



Archeology Program

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Archiving Archeological Records in Gates of the Arctic NP&P

A researcher's field records are an essential source of information. They provide context for decisions concerning the research. They are a continued source of information, as not all the contents of field notes are ever published. Over time, the field records can be windows opening onto people and conversations in the past, and give the reader a better sense of meaning and connection to a place.

The field records of archeologists and ethnographers in our national parks are important resources that should be protected. Field records, however, often get overlooked as cultural resource assets. They are often considered personal property, and remain in possession of the researcher unless park personnel make a concerted effort to secure copies.



Aerial view of Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve.

John Campbell worked for almost 30 years with Alaska Native people who lived on lands that became Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve. His field records document an extraordinary time for the Nunamiut Iñupiat, whose life style was shifting from seasonal settlements to fixed habitations at Anaktuvuk Pass. When he retired in 1991, Campbell had a significant body of papers that documented the history of people within the park. Even though his work pre-dated park formation, these papers were an important cultural resource for Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve.

The following report discusses the efforts of a park archeologist, Jeff Rasic, to secure the papers. With dedication and perseverance, Jeff was able to successfully apply for funding from the Wenner-Gren Foundation to prepare the papers for accession as an NPS collection.

John Campbell and the Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve

Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve lies just north of, and is entirely within, the Arctic Circle. The park consists primarily of portions of the Brooks Range of mountains and covers 13,238 square miles. It was first protected as a national monument in 1978, before becoming a national park and preserve in 1980 with passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). The area is part of the ancestral lands of the Nunamiut Iñupiat people, who are permanently settled at the village of Anaktuvuk Pass, within the exterior boundaries of the park. John Campbell, an anthropologist, focused in-depth research on the history and prehistory of northern Alaska and the Nunamiut Iñupiat residents of Anaktuvuk Pass around the time that they abandoned seasonal settlements for permanent houses.

Campbell specialized in the archeology and ethnography of the North American Arctic and Subarctic. He received his Ph.D. in Anthropology from Yale in 1962 and subsequently held positions at the University of New Mexico, George Washington University, and Smithsonian Institution. Between 1964 and 1992 Dr. Campbell was a faculty member at the University of New Mexico, where he served terms as the director of the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology and chair of the Department of Anthropology. His professional service included positions as Assistant Editor for *American Antiquity* and on the Board of Governors for the Arctic Institute of North America.



John Campbell, right, at work in Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve.

Through archeological investigations beginning in the 1950s, Campbell developed a cultural-historical framework for northern Alaska prehistory that still serves as a major reference today. He applied an ecological perspective to understanding cultural adaptations in the Arctic, and developed extensive knowledge of northern plants and animals, an area in which

he also published and made scholarly contributions. Dr. Campbell derived innovative insights about prehistoric land use and settlement systems from his ethnographic observations of Nunamiut hunters, and in doing so made valuable contributions to the specialty of ethnoarcheology.

Campbell's ethnographic work also documents a unique time in Nunamiut history, since they had recently settled into village life but still engaged in a mobile lifestyle with a heavy reliance on hunting and wild foods. Campbell worked with Nunamiut elders, and particularly closely with the prominent Nunamiut leader, Simon Paneak, to record traditional stories, technological knowledge, and geographic place names. A portion of this information was subsequently published, but much remained in raw form among his personal papers. They comprise a comprehensive record of Northern ethnography, archeology, and natural history research from the 1950s to the 1990s, with particular emphasis on the period between 1956 and 1970.

Scope of the Project

Campbell's papers totaled approximately 25 linear feet and contained primary data as well as correspondence and other documents that provide a historical record of professional practice and personalities through the second half of the twentieth century. He was a meticulous record keeper (for example, he often saved copies of both the correspondence he wrote and that which he received) and the materials were in good condition. They did not, however, meet archival standards required for long term preservation. Documents contained staples and other fasteners, maps were tightly folded, and many photos were loose within large envelopes. Furthermore, the papers were only partially organized, and documents of various kinds and from different projects were interspersed. Finally, the collection lacked adequate documentation and contextual information. For example, there were numerous personal notes and correspondence that lack author's full names and other key details.

Basic categories of materials included:

- Journals and field notes related to archeology, ethnography, and natural history of northern Alaska, the Copper River basin (interior Alaska), and southern Yukon Territory.
- Photographs that include approximately 2000 color slides of archeological and ethnographic field work in Alaska, Canada, and the western U.S.
- Maps (approximately 40) of archeological field surveys, historic data on bird and game populations, and maps annotated with traditional place names.
- Unpublished manuscripts including archeological site and survey reports, travelogues, and essays on ethnographic topics.

Campbell retired in 1991, and it was clear to park archeologist Jeff Rasic that his papers constituted significant cultural resources for Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, but how and where to archive them? The first step was to assess the needs for the collection. It was quickly decided that the papers should be stored at the NPS archival facility in Fairbanks, Alaska. This facility, built in 2006, houses museum collections for the park. It was an appropriate repository for the collection as it was located in central Alaska, close to the homeland of the Nunamiut people with which Dr. Campbell collaborated and was the setting for much of his archeological field work. The papers were, however, stored in Albuquerque, NM.

Funds were needed for a professional archivist and one or more assistants to work with Campbell to organize the materials and stabilize papers and other media in archival-quality containers. An estimated budget was about \$14,880, half targeted toward an assistant's salary, a quarter to the archivist's salary, and the remainder to travel, shipping, and supplies. In order to obtain the funding, Jeff turned to the Wenner-Gren Foundation, Historical Archives Program.

The Wenner-Gren Foundation

The Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Inc. is a private foundation dedicated to the advancement of anthropology throughout the world. Through programs of funding for research projects, conferences, symposia, fellowships, and publication, the foundation aids basic research in all branches of anthropology.

The objective of the Historical Archives Program is to encourage the preservation of unpublished personal research materials of established anthropologists, considered of value for research on the history of anthropology. Grants (maximum \$15,000) are offered for two purposes:

- To assist senior scholars (or their heirs) holding unpublished research materials and personal papers of significant value for the study of the history of Anthropology, with the expenses of preparing and transferring them for archival deposit. Applicants must show evidence that arrangements have been made with an appropriate archival repository.
- To aid oral-history interviews with senior anthropologists. A condition of the award is that copies of the interviews must be deposited in the foundation's archives.

There is no fixed deadline for submitting proposals to the Historical Archives Program. Applications are reviewed as they are received, and decisions about funding are made one to two months from submission of a formal application.

A Successful Grant Proposal

It was clear that preparing Campbell's papers for accession was a project that met the

Historical Archives Program criteria for funding. Rasic submitted a grant proposal in July to the Historic Archives Program to support the initial stabilization and basic organization of Campbell's papers, and shipment of the collection to Fairbanks. By the end of August, staff at Wenner-Gren contacted him to offer congratulations on obtaining the full amount requested of \$14,880.

Upon completion of the project Dr. Campbell's papers will be stable, well-organized, and accompanied by essential documentation. They will be ready for archival deposit into the Gates of the Arctic National Park museum collections. Once it is accessioned and in appropriate condition for cataloging, the collection will be eligible for NPS funding for detailed cataloging as well as enhancement through measures such as digitization of key documents and the creation of a web-accessible finding aid. In this form the collection will be of great value to the Native communities of northern Alaska and anyone interested in the history of Arctic anthropology and archeology.

Learn more about [Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve](#).
Learn more about the [Historic Archives Program](#), Wenner-Gren Foundation.

by Jeff Rasic and Karen Mudar

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