

J. C. Harrington Medal in Historical Archaeology



Kathleen A. Deagan 2004

Kathleen A. Deagan was honored at the 2004 annual meeting of The Society for Historical Archaeology in St. Louis, Missouri, as this year's recipient of the J. C. Harrington Medal for her contributions to the field of historical archaeology.

Born in Norfolk, Virginia, Deagan is the daughter of a U.S. Navy meteorologist. Her family lived on Navy bases around the world, and she attended twenty-two different schools before entering college. Deagan has suggested that her early predisposition to anthropology resulted from having spent much of her youth figuring out the social organization of her constantly changing schools.

In 1966, Deagan's father was transferred to the Navy hurricane squadron in Jacksonville, Florida, and she enrolled as an undergraduate at the University of Florida. After taking classes in prehistory and American Indians, with Charles Fairbanks, and an archaeological field school, directed by the charismatic Jerald Milanich, she decided to major in anthropology. As a doctoral student in the early 1970s, Deagan became involved in the long-term research program in St. Augustine initiated by Fairbanks and John Griffin. Fairbanks had been advocating a shift from monumental structures to backyard archaeology, and the first of these investigations was at the 18th-century residence of an Indian woman, Maria de la Cruz, who was married to a Spanish soldier. The site provided ideal historical parameters for Deagan to initiate the archaeology of *mestizaje* (European-Indian intermarriage and cultural admixture) while creating a social history for poorly documented segments of St. Augustine society. It also marked the beginning of her interdisciplinary approach to research

and her lifelong interest in the processes underlying the development of the Hispanic-American cultural tradition.

After completing her doctoral degree at the University of Florida in 1974, Deagan was hired as an assistant professor at Florida State University and continued her research aimed at defining social attributes and their archaeological correlates for St. Augustine's 18th-century population. Five years later, she turned her attention to 16th-century sites, interpreting these in reference to their well-documented 18th-century counterparts. Deagan's study of the 16th-century community began with an innovative auger survey to delimit the early settlement. By plotting the distribution of materials from the colonial town and its hinterland, she was able to determine the physical evolution of the community. Deagan also archaeologically documented one of the more devastating realities of colonization; the earliest sites were defined by the presence of pure Timucua pottery, while later sites contained gradually higher proportions of tribally mixed ceramics, revealing the rapid decline of the indigenous population and the relocation of other native peoples into the area. The results of this survey were so successful that the methodology has been emulated throughout the Spanish colonial research community.

In 1982, Deagan left Florida State University and joined the faculty at the Florida State Museum (now the Florida Museum of Natural History) at the University of Florida. She immediately assumed responsibility for the Puerto Real project in modern-day Haiti that had been initiated by Fairbanks a few years earlier. Puerto Real (1503–1578) was one of 13 original settlements established by Nicolás de Ovando on Hispaniola, and Deagan had long recognized the potential of the earliest Caribbean sites for her study of colonialism and the development of the modern world. For the next seven years she not only directed annual work at Puerto Real but, in 1983, also began her search for the nearby settlement of La Navidad (also known as En Bas Saline) where Columbus's ship, the *Santa Maria*, ran aground in 1492. Periodic work at La Navidad continues to this day.

At the University of Florida, Deagan met and married internationally renowned wildlife ecologist Larry Harris and became a caring stepmother to his four children. Marriage and family did not slow Deagan's pace. Rather, Harris invigorated her intellectual curiosity and reshaped some of her ideas through their shared interests in natural and cultural systems. Deagan and Harris have a remarkable relationship in their marriage, their professional lives, and among family and friends.

In 1989, Deagan expanded her research to the modern-day Dominican Republic to investigate La Isabela (1493–1498), Columbus's first permanent settlement in the New World. As the only wholly 15th-century European settlement in the Americas, La Isabela represented the ideal context to investigate plants, animals, pathogens, social institutions, and technologies initially introduced on the American landscape, and the roots of the adaptive strategies she had documented at later sites. In 1995, once the La Isabela project was well underway, Deagan initiated work at Concepción de la Vega (1496–1562), another of the earliest cities in Spanish America located in the interior of the present day Dominican Republic.

Despite her very active research program in the Caribbean during the 1980s and 1990s, Deagan has always maintained projects in St. Augustine. In 1986, she embarked on fieldwork at Ft. Mosé, the first legally sanctioned free black town in the Americas. The attention she brought to this site resulted not only in the state's acquisition of the property but also in one of the most successful traveling exhibits in the country. Deagan has continued work at the Fountain of Youth Park and Nombre de Dios, investigating the initial settlement of Pedro Menéndez de Avilés and St. Augustine's first and most complex mission community.

Using impeccable field techniques, Deagan has methodically amassed an extraordinary database from which she has formulated the outlines of a Spanish colonial adaptive strategy that incorporates gender, socioeconomic variables, and ethnicity—broad patterns with regional variations that she has explored throughout the Americas. She has also engaged in a scholarly investigation of American Indians and Africans in Euramerican cultural development as well as their profound contributions to New World colonial life and Latin American culture today.

When she determined that available typological tools were inadequate, Deagan addressed Spanish material culture systematics. Initially drawing on the ceramic studies of Fairbanks, John Goggin, and

Florence and Robert Lister, Deagan has spent the past 20 years conducting comprehensive research on Hispanic material culture. This ongoing study has resulted in the publication of two encyclopedic reference volumes, with a third one in progress.

Students have been a significant feature in all of Deagan's research projects. She has taught as many as three field schools a year, sometimes alternating in different countries. These sojourns have become legendary for their rigor, for their immersive approach to all things archaeological, and for the remarkable number of her students who have gone on to become professional archaeologists. To this day, Deagan teaches one of the finest archaeological field schools in the country, and most of her students remember having highly influential educational experiences with her. They also remember her special field school traditions such as cooking wonderful dinners (usually Minorcan clam chowder) for the crew before midterm exams, fun nights on the town with her graduate supervisors, and, of course, the famous end-of-semester proms that have kept St. Augustine's thrift stores in business over the years.

Those who have been fortunate enough to have her as a major professor owe her a lifelong debt as a mentor and friend. While at FSU, Deagan had dozens of master's students; as of 2002 at the University of Florida she had served on 55 graduate committees and chaired 8 PhDs and 10 MAs. Countless students have been supported by the more than 50 major research grants she has been awarded.

In much the same way that she has selflessly guided and supported students, Deagan has reached out to archaeologists throughout Latin America and Europe. She has always made a special effort to help those in underserved Latin American and Caribbean countries who have limited access to resources through her frequent visits, consultations, workshops, and donated publications. On many occasions she has invited students and scholars from around the world into her home for extended periods of time while they conducted research, attended conferences, and completed coursework. She is unquestionably one of historical archaeology's finest international ambassadors.

Kathleen Deagan's efforts throughout the years have enriched and facilitated the work of others by example, generosity, and unmatched intellectual contributions. Her publication record is nothing short of phenomenal and includes 10 books, 35 major articles, and 18 chapters in books. Her most recent two-volume set (with José María Cruxent) on the history and archaeology of La Isabela was awarded the 2003 outstanding book award by the Society for American Archaeology. Other scholarly achievements have been recognized through awards by numerous institutions and organizations over the years. Deagan was named Distinguished Research Curator at the Florida Museum of Natural History in 1995, Alumna of Outstanding Achievement by the University of Florida in 1997, and awarded a Distinguished Research Professorship by the University of Florida Research Foundation in 1999.

Over the past 25 years, Deagan has also been committed to professional service and has served as an elected officer for the Florida Archaeological Council, Southeastern Archaeological Conference, and the Society for American Archaeology. She has been an active member of SHA throughout her career as newsletter coordinator for the Southeast (1979–1984), board member (1980–1983), Editorial Advisory Committee member (1983–1999), president-elect (1984), and president (1985). Currently, she is an important political face of archaeology as the chair of the Florida Humanities Council (2002–2005).

In recognition of three decades of extraordinary scholarship, student training, and professional service, Kathleen Deagan has been awarded the 2004 J. C. Harrington Medal for her outstanding contributions to the field of historical archaeology.