

John L. Cotter Award in Historical Archaeology



Elizabeth J. Kellar 2002

Elizabeth J. Kellar is the 2002 recipient of the John L. Cotter Award in Historical Archaeology. She received the award at The Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA) annual Conference on Historical and Underwater Archaeology, held in Mobile, Alabama, in January 2002 for her key role in establishing a student presence in the governance and activities of SHA.

Elizabeth Kellar's early college training included anthropology, but she eventually obtained a degree in accounting in 1979 from Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Soon after graduation, she entered the workforce. In mid-1993, Elizabeth decided to change careers and return to archaeology/anthropology. She left her position as vice president/manager for reporting and analysis at a Boston-based financial institution. In 1993–1994, she completed graduate-level course work in anthropology at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. She entered the graduate program in anthropology at Syracuse University in 1994 and completed her master's degree in 1996, submitting a thesis entitled, *The Public Trust: Educational Responsibilities and Objectives beyond "Preservation" and "Awareness."* She was advanced to PhD candidacy at Syracuse in spring 1999. As of early 2002, Elizabeth was completing her dissertation on the construction and expression of identity

at a laborers' village at Adrian Estate, St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands.

Elizabeth strongly believes in professional service, and her contributions to SHA attest to her commitment. She has been a member of the Academic and Professional Training Committee (APTC) of SHA (1995 to the present) and was the founding chair of the Student Subcommittee of APTC (1995–1997). After stepping down as chair, she continued to serve on the subcommittee for two additional years (1998–1999). She also served on the SHA Membership Committee (1997–1999), the period during which the most recent SHA membership survey was conducted, analyzed, and written up.

Elizabeth did not act alone in her activities as a student organizer. The Anthropology Department at Syracuse was extremely supportive of her efforts, in particular Professor Douglas Armstrong. I suspect, however, that Elizabeth's organizational and persuasive skills had much to do with her success. One of her colleagues in graduate school, Douglas Pippin, was also extremely motivated to make the student organization succeed. Pippin and Kellar worked together as a team for several years.

At the midyear meeting of the SHA Board of Directors in 1994, the former Collegiate Curriculum Committee was revived and reconstituted as APTC. Then-President Elizabeth Reitz appointed me as chair, a position that I held through 1998. One of the stated SHA goals to be implemented by APTC was "educating ... students [and] professionals regarding the ideals and standards of historical archaeology (from Goal 4). By the end of 1994, APTC included two students, Arthur F. DeFazio and Elizabeth Kellar. At the annual meeting in January 1995, Elizabeth approached then-President Donna Seifert about the possibility of creating a standing student committee. The students' proposal was given to APTC for evaluation. Elizabeth planned an organizational meeting for the Saturday of the meeting. Although turnout was light, she was not deterred.

In January 1996, based on APTC's very positive recommendation, the SHA board approved the students' proposal and constituted a Student Subcommittee of APTC with Elizabeth Kellar named chair. (The student subcommittee chair sits on APTC and acts as a liaison between APTC and the student subcommittee.) Elizabeth had already organized a second student get-together at the annual meeting in 1996, and the turnout was higher. A 1996 write-up by Kellar and Pippin in the *SHA Newsletter* (29[3]:14–15) recapped the students' original 1995 proposal to the board, in which the students expressed a need "to organize in concern for their future as professional archaeologists" The proposed group was seen as "a great opportunity for students at all institutions to get to know and interact with one another." They also noted (p. 14): "We all have a lot of enthusiasm that could be put to good use through the SHA organization: in promoting our field to the public through educational forums, in contributing to the SHA newsletter, in preparing ourselves for future involvement in the many organizations open to archaeology, and especially in acknowledging ourselves as a cohesive and involved group."

Two of the first projects of the student subcommittee spearheaded by Elizabeth were a listing of graduate students and a survey of their interests. The student gatherings at the 1995 and 1996 annual meetings were opportunities for students to fill out the survey form, which was also published in the *SHA Newsletter*. In late 1996, Kellar and Pippin reported the preliminary results of the survey in the newsletter.

The student subcommittee also worked closely with APTC to plan activities for students at the annual meetings. A student reception was organized in 1996, which has evolved into a successful annual function sponsored by past presidents of SHA. The reception was envisioned as an opportunity for students to meet those in governance roles in the society and to make contacts with other members of SHA, both students and nonstudents. Since 1997, the students have organized a student career forum on topics such as publishing in archaeology and preparing for the job market. Elizabeth co-organized and chaired two of these forums (1997, 1998) and served as a panelist at the 1995 annual meeting on a SHA panel that focused on academic standards.

One of my tasks as a member of APTC is to update SHA's "Guide to Higher Education in Historical and Underwater Archaeology," which is published annually in the *SHA Newsletter* and on the SHA Web site. Elizabeth worked closely with me for two years to collect updated information

from the numerous institutions involved. She did an exemplary job, and I appreciated her competent and cheerful assistance. Although she “retired” from working on the updates, she recruited another member of the student subcommittee to help.

When Elizabeth turned over the reins of the student subcommittee to Douglas Pippin in early 1998, the group was strong. She should be recognized for her organizational skills and perseverance in getting the job done. The student members of SHA are essential for maintaining the viability and health of the organization. Beyond what the students give to the organization are the contributions they make to the field of historical archaeology as young professionals who understand the value of service to an organization or discipline. The subcommittee set up by Elizabeth quickly became a venue for networking with student peers and professionals, learning practical skills that would help students enter the job market, and participating in the governance of SHA, which will eventually be led by members of their generation.

Elizabeth was the quiet driving force behind the success of this movement for three years, and although her participation continues, she clearly understood the value of creating a strong system and bringing others along to eventually lead and improve upon what she had built. Elizabeth’s maturity and perseverance were keys to her success, but in addition to being a strong and effective leader, she encouraged others to take the necessary risks to become good leaders themselves. Strong leadership is necessary for the healthy growth of an organization. For example, she continued to write about the subcommittee’s activities for the *SHA Newsletter*, coauthoring columns with those who followed her as chair of the subcommittee (Douglas Pippin and Timothy Scarlett).

Elizabeth set out to accomplish a series of student-related goals within SHA. She thought them through clearly with the input of others and implemented them. Because of the strong base that she created, the Student Subcommittee of APTC is strong and viable today. Hers is a considerable accomplishment and deserves recognition by SHA.

Finally, Elizabeth Kellar is a role model for all students who wish to become successful, well-rounded historical archaeologists, whether they are beginning careers directly out of the university setting or “retooling” after careers in other fields. In 1993, just three days after she left her job at a Boston bank, Elizabeth flew to Nashville to work as an Earthwatch volunteer at the Hermitage. Today, she is director of archaeology at the Hermitage.

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