details once the date is set. WestConn@neara.org

MASSACHUSETTS – Peter Anick At our fall conference, Marshfield native Derek Gunn presented a number of his favorite sites in southeastern Massachusetts. We got to see a few of them on a field trip with him in December. Our first stop was at a series of roughly strewn stone piles on bedrock outcrops along the cleared path of a power line in Middleboro. While it was difficult to tell if the stone clusters dated to the construction of the power lines or were a remnant of earlier activity, it was intriguing to find a collection of several dozen fist-sized quartz stones tucked away in a niche within one of the piles. After an interrogation by town police, who were intrigued by a bunch of people poking around a bunch of rock piles, we hiked into a nearby woods to investigate what may be a pedestaled boulder. As is often the case, we could not decide whether the supporting stones were part of a natural or artificial configuration. But its position atop a knoll might well have attracted the attention of Native Americans living in the area.

Our chapter has been particularly keen to identify and visit lithic sites that have Native American ties mentioned in the historical record. On past trips, such sites have included fish weirs, inscribed stones, and perched and split boulder formations. We were pleased to include several anecdotally “documented” sites on this trip as well. Mavor and Dix’s book Manitou makes mention of “sacrifice rocks” along Old Sandwich Road in Plymouth. These were reported in William T. Davis’ 1899 book, Ancient Landmarks of Plymouth:

“Sacrifice Rocks. – Of these there are two, and both on the easterly side of the Sandwich Road, one between Forge Pond and the Cornish tavern and the other beyond what is known as the Chamberlain place. These rocks, still covered with small branches, remain as monuments of aboriginal religious rites. Like the Manittoo Asseinah, or Spirit Rocks of the western Indians, they have always received the homage of branches from the natives, who passed them reverently as the abodes of the Great Spirit, and went on in silence”

At the Plymouth “Sacrifice Rock”: Walter van Roggen, Brian McClain, Gayle Spurr, Derek Gunn, Fred Martin, Donna Thompson, Mara Pentlarge, Gail Coolidge, Steve Voluckas, Randy Swan, Michael Corthell.

Only one of these boulders is currently marked with a sign, and it no longer sports a crown of small branches. Instead, we found trinkets, shells, small stones and necklaces. The sign says “Sacrifice Rock. Manittoo Asseinah. Indian name meaning God’s rock.” Derek took us to two possible candidates for the other purported sacrifice rock. One is a modest split boulder commanding an expansive view from the top of the hill above Old Sandwich Road. The other is further south along the road, which was likely once an Indian trail. If anyone has historical records or knowledge of the location of other sacrifice stones around Plymouth, please let me know.

We then drove east to another high point in the Pine Hills known as “Cleft Rock”. Here a fracture in a large erratic had opened up a rectangular doorway into a narrow passage which bisects the immense stone.
According to the U of Mass 2014 regional planning study, this boulder once served as an Indian outlook. Indeed, were it not for the thick foliage on the hillside below, we would have had a panoramic view of Plymouth Bay. Perhaps this was where the Wampanoags kept a watchful eye on the Pilgrims.

We concluded our Marshfield trip exploring walls on farmland once owned by American politician Daniel Webster (1782-1852). Whether they were his doing or not, the walls include several unusual features, such as tall pointed standing stones and short sections in which a row of large stones rests upon a layer of much smaller cobbles. Here Steve Voluckas admires one of the standing stones. Ma-coord@neara.org

NEW YORK – Polly Midgely I continue to receive reports about the exploration of a number of NY sites from both chapter members and other interested persons.

The next two pictures are focused outward from the entrance to the Old Road Chamber in North Salem (see page 1). One shows the view through this opening on the recent November Cross Quarter Day. The other shows the sun rising above the eastern ridge opposite the chamber’s entrance.

Bob Grubsmith, a serious explorer of rock sites and old places, shared pictures of the bird effigy below. Each view he sent looked different. Bob found this bird, named “Turtle Rock,” on an Overlook Mountain boulder. He found it by following old written references in the area to Turtle Rock.

Robert Schaper shared a site in Chester NY that he believes has solar alignments and a history of Native American as well as Colonial occupation. He knows the site well having lived there as a child. Gerry McLoughlin made a visit and measured for alignments, and along with Donna Savino and Lou Tartaro, checked out possible markers for sunset alignments. They all noted nearby peaks to the west and a field that may once have been filled with wigwams.
Jim Haskins, a member from Massachusetts, identified an extensive site in Claryville above the East Branch of the Neversink River. He explored and photographed stone features on property that has been in the same family for five generations.

The location of a canyon-like rocky divide in Southeast was long a mystery to local members of this Chapter. Rob Buchanan, Dale Saltzman, Dyane Plunkett and Teresa Bierce, in particular, searched for it. The location, when found, was where a river might once have run both ways. It was near the beginning of the Still River and near a tributary of the Croton River. Rob Buchanan took these photos of this canyon-like divide:

Noteworthy were the cairns and stone walls we saw. Many like this one had “wind holes” in them. Some went into the lake.

This beautiful place is where experiments with uranium and other radioactive materials were started about 50 years ago at a research facility of the United Nuclear Corp. There was an explosion in 1972. The accident was cleaned up and the area declared safe. The National Park Service bought the land, oversaw the cleanup and rerouted the Pawling section of the Appalachian Trail. I hope plutonium dust will not be listed with ticks, bears, snakes and poison ivy as a hiking hazard.

Possible field trips this spring are Bonticou Crag in the lower Catskills, a return trip to Southfields and the Appalachian Trail in Beekman. Please let me know your interests. NY-coord@neara.org

RHODE ISLAND – Harvey Buford: I wish to thank my predecessor Steve DiMarzo for his continuing documentation of cultural stone sites, particularly in the Canonchet area of Hopkinton. There are hints of an interesting connection between early English settlement in Canonchet and continuing presence and practice of Native American ceremonial traditions at least well into the 1800’s. The local team working with Mary and James Gage has researched town records in Hopkinton back to 1757 and Westerly back to the late 1600’s. Canonchet was part of the area subject to ongoing claims between the Connecticut and Rhode Island colonies (decided by the King in 1726) and Narragansett, Pequot and other tribes. It is likely there were English settlers in Canonchet while these disputes were
unsettled. In the period 1707-09, the RI General Assembly assumed control of the “vacant Indian lands”, much of inland southern Rhode Island, by quit claim from Niantic (Narragansett) Sachem Ninigret. They then had to decide what to do with the English occupants who were already there without official sanction. It was contentious. The colony expelled some as squatters and allowed others to stay, finding some validity where the Indians had willingly transferred property rights.

In December, I led a contingent to the State Archives to come at the issue from the other end of the time scale: who if anyone was already there when the colony assumed ownership of the vacant lands or who first purchased or leased land there from the colony after 1709. NEARA member and author Tom Helmer, Narragansett Tribe member Dawn Dove, Hopkinton Historical Association President Rick Prescott and HHA officer Terry Prescott accompanied me. A wealth of information is available for anyone who can decipher faded 300 year old script. I have arranged a return visit to search for the early claims and a survey, possibly a narrative and not a map, of the vacant lands as requisitioned by the colony. Our goal remains to understand the history of this cultural landscape and document who did and didn’t construct the thousands of stone groupings here.

Working with the Gages and Curtis Hoffman, we recently conducted a Plow Zone study in the rugged terrain of Canonchet where the cairns are thickest and the state archaeologist has judged they are farmer piles. I am unaware of farmers stacking stone piles except in areas that were cultivated with plow. If you have knowledge to the contrary I would very much like to hear from you. The soil types here are steep, highly erodible with a large percentage of boulders and ledge outcrops. Our core samples which we photo documented and mapped found no tell-tale indication the soils were ever plowed.

Stone rows and cairns are subject to natural and manmade damage. A tree fell and crushed this well-known local cantilevered cairn as seen in before and after photos. I’m sure you have seen trees growing from stone walls and cairns and recognize the vulnerability of these stone constructions. Most stone features in Rhode Island are on public accessible lands. We are discussing stewardship guidelines we can provide property owners to protect these features from damage or to repair them in a way sensitive to the culture that built them. Please contact me if you already have had this experience.

Then you have the willful damage of cultural landscapes, in this case a ceremonial site with spray paint graffiti way out in the woods. Our research crew set aside a day to reclaim this site and install one of our new Archaeological and Sacred Site Etiquette Guide notice boards. RI-coord@neara.org

MEGGERS NEARA LIBRARY–Anne Wirkkala NEARA members are as varied as the stone monuments and relics they research: from PhDs of geology and the anthropology to first year students in the field; from noted Smithsonian scholars to stay-at-home moms who plan interesting hikes into the woods; from CEOs to retirees who enjoy exploring the unknown. They all have one thing in common: they do research and they leave their works behind them. Since its beginnings NEARA has deemed it prudent to collect these archives and to keep them safe for those who follow: hence the Meggars NEARA Library. It is not that NEARA has a library that is the current issue. It is paying for its keep. Until 2016 NEARA was able to house its collections free of charge. As situations changed and space became an issue in many academic places, NEARA was forced to strike out on its own.

As anyone who has visited the Library knows, it is indeed a unique collection of collections and deserves a place in the library world. But how to pay for it? During the past year, NEARA members have dug deeply into their pockets and donated sufficient funds to pay the rent. Work is underway to continue this fundraising and to apply for grants. BUT members need to know that the free ride is over and we all need to pledge money to support the upkeep of this archival
collection, which reflects the very heart and soul of our organization.

But wait, the Library is more than just a safe home for our past musings. For someone like Ros Strong, a long time NEARA presence, it is a “respectable place to show the world that NEARA exists and to gather our membership on occasion.” To some like Harlan Robb, a devoted Concord member, it is a place to borrow books that pique his research interest. To Polly Midgeley, NY Coordinator, it is a place to find the research of older sites as she prepares new site reports. To long time member Fred Martin, it is place to peruse the musings of Mavor and Dix with regard to a site in northern Vermont. To Peter Anick, MA Coordinator, it is a place to find interesting field trips for an upcoming meeting. To Texas member Bob Sharp, it is a home for his special books as he journeys to a smaller living space. To Warren Dexter’s family it is secure space for his many worldwide photographic records of things stone.

Most important, it is your library. The place where your research will find a permanent home. The place where you can learn more about anything NEARA. Please let me know if we can help you access the collection, borrow a book, find a site report or answer a research question. library@neara.org

JIM GUTHRIE’S COMMENTARY

SCIENTIFIC METHOD Some archaeologists who have worked in the physical sciences think there is something called the “scientific method” that must be performed in a prescribed way. Some imagine that science is largely a matter of testing explanations, eliminating them sequentially until only one survives. To conserve resources, the “legitimate” scientist must not examine an imaginative hypothesis until all more prosaic ones have been disproved (e.g. Feder 2008: Frauds, Myths and Mysteries, p.39). I see this as a result of misunderstandings among our various “cultures.” A fine example was reported in passing by Ewen Callaway in the August 11 issue of Nature (Vol. 536, NO. 7615:136).

During the last few years, there has been increasing evidence that a significant part of the American population arrived by sea on the west coasts and that the traditional “ice-free corridor” was uninhabitable by humans for hundreds of years after it opened. Callaway published an excellent summary of these developments, featuring genetic studies that document gradual return of life to the “corridor,” starting about 12,600 years ago. First came grasses and sedges, then sagebrush, then trees. Birds and mammals entered still later. What caught my eye was a quotation from an archaeologist who stated, “Now the ice-free corridor has been shown to be dead in the water, we start to look at something like a coastal migration route.”

But a few scholars had been “looking” at the coastal route for 40 years, not waiting for the conventional view to be disproven. Knut Fladmark (1979, 83, 86) and James Dixon (1003, 99) laid the groundwork. They had their own reasons for being skeptical of the standard narrative and forged ahead with the radical idea of arrival by sea. Dixon (1993: Quest for the Origins of the first Americans, p. 129) tells how he was warned about losing his credibility within the profession if he persisted. To me these scholars are the ones who represent the real “scientific method” which depends on creativity and being open to new ideas.

PILTDOWN HOAX: WHO DONE IT? Although the story of the Piltdown Hoax (1912) is well known, the perpetrator(s) have never been identified conclusively. Sleuths have proposed a long list of suspects, including Arthur Conan Doyle! The solution seemed to be in hand in 1996 when Henry Gee published apparently conclusive evidence that it was Martin A.C. Hinton, a volunteer at London’s Natural History Museum (“Box of Bones Clinches Identify of Piltdown Paleontologist Hoaxer,” Nature 381 (6580):261-2. But a new study that included genetic technology has “conclusively” fingered Charles Dawson, an amateur fossil collector and one of the favorite culprits. The work is summarized in Samir Patel’s “Piltdown’s Lone Forger,” in the November/December issue of Archaeology (Vol. 69, No. 6:9-10). Because the Piltdown skull, with its ape’s jawbone, was regarded as authentic for many years, the affair is discussed routinely by skeptical writers as a prime illustration of the fallibility of experts and mythmaking in the absence of solid evidence.

ANCIENT INDIGAT AT HUACA PRIETA, PERU Complex textile technology, especially the use of dyes, provides one of the more convincing indications on interhemispheric exchanges (e.g. Jett 1998 in NEARA’s Across before Columbus). An anonymous note in The New York Times, September 20, p. D-2, reports indigo-dyed cotton textiles at Huaca Prieta, Peru, that are 6,000 years old and said to be the earliest known use of indigo. Indigo-dyed linens from 4,400 years ago are known from Egypt. The multi-step process of dyeing with indigo is astounding complicated. According to Steve Jett and research papers studied by Sorensen and Johannessen for their catalog of early interhemispheric exchanges, plants that yield indigo originated in India and were spread to Egypt and parts of Asia by trader, along with other aspects of textile technology. Exactly how they got to America is unknown, but Jett has noted that “some technologies that are shared between the two hemispheres are so complicated and/or peculiar that it is surprising that they were ever devised.”

EARLIEST EXAMPLE OF LOST WAX TECHNIQUE The complex metallurgical process of reproducing a wax model in metal was practiced at least 6000 years ago in Pakistan. Discovery of a copper amulet shaped like a wheel with six spokes was reported by physicist Mathieu Thoury and colleagues in the November 15 issue of Nature Communications, and a summary by Sarah Kaplan, with photo, appeared on page A-2 of the Washington Post, Nov. 16. Thoury used a type of microscopy known as full-field photoluminescence to examine the internal structure of the copper through the thick corrosion. Because of its many steps, lost wax casting has been used to argue for early long-distance technology transfer. It reached Colombia and western Mexico by 100 B.C. and was known in Peru by A.D. 1200. Investigators such as Joseph Needham (1985) tend to favor Chinese metallurgists as the carriers.

ANCIENT SCROLL READ BY X-RAYS There are a number of rolled up ancient parchment and copper texts that are too fragile to be opened. One of these has now been read by a new application of computed tomography (CT), an X-ray-based process that sees symbols and their position in the charred mass, allowing them to be assembled virtually into a
flat image. Excavated about 50 years ago at the En-Gedi site in Israel, the parchment proved to be the earliest instance of the first two chapters of the book of Leviticus. The style of the Hebrew script indicates that it was copied between A.D. 50 and 100, although the radiocarbon date is A.D. 300. According to W. Brent Seales, who developed the process at the University of Kentucky, it is the first severely damaged scroll to be unraveled and identified noninvasively. Many others, such as charred scrolls from Herculaneum, await study. Nicholas Wade published an illuminating account in his “Technology Unlocks Secrets of a Biblical Scroll,” on page A-6, The New York Times, September 22.

EARLY TRANS ATLANTIC CONTACTS Genetic discoveries in the last four years have shown that indigenous Americans have dual ancestry – about two thirds from eastern Asia and a third from people who share ancestry with Europeans. Most archaeologists are loath to consider the possibility that early hunters from western Eurasia entered North America from the east. This is due largely to the traditional and deeply imbedded belief that the ancestors of all indigenous Americans arrived by foot from Beringia. However, there are some intriguing phenomena that occur among American Indians and West Eurasians but so far are unknown in East Asia. Among these are bifacial stone points from more than 20,000 years ago and genetic characteristics such as segments of the nuclear genome known as “Mal’ta-1,” mitochondrial DNA from the X family and Y chromosomes of type R. To me, these are evidence of very early contact between the two populations that must be accounted for in any acceptable narrative.

MITOCHONDRIAL X AGAIN Bradley Lepper continues to promote the unlikely notion that European mitochondrial X reached North America by way of Beringia and not directly across the Atlantic (see comments in the previous issue). In two consecutive issues of Mammoth Trumpet (Vol. 31, Nos. 3 and 4), he has praised publications by Jennifer Raff and Deborah Bolnick, who seem to be the only other active advocates of this scheme. His latest contribution includes a map showing X to be concentrated in the Mediterranean region, Eastern Canada and around the Great Lakes. His map, much like that of Stanford and Bradly (Across Atlantic Ice, p 248), identifies areas with more than 4% of the trait. However, the high levels in the Basque regions are missing in Lepper’s map. It seems improbable to many archaeologists that an eastward flow of X to Beringia would have left no trace east of the Altai region, but Lepper has figured it out. He writes that X “is found today only in populations that have reached North America from the east. This is due largely to the traditional and deeply imbedded belief that the ancestors of all indigenous Americans arrived by foot from Beringia. However, there are some intriguing phenomena that occur among American Indians and West Eurasians but so far are unknown in East Asia. Among these are bifacial stone points from more than 20,000 years ago and genetic characteristics such as segments of the nuclear genome known as “Mal’ta-1,” mitochondrial DNA from the X family and Y chromosomes of type R. To me, these are evidence of very early contact between the two populations that must be accounted for in any acceptable narrative.

A NEW ISSUE OF PRE-COLUMBIANA Steve Jett has produced a massive (512 pages) new volume, numbered Vol.5, Nos. 2-4, Vol. 6, No. 1. Although it features papers on calendar systems and writing, it has the usual invaluable reviews of books and articles that are pertinent to our interests as well as news, necrology, etc. This is only the first installment in a two-book issue. It may be obtained for $45.00 from Pre-Columbian E.S.R.S., c/o Celia Heil, 2014 Covington Dr., Florence, AL 35630-1658

DINGOES FROM INDONESIA Archaeological and genetic evidence indicates that Indonesian traders brought dingoos to Australia between 5,000 and 3,500 years ago. Archaeologists Paul Tacon and Melanie Fillios think the most likely carriers were Toalean seafarers from Sulawesi and that they picked up the dingoos in Borneo. According to Tocan and Fillios, Indonesian merchants operated between 8000 and 1500 years ago, traveling vast distances with their goods. An anonymous note in the April 1 issue of Science summarizes the work, published earlier in the Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports.

BOOKSHELF

THE SALT WATER FRONTIER: INDIANS AND THE CONTEST FOR THE AMERICAN COAST by Andrew Lipman (Yale University Press, 2015) reviewed by Ros Strong. Lipman, assistant professor of history at Barnard, has a new approach to the earliest history of our region. The book jacket blurb reflects my opinion: “Andrew Lipman’s eye-opening first book is the previously untold story of how the Ocean became a ‘frontier’ between the colonists and Indians. When the English and Dutch empires both tried to claim the same patch of coast between the Hudson River and Cape Cod, the sea itself became the arena of contact and conflict. During the violent European invasions, the region’s Algonquian-speaking Natives were navigators, boat builders, pirates and merchants who became active players in the emergence of the Atlantic world. Drawing from a wide range of English, Dutch and archeological sources, Lipman uncovers a new geography of Native America that incorporates seawater as well as soil. Looking past Europeans’ arbitrary land boundaries, he reveals unseen links between local episodes and global events on distant shores.”

The many excellent maps, especially in the Dutch areas of influence on the Hudson River and Long Island illustrate details of early interaction with tribes such as the Munsees and Unkechaugs that are unfamiliar to most of us. The book is well indexed. krosspt@gmail.com

AMULETS, EFFIGIES, FETISHES AND CHARMS by Edward J Lenik (University of Alabama Press, 2016) Reviewed by Peter Anick. With “Amulets, Effigies, Fetishes, and Charms” archaeologist Edward Lenik makes a third contribution to his extensive inventory of Northeast American Indian lithic “art”. His first book, “Picture Rocks” focused on non-portable” rock art carved into bedrock and boulders. With its ample illustrations, geographical notes, and historical background, it has deservedly become the standard reference
for rock art aficionados in the northeast. His second book, “Making Pictures in Stone”, extended the geographic range to include sites further south and west, while also dwelling much more on portable artifacts – decorated pendants, gorgets, tablets, cobbles and stone tools. His third book resumes his exploration of portable art. While the subject matter overlaps with his previous books, the selection of artifacts does not. Unlike his earlier books, which are organized in turn by geography and artifact type, this book organizes its content by the types of objects represented: anthropomorphic images, animal representations (terrestrial, marine, reptiles and birds), and geometric motifs. The copious illustrations and photos reveal a diverse iconography of sculpted and engraved figures. Lenik relates many of the images to Native American ethnography and speculates on their function. Whether designed to be worn, carried around or used as a tool, he argues that the objects were likely imbued with supernatural power. Where possible, he also places them within an archaic, woodland, or historic time frame.

Creating this inventory took considerable legwork to locate and inspect artifact collections, in addition to combing through archaeological and ethnographic publications. Thankfully, Lenik has included several valuable resources to help us follow in his footsteps: first, a table summarizing petroglyph motifs in the northeast, identifying their general location, style, technique of manufacture, and inferred age; second, a thorough list of references for readers who wish to delve deeper into the research literature. Finally, he provides a compendium of museums where portable items are on display, including brief descriptions of their physical and online collections. For those with a penchant for bushwhacking in search of “megalithic” stone remains, you may find that “Amulets, Effigies, Fetishes, and Charms” is just what you need to better appreciate the smaller things in life as well.

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NEARANS MAKING NEWS

FRED AND BEPPY MARTIN traveled to Crow Canyon Archaeological Center in Colorado in October, where Fred made two presentations on their work in Colorado at the Society of Cultural Astronomy in the American southwest meeting (www.scaas.org). They were titled “The Bull Creek Basin is Lunar” and “Some Findings from a Survey of Peterson Mesa”. The Martins also went to Bath, England in September for the 24th conference of the European Society for Astronomy in Culture (www.seac2016.com). There Fred presented a talk titled “A Theoretical Model of Moon and Milky Way at Ancient Meeting Places”. Questions? Email Fred at extra@nbeam.com

GLENN KREISBERG will be among the speakers at Archaeoaucoustics III in Tomar, Portugal Oct. 5 - 8. http://www.otsf.org/2017-conference.html His presentation is “Mission Malta: Exploring the Sound and Energy Properties of Ancient Architecture.” cliffrover@aol.com

NORMAN MULLER will speak about “Above-Ground Indian Artifacts: The stone Mounds and Walls of Longswamp Township and Beyond” at the Henry Auditorium at the Lutheran Home, One South Home Ave., Topton, PA 7:00 p.m. on May 17. Using Longswamp Township as a model, he will explain how the unique design of these stone mounds repeated at other sites in New England and NY, was pre-existing and are Indian, not colonial. nmuller@princeton.edu

A WARM WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS!


Gerry McLoughlin took this photo of the group on the Manitou Revisited field trip at the fall conference.
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