

New Mexico Archaeology

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF ARCHAEOLOGY

MUSEUM OF NEW MEXICO FOUNDATION

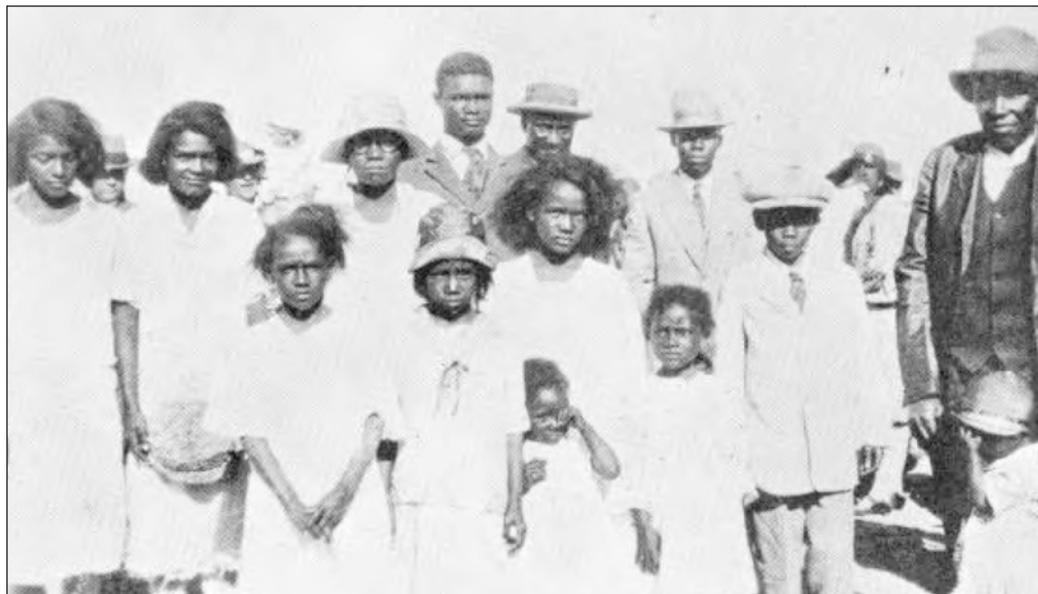
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FEBRUARY 2026

OAS PLANS TO OFFER MORE TALKS AND TOURS THIS YEAR

JOHN TAYLOR-MONTOYA
OAS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Greetings, friends! I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who participated in the survey that was sent out with the newsletter several months ago. Your feedback is valued and is helping us provide you with better programming. We have analyzed the results, and we have started taking action. One of the most widely requested types of programming was in-person talks. We have responded with a new series of Brown Bag Lectures for 2026. The first talk was an excellent discussion about the Mimbres ceramic tradition by Dean Wilson. We are planning more Brown Bags for the near future. We'd love to see you at the Center for New Mexico Archaeology. The Friends of Archaeology board is also planning for a collaboration with the Santa Fe Archaeological Society to bring a series of Spring lectures that will provide different perspectives on the history and archaeology of Coronado's entrada. The FOA board, the OAS, and the Foundation are also actively pursuing opportunities for field trips. One of the most popular options based on the survey are short, See **Director**, on Page 8.



DREAM OF HOME

ONE MAN'S MISSION TO FIND HIS PLACE IN THE WORLD STILL RINGS TRUE 100 YEARS LATER

BY JOHN TAYLOR-MONTOYA
OAS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Paul Laurence Dunbar Elementary School in Vado, New Mexico. Opened in 1926, the Dunbar school was the culmination of the hard work, determination, and hope of a small community of African Americans making their way in southern New Mexico at the beginning of the twentieth century under the long shadow of segregation. The Dunbar school was named for renowned African American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar. One of his most popular poems is "Sympathy" from which the line "I know why the caged bird sings" was used as a title for Maya Angelou's autobiography. The building still stands in the small town of Vado, now a state and *National Register* property, and a testament to the contributions that African Americans have made to New Mexico history.

This story does not begin in the 1920s, though, but instead starts with the Mexican-



Above, the original church at Blackdom, in southern New Mexico. At top, a photo of the Blackdom Sunday School class taken in the early twentieth century.

American War and the United States conquest of the Southwest in 1846. Henry Boyer was a young man attached to the United States Army forces under the command of Colonel Doniphan. He was a

See **Dream**, on Page 6.

FIELD PROGRAM VISITS BLACKWATER DRAW

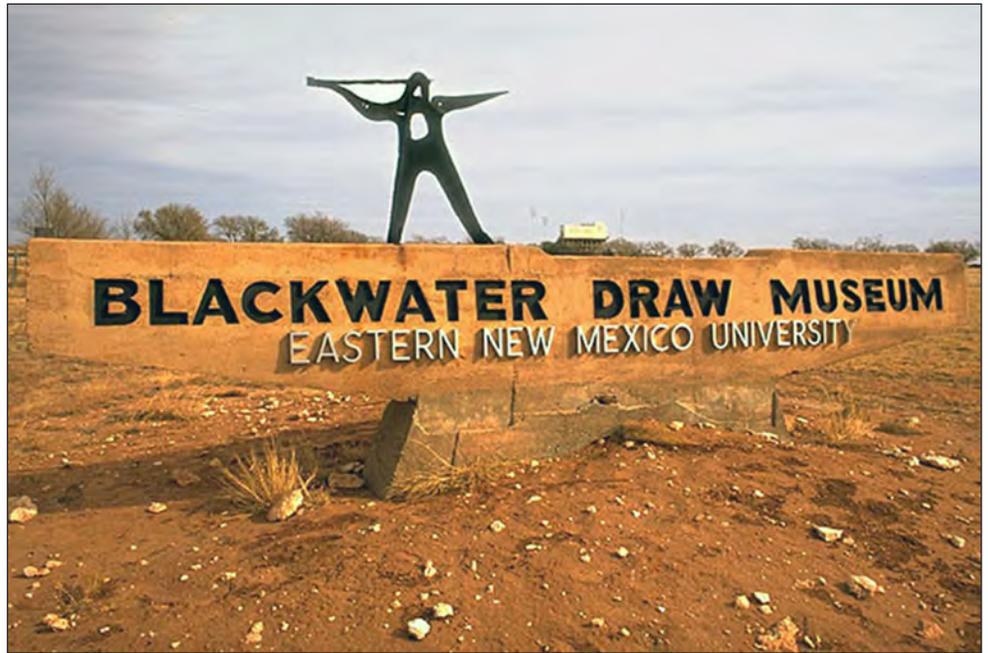
BY JOHN TAYLOR-MONTOYA
OAS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

OAS is at Blackwater Draw! The Statewide Archaeology Field Training Program is going to the Blackwater Draw National Historic Landmark. OAS has entered into a partnership agreement with Eastern New Mexico University, who manages the site, to conduct an in-field practice session for participants in the program. We are grateful to the amazing staff and faculty at ENMU for making this possible. And we remain grateful to the OAS staff that are doing an amazing job implementing this program.

As you may know, the Blackwater Draw Locality 1 site is the type-site for the Clovis technological tradition. This is the oldest established cultural expression for which we have an unimpeachable archaeological signature. Clovis technology has been found throughout North America. It is recognized primarily by the distinctive fluted spear points that are known as Clovis points, but also a skilled flintknapping tradition that produced large bifacial artifacts, specialized blades and blade cores, and the use of mammoth ivory for implements.

Blackwater Draw was first investigated by archaeologists in the 1930s, not very long after the discovery at Folsom established the antiquity of humans in North America. One of the most important contributions of the Clovis site is that it contained some of the first stratigraphic remains of Paleoindian artifacts and extinct animals. It brought to light that the Folsom "culture" was neither the earliest nor the only technological tradition that dated to the late Pleistocene. The site was within an active gravel mining operation that lasted well into the 1960s. Amazingly, much of the site was able to be excavated and studied and parts of it remain to this day. The site was listed on the *National Register* in 1961 and declared a National Historic Landmark in 1982.

The scientist credited with first investigating the Clovis site is Edgar B. Howard. He arrived around 1932 and quickly realized the potential importance of the site. He worked with local amateur archaeologists to set up operations and



The entrance to Blackwater Draw Museum at Eastern New Mexico University.

begin excavations as soon as possible. By the time he encountered the archaeology at BWD, Howard was a seasoned "Early Man" archaeologist, as studies into the deep prehistory of North America were called at the time. However, his adventures in archaeology did not begin as smoothly.

Before his investigations at the gravel pit that would become the world-renowned Clovis Site, Howard began his archeological work in the Southwest on the foothills of the Guadalupe Mountains. The initial objective of the project was to investigate pre-Puebloan Basket Maker culture by exploring dry caves in the Chihuahuan Desert region, far from the San Juan Basin which was already crowded with archeologists and relic hunters. A genteel southerner originally from New Orleans, Howard entered archeology much as the gentlemen-naturalist might have in the late nineteenth century. Educated in anthropology but not a field archeologist, Howard was unprepared for the rigors of field work in the Basin and Range country of New Mexico. Howard's correspondence to the Director of the University of Pennsylvania Museum shows that Howard was flustered by the gruelling field conditions and complained of the rattlesnakes and having to twice re-sole his field boots. From that same correspondence, Howard is quoted as saying that he thought

fieldwork would be in a "nice clean cave near a bubbling spring, on a good road, and with baskets and sandals hanging up on pegs or neatly piled in corners."

Despite being an admitted tenderfoot, Howard persevered with the help of his field hands from Carlsbad, New Mexico. They were eventually rewarded in their efforts at Burnet Cave where they excavated several "Basket Maker" components along with a "grooved spear point" that was referred to at the time as "Folsom-like." The point he found most resembles a re-worked Clovis point. Associated with the spear point in the cave were a hearth and the charred bones of Ice Age mammals identified as musk ox, camel, horse, and caribou. Howard worried about the direct association of the point with the thermal feature and Pleistocene faunal remains.

At the Clovis site, there would be no doubt about the association of the extinct fauna, including multiple mammoths and extinct bison, and the stone age spear points found in association.

The OAS field crew will be examining a lesser-known part of the site and will likely encounter material culture from the historic period. They may encounter some prehistoric archaeology as well. We are looking forward to their report. ❖

New Mexico Office of Archaeological Studies

The Office of Archaeological Studies (OAS) was the first museum program of its kind in the nation. OAS staff conduct international field and laboratory research, offer educational opportunities for school groups and civic organizations, and work to preserve, protect, and interpret prehistoric and historic sites throughout New Mexico.

Friends of Archaeology

The Friends of Archaeology is an interest group within the Museum of New Mexico Foundation that supports the OAS. To join the FOA, you need only become a member of the Museum of New Mexico Foundation and sign up. Visit www.nmarchaeology.org for information. We're also on Facebook, at www.facebook.com/FriendsOfArchaeologyNM. Friends of Archaeology's e-mail address is friendsofarchaeologynm@gmail.com

Mission Statement

The mission of the Friends of Archaeology is to support the Office of Archaeological Studies in the achievement of its archaeological services mandate from the State of New Mexico through participation in and funding of research and education projects.

FOA Board

Board Members: Barbara am Ende, Margaret Armstrong, Joe Benitez, Donna Coleman, Zella Cox, Greg Dove, Sherill Spaar, and Charlie Weiss

Contributors to the Board:

Melissa Martinez, Lauren Paige, John Taylor-Montoya

FOA, SFAS HOST SPRING LECTURE SERIES ON CORONADO EXPEDITION

Friends of Archaeology is thrilled to announce a new collaboration with the Santa Fe Archaeological Society that will bring three compelling public lectures to Santa Fe this Spring. Together, FOA and SFAS will host a special series focused on the Coronado Expedition and its lasting impact on the history and archaeology of the American Southwest. These programs will feature nationally recognized scholars and authors whose research continues to reshape how we understand early Spanish exploration, Indigenous landscapes, and the search for the legendary Cities of Gold. Each lecture will offer fresh perspectives, engaging storytelling, and opportunities for conversation with the speakers. FOA members will receive reduced admission prices for all three programs.

The Problem of Distinguishing the Coronado Expedition's Multiple Routes Across Southeastern Arizona

Richard and Shirley Flint

Date: Wednesday, March 18, 2026

Time 6:30 p.m.

Venue: Sky Cinemas Midtown, 1003 Midtown Calle Centro

Tickets: \$15/Members, \$20/Non-Members

Renowned historians Richard and Shirley Flint will explore the long-standing debates surrounding Coronado's route through southeastern Arizona. Drawing on documentary evidence and archaeological research, they will unpack how scholars attempt to reconstruct paths taken nearly five centuries ago and why those routes still matter today.

The Coronado Expedition: The New Evidence

Deni Seymour

Date: Tuesday, April 21, 2026

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Venue: Sky Cinemas Midtown, 1003 Midtown Calle Centro

Tickets: \$15/Members, \$20/Non-Members

Archaeologist Deni Seymour will present recent discoveries connected to the Coronado Expedition and discuss how material evidence from the landscape continues to refine historical narratives. This program promises an in-depth look at how archaeology and history intersect in the search for answers about early contact in the Southwest.

Cities of Gold: A Journey Across the American Southwest

Douglas Preston

Date: Tuesday, May 19, 2026

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Venue: Sky Cinemas Midtown, 1003 Midtown Calle Centro

Tickets: \$15/Members, \$20/Non-Members

Author Douglas Preston will conclude the series with a sweeping exploration of the myths and realities surrounding the fabled Cities of Gold. His talk will trace the enduring fascination with Coronado's quest and reflect on how archaeology, storytelling, and exploration shape our understanding of the region's past.

Ticket links and discount details will be emailed to members in February, so keep an eye on your inbox. ❖

BROWN BAGS ARE BACK

C. DEAN WILSON COMPARES CERAMICS OF THE MOGOLLON-MIMBRES, ANCESTRAL PUEBLOANS

BY LYNNE DRAKOS
OAS DIRECTOR OF
BUSINESS OPERATIONS

On Wednesday, January 14, 2026, renowned archaeologist and ceramics specialist C. Dean Wilson gave a vastly informative talk examining the sequence of pottery types from archaeological sites located in the

See talk photos on Page 5. Wilson compared pottery from this area with that found at Ancestral Pueblo sites on the Colorado Plateau to the north. In his presentation, Wilson examined the nature, significance, and potential causes of differences in pottery production between these two culturally significant areas.

During his talk, Wilson considered how, and potentially why, ceramic types assigned to different traditions within these two cultural areas reflect varying factors including time and location of manufacture, characteristics of available ceramic materials, and aspects of trade and exchange between distinct groups.

Of particular interest was Wilson's discussion of the clays that were used in the construction of pottery from the two distinct "utility" areas considered in his talk. The clay utilized in the construction of pottery found in the mountainous Mogollon region and Mimbres Valley exhibited material from the Datil volcanic field and other local igneous sources. Wilson explained that these clays are soft, malleable, plastic, and sticky and are thus easily polished. These volcanic-sourced clays also mature, or become solid and structurally strong, at a very low temperature when fired.

Images, shown during the presentation, of pottery constructed from these iron-rich sources depicted finely coiled and corrugated pottery,

brown "utility" wares, and ceramics characterized by red paint on brown surfaces. Pottery types assigned to the Mogollon sequence and discussed during Wilson's talk included, among others, Alma Plain, San Francisco Red, Mogollon Red-on-brown, Three Circle Red-on-white, and Mimbres Bold Face Black-on-white.

In contrast, to the north, on the Colorado Plateau, clay was often sourced from sedimentary, ancient marine deposits that present quite differently with regard to appearance and working qualities than that of the volcanic-sourced clay. Clay utilized from the finer-grained shale, sedimentary sources more easily accepted the application of black-on-white painted decorations and also matured at a higher temperature when fired than did clay originating from igneous sources.

While Ancestral Puebloans were constructing larger, more permanent settlements in the north, the inhabitants of the Mogollon were constructing pithouse villages such as those excavated at the SU Site, near Reserve, New Mexico. With considerations such as this, Wilson explained that differences in geography and materials used in the production of pottery between these two areas helped define the distinct sequence of ceramics that developed in the Mogollon Highlands in comparison to that of the Colorado Plateau region. Wilson went on to conclude that the eventual, wide distribution of pottery considered to reflect both Mogollon and Ancestral Puebloan traditions may be best understood in terms of long and complex developments involving Ancestral Pueblo groups with changing pottery technologies adapting to unique landscapes, vast exchange networks, population movement, and the sharing of ideas over widespread and diverse areas. ❖





Above and right: Images from the Brown Bag Lecture by C. Dean Wilson, held January 14, 2026, at the Center for New Mexico Archaeology. Wilson's talk was the first of several lectures planned for the year of 2026.

DREAM

Continued from Page 1.

wagoner running supplies for the troops. He reportedly was there when Doniphan's troops, mostly Missouri volunteers, repelled an attack by Mexican dragoons and artillery on Christmas Day, 1846. Archaeologists have identified two possible locations for the actual battle site. It is named for a bend in the Rio Grande, but the precise location has not been verified. One of the proposed locations was under cultivation when visited and therefore never fully surveyed. The battle is known as Las Temascalitas to locals and Spanish speakers at the time, named for the nearby landforms that resembled beehive ovens.

While those events were no doubt burned into Boyer's memory, his lasting impression was of the land and possibility that he saw as he traveled up and down the Camino Real. The open desert landscape brought to his mind visions of freedom and the hope for a new, different life.

For young Henry had been born into slavery, the illegitimate son of white plantation owner Colonel George Bowyer of Milledgeville, Georgia in 1820. Henry was taken to Missouri by Colonel Bowyer while in his youth. When Henry reached New Mexico, he was enchanted by the vast open landscape of the Southwest. The magic of Big Sky Country planted the seeds of a dream. Henry returned to Georgia, married and had children most of whom were also born into slavery. All except for his last child, Francis Marion Boyer, born in 1871 in Macon, Georgia a free person.

It was Francis who would venture to New Mexico and realize the dream of his father. Francis and a small group of companions set out west in 1899 earning a living as they could along the way as line cooks and laborers. However, Francis was both an educated man and an experienced organizer by the time he travelled to the deserts of New Mexico. A graduate of Morehouse College and renowned orator and debater, Francis had already previously established African American communities in the Deep South of the US. He also used

GLIMPSES OF LATE FRONTIER LIFE IN NEW MEXICO'S SOUTHERN PECOS VALLEY: ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY AT BLACKDOM AND SEVEN RIVERS

REGGE N. WISEMAN



MUSEUM OF NEW MEXICO
OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDIES

ARCHAEOLOGY NOTES 233
2001

Office of Archaeological Studies Archaeology Notes 233, *Glimpses of Late Frontier Life in New Mexico's Southern Pecos Valley: Archaeology and History at Blackdom and Seven Rivers*, was published in 2001 by archaeologist Regge N. Wiseman.

his skills as a public orator to speak out against racial injustice. His success and notoriety earned him the unwanted attention of the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist groups in the South. Frustrated with conditions there, he sought a new beginning in the desert valleys that were the subject of childhood stories told by his father, and he left his wife and family. His wife, Ella, was a graduate of what would become Spelman College and an accomplished educator.

Boyer and a group of other African American men and women founded a small community that was known as Blackdom, not far from Roswell, at the turn

of the twentieth century. The community utilized the homestead and land expansion acts to their advantage to acquire land, establish a self-sustaining local economy, and build their wealth. Indeed, historian Dr. Timothy E. Nelson has suggested that the African American community at Blackdom, and elsewhere in the West at this time, intentionally used the legal and social system of separate-but-equal to their advantage (*El Palacio*, Spring 2021).

The economy of Blackdom was built primarily around homestead patents and agricultural pursuits. Often, settlers

See **Home**, on Page 7.

HOME

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worked as farm hands on other people's land and then returned to their plot to continue improving it. Hobart Boyer recalled working 10 hours a day on another man's land and then coming home and working until dark on his family's plot. Hundreds of patents were proved accounting for thousands of acres. Despite their ingenuity and incredible work ethic, the residents of Blackdom were not immune from the dwindling water resources and economic troubles that came during the 1920s and 1930s. Residents left and the population declined rapidly. Commentators at the time and some historians today view the settlement as a failed experiment. However, another perspective is that the settlement provided the community with wealth, assets, and organization that allowed them to move on and pursue other opportunities.

You might wonder what life was like for the residents of Blackdom. In 1996 and 1997, OAS completed studies at several sites including an excavation at LA 89153 which was attributed as the homestead of Isaac W. Jones (Wiseman 2001). Jones was one of the signatories on the articles of incorporation for Blackdom. The material culture that was left behind at his homestead is a fascinating glimpse of life for African American homesteaders in that community at the turn of the twentieth century. Artifacts include items common to rural domestic sites in New Mexico including an abundance of vessel glass and metal cans. The cans are typical for the time and area, solder-seam hole-in-top that likely were for storing fruits and vegetables. Also abundant were metal nails, almost all of which were drawn nails indicating a post-1890s time period. Evidence for family is present in the form of porcelain doll fragments and part of a toy car. The assemblage is most interesting in comparison to other historic farmsteads in the region. Relative to other comparable assemblages the Jones homestead artifacts paint a picture of a frugal, family-oriented people. In many ways, there are no ethnic markers among the assemblages, they all have evidence of wearing the same type of clothing, eating off the same type

of plates, and probably shopped at the same stores. Two food items set the Jones homestead apart. A higher frequency of bones from pigs, rather than beef or goat at other sites, and no evidence for coffee drinking but parts of a tea pot. Mr. Jones also preferred his tobacco as snuff rather than cigarette or plug.

One other aspect of the assemblage that sets the Jones homestead apart from others is the abundance of evidence for a heavy emphasis on literacy and education. A number of pens, pencils, and school slate fragments were recovered from the homestead. More slate was found at the Jones homestead than at an early twentieth century schoolhouse site in the same general area. While there are a number of variables that affect the composition of archaeological assemblages, the inference we have drawn from the Jones homestead aligns with the principles that guided the community of Blackdom and, later, Vado. The founders, especially the Boyers, were known for stressing the importance and value of education. The Jones family did not stay at the homestead long, though, which was actually common among homesteaders in the area. By 1929, the community of Blackdom was largely abandoned and a new settlement was started along the Rio Grande at Vado, New Mexico.

Vado itself has an interesting history stretching far back in time to the earliest inhabitants of the area whose traces can still be found in the nearby hills. In the nineteenth century the area was occupied intermittently by Hispano and Anglo farmers and a community of Quakers for a short time. The community was known by a few names before the railroad designated it as Vado, from the Spanish word for a river ford. The Dunbar school was built as a response to segregation. In 1925, New Mexico legislators adopted a law for the segregation of schools. Segregation in New Mexico operated differently from the Jim Crow laws of Southern states and was mostly limited to self-selected school systems. Segregation in other parts of life tended to vary from town to town. In 1925, the Las Cruces school system adopted segregation. The Paul Laurence Dunbar school officially opened in February 1926. A rectangular

brick building with a low-hip gabled roof, the building still retains much of its original character. The brick work is mottled providing a distinctive façade. The interior originally was partitioned into four school rooms. The building had electricity but no central heat. Recollections are that the small school rooms served as many as 175 students. In 1939, the WPA installed concrete sidewalks on the grounds.

After the Brown v. Board of Education decision was handed down by the US Supreme Court in 1954, New Mexico schools were relatively quick to integrate. The last class at Dunbar attended in 1957. The building was then used as a community center and, most currently, as a Head Start program building. Descendants of the African American visionaries that established Blackdom and Vado still reside in the area to this day. And the legacy of their ancestors lives on.

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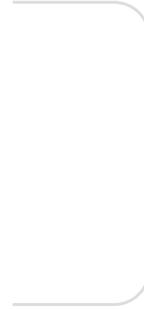
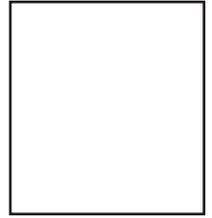
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DIRECTOR

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one-hour hikes. We are looking at options for field trips with a number of factors in mind, including accessibility and different levels of hiking difficulty. This promises to be an exciting year for learning more about archaeology.

Speaking of learning about archaeology, the statewide field training program that OAS launched in September 2025 is going strong. We have four of our five cohorts of students who are finished with at least two of the three training components. We are very pleased to have partnered with local cultural resource management companies. They are providing on-the-job training to several of the field school trainees, and reports have been positive about the trainees' performance. As of January, the trainees had already completed a total of 50 person-days in the field!

I recently had the opportunity to give

a talk to an upper division archaeology class at Southern Methodist University. Our field training program was the hot topic that the students wanted to learn more about. The professor commented, "I'm going to steal that idea as soon as I get a chance and see if it will work here!" This innovative program continues to garner interest far beyond New Mexico. Providing alternative pathways to professional archaeological job skills may be a key aspect of the discipline going into the future. It is part of a national trend where archaeologists are exploring alternatives to the traditional field school and expanding access to the profession. My gratitude goes out to the OAS staff who have made this program a success.

And thank you, friends, for your continuing support of OAS. Your passion, interest, participation, and support help us provide programming to the people throughout New Mexico. You are helping bring archaeology to life and helping us achieve our mission. ❖

MAKE YOUR MARK ON NM ARCHAEOLOGY!

Please consider supporting the Office of Archaeological Studies by making a gift to education or research by check, credit, stock, IRA rollover, or planned gift. Your tax-deductible donation through the Museum of New Mexico Foundation will have a lasting impact. One hundred percent of your donation will be directed to the OAS. No administrative fees are charged. Give online: museumfoundation.org/give/. For questions, or to donate, contact Lauren Paige at (505) 982-2282, or via e-mail at lauren@museumfoundation.org.

