

J. C. Harrington Medal in Historical Archaeology

KENNETH E. KIDD

1985



The Society for Historical Archaeology selected Kenneth E. Kidd to be the third recipient of the J. C. Harrington medal.

Kenneth Kidd was born in Barrie, Ontario, in 1906 and grew up on the family farm in Simcoe County. Kenneth Kidd began his University training in History and English and received his Honors B.A. from the University of Toronto in 1931. He then entered the Ontario College of Education where he earned a Specialist's Certificate in 1932 and, upon graduation, taught at the Mohawk Institute, Brantford, Ontario. The Institute was the first residential school in Canada for Six Nation's Indians. In 1935 Kenneth Kidd joined the staff of the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) of Archaeology as a secretary in the Department of Ethnology, to begin a lifelong association with that institution. At that time, Ethnology at the ROM was really Anthropology for it embraced all branches of that science so far as they affected museum activity. After the mid-thirties, however, archaeology gained prominence.

Ken Kidd soon returned to the University of Toronto to begin graduate work in Anthropology and History and in 1936 did field work among the Blackfoot Indians of Alberta, collecting material for his

thesis. In the twenties and thirties, anthropology was a very young discipline in Canada and the single professorship in the country was held by Thomas F. MacIlwraith at the University of Toronto.

Kidd's first exposure to archaeology was at Chaco Canyon where he attended the University of New Mexico Summer Field School in 1937. The following year he went on his first Canadian dig, at a late prehistoric site at St. Thomas, Ontario, led by Philleo Nash from the University of Toronto and during the next season he directed his own excavation in Algonquin Park, the first of many to follow.

These were the beginnings of scientific archaeology in Ontario, and the first attempts to bring it before the public. The results of the ROM's field work were always promptly displayed in the galleries, public lectures were given of the summer's activities, and a museum news letter began to circulate in May 1962.

The Government of Ontario responded and made the generous grant of \$3000 for all the archaeological summer projects of the museum. As you may surmise, the field worker's wages in the thirties and forties were paid for by food and tent, air and sunshine and the excitement of discovery.

In the fall of 1941, the director of the ROM, Charles Currelly, stopped Ken Kidd in the corridor one day and told him point blank, as was his habit, that come spring Kidd would have to go to Midland to dig up a 17th century mission site.

The site in question was Ste Marie I, built by the Jesuits in 1639 and a center of their activities among the Huron Indians until its destruction in 1649.

The excavation lasted about eight months—was the first of its kind in Canada—and was a pioneering effort in the methodology and field techniques in historical archaeology.

Ken Kidd recognized the nature of the difficulties and wrote in the report on the site, *The Excavation of Sainte Marie I*, with characteristic modesty. "Since the amount of historical archaeology which has been done in North America is still rather inconsiderable, each fieldworker has had to devise many of his own procedures, while following in general established techniques. This certainly has been true of work at Ste. Marie."

The procedures that Kidd devised have stood the test of time and his monograph on the pioneering historical excavation in America is a model of archaeological research, analysis, and style.

Some years later, in 1950, Ken Kidd received a Letter of Commendation from the General of the Jesuit Order in Rome. Ste. Marie One has now been restored, not entirely as the excavator would have hoped, but is a major North American reconstruction nonetheless.

Some time before the excavation of Ste. Marie, in the fall of 1938, Ken Kidd had taken a leave of absence from the ROM to accept a scholarship at the University of Chicago. While in residence at International House, he met Martha Maurer. Martha, who was also doing graduate work at the time, at the Art Institute of Chicago, had been warned by her great Aunt to stay away from International House because she might meet and marry a foreigner. That warning obviously went unheeded, for Ken and Martha were married on 9 October 1943.

In 1947 Kidd began the excavation of the historic ossuary at Ossassané, near Midland, Ontario. This is the only Indian ossuary that has a reasonably exact date and has yielded a wealth of material goods and the remains of almost 500 individuals. In 1836, the Jesuit Jean de Brebeuf was at the scene of the ceremonies, which lasted almost a week, and recorded them in considerable detail.

By the late 1940s Ken Kidd had become the leading authority on eastern Canadian prehistory and was asked to write a chapter on Ontario in the first synthesis of Northeastern Archaeology by James Griffin, *Archaeology of Eastern United States*. Kidd's contribution "60 Years of Ontario Archaeology" is the earliest overview of the prehistory of the province.

In 1951 Kidd received a Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship for the study of European goods traded to the Indians during the early period of contact. Not much was known at the time about European technology of the 17th and 18th centuries that produced the artifacts found on Indian and European sites

and Ken and Martha Kidd spent much of 1951 and 1952 traveling through New England, New York, and Pennsylvania visiting museums, private collections, and archives.

In 1956 the Kidds went on a similar quest, this time to the museums and archives in Great Britain, France and Germany, as well as Denmark and Sweden. In 1960 they added Italy, Spain and the Netherlands to their research network.

They returned with sheaves of notes, photocopies, photographs, and drawings and Ken set about organizing this material for publication—between a multitude of curatorial duties at the museum.

The publications that resulted from Kidd's study of early contact trade and domestic artifacts have become essential references in the discipline. They include *Trade Goods Research*, 1954; *Historic Site Archaeology in Canada*, 1969; *A Classification System for Glass Beads for the Use of Field Archaeologists* (with Martha as co-author), 1970; *The Manufacture of Glass Beads from the Middle Ages to the Beginning of the XIXth Century*, 1979; *A Study of Cutlery for the Use of Field Archaeologists*, 1982. Kidd's museum research on this subject was so wide-ranging that a few more papers are being readied for publication.

In the same context should be mentioned Kidd's continuing interest in Paul Kane, many of whose ethnographic paintings and sketches are housed at the ROM. Paul Kane, like George Catlin in the United States, traveled across Canada in the middle of the 19th-century and made a visual record of native life and material culture. Kidd published several papers on Kane's wanderings and sketches.

In 1954 Kidd became the curator of Ethnology at the ROM. In 1956 he was made a member of the Council of the Champlain Society and in 1957 was elected Vice President of the Society for American Archaeology.

During his years at the ROM, Ken Kidd not only personally excavated sites, did extensive research on historic trade goods, guided the growing department of Ethnology, but he initiated and started a number of programs and projects, some of which have grown to international significance, such as the Royal Ontario Museum program in British Honduras, now Belize. Kidd also coordinated the excavation of the Serpent Mounds near Peterborough, Ontario (1956 to 1960) and initiated a program of ethnological research in the Patricia District at Round Lake (1958 to 1959).

Although not a swimmer himself, Kidd introduced underwater archaeology in Canada and pioneered the systematic field recording of Indian rock art in the Great Lakes area. The results of this program, which began in 1957 and continued for four seasons, appeared in *Indian Rock Paintings of the Great Lakes*, in 1962, which Kidd co-authored with Selwyn Dewdney. This work continued the field observations with ethnohistorical research to provide the first account of the range, diversity and significance of native rock art.

In the mid 1960s the Government of Ontario was expanding the university system of the province and Ken Kidd was asked to establish the Department of Anthropology at the newly founded Trent University in Peterborough.

After 30 very active years at the Royal Ontario Museum, at a time when most curators quietly begin to daydream of retirement, Ken Kidd embarked on a second career and, in 1964, became the founding chairman of the Anthropology Department at Trent University.

Ken planned the foundations of the new department with great care and foresight so that now it is one of the few in Canada that has such a wide range of coverage of anthropology and an active graduate program in *Archaeology and Art of the Americas*.

In 1968 Kidd developed and initiated the *Indian and Eskimo Studies Programme* at Trent, the first in Canada, which now flourishes successfully as The Native Studies Department and which has come to serve as a model for similar departments at several other universities in the country.

The goal of this bold experiment was to facilitate the university education of the native community—in

terms of a selective curriculum and an appropriate setting. The establishment of this program at Trent is the culmination of Kidd's lifelong interest in the native people of the Great Lakes—their historic past as well as their present condition. It should be noted that Ken Kidd is the only Canadian recipient of the Cornplanter Medal, given in 1970 by the Cayuga Museum of History and Art in recognition of his contributions to native studies.

Today, Ken Kidd divides his time between continuing research on historic trade goods and helping individual native students achieve their potential in modern society.

Throughout a career that now spans 50 years, in his pioneering studies in historical archaeology, material culture, and ethnohistory, Ken Kidd always sought to bring exactness to scholarship, precision to field work, and clarity to writing. These are also the qualities he passed on to his students.

But what is equally significant is that all of these accomplishments and achievements have been pervaded by a deep sense of humanity and an abiding faith in the individual and his worth.