# J. C. Harrington Medal in Historical Archaeology

## Robert L. Schuyler 2009

Robert L. Schuyler was honored at the 42nd annual SHA meetings in Toronto, Canada, as the 2009 recipient of the J. C. Harrington Medal in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the field of historical archaeology.

Bob's interest in archaeology can be traced back to his earliest years in New Haven, Connecticut. After a brief seduction by dinosaurs (based on their size, not their brains) and astronomy (based on a false hope of meeting aliens), he proclaimed by the fifth grade that he was going to be an archaeologist. He never changed that decision. Although he came from a working-class background—neither of his parents went to high school and he was the only child out of four siblings to go to college—he was born into a supportive New England urban environment. New Haven had an excellent public school system and was home to the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History. These institutions, reinforced by stories in the *National Geographic Magazine*, created an image in Bob's mind of archaeology as the study of ancient civilizations. In Sheridan Junior High School, however, he expanded this view to include both world prehistory and the broader field of anthropology.

In 1957 Bob spent the summer with his older sister in Los Angeles, and on the fourth of July visited Arizona. He explored pueblo ruins, such as Walnut Canyon National Monument near Flagstaff, and fell in love with the Southwest. Returning home, he joined the New Haven Chapter of the Archaeological Society of Connecticut. Under Lyent W. Russell, a physics instructor at Yale

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and leader in the society, Bob excavated on Grannis Island, a prehistoric site on the Quinnipiac River. Before he graduated from James Hillhouse High School, Bob had also joined the Society for American Archaeology and was able to attend the SAA 25th-anniversary founding meeting (May 1960) at the Hotel Taft in New Haven. He saw many of the doyens of American archaeology—Junius Bird, Jesse Jennings, Waldo Wedel, Gordon Willey, and others—but especially went to meet the Arizona contingent. He heard Raymond H. Thompson speak on black-on-white wares and shook hands with "Doc." Haury. By 1960 he had decided to be an anthropologist and a Southwestern prehistorian, and so he only applied to one college, the University of Arizona in Tucson.

During his four years (1960–1964) as an undergraduate, Bob got an excellent grounding in general anthropology. Thompson was central as his archaeology advisor, but Bob also studied with Emil W. Haury, Frederick Hulse (physical), Edward H. Spicer (cultural), and Edward P. Dozier (linguistics). In Introductory Anthropology 1A, under Hulse, Bob had an advanced doctoral student as a teaching assistant, Roderick Sprague. In 1963, after attending the University of Arizona Archaeological Field School on its first season at Grasshopper Pueblo, he was introduced to Binfordian processual archaeology by a new faculty member, William A. Longacre. He partially but not totally endorsed this "New Archaeology." His earlier discovery of culturology and cultural evolution in the works of Leslie White enabled him to see both the inherent strengths and limits of this movement. In 1964 Bob graduated *magna cum laude* with departmental honors, and he wrote the first senior honors thesis in anthropology at Arizona.

After another year (1964–1965) in Tucson as a graduate student on a National Science Foundation Fellowship, he shifted his interests back to his earlier focus on ancient but complex societies. He planned on doing a comparative study of Mesoamerican and Indus Valley civilizations and in 1965 he started doctoral work at Harvard University. In Cambridge he studied Maya civilization under Gordon R. Willey. Because of intellectual and personal conflicts, both he and his fellow graduate student Mark P. Leone left Harvard after one year. They actually spent only one semester on campus, serving as junior field assistants during the spring on Willey's Maya Seibal Project in the Peten lowlands of Guatemala. Earlier in the fall semester, however, Bob took classes at Harvard with a visiting associate professor from the University of California at Santa Barbara, James Deetz. Bob enrolled in Deetz's archaeology seminar and also helped him with his cemetery-gravestone survey by inventorying the Newburyport, Massachusetts, burial ground. With Deetz's support and letters from Arizona, Bob received the last teaching fellowship at UCSB for 1966–1967.

The new anthropology department at Santa Barbara was on a secondary UC campus, but its chair, Charles J. Erasmus, set out to make the department visible as a center for both the New Archaeology and evolutionary cultural anthropology. By the mid-1960s he had partially succeeded. Under Erasmus's plan, Deetz, Lewis and Sally Binford, and Albert C. Spaulding had been or were being hired, along with Claude Warren, Bill Allen, and Brian Fagan. For cultural anthropology, Thomas G. Harding, a young evolutionary scholar from Michigan, and Elman R. Service arrived, while, after Schuyler left, Leslie White retired there as professor emeritus.

Such a potent mix reinforced by national political events, including the election of Ronald Reagan as governor of California, caused continuing perturbations on the campus and in the department. Between 1967 and 1969, when he completed the in-residence part of the program, Bob went through three different advisors/dissertation chairs: Deetz, who left for Brown at the end of Bob's first year, Spaulding, and finally Brian Fagan. His doctoral dissertation, "Archaeological Perspectives in Historical Archaeology," was not completed until 1974, five years after he had taken his first academic appointment.

Bob's transition from Mesoamerican archaeology to historical archaeology occurred at UCSB, but it was a slow and complex process. It actually took place after Deetz left Santa Barbara but was complete by 1968. The establishment of The Society for Historical Archaeology was also an important influence. In summer 1967 Bob served as a junior project archaeologist on excavations at the historic Fortress of Louisbourg in Canada.

His first academic appointment at the University of Maryland in College Park, another newly formed department of anthropology, lasted only one year. That year (1969–1970) saw the violent

climax of opposition to the war in Vietnam exploding onto campuses across America. Bob took a leadership role as chair of the Student Strike Committee (although he was a faculty member) and as an officer in DRUM, the Democratic Radical Union of Maryland. These groups organized resistance on the College Park campus, which was soon under siege by the state police and the Maryland National Guard, and helped to launch demonstrations into Washington, DC. By the end of the year, although he had started a limited testing program on contact Native American sites along the Potomac River, he was of too much interest to local authorities, the FBI, and the university central administration, so, like so many before him in the Chesapeake, he took the Underground Railroad (actually Amtrak) north.

In a process of academic musical chairs involving people (Mark Leone, Mel Thurman, and Bob Schuyler) and institutions (University of Maryland, Princeton, and City College of New York), Bob ended up in his second but first permanent position at CCNY under its founding chair, Diane Sank. It was at City College (and slightly later at the CUNY Graduate Center) that for the first time Bob had a stable base from which he could build his professional career in historical archaeology. This base was duplicated and expanded when he moved in 1979 to the University of Pennsylvania.

Schuyler's contributions to historical archaeology, which span four decades, fall into three interrelated categories: scholarship, education, and the simple but continuing building of the discipline.

His scholarly contributions can be reviewed by entering through a predictable side door—politics. In 1976 at the Eastern States Archaeological Federation (ESAF) bicentennial meetings in Columbus, Ohio, Schuyler presented a keynote address, entitled "Images of America: The Contribution of Historical Archaeology to National Identity" (*Southwestern Lore* 1976). Some have looked back on this article as one of the opening attempts to use the history of the discipline to examine historical archaeology itself as a socio-political phenomenon. He assessed historical archaeology in 1976 while a much more senior scholar, Jimmy Griffin, evaluated prehistoric studies. Schuyler did not please the bicentennial audience when he pointed out the nationalistic and hegemonic nature of the field's contributions as a materializing of a mythical past. Griffin also did not go over well when he told the audience: "You like banner stones, you like arrowheads, but you don't much like living Indians." Schuyler was however congratulated by one person attending the conference—Griffin. At the same time, Schuyler always points out that he also made statements in the same paper like the following:

> Such research [the study of minorities, workers, women, etc.] will certainly expand in the years ahead but its purpose should not simply be the generation of alternate images of our national heritage. In fact, objective archaeological data will probably be no more palatable to an ethnic minority than it will to a ruling majority. All cultures are based on mythologies which have little to do with historical fact… (p. 37).

For Schuyler, archaeology—general archaeology—is a science, a social science (not a physical or natural science), and, of course, it is interpretive. It is neither a political cause nor an attempt to liberate anyone, even from his or her own "false consciousness." Its purpose is to understand the human past, both in its own terms and from a contemporary, objective, scientific perspective. In order to enhance these goals within historical archaeology, it is necessary to understand its disciplinary history and its current socio-political setting. Schuyler has been, along with a few colleagues like Sprague, a major advocate for such studies. In 1998 he created "Images of the Past," a column for the *SHA Newsletter* that attempts to preserve visual elements of that history. This column, with strong support from previous editors, Norman Barka and William Lees, is one of the most popular sections in the current *Newsletter*.

The second important scholarly contribution, beyond trying to get the field to study its own origins and development, has been to ask the most fundamental question of all: What is historical archaeology? In 1970 Schuyler published a definitional article, "Historical and Historic Sites Archaeology as Anthropology: Basic Definitions and Relationships," (actually written in 1969) that attempted to answer this question and resolve some basic approaches and relationships to general scholarship. In this well-known paper Schuyler defined what is now called historical archaeology

as "the study of the material manifestation of the expansion of European culture into the non-European world starting in the 15th century and ending with industrialization or the present … ." Historical archaeology is defined not by its methodology (which is basically the same across all of archaeology) nor by the presence or absence of written sources. Many archaeologies of history have nothing to do with this field. Historical archaeology is defined by its subject matter—a major phase in human culture history which exists because "a set of underlying patterns and processes created the historical entity it is studying."

Over the next decade Schuyler, and others, worked on this definition. He attempted to move it beyond its overly historicalist and New World frameworks onto a broader processual foundation, recognizing the centrality of the archaeology of Europe itself, the truly global nature of the field (all peoples, all cultures, all civilizations), and fully incorporating the 19th and the 20th centuries. He came to define historical archaeology as the study of the modern world: its emergence between A.D. 1400 and 1600, its successful and permanent establishment between 1600 and 1800, and the transformation of this modern world system by the continuing processes of industrialization between 1800 and the present. So-called "globalization" is simply the most recent phase in a 500- to 600-year-long cultural evolution.

If historical archaeology is correctly defined as the archaeology of the modern world, then what is its proper housing or location within general scholarship? This is the third basic scholarly issue that has concerned Schuyler across his career. Is historical archaeology an autonomous, stand-alone discipline? No. Is it part of an autonomous discipline of archaeology? It could be and has been but should not be. Is it an interdisciplinary field? Certainly not. Indeed, the very concept of "interdisciplinary studies" in general is one of the repeating "bad pennies" that keeps cropping up in modern scholarship. A key strength of current research is the ability of *different*, *separate* disciplines to explore the same subject from equally valid but different perspectives. For example, a sociological vs. and anthropological study of the University of Pennsylvania as an example of American higher education at the start of the 21st century would undoubtedly yield very different results.

Historical archaeology could be and on rare occasions has been a subfield of a number of disciplines including archaeology, history, folklore, geography, or even historical sociology. Schuyler's advocacy has been that the field is best situated and most productive as an integral specialization within anthropological archaeology. Why anthropology? Its central culture concept, strong empirical fieldwork tradition, comparative methodology, relativistic inclusion of all human cultures, equal attention to material culture, and, finally, the fact of cultural evolution move historical archaeology naturally under the aegis of this broader field.

In the 1970s this position led him to participate in an early history vs. anthropology debate within the field. In 1978 he edited the first sourcebook centered in part around this issue. *Historical Archaeology: A Guide to Theoretical and Substantive Contributions* was a sourcebook, not a reader. He purposely excluded any new items, reprinting only classic programmatic statements and classic case studies issued between 1900 and the late 1970s. His selections (35 items) were quite successfully inclusive, except he could not get permission from Krauss Reprints to include the Johnny Ward's Ranch site report.

For the next decade, perhaps 15 years, this volume served as the introduction for most people entering the discipline. It has sold more than 15,000 copies and is still in print; indeed, it now has a second life as a basic text for teaching the history of the field.

Another general scholarly contribution was Schuyler's early emphasis on the global nature of the field's subject matter. Several people had made this world observation as early as the January 1967 conference in Dallas. Building on this discussion, Schuyler clearly underlined it in his sourcebook. In 1972 he had already created a "Global" section in the *SHA Newsletter* in an attempt to cover research outside of North America and Western Europe. This column, reporting on work in Latin America, Africa, Eastern Europe-Russia, Asia and Oceania, ran until 1980 when more focused regional *Newsletter* sections made it unnecessary.

Before attempting to define the discipline, highlight its history, firmly place it within general

scholarship, and emphasize its global scale [the only archaeology to have such a scale], Schuyler joined with all historical archaeologists in his final contribution to scholarship. Across four decades he supported the continuing attempts to expand the legitimate horizons of and topics within historical archaeology. Initially he started with a very traditional research topic, contact period 17th–18th century Native American sites along the Potomac River. Immediately, however, he shifted into new territory. He was a pioneer in studying the archaeology of ethnicity and race, especially free African American communities. Between 1971 and 1973 he excavated Sandy Ground, an African American oystering town on Staten Island. Large areal surveys and specific site excavations explored this distinctive community's archaeological history. As Theresa Singleton has pointed out, Schuyler was one of the first investigators to move beyond a search for Africanisms and redirect the study of African-Americans to understanding them as an integral group (or groups) within American history. The Sandy Ground Project eventually became William Askin's doctoral dissertation, and Schuyler went on to edit the first volume on such minority groups: *Archaeological Perspectives on Ethnicity in America: Afro-American and Asian American Culture History* (1980).

From the archaeology of ethnicity he moved on between 1974 and 1977 to explore an industrial urban setting in Lowell, Massachusetts, one of the first planned industrial cities in America. Then he went back to the American West in 1980 to explore another industrial but specialized community, Silver Reef, Utah, an ephemeral (1877–1890) mining town. More recently he has continued this love of the American West by studying an eastern frontier in southern New Jersey. A marginal region, lightly settled by Anglo-American colonists who focused primarily on extractive industries, particularly iron and glass, until opened by the arrival of the railroad to more intensive settlement, the Pine Barrens of central and southern New Jersey are a striking parallel to the American Far West. His study of Vineland, New Jersey, and its agricultural hinterland, initiated in 2001, is exploring an historic landscape that did not exist in 1860 but was fully formed by 1880. This project also represents a new topic—the archaeology of the 20th century.

Related to these scholarly contributions but forming a separate category, Schuyler has also been a major educator within historical archaeology. He has produced an impressive number of undergraduate, masters, and doctoral students. His activities in this category extend across multiple generations. The first generation is readily recognizable. These are the CCNY-CUNY cohort and include William Askins, Roselle Henn, Meta Janowitz, Jed Levin, Jerome Schaefer, and Edward Staski. Bob's relationship to this group is complex because some were his undergraduate anthropology majors at City College whom he sent on to graduate schools; others were graduate students at CUNY.

The second cohort is composed of University of Pennsylvania students. Schuyler moved to Philadelphia in 1979 where he became a member of the Department of American Civilization, with a secondary appointment in anthropology, and as a curator in the Penn Museum. This student list is longer and includes undergraduates who continued on in the field and masters as well as doctoral advisees:

Anna Agbe-Davies
Rebecca Allen
Amber Bennett
Carin Bloom
Jane Busch
John Chenoweth
Minette Church
Brian Crane
Kevin Crisman
Elizabeth Crowell
Lu Ann De Cunzo
Kevin Donaghy
Joel Fry
Lorinda Goodwin
Barbara Heath
Audrey Horning
William Hunt, Jr.
Patrice Jeppson
J. W. Joseph
Lisa Kealhofer
Julia King
Chana Kraus-Friedberg
Martha Lance
Orloff Miller
Lynn Morand (Evans)
Jessica Neuwirth
Olivia Ng
Carol Nickolai
Elizabeth Norris
Benjamin Pykles
Elizabeth Ragan
Mary Beth Reed
Richard Schaefer
John Seidel
Sheli Smith
Darby Stapp
Richard Veit

With 32 of his students having completed PhDs, Schuyler may hold that record in historical archaeology. This enormous human contribution has been recognized at the University of Pennsylvania. In 2004 Schuyler was selected for the SAS Dean's Award for Innovation in Undergraduate Teaching. More recently, in 2008 he was honored with a very difficult award to win at University of Pennsylvania: the Provost's Award for Graduate Education and PhD Mentoring. Currently Bob continues his contribution as an educator working with his active graduate students. This list includes masters and doctoral students:

Christopher Barton
Lynsey Bates
Craig Cipolla
Dawn Di Stefano
Kristen Fellows
Jill Bennett Gaieski
Jordan Pickrell
Teagan Schweitzer (Robert Preucel, primary advisor)
Janet Six
Kyle Somerville

Bob's third and final contribution beyond scholarship and higher education is that of a simple but energetic builder of historical archaeology. He shares this goal with many of his colleagues and the primary environment in which he has built is that of scholarly organizations. He is a founding member, life member, or early member of almost all pertinent groups. For example, he is a founding life member of the Australian Society for Historical Archaeology (now the Australasian SHA) and a founding member of both the Association for Gravestone Studies and the Society for Commercial Archaeology. He has been quite active in several such organizations including the Council for Northeastern Historical Archaeology (CNEHA). When he became executive officer in 1980, CNEHA was moribund. Its journal was not publishing; it had no formal new membership outreach; and meetings were held on Bear Mountain in the Hudson Valley, a location hard to get to except by car. Bob combined forces with Paul Huey, a long time and dedicated CNEHA member, and George Miller. They made themselves life members by putting together a few hundred dollars to create a "war chest." Then they forcefully brought the journal back on publication schedule, where it has (under a sequence of excellent editors and adequate manuscript flow) remained. They forced a change in venue to easily reached locations starting with the 1980 Albany meeting, and finally, they launched the first formal membership drive. The CNEHA is so successful today because of these efforts and the work of subsequent leaderships.

Finally, of course, Bob has been quite active in The Society for Historical Archaeology. He joined as it formed but could not attend the first formal meeting (Williamsburg 1968) as he was a poor graduate student on the West Coast. Fortunately, the SHA came west the next year. A delegation of students from UCSB and UCLA, including Bob, Mel Thurman, and Larry Spanne, drove to Tucson where Bunny Fontana and Rick Sprague organized the Second Annual Conference at the Santa Rita Hotel. It was a wonderful meeting, and Bob ran around touching base with all the pioneers in the field (Harrington, Cotter, Caywood, Woodward, among them), collecting information for his dissertation research. He went on to attend all SHA conferences except for two—a total of 39 meetings.

For almost 40 years he worked for the society. He first served under Paul Schumacher running the "Pacific West" section of the *Newsletter*, then his "Global" section, and now "Images of the Past." He has chaired the membership drive as well as the Inter-Societal, Awards, and History committees. He was the junior co-organizer with John L. Cotter for the 15th Annual Meeting in Philadelphia (1982). He joined the SHA Board in 1978 and served as president in 1983. Finally across these four decades, he has been a single-person membership drive as many now in the society know.

For all these reasons: scholarship, higher education, and loyal building up of historical archaeology as a discipline, The Society for Historical Archaeology selected Robert L. Schuyler as the 2009 recipient of the J. C. Harrington Medal in Historical Archaeology.

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