

BACK TO CARDEN BOTTOM, OR, IN SEARCH OF THE PEOPLE OF CAYAS PLANS FOR THE 46TH ANNUAL SOCIETY/SURVEY TRAINING PROGRAM

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The 2009 Training Program at Carden Bottom will concentrate on recovering feature fill from a large pit that we will transport to the top of Petit Jean Mountain; then water screen most of the matrix and float some of it. We will gain insight into one of the most interesting epochs in Native American history in Arkansas, the period from the 1400s into the 1600s. The artifacts and other data from this pit document the climax of the Mississippian culture, and the beginnings of the Contact Period in which both Native peoples and French, Spanish, and English cultures were irrevocably transformed.

Carden Bottom (or Carden’s Bottom or Cardon’s Bottom or Carden Bottoms) is an 8000 acre area of intensely farmed Arkansas River floodplain located between Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge on the west and the Petit Jean River running against the foot of Petit Jean Mountain on the east. To the north is the Arkansas River; to the south is Arkansas Highway 154 and the great westward bend of the Petit Jean River.

Carden Bottom has been occupied for some 11,500 years. There were probably more people of the Dalton culture in the area at that date than live there today, although hundreds of farm families lived there as sharecroppers and tenant farmers from the late 19th and early 20th centuries into the 1950s. Much of the area shows evidence of Woodland period hamlets, and there are even connections to the Plum Bayou culture centered at what is now Toltec Mounds State Park.

But it is the Mississippian period that has drawn international attention to what may be an even larger area of farming villages termed the Carden Bottom Locality. This entity may have extended farther west a few miles, and certainly went easterly on the north side of the Arkansas River, likely as far as the Point Remove Mounds Complex, a still poorly understood site near Morrilton.

These were the people that the Expedition of Hernando de Soto visited in late September 1541. Somewhere close by, if not in Carden Bottom itself, was the province of *Tanico*, strategically located on the River of *Cayas*, the Expedition’s name for the Arkansas. The Spaniards stayed a week or two, made salt from a stream, then moved west to encounter and fight Caddoan peoples a few days later.

The assumption that Carden Bottom equals *Tanico* comes from events 375 years later, when looting of Native

American graves began in the northern margins of the Bottom as early as the 1870s. Thousands of vessels were removed from these graves over the next 80 years and ended up in private collections across the U.S. and beyond. The similarity of these vessels to others elsewhere indicate that they were most probably from graves of Native Americans who belonged to what has come to be known in the last 50



A view of the Carden Bottom area, from Petit Jean Mountain.

years as Middle or even Late Mississippian culture. Our best contemporary evidence of course is from the accounts of the Soto Expedition.

Modern scientific archeology only came to Carden Bottom in the 1980s. In the early 1990s the (then) Arkansas Tech University Survey Station and the Arkansas River Valley Chapter conducted four winter seasons of fieldwork there (1991–94). Some 30 sites were recorded ranging from Dalton to Late Mississippian.

A particular focus of that work was a natural levee near the 1940s levee at the far northern edge of the farmed land in the Bottom. Due to confusion on the part of the archeologist in charge, occupation on this natural levee was recorded as two sites, 3YE25 on the west side of a county road, and 3YE347 on the east side. At least the division corresponds to differences in historic land ownership, the “Patrick Place” on the west and the “McClure Place” on the east. Controlled surface collections and limited test excavations demonstrated the occupation was continuous throughout the natural levee, and even extended north across a bit of a slough.

This fieldwork at 3YE25/347 produced thousands of artifacts including a range of Late Mississippian lithics such as Nodena points, shell-tempered sherds from jars and bowls decorated with red paint, incising, and other techniques (but almost no punctations), as well as extensive faunal material (some analysis paid for by the Archeological Research Fund) and charred corn cobs and nut hulls. Features included post molds, a smudge pit, and trash-filled pits dug originally for unknown purposes. We also found one looted burial in spite of our best efforts at avoiding reported cemetery areas.

Perhaps the most significant trash-filled pit is Feature 10, at 3YE347. A line of 1 x 2 m test units was put down in an area of dense surface artifacts that included a blue glass bead. The resulting test trench crossed an enormous pit of unknown purpose, about 8 m long by 5 m wide by 1.3 m deep. Finds included more of the same Late Mississippian artifact assemblage along with faunal material ranging from a bison calcaneus to turtle plastrons. The trench also produced the only vessel absolutely known to have been found at Carden Bottom, a small, undecorated, mostly intact jar that is the same form as some looted specimens.

We also recovered from the trench more European trade goods, including rolled brass beads, an iron blade, and part of a sheet iron bucket. A radiocarbon assay on a charred stick (paid for by the Archeological Research Fund) pro-

duced a date of 430 ± 80 years BP, calibrated with a 95% probability at AD 1400–1650, and 68% probability at AD 1585–1625. And yet, with the exception of an intriguing mention by Henri di Tonti of *Canico*, a village of a small number of families somewhere on the Arkansas in 1721, no other historic Indians are known in the immediate area until the temporary use of the Arkansas by the Osage and Quapaw during the 1600s and into the 1700s.

The apparent timing of filling this enormous pit and the presence of European-made goods often associated with trade make Feature 10 significant. Some other brass items were reportedly found in the area as looters wrecked Native American burials over the last century. Finally, there are many questions about the makers and age of the extensive painted and pecked rock art on the high ground in sight of Carden Bottom (Petit Jean Mountain to the east, Crow Mountain to the north, and Dardanelle Mountain to the east). Some of the rock art shows motifs identical to decorations on vessels believed to have been looted from Carden Bottom.

What is now needed are answers to some of the many questions raised by the still fragmentary knowledge about Carden Bottom and vicinity that has accumulated over the decades. Full excavation of the Feature 10 pit, and perhaps of other smaller pits, might provide some of these answers.



Fearless Leader Dr. Skip Stewart-Abernathy (second from right) consults with (left to right) Leslie Walker (UAF Ph.D. candidate, working on Carden Bottom ceramic styles), Jami Lockhart (Survey remote sensing specialist), and Larry Porter (WRI station assistant) at site 3YE347 as they prepare to lay out a grid for archeogeophysical survey. What is Larry contemplating so intently?

THE 46TH TRAINING PROGRAM, JUNE 13–28, 2009 LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS & GENERAL INFORMATION

by Alan Smith, Russellville

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL LOCATION

The 2009 Annual Training Program will consist of excavations at Carden Bottom, plus classes, lab work, water screening and flotation, and camping at the University of Arkansas System's Winthrop Rockefeller Institute (WRI) atop Petit Jean Mountain (PJ Mtn). WRI station archeologist Skip Stewart-Abernathy will direct the program, with help from Larry Porter (WRI) and Alan Smith (AASociety).

The principal highway serving both Carden Bottom and WRI is State Highway 154, which extends east-west on the south side of the Arkansas River. It intersects both north-south trending Highway 7 at Centerville (west of the mountain), and Highway 9 at Oppelo (east of the mountain). Centerville and Oppelo (18 and 14 miles, respectively, from WRI) have convenience stores, gas stations, and limited restaurant facilities. Morrilton, Dardanelle, and Russellville (21, 26, and 33 miles from WRI) are the nearest communities with amenities such as motels, grocery stores, Wal-Marts, churches, and a wider selection of restaurants.

Society Headquarters, Campground, water screening and flotation areas, lab, classrooms, van/car pooling, and most evening programs will all be at WRI, so there are advantages in terms of fuel economy and commuting time to lodging and eating there as well. However, PJ Mtn is highly regarded as a tourist destination, which is reflected in the cost (and generally high quality) of lodging and dining facilities at WRI, Petit Jean State Park, Tanyard Springs, etc. For the adventurous and frugal, we have arranged some less luxurious, but more affordable options. These include tent camping on the lawn by the tennis courts, a limited number of RV parking spaces, and very limited "bunkhouse" apartments.

Whether or not you stay on PJ Mtn, you will find a range of activities there to fill your leisure time after work. Petit Jean State Park has seven major trails, loads of rock art, spectacular views of the river valley and the famous Cedar Falls, a lake, public swimming pool, and several playgrounds. The Park Visitors Information Center has a small museum and store. Of course, you shouldn't miss Petit Jean's grave site at Stout's Point and the Museum of Automobiles. (The dig will overlap with the 51st Annual Swap Meet and Auto Fair.) This is one of the most scenic areas in Arkansas, so keep a little extra time and energy in reserve to enjoy it!

FINDING THE DIG HEADQUARTERS AT WRI

If approaching on I-40 from the east, take exit 108 at Morrilton, follow Hwy 9 south to Oppelo, turn west on Hwy 154, and go up and along the top of the mountain about 12 miles. When you pass the Petit Jean State Park Visitors Information Center on your right, you are getting close to your turn. Turn right on Red Bluff Drive. The turn is marked by a hard-to-read yellow-lettered brown sign pointing to "Rockefeller Institute" on the opposite (left) side of the road, but the stone bridge across the Lake Bailey Spillway is a better landmark during the day. Cross the scenic stone bridge and proceed up the hill to the "T" intersection and turn right. A huge stone slab on your left, about a half-mile farther on, marks the entrance to the WRI complex. As you enter the WRI main campus, AAS and "Archeology" signs will steer you toward AAS Headquarters, to be set up at the Survey Station/Lab in the WRI Teaching Barn.

If approaching PJ Mtn on I-40 from the west, take exit 81 at Russellville, follow Hwy 7 south to Centerville, turn east (left) on Hwy 154, continue through Liberty Hall, New Neely, and Cotton Town, go past the turnoff to Carden Bottom, across the Petit Jean River at Pontoon, and up the mountain to PJ State Park. Turn left on Red Bluff Drive and continue as described above. If you pass the Park Visitors Information Center, turn around: you've gone too far. Go back about a half mile and watch for the scenic stone bridge (on your right this time).



Dig Headquarters & Survey Station in the Teaching Barn at WRI.

CHECKING-IN

Work days begin at 6:30 in the morning, so you need to arrive on the afternoon before your first work day to check in at Headquarters (at the Teaching Barn) and set up your camp or check in at other accommodations. Announcements and work schedules will be posted at HQ and a modest supply of equipment, books, and T-shirts will be for sale. Office Manager Barbara Scott will give you your information packet, with all the program details, local area information, maps, and procedures.

ORIENTATIONS

Come to the Dig for as long or as short a time as you want, but you **MUST** have an Orientation prior to participating. If you have never attended our program before, the Beginners' Orientation will take all of your first morning, starting at 6:30 am in the Legacy Theater on the WRI main campus. Beginners' Orientations will be scheduled each morning as needed from June 13–21, with the final Beginners' Orientation at 5:30 pm on Monday evening, June 22 (our traditional day off for rest, recreation, laundry, etc.).

If you are an "Old Timer," the orientation is shorter and will be conducted in the field. Meet at the parking lot midway between the Boathouse and the Barn at the designated time to catch a ride to the site.

DAILY SCHEDULE

The work day begins at 6:30 am (vans will leave for the site at 6:15 am), there is an hour for lunch (10:30–11:30 am), and the work day ends by 3:30 pm, giving everyone time to relax before getting supper. A detailed schedule of all activities, seminars, evening programs, and special events will be in the packets sent to registrants. There are no seminars on Saturday and Sunday, June 13 and 14, and June 20 and 21, so those are full days of work at the site and in the lab.

There will be one Day Off on Monday, June 22, with no work at the site or in the lab. The Stewardship Workshop will be held that afternoon, and final Beginners' Orientation is at 5:30 pm for those newcomers arriving for the second week of the Program.

Seminars meet for five days, either morning or afternoon, with the exception of Basic Excavation, which meets all day (half-day in the classroom and half-day in the field). Those enrolled in seminars (except for Basic Excavation) will be assigned to work in the lab, field, or at the flotation station during the other half-day, depending upon where Dr. Stewart-Abernathy feels the most help is needed. The assignment sheet will be posted at camp and at Headquarters by suppertime each day. If you have a preference, or feel you cannot work a full day in the field in the hot sun (there will be some sunshades), please indicate this on your Registration form and you can work in the lab.

Seminars during the second week are held Tuesday through Saturday (June 23rd through 27th). Those enroll-

ing should plan to attend the Monday June 22nd 5:30 pm Orientation.

There will be free time after 3:30 each afternoon and on evenings with no programs scheduled: time to do laundry, take a swim, read seminar homework assignments, or enjoy the company of your fellow participants—lively people with interesting stories to tell. Your information packet will have additional details about area attractions and possibilities for recreation on and around Petit Jean on the Day Off. The final day (Sunday, June 28th) will be a close up/clean up/pack up day.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

The Society will have for sale the small tools you will need for your own personal "excavation kit" (again, details will be in your packet). These include, for example, a 3-meter measuring tape (most hardware stores do not stock these in metric), a Marshalltown trowel, land locators, string levels, text books for seminars, and of course the ever-popular Dig T-shirts, plus Survey and Society publications and memorabilia.

SEMINARS

Seminars are especially for participants in the Certification Program, but they are open to all Training Program registrants, if there is enough room. If you are in the Certification Program and need two seminars this year (as sometimes happens because topics are only offered every other year), you need to make your case in a separate letter to Barbara Scott and send it in with your Registration form. If you have little or no experience, you need to sign up for Basic Seminars first. You **MUST** register for seminars in advance on the form—there is no registration for these classes "at the door."

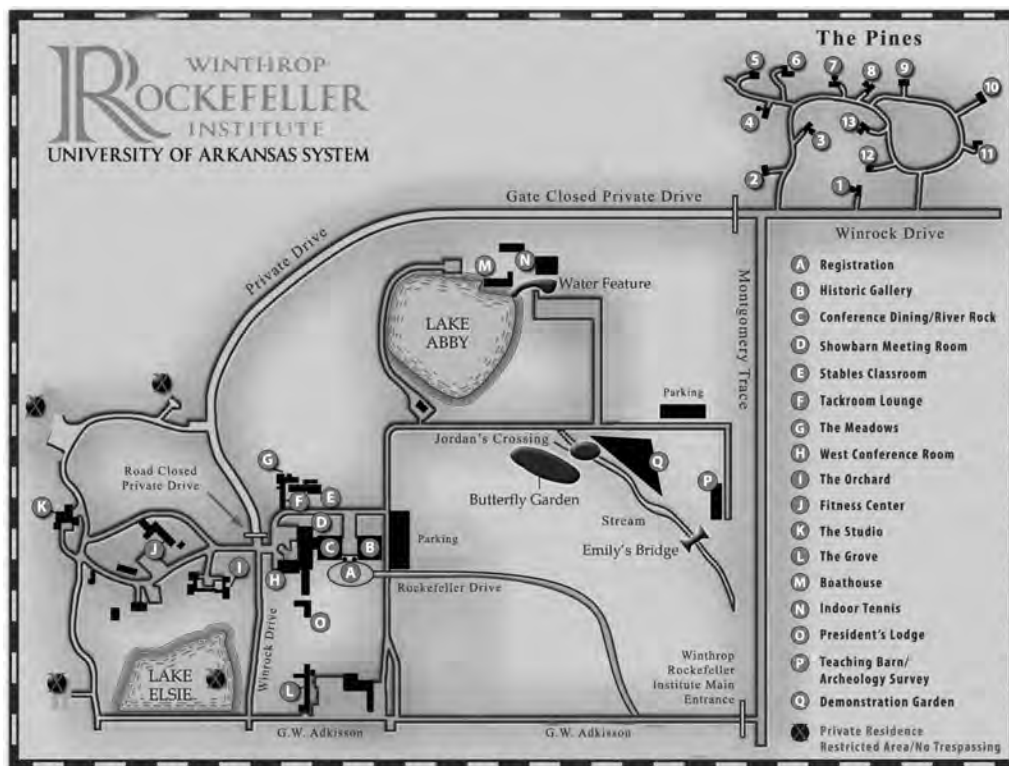
For a schedule of Seminars and their Instructors, see the color insert. Here's a run-down on what is being offered and what each class is about.

BASIC SEMINARS

Basic Excavation. Participants will spend mornings at the site and afternoons in class. This is the only full-day seminar (half-day in the field, half-day of lecture). You will learn, among other things, how to sharpen a Marshalltown trowel (is there any other kind?), how to measure in centimeters, and how to take notes describing what you are doing, what you see in the dirt, and what you find.

Basic Laboratory. This class teaches how to identify and treat the major classes of materials; steps in cleaning, cataloging, and organizing; basic artifact description and how lab processing relates to analysis and site interpretation.

Site Survey. Students learn how to identify and record archeological sites using the Survey site form, how to make and record systematic surface collections, plus how to read a quad map, use a land locator, make a field map—then you



WRI map showing the locations of buildings and outdoor features. “P” is the Survey station and Training Program HQ and Lab. Accommodations are available in various buildings. Classrooms will be in the main conference complex “H.” Campground is the open area northeast of Lake Abby. All is easy walking distance.

go out and do it. The instructor asks all interested persons to be advised: this course entails a lot of walking in the sun or heavy woods.

ADVANCED SEMINARS

Ceramics. The class teaches the basics for understanding clays and pottery making: technological and decorative attributes of pottery, what pottery teaches us about the past, techniques for ceramic analysis, and a little about the pottery making traditions found in Arkansas.

Human Osteology. This overview of bioarcheology includes identifying human skeletal remains, techniques for excavation and data collection, basic analysis such as how to determine age and sex, plus legal and ethical issues in the study of human remains.

Photography. The instructor will cover basic information on photographic equipment, the role of photography in archeology, and how to take good photos in the field and lab.

Establishing Time. This class covers the various techniques for relative and chronometric dating of archeological sites—their history, accuracy, and problems associated with each technique. You will get some hands-on experience with sample collecting, either at the site or experimental.

Arkansas Archeology. This class covers the cultural and natural areas of Arkansas, the history of Arkansas archeology, and an overview of the prehistoric and contact period cultures, plus a review of the current literature.

FACILITIES

The Winthrop Rockefeller Institute (WRI) on Petit Jean Mountain, which “adopted” the former ATU Survey Station two years ago, will host the 2009 Society Dig. Headquarters and Lab will be at the lovely new Teaching Barn, located in the Heritage Farmstead area of the WRI complex. The Heritage Farmstead is being developed to preserve knowledge of the close-knit agrarian society of small, self-sufficient farms that Governor Rockefeller found when he first arrived on Petit Jean Mountain in 1953. Heritage, environmental, and horticultural programs are being developed in the context of a demonstration farm.

WRI has assigned us two nicely carpeted and well-appointed conference rooms (with glass exterior walls, full A/V capabilities, and brand new cloth-upholstered furniture) as classrooms. Tip: If you have spent the morning excavating or water screening, you might need to change clothes or shoes before going to class.



Main entrance to the WRI conference center.

overlooking Lake Abby, a swimming beach, a docking station for a fleet of paddle boats, a portable “fire pit,” and more—all available for our use. (Sorry: there will be no porta-potties or adventure showers in camp this year; however, ornamental and educational gardens, a rock garden, babbling brooks, a small playground, Frisbee golf course, volleyball, tennis and basketball courts, horseshoe pits, and other amenities will be freely available to all.)

There is a small kitchen at the boathouse and a larger catering kitchen at the nearby dining pavilion. Both have large ice machines (yes, we get free ice!). Use of the kitchens for meal preparation and dishwashing may be allowed on a trial basis, as long as everyone shares the facilities graciously

and cleans up all messes when they are done, even if they didn’t make them.

A dumpster will be available for campers’ use. Since the area is not routinely used as a campground, it does not support the usual population of human-dependent raccoons. However, they do learn fast, and the WRI staff noted the presence of skunks in the area as well. Food should be kept well secured.

The Barn is not only air-conditioned and roomy, but, to occupy your leisure moments, is surrounded by heritage gardens, a butterfly garden, hummingbirds, and barn cats. This is where you will pick up your packets and ask questions. Van-pooling to Carden Bottom will depart from the gravel parking lot halfway between the Barn and the Boathouse. Classes and evening programs will be held in the main WRI facility, which is well equipped and luxurious, boasting archeology exhibits, culinary gardens, a gift shop, and the River Rock Grill.

Camping

The Society Campground will be at WRI on the grassy knoll (!) north and east of the Lake Abby Boathouse and Tennis Courts, about 300 yards from the headquarters and lab areas at The Barn. There will be room for an unlimited number of tents and about four RVs. The basic fee for a tent site on the grass will be \$5 per night for one person, \$6 for two persons, and \$7 for three or more people. Tent campers will have access to electricity for an extra \$6.50 per night. The fee for RVs will be \$18 per night (\$13 to WRI, \$5 to AAS). This includes water and electricity for the RVs. There are no sewer connections at this location for RVs. However, there is a dump station at Petit Jean State Park, about three miles west.

The campground will open on the 12th of June, a “gathering” day one day prior to the commencement of fieldwork, and close at the end of the “clean-up/pack-up/tear-down” day on June 28th. A Camp Boss will watch over your camps during the day, and remind us all of rules such as quiet hours, kitchen cleanup, etc., and be generally helpful as needed.

The boathouse complex features ample rest rooms and showers for all campers, a flagstone patio with café tables

Other Accommodations at WRI

Motel-quality lodging facilities are available at WRI. You can check the website (<http://www.uawri.org/page/16/accommodations>) to get an idea what these rooms are like. Ten rooms are reserved for the Training Program in The Orchard, priced at \$52.50–\$57.50 per night, depending on length of stay. There will also be two “bunkhouse” style apartments at The Groves that will sleep between four and six people at \$25 per person per night. (Other rooms may be available at WRI at their regular rates of \$99–\$150 per night). The special rates are first come, first serve, so call WRI at 866-972-7778 to make reservations if you are interested in any of these accommodations.

at Petit Jean State Park:

Mather Lodge: This rustic CCC lodge complex has rooms ranging from \$65–\$70 that sleep from two to four people with full amenities. Fully equipped housekeeping cabins are also available in a wooded area near the lodge. All have kitchens, a linen service and are air-conditioned. Prices range from \$100–\$175, depending on size and options like hot tubs. Mather Lodge has a restaurant, pool, and gift shop, and is only about 3.5 miles from WRI. But space is limited, and Petit Jean State Park is a popular destination, so interested Dig participants need to book **RIGHTNOW** !