

2024 East Central Illinois Archaeological Society Report

Here is an expanded version of the chapter report submitted at the IAAA meeting in April 2024.

ECIAS continued its normal schedule in September 2023 with monthly presentations, usually on “third Thursdays” from September through May at the Urbana Free Library. Annual events are a November “Explore Archaeology” day in partnership with the Museum of the Grand Prairie, and a holiday party in December. Other activities include artifact cleaning done by volunteers, and the very successful holding of a yard sale in June 2023.

Current officers and board members are—

President: Fred Christensen; Vice-President: Susan Taylor; Secretary: Holly Labisky; Treasurer: Mohan Tracy; Advisor: Eve Hargrave. Board Members are Alice Berkson, Susan Deppe, and Kim McGee.

Contacting and working with other institutions has been extremely productive for membership, publicity, and identifying speakers. These institutions include ISAS, the University of Illinois Anthropology Department, the Parkland College Social Sciences Department, the Osher LifeLong Learning Institute (OLLI), the Champaign County Master Naturalist Program, and the Museum of the Grand Prairie.

Membership is robust, with 49 people and families. In addition, our email list of “friends” contains more than 150 names.

Here are some of the speakers we’ve enjoyed having over the past year. Other chapters can see if any of them would be willing to travel for a presentation.

“Excavations at Two Free-Black, Civil War Era House Sites: An Update of the Springfield Race Riot Project,” Floyd Mansberger, Fever River Research.

“Answering the Question: ‘Why the CAMD?’ Monette Bebow-Reinhard, author/historian. Her presentation focused on the use of copper from Illinois Hopewell and Mississippian sites, based on her research for writing the “Illinois Copper Artifact Resource Manual.”

“Stories of Private Artifact Collections; Documenting Private Collections,” Norman Emerick, Laura Ayers, Kim McGee, and Eve Hargrave. Eve, currently an

osteologist/NAGPRA specialist with the U of I Anthropology Department, is developing a standard form for documenting private collections, similar to the extremely successful Portable Antiquities Scheme used in the United Kingdom.

“Seeking a Home: The Archaeology and Architecture of German Immigration in Southwestern Illinois,” Michael Smith, Illinois State Archaeological Survey.

“Ghost Towns of Wyoming,” Kathryn Maag, graduate student at the Department of Anthropology, UIUC.

“Making Community at the 14th Century Village of Noble-Wieting” G. Logan Miller, Department of Anthropology, ISU. Logan’s was the latest annual report from the ongoing excavations at the Noble-Wieting site in McLean County.

“Chip-a-Canoe Adventure,” Larry Kinsella, Cahokia Archaeological Society. Larry described his fascinating “experimental archaeology” project of creating a dugout canoe using only traditional tools and methods.

“The Nazca Lines in Their Society,” Prof. Helaine Silverman, Department of Anthropology, UIUC. Prof. Silverman has also given talks on tourism and travel at archaeological sites. She has the distinct honor of being personally criticized by Erich von Däniken (“Chariots of the Gods”) for not including space aliens in her account of the Nazca Lines in Peru.

“30 Years of Field School, CRM, and Volunteer Projects at the Macktown National Register Site in Rockton, Illinois,” Rochelle Lurie, RRL Consulting, Inc. Established in the late 1830s at the confluence of the Pecatonica and Rock Rivers, Macktown was one of the first settlements in northern Illinois. The community was a major trading post along the Galena-Chicago Trail.

There are other presenters who have given excellent talks in the past, and who we have scheduled for the coming year. Wayne Pitard (retired director of UI’s Spurlock Museum of World Cultures) has given talks on the ancient Middle East (Canaanites, cylinder seals). Prof. Robert Morrissey (UI History Department) is an expert on 18th-century French/Native American relations, and has given talks on Illiniwek artifacts and on the “Running Illini” (French chroniclers mentioned the long-distance running abilities of the Illiniwek, useful for pursuing bison without horses on the Illinois prairies).

In addition, ECIAS president Fred Christensen has given these talks at other venues and they could be of interest to IAAA chapters: “The Archaeology of the River Thames,” “The World of Stonehenge: A Special Exhibition at the British Museum, 2022,” “Crackpots and Cracked Pots: Eccentric Theories in Archaeology,” and “The Archaeology of the Golan Heights” between Israel and Syria.

ECIAS’ plans for the coming year include another yard sale in mid-June, a June 1 day trip to the cemeteries and trail ruts of the early 19th-century Edwards Trace area near Springfield, and extensive artifact cleaning projects for state-held collections, details to be determined.