

John L. Cotter Award in Historical Archaeology



Deirdre A. Kelleher

Deirdre A. Kelleher is the recipient of the Society for Historical Archaeology's 2014 John L. Cotter Award for the outreach and community involvement she has created for public archaeology, as well as the media focus her work has generated. The award was presented at the society's 2014 annual conference in Quebec City, Canada.

Ms. Kelleher is currently the project director for Elfreth's Alley Archaeology in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Anthropology at Temple University, having earned an M.A. in anthropology from the same institution in August 2013. Studying German and Irish immigration in Philadelphia in the early 19th century, she expects to earn her Ph.D. in 2015.

The Temple University Office of News Communications produced a video about Ms. Kelleher's work at Elfreth's Alley in December 2012 (Fischer 2012). In this video, Ms. Kelleher is in her element, explaining her work and sharing her enthusiasm for this project. The video describes not only her work at Elfreth's Alley, but also presents the Elfreth's Alley Museum's goal of ultimately displaying the artifacts she is recovering. The 3 January 2013 entry on her Elfreth's Alley blog references this video (Kelleher 2013c). Ms. Kelleher's particular touch can be seen in a temporary exhibit that opened on 18 May 2013 in the Elfreth's Alley Museum, entitled *Making Ends Meet: 300 Years of Life on Elfreth's Alley* (Jenkins 2013).

The blog that Ms. Kelleher has created, with its pictures and detailed descriptions of artifacts, enables volunteers and the general public to monitor this project and benefit from her research and insights (Kelleher 2013a). The blog was begun on 16 April 2012, prior to the excavations,

and is frequently updated by Ms. Kelleher with information about the dig and artifacts recovered. The blog is also referenced on the Elfreth's Alley web site, which is hosted by the Elfreth's Alley Association (Elfreth's Alley Association 2009–2013). In all, the photographs of artifacts and descriptions of the dig and lab work are beautifully and professionally presented. By creating and maintaining this blog, Ms. Kelleher educates, inspires, and motivates the volunteers, making them feel that they are part of the project and that their contributions are important. This successful volunteer program sparks substantial media attention, which, in turn, brings increased public attention to the value of historical archaeology. Ms. Kelleher's efforts in connecting the public to historical archaeology through Elfreth's Alley help make the members of the public aware of the need to preserve and protect the material culture of their forebears.

Over 70 volunteers work with Ms. Kelleher, both in the field at 124 and 126 Elfreth's Alley, as well as in the Temple University Archaeology Laboratory. Her volunteers come with a vast array of backgrounds, from those holding doctorates in anthropology or archaeology to those with absolutely no experience but a lot of spirit. Volunteers range from middle-school students to retirees and come from the Philadelphia area, New Jersey, and even as far away as New York to be part of this project. She comfortably and competently works with volunteers at various levels, training them in the fundamentals of field- and laboratory work, and creating a wonderfully cohesive study of immigration in the early 19th century at Elfreth's Alley. This ability to relate to each volunteer builds an atmosphere of excitement and camaraderie that manifests itself in the additional research several volunteers choose to do on artifacts discovered.

Her own research work on 19th-century marbles, buttons, and pipes under her Pennypacker Fellowship comes to life at Elfreth's Alley when these items are recovered from the ground. To have someone able to interpret these things immediately adds to the excitement and enjoyment for those who volunteer. Ms. Kelleher was the recipient of the Pennypacker Fellowship, Scholar-in-Residence Program in spring 2012, given by the State Library of Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. She was awarded this fellowship for the project "Understanding Domestic, Immigrant Life in 19th-Century Philadelphia through the Lens of Archaeology and Material Culture." For the summers of 2011 and 2012, she was awarded Temple University College of Liberal Arts Graduate Student Research awards. In fall 2011 she received the Gold Key Research Grant from Golden Key International Honor Society, and in fall 2010 she received a Temple University College of Liberal Arts Graduate Student Travel Award.

In 2013, the excavations at Elfreth's Alley truly captured the public's attention. Ms. Kelleher was interviewed several times after the Temple University video was published. The Associated Press ran the article, "Public Helps Excavate Oldest U.S. Street in Philly," by Kathy Matheson, on 3 March 2013.

Other interviews were conducted by Summer Ballentine (2013) of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Hadas Kuznits (2013) of KYW Radio (CBS), and Peter Crimmins (2013) of WHYI Philadelphia and NewsWorks. The NewsWorks story was picked up by other local media sources, as detailed in the 25 July 2013 blog entry (Kelleher 2013d). In each of these articles and interviews, Ms. Kelleher describes aspects of public archaeology at Elfreth's Alley and includes interviews and quotes from volunteers. Ms. Kelleher has made the Elfreth's Alley experience so positive that thoughts and feelings about volunteering have been easy to share, as seen in the comments of several volunteers in the Associated Press article and in Ms. Kelleher's blog.

Ms. Kelleher's public engagement activities include the Philadelphia Science Festivals in 2012 and 2013, for which she organized hands-on activities for school-aged children. Elfreth's Alley holds summer (June) and winter (December) "fêtes," for which Ms. Kelleher designs displays of artifacts and makes herself available to speak with visitors about her work. Other engagements include participating in the Day of Archaeology projects in 2012 and 2013 (Kelleher 2013b). She has presented several papers at meetings and conferences, including the Archaeological Society of New Jersey, the Philadelphia Archaeological Forum, Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology, and the Archaeology at Temple Symposium.

In addition to her duties at Elfreth's Alley Archaeology, Ms. Kelleher is currently an historic preservation assistant at the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office in Trenton, where she has been employed since 2011.

In summary, as a young professional, Deirdre A. Kelleher has made exceptional contributions to the field of historical archaeology through the outreach and community involvement activities she has developed for public archaeology at Elfreth's Alley Archaeology. The media focus her work has generated attests to the success of her efforts.

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