Preface and Acknowledgments

Since the 1960s, interest in the archaeology of households has flourished, and the study of households has come to be recognized as an integral area of archaeological inquiry. Volumes on this topic have appeared sporadically over the past few decades, but most have focused on specific time periods or geographic regions. Meanwhile, the cross-cultural study of households has been steadily expanding as an academic area of interest. This is reflected both in university classrooms and in presentations at the international conferences of various archaeological organizations. There is growing need among students, scholars, and professional archaeologists for resources that are concerned with current and innovative approaches to this topic.

It was with this need in mind that Nyman and Fogle invited a diverse group of scholars working on an equally diverse range of archaeological households to participate in a thematic session at the annual conference of the Society for Historical Archaeology held in Leicester, England, in January 2013 (Mary Beaudry served as discussant for the session but here serves as coeditor and contributor). The session brought together new voices as well as veterans in historical archaeology who not only represent the breadth of research topics across the Americas (both temporally and geographically) but also employ innovative approaches to household archaeology that reveal how far the study has evolved. This volume is the culmination of efforts that originated in the session.

Much of the scholarship in household archaeology has focused on the materiality of past dwellings or on the household as the locus for domestic production. These are important avenues for the study of households—and ones several of our contributors address. Contributors to the present volume have attempted to take these emphases further, looking beyond the house per se to investigate homes and the wider landscapes in which
they are situated, as well as households in regional and global contexts. This volume illustrates ways in which household archaeology can be used to address essential social issues in the past, including gender relations, domination and resistance, subsistence practices, and the effects of colonial expansion. The walls of households are metaphorically torn down in this book, as contributors incorporate elements such as yard spaces and middens as important and expressive elements in the formation of past dwelling places within larger historical and cultural contexts. Our contributors employ innovative methods to examine the intersection of households with communities, regions, and the cultural landscape writ large. The volume focuses on historical sites in the Americas, but the case studies attend to a variety of historical time periods, regions, and cultures. The result is a wide-ranging perspective on the diversity of ways in which archaeological remains of dwellings conceived in the broadest sense provide insight into how people in the past navigated, negotiated, and contested the circumstances of their lives.

We are grateful to the original participants in the 2013 SHA session in England, especially Frasier Neiman, Elizabeth Terese Newman, Suzanne Spencer-Wood, and Carolyn White, whose conference papers do not appear here. We also thank Ben Barna, Andrew Agha, and Nicole Isenbarger for their willingness to step in at short notice with their contributions, which we were most happy to include. We acknowledge and thank our contributors and everyone who supported us in bringing this volume to fruition, in particular Sonia Dickey, formerly at the University Press of Florida. Kevin dedicates his chapter to the memory of his mother, Jean Minton Fogle (1952–2011); James dedicates his to his parents and to Brooke, for all their love and patience; and Mary dedicates her contribution to the memory of her sister, Jeannette M. Beaudry (1957–2010).
Archaeologists working in almost every corner of the globe, on nearly all time periods and cultures, consider the archaeology of households an important topic “at the heart of archaeology” (Hendon 2004: 272) and see it as a useful method for studying manifold aspects of human behavior. It did not take long for archaeologists to respond to Wilk and Rathje’s 1982 manifesto promoting household archaeology; in 1988 the Chacmool Conference held in Calgary, Canada, selected households and communities as its theme, and the conference drew an international group of archaeologists who by then were fully engaged in household archaeology (the conference proceedings were published as MacEachern et al. 1989). Since that time the literature on household archaeology has burgeoned; indeed, in recent years there has been a considerable upsurge in the publication of books and articles devoted to household archaeology, proving that it continues to be a vibrant area of archaeological research. There are numerous works devoted to household archaeology across time and space comparatively or that thematically treat issues of household activities and household production (e.g., Allison, ed. 1999; Blanton 1994; Douglass and Gonlin, ed. 2012; Hendon 1996), as well as works that focus on household archaeology of a particular region or time period, for example, ancient Israel (Yasur-Landau et al. 2011), Neolithic and Classical Greece (Ault and Nevett 1999; Souvatzi 2008), the ancient Near East (Parker and Foster 2012), highland and lowland Mesoamerica in both precontact and colonial times (e.g., Carballo 2011; Hendon 2006, 2004; Robin 2003; Santley and Hirth 1993; Schweitz 2012), South America (Bermann 1994; Jamieson 2002; Nash 2009), colonial South Africa (e.g., Hall et al. 1990; Malan...
1999, 1997), colonial Australia (e.g., Prosser et al. 2012), and prehistoric and historical North America (e.g., Barile and Brandon 2004; Beaudry 2004, 2002, 1999, 1989, 1984; Groover 2005; Pluckhahn 2010; Wesson 2008; Young 2004). This means household archaeology now has a wide array of proponents who approach the archaeological study of households in a variety of ways, a development that has enriched the field. Nevertheless, there are certain recurrent themes in household archaeology regardless of researchers’ theoretical and methodological approaches; some are the very themes originally proposed by Wilk and Rathje—household production and reproduction, household activities, and households and communities, for instance—and some newer themes have emerged over time. These include both macroscopic and microscopic scales of analysis of households in their landscapes, refuse disposal, and site formation processes, and of gender relations at the household level, as well as hybridity and the formation of alternative forms of households, which are all themes considered by the contributors to this volume.

Themes and Approaches in Household Archaeology

Archaeologists are naturally drawn to household archaeology because so many of the sites they excavate are places where people lived as well as where for much of the human past people carried out most of their daily activities; from the outset, researchers in household archaeology thought of the household as not related so much to family and kinship but primarily to production and to what households do, acknowledging that households can be multigenerational and have inmates who are not kin (such as slaves, servants, apprentices, boarders, and so forth). Archaeologists also acknowledged early on that understanding households involved more than understanding architecture and houses; throughout history, many households occupied domestic compounds and were to a greater or lesser degree incorporated into neighborhoods and communities. Archaeologists therefore were interested in activity areas both within dwellings and out of doors, in the open spaces of compounds, courtyards, patios, houseyards, and even urban backlots. Archaeologists of households often are interested in comparisons among households to facilitate an understanding of issues of power, differentiation, and inequality within given societies; such studies may consider economic aspects of household production...
and consumption, but they also take into account the symbolic aspects of prestige goods as ways of demarcating social difference.

One of the major themes that has characterized the archaeology of households has been finding ways of understanding functions and activities that households perform (for a recent discussion, see Douglass and Gonlin 2012); initially this often involved consideration of household production and consumption—what members of the household made and did as a collective and what the household as a collectivity consumed. Penelope Allison (1999: 1) pointed out over a decade ago that the traditional approach to the archaeology of households focuses on their “role as measurable socio-economic units” of a wider community; this definition of a household as the smallest, indivisible social unit means that a household could be seen to stand for society, and the household, thus defined as a “unit,” is slotted into some sort of socioeconomic classification based on the perceived standing of its head. Despite acknowledging the productive nature of households, this approach tends to view the household chiefly as a locus of consumption, and household deposits have therefore been analyzed to ascertain what types of goods were purchased or made, how much was expended on acquisition, the sources of goods that a household consumed, and what these goods could tell of the overall socioeconomic status of households in a given society. What is perhaps surprising is that despite their frequent emphasis on household activities, household archaeologists have only recently adopted practice theory to frame analysis of household activities (see, e.g., Robin 2013). Robb (2007: 75) notes that while of course houses provide shelter, “they also embody cultural values, commitment to places, and plans of action.”

Allison noted further that “the internal dynamics and interrelationships of a household have been viewed as trivial and insignificant” (1999: 2); she subscribes to the view that the household is not so much a unit as it is a system of membership. This acknowledges the internal diversity of households as well as the diversity of households within any given society; it also allows archaeologists to consider how households are differentially constituted in different times and places as well as to address spatial, status, gender, and age relationships within the organization and structure of the household. Indeed, for many, the shift of emphasis on household as productive unit to that of an often highly differentiated and complex system of both fixed and shifting relationships has led to a strong focus