What Remains: Indigenous Remains of the Greater Lowell Area

Honors Project

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Honors Requirements for the Degree of BA in History

Christoph Strobel, History Department, Honors Mentor

Lauren Fogel, History Department, Committee Mentor

May 2023

**Introduction:**

Indigenous people are frequently confined to the past through a sanitized narrative that focuses on the white settler heroes of war and the myriad of monuments and tributes for these great ancestors. Our ancestors were also the Indigenous – the original inhabitants of these lands and receive little attention. Commonly, ill treatment of this group is relegated to retribution for atrocities committed against superior whites and thought of in the context of the 1500-1700s. Even less thought is given to the indigenous once deceased. However, it is from the deceased that much knowledge can be gained, not only about the individual remains but how those are treated through multigeneration within mainstream society. Prevailing racism is evident in the action and inaction of those affiliated with the community and lands.

This project will research indigenous remains that have been uncovered in the greater Lowell area over the last 120 years through specific case studies and the role of amateur archaeologists. Starting with the remains uncovered in Billerica in the 1880s, the research will examine incidents in Lowell, Billerica and Andover through 1978 where indigenous remains have been unearthed in these localities. Each case will analyze the history of the discovery and more importantly, the portrayal in the relevant media at the time. In addition, the role of amateur archaeologists will be explored and seek to highlight the challenges such practices present.

My thesis explores the following issues:

* How are Indigenous peoples treated in death?
* What kind of insights into mainstream perceptions of Native Americans can we gain from media during times when human remains were unearthed?
* What are the challenges and benefits of amateur archaeological practices and how do these shape societal perceptions?

Such a discussion provides a glimpse into the representation of Indigenous peoples in the nineteenth and twentieth century. My project highlights the continued misrepresentation and erasure of Indigenous cultures and peoples.

**Method & Presentation:**

The project, over a two-semester period, will consist of an article-length document and a presentation. A final presentation will be held in April 2023 at the UML History Department Presentation Panel.

The predominant method for the research will be the utilization of historical documents and archives. Close analysis of each case study will encompass examining available local newspaper reports for each town, including digitized and physical copies, along with microfiche files. Additionally, exploring any historical documents at local libraries pertaining to sites where remains were discovered. By searching the Newspaperarchive.com website, a detailed account can be derived of all reported Native American remains that were discovered since the turn of the century. This is a key component as it illustrates the events, but also the relevance of the remains along with the treatment and indifference afforded the Indigenous community. The Center for Lowell History is crucial as it has a comprehensive library of documents, primary sources such as Lowell Atlas and a wealth of resources pertaining to Lowell and Billerica which encompass three of the case studies. Visits to the Massachusetts Historical Commission to access archives of building inspection plans, architectural drawings, and site files for each of the five specific cases. Furthermore, accessing archival documents at the Massachusetts Archaeology Museum will shed light on excavation methodologies and discoveries of collections amassed. Incorporating background information on Warren Moorehead, a key figure in amateur archaeology, will be achieved through records obtained online at the Peabody Institute of Archaeology Andover, Moorehead publications, and archival records at the Peabody. In addition, exploring the activities of Frederick Burtt, a UMass Lowell professor and prolific amateur collector, through archaeological societies and publications will add insight to the mentally and perception toward Indigenous people. Edward Guillemette will be the third amateur archaeologist my project will examine, and his prolific collection of artifacts amassed during the mid-20th century.

**Timeline:**

This a two-semester project that will begin September 2022 and be completed in April 2023. Working with mentor Prof. Christoph Strobel, the H7/H8 requirement will be satisfied with Independent/Directed study courses. Weekly meetings will occur with Prof. Strobel on Thursdays for the duration of both semesters.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **THESIS STEP** | **DATES FOR SPRING THESIS** |
| Honors Mentor Declaration Form | May 2022 |
| Preliminary Research | May – September 22, 2022 |
| Meet with Honors Mentor weekly | Every Thursday 1-2pm |
| Project Proposal | Due Oct. 31, 2022 |
| Continue Research & Start Writing | September 2022 – January 2023 |
| Completed 1st Draft | End March 2023 |
| Full Revised 1st Draft | April 23 2023 |
| Completed Final Draft | April 30, 2023 |
| Presentation to Honors College & History Department | April 2023 |
| Project Completion Form | May 9, 2023 |

**Working Bibliography**

**Archives:**

Billerica Historical Society

Center for Lowell History

Massachusetts Historical Commission

Massachusetts Archaeology Museum

Massachusetts Archaeological Society

Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act

New Hampshire Archaeological Society

Newspaperarchive.com

Peabody Institute of Archaeology Andover

Smithsonian Institute National Archives

**Bibliography:**

Gilbert R. Merrill, 1962, “History of the Lowell Technological Institute,” *The Textile History Review* 3, no.2 (April) : 82–96.

Luedtke, Barbara E., Massachusetts Historical Commission, and UMass Amherst Libraries. *The Camp at the Bend in the River : Prehistory at the Shattuck Farm Site*. *Internet Archive*. Boston, Mass. (80 Boylston St., Boston 02116) : Massachusetts Historical Commission, 1985. <https://archive.org/details/campatbendinrive00lued/page/330/mode/2up>.

Moorehead, Warren K., and Benjamin L. Smith. *The Merrimack Archaeological Survey, a Preliminary Paper*. Salem, Mass.: Peabody Museum, 1931.

NEILSON, Larz. “History: Arrowheads, Spears, Knives, and Grinders — Native Artifacts Found throughout Region.” Homenewshere.com, September 21, 2021. https://homenewshere.com/wilmington\_town\_crier/news/article\_22fd60ae-1659-11ec-a258-4b924db855ee.html.

Pendergast, John. *The Bend in the River*. Tyngsboro, Massachusetts: Merrimack River Press, 1991.

Redman, Samuel J. *Bone Rooms : From Scientific Racism to Human Prehistory in Museums*. Cambridge, Massachusetts ; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2016.

Strobel, Christoph. *Native Americans of New England*. Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2020.

**Libraries:**

Andover

Lowell

Billerica