



Contract Archaeology and the Center for American Archeology

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ABSTRACT

In 1953, Stuart McKee Struever (1931–2022) founded Archaeological Research, Inc., the nonprofit organization that would develop into the Foundation for Illinois Archeology and ultimately into the Center for American Archeology (CAA), as it is known today. The institution grew, and so too did Struever's vision of its scope and mission—from a research-focused program into one that could engage all dimensions of archaeological research, education, and public engagement. One often underappreciated aspect of this expanding vision and suite of archaeological programs is the Contract Archeology Program that would embrace the then nascent discipline of cultural resource management (CRM). Spanning several decades, the CAA Contract Archeology Program would contribute to the stewardship and preservation of archaeological resources in Illinois, as well as provide training for future archaeologists and new data for further research and knowledge production. In this article, we explore the establishment and growth of the CAA's Contract Archeology Program, its contributions to CRM archaeology, and its legacy, both in the past and present.

KEYWORDS

Center for American Archeology; Foundation for Illinois Archeology; cultural resource management; Illinois; Stuart Struever; history of archaeology

Introduction

The Center for American Archeology's (CAA) Contract Archeology Program (CAP) meant that Struever's vision of a freestanding interdisciplinary archaeological institution persisted through the twentieth century. Informally founded in 1972 with the completion of its first report, the contract program embraced the emerging field of cultural resource management mandated by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA). Section 106 of the act specified that federal agencies must consider the impact of their activities on historic, irreplaceable resources; the impact on archaeological sites meeting significance criteria would receive funds for survey (Phase 1), testing (Phase 2), and mitigation through excavation (Phase 3). Struever clearly saw both the research and financial potential of the

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NHPA. Spanning decades, CAP contributed to the identification and preservation of Illinois's archaeological resources, provided important training for future archaeologists, facilitated research, and produced new archaeological knowledge.

In this article, we explore the establishment and growth of the program, its contributions to regional archaeological knowledge, and the place of cultural resource management archaeology at the CAA today. To do so, we take a document-centric approach that is based on files and reports from the CAA and its sequential predecessors: the Northwestern University Archeological Program, the Illinois Valley Archaeological Program, and the Foundation for Illinois Archeology, culminating with the CAA. The shared element, of course, is Stuart Struever and his vision for what the CAA, including CAP, could be.

Struever's vision for Illinois archaeology and his planned, encompassing program is stated in an introductory statement included in the Illinois Valley Archaeological Program Research Papers series, published by the Illinois State Museum in 1973. There he presents his concept of the Illinois Valley as a natural "field laboratory" for research with his aims to (1) excavate past cultures and reconstruct lifeways, (2) formulate and test hypotheses of cultural change, (3) develop and refine new methods, and (4) train students in excavation, analysis, and the natural sciences intersecting with archaeology, such as geology, zoology, and botany (Struever 1973:iii). It is within this context and the rise of cultural resources management (CRM) archaeology broadly (McManamon 2018; Neumann et al. 2010) that the CAA Contract Archeology Program emerged.

Early Contract Archaeology Projects (1972–1974)

The CAA's CRM reports are indexed as Report(s) of Investigation (ROI). ROI numbers were assigned to the earliest reports sometime after the development of the program and its documentary records. Assigned numbers largely follow the chronological order of the project. These reports are curated by the CAA as well as the Illinois State Archaeological Survey's CRM Archive.

Struever was directly involved with and/or credited with 14 individual projects: ROIs 1–13 and ROI 16 (Supplemental Table 1). Authorship of these reports is not always attributed in the surviving documents. CAA records indicate he had at least a supervisory role in these early projects. Struever's involvement in CAP decreased markedly once the program became formally established.

The first of these reports, "An Archeological Survey of the Collins Generating Station," was prepared in 1972 by Margaret Kimball Brown for the Northwestern University Archeological Program (Stuart Struever, director) and "was carried out through the Foundation for Illinois Archeology" (Brown and Struever 1972:1). This project was conducted on behalf of Commonwealth Edison "[a]s part of the environmental study of the site selected for the Collins Power Station" (Brown and Struever 1972:1). The report is five pages in length, reflecting the state of formative

CRM archaeology and compliance reporting. The methods are unremarkable: local collectors contacted, pedestrian surveys conducted, and subsurface testing performed to detect intact subsurface archaeological features. Nine sites were reported, four of which were located within the project area. Illinois Archeological Survey (IAS) numbers were assigned to all nine, regardless of their location relative to the area of potential impact. Brown and Struever commented on each site's state of preservation, provided a brief interpretation, and made recommendations, particularly "more examination of the ground after the initial scraping by the earthmoving equipment" during construction. They also provided a hand-drawn map of the project area that illustrates the location of each site. Neither NHPA's Section 106 nor the National Register of Historic Places is mentioned in the report.

ROI 2 and ROI 3 (Supplemental Table 1) both focus on the McGee Creek Levee and Drainage District. This project marks the CRM program's first engagement with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). This relationship would develop further, as documented below.

ROI 4, "Report on Preliminary Site Examination Undertaken at the Carlin Site on FAP 38, Calhoun County, Illinois (1973; see Supplemental Table 1), has the hallmarks of modern CRM reporting. This Phase II project is credited to "Northwestern University under the Auspices of the Illinois Archaeological Survey, in cooperation with the US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, and the State of Illinois, Department of Transportation." In contrast to earlier reports, ROI 4 includes now standard sections on project authorization, setting and site description, excavation procedures, results summary, tables, summary remarks, recommendations, a project map, and a budget. This project appears to be the first CAA CAP fieldwork conducted for these agencies, whose significance would increase markedly in following years.

ROI 8, "An Archeological Survey of the Village of Oak Brook, Illinois" (1974; see Supplemental Table 1) is the first contract report specifically credited as a Foundation for Illinois Archeology (FIA) project. ROI 13, "An Archeological Survey of the Transmission Line Corridor and Pipeline Areas of the LaSalle County Station of the Commonwealth Edison Company" (1975; see Supplemental Table 1), is similarly credited to Struever and the FIA. The report notes "Commonwealth Edison Company contracted with the Northwestern Archeological Program" with a footnote stating that "[t]he Foundation for Illinois Archeology is the contract archeology division of the Northwestern Archeological Program." This fluidity in organizational roles and designations existed in many of the early reports prior to the formal establishment of the contract program.

At this point in the program's development, relatively small-scale projects were conducted and initial engagement with authorities responsible for NHPA Section 106 compliance began. In addition, initial methods and reporting were undergoing standardization.

Historic Site Surveys and Predictive Models

An important early project connected to cultural resource management was the CAA's involvement with the Illinois Archaeological Survey's Historic Site Surveys in the early 1970s. Commissioned by the director of the Department of Conservation, then the State Historic Preservation officer, these archaeological surveys were conducted in response to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966's directive to create inventories of sites, archaeological and other, potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. CAA archaeologists surveyed select portions of the Illinois River, as well the Apple Creek, Mauvaise Terre, Big Sandy, and Macoupin tributary valleys; the Fox and Des Plaines Valleys; the hinterlands of Calhoun, Pike, Jersey, Greene, and Scott Counties; the confluences of the Illinois, Des Plaines, and Kankakee Valleys; and along the bluff crests (Supplemental Table 2). These surveys were important for expanding the state's basic site inventory for both Section 106 compliance and for archaeological research, as they facilitated comparative study of the main valley and selected sections of tributaries.

The Contract Archaeology Program during the Farnsworth Era (1974–1998)

The first report to explicitly mention a "Contract Archeology Office" is ROI 14, "An Archeological Survey of an Erosion Control Structure on the Thelmo Marlow Farm, Calhoun County, Illinois" (Farnsworth 1974). It dates to 1974, but it received a higher report number than the 1975 LaSalle County project (ROI 13) mentioned above. ROI 14 includes two important points in the development of CAA contract archaeology. This is the first report to bear the name of the archaeologist most closely associated with CAP: Kenneth Farnsworth. Appointed by Struever to lead the program, Farnsworth would serve as director of the CAA Contract Archeology Program for a quarter century (1974–1998.) Farnsworth directed projects associated with several agencies, including the Illinois Archaeological Survey, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and the Illinois Department of Transportation.

US Army Corps of Engineers

The US Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) regularly engaged the Contract Archeology Program for its archaeological needs, as exemplified by the April 1976 report, "An Archeological Survey of the Lower Illinois River Shoreline (Miles 1–80)," by Farnsworth for the St. Louis District in preparation for dredging the river's 9 ft navigation channel. The Contract Program's charge was to document "important archeological or historic sites situated within 300 feet of the river shoreline," which was accomplished by pedestrian surveys of the Illinois River's banks and secondary stream confluences (Farnsworth 1976:1). Farnsworth connected the

9 ft channel survey to Northwestern University and FIA's ongoing efforts to "compile a master inventory of all prehistoric and historic sites in the area, spanning Illinois' 11,000 year archeological record" (Farnsworth 1976:3). Thus, survey results were important progress in understanding the distribution of sites as a basis for preservation and future research. Similar survey efforts were undertaken by the Contract Archeology Program under USACE contracts along sections of the Mississippi River and river levee systems in preparation for drainage control projects, including geoarchaeological surveys (Supplemental Table 3).

Illinois Department of Transportation: FAP 408 or the Central Illinois Expressway Project

Survey and mitigation conducted by the Contract Archeology Program for the FAP 408 Project was a massive, transformational undertaking. This was an Illinois Department of Transportation project that constructed the Central Illinois Expressway (I-72). The Contract Archeology Program performed a considerable number of Phase I, II, and III projects along this corridor. Initial FAP 408 Section 106 case reports and compliance plans specifically outline an approach anchored in the CAA's specialists, facilities, and ability to perform CRM archaeology. The project revealed over 600 individual sites spanning almost all human occupation of the valley. Several large mitigation projects were launched that form the modern corpus of lower Illinois Valley Middle Woodland archaeological knowledge, as well as that for other time periods (Supplemental Table 4). Like other CAP projects, interdisciplinary specialists were engaged, including paleobotanists, zooarchaeologists, bioarchaeologists, and geomorphologists. Year-round staffed laboratories for projects and specialists, building on Koster-era rentals and purchases, expanded the CAA's Kampsville campus. In addition to important new knowledge about both the Illinois River and Mississippi River valleys and especially the uplands, FAP 408 facilitated institutional growth through the generation of revenue, indirect benefits, infrastructure, specialty labs, personnel, and training opportunities for students.

The Central Illinois Expressway (FAP 408) project contributed significantly to regional archaeological knowledge in several ways. FAP 408 covered a full transect of the uplands on the east side of the LIV through the floodplain of the Illinois River, the region between the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers and the Mississippi River floodplain (Supplemental Figure 1). CAA researchers had previously focused primarily on a research strategy that emphasized the Illinois River floodplain, its tributaries, and immediately adjacent uplands. Site report publications had not always emerged in timely fashion. The FAP 408 surveys, testing, and Phase III excavations thus yielded a systematic study of a significant transect of the valley carried through to timely reports and publications. Another part of the project's success was the integration of university field schools with right-of-way contract excavations at sites such as the Elizabeth Mounds. Field-school student participation in

compliance archaeology projects provided students with important training and facilitated thorough study of excavated sites in their entirety.

Through FAP 408 projects, we reported novel Archaic occupations in the Illinois River floodplain, including intensive studies of intra-site variability (B. Stafford 1989; R. Stafford 1985). A deeply stratified site that included Archaic components, Napoleon Hollow became an important point of comparison for the Koster site (Styles 1985; see Hajic and Styles 2027; Brown and Wiant 2027). Ambrose Flick, an early Woodland site in the upper reaches of the Sny Bottom, provided new knowledge of this relatively unknown period (Stafford 1992). Small Middle Woodland homesteads in the uplands east of the Illinois River also yielded important information about Middle Woodland peoples living beyond the main trench of the Illinois River. The Woodland component of the Napoleon Hollow site, along with results from excavations at the nearby Elizabeth Mound Group, yielded novel information about Middle Woodland peoples and their ceremonies (Charles et al. 1988; Wiant and McGimsey 1986). Complex Late Woodland interment patterns were documented at the Kuhlman Mound site, located on the bluffs above the Mississippi River (Atwell and Conner 1991). Phase III excavations of Mississippi Valley sites were assimilated into ITARP projects, (e.g., O’Gorman 2005).

The Glory Days of the CAA Contract Archeology Program

The Contract Archeology Program in its prime is illustrated in a document entitled “Archeological Resource Experience, Facilities, Fieldwork and Laboratory Methodology, and Personnel of the Center for American Archeology” submitted by the CAA to the St. Louis District of the US Army Corps of Engineers. This document demonstrates a robust, active cultural research management program. Noting the breadth of the program’s projects, Farnsworth writes, “Our 20 years of research experience in the lower Illinois and middle Mississippi drainages cannot be even remotely approached regionally by any other archeological research group. Our Kampsville Center regional research laboratories and curation facilities are unmatched by anyone for analytic ability, scope, or experience” (Farnsworth 1982:v). From the Contract Archeology Program’s start through completed projects in 1982, Farnsworth reports over \$6,000,000 in total contract value—approximately \$19.5 million today—from projects around the state.

These large projects undertaken by CAP, particularly FAP 408, sustained it and the larger institution through its revenue, expertise, research contributions, and overhead/infrastructural support. It facilitated the presence of year-round staff in Kampsville. It standardized recordation and methods. As CAA programs do today, it aided the training of future archaeologists. Additional projects occurred after the end of the 408 project of course; however, these were not sufficient to support the program financially at the 1980s levels, leading to the loss of personnel. When the State of Illinois mandated that only Illinois State institutions could be

awarded CRM contracts during the 1990s, CAP—as carefully crafted by Struever and nurtured by Farnsworth—abruptly ceased to exist. By the closing years of the twentieth century, the Contract Archeology Program was effectively shuttered. CRM projects have been undertaken since that time, with reports produced in 1999 and 2003, and occasional small Phase I projects thereafter.

Cultural Resource Management at the CAA Today

Our most recent engagement with CRM is our new field school—Applied Archaeology for CRM Careers. In 2022, we partnered with the Center for Field Sciences, now the Anthropocene Research Center, to offer a field school specifically designed to produce well-trained CRM field technicians in response to increased industry demand generated by new infrastructure spending and increased student interest in CRM job training. The field school is offered twice annually, during the spring and the fall. It is an intensive four-week program of fieldwork, lab work, and lectures for 10–12 students per session.

Our curriculum was designed following survey of practicing CRM archaeologists to identify practical skills and topics relevant to the industry that are not normally taught in traditional academic research-oriented field schools. Students are first trained in pedestrian survey, assessing surface visibility, photo documentation, project area sketch maps, and surface material identification. Several survey styles are taught, and students learn handheld and base-rover style GPS mapping. Pedestrian survey methods are followed by shovel testing. Not only do students excavate and screen shovel test units, but they also learn procedures for documentation and gain practical experience in soil description. They then focus on excavation of test units and associated skills.

Interspersed with this training, students are familiarized with the operation of a total station and are exposed to basic geomorphic investigations with hands-on training in the use of a Giddings probe to take deep core samples. Field experience also includes working with heavy machinery to excavate exploratory trenches. A primary objective of the machinery experience is training in operating safely around this dangerous equipment while detecting and documenting archaeological features. Safety is stressed throughout the program, with student exposure to proper personal protective equipment, daily tailgate meetings regarding potential hazards of the day, and ongoing reminders to be vigilant concerning the potential hazards to themselves and classmates.

Evening sessions consist of laboratory training in flotation processing, material processing, initial sorting, and preliminary analysis. Lectures provided by CAA staff and CRM professionals from the public and private sectors include the Section 106 process; the role of federal and state agencies; ethnobotany, zooarchaeology, bioarchaeology, and geophysical investigation; use of drones; photogrammetry; and tribal consultation, as well as talks about the good, the bad, and the ugly of CRM work for those actively working in the field.

Students receive basic GIS training for generating maps that graphically display investigation results of sites investigated during the program. Field school culminates with each student producing an Illinois Archaeological Survey Short Report—a basic CRM Phase I report. This process demonstrates the need for thorough and accurate field recording and provides the students with an understanding of how the fieldwork, analysis, and documentation all come together to provide an adequate description of what they did, what they found, and what it means. Finally, the CAA provides an opportunity for students to produce or improve their résumés and to interview for positions with actively hiring local CRM firms.

Stuart Struever and Contract Archeology at the CAA

So, what did Struever see in contract archaeology? CRM archaeology served several needs for Struever and the CAA. For research, it provided a tremendous amount of information across material classes about people in the past and greatly expanded our knowledge of site density and distribution. Further, CAP projects facilitated institution building, supporting the CAA's existence through revenue and indirect benefits such as specialty labs, staff, and salaries and permanent expertise in a variety of specialties. Importantly, the program provided training opportunities for students. Thus, while Struever's vision was not specifically CRM focused, CRM aided the institution and its broader archaeological mission.

As noted above, the Contract Archeology Program at the CAA ended with the closing of the twentieth century and the rise of the State of Illinois's compliance archaeology efforts. An enduring component of our CRM heritage is the CAA's continued commitment to integrating real archaeological research opportunities in the lower Illinois Valley with the practical education of aspiring archaeologists in our CRM field school. We trace this broad, integrative focus to Stuart Struever and his unique vision for what an Illinois Valley archaeological program could be.

Acknowledgments

We thank and acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the countless alums—our Kampaign Legacies—who tirelessly worked to make the Contract Archeology Program such a meaningful success through the decades. We also thank Mike Wiant and Gail Anderson for their advice and oral histories that informed our article.

Supplementary Materials

Supplementary material for this article can be found at <https://www.midestarchaeology.org/mcja/supplemental-materials>.

Supplemental Figure 1. FAP 408 (Central Illinois Expressway) Tract

Supplemental Table 1. CAA Reports of Investigation Written by and/or Credited to Stuart Struever

Supplemental Table 2. CAA Historic Site Survey Reports to the Illinois Archaeological Survey
 Supplemental Table 3. CAA Reports of Investigation for the US Army Corps of Engineers
 Supplemental Table 4. CAA FAP 408 Research and Technical Publications

Declaration of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no financial interest in the project described in this article nor have they benefited financially from it.

Funding Statement

No grants have supported the preparation of this article.

Notes on Contributors

Jason L. King (PhD U of New Mexico, 2016) is executive director of the Center for American Archeology. He received his BA from the University of South Carolina and his MA and PhD from the University of New Mexico. His first experience in Illinois archaeology was at the University of New Mexico/Center for American Archeology field school at the Mound House site in 1999. He began supervising fieldwork in 2001 as part of the CAA/UNM Field School at the Mound House site, Greene County, Illinois. In 2010 he became CAA research director and then in 2016, executive director. He has directed CAA fieldwork and field schools at several sites, including geophysical prospection and excavation of Middle and Late Woodland mound and habitation sites, as well as investigation of historic sites such as the Kampsville Lock site and the Calhoun County Poor Farm. His most recent work has focused on the German site, a Late Woodland (800–1200 CE) habitation south of Kampsville.

Don Booth (MA Brandeis University, 2002) is a retired cultural resource management (CRM) professional with a career spanning over 35 years. Focused primarily in the St. Louis region, Booth has participated in, or led, CRM projects throughout the Midwest and Southeast. Two projects he directed were recognized by the American Cultural Resources Association (ACRA), with the ACRA Industry Award in 2007 and the ACRA Quality Product—Large Project Award in 2008. In addition to this CRM work, Booth has served, in 2013 and 2014, on the Technical Advisory Committee for The Mounds—America's First Cities feasibility study, a proposed project to place Cahokia Mounds and other regional mounds under National Park Service management and, from 2016 through 2018, on the Illinois Historic Sites Advisory Council. In his retirement, Booth has codirected, since its inception in 2022, the Applied Archaeology for CRM Careers field school at the Center for American Archeology, in Kampsville, Illinois.

Jane E. Buikstra (PhD U of Chicago, 1972) is Regents' Professor of Bioarchaeology and Founding Director, Center for Bioarchaeological Research in the School of Human Evolution and Social Change at Arizona State University. Buikstra defined the discipline of bioarchaeology, an international field that enriches archaeological knowledge of past peoples through scientific study of their remains and archaeological/historical contexts. Buikstra was elected to the National Academy of Sciences (1987) and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2019). She is president of the Center for American Archeology (1986–present) and past president of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists, the American Anthropological Association, and the Paleopathology Association. She has received the following awards: the Pomerance Award for Scientific Contributions to Archaeology (AIA, 2005), the T. Dale Stewart Award (AAFS, 2008), the Charles R. Darwin Lifetime Achievement Award (AABA, 2008), the Eve Cockburn

Award for Service (PPA, 2011), an honorary DSc (Durham University, UK, 2014), the Lloyd Cotsen Prize for Lifetime Achievement in World Archaeology (2016), the Lucy Wharton Drexel Medal (U PA, 2018), the Gorjanovic-Kramberger Medal in Anthropology from the Croatian Society of Anthropology (2018), the Aleš Hrdlička Memorial Medal of the Anthropology Society of the Czech Republic, the Shanghai Archaeological Forum's Lifetime Achievement Award (2019), and the Distinguished Career Award (MAC, 2020).

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