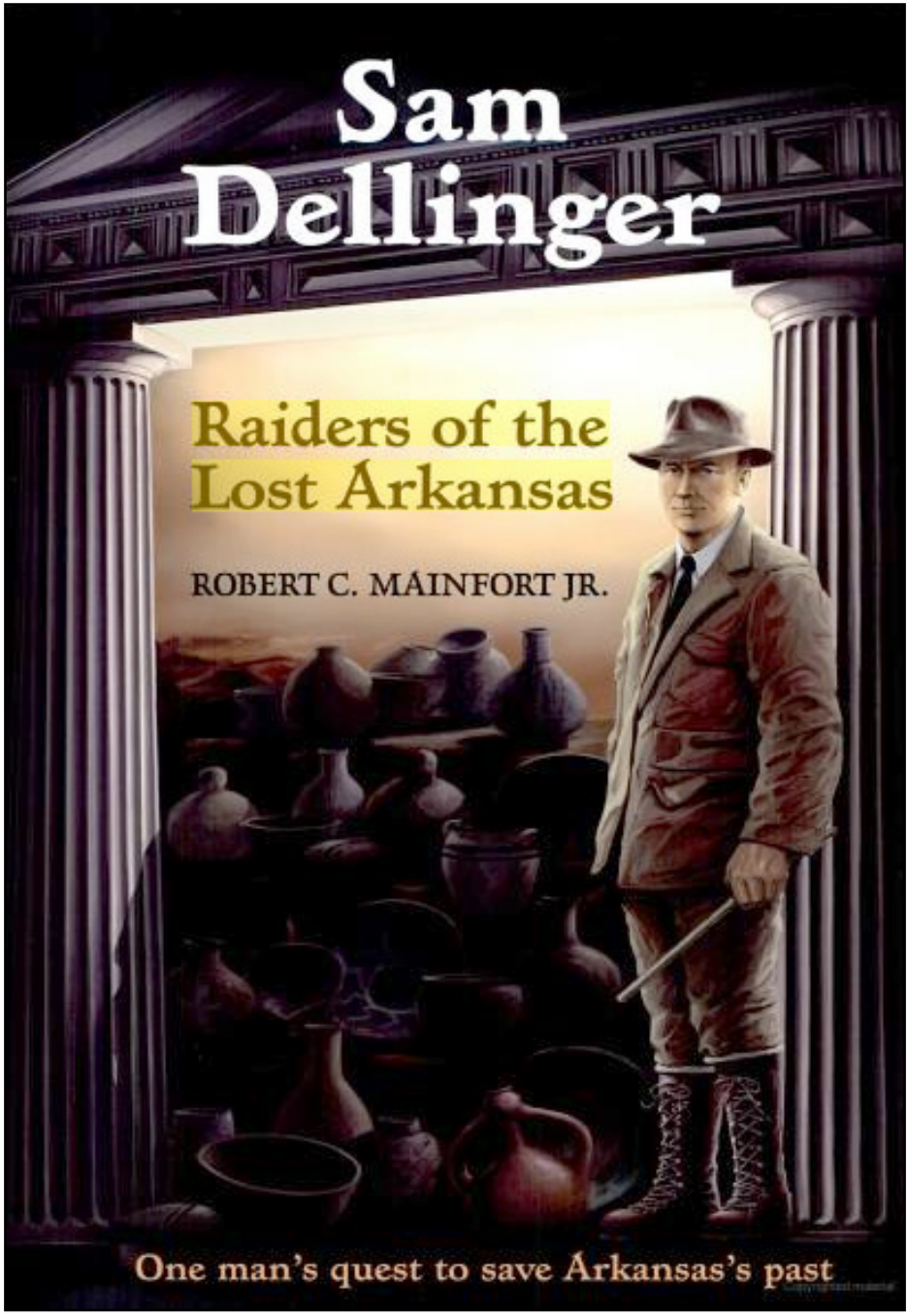

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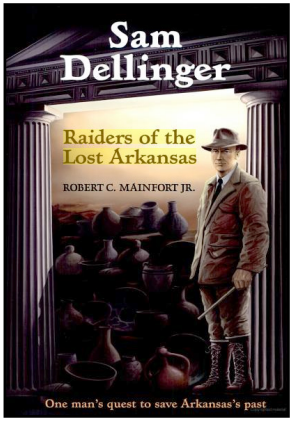

Sam Dellinger: Raiders of the Lost Arkansas

Robert C. Mainfort, Jr. 2008. The University of Arkansas Press. xvii+144 pp., $39.95 (cloth).

Reviewed by John R. Halsey, East Lansing, Michigan.

Most states in the midcontinental United States have had to face the consequences of major losses of cultural patrimony through the removal of significant archaeological remains, sometimes by out-of-state institutions or, more commonly, by "pot hunters." While largely historical, in some states, the problem persists today. For example, in the states bordering the Great Lakes, there is a continuing and increasing loss of native copper artifacts and metallic grave goods found with historic period burials on state, federal and private lands due to the increased sophistication of unscrupulous metal detectorists, and of shipwreck artifacts to divers who see only the dollar value of a 150-year-old shipwreck's bell or anchor. However, the most-plundered state may be Arkansas.

The story of how Arkansas fought back is detailed in this remarkable volume. Although the publication itself is the permanent record of an exhibit of the same name mounted at the Old State House Museum in 2008, it might not have come about without the author's personal interest in the archaeological collections held at the University of Arkansas Museum dating to at least 1994 when he was first exposed to them during a job interview.

The protagonist of Mainfort's story is Samuel Claudius Dellinger, an "ABD" marine biologist who became curator the University of Arkansas Museum *and* Director of the Department of Zoology in 1925. He was clearly a towering figure in the history of Arkansas archaeology, as he held both positions for over 30 years. In a 13-page introductory chapter, Mainfort presents the necessary biographical details. We discover that Dellinger was instrumental in developing the first anthropology courses taught at the university and that he was a man of great scholarly conviction and integrity. After Arkansas voters passed an act in 1928 that prohibited teaching evolution in state schools, Dellinger was one of only five University of Arkansas faculty members who signed an American Association of University Professors resolution calling the anti-evolution bill unconstitutional and an interference with free speech.

The second chapter, "Arkansas for Arkansans," examines the early history of the acquisition of many thousands of Arkansas artifacts by outside individuals and institutions (including some from the nearby states of Oklahoma and Alabama) that began no later than 1879 and continued into the 1930s. After visits to a number of major museums, Dellinger fulminated: p. 131

> Imagine my chagrin when I visited such museums as Peabody at Harvard, the National Museum at Washington, D.C., the one at the University of Michigan, the Heye Museum of the American Indian at New York and found there that their finest and most valuable Indian displays had been sent from Arkansas. Specimens are there that can never be found again in our state. They were sold to big museums at a nominal sum. They are not like a crop of cotton or corn that can be grown again but when these go out of state they are lost forever [p.15].

The chapter is illustrated with photographs of all the principal perpetrators, period photos of artifact exhibits and artifacts from that time with catalog information. However, all the artifacts illustrated here are from the University of Arkansas Museum, so they were getting some.

Dellinger's career was not spotless by the standards of the twenty-first century. As fierce as he was about the export of Arkansas artifacts, he obtained and cataloged a number of important artifacts from the Craig Mound at Spiro, Oklahoma. In an apparent fit of pique, he refused to participate in the Phillips, Ford and Griffin survey of the lower Mississippi Valley, but did not obstruct the later use of Arkansas materials in the final report.

More positively, he directed numerous excavation campaigns, was a gifted grant-winner, a mesmerizing lecturer, a firm opponent of anti-Semitism, and a tireless promoter of archaeological sites as educational parks.

Because so many of the artifacts illustrated in this volume were found in prehistoric graves, a brief chapter, "Human Burials and the Law," highlights the enormous gulf between how burials were thought of and treated in the 1920s versus today.

Another chapter, "History of the University of Arkansas Museum," traces the growth of the Museum from its founding in the mid-1870s, its numerous migrations, and its current status.

The largest portion of the publication is "The Exhibit Collections," broken into Northeast Arkansas, Ozark Bluff Shelters, Central Arkansas River Valley, the Spiro Mound Group, and the Ouachita River Valley sections. Each section is illustrated with a few period shots and numerous full-color artifact

photographs. With the exception of the Ozark Bluff Shelters, the images are heavily weighted toward ceramic vessels. The Spiro section leans heavily toward engraved conch shells and drawings of the engraved images. Curiously, apparently not one of the many repoussé copper plates from Spiro in the Museum's collection was included in the exhibition.

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The book concludes with a bibliography of Dellinger's published works and a bibliography of publications, theses and dissertations that have used the collections amassed by Dellinger.

Sam Dellinger: Raiders of the Lost Arkansas is a potent reminder of how much we still owe the state-level, non-professional field archaeologists and museum pioneers of nineteenth and early twentieth century; and how many more (at least one per state!) are worthy of a detailed "Sam Dellinger-level" of memorialization of their irreplaceable archaeological efforts.

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