

Interior



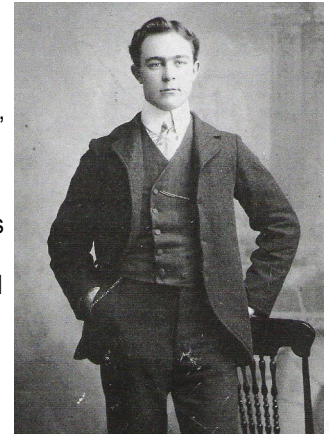
Shelves

Life's More Than a Beach for Cape Cod History Students

Contributed by William Burke, NPS (Cape Cod National Seashore)

For a dozen AP History Students at Nauset High School, it didn't matter that the beach was calling on a brilliant late September Indian summer afternoon. Their high school, one of only a few actually within a National Park, had embarked on a curious pilot program. Together with their teacher, Alison Kaar, and Seashore historian Bill Burke, the students descended a darkened stairway deep within the basement of the Seashore visitor center. No, there was no need for surfboards or sunscreen. It was time to discover the intricate writings of a Cape Codder known for his research on Native Americans – Warren Sears Nickerson.

What the students discovered was simple. Nickerson's exhaustive genealogical research from the 1930s and 40s identified 1,300 Indians by names and families utilizing late 18th and early 19th century land deeds, court records, vital statistics, military lists and place names. The 1.4 linear feet of materials were in six large boxes that included handwritten notes, photo static reproductions of historic documents from the Massachusetts Archives, hand-sketched family trees, and his 130 page magnum opus: *Some Lower Cape Cod Indians*. The students read through hand-typed stories like "French Privateer," "First Blood at Nawset," "Praying Indians," and the life story of the Lower Cape's last full-blooded Indian – Micah Rafe. They quickly learned about Nickerson's frugality and quirkiness; his hand-typed stories were found on old recycled envelopes and brown paper bags, and on the back of old letters and scrapbooks. The students found irony in it all; Nickerson, a Mayflower descendant, painstakingly recounting the demise of native culture on the Lower Cape. They saw his flaws, his ethnocentrism, his prejudices, and his romanticism. Through it all, they also saw a man ahead of his time who yearned for the past. It was a classic lesson in historiography along with the exhilaration of reading irreplaceable material - raw information that no other person came close to assembling in his day.



Warren Sears Nickerson



Student Conservation Association intern Nathan Marx works with Nauset High School students

An official purpose of the project was, all along, to bring the material to the light of day. The local Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe had worked with the papers several years back, but most researchers knew nothing of their existence. Working with the park's two Student Conservation Association interns Nathan Marx and Laura Hognlund, the students scanned significant samples of the material and wrote abstracts for them. Nathan and Laura developed a searchable inventory of stories and documents, which was immediately given to the local Nickerson Family Association, and which will be made available to the public through local depositories, including Cape Cod Community College.

As the project wound down, I think more than a few of the students realized that they had zoomed past the visitor center everyday on their way to school for the past 3 years, never giving a second thought to local history – history beyond their textbooks. Now local place names meant something, their school name meant something, and their incursion into the world of primary source documents was worth the wait. They proved that sometimes high school juniors and archival materials can mix!

Paleontological Research Advances in Reclamation Collections

Contributed by Jennifer Huang, BOR

Erosion around reservoir perimeters is generally considered problematic because it diminishes the shoreline, increases siltation in the reservoir and thereby decreases overall water storage capacity. For the Bureau of Reclamation, an Interior water management agency, reservoir erosion is something to avoid. Reclamation is now fighting to curb annual erosion at southeastern Idaho reservoirs, while simultaneously celebrating an exciting side-effect—shoreline erosion has exposed a varied abundance of Pleistocene epoch fossil material.

Two geological units running through this area of the state contain significant numbers of vertebrate fossils representing large Pleistocene mammals including camel, horse, mammoth, and bison. It is touted that this area is second only to the La Brea Tar Pits in Los Angeles for variety and quantity of Pleistocene vertebrate fossils, and represents both a nationally significant location and resulting museum collection. Much can be learned from the more than 17,000 paleontological specimens that Reclamation's Snake River Area Office curates at the John A. White (JAW) Repository at Idaho State University's Idaho Museum of Natural History (IMNH), located in Pocatello, Idaho.

Specimens in Reclamation's paleontology collection are currently being utilized in a number of research projects, including efforts at the Denver
(continued p. 2)

