

# Influential Women honors Polly Anna Burnette, advancing archaeological discovery and cultural resource management.

DEXTER, MI, UNITED STATES, June 12, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Archaeologist Builds Career Across International Excavations, Academic Excellence, and Midwest Cultural Heritage Projects

Dexter, Michigan – Polly Anna Burnette is an accomplished archaeologist specializing in cultural resource management and historical archaeology. Her professional journey reflects a strong foundation in fieldwork, international research experience, and academic achievement, all of which have shaped her career in archaeology and cultural heritage preservation.

Polly Anna began her academic path at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, where she earned a Bachelor's Degree in Anthropology. During her undergraduate studies, she discovered a strong passion for excavation and field-based research. A pivotal moment in her early career came when she received a field school scholarship that allowed her to excavate a Neanderthal site in southern Spain. This experience proved to be a turning point, opening doors to internships at prestigious institutions such as the Smithsonian Institution and the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology. These opportunities helped her develop foundational expertise in zooarchaeology, laboratory methods, and excavation practices, setting the stage for her long-term career in the field.

Following her undergraduate education, Polly Anna pursued a Master's Degree at Cornell University, where she studied Near Eastern Studies, Anthropology, and Archaeology. During her time at Cornell, she expanded her international field experience through excavations in Israel and strengthened her technical expertise in laboratory management, research methodologies, and student mentorship. Her academic excellence and field contributions were recognized



through multiple research grants, including the CIAMS Hirsch Travel and Research Grants, which supported her continued academic and archaeological work.

Today, Polly Anna serves as an Associate Archaeologist at Chronicle Heritage, where she plays an active role in cultural resource management projects across the Midwest. Her work includes archaeological surveys, monitoring, laboratory processing, and urban excavation projects. She is SOI qualified and takes a leadership role in guiding field crews, ensuring compliance with archaeological standards, and producing detailed technical reports. In addition to her field responsibilities, she is passionate about mentorship and education, regularly engaging with students and young professionals through talks on archaeology and career development in the discipline.

Polly Anna attributes her success to a combination of determination, mentorship, and hands-on experience in the field. A pivotal moment in her journey came with her field school scholarship in Spain, which led to expanded opportunities including internships at the Smithsonian and University of Michigan museums, as well as international projects in Romania, Serbia, and Israel. Her diverse field experiences, combined with rigorous graduate training at Cornell University, deepened her expertise and broadened her perspective on archaeological research. Throughout her career, involvement in professional organizations and guidance from supportive mentors—particularly women in archaeology—have played a significant role in shaping her professional development. Ultimately, she credits her success to a persistent curiosity about the past, a strong commitment to responsible fieldwork, and a dedication to ensuring that historical narratives are represented through the artifacts and sites she studies.

In her work with students and emerging professionals, Polly Anna has frequently addressed the importance of networking and volunteering, particularly in academic environments. She emphasizes that students who commit time consistently to research projects—such as participating in fieldwork multiple times per week—are often the ones who build meaningful professional connections. These relationships can lead to invitations to participate in excavations and other advanced research opportunities. While she acknowledges that many of these roles are unpaid and require significant dedication, she views them as invaluable stepping stones in building a career in archaeology.

She also encourages aspiring archaeologists to actively pursue opportunities by sending cold emails to researchers and professionals in the field. According to Polly Anna, lack of response should not be interpreted as rejection, as faculty and professionals may be on sabbatical or managing heavy workloads. She stresses that the act of reaching out is itself an important professional skill. Additionally, she highlights the importance of following through on commitments once they are made, noting that reliability, consistency, and accountability are essential qualities in the field of archaeology.

Polly Anna identifies one of the biggest challenges in archaeology today as the uncertainty created by political and funding changes that impact research contracts. Many archaeological

projects are tied to agencies such as the National Forest Service, and shifts in funding or policy can significantly disrupt ongoing work. At one point, these uncertainties raised concerns about whether certain projects would continue, but her company successfully adapted by restructuring contracts and maintaining operational stability. Leadership within her organization also provides regular communication during periods of political or institutional disruption, helping teams remain informed and focused.

Another major challenge in her profession is the demanding nature of travel. Polly Anna is currently working toward a stage in her career where she can reduce the amount of constant field travel, which she identifies as a long-term professional goal. While she is fortunate to work primarily within her home state, she acknowledges that many archaeologists across North America must travel extensively for field assignments. She describes travel as a “love-hate” aspect of the profession—some locations, such as the Upper Peninsula, are highly rewarding and exciting to work in, while others in remote agricultural areas can be more challenging. Ultimately, she notes that her willingness to travel depends largely on the quality and interest of the project itself.

Beyond her archaeological work, Polly Anna is also actively involved in environmental advocacy. She has contributed to initiatives with Friends of the River Rouge, an organization dedicated to monitoring and protecting the health of the Detroit River watershed. Her involvement reflects a broader commitment to environmental stewardship and highlights the intersection between cultural heritage preservation and ecological responsibility.

Polly Anna Burnette’s career reflects a dedication to fieldwork, education, and community engagement. Through her continued contributions to archaeology and cultural resource management, she remains committed to advancing the understanding of the past while mentoring the next generation of professionals in the field.

Learn More about Polly Anna Burnette:

Through her Influential Women profile: <https://influentialwomen.com/connect/Pollyanna-Burnette>

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