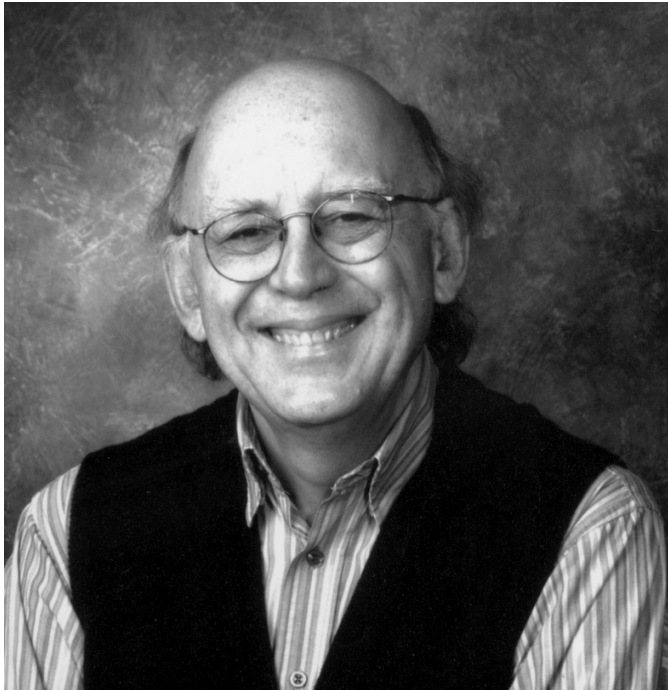


J. C. Harrington Medal in Historical Archaeology



Marcel Moussette 2005

The Archaeologist Who Came in from the Cold

Marcel Moussette's life and work resemble a river whose nature changes while essentially remaining the same through time. This may seem a tired metaphor, but when the St. Lawrence River is as important as it has been for Marcel in his personal and professional evolution, it is the only metaphor that can be used to grasp the full depth of his achievement. This is especially true when "St. Lawrence River" is said in French: *fleuve*, meaning a mighty watercourse flowing into the sea. No English equivalent exists for *fleuve* and this, too, is appropriate, as Marcel's contribution to scholarship has been almost exclusively in French. Only Marcel could tell us if this is a political gesture, but its importance as a cultural statement is there for the whole world to see. For all of us, his work is a benchmark of the intellectual maturity of historical archaeology, as the concepts and substance of our discipline flow into other cultural universes.

A hallmark of Marcel's work is depth—depth of detail, depth of understanding—deep structures that lead us to comprehend the richness of social life. It is easy and appropriate to add breadth—breadth of subject, breadth of explanation—to Marcel's qualities. Together, depth and breadth can be conjugated in both French and English as *context*, and Marcel has always maintained the importance of this approach in his research as well as in his teachings.

The importance of context goes back to his early life.

Marcel was born and raised in La Prairie, a small town founded as a Jesuit mission in the 17th century on the south shore of the St. Lawrence, facing Montréal across the Lachine Rapids. He spent his childhood with both feet in the current, fishing, swimming, and playing. Many recurring themes in Marcel's work have resonances with this time and place. La Prairie is next door to the Iroquois community of Kahnawake (Caughnawaga), renowned for a church bell reputedly taken from Deerfield, Massachusetts, in the infamous 1704 raid. Was one of Marcel's ancestors in that raiding party? Perhaps not, but his own forays into American intellectual territory lead me to believe it is possible! La Prairie and Kahnawake have intermingled during their 330 years of existence, hybrids of French and Iroquoian cultures. Marcel's continuing interest in the mutual influence of European and Amerindian cultures on each other, evident in his early work as a biologist and predominant in his recent work on the symbolism of religious medallions, is perhaps a consequence of the proximity of these two communities. His father worked in La Prairie's brickyards, which may be the inspiration for his deep interest in ceramics, processes for fabricating objects and, ultimately, in the fabrication of meaning.

Marcel began his studies, as he did his career, as a biologist studying fishing in the St. Lawrence. He was no ordinary biologist and could easily have been mistaken for an ethnographer as he studied the history of the industry and conducted fieldwork with traditional fisher folk. This research resulted in a publication on fishing technologies from the Contact period up to the 20th century (*La pêche sur le Saint-Laurent, répertoire des méthodes et des engins de capture*, Boréal Express, 1979), and it was to herald Marcel's great interest in material culture within a larger cultural system. It is not surprising to see that he continued his studies as an ethnologist and historian in the anthropology department of the Université de Montréal and then the history department of Université Laval. His doctoral research, based on material from Parks Canada's large-scale archaeological project, the Forges de Saint-Maurice, addressed a subject that warmed the hearts of all those who read it: the history of domestic heating in Canada, published as *Le chauffage domestique au Canada* (Presses de l'Université Laval, 1983).

Marcel's specialty has always been material culture—he is one of the foremost specialists on French material culture in North America. He worked from 1968 to 1980 with Parks Canada, first in Ottawa as a field archaeologist and analyst and then in Québec City as director of the Québec region's material culture division. It was while working in Ottawa that Marcel met his lovely and charming wife, Jane Macauley, and became the father of two sons.

One of his achievements as an applied archaeologist was directing the development of guides for classifying finds from Parks Canada's numerous projects according to material and function. This was a huge step towards understanding the voluminous material coming from projects such as the Forges de Saint-Maurice, the Fortifications of Québec City, and Beaubassin, to mention only the better-known sites. This was done at a time when comparable endeavors were being undertaken in the United States (remember, this was the heyday of New Archaeology) and when nothing similar existed in French. It allowed a young generation of scholars to sink their teeth directly into archaeology without first having to go through language training. The guides also permitted easy and efficient communication within that community, as they soon became the standard instruments for historical archaeology in French Canada. They continue to be used to this day, though they have undergone several revisions to take new discoveries and growing sophistication into account. Marcel continues to oversee the production of material culture guides (*Identifier la céramique et le verre anciens au Québec: guide à l'usage des amateurs et des professionnels*, Michel Brassard and Myriam Leclerc, CÉLAT, 2001). Marcel has given much thought to the complex meaning of objects, and his approach to material culture has gone far beyond typologies, extending to the analysis of their context ("L'objet archéologique, réceptacle et générateur de sens," *Paléo-Québec*, 1995, 23:3–15).

He published an analysis of coarse earthenwares from Place-Royale in Québec City and a report on excavations at Champlain's Habitation during a brief 15 months as a freelance consultant after leaving Parks Canada in 1980. The published results of these projects (*Les terres cuites communes des maisons Estèbe et Boisseau*, Collection Patrimoines, Ministère de la Culture et des Communications, dossier 51, 1996; *Le site de l'Habitation de Champlain à Québec*, Ministère des Affaires

culturelles, dossier 58, 1985, with Françoise Niellon) are essential references for archaeologists studying the French Régime in North America.

When Marcel joined the faculty of Université Laval in 1981, he instigated a field school at the Intendant's Palace site in Québec City. This project, which ran from 1982 to 1991, sustained a large number of master's theses, and it was a particularly fertile training ground for numerous students. His 1994 monograph, *Le site du Palais de l'intendant à Québec, gènèse et structuration d'un lieu urbain* (Septentrion), explores the relationship between structural changes that occurred there over three and a half centuries and the various meanings attributed to the site by the inhabitants of Québec City. It is an excellent example of the use of contextual archaeology to study the multiple universes of an archaeological site, and it remains a seminal work on urban archaeology. Marcel's influential article on the site, published in *Historical Archaeology* ("The Site of the Intendant's Palace in Québec City: The Changing Meaning of an Urban Space," 1996, 30(2): 8–21) opens a window on this rich project. The Intendant's Palace project produced many other articles, many of which are unknown, as they are published in French. It is for that reason that full references are included here.

Marcel's most recently published research is the result of years of patient work begun on the Intendant's Palace site but ranging over the vast territory of New France—one-third of North America—that was administered from this site during the French colonial period. This research examines the dual symbolism of religious medallions used as tools of acculturation by the French and accepted as tokens of their own cultural identity by Amerindians, and it aptly shows the depth of his inquiry. At Marcel's plenary session address at the 2002 meetings in Mobile, Alabama ("An Encounter in the Baroque Age: Amerindians and French in North America"), he ably expounded on the hybridization of European and Native American ideologies as witnessed in the use of baroque art styles. Several articles develop this theme in depth: "Des couteaux pour la traite des fourrures," *Material History Review/Revue d'histoire de la culture matérielle*, 2000, 51:3–15; "Les médailles religieuses, une forme de l'imagerie baroque en Nouvelle-France," *Les cahiers des Dix*, 2001, 55:295–329; "Les garnitures de fusils de traite des magasins du roi à Québec: un autre chemin de l'univers baroque en Amérique du Nord," *Archéologiques*, 2001, 14:50–78; "Archéologie d'une rencontre. Les univers dualistes français et amérindiens dans l'Amérique septentrionale des XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles," *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec*, 2002, 32(1):13–27.

In 1987, Marcel returned to the St. Lawrence River, where, until 1998, he directed a research project on an early agricultural site—I'île aux Oies. This research program has greatly expanded perceptions of the 17th-century rural world by documenting in detail insular subsistence patterns and their influence on land use during the early French Regime. This project demonstrated the research potential of rural seigneuries and farmsteads that had been largely overlooked by Québec archaeologists ("Il nous reste un passé à creuser. Pour une archéologie du monde rural du XVII^e siècle," *Interface*, 1995, 16(3):18–29). His soon-to-be-published monograph, covering 12 years of research on this project, will be for the deep structure of meaning for agricultural sites what the Intendant's Palace site was for urban archaeology. He has, at the same time, directed several seasons of field schools in his hometown of La Prairie.

The ecumenical nature of Marcel's work has been recognized by his peers in Québec. He was a member of the provincial Cultural Properties Commission from 1983 to 1986. As such, he played an instrumental role in directing the protection and development of the province's heritage resources. From 1985 to 2002, he was co-coordinator for the Memorandum of Agreement for archaeological research between the City of Québec and Université Laval. He has assumed similar responsibilities in a Memorandum of Agreement between the City of La Prairie and Université Laval since 2000. These agreements have fostered the training of hundreds of undergraduate students and dozens of graduate students in historical archaeology. In 1997, he was accepted as a member of *La société des Dix* (The Group of Ten), an exclusive multidisciplinary intellectual society founded in 1935. His inaugural essay ("Un héros sans visage: Champlain et l'archéologie," *Les cahiers des Dix*, 2000, 54:13–44) addressed the thorny question of the populist archaeological fascination for the tomb of the founder of New France, Samuel de Champlain.

This debate steeled positions in Québec through the 19th and 20th centuries in much the same way as metal detectorists are the subject of controversy in this new century. Marcel's key role in developing historical archaeology in Québec and Canada was recognized by The Society for Historical Archaeology when it presented him its Award of Merit in 2000. Most recently (August 2003), he was elected as the director of the CÉLAT, an inter-university research center uniting 30 scholars from five different universities in subjects as various as literature, art history, sociology, semiotics, history, anthropology, and, of course, archaeology. His role as director of an interdisciplinary research center goes beyond strictly disciplinary research to combine the strengths of its component social sciences.

I have known Marcel Moussette as a teacher, a mentor, a colleague, and a friend. We have lived in the same neighborhood for more than 25 years, so I have seen him very frequently and in many different contexts. I often run into him on the street, where he may be talking to a student, a colleague, someone who has found bottles in their back yard, or an artist looking for inspiration from someone known for his coherent worldview. Marcel is such a well-known personality that even his former neighbors, the local Hell's Angels chapter, would ask him for advice. I do not know if their questions were strictly limited to archaeology, but, elsewhere, I do know that he has lectured on the subject for a grassroots initiative called "The People's University." His outreach is real and constant, and it comes in many forms. You probably haven't read his two novels—yes, they are only in French—but you may have heard the French-language versions of Canadian folk-rock singer Bruce Cockburn's songs translated by Marcel, some of his other lasting contributions to Canadian cultural life.

I know of no endearing faults (nor of annoying ones), only of many personal and intellectual qualities. His greatest intellectual quality is certainly his insatiable curiosity, while his greatest personal quality is without a doubt his humaneness, evident through his respect for others and his great generosity. He is patient, levelheaded, attentive, wise, and, above all, modest. For all of this, Marcel is greatly appreciated by his students and hotly sought after as a thesis director (he has directed 39 master's students and 5 doctoral). He is proficient and generous with advice on subjects as diverse as literature, child-raising, hiking equipment, or speed skating. I know he has been of succor to colleagues, friends, and students in life crises on many occasions.

Marcel is able to apply the substance of his work to everyday life. One example comes from his intellectual interest for heating systems. Marcel and I were in a restaurant one freezing winter day. It was -30 outside, and that is either Centigrade or Fahrenheit when it gets that cold. A person, perhaps a man but too bundled-up to tell, came in and walked by. Marcel remarked that the bundle was dragging a "cloud of cold" with it through the restaurant. It was all too true. This remark inspired another analogy that rings true for the Laurentian valley as well as for the spread of historical archaeology into new cultural universes. It will also serve as my conclusion: the recognition that Marcel Moussette receives today from The Society for Historical Archaeology marks his coming in from the cold. Thank you, Marcel, for warming our hearts and minds.

WILLIAM MOSS