



Paul Heuston

ALBERT C. SPAULDING¹
1914–1990

Albert C. Spaulding, professor emeritus at the University of California, Santa Barbara, died May 29, 1990, after a long battle with cancer. His friends and colleagues greatly admired his courage, dignity, and characteristic low-keyed sense of humor, which he maintained to the very end.

American Antiquity, 57(2), 1992, pp. 197–201.
Copyright © 1992 by the Society for American Archaeology

Spaulding was born August 13, 1914, in Chouteau, Montana. He was raised in Missoula, where his father was dean of the School of Forestry at the University of Montana. When they were sophomores at the University of Montana, he married Charlotte Smith, his former high-school sweetheart. Albert and Charlotte had two children, Ronald and Catherine. Spaulding received his B.A. in economics from the University of Montana in 1935, and his M.A. in anthropology from the University of Michigan in 1937.

After teaching one term at the University of Montana (1935–1936), he joined the Works Progress Administration (WPA) as a supervisor in various archaeological programs. From 1937 to 1941, Spaulding conducted archaeological projects in the states of South Dakota, Nebraska, Mississippi, and Kentucky. The WPA experience gave Spaulding, like so many others of his time, an opportunity to expand his regional knowledge of North American prehistory. During those years he worked with George I. Quimby, Joffre Coe, Jesse Jennings, Will C. McKern, and William S. Webb.

In 1938, Spaulding began his doctoral studies at Columbia University where he studied under Professor W. Duncan Strong. Gordon R. Willey, a classmate, reminisces:

Al and I were in Duncan Strong's southeastern U.S. archaeological seminar in the fall of 1939. We were the only ones in it with southeastern field experience so, I suppose, you could say we dominated it. We were very congenial, but I think Al always felt I was a bit overenthusiastic in some of my archaeological interpretations.

"Gordon," he would caution me, "you have a superposition of Coles Creek Incised [or whatever it was] over Marksville Incised [at such and such a site location]. This is an established, evidential fact. On the other hand, that Coles Creek Incised gradually evolved out of Marksville Incised is a different kind of statement. It is an hypothesis, a speculation. It may be a very reasonable speculation, but it is still a speculation."

I can still see and hear him. He was always neatly dressed, his slender, trim figure in a dark suit, the knot in his tie pulled up neatly and tightly. The large, intelligent dark eyes would hold yours as he expounded. He had fine, sharply defined, rather delicate features. His manner of speaking was very precise, almost exaggeratedly so. He did this to make his points, and his points always added up to the proposition that archaeology—if not yet a science—should be one, and that the best way to bring this about was for its practitioners to be certain of what they were saying, to be specific and, if at all possible, to be quantitative.

I remember some of the things he would talk about in those days—when he and I and perhaps one or two others would go out for a beer after one of those afternoon seminar sessions. Some of them were matters he returned to, years later, in his precisely phrased and polished articles. Among other things, he spoke of the "dimensions of archaeology," of form, space, and time, and of the interplay among these three as we set about trying to understand the past. He was horrified once when I said something to the effect that such and such a culture phase "embraced more time than space." "Willey," he scolded—he had a way of using my last name when he was particularly provoked with me—"you know better than to say a thing like that. Time and space cannot be measured on the same scale." It did me no good to explain my metaphysical figure of speech as being no more than that. He simply said: "If you go around saying things like that, someone might be dumb enough to take it seriously" [Gordon Willey, personal communication, 1990].

During his last year in residence at Columbia (1939–1940) Spaulding was named university fellow, the first anthropology graduate student to be so honored. He completed his doctoral studies in 1942 but needed to publish his dissertation in order to acquire the degree. Because of the war, however, publication was delayed. The publication, "Northeastern Archaeology and General Trends in the Northern Forest Zone," appeared in 1946, at which time the Ph.D. degree was conferred.

During the war years (1942–1946) Spaulding worked for the War Mapping Program of the U.S. Forest Service. He was employed variously as instrument man, assistant topographic engineer, and assistant photogrammetric engineer. He spent about a year mapping the coastal range of southern California and was then transferred to Pennsylvania.

After the war, Spaulding took a one-year position at the University of Kansas. This was followed by a position at the University of Michigan, where he began as an assistant professor/assistant curator in 1947 and moved through the ranks to professor/curator. Spaulding left Michigan in 1959 to serve in the newly established Office of Social Science at the National Science Foundation (NSF). At first he was program director for two programs—"Anthropology" and "History and Philosophy of Science"—but in 1961 his job as program director of anthropology became full-time. As the first director of anthropology at NSF, Spaulding influenced the shape of the program. His most enduring accomplishment is that he determined the way that NSF regarded anthropology and all social sciences, essentially because he caused NSF to take anthropology seriously as a science.

In 1963 Spaulding taught briefly at Yale University before he left NSF for the University of Oregon, where he served as chairman of the Department of Anthropology until 1966. In that year he moved to the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he continued until his retirement in 1983. He was dean of the College of Letters and Science at UCSB from 1967 to 1971. After retirement in 1983, he continued to teach on a reduced basis until his illness forced him to discontinue teaching in 1988.

Spaulding was active in several professional societies. From the period 1953 to 1964, he served as associate editor, secretary, vice president, and president of the Society for American Archaeology. He served twice (1963–1966, 1973–1976) on the executive board of the American Anthropological Association and once (1978–1981) on its finance committee. He served as vice president (Section H) of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1964 and on its nominating committee in 1967–1968. He was president of the Michigan Archaeological Society in 1958–1959 and of the Society for California Archaeology in 1967–1968.

Spaulding is remembered most for his methodological work rather than field studies, but in his earlier years he worked in many different states including Alaska, California, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Illinois, in addition to those states where he worked under WPA auspices.

His impact upon archaeological method has been very great. As early as the 1950s Spaulding began urging other archaeologists to use quantitative methods as research tools. His arguments were first framed in the context of formulating typologies of artifacts, but were later expanded to include other archaeological activities. Spaulding's basic view throughout his career was that quantification increased methodological precision, and that precision was a fundamental underpinning of scientific research. Despite this perspective Spaulding never succumbed to the fascination of numbers for their own sake. He was always able to ask sensible questions regarding the nature of prehistoric societies and would apply numerical methods in attempting to answer those questions only when they were appropriate for the task. His advocacy of greater methodological rigor, of course, was not carried out in isolation but along with others who formed a vanguard in changing the nature of the discipline. Spaulding greatly enjoyed the intellectual debate that centered on these issues.

Spaulding demanded exceptionally high standards from his students as he did of himself. He was always willing to take time to advise students (and colleagues) about the methods that would be appropriate for dealing with archaeological data. He was a careful, critical reader of manuscripts and a stickler for using the English language in a clear, concise manner. Because of these skills, colleagues frequently asked him to criticize works in preparation. His comments ranged from a concern with the placement of commas to fundamental questions of epistemology.

In 1981, the Society for American Archaeology awarded Spaulding its Distinguished Service Award and in 1985 its Special Award for Distinguished Service in conjunction with the society's 50th-anniversary celebration.

After his death, the Albert C. Spaulding memorial lectureship was created at UCSB in his honor.

BARBARA VOORHIES

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ALBERT C. SPAULDING

- 1940 Review of *The Archaeology of Santa Marta, Colombia*, by J. A. Mason. *American Anthropologist* 42: 507–508.
- 1946 Northeastern Archaeology and General Trends in the Northern Forest Zone. In *Man in Northeastern America*, edited by F. Johnson, pp. 143–167. Papers of the R. S. Peabody Foundation for Archaeology No. 3. Andover, Massachusetts.
- 1947 A Hopewellian Burial Site in the Lower Republican River Valley, Kansas (with F. Schultz). *American Antiquity* 13:306–312.
- 1949 The Middle Woodland Period in the Central Plains. *Proceedings of the Fifth Plains Conference for Archaeology* 5(1):106–111.
Review of *Anthropology*, by A. L. Kroeber. *American Antiquity* 14:235.
- 1950 Review of *A Manual of Archaeological Field Methods*, edited by R. F. Heizer. *American Antiquity* 14: 351.

- 1951 Recent Advances in Surveying Techniques and Their Application to Archaeology. *Essays on Archaeological Methods* 8:2–16.
- 1952 The Origin of the Adena Culture of the Ohio Valley. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 8:260–268.
- 1953 The Current Status of Aleutian Archaeology. *Memoirs of the Society for American Archaeology* 9:29–31.
- Review of *Hopewellian Communities in Illinois*, edited by T. Deuel. *American Anthropologist* 55:275.
- Review of *Measurements of Some Prehistoric Design Developments in the Southeastern States*, by J. A. Ford. *American Anthropologist* 55:588–591.
- Statistical Techniques for the Discovery of Artifact Types. *American Antiquity* 18:305–313.
- 1954 Reply to Ford. *American Antiquity* 19:391–393.
- 1955 Review of *The Prehistoric Cultures of the Horn of Africa: An Analysis of the Stone Age Cultural and Climatic Succession in the Somalilands and Eastern Parts of Abyssinia*, by J. D. Clark. *American Anthropologist* 57:1329–1330.
- Prehistoric Cultural Development in the Eastern United States. In *New Interpretations of Aboriginal American Culture History*, edited by B. J. Meggars and C. Evans, pp. 12–27. Anthropological Society of Washington, Washington, D.C.
- Review of *Outline of Cultures in the Ohio Region*, by R. G. Morgan. *American Antiquity* 20:289.
- 1956 *The Arzberger Site, Hughes County, South Dakota*. Occasional Contributions No. 16. Museum of Anthropology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
- Review of *The Plains Anthropologist*, No. 2, edited by F. Fenenga. *American Antiquity* 21:321–322.
- An Archaeological Approach to the Study of Cultural Stability (with R. L. Rands, W. W. Taylor, R. H. Thompson, and R. Wauchope). In *Seminars in Archaeology: 1955*, edited by R. Wauchope, pp. 31–58. Memoirs No. 11. Society for American Archaeology, Salt Lake City.
- 1957 The Old Copper Culture and the Keweenaw Waterway (with G. I. Quimby). *Fieldiana, Anthropology* 36(8):189–201. Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago.
- Review of *Piecing Together the Past: The Interpretation of Archaeological Data*, by V. G. Childe. *American Anthropologist* 59:564–565.
- Old Copper Culture. *American Antiquity* 22:436–437.
- 1958 The Significance of Differences Between Radiocarbon Dates. *American Antiquity* 23:309–311.
- Review of “Method and Theory in American Archaeology: An Operational Basis for Culture-Historical Integration,” by P. Phillips and G. R. Willey, and “Method and Theory in American Archaeology II: Historical-Developmental Interpretation,” by G. R. Willey and P. Phillips. *American Antiquity* 23:85–87.
- 1959 Review of *A Guide to Archaeological Field Methods*, edited by R. F. Heizer. *American Antiquity* 24:434.
- 1960 The Dimensions of Archaeology. In *Essays in the Science of Culture in Honor of Leslie A. White*, edited by G. E. Dole and R. L. Carneiro, pp. 437–456. Crowell, New York.
- The National Science Foundation and Archaeological Research. *American Antiquity* 23:441.
- Review of *The Prehistory of Southern Africa*, by J. D. Clark. *American Anthropologist* 62:1102–1104.
- Statistical Description and Comparison of Artifact Assemblages. *Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology* 28:60–83. Quadrangle Books, Chicago.
- 1961 Review of *Approach to Archaeology*, by S. Piggot. *American Antiquity* 26:123.
- 1962 *Archaeological Investigations on Agattu, Aleutian Islands*. Anthropological Papers No. 18. Museum of Anthropology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
- 1964 Review of *Explanation in Social Science*, by R. Brown. *American Anthropologist* 66:432–434.
- 1965 Review of *Data Quality Control—A New Research Technique*, by R. Naroll. *American Anthropologist* 67:1041–1042.
- 1966 Review of *The Dynamics of Stylistic Change in Arikara Ceramics*, by J. Deetz. *American Anthropologist* 68:1064–1065.
- 1968 Explanation in Archeology. In *New Perspectives in Archeology*, edited by L. R. Binford and S. R. Binford, pp. 33–39. Aldine, Chicago.
- 1969 Review of *American Historical Anthropology (Essays in Honor of Leslie Spier)*, edited by C. L. Riley and W. W. Taylor. *American Antiquity* 34:195–196.
- 1971 Some Elements of Quantitative Archaeology. In *Mathematics in the Archaeological and Historical Sciences*, edited by F. R. Hodson and R. Tatu, pp. 1–16. University of Edinburgh Press, Edinburgh.
- 1973 The Concept of Artifact Type in Archaeology. *Plateau* 45:149–163.
- Review of *Models in Archaeology*, edited by D. L. Clarke. *Science* 181:933–934.
- Archaeology in the Active Voice: The New Anthropology. In *Research and Theory in Current Archeology*, edited by C. Redman, pp. 337–354. John Wiley & Sons, New York.
- 1974 Review of *Systematics in Prehistory*, by R. C. Dunnell. *American Antiquity* 39:513–516.
- 1976 Multifactor Analysis of Association: An Application to Owasco Ceramics. In *Cultural Change and Continuity*, edited by C. E. Cleland, pp. 59–68. Academic Press, New York.
- 1977 On Growth and Form in Archaeology: Multivariate Analysis. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 33: 1–15.
- 1978 Artifact Classes, Association and Seriation. In *Archaeological Essays in Honor of Irving B. Rouse*, edited by R. C. Dunnell and E. S. Hall, pp. 27–40. Mouton, The Hague.

- 1982 Structure in Archaeological Data: Nominal Variables. In *Essays on Archaeological Typology*, edited by R. Whallon and J. A. Brown, pp. 1–20. Center for American Archeology Press, Evanston.
- Human Behavior, Explanation, Archaeology, History, and Science (with D. B. Bamforth). *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 1:179–195.
- 1983 Quantification in Archaeological Analysis. Review of *Mathematics in Archaeology*, by C. Orton. *The Quarterly Review of Archaeology* 4(2):3, 12–13.
- 1985 Fifty Years of Theory. *American Antiquity* 50:301–308.

NOTE

¹I am deeply grateful to Charlotte Spaulding, Mary Greene Seymour, Gordon Willey, and Elman Service for their assistance in preparing this obituary.



Upper Peninsula, Michigan, ca. 1955 (from left to right): Albert C. Spaulding, Gary Vescelius, and Mark Papworth (courtesy of Charlotte Spaulding).