

OBITUARIES

CHARLES E. BORDEN, 1905–1978



Charles Edward Borden died in Vancouver, B.C. on Christmas Day, 1978. Carl, as he preferred to be called, was born on May 15, 1905, in New York City. His father, a graduate of the Yale University Medical School, died in 1908; and his mother, a native of Germany, promptly returned to her homeland with Carl and his baby sister. The family had always spoken both English and German, but his mother was persuaded by Carl's schoolmasters that the political situation dictated that it was best to speak only German. The family managed to survive the hardships of World War I and the equally severe postwar conditions in Germany. After graduation from the Gymnasium in the town of Bergedorf near Hamburg, Carl apprenticed as a farmer. With a characteristic sense of adventure, he decided to return to his native United States. He obtained passage in exchange for galley work on a U.S. bound freighter and, as a penniless youth of 17, arrived in New York clutching his birth certificate for presentation to a somewhat suspicious immigration officer. He relearned

English by taking correspondence courses while working for a mining company in upstate New York. Later he moved to Los Angeles, where he became a photoengraver, and eventually entered U.C.L.A. at the age of 23. He obtained his A.B. in 1932 and moved to Berkeley for graduate study. In 1935 he returned to Germany as the Walter Loewy Traveling Scholar to Europe. After a year of study at Heidelberg, he returned to Berkeley to finish his Ph.D. in German with a strong minor in botany in 1937.

While at Berkeley, he met and married Alice V. Witkin. In 1938, the family, now including an infant son, John Harvey, moved to Portland, Oregon, where Carl was in charge of German instruction at Reed College for a year before accepting an Assistant Professorship of German at the University of British Columbia in the fall of 1939. In 1944, a second son, Richard Keith, was born in Vancouver. Although his family was established in Canada, and he deeply loved his British Columbia home, Carl was ever conscious of his American heritage, and he waited until 1972 to become a Canadian citizen.

Carl developed an early interest in archaeology when he participated in excavations of Hamburgian sites while he was in high school. His latent interest in prehistoric archaeology was rekindled in 1943 with the publication of Philip Drucker's *Archaeological Survey of the Northern Northwest Coast*. After reading Drucker, Carl realized that the Fraser Valley must have been a strategic area for the historical development of the unique Northwest Coast culture. As he was frustrated by the lack of resources in the University of British Columbia library for his special area of research in German drama theory, he set about reading all relevant materials on Northwest Coast prehistory. In 1945, as soon as possible after cessation of World War II, he started testing some small campsites he had located on and near the University of British Columbia cam-

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pus. A year later, while walking along Locarno Beach not far from his home, he noticed shells piled up from an excavation for a basement. He obtained permission to continue the excavations. His work at Locarno Beach was terminated just ahead of a bulldozer in 1948.

Until then the "Great Fraser Midden" was the only site in Vancouver that was known in the literature. As the material recovered by Harlan I. Smith and others from this huge shell mound at Marpole was notably different from what he had recovered from Locarno Beach, Carl relocated and tested an undisturbed portion of the site a few miles upriver from the university campus. Years later he again found himself digging the last bit of midden just ahead of a bulldozer at Marpole.

Realizing that urban development was bound to destroy the sites he knew, Carl undertook an intensive survey of the city and initiated a program of salvage archaeology. Although at first there was no interest in funding such a project by either city or provincial government authorities, he managed to obtain small faculty research grants from the university to at least cover his expenses. He was unable to find students at the University of British Columbia willing to volunteer their services, so he established a working relationship with Erna Gunther at the University of Washington whereby students from Seattle could obtain field school credit from the University of Washington while working with him.

During the second season of this arrangement, in June, 1950, I joined Carl at the Whalen site on Point Roberts, Washington, just south of the international border. As I was the first student he had had in the field who intended to be a professional archaeologist, I received the full advantage of his instruction, working side by side with him on hands and knees with trowels and dustpans, excavating and recording everything with meticulous detail. I witnessed the workings of an inquiring mind as he thought aloud for my benefit, setting up and later discarding working hypotheses, predicting what we might find, and deducing tentative conclusions about what we encountered. By the end of the dig he had formulated a clear conception of the significance of the Whalen site to Pacific Northwest prehistory. Later that summer I accompanied him on his first archaeological expedition into the interior, where we excavated a protohistoric Carrier Indian house depression at Chinlac north of Vanderhoof. I acquired my love for reconnaissance work when I accompanied him during the following summer on a grueling and adventuresome small boat survey of the Tweedsmuir Park lake system, which was soon to be flooded.

After his initial discoveries, Carl was instrumental in obtaining a post for an anthropologist at U.B.C. Carl was then allowed to initiate courses in archaeology, but only with the understanding that he continue to teach a full load of German courses. Despite the fact that the new Department of Anthropology and Sociology grew rapidly, and interest in archaeology flourished, Carl kept up his onerous teaching duties in both departments for years. Only in 1969, the year before he retired, was he granted a full appointment as an archaeologist. As he was in the field every summer and many winters until his wife Alice died in 1970, his laboratory analyses were done mainly in the evenings, and he never had a prolonged period of time to write until after his retirement. Meanwhile he suffered a massive heart attack in 1973. In spite of weakening health, he was determined to finish a final report on the deeply stratified Milliken site in the Fraser Canyon, which he considered to be the most significant site he had excavated as it is the oldest occupation site in western Canada. His new wife Helga, whom he married in 1976, protectively cared for him so that he was able to relax and write. Unexpectedly, he died of a brain hemorrhage right after he had finished a chapter of a book edited by Roy Carlson on Northwest Coast Art.

Carl Borden early established himself as one of the foremost archaeologists in Canada. He promptly presented useful preliminary reports on his excavations and artifact analyses, and he established the basic archaeological sequence for coastal British Columbia. He became more widely known in the profession after publishing several thoughtful syntheses and theoretical papers in which he exhibited his tremendous ability to perceive the broader culture historical implications of the results of his work and that of his colleagues in British Columbia and neighboring parts of northwestern North America. His name is known by every archaeology student in Canada because he devised a universal site designation system for all of Canada which is referred to as

the Borden system. He spent considerable time in editorial work for the "Notes and News" section of *American Antiquity* between 1956 and 1962 and for *Encyclopedia Britannica* from 1963 to 1969.

After a 10-year struggle, Carl and Wilson Duff of the British Columbia Provincial Museum managed in 1960 to have the Archaeological and Historic Sites Protection Act passed by the provincial legislature. In 1967 he succeeded Wilson Duff as chairman of the Archaeological Sites Advisory Board, created under the provisions of this act. A provincial archaeologist was appointed in 1970. Borden resigned as chairman of the board in 1977 when a completely new act was passed.

Carl worked with amateur archaeologists, patiently guiding and teaching them to help preserve the information contained in archaeological sites. There is now a flourishing body of active and responsible members of the Archaeological Society of British Columbia scattered throughout the province who report new sites to professionals. Carl was always interested in attempting to preserve the cultural heritage of native British Columbians. He took particular pride in his work with certain families at the Musqueam Reserve, not far from the University campus. One of the sites on the reserve is a Salish long house preserved from the turn of the century. He arranged to excavate the shell deposit beneath the floor of the house. The site was not only ideal for his winter field classes because it was protected from the weather, but also many of the residents of the reserve took great interest in what was found.

Carl received several awards in recognition of his important contributions to Canadian archaeology. In 1967, he received a Centennial Medal for valuable service to Canada; in 1977, the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal. In 1975 the University of British Columbia conferred an honorary degree of *Literarum Doctor*, while in 1978 the Canadian Archaeological Association presented the Smith-Wintemberg Award jointly to Carl and Norman Emerson.

His many ideas expressed in his culture historical syntheses have been analyzed in detail in a Master's thesis at Portland State University by Ellen Robinson. His students, many of whom have become professional archaeologists, will always be grateful for the enthusiasm he imparted for whatever subjects he taught.

ALAN L. BRYAN

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