

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Bonnie Styles

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Agencies and Organizations-Illinois State Museum Oral History project

Interview # OSM-A-L-2018-033

Bonnie Styles, former Illinois State Museum Director, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Agencies and Organizations – Illinois State Museum Oral History project*.

Interview dates & location:

Date: 26 June 2018 Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library,
Springfield, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark Flotow, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript
being processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 2:40 + 1:34 / 2.67 + 1.57 = 4.24 hrs

Session 1: Early life, education and career leading to IL State Museum

Session 2: Experiences as director of the IL State Museum

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on October 24,
2018.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield,
Illinois.

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Abstract

Bonnie Styles, *Agencies and Organizations*, OSM-A-L-2018-033

Biographical Information Interview: Bonnie Whatley Styles was born November 11, 1950, and was raised on a farm in Tempe, Arizona. She attended Tempe public schools and graduated from high school in 1968. She majored in anthropology at Arizona State University where she participated in archaeological field work and earned a B.A. in 1972, graduating with highest distinction. She earned her M.S. in anthropology from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois in 1973, and a Ph.D. from Northwestern in 1978. While there, she focused on archaeology, was a supervisor at the Koster site, and directed excavations at the Newbridge site as part of her dissertation research on prehistoric subsistence practices, especially on use of animals.

Styles served as an Acting Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, and then accepted the position of Associate Curator and Chair of Anthropology at the Illinois State Museum (ISM) in 1977, at the beginning of Bruce McMillan's tenure as ISM Director (until 2005). He transformed the ISM and was an important mentor to her. In 1983, she was promoted to full Curator of Anthropology. During her early tenure, she improved curation of the anthropology collections, secured federal funding and led the content team for the development of the anthropology hall (*Peoples of the Past*). In 1988, she was promoted to Director of Sciences, and from 1999-2005 she served as Associate Museum Director of Science and Education. Under Styles' directorship (2005-2015), research and collections continued to fuel innovative exhibitions, and she was instrumental in funding and developing the *Museum Tech Academy* afterschool and summer program for teens and the *Mary Ann MacLean Play Museum* children's gallery. She took on leadership roles in the American Assn of Museums, the American Quaternary Assn, Midwest Archaeological Conference, Society for American Archaeology, Natural Science Collections Alliance, Assn of Science Museum Directors and Rotary Club of Springfield. Styles became the Ex. Dir. of the Assn of Science Museum Directors (2017), adjunct professor in Anthropology at Northwestern University (2017), and a member of the Smithsonian Institute's Native American Repatriation Review Committee (2018).

Topics Covered: archaeology in the Illinois River Valley; impressions of the ISM's anthropology potential in the late 1970's; attracting outside grant monies; researching public exhibits; Interdisciplinary Quaternary Studies Program; development of the ISM Research and Collections Center; Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA); Peoples of the Past and the "Changes" exhibits museum accreditation; Illinois State Museum Society; the "virtual museum" concept; transformation of the Dickson Mounds Museum; ISM education projects; Tech Academy for school children; October 2015 ISM closure;

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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