

INTERACTION AND COMMON GROUND: POLITICAL AND PRESERVATION
OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE SOCIETY FOR CALIFORNIA ARCHAEOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Over the past two years the Society for California Archaeology has lobbied to fund existing state mandates in the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) to support the Information Centers, begin CEQA reviews, and to continue progress on a new state heritage management plan. Communication and political consensus with other preservation groups such as the California Committee for the Promotion of History and the California Preservation Foundation promise hope for progress in California's historic preservation movement.

Opportunities for SCA to assist OHP are also identified, including a new proposal for emergency monitors and advisors. A number of options are available for improving CEQA review at the state and local level. Areas of common interest with the Native American Heritage Commission are discussed. The evolution of the State Historical Resources Commission into a stronger policy-making body will provide additional opportunities for advocacy and progress in historic preservation programs.

INTRODUCTION

There are windows of opportunity for major advances in historic preservation programs, just as there are cataclysms and disasters that befall the preservation movement and its leaders. The last major window was in 1984, following the completion of the California Heritage Task Force Report (Holt 1984). Legislation in response to this report led to the firm establishment in state law of the Office of Historic Preservation and the State Historical Resources Commission, while giving those bodies important new mandates. Efforts to implement those mandates are finally underway.

For example, the 1984 state law calls on the State Historical Resources Commission to submit an annual report on unattained goals of historical resources plans and programs, and to recommend "needed legislation for the support of these programs." We see this required annual report as an opportunity for the Commission to become an advocate for historic preservation in ways that the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), as representative of the administration, is unable to act.

At their April and November 1989 meetings in Los Angeles and Riverside, the Commission accepted public testimony on the needs

and goals of historic preservation programs. This information provided the basis for a first-ever annual report to the State Parks Director and the legislature. SCA was represented there, along with other preservation groups, speaking in support of a stronger role for the Commission and OHP.

COMMISSION AND OHP BACKGROUND

Commissioners on the State Historical Resources Commission are appointed to a four year term. They include two public members and seven individuals who are acknowledged experts in the fields of prehistoric and historic archaeology, history, architectural history, architecture, folklife, and ethnic history. They have already earned the respect of their colleagues, and serve for the opportunity to influence and support historic preservation actions in the state.

The Commission met in February 1989 to address standards for recording archaeological sites and assignment of trinomials, and to discuss issues of management, funding and organization of the Regional Information Centers (*SCA Newsletter*, March 1989). This was the first time that the Commission established policies governing the inventory of archaeological resources, a major achievement that rose well above the narrow disputes that have occurred.

To go back a little in our interaction with OHP, in December 1987 I attended a meeting of an advisory group to OHP. The meeting included representatives of the California Preservation Foundation, the California Committee for the Promotion of History, and the Conference of California Historical Societies. These groups, informally called the "major statewide", had worked closely with Paul Chace and the SCA in the two-year effort to produce the Task Force Report, and they were similarly disenchanted with the lack of progress since then (*SCA Newsletter*, January 1988).

It soon became apparent at the meeting that the major problem for OHP's preservation programs was the declining funding provided by the federal government, down from a high of \$1.1 million in 1980 to just \$600 thousand in 1987. These substantial program cuts during the Reagan years have been made worse, doubly so in fact, by state budgets that only provide matching funds to equal the federal contribution, thus reducing the total OHP budget from a high of \$2.2 million in 1980 to just over \$1 million a year now. Although state law added several major mandates to the State Historical Resources Commission and the Office of Historic Preservation in 1984, there was no corresponding state budget increase or funding tied to those new obligations.

Declining OHP budgets were responsible for the 1983 administrative decision to stop reviewing state and local projects subject to the California Environmental Quality Act. The 1984 mandate to review publicly funded projects that affect

historic resources has yet to be funded or implemented. Declining budgets also led OHP to stop making grants to local communities for historic building surveys and, as was threatened in January 1988, to stop state funding entirely for the Regional Information Centers, meager as it was. A lack of "discretionary" funding for either staff coordination or consultant fees was a major factor in halting progress on the long-awaited "Comprehensive Statewide Historical Resources Plan". When state Senator Milton Marks joined the December 1987 meeting he plaintively asked how much money was available from OHP after paying for the staff and operating expenses. "\$30,000" was the answer, which Sen. Marks said was pitiful for the State of California. He asked the group to develop a consensus for funding priorities.

The Heritage and Tourism Committee did develop a consensus in support of three items, as we've reported in the SCA Newsletter: \$120,000 for the Information Centers, \$100,000 for staff in OHP to do CEQA reviews, and \$160,000 for work on the state plan. These items were added to the state budget by Senator John Garamendi in May 1988, thanks in part to an effective letter-writing campaign by SCA members, and might have been appropriated had not a major state budget deficit been discovered soon thereafter. To her credit, the State Historic Preservation Officer proposed these same items for the state budget year beginning in July 1989. The SHPO won the support of the Parks and Recreation Director for this first-ever funding augmentation for OHP. However, that budget proposal fell victim in December 1988 to a projected state deficit, and a lack of understanding of OHP's budget by the Department of Finance.

Many fear that the major legacy of both the Reagan and Deukmejian administrations will be an enduring financial impoverishment of national and state governments. Enacting funding increases in programs for social sciences and the humanities are increasingly difficult. In spite of that pessimism, we should still try to create a window of opportunity to improve preservation programs in California, to force that window open, or just to be ready with sound proposals when it does open.

Our colleagues in the fields of history, historic architecture, and the Native American Heritage Commission have all spoken highly of the value of the Information Centers, especially for their role at the local level in record searches and project reviews. Their support has been valuable in making the Information Centers a strong funding priority in OHP's budget requests.

SHARED CONCERNS WITH NATIVE AMERICANS

There are many concerns that archaeologists share with Native Americans, especially the protection of sites and the preservation of cultural information. The SCA and the Native American Heritage Commission are supporting the Information

Centers, and are both interested in developing procedures to implement CEQA at the local level. Both are seeking greater respect for cultural values.

Of course, there are a number of differences that should be acknowledged, such as the relative importance of traditional knowledge versus an interest in information gathering and hypothesis testing. Two major controversies in the years ahead will be the disposition of burials and associated artifacts from older collections, and proposed "repatriation" of artifacts in museum collections. Native Americans and California archaeologists are the major parties with an interest in archaeological collections from prehistoric sites. Proposals for wholesale reburial or rejection of Indian participation in collections management are likely to be challenged by one side or the other, sometimes in court. I believe SCA has a responsibility to speak for the archaeological values of those collections, both demonstrated and potential, to insist on competent analysis, and to support improvements in curation and access to collections.

There is a possibility of compromise between Native Americans and archaeologists regarding burial collections that involves a concept of a "reburial vault" that would preserve provenience data and future accessibility to collections while simultaneously returning them to a protected location in the earth. An underground vault with access limitations does not represent either side's ideal for reburial or curation. Whether or not the Heritage Commission is willing to seek or accept a compromise remains to be seen.

There is a growing acceptance and respect by many archaeologists for Native American values and claims for burial collections. And there is a growing appreciation and respect by many Native Americans for the scientific and humanistic values that burial collections may possess for analysis. Many are interested in learning more, with archaeologists, about their ancestors and culture history, while still advocating return of collections to the earth.

There are alternatives, too, for protracted ideological, polemical, and legal battles, wholesale reburial, or continued non-decision and an abdication of responsibility to find solutions to this dilemma. I believe a consensus is not only possible, but is necessary to convince political and administrative authorities to fund any alternative for responsible and respectful treatment of the collections. Proposals that require analysis and deaccessions, improved curation or construction of a reburial vault will all require additional funding for staff or facilities, which may be difficult to obtain. For example, the burial inventory project in the Department of Parks and Recreation, completed in 1988 by Robert Kautz, was the only major investment in those collections to date. It resulted in vastly improved curation, documentation,

significance evaluations, and discussion of various alternatives of disposition (Kautz 1988).

CEQA AND THE HISTORIC "BUILT ENVIRONMENT"

The 1977 court case of SCA versus Butte County remains as one of the major court interpretations of CEQA. It led, indirectly, to the inclusion of archaeological resources in Appendix K of CEQA as one of the resources to be considered. However, our natural allies in the protection of resources are Native Americans, historians, and architects rather than attorneys. Often the SCA Executive Board is asked to sue or join a suit to stop some particular development that threatens an archaeological site. Sometimes the litigation involves a controversial project, and the archaeological values are an afterthought to both developers and opponents. The SCA Board has carefully declined direct involvement in these cases. Attorney fees can quickly absorb the limited resources of the Society, and should be committed only as a last resort in truly significant cases.

One of the recommendations from the recent advisory group to OHP was to seek changes in CEQA to better identify and protect cultural resources. The California Preservation Foundation (CPF) hopes to reverse an Oakland court decree that the demolition of an historic building was not discretionary, and was therefore exempt from CEQA, even though it was tied to a redevelopment permit request under CEQA review. This loophole in CEQA would be closed by passage of SB 1600 (Roberti). SCA hopes to specify consultation with the Information Centers as an official agency of the Office of Historic Preservation for all discretionary projects under CEQA. Any proposed change to strengthen CEQA may alarm local governments, developers, and even state agencies. We should proceed cautiously in this area, together with CPF, to make CEQA protection and enforcement a priority.

It may not be readily obvious to all, but archaeologists share a strong interest with architects and historians in preserving old buildings, and not just for the associated deposits and underground features. In State Parks, for example, archaeologists such as Glenn Farris, Larry Felton, Pete Schulz and crews are doing "vertical archaeology" of historic standing structures for information on building techniques, cultural uses, and changes over time. The task of recording building features with the same care as excavation features can be a monumental job. But looking at a building for its information potential clearly adds a dimension of significance beyond the usual restoration values.

SCA needs to continue efforts to represent the consensus interests of archaeologists at the State and local level, and to those federal agencies with lands and programs in California. Great progress has been made in the 1970s and 80s, but a number of agencies have yet to make a permanent commitment through staffing or regulatory procedures for cultural resource manage-

ment. Only half the counties, and just 8% of California cities are regular users of Information Centers for record searches.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE POLITICAL PROCESS

SCA has been given credit recently, by some, for being politically astute or successful, though such judgements are premature at best. It is true that SCA has cautiously become politically active once again, and that for several years the Executive Board has sought to represent the mainstream or consensus in California archaeology. Some conclusions on the political process may be drawn at this point.

Politics is labor intensive and time consuming, just like archaeology, and can be equally absorbing. The most important part of building a consensus is listening to others, including allies and adversaries.

Political activism is not an exact science. The assumptions, facts, agendas, and decision-making processes are rarely made explicit, nor are they based on hypothetico-deductive models. Personalities and rapport are important, though *ad hominem* arguments are not, however tempting. While most archaeological efforts credit one or more individuals for results and conclusions, political efforts typically result in compromise, with widely shared credit for any successes that result.

Timing and brevity are more important than the weight or quantity of evidence on most issues involving public policy, budgets, and land use planning. A timely non-polemical letter may have more effect than a substantial report produced much later.

We may not be polished or influential in political efforts, but it is important to try, for the sake of the resource and the practice of archaeology. No one else will do it for us in California. SCA has not had a standing committee chair on politics since Clyde Kuhn in 1978, which should give us pause.

Archaeologists are a very small minority of Californians with relatively little political clout by ourselves. Joining with others in historic preservation and the environmental protection movement, and demonstrating the economic benefits of tourism to historic sites will be necessary to advance a substantive political agenda.

Most political victories do not come from the first skirmish; they take time and sustained effort. A legislative history of several bills or budget proposals may be needed before enactment.

Consistency of purpose is important for credibility and ultimate success. This is a particular challenge for the SCA which depends on volunteer leadership and a Board that recruits new members every year.

AN AGENDA FOR ACTION BASED ON CONSENSUS

There will always be room in the SCA for a wide diversity of research interests, methodologies, opinions, and personalities. However, I believe a strong consensus has emerged in six broad areas as the SCA and cultural resource management have matured in the 1980s.

1. The Regional Information Centers are essential to the practice of archaeology and preservation of the resource. They provide a basic service to agencies and consultants. Their coordinators and staff are dedicated and independent, and have all made significant contributions to California archaeology. The Information Centers have survived and in some cases, prospered in spite of meager funding from the state. However, they have yet to reach their potential as comprehensive archives and providers of material cultural information. SCA has a responsibility to champion the support and potential of the Information Centers, and to participate in plans that affect their future.

2. SCA is a professional organization, in management and style, and tends to represent best the concerns of professional California archaeologists. We owe support to our colleagues, and recognition for the many good and excellent programs that have been developed. We also need to defend the quality of these programs when they are threatened by extraordinary cutbacks in staff or budgets that would compromise standards of preservation or mitigation. SCA also has a role to play in the early development of archaeological programs in agencies that have not come to terms with CEQA and NEPA. Several state-chartered conservancies and many local agencies come to mind. The potential success for this kind of missionary work is limited only by the generally tight budgets and status quo conservatism of most government agencies.

3. SCA has a special long-term relationship with the Office of Historic Preservation and the State Historic Preservation Officer. It is important to keep lines of communication open and respectful, for there are many areas where ideas and resources can be shared in cooperative efforts, such as the draft pamphlet by John Parker (1989) on "What Every Developer and Planner Should Know About Cultural Resources". Publication endorsement and support for this pamphlet is a good possibility, and its use by local planning agencies to protect sites and educate developers may prove invaluable. Similarly, the experience and insights gained by Michael Glassow in development of the Santa Barbara model CRM plan are lessons that can help all who become involved in regional and statewide planning efforts. His candid review of the process and results are featured in Volume 2 of the SCA *Proceedings* (Glassow 1989). SCA stands willing to publicize and assist the work of OHP to prepare a number of planning documents: guidelines for reports, treatments of site types, and the development of curation standards, for example.

SCA is often in the position of asking OHP for more of everything they do that supports archaeology, and perhaps that is our right and obligation. However, there are times when SCA members can offer a vital service that OHP could never provide. Emergency discoveries of archaeological sites are reported to OHP and to the Native American Heritage Commission roughly 50 times a year, with requests for field inspections. Some reports are of burials exposed by stream or coastal erosion, or by agricultural and construction activities. Other cases involve middens, rock art, and historic sites, or the finding of artifacts believed to be ancient or unique. Usually these sites do not involve cases subject to NEPA or CEQA, and there is little time or funding for OHP or the Heritage Commission to send out their staff. Too often, decisions or advice on the treatment of sites are being made without any on-site archaeological review or documentation.

What is needed is a list of SCA members who would be willing to serve as emergency monitors or advisors, who would be able to take a first look at these discoveries, and to offer advice to landowners, OHP, and the Native American Heritage Commission. Individuals might be called on just once or twice a year to explore a discovery in their area, perhaps together with an Indian monitor or "most likely descendant". Guidelines have been developed for this volunteer program, including concerns for liability, orientation, availability, and ethics. We hope to work with local archaeological societies in areas where they are active. Please let an Executive Board member know if you are interested in this possibility of service for the resource.

We have often been critical of OHP for failure to carry out mandates written in state law, such as the obligation to review publicly funded projects under CEQA. These shortcomings are not for lack of concern by OHP staff, who have dedicated years of professional efforts to historic preservation. Rather, it is simply that OHP's budget has declined drastically in the 1980s, while their mandates and workloads have increased. It is not enough to simply complain to OHP staff or the SHPO about noncompliance when we have an opportunity to lobby in the Capitol on their behalf as an independent advocate and support group.

4. SCA remains in many ways a "grass roots organization", a motley group of professional archaeologists, avocationalists, and students. We will continue to be open in meetings, membership, and publications to all with a genuine and ethical interest in California's past. There are at least a dozen local archaeological societies in California, some with membership in the hundreds, with active programs in research, conservation, and education. SCA has grown to more than 710 in 1989, an all-time high, especially by reaching out to non-archaeologists who are avid consumers of archaeological information. Perhaps the SCA Annual Meeting can be a place for local archaeological societies to meet and exchange information on meeting programs, fund raising, field trips, and conservation efforts, and to canvass the papers presented for possible speakers. At the very least,

communication can be improved through exchange of newsletters and mailings and other networks to broaden our membership and to be ready for future "grass roots" political actions.

5. While the thrills of discovery and the agonies of site destruction continue to attract the bulk of our efforts, and receive the best newspaper coverage of the state's archaeology, it is collections that are probably most in danger of loss, decay, misuse and neglect. SCA has a responsibility to defend, as a spokesman, the archaeological values inherent in most collections, and to work for improvements in curatorial facilities and standards. Access to collections is important for the future of archaeological research: for comparison with new discoveries, to reconsider timeworn conclusions, and to challenge accepted shibboleths.

6. The vast majority of SCA's budget and volunteer efforts will continue to be devoted to scientific and educational concerns, by custom, logic, and because of the state's legal restrictions on tax-exempt organizations. But it is also important, and appropriate, to represent the interests of California archaeologists in state and federal legislation. That includes small contributions to political campaigns as gifts of support and appreciation, because that is how the game is played by participant-observers. It also includes concerted action with other major organizations for historic preservation and environmental protection in California.

There used to be strong bipartisan support for archaeology and historic preservation. Democrats have traditionally been better at supporting expenditures for staffed programs, while Republicans typically have had a greater interest in tax credits for restoration and preservation projects. California archaeology takes in more than prehistory and the undocumented history lower class ethnic and social groups. As we extend our research to the archaeology of the formerly rich and famous, such as Leland Stanford, John Bidwell, and John Marsh, and since archaeology in the private sector is essential to the orderly and predictable development boom in many areas, it seems appropriate to ask again for bipartisan support for historic preservation. Most archaeologists are admitted Democrats; it is time, though, for Republican archaeologists to "come out of the closet" politically, and for more of us to vote for representatives with preservation platforms and records in mind.

CONCLUSION

On a daily basis, archaeologists are increasingly working with historians, Native Americans, planners, and environmental professionals. That interaction on projects and sites throughout the state should be reflected by cooperation between SCA and other organizations that share an interest in cultural resources.

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