

John L. Cotter Award in Historical Archaeology



Joseph M. Bagley

Joseph Bagley is the 2016 recipient of the John L. Cotter Award for Historical Archaeology for his work as Boston City Archaeologist beginning in 2011. Bagley received the award at the 49th Annual Conference on Historical and Underwater Archaeology in Washington, D.C.

Bagley received his bachelor's degree in archaeology, with a minor in earth science, from Boston University. He completed an honors thesis on the archaeology of the Boston Common's Frog Pond site. This was both his first foray into urban archaeology and his first opportunity to research at the Boston City Archaeology Lab. After graduation, Bagley was able to do archaeological fieldwork all across the East Coast in a cultural resource management context. He then began the historical archaeology master's degree program at the University of Massachusetts (UMass), Boston. His thesis was entitled "Cultural Continuity in a Nipmuc Landscape" and won the program's Archaeology Book Award when he graduated in the spring of 2013. The thesis was part of a collaborative program between historical archaeologists at UMass, Boston, and the Nipmuc Tribe. His paper analyzed 18th- and 19th-century practices of lithic use that suggest cultural continuity among the Nipmuc families who had lived for generations on what is now known as the Sarah Boston site, part of Hassanamesit Woods in Grafton, Massachusetts. The same year he began his graduate degree program, Bagley was also given the outstanding honor of becoming the Boston City Archaeologist. Only the fourth city archaeologist in Boston's history, he was able to do incredible work for the city while continuing full-time course work for his graduate program.

It is for his impressive role as Boston City Archaeologist that Joseph Bagley was nominated for the John L. Cotter Award. Already, in his brief tenure in this position, he has advocated passionately for the archaeology of his city. Bagley reviews construction activity throughout Boston for potential belowground impacts, he runs the City Archaeology Lab, and does a seemingly endless number of public presentations. All this effort is buoyed by an army of loyal volunteers, who Bagley trains, mentors, and instills with a contagious sense of passion about archaeology.

His volunteers come from all walks of life, but they have all bonded through the energy and enthusiasm that Bagley brings to the world of Boston archaeology. Some are high-school, college, and graduate students who are interested in exploring areas of learning not offered in their schools. Some are researchers and scholars from all over the United States that are working on projects related to collections held at the City Archaeology Lab. Others are underserved youth, retirees, teachers, or residents of Boston, some of whom live near archaeological sites. They research, wash and sort artifacts, catalog, participate in designing small exhibits, collaborate on writing archaeological reports or conference papers, volunteer on Bagley's excavations, and help interpret archaeology at public events. In this way, Bagley does an exemplary job of bringing the archaeology of Boston to his local community. He has also devised ways to engage a much broader audience to bring national attention to the archaeological resources he protects.

One of the major ways Bagley has been able to accomplish this is through social media. The City Archaeology Program now has a presence on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, with an astonishing combined total of over 8,000 individuals tuning into these accounts. He is known for his "live feeds" of current projects, a strategy that involves posting many updates throughout the day when Bagley and his crew of volunteers are working in the field and in the lab. This allows all his followers to be present for moments of discovery, such as when new features are identified or exciting artifacts are found. It engages the public in discussions about puzzling artifacts, or when the function of a feature is not immediately clear. And it encourages crowd-sourced research, whether Bagley poses questions from the field about manufacturers of ceramics, the typology of straight pins, or the history of a plot of land. Through this social media presence, the public is able to live in Bagley's shoes as he makes decisions and discoveries in the field, as he recovers forgotten collections in the lab, or as he makes interpretations of the city's past through supporting archival discoveries. They are captivated by the opportunity to participate in such a meaningful and authentic way in active archaeological research about Boston.

Bagley's commitment to bringing awareness of Boston archaeology to the public also manifests itself in an ambitious schedule of public events and presentations. Those in attendance walk away with an appreciation for the history under their feet and the importance of archaeology in telling the story of Boston. They become advocates for individual projects and for the Boston City Archaeology Program as a whole. Bagley is building on this momentum for public education through the Massachusetts Archaeology Education Consortium (MAECON). He cofounded this organization and serves on the board of directors. MAECON's mission is to promote and facilitate archaeology education in communities throughout Massachusetts. MAECON combines the resources of several organizations, including the Museum of Science, Boston, the Archaeological Institute of America, the Robert S. Peabody Museum of Archaeology, and, of course, the Boston City Archaeology Program. Through this collaborative work, the organization is able to provide teachers with professional development opportunities, provide consultation to groups with archaeological education needs, and act as a hub for information on Massachusetts archaeology.

In order to continue bringing Boston archaeology to a national stage, Bagley has written a much-anticipated, illustrated book on the archaeology of Boston. This book, entitled *A History of Boston in 50 Artifacts*, is written for a nonspecialist public audience and highlights

50 compelling artifacts that exemplify the extensive archaeological resources of Boston and the city's 10,000-year history. Published by the University Press of New England, it was released in April 2016.

Bagley has taken public engagement with the city's archaeological resources to a new level. His work is a model for other cities, governments, and organizations in the way he includes the public in all aspects of his demanding job. Each day, the program grows. Despite the fact that resources are limited, Bagley continues to strengthen the program, grow his volunteer base, and grow his audience.

JENNIFER POULSEN