

Early History of the Kansas Anthropological Association

The Kansas Anthropological Association (KAA) is the oldest avocational organization of its type in the state. After many months of interest and effort by numerous individuals, the KAA was organized on the Fort Hays Kansas State College campus on April 16, 1955, with 45 charter members present. The last surviving charter member passed away in 2009.

Early KAA leadership was centered around the college at Hays, and the membership was drawn primarily from the western part of the state. The first state officers were President Dr. Eugene Crane, Vice President Vernon Drake, Second Vice President George Sternberg, and Secretary/Treasurer Bob Helton. Annual dues were \$3 for active members and \$100 for life memberships. At the end of the first year in April 1956, membership totaled 136.

One of the goals of the new organization was a statewide archeological survey. County site files were created, and informational letters were sent to all sheriffs, soil conservation agents, and county engineers in every county in Kansas. At the first annual meeting, the members decided to send free of charge KAA publications to the Kansas State Historical Society (KSHS) to further the aims of both groups.

This attitude of cooperation between the KAA and the KSHS was destined to continue under Tom Witty, who came from Nebraska in 1960 to become the Kansas State Archeologist. By 1987 two measurable indications of that cooperation were the 1,700 recorded sites in the state files and the corps of competent avocational crew members trained by Tom Witty and his staff.

Until 1975 the opportunity for avocational and professionals to join in a variety of archeological investigations came mainly in the form of weekend digs at such important sites as Fort Zarah and the Minneapolis site. Several individuals who demonstrated competence subsequently served as members of field crews on highway and reservoir salvage operations and assisted KSHS archeologists by providing expert local knowledge from their areas.

With the introduction of the Kansas Archeology Training Program (KATP) in 1975, the short weekend digs were discontinued in favor of 16 consecutive days in early June of intensive work and study, including fieldwork, lab work, and classes that can be taken for college credit. Members come from all parts of the United States to join in the learning and camaraderie of the KATP. Weekend events for members offer work and social activities, such as tours, site surveys, and seminars. These events have come to be known as Fall Fling, Summer Spree, and Certification Seminar. Thousands of KAA members have participated in these events over the years, and they are passionate about their involvement.

Area chapters hold informative meetings and activities for their local members and area residents and rotate in sponsoring the annual meeting in April of each year.

KAA publications have been continuous since 1955. Early newsletters printed many of the background articles that led to the development of a cultural sequence for Kansas. Early journals carried articles about KAA research and reports of training programs. The journal progressed into a professionally published journal *The Kansas Anthropologist* that presents both avocational and professional papers and reports. Abstracts of articles published in *The Kansas Anthropologist* are available on the KAA web site at www.katp.org/publications.html. In addition, the KAA has published three bulletins in 1960, 1993, and 2015. The KAA has been fortunate to be associated with the KSHS archeological staff, who provide editing services.

KAA is proud of its history and wants to continue to grow and prosper. To receive more information about the KAA, please visit the web sites of the KAA at www.katp.org or the KSHS link at www.kshs.org .