

Interior



Shelves

Artifact of the Week

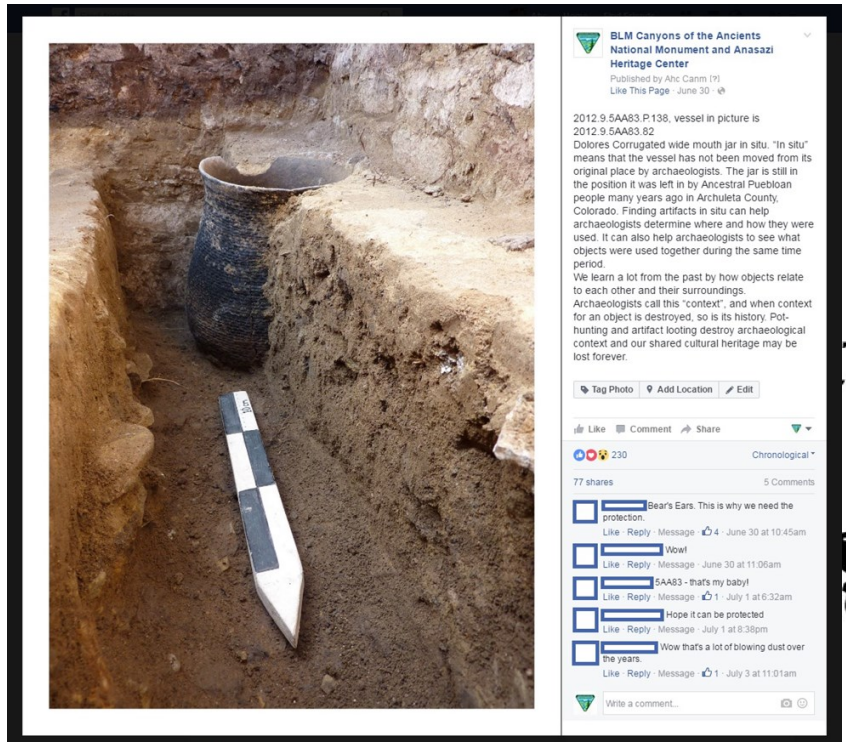
By Bridget Ambler & Sarah Thomson, BLM Anasazi Heritage Center

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Canyons of the Ancients (CANM) and Anasazi Heritage Center (AHC) created their Facebook page in 2012 to share information with a broader audience. Since then, the page has garnered over 3,000 likes and almost 400 "check-ins". The Facebook page promotes events, provides information to potential visitors, and interprets cultural resources.

One of the most popular features of the CANM and AHC Facebook page is the "Artifact of the Week", which highlights objects and archives in AHC collections. "Artifact of the Week" posts were initially generated by AHC intern, Sarah Thomson, and featured items related to the Dolores Archaeological Project. Currently, curation staff and interns select interesting objects from the AHC collections to highlight in the weekly posts.

Curation staff and interns interpret museum objects that have a story to tell, which allows each "Artifact of the Week" to be more than just a pretty picture; the posts are a learning opportunity and a way for the public to engage with collections. Prehistoric ceramic vessels and projectile points tend to be the most popular posts. Other important museum objects, such as archives, photographs, pottery sherds, and historic artifacts, also provide a more comprehensive picture of the collections housed at the Anasazi Heritage Center. The Facebook page highlights the research value of collections stored for long-term preservation as part of our public trust responsibility.

Each "Artifact of the Week" post receives anywhere from 25 to 250 likes and is seen by around 2,000 people. The posts are often shared to other Facebook pages, such as BLM Colorado, Four Corners Museum Network, and various archaeology interest groups. The "Artifact of the Week" post often elicits feedback, which can spark lively debates among the AHC Facebook fans. Through Facebook, our curation facility is able to foster engagement with our collections that extends far beyond those who visit our remotely located museum. If you're interested in seeing more of our "Artifact of the Week" posts or learning more about the Anasazi Heritage Center, please follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/BLMCanyonsoftheAncients).



This popular "Artifact of the Week" post featured a ceramic pot "in situ".

An 1850s Shop's Ledger Provides New Insights into Park History at the C&O Canal NHP

By Blyth McManus, C&O Canal National Historical Park/The Canal Trust

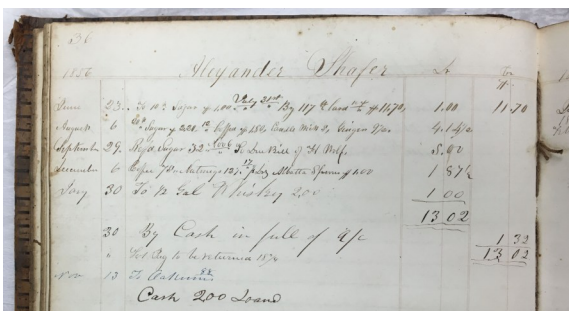
The archives of the C&O Canal National Historical Park (NHP) holds a merchant's ledger (1856-1858) from Williamsport, MD that provides details about everyday life along the canal and insights into park history. The ledger's more than 260 lined pages provide insight into the foodways, economics, and material culture of people along the canal whose stories have often become invisible to the historical record. Generally, shopkeeper's ledgers hold a wealth of information that crosses many disciplines, making them important historical artifacts for many different researchers. The information available from these ledgers can range from economic history to local genealogy. The ledger from the C&O Canal NHP's museum collection includes the names of more than 250 customers along with other details providing valuable information for members of the public who are looking for insights into the daily life of this area during the mid-nineteenth century. *Continue on page 2*

An 1850s Shop's Ledger...at the C&O Canal NHP

By Blyth McManus, C&O Canal National Historical Park/The Canal Trust
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During the main operating era of the canal, from the 1830s to the 1920s, canal boats hauling goods and people traveled up and down the canal's 184.5 miles of water, from the Georgetown, DC tidewater area to the terminus in Cumberland, MD. Williamsport, MD was an important center along the canal as it had many warehouses and manufacturing industries. But Williamsport's shops also provided consumer goods and services for the people who lived and worked along the waterway. According to the ledger, consumers at this particular store purchased staples such as flour, sugar, coffee, lard, soap, and candles, but also bought specialty items. Ledgers, like this one, provide important information about material items that are not typically excavated by archeologists. Everyday items on the list, which can easily be deemed unimportant, humanize the historical record by revealing similarities between then and now. Details show how people interacted with shopkeepers but also how they conducted everyday business. The ledger records that on, September 9, 1857, John Harrigan paid his bill of \$11.08 with \$1.84 in cash and \$9.24 "By Garden Stuff and Work." Such details would not be found anywhere else but in a shopkeeper's ledger.

This ledger is important to the history of the C&O Canal NHP itself. The ledger reports that Alexander Shafer shopped at the store seven times between June 1856 and January 1857. There is nothing extraordinary about his purchases, as they appear to be mainly food staples, like flour and such. However, who was Shafer? And how did he affect park history? While the



Alexander Shafer's entries, 1856-1857, page 36

shopkeeper's ledger does not hold all of the answers, it gave researchers enough detail to discover that Shafer purchased an established mill complex south of Williamsport and adjacent to the C&O Canal on July 18, 1851. He would later try and sell the complex in May 1854. However, a property map dated 1859 still identifies the land as belonging to "A. Shafer." Shafer's mill property was ultimately purchased by the Department of the Interior for the C&O Canal NHP on December 22, 1975. Without the shopkeeper's ledger, Alexander Shafer's connection to the park and the general area would have been harder to discover. Also researchers would not have been able to develop a relatively complete view of a man who played an important role in C&O Canal NHP's history.

The owner of the ledger and the location of the shop are unknown. However, the ledger provides important historical context to the park and the local area, gives researchers a glimpse into everyday life, and potentially provides additional context to the area's archeological sites.

What other connections could be made if archival staff were able to transcribe, study, and make searchable documents such as this historic ledger? How would access to this information change how we understand the history of our parks? New perspectives await in the pages of this document, and others like it.

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Portrait of an Agency

By Tracy Baetz, Chief Curator, Interior Museum

The tradition of secretarial portraiture is as old as federal agencies themselves. Among the nearly 8,000 objects in the U.S. Department of the Interior Museum's collection are the official portraits of all 50 past Secretaries of the Interior. Typically the portraits are commissioned near the end of a term and, when possible, are painted from life. The artists who render them are often the most renowned portraitists of their respective eras. Among those represented in Interior's series are artist-explorer John Mix Stanley, Eastman Johnson "the American Rembrandt," celebrated British portraitist Ernest Moore, and American Impressionists William Merritt Chase and Henry Salem Hubbell.

In recent years, the majority of Interior's secretarial portraits hung in small groups on various corridors throughout Washington, DC's Stewart Lee Udall Department of the Interior Building. With modernization



A selection of Secretarial portraits on view in the Stewart Lee Udall Department of the Interior Building.

renovations underway in the final wing of the headquarters in early 2015, Interior Museum staff utilized the opportunity to bring the remaining portraits out of storage and reunite all 50 paintings. With the exception of the most recent 16 secretarial portraits—which line the walls of the reception area leading to the Secretary's suite—the artworks now hang chronologically along the seventh floor central corridor of the headquarters building. None of these portraits had previously been displayed with any accompanying information. Therefore, the Museum enhanced the installation by creating introductory panels contextualizing the history and role of the Secretary of the Interior and adding individual portrait labels summarizing each Secretary's tenure and highlighting salient details about either the artist or the portrait itself.

Today the portraits are regularly viewed by the building's 2,000+ employees and countless Departmental visitors. In addition, the relocation has meant that the portraits are now able to be included on the route of the Museum's public tours of the building which attract more than 1,200 people annually. For those unable to see the portraits in person, a companion exhibition was launched online in January 2016 via the [Interior Museum's Google Arts and Culture portal](#). *Portrait of an Agency* allows for a viewer-directed experience where a user can scroll through at his or her own pace, read the backstories on each piece, and even zoom in on the high-resolution images to see brush strokes and artist signatures. Finally, Chief Curator Tracy Baetz presented a public lecture about the secretarial portraits in July 2016, and this is available for viewing on the Interior Museum's [YouTube channel](#). Collectively, the secretarial portraits and the newly-developed collateral materials provide unique ways to visualize the history of the Department and gain insight into American history.