

## ANT 309 Lecture Outline Monday March 8, 2010

### XII Historical Archaeology

- A Definition: Historical archaeology refers to archaeological investigation of the historic past; the investigation of the material remains from societies that are also known from some form of written documentation. Historical archaeology has its roots in classical archaeology- the study of the classical civilizations of the Old World and Biblical archaeology which attempts to document places described in the Bible. Historical archaeology is distinguished from Classical archaeology by being is restricted to the Americas
- B Rise of Historical Archaeology in America
  - 1 James Hall; in 1853 excavates the Miles Standish homestead in Duxbury MA.
  - 2 Efforts remained unknown until 1960's – notes discovered by James Deetz
  - 3 Father Felix Martin, Jesuit Priest in 1855 excavated mission at Saint Marie Huron site – 1648-49 abandoned due to Iroquois raids.
  - 4 Martin and Hall's work marked the beginning of serious historical archaeology in America
    - a Motivated by personal connection to past
    - b Both had expectations of what to find given by documentary sources (of course, neither published their work, so historical archaeology as such really didn't get going until the 20<sup>th</sup> century)
- C Development of Historical Archaeology
  - 1 Early 20<sup>th</sup> century, conducted as an adjunct of historical studies at the biggest, most famous historical sites in North America:
    - a Plymouth Plantation
    - b Colonial Williamsburg
    - c Little Bighorn
    - d Mormon Fort
    - e Spanish Presidio at San Diego
  - 2 Handmaiden to history: Get data necessary to restore and interpret sites: Colonial Williamsburg was the model- digging done by historians- no concern for artifacts or provenience- wanted to uncover foundations so that buildings could be reconstructed
  - 3 Things changed in the 1960s: The age of relevance
    - a Stanley South: Method and Theory in Historical Archaeology (1977)
      - i Employ logically grounded scientific methods
      - ii Apply quantitative methods of pattern recognition
      - iii **Focus on larger social context: archaeology of disenfranchised people without history**
      - iv **Called into question the “melting pot” model of American history**

- b James Deetz and Robert Schuyler emphasize systematic exclusion of non-Anglo groups from mainstream; the archaeological record is undistorted in contrast with written records
- c Cultural Resource Management: Explosion in historical archaeology
  - i 50-year rule
  - ii Different interpretations of archaeological significance

D Postprocessual Critique

- 1 Refer to historical archaeology as "text-aided" archaeology
- 2 A call to "project oneself into the particular contexts of the past, to discover the significance and meaning of past actions." The archaeological record consists of objects that had meaning to living people. Archaeologists should seek to determine that meaning. This works well with the historic record
- 3 Postprocessualists argue for more political awareness and involvement: Archaeologists should seek to illuminate political inequality in the past and use the allure of archaeology as a stage for modern-day political theatre. Use the inequality of the past to illuminate inequality of the present.
- 4 Some argue that processual archaeology (scientific, rational, objective) is merely a means to rationalize the present. A tool of the power elite