

## 2019 Training Program in Southwest Arkansas

Come Make an Impact this Summer!

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Last year's Training Program, like many before it, did great work in terms of fleshing out what we know about a major archeological site. Though we're going in a totally different direction this year, the impact that you can have on Arkansas archeology will be no less great. I admit that what I'm about to describe for you looks a little different than usual, but what I'm inviting you out to help with is going to be a major contribution to Arkansas archeology and will also, I hope, be something that you really enjoy.

So, our recent Training Programs have looked at sites where we haven't worked before, or at least did not have research ongoing. This time around, we're reviving a project started by the Arkansas Archeologi-

cal Society way back in the 1980s (I made myself feel old typing that). That's right! We are going back to Holman Springs! But wait, there's more! We are also going to be doing some of the first systematic work on a site, known as Lockesburg Mounds, that hasn't been researched, but immediately looks like one of the most important sites in the region.

### The Sites

First, Holman Springs (3SV29) is a large Caddo saltworks in far western Sevier County. It is one of a few such sites ever excavated, and one of two (along with Bayou Sel) that have yet to be adequately written up. The Society did initial tests there in 1984,

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The photo depicts a view of Holman Springs. (SAU20170097D)

then held the Training Program there in 1985 and 1986. This was the “more sherds than dirt” project. The site used to have two mounds on it, composed almost entirely of pottery, if that gives you an idea of how artifact-laden it was. For a host of reasons, the results of that work were brought back to Magnolia, then never fully analyzed. We need to wrest Holman Springs from this limbo.

Lockesburg Mounds (3SV48) is a bit of an enigma. Situated near the town of Lockesburg, it is one of the largest Caddo sites in the Little River Region, and one of the largest complex of Caddo mounds ever recorded. It consists of 13 mounds and one large midden area (that we know of). The catch with Lockesburg Mounds is that we know actually very little about it. The only archeological overview of the Little River Region does not mention it, and it rarely gets attention in wider discussion of Caddo archeology. We know about the mounds, but we don't know much else about it.

What we do know about it is as follows. First, it's a big site at 13 mounds, whereas most of the mound sites in the area are 1–2 mounds. Second, it has been very roughly treated in recent years by artifact hunters. In the 1980s, some people took a backhoe to it, cutting deep trenches into it and mining it for pots to be sold. Witnesses likened it to the destruction of the Craig Mound at Spiro in the 1930s. There are no known field notes from this destruction, but it is quite clear that a large number of graves were disturbed in the process.

### The Training Program

This year's Training Program will look a little different from previous years. The balance between field and lab efforts is going to be tilted a little more towards the lab than in years past, but we will still have a field component.

The laboratory portion will focus around a class on Caddo ceramics that will go beyond our usual offerings of Basic Laboratory and even Ceramics. It will teach you to sort sherds, recognize different kinds of decorations, and acquaint you with how we categorize Caddo pottery. This will feed into a major effort to process the 1980s collections, sorting plain from deco-

rated and developing the actual analytical databases that will be used to finish the ceramics analysis. This is going to be more in-depth than what we usually offer at the Training Program. I can't tell you how valuable your contributions here will be, as this collection has been stalled for over thirty years, and it would take Fiona and me decades to go through it without help. Your contributions will be a huge relief, and will help close out a Society project that has been unfinished for too long. We all have an ethical obligation to finish what we start, and this summer can help us do that with Holman Springs.

Omitting a long story about landowner entanglements, let's accept that we are either going to have the field component at Holman Springs or at Lockesburg. If we go to Holman Springs, we will be re-opening some of the 1985–1986 units to georeference them, then opening new units to fill in and further explore some of the features the Society encountered earlier. There will be literal buckets of sherds to be recovered. Excavations at Holman Springs found some preliminary patterns in the arrangement of features, but getting a wider look at them will help us make sense of the site.

If we go to Lockesburg Mounds, we have a whole other project entirely. As mentioned above, Lockesburg Mounds was very, very heavily damaged by artifact hunters back in the 1980s. The trenches they tore into the mounds remained open and are still visible when you visit the site today. Our plan for Lockesburg involves 1) documenting the extent of the destruction and 2) cutting profiles in the damaged sections to understand the construction sequence of the mounds. We also plan on using these excavations to recover carbon samples that can be used to give us a date range for when this site was in use. Getting to know this site better will help us understand the history of the region much more clearly. Given that the Little River Region sits between the Great Bend and the Ouachita Mountains, both better-understood regions, this work will help fill in a pothole in our knowledge.

The Training Program will be held out of the UA-Cossatot campus in De Queen. They have accorded us a building to use as a lab and classroom space, and another for evening lectures. There are plenty of hotels

and restaurants in town, and lots of places to recreate in your time off. If you want to camp, we already have places reserved at De Queen Lake, a Corps of Engineers campground just north of town. The camping areas have been recently refreshed, there are modern bathroom facilities, and the setting is splendid, catching the breeze as it blows through the pines along the lake's edge.

### The Archeological Impact

I've already touched on this a bit, but I want to go a little deeper into the importance of this summer. What do we gain by this work? I'm glad you (I) asked! Right now, Holman Springs and Bayou Sel (in Clark County) are the two major Caddo saltworks excavations that haven't been fully analyzed and reported. The other major Caddo saltworks, including the Hardman site, Drake's Salt Works (Louisiana), and Salt Well Slough (Texas) all look a lot different. Some were occupied year-round, some were probably only inhabited for a few months out of the year. Others were likely not inhabited at all, with people just coming there to make salt during the day, then going to a completely different site in the evening. There's a lot of variability in how Caddos made salt, even within the

rather tight confines of the Ark-La-Tex. Getting better information on Holman Springs would help clarify any regional trends that might be out there.

Also, Drake's Salt Works appears to be late, maybe 1600s and 1700s, and possibly connected with trading horses from the Great Plains down to the French in coastal Louisiana. Hardman is much earlier. Salt Well Slough is somewhere between the two. We don't know where Holman Springs sits within that chronology (we are currently waiting on the results of carbon samples from the 1980s digs) but having new and better-collected samples will help us look at chronological patterns as well as regional.

For Lockesburg Mounds? Anything that we learn about this site is crucial to our understanding of the history of Caddo settlement in the Little River Region. This is a major site that has been largely ignored, so getting something that tells us about chronology, site structure, and its connections with other sites is a huge boon. Plus, it was very badly damaged in the 1980s, so being able to document the damage and salvage any information from the disturbed areas is bringing some small amount of good out of heart-breaking damage to a site sacred to the Caddos.

See you this summer!



Geophysical survey at Lockesburg Mounds in 2018. ARAS-SAU digital photo P\_20181029\_140456.