

# THE PEABODY MAN

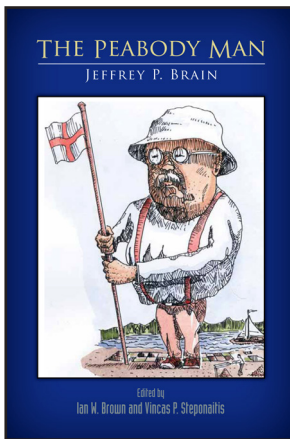
JEFFREY P. BRAIN



Edited by  
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## The Peabody Man: Jeffrey P. Brain

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*Reviewed by Christopher S. Peebles, Glenn Black Laboratory of Archaeology, Indiana University.*

The Lower Mississippi Survey (LMS) was founded more than 70 years ago by Philip Phillips (Harvard), James Ford (Louisiana State University), and James B. Griffin (University of Michigan). Throughout this span the LMS has 1) conducted and published exemplary archaeological research, 2) attracted and held the loyalty of generations of students and scholars, and 3) celebrated the lives its pivotal members in privately published books of memories. The work at hand is the third offered by the LMS and honors Jeffrey P. Brain (the first honoree was Philip Phillips, the second Robert S. "Stu" Neitzel). The authors demonstrate with their memories and words how Brain's leadership earned their respect, trained them as archaeologists, and set the highest standards for their scholarship. These qualities bound them and their research to the LMS in whole or in part for their academic lives.

It is clear from the author's memories that Jeffrey Brain has been and is an exceptional, effective, and sometimes unpredictable teacher and mentor. Apart from the occasional course he taught in the Department of Anthropology at Harvard, he conducted rigorous seminars and individual reading courses on the prehistory of the Southeast and the Lower Mississippi Valley. As a result, undergraduates and graduate students went into the field with a solid understanding of the pre- and proto-history of the region and of the specific archaeological sites they would be excavating. He also set students to work on particular parts of existing Peabody Museum collections from the Lower Mississippi Valley so they would have firsthand knowledge of what they might find in their excavations that summer. Judith A. Habicht-Mauche, today a Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Santa Cruz, recalls going through a collection of sherds and approaching Jeffrey Brain with those she could not identify as to type or variety. He took one look, pronounced them junk, and threw them into the wastebasket next to his desk. After her initial shock, she retrieved the sherds and went back to her work space. Upon a second request for assistance, "Jeff...came over



to my work area and spent the next hour or so patiently teaching me the rudiments of Lower Mississippi Valley ceramic typology, as well as the general philosophy behind the type-variety system of classification. It was the beginning of a productive and rewarding mentoring relationship that lasted throughout the rest of my time at Harvard" (p. 94). A wastebasket was a central element in the evaluation of a grant proposal written by Tristram Kidder: it too initially found its way into the trashcan. Jeff then spent the next morning helping him rewrite the proposal, which was successful (pp. 97–98). The data collected by this project formed the basis of Kidder's dissertation. Today he is Professor of Anthropology at Washington University, St. Louis. Katherine Spielmann, now Professor of Anthropology at Arizona State University, wrote her honors thesis on the Archaic of the Carolina Piedmont. Jeffrey Brain was her advisor. She concludes: "He gave me the sense that I was undertaking a worthy project and had the potential to succeed in the profession" (p. 87). She concludes: "It is immensely important to the success of an undergraduate student to be treated with the kind of respectful guidance and comradery that Jeff offered me decades ago. I have always appreciated him for it!" (p. 88).

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Getting a crew into the field in Mississippi in the 1970s and 1980s offered unique challenges. As Gilman Parsons notes (pp. 37–41), it is not clear whether the mere presence of a band of Yankees was the problem or if the Harvard connection was the major cause for suspicion. Jeffrey Brain could claim one half of his ancestors came from Alabama and that part of the LMS sponsorship came from Louisiana State University, so the implied "otherness" was to some degree countered. Countered, that is, until NAACP literature was forwarded through the mail to one member of the crew. Then there was the implied adherence by most of the crew to Episcopal Church that gave pause to the Baptists thereabout. Next, the fact that Mississippi was "dry" had to be overcome. One could drive a very long way to get beer (if one got lots of beer to bring home one risked becoming a bootlegger) or one could brew one's own beer. Anne Souza Brain, Jeff's wife of almost 50 years today, tells of his brewing and bottling beer and the exploding bottles that wiped out their refrigerator and made a room in the laboratory building unusable (pp. 25–26). There were adventures in cuisine, usually with species and spices not found in Cambridge. Stu Neitzel prepared Cajun feasts and the occasional squirrel's head stew for the LMS crew (p. 20). Some became addicted to the manna from the bayou; none turned up their nose at it (under threat of going to bed without dinner). Stories of rented houses, from haunted edifices to shotgun shacks to ante bellum mansions in good repair, are familiar; nutty neighbors are present; the project cooks, hired locally, are heroes. All in all, wonderful field stories that any archaeologist can appreciate.

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Jeffrey Brain offered far more than interesting sites and settings, education and mentorship. He showed how archaeology was practiced from research design through final report and publication. Several authors, including the editors, note that he was constantly at work in his office and at his typewriter: "...one knew that Jeff was in his office simply by hearing the tap-tapping on his typewriter" (p. x). It brings to mind remarks attributed to the 18th century Duke of Gloucester who, upon meeting Edward Gibbon, said: 'Another damned thick, square book! Always scribble, scribble, scribble! Eh! Mr. Gibbon?' Brain's thick, square books came one after the other on important Lower Mississippi Valley sites and particular problems in late prehistory. They continued to come after he moved his research from Mississippi to Maine, from pre-and proto-history to the early 17th century English Popham Colony, and from one Peabody Museum to another. His bibliography fills 14 pages at the end of the memory book and comprises a dozen major monographs. The authors of this volume, most of whom became professional archaeologists, have followed Brain's example: they have published their research in a timely and complete manner. Many of their works and those by Jeffrey Brain are available in digital form from the Research Laboratories of Archaeology, University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill: [http://rla.unc.edu/Archives/LMS1/LMS\\_library.html](http://rla.unc.edu/Archives/LMS1/LMS_library.html) (accessed 1 June 2011). The two earlier books of memories for Philip Phillips and Robert S. Neitzel can be found there; *The Peabody Man* will find a digital home there as well.