



## CYNTHIA IRWIN-WILLIAMS<sup>1</sup> 1936–1990

Cynthia Irwin-Williams was born April 14, 1936, in Denver, Colorado, and died in July 1990 in Reno, Nevada. She and her brother, Henry, became interested in archaeology while they were quite young. When Cynthia was 14 and Henry 12, they began to spend weekends and vacations working in the Department of Archaeology at the Denver Museum of Natural History, and frequently joined the curator, Dr. H. Marie Wormington, in the field. This led to publications on the Magic Mountain, LoDaisKa, and Agate Bluff sites around Denver and the development of Cynthia's interest in the Archaic period.

She received her B.A. and M.A. in anthropology from Radcliffe College in 1957 and 1958, respectively, and her Ph.D. in anthropology from Harvard University in 1963.

In 1957 Cynthia worked at the Colorado Historical Museum (Denver), and in 1963–1964 she lectured at Hunter College in New York. She taught at Eastern New Mexico University from 1964 until 1982, and from 1978 to 1982 held an endowed chair (the Llano Estacado Distinguished Research Professorship). In 1982, she became executive director of the Social Science Center, Desert Research Institute of Nevada, Reno, which expanded substantially under her guidance. From 1988 until her death she held the title of Research Professor, Quaternary Science Center, at the same institution.

Cynthia Irwin-Williams had over 30 years experience in the development, conduct, and administration of multidisciplinary projects focused on human development in relationship to environmental context and climatic change. She had over 60 publications in archaeology and related aspects of geology, paleontology, climatology, remote sensing, desertification, and desert reclamation. Her research ranged widely around the globe, including France, Mexico, and most of the western United

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States. In a similar manner, she conducted research covering a broad time span, including the Paleolithic, Paleoindian, Archaic, Anasazi, Pueblo, and Colonial Spanish periods.

She directed excavations at Salmon Ruin, one of the largest pueblos in New Mexico, as well as at a number of important Paleoindian sites, including the deeply stratified Hell Gap site in Wyoming and Valsequillo near Puebla, Mexico. A monograph on Salmon Ruin was in progress at the time of her death.

Cynthia forged close personal relationships with the people she worked with, many of which continued long after field seasons ended. She also worked frequently with avocational archaeologists.

Irwin-Williams was active as an officer or committee member for a variety of professional organizations, including the Society for American Archaeology (SAA), where she served on the Executive Committee from 1975 to 1979, as President from 1977 to 1979 (the second woman to hold this position); as Chair of the SAA Federal Archaeology Committee from 1979 to 1984, and as a member of the Committee on Native American Relations (1974–1976). In these posts she was centrally involved in the development of the National Environmental Policy Act as well as subsequent legislation and Executive Orders that resulted in the creation (in the 1970s) and defense (in the 1980s) of cultural-resource management. In addition, she was a member of the Executive Committee of the American Quaternary Association and the Nevada Council on Professional Archaeology and a fellow of the American Anthropological Association. She also served on various research panels for the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. From 1978 to the time of her death she served on the Board of Advisors for the Center for Field Research.

Her research on the early prehistoric connections between the Plains and Southwest led to her critical publications and presented papers on the southwestern Oshara tradition and the origins of sedentary agricultural societies in the Southwest. She was honored by the Smithsonian Institution as one of a group of pioneer women in southwestern science and humanities, termed the “Daughters of the Desert.”

In addition to her primary interests in the Quaternary sciences, Irwin-Williams contributed to research in several unrelated fields, particularly human physiology. Particular projects included the genetic and environmental factors in the development of alcoholism and addiction, the biochemical component in compulsive gambling, and neurochemical research on the etiology of and clinical treatment for the migraine headache.

Cynthia Irwin-Williams is generally considered to be a role model for younger women in science. She will be greatly missed by her friends, colleagues, and students.

H. M. WORMINGTON AND GEORGE AGOGINO

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## NOTE

<sup>1</sup> The lead photograph, provided by Dr. H. Marie Wormington, was taken in 1964 at the Hell Gap site.

<sup>2</sup> A draft bibliography of Cynthia Irwin-Williams's publications was compiled by Arthur F. DeFazio. Additions, corrections, and further information were provided by George Agogino, Larry Baker, Michael W. Graves, Patricia Hicks, Teresita Majewski, Lonnie C. Pippin, J. Jefferson Reid, and Nathalie F. S. Woodbury. The editors offer the disclaimer that what appears here is a "best approximation" of Irwin-Williams's published works rather than a "complete bibliography."