St. Augustine, Florida—the oldest continuously occupied city in the United States—was founded by Spanish colonists in 1565, who then set about colonizing the interior of the American South. Captain Juan Pardo was assigned the task of building six forts along a path that stretched from Parris Island (South Carolina) to what is now eastern Tennessee. While five of those forts remain to be discovered, the sixth one, Fort San Juan (top), was built at a Native American town called Joara. Today, the ancient remains of Joara are known as the Berry site, near Morganton, North Carolina.

Excavation of the Berry site has been a collaboration between U-M Museum of Anthropology Curator Robin Beck (above right), Christopher Rodning (Tulane), and David Moore (Warren Wilson College). By 1997 they had identified several houses (above left)
occupied by Spanish soldiers, but had found no trace of the fort itself. Built in 1567, Fort San Juan was occupied for only eighteen months before its destruction by the ancestors of today’s Catawba.

Finally, in 2013, using a combination of large-scale excavation and geophysical techniques, Rob and his colleagues located the fort’s defensive moat, a likely corner bastion, and a series of sixteenth-century Spanish artifacts. The fort, it turns out, had been hidden beneath an earthen mound once thought to have been prehispanic. It now appears that the mound was built over the ruins of the fort.

Fort San Juan is the oldest European fort thus far located in the interior of the United States. Future excavations at the Berry site—which will include Beck and a team of U-M students—should document two fascinating processes: Spain’s doomed attempt to take possession of what is now the Southeast U.S., and the changes brought about by European contact with Joara, changes that led to seventeenth-century Catawba culture.

For the second time in its history, our Museum has struck out in a dramatic new direction. The first time, of course, was in the 1960s, when visionary director James B. Griffin took us international. After years of focusing on the archaeology of North America, Griffin hired a group of young archaeologists committed to Latin America and the Near East. He had concluded that these areas were “gathering momentum.”

In 2012, our Museum identified two additional new directions that were gaining momentum: The Origins of Human Culture and Circumpolar Archaeology.

Some of the first chapters in the history of culture-bearing Homo sapiens were written in southern and eastern Africa. Between 250,000 and 35,000 years ago, our species separated itself from other hominids and began to display behaviors associated with ethnographically-documented hunters and gatherers. One of the participants in this exciting new research is Brian Stewart, who joined us in Fall 2013 as Curator of African Archaeology. Born in Ohio, Brian did his BA at Vermont, received his PhD from Oxford (U.K.), and took up postdoctoral fellowships at Cambridge (U.K.) and Harvard. Along the way, he worked at Dunesfield Midden in South Africa, one of the world’s largest single-component Paleolithic campsites. From there he went on to excavate Seshonghong and Melikane rockshelters in highland Lesotho, and Spitzkloof A and B in the Namaqualand coastal desert, South Africa. With sequences stretching back 50,000 to 100,000 years, these rockshelters contain diverse kinds of evidence for how early members of our species learned to cope with hostile African habitats before colonizing the globe. Recent excavations in the Namaqualand desert have revealed fragments of decorated ostrich eggshell and a bone bead in layers predating 20,000 and 50,000 years ago, respectively—artifacts hinting at the creation of ancient information networks and social alliances necessary for survival in this arid landscape.

Circumpolar archaeology itself is not new, but it has really been invigorated by recent global warming research. With the recognition that many signs of climate change—past and present—appear in the Arctic and Antarctic before they reach the mid-latitudes, understanding human adaptation to these extreme environments has taken on new importance. Patagonia is one of the exciting new frontiers for circumpolar research, and we added new curator Raven Garvey because of her commitment to the sub-Antarctic region. Her appreciation for the demands of harsh environments may stem from a childhood spent in Maine, but Raven’s formal study of prehistoric adaptations began when she was a student at the University of Montana where, for her master’s thesis, she studied Paleoindian toolkits and whether they were optimally designed for a highly mobile lifestyle. For her PhD she moved to the University of California at Davis where she studied with Robert Bettinger, a leader in the field of hunter-gatherer ecology. It was early in her training at UC-Davis that Raven’s geographic focus shifted to Patagonia and her dissertation centered on hunter-gatherer land-and-resource use and adaptive responses to major climatic changes in that region. As Curator of Circumpolar Archaeology, Raven intends to continue her research on prehistoric adaptations and to evaluate current models of optimal foraging and cultural transmission among hunters and gatherers in demanding environments, including the sub-Antarctic.

As many of our friends and alumni know, the success of the Museum of Anthropology depends on a strong involvement in university-wide initiatives in ecology and evolution. The addition of Brian and Raven to our faculty prepares us well for that involvement and for our future new home in the Biological Science Building.

Surveying in northern Patagonia

Student volunteers are encouraged! Contact Dr. Beck (rabeck@umich.edu) about his 2014 Field School.

New Directions for the Museum
Henry Wright Honored with SAA Lifetime Achievement Award

Curator Henry Wright received the 2013 Society for American Archaeology Lifetime Achievement Award, which is "presented annually to an archaeologist for specific accomplishments that are truly extraordinary, widely recognized as such, and of positive and lasting quality . . . and evidence of extraordinary lifetime accomplishments that have made great scholarly, pedagogical and/or institutional achievements." The SAA notes that "in his career, [Dr. Wright] has made transformative contributions to archaeological theory and method, and has conducted important research in North America, Mesopotamia, Africa, and China. He exemplifies the highest qualities of enduring scholarship, teaching, service, and outreach, both nationally and internationally. His fieldwork has focused on the emergence of the world's earliest states, although he has also investigated a wide range of other topics. Dr. Wright's contributions to scholarship have been acknowledged by a MacArthur Fellowship in 1993, election to the National Academy of Sciences in 1994, and a Gold Medal for Distinguished Archaeological Achievement from the Archaeological Institute of America in 2009. At the University of Michigan, he was awarded a Collegiate Professorship in 2001 and the Albert C. Spaulding Distinguished Professorship in 2006. Congratulations to Dr. Wright."

John O’Shea Named Emerson Greenman Collegiate Professor

Professor Robert Reynolds (Professor of Computer Science at Wayne State University) has a long history of collaboration with the curators of our Museum, including with Ken Flannery (computer modeling of forager foraging in Oaxaca, Mexico), with John O’Shea (modeling caribou migration over a new-submerged land bridge across Lake Huron), with Bob Whallon (ongoing research on hunter-gather decision-making), and—one of his newest projects—analyzing Joyce Marcus’s data on Peruvian fishing in the wake of the major 1982 El Niño. In June 2013, Bob’s paper (coauthored with his former student, Dr. Thaar Jyvääs) on using cultural algorithms to generate a model for the colonization and growth of ancient Monte Albán won the award for Best Paper at the IEEE International Congress on Evolutionary Computation. A second paper by Professor Reynolds, on the Huron land bridge, took second place in a different category.

Robert Reynolds Wins Award

Curator John O’Shea has been named the Emerson F. Greenman Collegiate Professor of Anthropological Archaeology. Like O’Shea, Greenman was Curator of the Great Lakes Division in the Museum of Anthropology (1935-1965), and directed a number of landmark excavations in the Manitoulin Island region of Ontario, Canada, as well as in Michigan (including the Younge, Wolf, Furton, and Rivière aux Vase sites, and the Massaueau Earthworks). This Collegiate Professorship recognizes John’s impact on anthropological archaeology at the U-M as a mentor, teacher, innovator, and problem-solver. In addition to Michigan, he has conducted fieldwork in the Midwest (Nebraska, Iowa), Eastern Europe (Hungary, Romania), and at the bottom of Lake Huron. John’s being named Collegiate Professor comes on the heels of his election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, where his inaugural statement read: “O’Shea is a world-class expert on prehistoric societies that span the transition from egalitarian to hierarchical. He pioneered new methods to infer social and economic organization through mortuary analysis. O’Shea has successfully applied such analysis to groups as diverse as the Pueblo, Oaxaca, and Aka of West Africa and the Bronze Age societies of Hungary and Romania. His research requires great quantitative skills and combines archaeology, ethnography, ethnohistory, and the development of new models that are now being applied all over the world.”

The Himalayan Journey of Walter N. Koelz

In the fall of 1932, U-M naturalist Walter N. Koelz traveled to northwest India to lead a scientific collecting expedition in the rugged Himalayan regions of Western Tibet. Some 18 months later he returned to the United States with a remarkable collection of biological specimens and an array of objects—Buddhist sacred objects, ritual objects, textiles, and household goods—collected in the LIP chronology; this new phasing has been applied to most Late Intermediate period sites in the Central Plateau, including those excavated by Ronald Faulseit. Cerro Danush Excavations at a Hilltop Community in the Eastern Valley of Oaxaca, Mexico by Ronald K. Faulset

The University of Michigan Himalayan Expedition, 1932–1934 by Carla M. Snipol

Monte Albán was the capital of the Valley of Oaxaca, Mexico, but once its capital began to wane, other sites filled the political vacuum. Memoir 54 details Ronald Faulset’s excavations at the site of Danzí-Macuilxochitl; his 2007–10 mapping and excavation seasons focused on the Late Classic and Early Postclassic. The spatial distributions of surface artifacts—collected during the intensive mapping and systematic surface collecting—on residential terraces at Cerro Danush are analyzed to evaluate evidence for craft production, ritual, and abandonment at the community level. This analysis is complemented by data from the comprehensive excavation of a residential terrace, which documents diachronic patterns of behavior at the household level. The results from the survey and excavations are evaluated within the theoretical frameworks of political cycling and resilience theory. Faulset concludes that resilient social structures may have helped orchestrate reorganization in the dynamic political landscape of Oaxaca after the political collapse of Monte Albán. [272 pp; list $38, sale $30]

Cerro Danush

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Graduate Students are Doing Fieldwork All Over the World

In May, Bree Doering (right) returned to St. Catherine’s Island, Georgia, to join the American Museum of Natural History Project, and she helped excavate the community surrounding a historic Franciscan mission. In June, she traveled to Alaska to participate in a Colorado State University-run survey that identified numerous prehistoric sites in the Tanana Valley.

Andrew Gurstelle (below left) continued his dissertation fieldwork in the Sávé hills of Bénin where he is investigating the development of the Shabe kingdom, a Yoruba polity that was the source of many of the African slaves exported to Cuba and Brazil in the 19th century. Building on last year’s reconnaissance, Andrew completed a systematic survey of all hamlets and settlements surrounding the site of the 18th-century town of Atiño and conducted a second systematic survey around the sacred granite hills of Oke Shabe. With collaborator Simon Agani and new project member Nestor Labiyi, both of the University of Abomey-Calavi, Andrew will return to Bénin in 2014 to curate a museum exhibit on the archaeology of the Shabe kingdom.

Jordan Dalton volunteered with the U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, helping to catalog their urban lots and to map out historical trail preservation in the Fallen Leaf Lake area.

Anna Antoniou (top, facing page) spent most of her summer on the Mexican-Arizona border as part of the Undocumented Migration Project headed by U-M Professor Jason De León. This long-term project combines ethnographic and archaeological approaches to understand unauthorized border crossings. Anna conducted a survey in the Sonoran Desert to study the use of the landscape by those crossing the desert, and to observe the materials associated with crossing. Under De León’s guidance, Anna spearheaded the second season of The Pig Project, which aims to understand the effects of the harsh desert environment on human remains by conducting forensic and taphonomic studies using pigs as a proxy for human remains. Anna also conducted lithic analysis on collections from the Welqamex Household Archaeology Project, hoping to better understand household-to-household variability in tool production at the Coast Salish village of Welqamex and to determine the relationship between household tool production and the social organization of this complex village.

This summer Elspeth Geiger took part in a building survey and site excavation of a prohibition-era speakeasy on 3rd Street in Detroit, a project carried out by the Wayne State University Anthropology Department and by Preservation Detroit. With the 80th anniversary of the end of Prohibition approaching, the research is primarily meant to explore the connection to the Purple Gang, but will also investigate the history of Detroit’s Eastern European communities in the 3rd Street area.

Jess Beck (below right) spent this past summer in Jaén, Andalusia, Spain, analyzing human remains from the Copper Age site of Marroqués Bajos. She is examining mortuary treatment, MNI, and the estimated age and sex of the interred individuals in order to explore the relationship between social organization, individual and community identity, and the origin, maintenance and collapse of one of the largest enclosure sites in Iberian Bronze Age.

This past summer, Chelsea Fisher worked at the site of Vazanón in Yucatán, Mexico, excavating in Formative period contexts, including the plaza of the site’s E-Group and an elite residence. She plans to continue investigating Formative households at Vazanón and the surrounding area for her dissertation. She and Lacey Carpenter worked on Ashley Lemke’s dissertation fieldwork at the Gault site in Texas.

Casey Barrier took part in a building survey and site excavation of a prohibition-era speakeasy on 3rd Street in Detroit, a project carried out by the Wayne State University Anthropology Department and by Preservation Detroit. With the 80th anniversary of the end of Prohibition approaching, the research is primarily meant to explore the connection to the Purple Gang, but will also investigate the history of Detroit’s Eastern European communities in the 3rd Street area.

All Over the World

When our Museum created the Archaeobiology collection—a combination of our extensive ethnobotanical and zooarchaeological collections—in 2011, one of the goals was to form a consortium with the Archaeobiology program at the Smithsonian Institution. That consortium is now a reality, allowing both institutions to move the study of plant and animal domestication from gross morphology to analyses of DNA, phytoliths, starch grains, and other cutting-edge approaches. One of our joint research projects, a collaboration with Smithsonian scholar Bruce Smith on his study of sunflower domestication, involves specimens from both museums’ collections.

At the same time, we have not forgotten the need to grow Archaeobiology, filling lacunae in our collections. We recently added the complete skeleton of “Buttermilk,” an elderly Morgan horse to our ungulate collections. “Buttermilk” is crucial to Amy Nicodemus’ research into Bronze Age domestic horses in Eastern Europe.

New acquisitions are also swelling our collection of domestic New World plants. In 1968, during Curator Kent Flannery’s research into early agriculture in Mexico, it fell to botanist Lawrence Kaplan to identify the very early Phaseolus beans from Guía Naquiz Cave, Oaxaca. To collect comparative data on the variety of beans grown in Oaxaca, Kaplan visited a dozen Zapotec Indian markets in the area, where he purchased locally-grown beans and collected cultural and ecological data about each variety. With Kaplan’s retirement, samples of these local bean varieties have been accessioned into our Archaeobiology collection—a combination of the Welqamex Household Archaeology Project, hoping to better understand household-to-household variability in tool production at the Coast Salish village of Welqamex and to determine the relationship between household tool production and the social organization of this complex village.

It is our hope that through these (and future) acquisitions of material with well-documented contexts, Archaeobiology will continue its long history of serving as a resource for the investigation of plant and animal domestication.
Barry Brillantes spent April and May excavating at Kaminajuay, a major Preclassic and Classic period site in the highlands of Guatemala. The project, led by Dr. Barbara Arroyo of the Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Cultura in Guatemala, is uncovering the early phases of the site’s history. Barry was in charge of excavations in the eastern plaza outside the central area (known as the Palangana), noted for its Teotihuacan-style architecture.

Excavations uncovered a series of plaza floors dating back to the initial occupation of the site, and a large stone monument (weighing roughly 2 tons) with depictions of what appears to be Teotihuacan-style architecture. The monument, dedicated to the god of maize (Chac), stands 3.5 meters high and weighs 2 tons. Excavations revealed that the monument was originally placed on top of a large platform and was later moved to its current location. The site of Kaminajuay was likely a ceremonial center during the Preclassic and Classic periods, with the monument serving as a focal point for ritual activities.

Ivan Cangemi, taking a break from struggling with a misbehaving pump (photo courtesy of Dan Diffendale)

Rachel Lee, standing inside a pithouse (1500–800 BC) at the Chojeon-dong site, Korea.
I love archaeology and wish to pursue it in the future. It has been a summer of personal as well as academic growth for me. I’ll never forget my experience with the 2013 Eastern Pequot Archaeological Field School (led by Steve Stillman of UMass-Boston) in Connecticut. The reason I chose this field school was that I thought it might be even more enriching than an average program because of its collaborative nature. I wasn’t at all disappointed. Before setting foot on the Eastern Pequot reservation, we were introduced to many tribal members who greeted us with hugs and laughter, and treated us to a potluck at their “Longhouse.” After which, we all went through a smudging ritual, involving an elder lighting a bundle of sage and pouring water over the smoke of each of us to cleanse our spirits. Then the twelve of us in the program joined up with two Eastern Pequot college students and an Eastern Pequot elder in the field every day.

For the first 2 weeks of the 5-week program, we dug shovel test pits in a wigwam site. At every STP from which we removed an artifact, the elder spread an offering of tobacco before we moved on. Unfortunately, we never found a wigwam site in our survey area, and few artifacts besides. For the second half of the field school, then, Professor Stillman decided to move us down to a house that was visible from the surface by its intact cellar and a chimney wall. Here we found many artifacts in and surrounding the house, including a midden to the southwest full of shellfish, glass, ceramics, and animal bones.

Of course, all those artifacts are now at UMass-Boston, waiting to be analyzed in the lab, and I’m jealous of the graduate students who get to transition from the field school into the lab work. All the artifacts, and even the dirt, were soil samples, are eventually returned to the reservation. Though we found nothing too “extraordinary,” every little thing was exciting to me. In addition to fieldwork, we made several trips to the Mashantucket Pequot Museum on a neighboring reservation to explore the exhibits and meet some of the archaeologists, like Kevin McElrind, who are behind much of the research that goes on in the area. We also visited other field sites with our hosts to attend powwows, all hosted by the Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation.

The program was amazingly fun. I developed an attachment to the people and to the land that I don’t think I’ll ever forget. I’ve always loved archaeology, but struggled to see how I could affect communities in a positive way. This program showed me that first-hand. I saw how archaeology could help heal and surrounding the house, including a midden to the southwest full of shellfish, glass, ceramics, and animal bones.

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Another challenge was exhibit logistics: where would the exhibit be housed, how much money would be needed to construct it, and where that money come from? While we are still negotiating funding, I was able to determine where the exhibit will be housed by meeting with the mayor of Siddi as well as representatives from the Museo Ornitologico, who agreed that a Nuragic exhibit would be best housed at their museum. In this issue, this is truly an accomplishment and it is my responsibility to not only collect data and make a plan for the exhibit, but to set in motion the actual installation.

In any research project there are potential pitfalls in the process of data collection. One of my largest disappointments was the lack of participation in my surveys—although I distributed 130 surveys, only 5 were completed and returned to me. So, rather than relying heavily on the survey information, I would conduct more interviews to get similar information. To date, I have collected, in interview format, the opinions and ideas of 60 citizens of Siddi.

Progetto Pra’ Siddi has provided more opportunities for me than I could have ever imagined. I now have practical, real-life experience in my field, and a better understanding of the processes in museum exhibition. I have been challenged on many fronts, and will never forget how I overcame these challenges.

The first phase of the project took place in Ann Arbor where I developed an interview and a survey template in both Italian and English. The surveys were then distributed at various businesses throughout the community upon my arrival to the island, and were to be taken by the museum visitors. The interviews, however, were designed for me to conduct orally, both in group and in individual interviews. I also developed criteria to consider during my museum visits around the island. But just being prepared would not be enough in the way of accomplishing my goals. In fact, the project seemed to be rid with challenges to overcome. For example, every interview and survey I conducted was in Italian, a language in which I am proficient, but not nearly fluent. But this barrier was overcome by sheer practice, and over the course of this project, my Italian proficiency improved greatly.

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Exposing the Spanish moat, looking west; cross-section of moat visible at top of photograph (Berry Site, North Carolina).