

THE PHMC SCHOLARS IN RESIDENCE
PROGRAM: A ROUNDTABLE ASSESSMENT

THE SIXTEENTH AND FINAL CLASS OF SCHOLARS IN
RESIDENCE AT THE PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND
MUSEUM COMMISSION

Joshua Stablman

Archivist, Pennsylvania State Archives and Former SIR Program Director

The Pennsylvania Historical Association's annual meeting was held October 22–24, 2009, at Widener University in Chester, Pennsylvania. In 2008 PHA and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission's (PHMC) Scholars in Residence Program (SIR) forged a collaboration resulting in an annual roundtable. The roundtable allowed program participants to disseminate their work to likeminded peers.

The Scholars in Residence program encouraged historical and academic research at PHMC sites by subsidizing researchers. This mutually beneficial program thrived for sixteen years, fostering use and interpretation of underutilized collections, ongoing development of scholarly thought, and lasting relationships amongst the historical community.

Regrettably, the Scholars in Residence Program became a casualty of the ongoing budgetary crisis statewide; there is no evidence that it will reemerge amidst the debilitating cuts endured by the PHMC.

Members of the final SIR class spoke at PHA's 2009 meeting about their experience with the program, including: April Beisaw, who utilized the State Museum of Pennsylvania's archeological collection to research the Susuquehannock practice of multiple

burials; Julian Chambliss, who worked with the J. Horace McFarland collection at the Pennsylvania State Archives, shedding light on to McFarland's significance in the contributions to civic improvement and the "City Beautiful" movement of the early twentieth century; and J. Adam Rogers who examined records at the Pennsylvania State Archives and focused his interpretation on the Civil War soldier's return home.

ARCHAEOLOGY WITHOUT EXCAVATION: DIGGING THROUGH THE ARCHIVES OF THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE MUSEUM

April M. Beisaw
Heidelberg University

The Scholars in Residence program afforded me the opportunity to undertake archaeological research on some of Pennsylvania's most important archaeological sites without conducting fieldwork or analyzing artifacts. Instead, I did my digging within the Pennsylvania State Museum. My research focused on field records from archaeological excavations, an important but underutilized form of historic document.¹

Archaeology is a destructive science; to dig a site is to destroy it in a controlled fashion. To counteract this destruction, archaeologists are trained to document all they do with drawings, photographs, and written descriptions. As we excavate we record not only what we see but also what we think about what we are seeing at that time. In this way, archaeologists record the facts but also the biases of their experience, research interests, and contemporary method and theory.

Archaeological sites are also an irreplaceable resource. Although new sites are constantly being created by ongoing human habitation, the sites of those people who came before us are in limited supply. Sites that were once visible to the untrained eye were routinely disturbed by generations of collectors, if not completely destroyed by any number of cultural or natural forces, including archaeology. The sites that remain untouched are more likely to represent small camps than large villages. Exceptions continue to be found but they are rare. To conduct new studies on the large pre-Contact villages of Native Americans, archaeologists should do their digging in the archives.

Field records provide a means of revisiting sites and asking new questions of data and data collectors. Artifacts (pot sherds, stone tools, etc.)