CHARLES E. CLELAND

The Society for Historical Archaeology and Its First Twenty-five Years: Introduction

Since its founding in 1967, the Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA) has grown in strength from a few score members to one of the largest archaeological societies in North America. This kind of rapid recruitment produces an interesting demography. Certainly it could be said that the vast majority of all people who call themselves historical archaeologists are still very much in active practice. While our youth quotient produces a vigor and dynamism found in few other societies, our relatively small senior cohort also distances our collective recollection of the institutional past. Even though the Society is quite young in absolute years, the events of 25 or even 10 years ago are to many members very ancient history.

With the approach of the 25th annual meeting in Kingston, Jamaica, the time seemed right for a retrospective review of the history of the SHA. Inasmuch as the founding of the Society in 1967 also gave academic legitimacy to the field of historical archaeology it is also appropriate to evaluate the influence of the Society on the development of the field.

For those few archaeologists who have been active participants in the affairs of the Society in the long term the need to explain our institutional roots is more than academic. Many have invested an immense amount of time and effort to make the Society grow and flourish. Likewise, there is the realization that those who conduct the Society's business today should be aware of the Society's past. Here there is a strong sense that our 25-year history is to a significant degree shaping our trajectory into the future.

It has often been argued that fields of specialization like historical archaeology are given direc-

tion by the force of brilliant theoretical insight or innovation of methodology, and to some degree this is certainly true. What is often overlooked, however, is the importance of the cumulative effect of the many small and seemingly insignificant decisions which have an enormous impact on the building of institutions and their influence. It is hoped that this description of the history of the SHA will explicate the latter point as well as the importance of its role in wider intellectual realms.

A self-appointed committee of Ed Jelks, Bob Schuyler, and Chuck Cleland decided in 1991 to organize a symposium for the Kingston meeting to discuss the history of the Society and its impact as an academic and political institution. It seemed appropriate that the best people to tell the story were those who had been closely involved in guiding the Society through its first quarter century. John Cotter agreed to discuss the development of historical archaeology prior to the founding of the Society in 1967. As a co-organizer and host of the meeting in Dallas where the SHA was formed, Ed Jelks is in a unique position to review the events of our founding. The committee decided the best way to describe the events and trends of the history of the next 25 years was to divide it into five segments, each covering a half decade. These segments were assigned as follows: Chuck Cleland (1967–1972), Stan South (1972–1977), Kathy Deagan (1977–1982), Bill Adams (1982–1987), and Julie Costello (1987–1992). Finally, Bob Schuyler agreed to provide a general overview of the 25-year period.

These pages do not pretend objectivity but represent the reminiscences and personal views of a few people who were closely involved with the personalities, events, and ideas which helped shape the Society and our discipline. We hope it will help younger historical archaeologists to know the Society better and to fortify them to lead the Society for Historical Archaeology into the future.

CHARLES E. CLELAND
THE MUSEUM
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
EAST LANSING, MICHIGAN 48823