



J. C. Harrington Medal in Historical Archaeology: Henry Michael Miller

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Fig. 1 Henry M. Miller.

Henry M. Miller is the recipient of the Society for Historical Archaeology's J. C. Harrington Medal in Historical Archaeology for 2020 (Fig. 1). The award was presented to Henry at the society's annual conference held in Boston in recognition of his dedication to scholarship, critical thinking about the complexities of the human past and experience, for his mentoring of students, and especially for his collegiality and friendship to colleagues in the field of historical archaeology. Henry's award is the 35th such award since its inception by the society in 1981.

The Formative Years

Born in Little Rock, Arkansas, Henry grew up in a close-knit family surrounded by tradition, church, hard work, and family history. While living a suburban lifestyle, Henry's family also had other members who lived on a nearby family farm. Through many weeks as a youth, he would directly experience the routines of traditional agricultural life that included cooking on a wood-fired stove, oil lamps, drawing water from a well, working with farm animals, and, most of all, using an outhouse complete with a Sears, Roebuck and Company catalogue. These experiences took place on a family farm replete with vernacular buildings and potato pits and paling fences. No doubt this was a foreshadowing of things to come!

Family history was another major influence. Growing up in the Deep South, stories of the "Lost Cause" and a great-great grandfather who was a Confederate

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veteran naturally led to an interest in the American Civil War. The acquisition of several lead minié bullets, family excursions to battlefields of the war, and participation in events of the Civil War centennial of the 1960s contributed to and fueled a strong interest in the human past and the study of it through the close examination of its tangible and material dimensions. An interest in past civilizations, particularly ancient Egypt and American Indian burial and ceremonial mounds, the exploration of shipwrecks seen in the pages of *National Geographic*, as well as a fascination with astronomy and the developing space program created in Henry a strong interest in the sciences and the scientific exploration and understanding of the human past and the complexities of the world around him.

To this must be added the influences of national events occurring in the 1950s and 1960s. The increasing momentum of the civil rights movement, desegregation of Southern schools and the occupation of Little Rock by the 101st Airborne Division in 1957, and the flaring of religious intolerance surrounding John F. Kennedy's election to the presidency of the United States were important in revealing the complexities, and sometimes disturbing, aspects of the human experience. While probably not realizing it, many of these influences were converging and were helping set the stage for Henry's future career.

Henry at University

Henry's university career began in 1968 at the University of Arkansas in Little Rock. He was the first of his family to attend college. It may come as a surprise, but anthropology was not his initial major. Having developed an interest in drama in high school, he actually began his studies as a drama and theater arts major! This background helps explain the dynamic presentations at professional conferences for which Henry is well known.

However, it would be a course in cultural anthropology needed to fulfill basic graduation requirements that would help set Henry's path toward a career in archaeology. As a source of "true revelation," the field of archaeology continued to fascinate him and eventually led him to transfer to the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. Based at the university, the Arkansas Archeological Survey was expanding under the direction of Charles McGimsey and Hester Davis, and the

university provided a solid foundation in learning archaeological method and practice and the value of the emerging idea of public archaeology. Henry received his initial training in fieldwork at a prehistoric site, however, it would be at that point in time he encountered a strange and relatively new field called historical archaeology. In 1971, the university offered its first field school in historical archaeology at Arkansas Post, the site of the earliest European settlement in Arkansas. Under the direction of Patrick Martin and William Westbury, this field school explored the Bright's Trading Post and Montgomery's Tavern sites and used Noël Hume's recent and influential publication *Historical Archaeology* as a course text. As part of this session, Henry and three students also had the distinction of conducting the first historical sites survey for 19th-century occupations in the state of Arkansas.

In his final year, Henry continued to gain field experience and pursued studies in public archaeology and allied fields such as museology. These combined experiences set his course toward the field of historical archaeology. Graduating in 1972 with a B.A. with high honors and an induction into Phi Beta Kappa, Henry's attention turned to graduate studies. He was accepted at and chose Southern Methodist University due to its reputation as a major institution for the study of archaeology and because of the offer of \$800 in financial aid!

It was at this point that Providence stepped in yet again. Needing summer employment Henry noticed an advertisement for excavators at a place called St. Mary's City in southern Maryland near Chesapeake Bay. Henry applied and was hired by Garry Wheeler Stone at the rate of \$2 an hour!

Arriving at St. Mary's City, Henry would become a member of the legendary 1972 field school and would be introduced to the relatively new world of the archaeology of the 17th-century Chesapeake Bay region. Under the direction of Garry Wheeler Stone and the late Alexander (Sandy) Morrison III, the focus of the excavations was the 1638 St. John's site, which was the first systematic excavation of a 17th-century site in the state of Maryland. The field-school students would also learn the proper analysis of 17th-, 18th-, and 19th-century artifacts under the watchful gaze of the then newly minted archaeological curator and laboratory director George Miller. These students also had the benefit of interacting with several of the leading scholars of the early Chesapeake. These included Cary Carson, the late Lois Green Carr, Russell Menard, and Lorena Walsh.

Academic colleagues at that time collectively dubbed this group of scholars the “Maryland Mafia.” The St. Mary’s experience immersed Henry in a robust and dynamic intellectual community that continues to the present day and taught him the value of collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches to the study of the human experience. This time at St. Mary’s also allowed him to begin to delve into other interests within historical archaeology. Zooarchaeology, foodways, and living history/experimental archaeology were topics added to the growing list of his archaeological endeavors.

The years 1973–1975 marked a key period in Henry’s career. Returning to Southern Methodist University, with Fred Wendorf as his advisor, he took his first course in historical archaeology from the distinguished J. O. Brew, and coauthored his first site report on the investigation of a contact period site in Texas. By that point in time the study of historical period sites had clearly become his focus of scholarly study. This was also the period in which he joined the Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA). Equally significant was a shift in his academic career. While Southern Methodist University had a reputation as serious school for the study of archaeology, research into historical sites was not a focus of its academic curriculum. Upon the recommendation of mentor Patrick Martin, Henry applied to and was accepted into a new Michigan State University program for the study of historical sites. Studying under Charles Cleland and Moreau Maxwell, course work provided a solid grounding in processualist approaches to archaeology, and the field of zooarchaeology continued to emerge as a serious interest, ultimately becoming the topic of his doctoral dissertation (Miller 1984). Returning to St. Mary’s City in 1973 and 1974, he served as crew chief of the field school and conducted dissertation research on the St. John’s site faunal assemblage. The following year, Henry would present his first professional paper on that research at the SHA conference held in Charleston, South Carolina. Returning to northern Michigan in 1975, further field experience was gained at Fort Michilimackinac and an early 19th-century mill site where he served as a crew chief under the direction of Pat Martin. Despite his experience in Michigan a clear Chesapeake focus had developed in Henry’s professional interests and thinking by that point.

Although he initially had other plans for him, Cleland, who was Henry’s dissertation advisor, supported and endorsed his student’s interests.

With graduate studies and comprehensive exams completed in 1976, and after a sojourn in Virginia at the Virginia Research Center for Archaeology with Bill Kelso in 1977, Henry and his faded-out blue Volvo headed back across the Potomac River to St. Mary’s City, where he took up his new role as archaeological laboratory director.

The St. Mary’s City Years

By the late 1970s, the study of the early colonial Chesapeake Bay region was an exceptionally dynamic area of academic and archaeological research. Close collaborations among archaeologists, historians, historical architects, material culture specialists, and a host of other scientists from many different fields revealed a world vastly different from the colonial areas established in other parts of the country. Chesapeake scholarship would be recognized for its vitality as well as its demands for high standards in fieldwork and its requirements for intellectual rigor in analysis and interpretation. St. Mary’s City would play a leading role in the establishment of that reputation. Henry and his colleagues at St. Mary’s were prominent in presenting Chesapeake research through paper presentations and in establishing what became known as “Chesapeake sessions” at numerous professional conferences. In the midst of this activity, and after what he has termed “the 11-year dissertation plan,” Henry completed his Ph.D. at Michigan State University in 1984. His dissertation, titled *Colonization and Subsistence Change on the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake Frontier*, remains a seminal and comprehensive study of colonial Chesapeake diet and subsistence patterns, and an example of the successful integration of archaeological and documentary evidence (Miller 1984).

The archaeological and cultural resources of St. Mary’s City are extensive and complex. Henry approached these with his characteristic enthusiasm and dedication to rigorous scholarship and “doing it right.” During his tenure there, he has served in lead roles as principal investigator and director on no less than 20 major excavation projects and surveys. These have played crucial roles in defining a rich American Indian occupation spanning thousands of years, the

17th-century town and town lands, as well as their subsequent history in the 18th-, 19th-, and 20th-centuries. These efforts include the Town Center Project that identified the location of key buildings that helped reveal the town's structure and early plan; excavations at Pope's Fort, an English Civil War fortification surrounding the Calvert House; excavations at the Chapel Field and Project Lead Coffins, which located the site of the 1635 and 1667 chapels and excavated portions of the large surrounding cemetery (Miller 1983, 1986a, 1994, 2019; Miller, Riordan et al. 2004). Consistent with the reputation for collaboration forged by the work at St. Mary's City, Henry, with Timothy Riordan and Douglas Owsley of the Smithsonian Institution, formed an interdisciplinary team that conducted one of the most comprehensive analyses of early colonial human remains excavated from the Chesapeake region. Additionally, this work led to the reconstruction of the brick chapel that was centered on archaeological data, historical research and surviving religious objects, and undertaken through the utilization of experimental archaeological approaches and employment of traditional trades knowledge and skills.

Many aspects of this work challenged then-current practices in archaeology and established views of the early Maryland "City." For example, many archaeologists saw artifacts from plowzone contexts as limited in interpretive value. St. Mary's archaeologists, on the other hand, were early advocates of what was termed "plowzone" archaeology. Using this approach, Henry and Julia King, in their analysis of artifacts from the Van Sweringen site, demonstrated that this material retains locational information and that artifact distributional patterns remain discernable and useful in providing information about site structure and activity areas (King and Miller 1987). As the location of important buildings and structures, such as the 1635 Calvert House, Cordea's Hope, and Smith's Ordinary, were identified and located during the town-center excavations, it became clear that previous interpretations of the early community and its structure were flawed and in need of revision. These new data showed that, rather than a random gaggle of buildings, St. Mary's City was actually laid out according to a plan centered on and adapted from "baroque" ideas of city planning then fashionable in European cities, and further demonstrated that frontier colonies were not isolated cultural entities, but instead were locations new ideas could reach and in which they could be exercised (Miller 1988b, 1999).

While work in the town-center area continued, other contiguous, but no less important, areas required serious attention as the facilities of St. Mary's College of Maryland expanded, and as Historic St. Mary's City improved and also expanded its infrastructure. Surveys were conducted in Mill Field and West Field, Old Campus/St. John's Freehold, and along Route 5 and Mattapan Road, in addition to several site mitigations on college grounds, the relocation of the 1840s Brome House from the town center to a new area on Green's Freehold, and the exploration of the offshore town waterfront along St. Mary's River. The latter project located what appeared to be the only known remains of a 17th-century tobacco ship. While those are but a select few examples of the many endeavors that have occupied Henry's time, each of these surveys and mitigations provided new information that shed light on many previously unexplored aspects of St. Mary's City and its surrounding fields and lands (Hurry et al. 2018). Through these Henry was (and remains) a stalwart advocate, sometimes in the face of powerful development pressures and threatening officials, for the preservation and thoughtful stewardship of the archaeological and cultural resources of this important community central to understanding Maryland's founding and the development of colonial society in the 17th-century Chesapeake. He has long served as the steward of the St. Mary's City National Historic Landmark for the National Park Service.

It is important to make note of the fact that in many projects Henry lists himself as "co-director" or "co-principal investigator." His use of these terms speaks to his inherent collegiality and his welcoming support for other scholars, such as Timothy Riordan, Silas Hurry, Ruth Mitchell, and, most recently, Travis Parno, as they have participated in various projects as staff at St. Mary's City.

Several other of Henry's interests require mention, as they are influences on the direction of his career and reveal his long-standing interest in interdisciplinary research. First would be his fascination with environmental archaeology and reconstruction. His earliest major work was a senior thesis completed at the University of Arkansas in 1972. In "A Reconstruction of the Early Historic Vegetation in Northwest Arkansas" he employed 1830s survey records to reveal the vegetation patterns of northwest Arkansas prior to the rapid changes resulting from Anglo-European settlement (Miller

1972). After returning to Maryland, his interests turned to conducting similar research on the changing landscapes of southern Maryland and to the examination of the lowly oyster shell. Realizing much more could be learned from the shells recovered from archaeological deposits, Henry, Michael Smolek (then the director of the Southern Maryland Archaeological Research Center), and Garry Wheeler Stone teamed with Bretton Kent, a shellfish ecologist at the University of Maryland. This collaboration resulted in opening up new ways to examine estuarine environments and for the better understanding of human usage and impact upon them. This research also resulted in the publication of the manual *Making Dead Oysters Talk: Techniques for Analyzing Oysters from Archaeological Sites* (Kent 1988), a publication familiar to (and used) by many of us. This work would aid his investigations into early foodways (Miller 1988a), the varied and complex historical ecology of the Chesapeake Bay region, and the many interconnections between diet and natural-resource utilization (Miller 1986b, 2001; Kirby and Miller 2005; Rick et al. 2015; Kelso and Miller 2016).

Along with oyster shells and other ecofacts, material culture studies were frequently a part of Henry's work. At the time he arrived at St. Mary's City, many aspects of Chesapeake colonial material culture remained terra incognita. Setting out to correct that, he examined tobacco pipes, window glass and window leads, and in conjunction with Michael Smolek and Dennis Pogue, undertook the first study of glass beads from Chesapeake sites (Miller, Pogue et al. 1983; Miller 1991). Perhaps the largest and most complex undertaking was his analysis of ceramics from St. Mary's City archaeological sites. His work in recognizing the basic ware types, developing their descriptions, and identifying their origins was critical to the collaborative work with Mary Beaudry, Janet Long, Fraser Neiman, and Garry Wheeler Stone in the development of the Potomac Typological System for the analysis of early colonial ceramics. This system was published in *Historical Archaeology* in 1983 (Beaudry et al. 1983). While the focus of Henry's research has been on St. Mary's City and the Chesapeake Bay area, he has always viewed them within a broader regional perspective. This can be seen in his thorough compilation and discussion of the various archaeological investigations and research into 17th-century British colonization in the Mid-Atlantic region (Miller 1996, 2004).

In addition to scholarship, Henry has also played prominent roles in the development of the institution of Historic St. Mary's City. After 10 years as laboratory director, he served for a period as acting codirector of the organization while also being the director of research. In 2011, he became the first Maryland Heritage Scholar. Through these positions of responsibility, he has worked, along with Silas Hurry, to build a new laboratory and curatorial space for the collections, advocated for increased funding and staff, and helped in the development of content matter for numerous exhibitions, such as the St. John's site exhibit and the new African American exhibit, "Struggle for Freedom," which translates complex research findings into interpretive spaces consisting of traditional exhibits, numerous reconstructed buildings, and living-history programming designed for the general public.

The careers of archaeologists sometimes lead them into unusual and unanticipated turns and directions, and Henry is no exception. Through his research in foodways, he had encountered a southern Maryland delicacy known as "stuffed ham." Coincidentally, at about the same time the editors of *Bon Appétit* magazine inquired about this unusual dish. As the new expert on Maryland stuffed ham, he was asked to prepare a "colonial" meal that was featured in the April 1982 issue of the magazine. The *Bon Appétit* article gave Henry bragging rights to being one of the first archaeological chefs.

Stemming from his experiences on the family farm and from his participation in the 1960s centennial of the American Civil War, Henry maintained an interest in living history and experimental archaeology and the ways they can generate insights into the interpretation of the human behaviors found in the archaeological record. The paling fences, straw-covered potato pits, and other facilities he saw and used at the family farm were key to understanding similar features found at numerous 17th-century sites across the Chesapeake. Information from his documentation of the last surviving wattle-and-daub chimney in Virginia was utilized in reconstructing 17th-century buildings at St. Mary's City. As a teenager Henry worked in the family printing business in Little Rock, running both traditional and modern presses. The knowledge and experience of printing came into play when he undertook the analysis of printing type discovered at the Van Sweringen site. The analysis showed the printing type was associated with the press of William Nuthead, who was the first

printer in the southern British colonies and who operated at St. Mary's City in the 1680s and 1690s. Henry's hands-on experience again became valuable when the museum decided to reconstruct a 17th-century printing press. He guided the reconstruction and then operated the press, portraying Mr. Nuthead as part of a living-history interpretive program beginning in the late 1970s. Volunteering at the National Colonial Farm and working with living historian (and a veteran of the St. Mary's Archaeological Field School) Harriet Stout gave him key insights into the immigrant/indentured servant experience in the colonial Chesapeake. The insights derived from these early forays into experimental archaeology and living history would later play key roles in trying to better understand the people behind the artifacts and in such projects as the reconstruction of the 1667 St. Mary's Chapel mentioned earlier.

Service and Mentorship

As the Harrington Medal is awarded for being “centered on scholarship,” inherent in that phrase is the Society for Historical Archaeology's expectation of significant roles in service, teaching and mentorship, and collegiality on the part of the awardee. Henry's service to the society has included the presentation of numerous individual papers, chairing many paper/topical sessions, published articles, and serving as the program chair for the 1995 SHA meeting in Washington, D.C. In addition to serving on the board of directors from 1991 to 1994, he also has chaired or served on many standing committees, including ethics and standards, government affairs, curation standards, and the UNESCO Committee on Underwater Archaeology. He served as the society's president in 1997 and, in that role, officiated at the establishment of the John Cotter Award, instituted the Past Presidents' Student Reception, and, along with Donna Seifert, served as an official SHA representative on the task force that formed the Registry of Professional Archaeologists.

Henry's service also includes providing expertise and advice to colleagues and professionals outside the society. Among these would be his architectural analysis of the Henry Coursey site on Maryland's Eastern Shore for Jay Custer at the University of Delaware and providing the author with a critical analysis of the faunal material from the British sloop of war *DeBraak*. On the other side of the Atlantic, Henry conducted for James Lyttleton the first analysis of plowzone artifacts systematically collected

with shovel test-pit methodology in the Republic of Ireland. This was at the manor of Clohamon, established in 1625 by Lord Baltimore in county Wexford. Of particular note, the use of plowzone data in historical sites research such as this was a field methodology pioneered at St. Mary's City in the 1970s and 1980s.

Advisory boards and committees of numerous organizations have also sought his keen advice. Among these are Jamestown Rediscovery, the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, the National Historic Landmarks Archaeology Committee of the National Park Service, and the Maryland State Archaeologist. In serving as a grant-proposal reviewer, he has assisted the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Science Foundation. Also significant has been Henry's role as content provider and designer in the development of exhibits at Jamestown Settlement, Colonial Williamsburg, the Maryland Historical Society, and the Smithsonian Institution. At the latter institution, the highly successful “Written in Bone” exhibit brought the findings of the work at the 1667 St. Mary's Chapel, Project Lead Coffins, and research from other Chesapeake sites to the general public. Additionally, there are other less formal instances in which he has provided needed critical assistance. Always approachable and available, there are numerous instances of lengthy conversations that frequently took place well beyond the confines of a workday's schedule, in which he generously talked through an idea, helped to refine a research approach or field strategy, or critiqued the conclusions derived from research.

Lastly, and of equal importance, is his role as teacher. Many undergraduate students have benefitted from being in his classes at St. Mary's College of Maryland and at Oxford University during a year-long appointment as visiting fellow in Medieval and Post-Medieval Archaeology at the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. Numerous dissertations and theses of many graduate students have been strengthened by Henry's insights and gentle, but emphatic, prods that pointed to needed rethinking and revision of ideas, methods, and conclusions. The final product has always been an improved scholar and the maintenance of rigorous scholarship. Finally, many students have experienced the St. Mary's City Archaeological Field School. As the longest continuously running field school in historical archaeology in the nation, Henry and his colleagues have continued the long-standing commitment to training students in rigorous archaeological methods, interdisciplinary approaches, critical thinking, and collegiate interaction—

all hallmarks of the St. Mary's City program. Many veterans of this program have gone on to work in professional careers in the academy, government, museums, and private practice. In recent decades, Henry has expanded teaching venues as he and Carol, his wife of 21 years, have planned and led a dozen adult tours that have explored the many transatlantic connections among Maryland, the United Kingdom, and Ireland.

More to Come

The above discussion is an effort at producing a cross section, or a representative sample if you will, to describe a long, varied, and highly productive career. Whether as archaeological curator, director of research, portraying an indentured servant, or, most recently, as the first Maryland Heritage Scholar, Henry's exemplary career shows a commitment to thoughtful, innovative, and rigorous approaches in the field of historical archaeology. His quiet, but determined, enthusiasm has produced new ways of interpreting the archaeological record, revealed many different aspects of Maryland's complex past, protected the state's cultural and historical resources, and encouraged others to do the same in their careers and actions. Many longstanding projects are still underway; new ones are on the horizon. Ongoing excavations at and exhibit planning for the 1635 Calvert House, a new visitor center for the museum, initiatives for science-based oyster-restoration efforts in the St. Mary's River, revising tobacco-pipe dating formulas and methods, and new work on African Americans in the St. Mary's City area are but a few of the projects and initiatives that will be occupying his time. It is safe to say that there is more to come from Henry Miller.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of Interest The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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