

## The 2023 Training Program at Holman Springs

Carl Drexler – Arkansas Archeological Survey, Magnolia

Last year's Training Program, the first after a two-year hiatus occasioned by the pandemic, was intended to wrap up the research initiated by the 1984–1986 Training Programs. A few weeks of digging and we would be able to put this long-dormant project into publication to enlighten our understanding of Caddo history in the area and of the long history of Caddo saltmaking in southwest Arkansas. Then, we happened upon a nineteenth century salt furnace that we had not expected to find. We also learned more about the patterning of features, Caddo and Settler, and, as is too often the case, excavations turned up as many questions as they did answers. After discussions between the Survey and Society, and consultation with the Caddo Nation, we are going to give it one more go at the Holman Springs site (Figure 1) this summer. It'll be the last one we do there. I mean it. For real, this time. I meant it last time, but for really-real this time.

For context, particularly for those who will be getting their first experience in archeology this summer, the Holman Springs site lies adjacent to a salt marsh in the valley of the Rolling Fork River, just west of De Queen, seat of Sevier County. This is part of the Little River Region, an area of Arkansas defined by the boundaries of the Little River's watershed. It is one of the least-well understood portions of Arkansas, from a historical and archeological standpoint, as it is not summarized in the Arkansas State Plan (Davis 1982). Michael Hoffman's (1971) dissertation is the longest study on it, but it is, by its own admission, a *partial* archeological sequence, and it doesn't talk about the site much. The work we are doing helps to fill in this gap.



### The Site

So, what is the site? Well, you've seen the word "salt" several times already in this article, and the Arkansas Archeology Month poster for this year has "SALT" emblazoned across the top, so it should not surprise you to learn that it's a salt site. It lies adjacent to a salt marsh, whose brine has been used for centuries to make salt for numerous purposes (food, industry, trade, etc.). The site's archeological record contains traces of both Caddo and Settler saltmaking, which we've been excavating for the past few... well, decades.

This site was the focus of the 1985 and 1986 Training Programs, headed up by Frank Schambach, the SAU Station head at the time. For many reasons, those projects were never written up, and we started a new effort to finish them up in the past few years. We needed some additional field data, which we started to get together during the 2022 Training Program. Last summer's project was a great accomplishment in that

Figure 1. View of Area 3 at Holman Springs during the 2022 Training Program. Photo by Rachel Tebbetts.



Figure 2. Nineteenth century salt furnace excavated in Holman Springs during the 2022 Training Program.

it established the EXACT location of the 1980s grids (now documented in millimeter-precise global mapping coordinates), uncovered further traces of Caddo salt production on the site, and saw us happen upon a truly remarkable surprise. That surprise was an early-nineteenth century salt furnace, one of only a handful ever excavated in the United States. How cool is that?

We came out of last summer's dig with a lot of answers to the original research questions, plus a host of new questions, many attached to the discovery of that salt furnace. Those new questions combined with some other logistical considerations to make it sensible to return to the site this coming summer. We are excited to get the chance to do so. Let's spend a minute on what we are going to be doing.

### What Are We Going to Do?

First, as one might expect, we're going to explore more of the salt furnace. We uncovered much of it last year, but the nice, clear order seen at one end of the furnace gave way to first brick rubble and then a pit area containing huge amounts of heavily blackened,

sooty material. We need to spend some more time exposing that blackened area and getting under the rubble to see if there are intact portions underneath. This will tell us a lot about the structure of the salt furnace and how it was designed. This will give us the chance to compare it to the few others excavated in the Trans-Mississippi South (e.g. Skinner 1971). That black, sooty pit holds a lot of interest, too. Bring soap, though.

We will also be doing further excavations in the Caddo saltmaking area near to the salt marsh. We had our Basic Excavation classes there last year, and we will have them there, again. There were some pots in place, stacks of sherds (probable elevators for keeping pots above the fire), and other elements associated with Caddo salt production. So, between the work on the salt furnace and the excavations in this part of the site, we will be expanding our understanding of both. These will be sited to fill in some of the gaps between units dug in the 1980s. Filling in those gaps will complete some of the maps of features started back then, giving us a fuller understanding of the architecture of the site.



Finally, let's talk about the eastern edge of the site. Our discussions with locals last year changed our understanding of where the mound on the site was before it was bulldozed in the 1970s. I thought it was near the center of the site. It's actually on the eastern edge. So, with that now established, I am planning to have an excavation area in the old mound footprint. The point of doing this would be to try and find the base of the mound, recognized by the cessation of the massive deposition of pottery sherds. Finding a sample from that level that can be subjected to radiocarbon dating would give us the age of the onset of deposition of that large pile of sherds, which would tell us when that scale of production started. Given that the history of Caddo saltmaking shows some chronological variation across the Caddo homeland, that would be a very useful piece of information to have.

This last effort is going to be a delicate one. As is widely known, mounds serve many purposes in communities around the world, and many of those purposes involve the interment of human remains. There are burial mounds that are, of course, full of them, but also things like platform mounds that would have been surmounted with a temple or leader's house might still have a few burials placed in it. Examples from elsewhere in the Caddo homeland tell us this. Throughout this project, and the Lockesburg Mounds project that preceded it, it has been a goal to avoid burials to the best of our abilities. This arises from conversations with the Caddo Nation, who have reviewed the work plans for this project and we are grateful for their input. To that end, we are having Jami Lockhart, from the Survey's Computer Services Program, come to the site to complete geophysical survey ahead of the project. We will also be keeping that portion of the dig moving slowly and carefully, with a small crew.

The laboratory portion of the Training Program will continue to be a vital part of the work. Dr. Marybeth Trubitt (ARAS-HSU) will again serve as lab director, but she and the folks in the lab will not be tasked with clearing the backlog of the 1980s dig, as was the case before. We will focus more on *not* creating as much of a backlog from this project. Our experience from 2022 tells us that people should be kept busy enough dealing with the influx.

There will be classes, as before. We will have the usual offerings of Basic Excavation and Basic Lab during both weeks. Glen Akridge will be teaching an Archeological Chemistry class, Emily Beahm will offer Photogrammetry. We will also have Site Mapping and Site Survey. Finally, Andrew Beaupré will teach Historical Archeology, which should connect well with the nineteenth century salt furnace and segue nicely into the planned upcoming Training Program focused on Arkansas Post.

We are planning on having three evening talks, planned right now to be Dr. Beaupré, one of our colleagues from the Oklahoma Archeological Survey, and one representative from the Caddo Nation. There will also be a few camp dinners, potlucks, and other community gatherings away from the field. I look forward to hanging out with you all!

### Logistics

Camping is planned to be at the DeQueen Lake campground again. De Queen restaurant offerings are about what they were last year, with a suite of fast food options, sit-down places, and some really solid Mexican food. The taco truck is still in full swing on the town square, and is popular enough that a local bike race starting this year, the "Cossataco," is named after it, at least in part. We just had the Caddo Conference over in Hochatown, Oklahoma, which has some other options if you're up for a 20-30 minute drive.

I look forward to seeing you all there!

### References

Davis, Hester (editor)

1982 *A State Plan for the Conservation of Archeological Resources in Arkansas*. Arkansas Archeological Survey Research Series no. 21. Arkansas Archeological Survey, Fayetteville.

Hoffman, Michael

1971 *A Partial Archeological Sequence for the Little River Region, Arkansas*. PhD dissertation, Department of Anthropology, Harvard University. Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Skinner, S. Allen

1971 *Historical Archeology of the Neches Saline, Smith County, Texas*. Unpublished manuscript, Texas Historical Commission, Austin.

# Arkansas Archeological Society Training Program: Holman Springs

## June 3–17, 2023 | De Queen, Arkansas

### Where, When, What & Who

The 2023 Training Program is a collaborative project between the Arkansas Archeological Survey (ARAS) and the Arkansas Archeological Society (AAS). The Training Program, which will begin Saturday, June 3, and continue through Saturday, June 17, will be held in De Queen, Arkansas, in the southwestern part of the state. Our main base of operations will be at the University of Arkansas-Cossatot. Station Archeologist, Dr. Carl Drexler, ARAS – SAU, will be directing the Training Program.

### Membership

Participants must be current (2023) members of the Arkansas Archeological Society. Please go to the Society's website to become a member or to renew your membership: [arkarch.org](http://arkarch.org).

### Under Age 18 & Minimum Age

All participants under age 18 must have a parent, guardian, or adult sponsor with them. **The adult must also register and be with the child at all times.** Minimum age is 8 years old. No children younger than 8 years old may participate in the Training Program and no unregistered children are permitted on site or in the seminars.

### Registration, Cancellations & Refunds

The deadline for early registration is May 5. After May 5, late registration will incur a \$15 late registration fee. Registrants must sign and return the accompanying Project Participation Agreement, Release, and Waiver, and the Code of Conduct form with their registrations. If you need to cancel your attendance at the Training Program, please be sure to contact Mel Zabecki ([mzabeck@uark.edu](mailto:mzabeck@uark.edu) or 479-575-6550) and let her know. All cancellations made by **May 15** will receive a full refund. Cancellations **after** May 15 will not receive a refund.

### Students

If you are a student who has made arrangements with their advisor to receive credit hours for attending the Training Program, please be sure to indicate this on the registration form. Mel Zabecki will contact you to request more information.

### Directions

The Training Program Headquarters will be at the Adams Agricultural Building on the UA-Cossatot campus located off of US 70 West (W. Collin Raye Dr.), 183 College Dr., De Queen, about two hours and 34 minutes' drive (145 miles) southwest on US 70 West from Little Rock, about an hour drive (55 miles) north on US 71 N from Texarkana, two hours and 39 minutes' drive (138 miles) south from I-40 on US-71S.

### Facilities

The AAS Headquarters, field lab and seminars will be located in the Adams Agricultural Building. Orientation and the evening programs will be held in the Skilled Trades Building.

### Check-In

Our workday starts at 7:00 in the morning, so you should **arrive the day before** you intend to start your first day of work. When you first arrive, the first stop should be at Headquarters to check in and collect your 2<sup>nd</sup> Packet of information and name badge. Headquarters will be staffed each work day from **7:00 am until 5:00 pm**.

### Accommodations

#### Motels and Lodges

Call or visit websites for rates, amenities, and availability. Mileage noted below indicates the distance to Headquarters at the UA-Cossatot campus.

- De Queen Courtyard Inn, 111 Hwy 71, De Queen, (870) 642-2034, (2.3 miles)



Map of the De Queen / UA-Cossatot / Pine Ridge Campground area.

- Palace Motel, 607 W. Collin Raye Dr., De Queen, (870) 642-9627, palacemotel.us (1.4 miles)
- Western Plaza Inn, 110 Hwy 71, De Queen, (870) 642-6990, westernplaza.com (2.2 miles)
- The Lodge at De Queen Country Club, Club House Dr., De Queen, (870) 642-8800 (5.3 miles)

**Society Campground**  
**IMPORTANT – PLEASE READ!**

The Society campground will be located at the US Army Corps of Engineers’ Pine Ridge, which is located on the shores of Lake De Queen. There are fire rings, picnic tables, electrical (30 and 50 amp) hook-ups, and water at the camp sites. There are two new shower buildings each with two showers for women and two for men. There is no designated swimming at the campground but campers can swim at their own risk.

Ten RV sites have been secured and prepaid by the Society to keep all camping participants together as much as possible. Just like last time, we will be sharing RV sites with tent campers; a maximum of two tents per site with RV. This will enable us to share electricity with tent campers. Generators are not allowed. You must pay for every day that your RV or tent is set up, even if you are not there.

**\*ALL SOCIETY CAMP SITES WILL BE ASSIGNED ON A FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED BASIS.\***

If you arrive and there isn’t a spot in the Society campground, your payment for camping will be refunded to you and you will need to find a camp site at Pine Ridge in the non-reservable sites or non-electrical sites or other accommodations. The campground attendant and Society Camp Boss will work with you to locate a spot.

Refunds for camping will only be made for those who arrive and are unable to secure their pre-paid Society camp spot, and need to camp in a non-Society spot at Pine Ridge. Non-Society camping spots are pricing around \$18 a night, depending on the spot.

The Society camping spots are reserved Wednesday, June 1 through Saturday, June 18. Check out for campers that are still there on Sunday, June 19, is 5 pm. Payment to the Society is as follows: tents - \$9 per night; pop-ups - \$12 per night; and, RVs - \$15 per night. If you come earlier or stay longer, you will need to make your reservations through recreation.gov or call 1-877-444-6777. This is also true if you decide to camp in a non-Society camping spot, although most non-Society camping spots are “walk-up” only.

The main road to Pine Ridge is De Queen Lake Rd., just off of Hwy. 71. If that road is flooded, use Bellah Mine Rd., approximately 5 miles north of De Queen Lake Rd. Follow the signs. Call the Army Corps of Engineers Office at 501-324-5655 to find out the status of the road. When you arrive, find the Soci-

## Field Notes

ety Camp Boss who will help you find a camping spot. Campground check in is 6:00 pm ending at 9:00 pm. No set up after 10:00 pm. That is when quiet hours begin. Give yourself extra time to set up your tent or camper.

### Transportation

Transportation to and from the sites will be by vehicles ARAS vehicles. All participants who are camping will need to meet at the designated spot at camp to ride in the vehicles vehicles going to Headquarters, lab, and seminars, and from there, to the site. Those participants not staying in the camp (staying in hotels or commuting from home), can park at the UA-Cossatot, Adams Agricultural building parking area. The vehicles vehicles will stop there to pick up anyone needing to go the field.

### Food and Ice

Each person is responsible for their own meals. There are several stores in De Queen to shop for food, ice, and other items you might need. You should bring lunch with you each day, regardless of whether you will be working in the field, in the lab, or attending a seminar. Vehicles Vehicles will not be returning to camp for lunch.

### Basic Schedule

You may come to the Training Program for as long or short a time as you like. Please note: **WE WORK EVERYDAY**, except Monday, June 12, our only day off. We will start the workday at 7:00 am when the vehicles vehicles will leave for the site from UA-Cossatot. For campers, the vehicles will leave the campground at 6:30 am, heading to UA-Cossatot. Lunch break will be from 10:30 – 11:30 am, and the workday ends at 3:30 pm, allowing attendees time to rest and relax before supper and attending any evening talks or other activities. A detailed schedule of all activities, seminars, evening programs, and special events will be in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Packet of information that you will pick up at Headquarters when you arrive. Announcements and work schedules will be posted in camp and on the door at Headquarters. Some important dates are shown on the table.

June 2	Friday	Set up camp, Headquarters, and Lab Staff and Supervisors Meeting at 4:00pm
June 3	Saturday	First Orientation, Lab, Field Activities begin at 7:00am ( <b>Vehicle pick-up from camp is at 6:30am</b> )
June 5	Monday	1st Session Seminars start
June 9	Friday	Last day of 1st Session Seminars
June 12	Monday	DAY OFF! No field or lab activities New Supervisors meeting at 5:00pm Last Orientation at 5:30pm!
June 13	Tuesday	2nd Session Seminars start
June 17	Saturday	Last day of 2nd Session Seminars
June 18	Sunday	Close excavations (if needed) and pack up

### Orientations

All first-time attendees must attend the Orientation prior to participating. Orientations will be scheduled as follows:

- Saturday, June 3 (7:00 am)
- Sunday, June 4 (7:00 am)
- Monday, June 5 (7:00 am)
- Friday, June 9 (7:00 am)
- Saturday, June 10 (7:00 am)
- Monday, June 12 (1:00 pm)
- Tuesday, June 13 (7:00 am)

Please indicate which Orientation you will attend when registering. If none of the scheduled Orientations work for your plans, please contact Mel Zabecki to discuss; [mzabeck@uark.edu](mailto:mzabeck@uark.edu) or 479-575-6550. Anyone is welcome at Orientation, no matter if you're a new participant or a returning one who wants a refresher.

### Seminars

In addition to excavating and working in the lab, Training Program participants have an opportunity to register for a variety of seminars. You must register for seminars in advance on the Registration Form. If you want to take a seminar, be sure to register early. Seminars fill up fast!

New participants are strongly encouraged to sign up for one of the Basic Seminars: Basic Excavation,



Basic Lab, or Site Survey. Basic Excavation is especially recommended and is a full-day seminar.

Participants may take one seminar each weekly session of the Training Program. Some seminars require completion of prerequisites, unless special permission is granted, as noted below. Most seminars are held for 4 hours each day and last for 5 days. Participants must attend all days of a seminar to complete it. Since most seminars take half of each day, participants are able to do fieldwork or work in the lab the other half of the day.

There are no seminars on Saturday and Sunday, June 3 – 4 nor Sunday and Monday June 11 – 12. Seminars may be subject to cancellation if fewer than 3 people register.

### Seminars – Session 1

#### Monday, June 5 through Friday, June 9

- **Basic Excavation:** Gary Knudsen  
(Full-day seminar)
- **Basic Lab:** Matthew Rooney (Half-day seminar)
- **Archeological Chemistry:** Glen Akridge  
(Half-day seminar);
- **Site Survey:** Bob Scott (Half-day seminar)

### Seminars – Session 2

#### Tuesday, June 13 through Saturday, June 17

- **Basic Excavation:** Paige Ford  
(Full-day seminar)
- **Basic Lab:** Michelle Rathgaber  
(Half-day seminar)
- **Photogrammetry:** Emily Beahm  
(Half-day seminar); *Prerequisites* - Basic Excavation and Basic Lab
- **Historical Archeology:** Andrew Beaupré  
(Half-day seminar)
- **Mapping:** Jessica Kowalski (Half-day seminar)

### Assignment of Activities

The assignment sheet will be posted as soon as possible each evening at Headquarters and all participants should be sure to check the assignment sheet each morning before heading to seminars, field, or lab for possible changes. All participants are responsible for adhering to the assignments given to them. The

assignments given and any possible changes made reflect where workers are most needed in the lab and in the field in order to accomplish research goals. Any requests to be moved to another work area or to have time off must be done in advance and first brought to the Training Program Director for approval and then communicated to Gillian Steeno at Headquarters. The Training Program Director, this year Carl Drexler, will make final assignments and participants must abide by the decision.

### First Packet of Information

Registrants will receive a detailed information packet and seminar assignment information shortly after May 15. Please indicate on the Registration Form if you would like to receive the information packet by email. A second packet with additional information will be distributed at the Training Program when you arrive and check in at Headquarters.

### Tools of the Trade

You may want to build your own personal “excavation kit” and the Society will have for sale some of the small tools you will need. These include for example, a 3-meter metric measuring tape, a Marshalltown trowel, and a string line-level. Also for sale will be textbooks for seminars, t-shirts, ARAS and AAS publications, and memorabilia. You will need to bring items with you from home: a clipboard to hold all your paperwork, sturdy gloves, and pencils. A list of recommended supplies will be in the first packet of information that will be sent to registrants. We can take credit cards at Headquarters, but remember to bring your checkbook or cash as backup in case technology fails us!

### Weather and Wildlife

You can generally count on the weather to be hot and very unpredictable in Arkansas in the summer-time. Come prepared for any kind of weather. Be sure to bring plenty of insect repellent for ticks, chiggers, and mosquitoes. We will have sunshades out there to provide protection from the sun and lots of water so be sure to bring a water bottle! Bring lots of sunscreen and reapply often. A good hat with a wide brim and

## Field Notes

wearing long sleeves will help you too. There may be wildlife in the campground and at the site. Make sure you secure your food and tents at the camping areas in the evening and before going out to the field and pick up the trash at the site before coming in from the field each day. There will likely be rain, even some strong thunderstorms, so be prepared with rain gear too. Sturdy boots are also a good idea.

## The Bottom Line

We have a great opportunity here to learn a lot about Arkansas's past! This is the most inexpensive archeological training experience available within the

United States. What better way to learn about Arkansas archeology and do archeology the right way? If you are reading this and considering registering for the Training Program, that means that you share the same interests as so many AAS members before you and currently! The love of the outdoors, the love of people, history, science, anthropology, archeology, and learning, participating, and contributing to something that will benefit more than just you. You are a volunteer! You matter. If you attend this dig, you will find more than just dirt, sweat, and bug bites. You will find old friends, new friends, camaraderie and just plain fun!!! Come join the fun!!!

# "We're Back!"

