

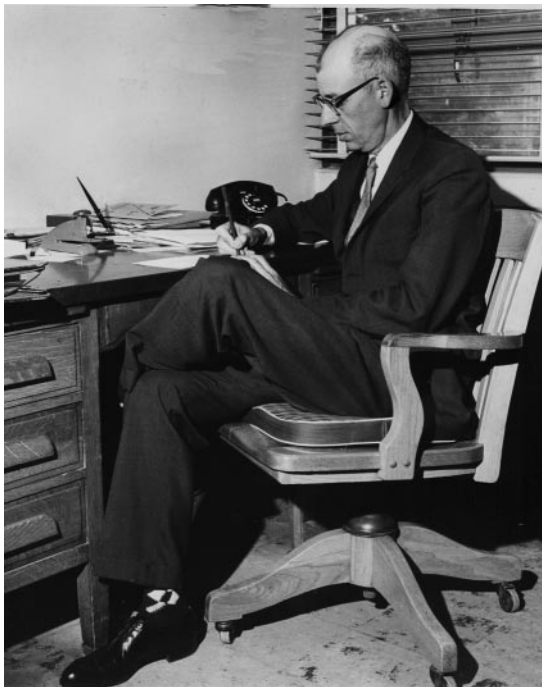
In Memoriam

**ROBERT E. BELL
1914–2006**

Eminent archaeologist and pioneer dendrochronologist Robert E. Bell passed away on 01 January 2006 in Norman, Oklahoma. Born in 1914, Bell attended Ohio State University and the University of New Mexico where he earned a B.A. degree in 1940. In that year, he matriculated at the University of Chicago where he received an M.A. degree in 1943 and, after serving in the US Army, a Ph.D. in 1947. Upon graduation, Bell joined the Department of Anthropology at the University of Oklahoma in Norman where he spent the rest of his distinguished career until retiring in 1980. In addition to nurturing the careers of innumerable students at the University, Bell conducted significant archaeological research in the central US, New Zealand, and Ecuador and was instrumental

in founding the Oklahoma Archaeological Survey and the Oklahoma Anthropological Society. His archaeological accomplishments were recognized by numerous tributes and awards.

While at the University of Chicago, Bell was trained in dendrochronology by Florence Hawley, who was a former student of Andrew Ellicott Douglass, the originator of dendrochronology, and who was pursuing archaeological tree-ring dating in the eastern US. Following in Hawley's footsteps, Bell applied his dendrochronological expertise to the analysis of wood samples from the Kincaid and related sites in southern Illinois. This exercise, which formed the basis of his Ph.D dissertation, was one of the first large-scale attempts to tree-ring date a major prehistoric site in the eastern US (Bell 1951, 1953). In the 1950s, he and his wife Virginia undertook a pioneering exploration of the dendrochronological and archaeological potential of various tree species in New Zealand (Bell and Bell 1958). Although Bell curtailed his dendrochronological interests after his New Zealand foray, he performed one further act that exceeds his other tree-ring accomplishments in importance. In the late 1940s, the University of Chicago terminated its dendrochronological program and was on the verge of discarding all the tree-ring samples that the program had accumulated over the years. Realizing the incalculable and irreversible scientific loss of such an action, Bob Bell rescued these materials from oblivion and maintained them in his personal possession for several decades. In the 1970s, he transferred the samples to the Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research at the University of Arizona where the Bell Collection is now preserved for future studies of archaeological tree-ring dating in the Midwest.



(Photo credit: Dr. Don Wyckoff taken in 1961)

—Contributed by Jeffrey S. Dean

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