



Common Ground

A Publication of the Coe Foundation for Archaeological Research, Inc.

Spring 2008

Fund Raising a Great Success and a New Lecture Series Begins

A big thank you goes out to all of those that contributed to CFAR's donation drive! We raised over \$5,000 that will be put towards educational programs in North Carolina. I appreciate everyone's support and enthusiasm from the people who have donated their personal time volunteering for CFAR, who dipped into their pockets to support a worthy foundation, and who attended any or all of last season's lectures! It is your passion for archaeology that helps spread the important message of learning about and preserving our past.

CFAR members have met many wonderful people this past year, and built new and lasting friendships. We have, however, had to say goodbye to a kind, loving, and dear woman, Sally Denton Coe, the widow of the late Dr. Joffre Lanning Coe.

Sharp-minded as ever, living on her own into her 90's, she supported the Coe Foundation in every way she was able and attended all four lecture of *The Joffre Lanning Coe Lecture Series* last year. Her support will always be remembered and cherished, and we will continue to fulfill both Mrs. Coe and Dr. Coe's hope for keeping archaeology alive in the minds of the people of North Carolina and beyond!

Keeping with this goal, we are on the fast track to more activities and lectures. Our inaugural speaker from *The Joffre Lanning Coe Lecture Series*, Dr. Stanley South, is back! Don't miss this opportunity to see and hear "the Father of Historical Archaeology", and last year's recipient of the North State Pine Award, speak about his recent research and book. See inside for details concerning

his lecture at the High Point Museum this summer!

Audra Slaymaker
Chief Executive Officer

The Joffre Lanning COE Lecture Series



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Sally Denton Coe 1916 - 2008

by Dr. Billy Oliver

On January 31, 2008 long-time CFAR board member Sarah “Sally” Denton Coe passed on and departed her life on Morgan Creek. All who knew Sally Coe shared one thing in common: knowing Sally was a once in a lifetime experience. Like a comet streaking across a darkened sky, Sally Coe caught your eye and made a lasting impression. She always made you feel special in her life. Her laughter was lyrical, musical and remained in your memory long after the sound had faded into the distance. Thoughts of Sally made you smile. Until offering a eulogy at Sally Coe’s funeral service, I never referred to her as “Sally.” She was always “Mrs. Coe,” clearly a term of endearment that identified her as the wife of my teacher, colleague and friend, Joffre Lanning Coe. Much like I never referred to Dr. Coe as “Joffre,” I just couldn’t bring myself to call her “Sally.” Now, that she has departed this

earth, I want to call her by her name because it is special. Sally Coe was a remarkable woman who exuded a special radiance in



Mrs. Sally Denton Coe, 2000

life. All who knew her felt its warmth, its brilliance and firm embrace.

I first met Sally Denton Coe thirty years ago on the banks of the Dan River at the Upper Sauratown archaeological site. On a hot, dry June day Dr. Coe came to inspect the archaeological work that had been done by his students. Coe, a giant of a man, drove a giant of a car, a Chrysler convertible

to the site. Accompanying him on the trip was a small, petite woman dressed in tan slacks, a loose white blouse and beaded Indian moccasins: Sally Denton Coe. When she exited the vehicle and was introduced as “Mrs. Coe,” she immediately put everyone at ease with her grace and charm. She warmly greeted each student in such a way that each felt special in her presence. She was the center of attention in a dry, dusty cornfield! I still remember the sound of her laughter after all these years. It seemed effortless and somehow blended magically with the slight breeze to make working in the repressive heat more of a pleasure than a hardship.

The reaction I had to meeting Sally Coe was not unique, others have been mesmerized by her personality, her cheerfulness and generosity. Shortly

after making that first acquaintance with Mrs. Coe in the Dan River floodplain, she announced her retirement from the UNC School of Education. The following excerpts were taken from a special edition of *The School of Education Newsletter* (June 1979, Vol. III No. 19):

“Sitting and talking with Sally Coe is a treat within itself! For the past ten years the cheerful grey-haired lady...has been a friend to faculty, staff, and students in the School of Education.”

“Smiling and insisting that her life didn’t consist of those things that are terribly interesting to write about, Mrs. Coe began to talk about her life before ‘Chapel Hill.’ She grew up in the Mississippi delta region in the town of Marks, Mississippi. The daughter of a Mississippi judge/state senator, Sally Denton enjoyed her childhood and youth in Marks. She remembers lovingly the personality of the area. However, she decided she wanted to see other places....She came to Chapel Hill to join her

sister Virginia and attend business school in Raleigh. She met, and married Joffre Coe, then a student at the University.”

“As Mrs. Coe discussed her life in Chapel Hill,



Dr. and Mrs. Joffre Lanning Coe, 1982

she mentioned her home on Morgan Creek road. Located on the creek back there, she comments that ‘water’ has played a big part in her life—the early years in the delta region, the house at Morgan Creek, and her beach house.”

“As she tells the story of her life, one thing seems for sure, Sally Coe has

enjoyed every chapter of it. However, there is one segment of which she wanted to be sure she made mention. That period is the two years she spent working with Dr. Frank Porter Graham when he returned to Chapel Hill following twenty years of service in the United Nations. She seems to have considered this ‘job’ more of a privilege than a responsibility. Dr. Graham, a former president of the University, was quite admired and respected by those who knew him. Mrs. Coe said her work with him brought her to an even greater admiration of him. She said Dr. Graham would send approximately two thousand Christmas cards each Christmas. ‘They went to dignitaries and also to the lesser known. He cared about all people.’”

“As she said of Dr. Graham, so could it be said of her. Sally Coe cares about people and this is what has enabled her to make such a contribution to our School of Education. Her caring ways and true concern will always be remembered...”

Not much has changed through all these years. It is difficult to believe that so much time has passed, but I have come to realize that as one reaches a high hill in the journey of life, it is easier to view past events as reflections in a distant pond...peaceful, tranquil, with their own special beauty, not as clear as the reality that once was, but nevertheless etched in one's consciousness. Still, the reflections are precious, they stimulate memories of joy, laughter, and the memorable times once shared. The reflections...the recalled memories...even sadness cause a special feeling when I think of Sally Coe. The memory of Sally brings on a slow, gentle smile that soon becomes a broad grin. Sally Denton Coe was a very special woman. She was filled with grace, dignity, intelligence, wit, charm and independent spirit. She was a steel magnolia whose ancestral roots reached deep into the dark soils of Marks, Mississippi. In

her youth she aspired to become a dramatic actress, but destiny held many roles for her. She was destined to become a star of a different kind: friend, wife, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, UNC employee, and CFAR board member to name but a few. She excelled at them all, leading the way,



Mrs. Coe with CFAR Board Members, 2003

commanding the stage with an indomitable spirit, a presence and a special radiance. Those who knew her have been enriched by her presence. She touched our lives and deeply effected our souls. We will miss her, but know that in her new role she is once again the leading lady...the star of the show...one who radiates warmth, goodness and well-being to all. Sally Coe cared about everyone, her friends, the environment, politics and the legacy of those whom

she felt honored to have served and been associated. However, the honor was ours for knowing her. When I was young my grandfather told a story about those who passed on to the Great Beyond, the Hereafter...the Happy Hunting Ground...Valhalla...Heaven, the afterlife known by many

names. In the story he indicated that when a worthy person passed on a new star appeared in the night sky. The more worthy the person, the brighter the

star would shine. Tonight, when I look at the darkened sky, I will look for a star that shines more brightly than the others, that twinkles in a special rhythm and commands the attention of all who gaze upon the center of the stage. I will think of Sally and smile.

Farewell, Sally.

Coe Lecture Series 2008

Talking Artifacts

We are pleased to announce that Dr. Stanley South will be our speaker for the first Coe Lecture of 2008. He will be speaking:

4:00 PM on June 14
High Point Museum
1859 East Lexington Ave.
High Point, NC

The phone number is (336) 885-1859. Directions can be found at the web site, <http://highpointmuseum.org/directions.htm>.

Over the years South has published numerous books on historical archaeology including *Method and Theory in Historical Archaeology* (1977), *Research Strategies in Historical Archaeology* (1977), and later *Archaeological Pathways to Historic Site Development* (2001). More recently he published *An Archaeological Evolution* (2005) which is an autobiography of his involvement in the field of historical archaeology.

In 1997 the Trustees of the University of South Carolina presented him with the Honorary Doctor of Humanities Degree [H.H.D.]. In 1999, he received South Carolina's highest civilian award, *The Order of the Palmetto*. Last year the governor of North Carolina presented South with the Old North State Award, the highest civilian award offered by the state,

for his archaeological research in North Carolina.

The following is a brief summary (abstracted from his book's prospectus) of Dr. South's work



Dr. Stanley South

that lead to his new book, *Talking Artifacts: The 20th Century Legacy* and the subject of his Coe Lecture.

In 1990, South conducted a major study through a grant from the Skinner family of Roswell Georgia, resulting in 16 volumes of a photographic inventory and description of artifacts collected in the attic of the Smith Family in Roswell between 1840 and 1940: "The ATTIC Project,"

[*Artifact Techniques To Inventory Collections*]. Later on he received a grant from the City of Roswell which allowed him to put the entire 16 volumes onto CD discs to be used by the curators of The Smith House Historic Site, now run by the city of Roswell. The current book is a major photographic volume on artifacts of the 20th century, which delineates The Household Artifact Pattern, which should be useful to anyone interested in what artifacts have to say to us about the cultural processes and behavior of middle class families in the 20th century.

The book emerged from The BASEMENT Project [*Basement Artifacts Speak, Explaining Meaning Embedding Numerous Technologies*]. It records the artifact legacy of a family who could not afford the high-priced objects easily obtained by the more wealthy families such as those emphasized on The Antiques Road Show, where the emphasis is on monetary value.

The emphasis of my talking artifacts book is on what we can learn from what the artifacts are telling us about their use and their function in the 20th century cultural system.

From the basic inventory list, South has abstracted those artifacts speaking loudest to tell their stories. The book should be of interest to anyone familiar with that century, because they will see the pattern reflecting similar things they also have in their own basements. The book is for those historical

archaeologists aware that 20th century artifacts are an increasingly major data base to be dealt with, as well as for historians and students of 20th century material culture. For novelists writing about cultural lifeways in that century, the book will be a useful reference for artifacts represented in their own research for the stories they tell.

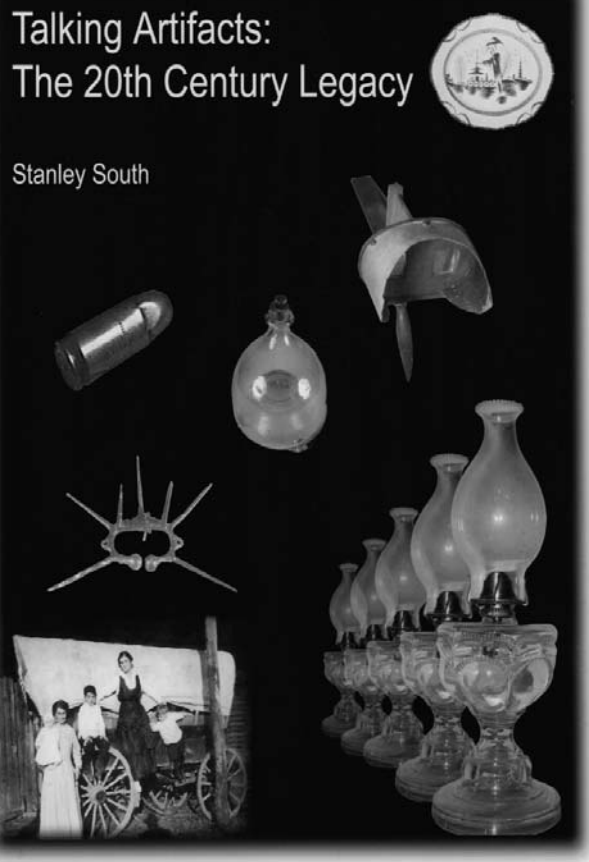
Some objects were functional in their original contextual association, but once recycled into later generations, function in a different contextual environment. Sleigh bells, for instance, were originally fastened to the back of the seat, where they produced a festive sound as the sleigh slid along the ice and snow toward the destination. Removed from that context, they function as a decorator item hung on the wall of a home, or stored with Christmas ornaments to be brought out to stimulate memories of the horse-drawn holiday sleigh-rides associated with past holiday seasons, for memory is the computer-motivator in the mind for many of the artifacts stored in basements throughout America. It is the collective memory to conserve what is worth remembering.

Basic functional needs of past people are also reflected in basement artifacts: food, shelter, comfort, housing, etc. Many of these go beyond memory being unfamiliar to 21st century adults, such as a glass fly catcher designed to sit over a slice of jellied bread as a center piece on the early 20th century dining room table, where diners could be entertained while they ate by watching the captured flies struggle to escape from the soapy water into which they fell as they flew up into the glass dome from

the jellied bread below. Diners sometimes placed bets on which fly would manage to climb the soap-slick glass wall higher than the others. This is not a practice familiar to Americans in the 21st century when flies no longer swarm in houses as they once did before laws outlawed pigs, chickens, cows and goats in backyards within city limits of towns and cities.

In the early part of the 20th century, a half-moon shaped glass breast pump was designed to be heated over a kerosene lamp, then placed over a woman's breast, where a cool washcloth was applied, thus causing a vacuum that sucked the milk into the little glass receptacle. A familiar artifact such as this, forming a basic part of the early 20th century child rearing, is now unfamiliar to most 21st century women. Such examples of what artifacts tell us are among the many forming the main body of the text in the book.

The basic concept of association of artifacts accumulated by a family, reflecting past behavioral relationships within a particular socio-economic class, is a major strength of the basement artifact



study presented in the book. Artifacts are an archaeological record of past behavior and socio-economic class structure of interest to scholars and students of material culture. They are like the bits and pieces recovered from the earth through archaeological excavation. They reflect the processes that drove the past culture from which the artifacts came at one moment in time and at a particular place representative of a cultural region. To South's knowledge, no such unique photo-filled, talking artifact book with an archaeological framework has ever been published concerning the 20th century.

Calendar of Events

Coe Lecture

Dr. Stanley South

Talking Artifacts:

The 20th Century Legacy

4:00 PM on June 14 at the High Point Museum.

1859 East Lexington Avenue, High Point, NC

(336) 885-1859.

Directions can be found at their web site:

<http://highpointmuseum.org/directions.htm>.



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