

Hawkins Brown. A 1939 Indiana school bus is joined by a display documenting the disappearance of the one-room schoolhouse, and the five vehicles displayed on a short stretch of interstate highway call to mind the ubiquitous traffic jam. On the other hand, the trope of progress is still visually dominant. With the exception of a 1929 Oakland sedan illustrating the Okie migration to California, the vehicles have been restored to showroom luster. The dangers of the automobile are represented in photographs and a copy of *Unsafe at Any Speed*, but none of the cars themselves are displayed as wrecks, and the carnage of streetcar and railroad accidents is ignored.

Even more obscure is the role of public policy. Admittedly, the process of passing a highway bill is not visually stimulating. However, more emphasis in the display texts and computer kiosks would have helped explain the decline of the railroads, or the reason why the 1977 Honda Civic on display got better mileage than almost any car on the market today. When the exhibit does address public policy, as in a display about the freeway revolt of the 1960s and 1970s, the treatments are balanced and visually appealing.

The most ironic silence is the lack of technical detail. Determined to avoid the rivet-counting, internalist approach of earlier exhibits, the curators have provided almost no explanation of what the vehicles were made of, how they worked, or how they performed. We get a display of early accessories—such as a 1915 car alarm—and a video gushing that computers are embedded throughout the transportation system. But the curators have not tried to explain the workings or social construction of key technologies such as transition curves, catalytic converters, air traffic control, or even minor doodads like the spotlight on that 1955 Ford.

Although the exhibit cannot tell every story, it tells its main story remarkably well. Whether visitors focus only on the largest artifacts or devote their time to the text or the interactive displays, all will

absorb the basic thesis that transportation is about place. And all will sense that transportation is not the exclusive province of planners and engineers, but a part of our shared history and culture.

Whether they get home on foot, by subway, taxi, car, or airplane, they will depart *America on the Move* with a greater understanding.

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1. The exhibit is accompanied by a book, Janet F. Davidson and Michael S. Sweeney, *On the Move: Transportation and the American Story* (Washington, DC: National Geographic, 2003); a DVD, *America on the Move* (New York, NY: A&E Television Networks, distributed by New Video, 2004); and a website, <http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthemove/>.

Archaeology and the Native Peoples of Tennessee

McClung Museum, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN; Exhibit design and fabrication: Design Craftsmen, Inc.; Architecture: Barber and McMurray, Inc.

Permanent exhibit

Utilizing multimedia and anchored by the Frank H. McClung Museum's collection of prehistoric and historic Native American artifacts, *Archaeology and the Native Peoples of Tennessee* is an effective presentation of the state's indigenous past. This exhibit builds upon the strength of the museum's collections in anthropology, archeology, and local history, while touching upon its other core collections in decorative arts and natural history. As the title indicates, the exhibit focuses on the native peoples of the region, including the pre-Columbian cultures in what later became Tennessee and the Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, Shawnee, and Yuchi tribes that had emerged by the 18th century.

A Smithsonian Institution affiliate, the McClung Museum is an integral part of the University of



The Archaeology and the Native Peoples of Tennessee exhibit opens with a timeline of historic periods related to Native Americans in Tennessee history. (Courtesy of Design Craftsmen)



The exhibit relates the significance of the white-tailed deer to Native Americans through interactive panels containing artifacts. (Courtesy of Design Craftsmen)

Tennessee. The University has been in the forefront of archeological research in the Southeast since the 1930s, and the exhibit reflects this leadership in its content. Each part of the exhibit is solidly grounded in current research and scholarship.

Archaeology and the Native Peoples of Tennessee is organized into five historical periods that are briefly introduced via a timeline at the exhibit entrance. This organizational scheme is appropriate for the topic, since American Indians (and their

ancestors) were not organized into historic tribes until fairly recently, and scholars instead look at lifeways to conceptualize the region's past. The periods—Paleoindian, Archaic, Woodland, Mississippian, and Historic—are arranged in chronological order along the perimeter of a circular exhibit space. Five additional displays in the center of the space, geared primarily towards children and young adults, focus on general archeological topics such as site dating and tools and their uses, as well as on topics specific to the region, such as the importance of white-tailed deer to indigenous peoples in the eastern parts of North America.

Separate displays for each period focus on society, technology, subsistence, ritual, and art. Supplemental displays focus on particularly important developments, such as pottery use in the Woodland period. These displays take a number of innovative forms. Complementing some of the standard artifact cases and attractive wall displays by muralist Greg Harlin are clear-topped cases set into the floor showing artifacts and archeological features as if they were just uncovered in the field (such as a dog burial, a flint-knapping area where indigenous peoples made stone tools, and a food preparation site). Some of the displays are equipped with artifact drawers for those visitors who would like to see more examples of a type of artifact or learn more about a topic.

The artifacts themselves are astounding and range from Mississippian shell gorgets (exquisitely rendered shell decorations worn by men around their necks) to the Duck River Cache (one of the great examples of ceremonial flint knapping in the Americas) and the infamous Bat Creek Stone. Once thought to have ancient Hebrew written on its surface but now generally considered a 19th-century hoax, the stone serves as a point of departure for discussing the Moundbuilder Controversy and other efforts to sever historic Indian tribes from the great accomplishments of the pre-Columbian past.

Overall, the exhibit reflects the present state of the scholarship on the subject, including its strengths and weaknesses. For example, the exhibit's Mississippian historical period highlights the visually impressive, large-scale settlements, while giving scant attention to the many smaller Mississippian farmsteads in the region. It is hoped that as researchers turn to new and neglected topics in the future the permanent exhibit can be updated, thus continuing the strong link between research and interpretation.

The exhibit has some flaws. The dominance of the Cherokee in the Historic section, while understandable in East Tennessee, tends to obscure the role of other historic tribes in the state. It implies that the Cherokee were the physical and cultural descendants of Mississippian peoples, an argument that can also be made for other groups such as the Creek or Natchez. Acculturation and trade between European Americans and Indians are discussed primarily in the context of the deerskin trade, but no mention is made of the substantial early trade in Indian slaves. The accompanying film has similar problems in emphasis. It notes, for example, that the Cherokee was the only tribe living in the state without explaining that this was because the Cherokee and Chickasaw twice combined in the early 18th century to drive the Shawnee out of Middle Tennessee. Both the main exhibit and film tell the story of the Trail of Tears, but the larger impact of Indian removal on Tennessee and the United States is unexplored.

Overall, the exhibit is attractive and well designed. It incorporates recent historical and archeological scholarship and strongly reflects the institution's mission. It is also innovative and effective in communicating the historical themes of cultural change, interaction, and persistence. *Archaeology and the Native Peoples of Tennessee* contains much of value for both cultural resource professionals and the broader general public. For preservationists, the exhibit directly confronts the difficulty of interpreting artifacts from sites later destroyed by

development, while providing a model for adding relevant context. For the public the exhibit provides a broad overview of the state's past cultures and their histories, enhanced by the fascinating objects these peoples created.

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*Highway to the Past:
The Archaeology of Boston's Big Dig*

Commonwealth Museum, Boston, MA. Curator:
Anne-Eliza Lewis

On exhibit into 2006

Boston's recently completed "Big Dig" gained widespread notoriety as the most expensive U.S. highway project of all time. The Central Artery Project, as it is officially known, replaced elevated highways with new tunnels cutting through Boston's congested waterfront and a third harbor tunnel link with Logan Airport. Federal and state sponsored survey and data recovery work by archeologists from area institutions and cultural resources management firms took nearly a decade to complete. By virtue of its scale, methods, and results, archeology of the Big Dig will shape the future practice of urban historical archeology in New England.

Highway to the Past: The Archaeology of Boston's Big Dig, its companion booklet, and virtual exhibit highlight the results of nearly a decade of Big Dig archeological discoveries.¹ The story of Boston, including the formation of the Boston Harbor and the city's pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial past, is ably told through a narrative highlighting Big Dig sites. The result is a unique and broad perspective on the material lives of countless generations of Bostonians.

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship

Volume 3 Number 1 Winter 2006



CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship
Winter 2006
ISSN 1068-4999

CRM = cultural resource management

CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship is published twice each year by the National Park Service to address the history and development of and trends and emerging issues in cultural resource management in the United States and abroad. Its purpose is to broaden the intellectual foundation of the management of cultural resources.

The online version of *CRM Journal* is available at www.cr.nps.gov/CRMJournal. Back issues of *CRM* magazine (1978–2002) are available online at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/crm>.

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CRM Journal is produced under a cooperative agreement between the National Park Service and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers.

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