**4.1 Robbins and crew member uncovering the hammerhead, September 1950. (Photograph 225 by Richard Merrill,1950.)**

CHAPTER FOUR

# *Roland Robbins in Context*

*William A. Griswold*

Roland Wells Robbins was never accepted by the academic community as a bona fide archeologist. Most academic archeologists found his methods brutish and quickly dismissed him because he was never formally schooled in archeology. Nevertheless, Robbins managed to do what few academic archeologists are ever able to do: successfully investigate an early industrial site buried by huge amounts of fill, gather archeological information that supplemented and informed a privately-funded reconstruction, create a large amount of public interest in the project, and launch a career in archeology that lasted throughout his lifetime. This chapter takes a critical look at Robbins' intellectual training, recordation proficiency, project management skills, and focus on public involvement during the Saugus project.

*It was curiosity about my own community that led me to dig in Massachusetts when I had no more equipment than a shovel and a questioning mind. At the time I had a thriving business as a house painter and handy man—and no archaeological training whatsoever. But I found that simple tools and the rudiments of a scientific approach, cautiously exercised, could ferret out history that had evaded others; and, as time passed, the opportunities to do so became so demanding that I ceased to be an expert at washing other people's windows and renovating other people's houses, and was established as a working archaeologist.*

Roland Robbins and Evan Jones, *Hidden America,* pp. 11-12.

## Background

Robbins came to the Saugus Iron Works project following his success in finding and excavating remnants of Henry David Thoreau's cabin on the shore of Walden Pond near Concord, Massachusetts. This discovery and Robbins' earlier investigation of Daniel Chester French's Minute Man statue at the Old North Bridge in Concord, Massachusetts, had brought Robbins notice and credibility as an amateur historical investigator.[1] It was as a direct result of his discovery of Thoreau's cabin that J. Sanger Attwill, president of the First Iron Works Association (FIWA), offered Robbins a role in what Attwill termed an "antique treasure hunt" at Saugus: looking for any trace of the old ironworking facility.[2] Unschooled in traditional archeological method and theory, Robbins brought his experiences at Walden, an inquisitive mind, and a skilled eye to bear on the project. His early discoveries during this "treasure hunt" were enough to continue his long-term employment with the project.

Having dropped out of high school, Robbins lacked any formal instruction in archeology or archeological excavation methods. This lack of formal education in the field dogged him throughout his career. Professional archeologists never accepted Robbins because of his perceived crude and damaging excavation methods and his willingness to embrace public participation in his projects.[3] Some of his harshest critics became some of the most respected scholars in the young discipline of historical archeology, including James Deetz and John Cotter. However, by the end of his life, Robbins had not only managed to stay actively employed in the field, but had developed a field résumé that would make many current practitioners of the craft envious. Regardless of how the academic community perceived Robbins, he

was in fact one of the first excavators to embrace investigations of early industrial sites. His eye for discoveries, his project management skills, his charisma, and his excitement about the various projects he completed seem to have vastly outpaced his lack of formal training as an archeologist, at least among his admirers.

During the early years of the Saugus project, roughly between 1948 and 1951, Robbins was very engaged in the day-to-day fieldwork and conducted much of it either by himself or by working closely with his crew. He spent long hours with the crew, enveloped in the exciting discoveries that were being made. In his book ***Hidden America***, Robbins notes he hired "three talented diggers from the Saugus Water Department" and explained to them "that archaeological digging required even greater caution than they were accustomed to use in their excavation of the city's plumbing system."[4] Crew numbers ebbed and flowed throughout the five-year-long archeological excavation that usually went on year round.

Robbins dealt with many individuals on a day-to-day basis. Among those connected with the project were J. Sanger Attwill, president of the FIWA; Quincy Bent, the chairman of the Reconstruction Committee; Walter S. Tower, the president of the American Iron and Steel Institute; Conover Fitch, architect for Perry, Shaw and Hepburn, Kehoe and Dean; and Laurence Davis, the attorney for the project. As with other diverse work groups, relations between these individuals were complicated and mixed. Robbins enjoyed very good relations with those who encouraged his research, while at times his interactions with others almost lacked civility.

Robbins made detailed entries for the project in notebooks. His daily logs record some archeological elements but also contain information about the management of the project. He kept these daily logs for the duration of his tenure, between 1948 and 1953. He used the daily logs as a vehicle to present his excavation rationale, interpretation of discoveries and, sometimes, contradictory information. Numerous sketch maps, field plans, and various illustrations were also done to supplement the log entries and thousands of photographs were taken to document the project. Around 1951, Robbins also began files on various features and topics that he encountered at Saugus, such as canals and docks. Today these records are located in at least two locations. The Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site cares for Robbins' daily logs while the Thoreau Society/Thoreau Institute curates some of the feature files and most of the correspondence related to the project.

Robbins' detailed descriptions of the discoveries and the methods used to make the discoveries illustrate his mastery of one of the most important parts of archeology, recordation, at least in the early years of the project (1948–1951). After that time, much of the recordation was handed off to Stephen Whittlesey, an engineer hired to professionally document the project, as Robbins was forced to focus more on management issues. After Whittlesey's hire, Robbins' daily logs still contain some archeological information, including notes, description, and sketches, but not to the same degree as before.

*It rained hard all morning. I wrote Mr. Bent a letter detailing the work to date in a.m. Sent him Hick's picture of me at buried road site and of Higgins in tailrace site. Boy named English looked me up at Saugus Library where I was writing report. Said Sanger said we could give him a job. Said he couldn't make it until June 20th. Sanger paid the men too late for them to cash their checks. I had to telephone him at 1:10 p.m. to ask if he intended to pay the men so they could reach bank before closing time. Said he would be right over. Didn't make it before 2:00 p.m. Gave Miss Hawkes $32.35 cash to give to me for money I have spent on equipment. I had Miss Hawkes to ask him about truck for removing dirt. Said he hadn't gotten to it. Letter from Barbara Lawrence, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard College, stating that bone specimens left for examination were of a cow. (These specimens were from hair and bone evidence found just north of most northern side of bellows base last fall). No men worked today because of bad weather.*

Roland Robbins, "Saugus Ironworks Daily Log - 1949," May 27, 1949.

**4.2 Robbins (right) discussing an artifact with J. Sanger Attwill (left) and unknown visitor. (Photograph 751 by Richard Merrill, November 1952.)**

While Robbins recorded what he did in his daily logs there are problems with his entries. One problem concerns Robbins' use of triangulation for plotting and mapping his work. Triangulation is a system of measurement that records the three-dimensional location of a feature or artifact using known locations and is a fundamental recording concept used by archeological excavators around the world. Very few of the landscape features that Robbins triangulated from are still present and no overall grid system was used to relate one map to another. This makes it very difficult to know exactly where features and artifacts were found.

Another problem, more serious than the first, lies in Robbins' failure to always record where he excavated. The daily logs describe the general areas where the excavations took place (e.g., east of the forge) but in some cases exact locations were never recorded. Ultimately, without this information, a reconstructed base map can never be fully complete in terms of illustrating the impacts Robbins made to the site. Likewise, Robbins' use of profiles was often erratic. He illustrated sections only on occasion and then he only illustrated features or deposits about which he wanted to convey specific information. In several cases, the locations of illustrated profiles are unclear.

Even with these shortcomings, the entries show Robbins to be a complex and inquisitive thinker. He obviously spent many hours reflecting on his discoveries and on their interpretation. His early notes are replete with questions that he was attempting to answer. For example, in one entry on Tuesday, September 14, 1948, Robbins asked "How come there is charcoal under the stones? Wouldn't this hurt their chance of being the foundation to the blast furnace?"[5] When such questions arose Robbins invariably suggested additional fieldwork to resolve the vexing question or contradiction. In some cases the additional excavations solved the dilemma but not always.

Two of the most important strengths of the Saugus Iron Works excavations are the photographic collection made by Robbins, Richard Merrill, and others and the contributions of collaborating experts. Richard Merrill was the photographer for the project hired by the FIWA. His photographs are simply stunning and many of them have been included in this book. Overall, Merrill took several thousand photographs. These, plus several thousand Kodachrome slides taken by Robbins, are in the Saugus Iron Works collection. Robbins and the FIWA must have realized the importance of their work for posterity and fortunately recorded much of what they did with excellent photographic images.

Robbins also recognized his limitations and realized early on that he would have to enlist the help of individuals representing many different disciplines to unravel the clues contained in the excavations. Dr. E. Neal Hartley (history), Dr. Herbert Uhlig (metals conservation), Dr. Elso Barghoorn (wood conservation), Dr. Laurence LaForge (geology), Barbara Lawrence (faunal analysis), Jack Lambert (forestry), and John Bradford (surveying and mapping) were just a few of the many experts who aided Robbins in

*Men continued work at slitting mill site, particularly digging out the stones buried in what might be natural clays at the northwest area of the 3rd waterway. These soils are being used to regrade the approach to the yard area south of the forge along the easterly side. Fitch and I spent part of the A.M. going over data relative to the casting beds, gravel fill to the south of the furnace, and rubble found on the slope to [the] front of the furnace.*

Roland Robbins, "Saugus Ironworks Daily Log - 1953," April 22, 1953.

**4.3 Robbins in his museum writing in his notebook in March 1953. (Photograph 840 by Richard Merrill, 1953.)**

the Saugus investigations. Robbins sought the assistance of many others during his excavations; in this respect the project was a harbinger of formal interdisciplinary research.

The daily logs provide overwhelming evidence that Robbins understood the concepts of stratigraphy and stratigraphic association of artifacts. Many of his drawings, both plan and profile, illustrate what he discusses fully in his notes, i.e., that older deposits, on the whole, are more deeply buried than younger deposits and that artifacts and features from the same deposit are similar in age. While Robbins understood these basic archeological concepts, he did not always use them to his advantage as effectively as he needed to tackle a project as large and as context dependent as the Saugus Iron Works excavations. Instead of relying on these concepts and using stratigraphy as a tool to interpret the deposits, features, and artifacts, Robbins would at times use the composition of the soil matrix or, even more problematically, topographic elevations to determine dates. For example, on Friday, August 26, 1949, he commented,

> To commute to Jenk's operations along tailrace south of furnace from the low controversial area easterly of furnace is beyond reasonable conjecture—because of the steep rise in the terrain from the low level area easterly of furnace to the area to south of furnace which was filled considerably at time of furnace construction. Also the slag pile as we know it is 7'–9' higher than the southerly side of foundation #8 and only 19' south of foundation #8. It is only 15' from the south side of foundation #8 to the stone wall just northerly of north end of slag pile. And yet the walls elevation is 6'–7' higher than is foundation #8![6]

As many professional archeologists have learned, interpretation of features based on elevation alone is fraught with pitfalls. Good interpretations are made by using stratigraphy to help sort out complex sites like Saugus. Interpretations about the relationship between features at different elevations, even when it seems logical to assume a relationship, are often disproved by examination of the stratigraphic association. By evaluating deposits and levels according to a preconceived notion of how things looked or functioned, Robbins used only complementary information to support his conjectures. While Robbins was far from the first person to use this approach, it may have compromised the collection of information; for example, this method makes it very difficult to evaluate alternative explanations. Ideally, Robbins would have been more systematic about his excavations and evaluated the data against multiple hypotheses so that much more could have been learned about the site.

Based on today's standards, Robbins' field methods were unsystematic and certainly resulted in the destruction of important data. Often, his trenches and test units were irregular in size and shape and, while he recovered artifacts, especially museum pieces, he never intended for his collection to be systematic. Rather than systematically sifting soil and collecting artifacts, Robbins removed tons of soil using heavy

*At the northermost end of tailrace and at a depth lacking about 1' from its bottom, I removed one slab very similar to those used in the wooden wheel affair that had a wooden round shaft and the wheels were joined with these slats. No large boulders were found in the filled tailrace. Inasmuch as no large stones are being found at the tailrace level or in the tailrace; also the fact that the tailrace is caved towards the west wall of [the] furnace, and its timbers show signs of having been exposed to fire, it seems likely that after the termination of the furnace's use it was exposed to fire. Later, fill used at its west wall crushed its timbers and sprung them towards [the] furnace. This fill, or a later fill, then crushed in the floor planking across its top. The* dismantling *of the furnace must have taken place* after *the tailrace was filled in and over.*

Roland Robbins, "Saugus Ironworks Daily Log - 1949," May 20, 1949.

**4.4 Robbins excavating in a trench in the slitting mill area in January 1953. (Photograph 793 by Richard Merrill, 1953.)**

machinery and often sifted or sorted through this soil only by eye or by using large-scale sorting equipment.

It is important that history not judge Robbins by standards that were not yet available at the time that the Saugus excavations were being conducted. While earlier professional archeologists like General Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers (who excavated Cranborne Chase, England) and George Reisner (who worked in Giza, Egypt, and Nubia) had conducted meticulous, controlled, systematic excavations much earlier, it was not until the mid-to-late 1950s that the Wheeler-Kenyon method of stratigraphic excavation caught on as the preferred method for archeological site excavation.[7] Many professional archeologists had only recently discontinued using arbitrary levels in their excavations at the time Robbins excavated at Saugus. It is appropriate to use professional archeological standards to judge Robbins' later work when such standards were widely accepted and practiced by professional archeologists, but that goes well beyond the scope of this book.

Robbins was an active consumer of products designed to aid in the location of artifacts and features. This proved to be a double-edged sword as he experimented with good products as well as bad ones. For example, he used mine detectors of World War II vintage for locating metal objects. As prolific as iron objects were on a former ironworking site, Robbins still managed to find iron artifacts with the mine detector. More questionably he also experimented with divination. However, since Colonial Williamsbur's Ivor Noel Hume, one of the founders of historical archeology, also experimented with divination, one can only assume that at the time it did not have the negative reputation it does today among professional archeologists.[8] Robbins notes:

> Friday, Oct. 12th [1951] … Ernie (?) Gaudet Malden 2-7297 and his friend who is so capable with the divining rods, were at Saugus from 9:45 to 11 A.M. I saw his friend work his rods. And although they were "too dry" to perform to best advantage, and the diathermy treatments he is taking for a broken ankle apparently are cutting down his efficiency, his still was able to get results. The rods would point down at iron relics in my museum—and at a gold watch—this was his "gold rod." They would not work for me. But I could hold one hand on the rod and hold his hand, he holding the other end of the rod, and it would turn down over iron. I had him go down Bridge St. He picked the gas main whenever he crossed it. When I told him it was an iron gas main he was quite surprised. He was using his "water divining" rod. It was the first time it had worked on metal. Where the refinery waterway outlet leaves Bridge St.—I should say 4'–5' before it leaves Bridge St.—he received a strong pull on his iron "divining rod." Said we should find metal there. I shall wait until we excavate there to determine whether he was right or wrong. I did not have the time to spend with them that I would have liked. I shall have them down at a later date . . . .[9]

*Perhaps my unique wheel might also have been lost had I not been fortunate in getting together with a biologist, Dr. Elso Barghoorn of Harvard. First testing smaller pieces of wood taken from the wheel pit, Barghoorn found that 87.7 per cent of the content was water. After considerable experiment, we arrived at a method in which each wooden member of the wheel was immersed in specially constructed vats filled with paraffin heated to 245 degrees. As the wet pieces were dropped in they sizzled like French-fried potatoes going into hot grease—as the moisture sizzled out of the wood, the paraffin seeped in to take its place, and when, after about seven hours, the sizzling stopped, the treatment was complete.*

Roland Robbins and Evan Jones, ***Hidden America***, p. 58.

**4.5 Robbins using mine detector with volunteer assistance. (Photograph 457 by Richard Merrill, 1950.)**

**Day-to-Day Excavations**

The Saugus project, like most large archeological projects, was anything but dull. In his daily logs Robbins points out many non-archeological curiosities including a salvage man offering to buy iron found at the site, deaths, sicknesses, injuries, disagreements, break-ins, salary disputes, and even hearsay that the excavation was actually a cover operation for uranium mining. In many cases, Robbins' daily logs read more like a private diary. On one occasion, on Wednesday, September 15, 1948, Robbins even notes his aid in extinguishing a fire at a Mr. Guy's workshop. He notes that

> . . . I continued my work of uncovering the stone base. At about 12:40 noon I had just finished my lunch and was starting back to work when I saw Mr. Guy running from his house to his workshop with a pan of water. I hastened over and found his shop aflame. I rushed to the Old Iron House and found two fire extinguishers and took them to the shop. With the help of neighbors the fire was brought under control. It was a miracle that it was saved![10]

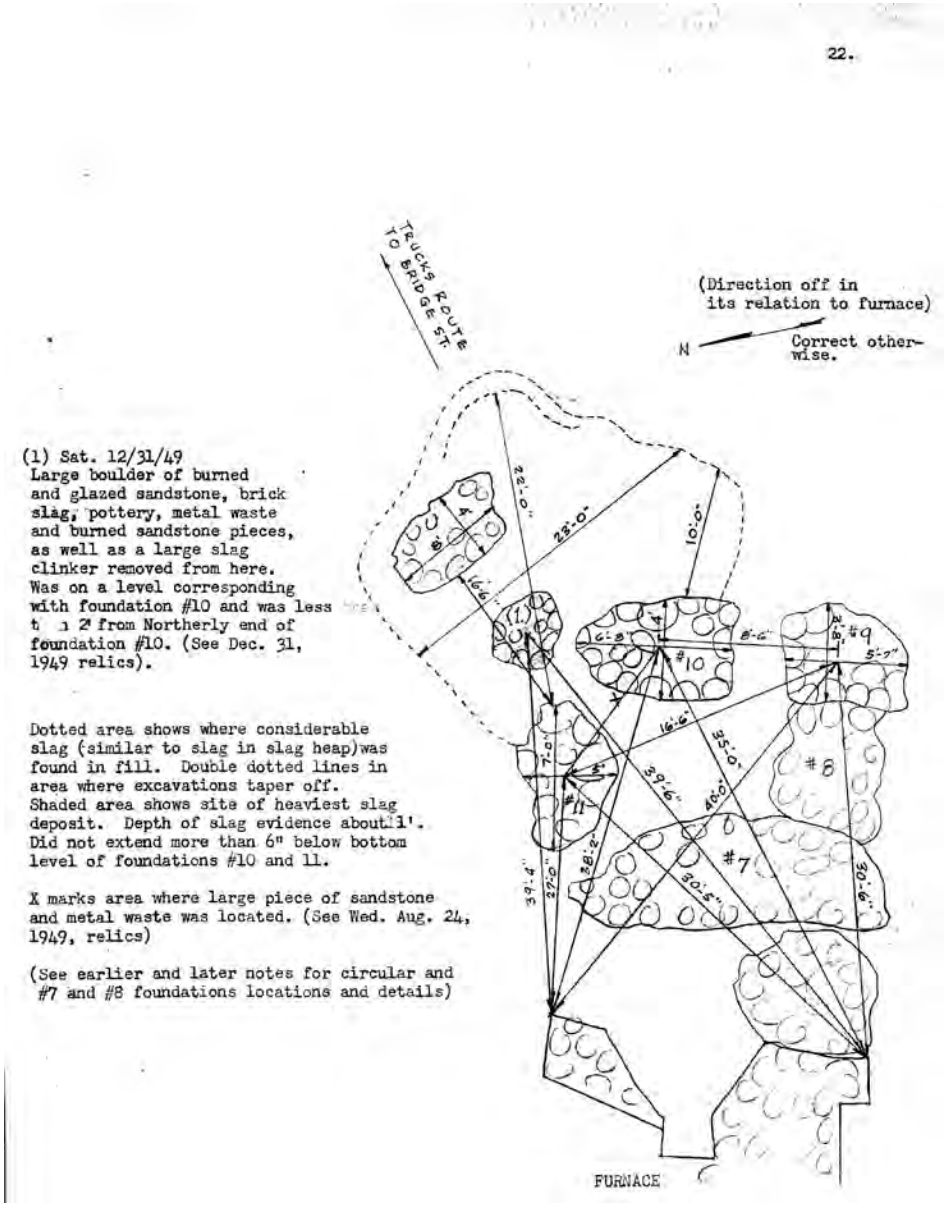
Rarely are notes left by professional archeologists ever this interesting.

The daily logs indicate that Robbins did a great deal of historical research for the project. His notes reflect that he made numerous trips to libraries all across the area. For example, on Monday, September 20, 1948, Robbins reports that he went to Baker Library at Harvard's Graduate School of Business to consult legal papers pertaining to the ironworks held in Harvard's collection. Hartley, the historian hired for the project, was instrumental in discussing the historical records with Robbins. Hartley's book ***Ironworks on the Saugus*** represents a thorough, if not exhaustive, effort to collect historical sources about the ironworks facility, the people who worked there, the Undertakers who financed the experiment, and the legal morass that eventually developed and led to the dissolution of the facility. While Hartley dealt with the primary and secondary historical source material, Robbins visited many other ironworking archeological sites within the U.S. By the end of his career, Robbins would have excavated at over twenty of them.[11]

The Hammersmith operation contained two components, one in Saugus (then known as Lynn) and the other south of Boston in Quincy, (then Braintree) Massachusetts. In April 1950, while Robbins was still deeply involved with the Saugus Iron Works project, he began limited excavations on one site in Braintree, along the Monatiquot River, in hopes of locating the other component of the Undertaker's financial experiment. For several reasons, Robbins quickly dismissed the site as the southern component of the corporation and moved on to a site along Furnace Brook in Hall Cemetery. Here Robbins met with much success identifying the furnace base and obtaining slag and metal samples for analysis and comparison with materials from Saugus. In fact, he went on to excavate the site more thoroughly in 1956 after he had resigned from the Saugus project.[12] While not nearly as large or complex as the Saugus ex-

*I was talking to Dr. Schubert and Hartley and remarked that the forge hammer base was seated upon a large horizontal beam. He remarked, "It couldn't be, they always placed a metal plate, or sow bars, at bottom of anvil base." I had to take him down to the site to prove my point . . . . In P.M. I was telling Dr. Schubert how I found the casting beds clinging to south side of furnace breast. He insisted that that could not be the case, "They ran out from center of casting arch." I told him I had the sands from these beds. He said that that wasn't possible. "They wouldn't last that long." I told him I had these sands and pictures of the casting beds. He didn't seem interested in this evidence, he felt certain that this was never the case with the English furnaces. I told him the sow bed abutted the hollow-ware casting bed. Again I was wrong. "The molds were filled from ladles." He implied the molds were placed upon the ground, or higher, were never placed in a sand bed. He was* certain *that the Saugus furnace had a* forge hearth*. . . . He seems entirely convinced that Saugus was a prototype of English Iron Works. Dr. Schubert should have been brought over 3-1/2 years ago. With his knowledge of English Iron Works there would have been no need of engaging an archaeologist to determine the basic pattern of the Saugus Iron Works.*

Roland Robbins, "Saugus Ironworks Daily Log - 1952," June 19, 1952.




**4.6 Drawing from Robbins' December 31, 1949, daily log. In the sketch Robbins identifies many of the features to the east of the furnace breastwork. The numbers on the feature were given by Robbins to simplify the narrative.**

cavations, the eventual excavations at the Quincy blast furnace, Robbins produced much better records there than he did at Saugus. The report that Robbins prepared for the City of Quincy illustrates that he had matured in both his knowledge of blast furnaces and in his recordation and management of an archeological project; notably, he did not suffer from the pressure of an imminent and ongoing restoration at this site as he did at the complex Saugus operation.

While no individual living at the time that Robbins did his work at Saugus would have been alive at the time the ironworks was operational, Robbins conducted some ethnographic interviews with various longtime residents and property owners who lived near the site. For example, he summarizes his discussions with Charles W. Davis on Tuesday, May 31, 1949:

> Ralph Barrett brought old Charles W. Davis to see me in the afternoon. Mr. Davis (colored) is now 90 years of age. He said he came to Saugus to work for Scott (of Scott's Mill) when he was 28 years of age. Was Scott's coachman. (This was about 1887). Worked for Scott for 14 years (till Scott died). Then worked one more year for Scott's widow. During the 15 years he worked for Scott and family, he lived in the Old Iron Works House, then owned by Scott. Mr. Davis could not recall any evidence of a fill or of a depression across Scott's property (in line from the blast furnace to Pranker's Pond) which might indicate the course of the old canal. Nor could he recall having ever heard anyone speak of the old canal having taken such a course. However he did say that Scott had done much to beautify this land many years before he (Davis) came to work for him. It is possible Scott may have earlier filled in any evidence of the old canal that may have remained.[13]

As personal experience has shown, ethnographic interviews of neighbors or former tenants can provide clues to earlier landscape or archeological features. They can also often turn out to be wild goose chases. Robbins, however, like a thorough detective, followed up on most of these stories. In several cases, these ethnographic accounts provided key information for site investigation and interpretation.

Robbins not only enjoyed talking with neighbors about the property but also loved public forums at which he could present his discoveries. For the most part, he was very personable and excelled in his public lectures and tours of discoveries at the site. His daily logs are full of references to his public lectures. For example, at the end of his 1953 entries, he notes giving lectures to the Antique Club of New Jersey; Jamaica Plain Tuesday Club; Round Table Club of the Baptist Church in Lexington Center; 20th Century Club; Couples Club at the First Parish Church, Fitchburg; Princeton Historical Society; Saugus Garden Club; Commonwealth Men's Bible Class at the Belmont Methodist Church; William Sutton Masonic Lodge; and the Connecticut AMC.[14] These lectures, coupled with his work at Saugus, meant a profoundly busy schedule for Robbins. During his tenure with the Saugus project, Robbins informed thousands of people about the discoveries.

*Spent part of morning with Mr. Eckert going over our property and lines. He gave me permission to do any test digging I want at any time on his property. Paul, Mike and I cleaned up around the furnace and laid out the casting beds and forge or bloomery site at high elevation where Iron Works sign stood. I talked with Mrs. Hogle for some time in p.m. Mr. Albert Rohnbacker, Juliette Rd, gave me a 17?7 coin that his son, Richard, aged 10, found on excavated soil piled to rear of I.W.H. Said some years ago* he saw *dump cart removing slag from south end of slag heap taking it to the dam at Prankers Pond where it was used for base purposes.*

Roland Robbins, "Saugus Ironworks Daily Log - 1950," April 28, 1950.

**4.7 Robbins talking with Rufus Zimmerman, a museum visitor in June 1952. (Photograph 684 by Richard Merrill, 1952.)**

Robbins' daily logs indicate that he, by necessity, kept odd hours to accommodate his speaking engagements. All of the time that he spent in publicizing the project paid off greatly. Not only did the excavation itself increase awareness of the important resources at the site, but Robbins' public involvement aided in the reconstruction. Several members of the community and local governing boards supported the reconstruction and the movement of streets and utilities, particularly Central and Bridge streets, because of Robbins' efforts.

When one looks at the audience Robbins tried to reach, one thing becomes apparent: he attempted to communicate with the general public and not with the academic community. His lectures were designed to excite the imagination of audience members and get them interested in history and archeology. People who visited the site were often met by Robbins and taken on tours. He even went so far as to allow members of the general public to join in the discoveries being made at the site. This irritated many in the scholarly community. Archeology was struggling to be a science and many academics thought that direct involvement of the public would diminish the discipline. In the post war era, archeology still bordered on the exotic and many trained archeologists wanted to keep it that way. Today, the discipline involves both academic archeologists and public historians, who devote most of their efforts to teaching history to the general public. In this respect, Robbins served as a trailblazer for public history and archeology.

For a rather prolific log writer and recorder of daily detail, Robbins mentions extraordinarily little about his family or life outside of the excavations. Occasionally he refers to a birthday, a weekend in Vermont, holiday plans, a baseball team, or a tennis game. One notable exception is an entry made on April 29, 1952. Here Robbins mentions his wife and children and their horseback riding lessons.

> Gerry drove Jean, Bonnie and me to the Pine Banks riding school, 90 Main Street, Melrose. There Bonnie, Jean and I had our 1st riding lesson. It lasted until 5:35 p.m. Decided to have another lesson next Tuesday. Dick preferred to play ball. In the evening I spoke at a P.T.A. meeting at the Woodville School, Farm Street, Wakefield. I did this for Harold Hanson . . . .[15]

In other instances Robbins, mentions events like the opening of Route 128 and how it helped cut time off his commute from Lincoln to Saugus, various bugs that occasionally infected him, grand jury duty, and his perceived results from his evening and weekend lectures. While these brief examples illustrate a man with a happy family life and mundane encounters which much of humanity experiences, they are not detailed enough to describe Robbins off the job. Instead, observations on his personality must be derived from his daily on-the-job dealings. From what he left in his notes, Robbins seems to be a likeable, practical person with good project management skills, a good sense of humor, and exceptionally good interpersonal skills, when he chose to use them. He also must have been very charismatic to accomplish what he ultimately was able to in archeology.

*10:00 a.m. the Iron Works played the Saugus Police Department a game of softball. This was the first game we have played. It was played at Anna Parker playground. It started at about 10:30 and ended a few minutes before noon. The Iron Works won by a score of 12 to 10. Manny, Tommy Sheehan and Charlie Sanford, Jr. were the only employees of the Iron Works available. Sanford's brother played, and Manny brought a fellow along to pitch for us. I brought Dick Robbins, Charlie Campobasso and Georgie Gordan along and they played the entire game. And it was a good game they played. Charlie caught, Georgie played 2nd base, and Dick played short-stop. They each got three for five. Dick drove in one run, Georgie and Charlie each drove in two runs and Georgie scored two more. It was raw, dark day. I could not play because of my back.*

Roland Robbins, "Saugus Ironworks Daily Log - 1952," September 14, 1952.

**4.8 Saugus High School students attending the premiere of the Saugus filmstrip "The Cradle of an American Industry" in November 1951. (Photograph 509 by Richard Merrill, 1951.)**

While some of the personal interplay between the various characters in the Saugus drama entered into the daily log entries, it seems clear that Robbins attempted to refrain from overtly criticizing project members; architect Harrison Shock, Quincy Bent, and ironworks historian H. R. Schubert seem to be an exception to this rule, particularly in the last two years of the project as the pressure rose to finish.

> Friday, August 3 [, 1951] … Jones tells me that she [Mrs. Kingsbury hired to aid the architects in the furnace reconstruction] is to supervise the laying of the furnace stones. Apparently they (the architects) are not sure of themselves (per usual) and have arranged for Mrs. Kingsbury to get them out of their dilemma—or to hold their bag. Too bad Mrs. Kingsbury did [not] have the advantage of inspecting the furnace stones and marking them, if necessary, before the furnace was torn down. Too bad, also, that Schock did ***not appreciate*** the importance of plotting the furnace stones at an earlier date.[16] In view of the fact that for the past ***2 years*** the architects have had the opportunity to study the detail and features of the furnace foundation, bellows base timbers and more recently the tailrace, wheel pit, etc; and yet are confused and ignorant of desirable furnace foundation data, not now available because of its dismantling, make it seem entirely unlikely that they will be capable of conceiving a true perspective of the upper structure of the furnace, of which we found no evidence. [17]

As time progressed, Robbins became less involved in the day-to-day fieldwork and more involved with the management of what had become a very large, very demanding project. His notes indicate that he was corresponding with numerous individuals about everything including conservation of wooden and metal artifacts, obtaining estimates for the purchase of water pumps, mediating disputes between adjacent property owners and the project's attorney, and lecturing to local civic groups. It is clear from his log entries that his interactions with several individuals, especially Attwill and Bent, began to wear him down. His usually excellent health and unbounded energy began to suffer and he frequently notes stress related ailments in his daily logs. Documentation of archeological discoveries lessened as time wore on, especially in his post-1951 daily logs. Ultimately Robbins resigned from the project on July 31, 1953, after a final confrontation with Bent.

Regardless of academics' critiques of Robbins and the Saugus Iron Works project, several things are clear. While complex to unravel, Robbins' notes, drawings, photographs, films, and correspondence provide enough information to document the early excavations at Saugus. While a site map cannot be constructed illustrating all of the places in which Robbins excavated, enough information is available in the Saugus archives and other repositories to piece together a final report on the project.