

John L. Cotter Award in Historical Archaeology



Timothy Scarlett 2003

The Society for Historical Archaeology presented the John L. Cotter Award in Historical Archaeology to Timothy Scarlett at its 2003 annual meeting in Providence, Rhode Island. Scarlett is the third recipient of the award, which recognizes outstanding achievement by a new professional in historical archaeology. Tim began his academic career at the University of Arizona, where he received a BA in Anthropology in 1991. He then entered the graduate program at Boston University and studied historical archaeology under the direction of Mary Beaudry. In 1994, he completed an MA degree with a thesis on redware ceramics in 18th-century New England. Bringing a continuing interest in ceramic production and technology, he then returned to the American West and entered the doctoral program at the University of Nevada, Reno. He completed his PhD in 2002 under the direction of Donald Hardesty with a dissertation on the Mormon pottery industry. Tim is currently an assistant professor of archaeology at Michigan Technological University.

His academic career reflects his multiple interests in teaching, research, and public service. Tim played an active role as a graduate student in the governance and activities of The Society for Historical Archaeology, serving as chair of the Student Affairs Committee between 1998 and 2001. At the University of Nevada, Reno, he excelled in teaching and helped develop a program to train graduate teaching assistants. He also taught summer field schools in archaeology to kids for many years through The Johns Hopkins University Center for Academically Talented Youth. Tim has

been a frequent contributor to the annual meetings of SHA. He presented papers on such topics as “Craft and Industry in Utah’s Potteries: Archaeometry and Historical Archaeology at the Missouri Universities Research Reactor” and “Narcissus Mirror: Commodity Manufacture and Modernism in the American Great Basin.” In addition, he organized sessions for the SHA Student Affairs Committee.

The promising research for which he is being nominated continues in the direction suggested by the topics of those SHA conference presentations. His recently completed dissertation project focused on the Mormon pottery industry in Utah and the American West. He used the diverse methods of ethnographic fieldwork, biographical history, archaeological excavation, and materials science, especially ceramic petrology and neutron activation analysis, to explore how Mormon immigrants from Europe and elsewhere created a unique system of pottery production and distribution. The research found that Mormon potters devised a wide variety of personal strategies that reflected a complex interplay between the local and the global, the secular and the sacred, the private and the public, the technological and the social. In the process, the dissertation concludes, Mormon pottery changed between 1848 and 1929 from being a local craft, to a capitalized industry, and to an art form. Tim’s research has been community-based and makes extensive use of volunteers.

It is for this seminal work that Timothy Scarlett received the 2003 John L. Cotter Award for outstanding and innovative contributions to the study of industrial production and ceramic technology in the American West. This work portends significant future contributions to the discipline of historical archaeology.

Donald L. Hardesty