

Working with Joe (SLIDE 1 Title)

Introduction

I'd like to say by way of introduction that my career in archaeology now spans thirty years in length. Big or small, the successful completion of each of the projects I've worked on over the years, if not always a joy, has been a learning experience and quiet source of satisfaction. Without a doubt, the majority of my favorite projects, and those I take the greatest pride in, have been those for PennDOT - and more specifically – for Joe Verbka (SLIDE 2).

I remember leaving my first meeting with Joe, a field view for the Route 28 project, feeling like I had a new friend, not a new client. We hit it off pretty fast, exchanging stories and tall tales that left me snickering and smirking the rest of the day. Our friendship developed from there, trading similar life experiences – from enjoying the quiet to be found lost in the woods, getting into mischief as kids, our families, being proud fathers, being divorced and finding something good the second time around - not to mention scaring the crap out of ourselves with a good ghost story. There were no pretensions with Joe. He was a regular guy that treated everyone the same way – like a regular guy – and that's how he liked to be treated in return. With Joe, there were no pretensions...no hidden agendas.

Being with Joe was like being with that friend from high school you shared detention with over and over again. Our get-togethers could best be described as juvenile, ribald, blunt, and explosively funny – no one could bring tears of laughter to your eyes like Joe did. However, these qualities never detracted from Joe's professionalism. As author Saul Bellow observed (SLIDE 3):

“Common sense and a sense of humor are the same thing, moving at different speeds. A sense of humor is just common sense, dancing. Those who lack humor are without judgment and should be trusted with nothing.”

Joe had judgement – good judgement that served him well as a District Professional. He understood the requirements of his job and the duties of his consultants. His experience dictated what a job should require, what it

should cost, and how long it should take. Joe could apply common sense in planning and scoping problem projects, coming up with unique and cost efficient solutions. He took great professional pride in these projects and when they were completed, he wasn't stingy in acknowledging help or good work.

Briefly, I'd like to summarize two such projects that I know Joe was pleased with and proud of: the Phase II excavations at the Thomas Carlin's Sons Foundry and the Phase I Polk Wetlands project.

The Thomas Carlin's Sons Foundry

I met Joe fifteen years ago on the S.R. 0028 Improvement Project in District 11-0. At the time, we were beginning Phase I field work on the 3-mile-long right-of-way in the City of Pittsburgh and Borough of Millvale, Allegheny County **(SLIDE 4 Phase I Testing)**. Dave Anderson, project Principal Investigator, and I, as Task Manager, worked closely with Joe to develop an APE for both horizontal and vertical impacts. Joe was a frequent visitor to the field investigations, which resulted in the identification of two archaeological sites - the Duquesne Borough Site (36AL506), recorded by Christine Davis Consultants - and the Thomas Carlin's Sons Foundry (36AL535). Although both sites were considered potentially significant in terms of thematic research questions established for the project and Phase II investigations were recommended for both, no additional work was planned because preliminary engineering plans did not impact either archaeological site.

Over nearly a decade, the project design morphed numerous times, resulting in changes to the APE. This usually entailed hastily arranged field meetings at improvised locations **(SLIDE 5)** near the project area to discuss the modifications and potential impacts. In 2006, a new alternative was developed, shifting not only the alignment of the highway but also the adjacent Norfolk Southern Railroad. The relocation of the railroad, in turn, created the potential for impacts to the Foundry site and the need for additional archaeology.

The Thomas Carlin's Sons foundry was designed in the early 1890s for modern late-nineteenth-century casting procedures and operated for approximately 23 years (SLIDE 6). The growth and expansion of the foundry occurred at a time of change and modernization in Pittsburgh's iron and steel industry. The foundry manufactured a wealth of products for coal mining, coke production, brick making, quarrying, oil production, road construction, and municipal public works. The Carlin's also held a number of patents for boilers and machinery (SLIDE 7).

Given the depth of the site and its position sandwiched between an active railroad and fiber optic line to the west and River Avenue and a gas line to the east, opening sufficient area to evaluate the resource became an issue if we were to accomplish the work safely in compliance with OSHA standards. Again numerous field meetings were convened to discuss and finalize a work plan for the problematic investigation (SLIDE 8). A number of block excavation schemes were considered before being finally discarded in favor of one that featured a long sloped excavation trench, oriented along the main portion of the foundry, as established through geo-referencing historic Sanborn insurance maps (SLIDE 9).

Phase II excavations yielded relatively few artifacts, but revealed that virtually all of the features of the foundry operations highlighted on Sanborn mapping were intact, e.g., foundation walls (SLIDE 10) demarcating the extents of the foundry, machine shop (SLIDE 11), and warehouse; remains of the clay and cinder foundry floor; a variety of brick floors within the machine shop and warehouse; concrete pads to anchor machinery; remains of a water hydrant; the base of a core oven complex (SLIDE 12); rubble from cupola ovens; a portion of a mold flask; a nearly intact subterranean loam mold; and the base of a twin boiler setting. In addition to these remains, a wealth of complementing archival information was collected from historic trade journals as well as the descendants of the Carlin brothers – family photos, personal diaries, accounting books, etc. (SLIDE 13).

Because the *in situ* remains of the foundry site are still adjacent to an active railroad and the Allegheny River (both of which originally provided means of transport vital to the operation of the foundry) and because the site retained aspects of its original design, the foundry site was recommended as eligible to the National Register of Historic

Places (NRHP) under Criterion A for its association with the Pittsburgh iron and steel industry. Further, it was representative of the general layout and scale of a mid-sized, late nineteenth through early twentieth-century iron foundry that incorporated a unique method of raw material storage – building vertically rather than expanding horizontally. The site was also recommended as eligible to the NRHP under Criterion D, as the archaeological remains provided valuable information that both confirmed the written record and produced new data in the form of features not known to be documented in the written record.

Joe was in complete agreement with these recommendations. However, because of spatial limitations and the limited range of artifact types, further excavations at the Thomas Carlin's Sons Foundry site would be unlikely to provide new or significant additional data. Further, matching the elevations of the site's structural features against the vertical APE, it was demonstrated that the impacts proposed by the construction design would be minimal and, therefore, the project would have No Adverse Effect on the Thomas Carlin's Sons Foundry site. Accordingly, no further work was recommended. When Joe received the SHPO concurrence letter, he called me beaming at a job well-done.

Polk Wetlands Project

In 2004 (**SLIDE 14**), the Ruffed Grouse Society led a partnership to create the *Pennsylvania Woodcock Habitat Initiative on State Lands* – abbreviated as PA WHISL. PA WHISL planned to create or enhance woodcock habitat by assisting resource agencies and conservation groups in the identification of potential woodcock habitat sites within public lands across Pennsylvania. Their goal was to create a pilot habitat site. The project focused on three specific public land areas: State Game Lands, State Forest Lands, and the Allegheny National Forest Lands.

PENNDOT District 1-0, supported cultural resource work for the pilot habitat site in exchange for banked mitigation credits for transportation projects that might incur wetland impacts in the district. As a consultant to PENNDOT, Baker conducted a Phase I archaeological investigation in the fall of 2007 for the proposed pilot habitat site. The site

was located on the broad valley floor of Sandy Creek (SLIDE 15) on State Game Land 39, near the town of Polk in Sandy Creek Township, Venango County.

The Phase I investigation yielded 48 prehistoric artifacts and a small amount of historic field scatter. The prehistoric artifacts included a complete early Late Woodland Raccoon Notched projectile point/knife (pp/k) (SLIDE 16), one bipolar artifact, two biface fragments, and 44 pieces of lithic debitage. The recovered pp/k was found in association with an intact prehistoric hearth feature containing a concentration of large cobbles, charcoal flecking, and fire-reddened earth. This artifact and feature cluster was subsequently defined and recorded with the State as the Woodcock site (36VE296).

Based on the presence of intact, culture-bearing horizons with a temporally diagnostic artifact, as well as the presence of an intact cultural feature, the Woodcock Site was recommended as potentially eligible for the National Register under Criterion D for its potential to yield data important to our understanding of prehistory.

Joe was in full agreement with the recommendation, but concerned with the fact that grant funds and time were almost exhausted. It would be impossible to select another test area, jeopardizing the creation of the pilot habitat site. To avoid this prospect, a meeting (SLIDE 17) was organized with Mackin Engineering Company, designers for the proposed wetland.

As a result of the meeting, Mackin Environmental Scientist Christopher Wagner proposed an alteration of the conceptual design for the wetlands to avoid impacting the archaeological site. Since the wetland design required 15 acres of land and Baker had evaluated 16 acres during the Phase I survey, Mackin had enough land area to create the Pilot site. The fact that the defined Woodcock site size was approximately 0.7 acres allowed Mackin to easily avoid any potential disturbance to the Woodcock site during project construction (SLIDE 18).

The revised design stipulated that the archeological site boundary be marked prior to the onset of wetland construction. Immediately outside of the staked boundary, a permanent 18-inch high, earthen berm was constructed around the perimeters of the identified site to protect it within a permanent barrier. The planned protective measures of the altered design obviated the need for additional archaeological investigations for the Woodcock site. Joe was very pleased with this solution – the outcome of an easy exchange between the consultants and PennDOT.

(SLIDE 19)

So, on behalf of the American woodcock, raise a glass of wine in thanks to Joe Verbka for helping it find a new home in Pennsylvania.

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