

# Archaeologists as Activists

*Can Archaeologists Change the World?*

EDITED BY  
**M. JAY STOTTMAN**

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Cover: Students from Portland Elementary School work with archaeologists at the Squire Earrick House on a community education program through the Portland Museum in Louisville, Kentucky.

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## Reconnecting Community

*Archaeology and Activism at the Portland Wharf*

MATTHEW E. PRYBYLSKI AND M. JAY STOTTMAN

## INTRODUCTION

With the development and evolution of public archaeology over the last couple of decades came the realization that archaeology is much more than just discovering the past, it has the power to connect that past with the present and touch people's lives. Within the framework of a critical theoretical perspective that illuminates self-reflection and emphasizes the importance of the political and ideological environment of archaeological research, we now begin to seek an application of archaeology for the benefit of the public. The next step beyond public archaeology is our collaboration with community to use archaeology and the past to benefit the present. Ian Hodder states that archaeology is "a diversity of stakeholders" and that

any archaeological site will provide a focus for interactions between many groups, from developers and contractors, to local governments, local residents, descendents, tourist, and archaeologist. It is the role of the archaeologist to attempt to work between and in relation to all the stakeholders while continuing to play the role as a member of that society. (Hodder 1999)

Archaeology within this perspective represents an applied and civically engaged archaeology, as described in the introduction of this book.

There is no lack of evidence for archaeology benefiting and collaborating with communities in the present (Colwell-Chanthaphohn and Ferguson 2008;

Derry and Malloy 2003; Little, ed. 2002; Little and Shackel 2007). The idea of a "public" form of archaeology seriously began taking root in a few special communities across the United States. As most of us know or have seen, places like Alexandria, Annapolis, and Colonial Williamsburg, to name just a few, started archaeology projects for research or historic preservation. However, these places quickly realized the potential of these unique initiatives to use cultural tourism, public history, and archaeology to help their communities grow economically and culturally (Potter 1994; Slick 2002). More recently archaeologists have begun to design projects to create such effects at the onset of their projects, such as efforts in St. Louis focused on community identity through historic preservation (Baumann et al. 2008) and Paul Mullins's (2003) use of archaeology to reconnect a displaced community with the history of its extinct neighborhood. It is this conscious use of archaeology to affect change in the present and advocate for communities that is an activist archaeology as defined in this book's introduction. The Portland Wharf Park project located in the Portland neighborhood of Louisville, Kentucky, represents an application of an activist archaeology as the conscious use of archaeology by civically engaged archaeologists to collaborate with and benefit a community.

PORTLAND: AN ILLUSTRIOUS PAST  
AND DEPRESSED PRESENT

Portland was founded as an independent town in 1811 at the base of the Falls of the Ohio River. The Falls of the Ohio, formed millions of years ago, are a spectacular natural feature located on the Ohio River between Portland and Louisville and are the only obstacle in navigation on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers between Pittsburgh and New Orleans (Kleber 1992). Portland was located at the terminus point of the lucrative portage service around the Falls and was an early rival to Louisville. Both Louisville and Portland prospered greatly by increased river traffic due to the development of the steamboat and rose from small towns to bustling mercantile centers. During the mid-nineteenth century nearly one-third of the cost to ship cargo from New Orleans to Pittsburgh was spent on the three-mile portage around the Falls (Munro-Leighton and Munro-Leighton 1979).

Because the portage business was so important to Louisville and Portland, it became the source of much friction between the rival ports. The high cost of transport and the condition of the road between the two was often the subject of commentary and complaints. To eliminate the need for the portage, a canal to bypass the Falls had been proposed as early as the 1790s. However, it was not until 1825 when the Louisville and Portland Canal Company was

chartered, and construction of the canal began the following year. However, the canal did little to improve transportation around the Falls as it quickly became obsolete because it was too narrow and shallow for the new generation of steamboats that dominated shipping on the Ohio River. As a result, the overland portage system continued its dominance into the late 1800s (Karem 1988; Waltrous 1977).

In 1837, Louisville attempted to take control of the portage industry by annexing Portland, with the promise of connecting the community to the railroad. However, the railroad was never built and the people of Portland seceded from Louisville and were again independent. However, the trustees of Portland were unable to keep up with demands of prosperity and again agreed to be annexed by Louisville in 1852. The 1850s were the peak of river traffic and of Portland's prosperity. However, by the 1860s, railroads had begun to overtake riverboats as the preferred transportation system in the country. The Portland Wharf, which had brought so much prosperity to the region, was made obsolete after the federal government took control of and enlarged the canal in the 1870s (Karem 1988; Kleber 1992; Yater 1987). By the turn of the century, Portland had been relegated to being just one of Louisville's many neighborhoods and, like many other older urban areas, encountered an era of degrading structures and mass unemployment. In 1937 and again in 1945, terrible floods ravaged the "old" section of town, and by the late 1940s plans for building a levee through the area were approved.

The construction of a levee in 1947 removed the last vestige of the oldest section of Portland and its wharf. The completion of Interstate 64, constructed atop the levee, served as the final action that successfully disconnected Portland from its original livelihood, the Ohio River (Figure 8.1).

The Portland of today is considered a blue-collar community that is very poor, with 82 percent of the population living in poverty. Because of this, Portland has seen substantial neglect. This neglect has instigated negative stereotypes from people outside of the neighborhood, further inhibiting most attempts at economic investment. However, the lack of development in Portland has spared many of its historic buildings from demolition. Because of this, Portland contains one of the most intact collections of historic buildings in Louisville. These buildings represent the strong connection to the past that the people of Portland still retain to this day. Despite the economic hardships and cultural stigmas, the people are deeply rooted in and proud of their history and heritage. Many residents of Portland trace their families back many generations in the community. Portlanders are so entrenched in their history that nearly 150 years since the city of Louisville annexed Portland for the second time, residents still harbor resentment and distrust of the city, showing that the past plays an important role in their culture and identity. This distrust



Figure 8.1. View of the levee and Interstate 64 toward the Portland Wharf from the Portland neighborhood. Photo by M. Jay Stottman.

has manifested itself into the apathy of the typical Portlander for the City of Louisville's feeble attempts to revitalize their neighborhood.

In 1983, Portland was on the brink of economic collapse, and with the City of Louisville it sought to use its rich heritage to change its fortunes and return to the prosperity it once knew in the past. The community looked to its past to benefit its future. Schoolchildren first envisioned that the birthplace of Portland and its rich archaeological resources could become the center of a park dedicated to Portland's past. The focus of revitalization centered on the oldest part of the Portland neighborhood and the site of its founding and important river wharf, known as the Portland Wharf. However, this economic and symbolic center of Portland's identity and prosperity was cut off from the neighborhood by a levee. At the time, the Portland Wharf was a sixty-acre urban forest with few traces of its illustrious past (Figure 8.2).

Although the Portland community and officials from the City of Louisville recognized the need for and the potential of revitalization with heritage, the lack of grassroots support for historic preservation and the history and archaeology park stalled the effort. It would take almost two decades of continued economic decline before support amongst the community and the City of Louisville would be strong enough to begin the process of change.





Figure 8.2. View of Portland Wharf Park from the levee. Photo by M. Jay Stottman.

### USING THE PAST FOR THE PRESENT

In a renewed effort, the City of Louisville has once again turned its attention toward the Portland neighborhood. City officials recognized the merits of the early revitalization vision years before and determined that cultural heritage tourism and fostering Portland's historic identity could be a way to feed off of Portland's rich past and begin positive change in the neighborhood. Recent research suggests that cultural tourism is the fastest growing aspect of tourism in the world today (Chambers 2000; McKercher and du Cros 2002; Slick 2002; Wallace 2005). And as many of us have seen, our archaeological sites are becoming increasingly popular as tourist attractions in and of themselves. Archaeology and archaeological sites have been a part of the rise of cultural tourism. However, the potential of archaeology within cultural tourism has yet to be fully realized, as concerted efforts could be made to use archaeology to attract tourists to communities, bringing with them spin-off economic benefits (du Cros and McKercher 1999). As has happened in other cities, the goal to identify and interpret historically significant areas within a community and to help market those attractions for the benefit of that community can be key to revitalization and economic stability.

Additionally, heritage tourism sites can influence and inform community

identity (Smith 2006:48). Portland's rich and prosperous past can be used to help foster and maintain a more cohesive community identity that instills a sense of pride that the people of Portland have for their neighborhood and that distinguishes it from other communities in Louisville. Researchers have long recognized the association of identity formation and maintenance to heritage (Graham et al. 2000; Smith 2006). Through public memory, cultural material, and the landscape, "heritage provides meaning to human existence by conveying the ideas of timeless values and unbroken lineages that underpin identity" (Graham et al. 2000:41). Fostering a positive community identity could be just as important as creating economic development in the revitalization of this depressed neighborhood. A heritage site representative of the Portland identity could serve not only as a reminder of pride in Portland, but also as a message to other communities of the cultural richness present in the neighborhood.

In the Portland neighborhood, the focus of the developing cultural heritage sites and tourism would be the transformation of the old Portland Wharf into a unique historic and archaeological park that would instill pride in the community and draw tourism. The city provided funding for professional park planners to develop a master plan for the Portland Wharf Park. However, unlike before, involvement of the community in the process of designing and continued development of the new park has been an essential part of destroying community apathy. The public and professionals were invited to participate in design workshops to provide their input and ideas. Archaeology is a prominent feature of the plan, which is focused on public participation and education as tools to connect the community with its past and the park.

Although there was yet again much talk about the Portland Wharf Park and the revitalization of the Portland neighborhood, all there was to show for it was the expenditure of money to create pretty drawings and a plan of what could be. There were still cries from an apathetic community that they would never see one shovel of dirt moved to make the park a reality. Within this context, a unique partnership between the City of Louisville through the Metro Parks Department, the Portland Museum (the local history museum), archaeologists from the Kentucky Archaeological Survey, and the people of Portland was formed to implement the plan. Each of these partners had an important role in the park. Metro Parks was seen as the administrator, managing the development of the park. The Portland Museum was the conduit to the community, and archaeology was the means to connect the people to the process of park development. Archaeology's first task was to change the apathetic perception of park implementation and start the process.

Based on limited investigations conducted by the University of Louisville in 1982 and 1983, it was clear that there was archaeological potential at the park. However, in order for archaeology to play a prominent role in the development

of the Portland Wharf Park, a complete assessment of the archaeological resources at the site was necessary. A full understanding of the archaeological resources in existence at the Portland Wharf site is essential for design and implementation of the park master plan. However, it was decided early on that public programming during the archaeological survey would be instrumental to making the proposed park tangible to the community. While master plans are great, it is a slow process to actually implement them. This was a difficult situation in light of the instant gratification desired by a disenfranchised community. However, archaeology was seen as a tangible way to show immediate progress toward the eventual creation of the park.

A few months after the master plan was unveiled, the Kentucky Archaeological Survey conducted a survey of the park. While a large part of the park area was found to have been severely disturbed during construction of the levee, several large areas of intact archaeological resources were identified (Stottman and Prybylski 2003). Features associated with these lots included house foundations, cellars, cisterns, privies, and trash middens dating from the mid 1800s to early 1900s. In addition, several examples of intact stone and macadam street paving and brick-paved sidewalks were located. Also, a large section of the paved stone wharf was found, including a set of wrought-iron mooring rings.

The intact archaeological remains of the Rugby Distillery, which operated from the 1880s to the 1920s, represents an excellent example of industrial archaeology at the site. Large brick foundations associated with bonded warehouse, foundations for distilling equipment, and brick walkways were found throughout the distillery site.

These resources clearly demonstrate the archaeological potential of the Portland Wharf site. The archaeological deposits found at the Portland Wharf represent a cross section of an entire community, ranging from residential to industrial lot uses, from wealthy merchants to laborers. Moreover, the potential for this site as an educational and research tool and its benefits to the community are apparent. Each new discovery is a potential new prospect in the goal of revitalization and pride, opening doors that have historically been slammed shut on the people of Portland.

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Although archaeology is an important component of the Portland Wharf project, the revitalization effort in Portland has been built and formed by partnerships. Most important has been the role of the Portland Museum in conducting educational and public outreach programs for maintaining and building community support; this is the core of the archaeology activism approach. These programs were funded by an Institute of Library and Museum Services grant

the museum received in 2001. Activities included public information meetings, public events, walking and trolley tours, school visits, public artifact-washing nights, communication with the public during fieldwork, public excavations, and preparation of an exhibit at various Portland Festivals. These events have brought to Portland both scholars and government officials in increasingly growing numbers.

Since it is the children who will be the future community members and leaders of Portland, great focus has been put on a series of extended school programs taught by the museum staff at Portland Elementary, located only two blocks from the Wharf Park. In a reflection of the greater Portland demographics, many of these children come from struggling families living at or around poverty levels, with few opportunities available to them.

The goals of the project were to develop and assess education programs that could be reproduced in the park during and after its construction; to provide students with a greater appreciation of art, archaeology, local history, and the importance of preserving and protecting archaeological and historical sites; and to help strengthen the young people's sense of pride and ownership in their community's history and future.

The students took part in archaeological investigations through doing hands-on excavations, washing artifacts, and learning how to catalog artifacts. Moreover, numerous visits to the park for natural and historical lessons provided the additional reinforcement of the core values. When we began these school programs, we were surprised, even shocked, to find that most of the students did not know that the Ohio River was only blocks from their schools and homes, much less that a park full of woods was nearby. So, in one sense, our immediate goal was to just expose the children to the wonders of their neighborhood and to provide them with a look at what could be. In providing these activities, these students were exposed to experiences that they never would have dreamed of having.

In addition to providing knowledge about the history of their neighborhood, we encourage the students to express how they feel about their community and what they would like to see in the future. We hope they will see that they are also creating history and that each family has a past, which adds to the story and flavor of Portland. The experience of being out of the school building, exploring their own community's history, and being in the park had a positive impact on self-perception.

Contributing to the park partnership, Louisville's Metro Parks Department has carried out the most recent endeavor in the creation of the Wharf Park. They completed the "Ghost Streets" Clearing Project, which involved the removal of weed trees and scrub brush that had grown up within the roadbeds of the historic street grid. In addition, large sections of woods, covering the areas



with the most archaeological potential, were also removed. This phase of development opened the doors for the placement of historic street signs and interpretive signage, enabling visitors to begin visualizing the area as a nineteenth-century bustling riverside port.

The efforts taking place at the Portland Wharf have been inspiring to the community and have increasingly put preservation projects in the Portland neighborhood in the spot light. In 2003, the U.S. Marine Hospital, built between 1845 and 1852 and located only a few blocks east from the Wharf site, was included on the National Trust of Historic Places' top eleven most-endangered list. This designation put Portland preservation on the national stage and was featured on a History Channel Special Presentation. Because of the publicity, the site was awarded several grants and has taken huge steps forward to its restoration, which is well underway.

Another Portland preservation project that has benefited from the increased attention is the Squire Earick House, owned by the Portland Museum. Located just one block south of the proposed entrance to the wharf park and within the boundaries of the National Register Historic District, the Squire Earick House is perhaps the oldest residence in the Portland neighborhood. Archaeologists at the Squire Earick House have utilized an archaeology activism approach, like at the wharf, as a way to garner support and connect with the community in meaningful ways. Portland schoolchildren participated in archaeology that will contribute to the ongoing interpretation of the house. In 2001, the Portland Museum obtained a Save America's Treasures grant, the second in the Portland neighborhood, in addition to two contributions from the city that have funded work in and around the house (Andrews 2003).

Both of these examples illustrate the partnerships being built in the Portland neighborhood with archaeology and historic preservation. The Portland Wharf project is an example of how partnerships and collaboration with a community can come together to benefit the public. Archaeology is one of those partners, which through an activist approach can help change and benefit a community.

### IMPLEMENTING AN ACTIVIST ARCHAEOLOGY

Although the public archaeology conducted at the Portland Wharf featured an activist element from the beginning, the Portland Wharf archaeology project continues to evolve within an activist approach to advocate for the Portland community. Because the Portland community recognized the value of their archaeological resources and invited archaeologists into their community to help realize their vision of an archaeology/history park, the research at the Portland

Wharf Park has moved beyond just using public archaeology to benefit the present to become a proving ground for developing an activist archaeology.

Despite the fact that the archaeological survey project at the Portland Wharf was largely focused on cultural resource management issues, bringing attention to the park and forming partnerships, subsequent archaeological excavations conducted in 2005 and 2006 were designed to explore the potential not only of the archaeological resources but also for archaeology activism. The goal was to collect information about the archaeological resources, the logistics of a long-term public program, and to test some public strategies. The methods used during these projects consisted of traditional archaeological methods and the employment of a variety of ethnographic methods.

In order to learn about the park and the present Portland population, surveys were conducted to collect information about park usage and the visitors to the archaeological dig. One of the surveys was used to collect information about the visitors, such as age group, residence, time spent at the site, and knowledge of Portland history. Additional information about types of programming visitors would like to see at the park and whether they think that it was worth paying a fee to participate also was collected with the survey. Another survey conducted during the project was used to collect information on park usage. Although the Portland Wharf Park has yet to realize the grand dreams of its master plan, the Portland Wharf is currently considered a park. It is primarily a wooded nature area with access to the Ohio River. However, it also consists of a bike and walking trail, which draws many visitors to the park.

During the usage survey, archaeologists kept track of the number of people who visited the park, some basic demographics, and what activities took place. One of the things we learned from the usage survey was that the park was not a destination, but merely a place along the route of the bike path. Most park users were cyclists or runners/walkers taking advantage of the trail. We were able to learn how people entered and exited the park and that access to the park was a major obstacle because of the levee. We learned that there are many obstacles to overcome when converting the park from just a place for a bike trail into a destination.

Also, during the excavations, various public programming strategies were tested, such as experiments with various content on signage, types of site tours, a volunteer program, public participation sessions, and educational programs. We wanted to know what kinds of public programming appealed to visitors the most. We tried to develop programming that accommodated a variety of people, from those who just like to watch and read signs to those who want to get their hands dirty. We wanted to know how long the programs should be and how structured they should be. We also wanted to discover the logis-



tical problems associated with having an open, long-term, active dig site, which would be subject to weather, vandals, and flooding. Thinking about such issues before hand and collecting data about their effectiveness will allow us to develop sustainable public archaeology programs at the park.

One of the key elements to creating Portland Wharf Park as a destination is the ability of archaeology to draw people to the park and what affect this may have on visitor's knowledge of the past and perceptions of Portland. The usage survey found that during the archaeological public programming conducted at the park, the public archaeology programs were the second biggest draw of people to the park, representing 25 percent of the total number of park visitors. Although this was still far less than the 52 percent of people coming to the park to cycle or jog, it demonstrates that archaeological programming could be a significant draw to the park, particularly if access to the park was improved and the programs were better-advertised (Figure 8.3). We also found not only that local residents were interested in the archaeology programs, but also that a majority of those who participated in the archaeological programming were from outside of the community and came to Portland specifically to participate in the archaeology program. Most of those from outside of the community indicated that the program that they participated in helped them understand the history of Portland and positively affected their perception of the community. All of those surveyed wanted to see more archaeological programming at the park; and many, particularly those from outside the community, were willing to pay a fee to participate. This bit of information is particularly important, as funding will be a major obstacle to conducting a sustainable public archaeology program at the park.

All of the information collected during the excavations has helped determine the feasibility of developing a sustainable long-term public archaeological program at the Portland Wharf Park. It also has helped identify some major logistical issues related to site security, access, facilities, and amenities. An activist archaeology is more than just bringing archaeology to the people; it is about learning how to make archaeology beneficial to the people. By thinking about and researching the effectiveness of public archaeology, we can begin to implement an activist archaeology.

Although the Portland community invited us to help them realize their dream of a history and archaeology park, we, as activist archaeologists, have done more than just dig and conduct public archaeology programming. We have become engaged in the struggles and efforts of the community by raising the profile of Portland heritage with the recent listing of the Portland Wharf archaeological site on the National Register of Historic Places. We helped Portland become a Preserve America Community and the Portland Museum receive a grant associated with that program to develop and implement an inter-



Figure 8.3. Cyclists and walkers participate in an archaeological site tour. Photo by M. Jay Stottman.

pretive plan for the Portland Wharf Park. We have provided technical assistance and participated in the development of a neighborhood plan and helped lobby on behalf of the community for the City of Louisville to keep its commitment to the park. Through these efforts, we learned that the development of a successful public archaeology program and an activist approach hinge on collaboration with and understanding of the local community.

One important thing we discovered in the surveys that we conducted was that we really did not know much about or understand the contemporary Portland community. While we knew that there were various neighborhood organizations and groups that we could work with to get a native Portlander's perspective of the community, we did not realize the delicate nature of the politics in and amongst these groups. Despite the fact that we were invited into the community and have been lifelong residents of Louisville, it did not gain us entry into contemporary Portland society nor did it give us a native's perspective. Thus, in addition to conducting our traditional archaeological research, we have been working on expanding our relationship with the Portland Museum and developing relationships with the Portland NOW neighborhood group, Portland Elementary School, Shawnee High School, the Portland Neighborhood Planning Task Force, and the Portland Marine Hospital. Also, we have been collecting information from various studies that have been conducted in

the Portland neighborhood, such as from a City of Louisville economic development project, an urban design class project on Portland, and applied anthropological work conducted in association with the development of a Portland farmer's market.

Through the process of implementing an activist approach, we found ourselves collecting information about Portland's current population, which put us into territory outside of traditional archaeological methods. We looked to our anthropological roots to administer questionnaires and conduct interviews with residents to collect information about the current population's attitudes and knowledge of their identity and its relationship to heritage and history. Eventually, we would also like to include focus groups and a participatory mapping project to learn more about the community and their needs, wants, and desires.

With the information collected, we hope to be able to design a public archaeological program that is collaborative with and understanding of the local community, which will help make Portland Wharf Park a successful tool in the revitalization of Portland. As a part of this program, we intend to involve residents in the archaeological process beyond standard public archaeology programs, perhaps by developing a volunteer core made up of Portland residents who will help conduct fieldwork and lab work and be docents at the park. We are working with teachers at the local high school to identify student interns. And we are working with local heritage sites, such as the Portland Museum and the Marine Hospital, to develop tour packages for tourists. We would like to make the public archaeology program a self-sufficient tourist attraction in itself by developing archaeology programs for tourists and archaeology day camps for kids. Within this strategy, archaeologists can become applied anthropologists working within the domain of cultural heritage and tourism to advocate for the Portland community.

As activist archaeologists we have the opportunity to take on a variety of roles and become advocates for the community. The research conducted at the Portland Wharf will undoubtedly contribute to our understanding of community members and highlight the rich history of this proud community. The public archaeology aspect of the project has vast potential for providing economic stimulus to the community through heritage tourism and helping create a heritage landscape in Portland Wharf Park that fosters identity creation and maintenance. We have the opportunity to become liaisons or brokers to help improve and facilitate a better relationship between local government and the community and to change the stigma of Portland into pride that transcends to the larger Louisville community. Perhaps, through this process of advocacy, we could become sympathetic stakeholders, as Hodder suggests. In order to be an effective activist and to truly understand the community, we must be-

come sympathetic and emotionally attached to the communities that we advocate. A sympathetic stakeholder is not a role that we can assign to ourselves; it is one that can only be earned from the community, which requires a long-term commitment to and understanding of that community. While we know there will be fits and starts to the realization of an activist archaeology at the Portland Wharf Park, it will be a career-long endeavor for these activist archaeologists.

## CONCLUSIONS

With an archaeology activist approach, we can help the present by understanding the past and connecting with a community. In the Portland neighborhood, archaeologists not only are uncovering Portland's illustrious past, but are trying to understand and collaborate with the community and become sympathetic stakeholders and advocates. The community has long recognized that the material remains of their once prosperous past lay buried beneath the silt just over the levee. The idea of using that past to benefit present-day Portland was born from the community itself. From the very beginning the community sought the assistance of archaeologists to help realize the community's dream of a unique park. This situation has created the opportunity for an activist approach to archaeology, where the needs of a community were the impetus for the creation of an archaeology project, which inherently puts activism at the forefront. Thus, we have become civically engaged and are advocates for a community through the participation in their vision. We found ourselves participating in Portland's neighborhood planning effort, providing technical assistance to the neighborhood association, and lobbying for the community in granting efforts and for better city services.

Through this process, we have become more attuned to the neighborhood and have placed more emphasis on understanding the dynamics of the present-day community in order to create a public archaeology program and a park that will suit its needs. At Portland Wharf Park, archaeology is being used to understand the past, to create a heritage tourism site, to help create and negotiate a landscape that fosters Portland's identity, and to advocate for the neighborhood, which just may contribute to the revitalization of disenfranchised community. The Portland Wharf Park and its archaeology program are not just about interpreting the past, but also about affecting change in the present. Although this effort has met many obstacles, from a lack of funding to political changes and a national recession, and has yet to produce dramatic results, it demonstrates that an activist archaeology requires a long-term commitment to a community and that change is often a slow process. There is no doubt that we and archaeology have become a part of the Portland community; and, even-

tually, the activist approach we have taken will help Portland reconnect with its roots at the Portland Wharf, located just over the floodwall, and create positive change with the community.

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## 9

# The Saratoga of the South Will Rise (or Be Razed) Again

## *Archaeologists Collaborating with Communities*

SARAH E. MILLER AND A. GWYNN HENDERSON

#### INTRODUCTION

Any archaeologist will tell you that an artifact's context is as important as its characteristics for revealing information about the past. The importance of context also extends to the research setting within which archaeologists work. Most recognize that archaeology does not deal exclusively with past cultures and are aware that living peoples are stakeholders in their research. However, this awareness does not often inform their work in any meaningful or systematic way. An activist archaeology asks archaeologists to become more consciously aware of the contexts within which they conduct public archaeology, to recognize the potential impacts their research can have on the communities within which they work, to include community members as equal participants in their research when they can and when the opportunity arises, and to actively engage in social change through that research.

This chapter follows the Crab Orchard Archaeology Education Project, which took place in the small town of Crab Orchard, Kentucky, over the course of its tumultuous development and satisfying implementation. Our aim is to illustrate the dynamic collaborative relationship between archaeologists and the communities within which they work and to examine the anticipated and unanticipated impacts collaboration of this kind can have on both parties. Student participants gained a new perspective on the history and significance of their community, in spite of how severely compromised the archaeological site on their school grounds proved to be. We learned to approach a site with more than an archaeologist's eye for research significance and value and with more than an educator's eye for a learning opportunity. Project participants chal-