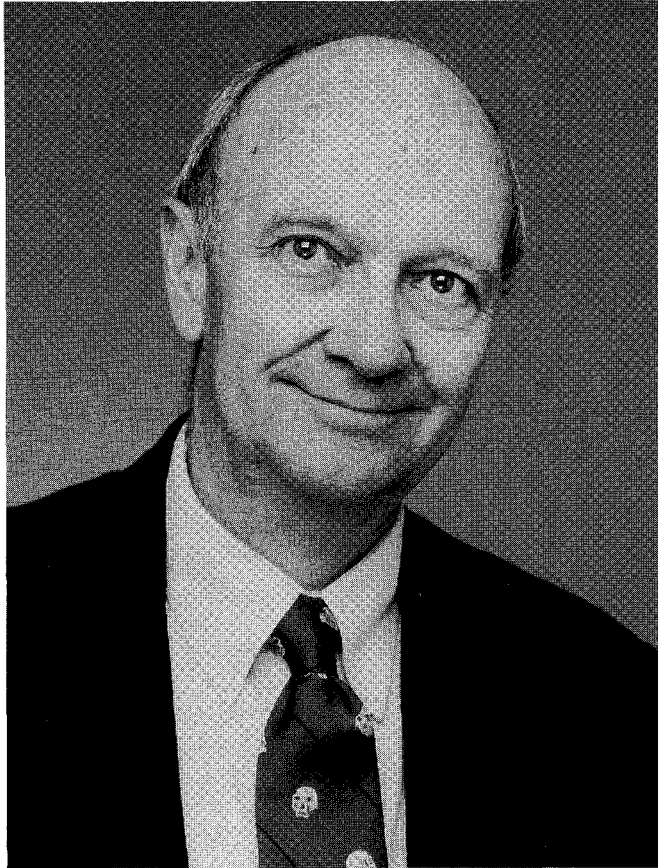


J. C. Harrington Medal in Historical Archaeology
BERNARD L. FONTANA 1993



The Society for Historical Archaeology awarded the 1993 J.C. Harrington Medal in Historical Archaeology to Bernard L. Fontana at the annual meeting of the Society for Historical Archaeology Conference on Historical and Underwater Archaeology in Kansas City, Missouri.

Dr. Bernard L. (Bunny) Fontana has been honored for 35 years of contributions to historical archaeology and fields related to it. This is the second Harrington Medal award I have presented; the first was for Arthur Woodward whose biographical sketch was written by Dr. Fontana, and now the second is for Bunny himself. It is a genuine honor to be able to present a survey, albeit a brief one, of Dr. Fontana's

long and distinguished career in anthropology, of which historical archaeology has been one small but significant part.

Fontana was born 7 January 1931 in Oakland, California, and spent his formative years there. In 1948 he entered the anthropology program at the University of California at Berkeley, where, among other things, he served as research assistant to Robert Heizer and Teaching Assistant to Charles Brant. He graduated with a B.A. in 1953. Upon completion of his degree, and with the pressing interests of Uncle Sam to be satisfied, he joined the Army for a two year stint. He spent most of his military career in Alaska. In 1955, with his service obligation completed, he applied for and was accepted into the Ph.D. program at the University of Arizona, Tucson, where he received his degree in 1960.

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when Bunny first became interested in historical archaeology but it was while he was a graduate student. During this period, he and fellow graduate student William Robinson became interested in locating a site that contained evidence of continuous occupation from the prehistoric period into the historic. At that time, to close the "gap" between the prehistoric and the historic periods was a research problem pursued, or at least talked about, by several Southwestern archaeologists. Stimulated in this search during a graduate seminar, they began excavations at San Xavier del Bac south of Tucson in the Spring of 1958. As it turned out, they did not find the connection they sought, but rather late 18th-century remains. This effort was published by William Robinson in 1963 as "Excavations at San Xavier del Bac, 1958" in *The Kiva*.

As a result of the seminar and of the excavation project, Fontana as senior author, William Robinson, Charles Cormack, and Ernest Leavitt, Jr., published a book entitled *Papago Indian Pottery* in 1962. This study drew together for the first time virtually everything available about the subject to that time, while also providing a detailed description of contemporary Papago pottery-making. It has achieved the status of a regional classic and is still the only reliable source available about Papago (Tohono O'odam) pottery.

In part because of his desire to stay in Tucson after receiving his Ph.D. in 1960, he found a job as Field Historian at the University of Arizona Library, a position he held for two years.

About the time work on the Papago pottery book was completed, another excavation was begun at the Johnny Ward's Ranch site south of Tucson near the Mexican border. Informed that this site was in reality a Spanish mission, Fontana, John Greenleaf, and others began excavations on Sundays in late 1960 and completed them in early 1961. They quickly and disappointedly recognized that the site was a 19th-century ranch house, not a mission. With this discovery the site became somewhat less interesting to them, but all agreed that they had to complete the project. The resulting report, "Johnny Ward's Ranch," was published in *The Kiva* in 1962. Up to this time, no historic site other than those of the Spanish period had been excavated and reported in Arizona.

A thorough history of the site plus detailed technological studies of nails, tin cans, other metal, glass, and ceramics made the report a useful reference. The report was a genuine pioneering effort in that it was the first to take late 19th-century interchangeable parts-type artifacts and treat them seriously. At the same time, work on this project changed Fontana's way of looking at archaeology; and needless to say, it changed the views of many others as well. This report became very well known and was, and still is, widely cited. In fact, in certain historical archaeological circles it is probably as well known as the Bible.

In 1962, Fontana became Ethnologist at the Arizona State Museum, a position he held until 1977. During his tenure at the Museum, he continued his interest in historical archaeology. It was during these years that much of this work in ethnology, ethnohistory, and historical archaeology was accomplished.

The 1960s decade was a period of definition of historical archaeology, and Bunny was an active contributor to this dialogue. Among other articles, he wrote "On the Meaning of Historic Sites Archaeology" for *American Antiquity* in 1965; and in 1968 he wrote "Battles, Buckets, and Horseshoes: The Unrespectable in American Archaeology" for the *Keystone Folklore Quarterly*, which resulted from the important Smithsonian Conference on Historical Archaeology held in that year. Also in 1968 he de-

scribed a collection of excavated artifacts from Magdalena, Sonora, Mexico, in a short article in *Historical Archaeology* entitled, "Bottles and History: The Case of Magdalena de Kino, Sonora, Mexico." This study represented the first time artifacts of the late 19th and early 20th centuries had been reported for a Mexican site.

In the Spring of 1964 Arthur Woodward taught the first historical archaeology class at the University of Arizona; Fontana sat in on the course and found his interest in the subject further excited. Later he created his own course which he taught from 1966 to 1972. This innovative and lively class, which had a humanistic orientation, served to expose students to the subject and encouraged several of them to make a career in the field.

In 1964 he and William Robinson planned an excavation at Guevavi, an 18th-century Spanish mission ruin near Nogales, Arizona. The project, carried out on winter weekends over a two-year period, resulted in a report written by Robinson in 1976 entitled "Mission Guevavi: Excavations in the Convento," published in *The Kiva*.

Dr. Fontana has served the Society for Historical Archaeology well over the years; he was involved with the founding of the Society and has been an enthusiastic promoter of it. He was elected to the Board of Directors at the 1967 meeting for a term that expired in 1971. That position was given up when he was elected in 1969 to serve as the Society's fourth president in 1970.

After about 1970 Bunny's direct involvement with historical archaeology was diverted more and more towards ethnohistory and ethnology, although historical archaeology continued to be of interest to him. Reasons for the diversion included a four-year stint as editor of the journal *Ethnohistory* (1969-1972), directing the Doris Duke American Indian Oral History Project (1967-1975), and co-founding the Southwest Mission Research Center in Tucson at the University of Arizona (1965). In 1967 he assumed responsibility for the Center's newsletter. Bunny packed this publication with information and made it eminently readable, a newsletter rarity. It increasingly demanded more and more of his available time; he resigned as editor in 1992.

In 1977 Bunny left the Arizona State Museum to once again become the Field Historian for the University Library and also to serve as Special Assistant to the President of the University.

He "retired" in 1990 but continued his historian duties at a 49 percent effort until 1992, when he actually retired from the University. It is ironic, perhaps, and it certainly says something about his abilities and skills, that he was hired twice for the same job, especially when we consider that he did not have a degree in history, and in fact other than a mandatory undergraduate class or two, never had formal exposure to the subject.

Finally, over the years many individuals have expressed interest in Dr. Fontana's nickname, "Bunny." It was given him at a very early age, and it has survived for nearly 60 years. I am certain, that if it did not create at least one embarrassing situation for him, it did cause occasional confusion. At least one student's wife asked the question, "What do you mean you are going on a dig with 'Bunny'? And who is she anyway?"

JAMES E. AYRES