Elaine Bluhm Herold: A Renaissance Woman of Illinois

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Elaine Bluhm Herold (1925-2015) was one of Illinois's earliest professional female archaeologists at a time when women were not considered participants in Illinois archaeology. Her contributions to the Illinois and national archaeological communities were immeasurable. Throughout her life, Elaine was a leader in regional archaeology, a mentor for future archeologists, and a role model for many subsequent generations of women in the field.

Elaine was born July 1, 1925, in Chicago, Illinois, to Joseph and Margaret Bluhm. She grew up in Chicago and entered the University of Chicago in 1942 to study anthropology, earning her bachelor's degree in 1946. Her graduate studies were at the University of Chicago from 1947 to 1952, earning her Master's degree in 1949 and Ph.D. in 1952. Her dissertation, "A Study of Early Hopewell Occupation in Illinois," was supervised by Kenneth G. Orr and John B. McGregor.

Elaine's early career was spent at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, where she worked from 1948 to 1957 as an Assistant in the Department of Anthropology. She conducted fieldwork at the Zimmerman site near Starved Rock and published her findings in the 1947 Fieldiana.

In 1952, Elaine married Donald G. Herold, who was Director of the Davenport Museum in Davenport, Iowa. She moved to Davenport to work at the museum, where she conducted research on the Hopewell culture and published her findings in the 1954 Davenport Museum Anthropological Report.

In 1956, Elaine was one of the founding members and the only female Board member of the Illinois Archaeological Survey (IAS). She served as the Secretary-Treasurer from 1956 to 1967. In addition, she was a professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she taught courses in fieldwork, analysis, and curation.

Elaine's research focused on the Hopewell culture, and she wrote up the collections recovered in the 19th century from Albany Mounds in Illinois. She also published several papers on the cultural history of Illinois.

In 1964, Elaine became the Director of the Archaeological Survey at the University of Buffalo. She continued to serve as the Director from 1982 to 2001. During her tenure, the IAS grew to become one of the largest and most respected archaeological organizations in the United States.

Elaine was a pioneer in so many areas of archaeology and influenced so many people. She was generous in sharing her memories and photographs of Elaine Bluhm Herold over the past few years—Jennifer Chaos Herold, James Brown, Gloria Fenner, Arthur Winston, Jon Hedman, and others. In 2015, Elaine Bluhm Herold died on May 22, 2015, at the age of 90.

Elaine Bluhm Herold was a true role model for many subsequent generations of women in the field.