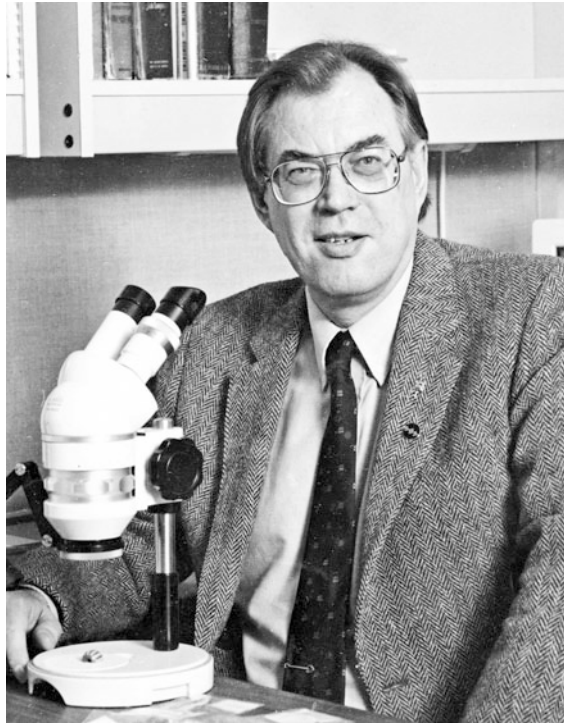


## Carol V. Ruppé Distinguished Service Award



**Karlis Karklins**

The Carol V. Ruppé Distinguished Service Award was established by the Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA) in 1988 to honor Carol Ruppé for her many years of service to the organization. Karlis Karklins received the 2013 Ruppé Award at the annual conference in Leicester, United Kingdom, in recognition of his tireless efforts for nearly 40 years to further and promote the field of historical archaeology and SHA around the world. It is only the sixth Ruppé Award to be presented.

Karlis Karklins was born in Riga, Latvia, in 1944, during German occupation of the country. As Soviet troops began to advance into Latvia in the fall of 1944, his parents, remembering the horrors of the initial Soviet occupation in 1940–1941, decided to abandon their homeland and head for Germany, the only place the German government would let them relocate. After the war, his parents emigrated to the United States, seeking to continue their careers as professors of German and Russian language and literature. Karlis learned English in New York City, and fortunately his mother soon found a job teaching at Syracuse University, where, in the upstate environment, Karlis was able to divest himself of his distinct Bronx accent.

Karlis became interested in archaeology while in junior high school. Living in White Plains, New York, at the time, he was fascinated by Indians and their diverse cultures. Upon hearing of his interest, a friend gave him a small box of arrowheads that purportedly had been found locally. This piqued his curiosity, and he began to assemble a library of books related to ancient humans and archaeology. Charles Darwin was his hero at the time (and continues to be). The pride of his collection was a worn copy of Henry C. Shetrone, *The Mound-Builders*, and he spent hours poring

over its pages, fascinated by the complexity of these ancient peoples' lifeways and their amazing material culture.

By the time he began college in 1962, his family had moved to Tampa, Florida. Although he was interested in the natural sciences at this point, especially mineralogy and paleontology, a friend urged him to attend several anthropology classes that were "cool." This led to a major in anthropology at the University of South Florida, with minors in biology and geology. His first paying job as an anthropologist was cleaning artifacts excavated by University of South Florida archaeologist Roger T. Grange at Castle Hill, Newfoundland, where Karlis too would eventually work. While working on a bachelor degree at the university, a minor event would have a life-long effect on Karlis. The director of the tiny Tampa Museum of Science and Natural History called him one day to inquire if he would be interested in visiting a burial mound in central Florida, where treasure hunters had found glass trade beads. They went to the site, found some beads, and Karlis has been fascinated by trade beads ever since. Today he is a leading expert on trade beads, has learned a lot about them over the last 50 years, but feels there is still a lot more to discover.

After graduation in 1966, Karlis selected the University of Kansas to begin his graduate training. During summer break from those studies in 1967, Karlis accepted a job as an archaeological crew member at Lower Fort Garry National Historic Park, Selkirk, Manitoba, for the National Historic Parks and Sites Service (NHPSS), Ottawa, Canada (later NHPSS would become Parks Canada). He returned in 1968 and was then invited to join the fledgling archaeology section created at the NHPSS by John H. Rick and Jervis D. Swannack, who would become early presidents of the SHA. Karlis began as an archaeologist and was involved in the survey and excavation of a number of sites across Canada. His interest in beads led him to become involved in the Western Canadian Fur Trade Project, the purpose of which was to identify and locate fur-trade sites that were worthy of being commemorated and excavated for interpretation to the public.

When Parks Canada regionalized in 1977, he chose to remain with the headquarters unit in Ottawa and became a material culture researcher. At this point in his career, Karlis decided it was time to complete the graduate studies he had begun at the University of Kansas and applied for educational leave. Instead of returning to Kansas, he chose the University of Idaho, as it was one of the few places at the time that offered courses in historical archaeology. He earned his master's degree in anthropology in 1979 under the tutelage of Roderick Sprague, another bead aficionado, who would become a dear friend. Until retiring as head of the Material Culture Research Section in 2002, Karlis conducted research on various artifact categories, most notably beads, and produced numerous reports on his findings. He also undertook several cultural assessment surveys in the Wager Bay region of Nunavut for Parks Canada in anticipation of this area being designated a national park.

It was during his early days at NHPSS that Karlis became involved with the SHA. His boss, Jervis Swannack, who was then editor of SHA's newsletter, suggested that taking over this job would be a wise career move. After some arm twisting, Karlis agreed and served as newsletter editor from 1971 to 1975. In 1975, he was elected to the SHA Board of Directors, serving until 1978. While on the board he was an active member of the planning committee for the 1977 society meeting, held in Ottawa. In 1980, he took on the role of the SHA Ontario Current Research Editor and also became the Canadian book review editor the following year. He gave up these positions when he was elected president of the society in 1986.

This was an exciting time, as the society was lobbying the U.S. Congress to pass the Abandoned Shipwreck Act. There were visits to Capitol Hill and meetings with several members of Congress. It was also the time that the society was being sued for purportedly libeling an individual who had illegally raised components of the Confederate blockade runner, *Rattlesnake*, situated off the South Carolina coast. Although the lawsuit was eventually dropped, it was a shaky time for the SHA and nerve-racking for its officers. During his presidency, Karlis was also responsible for designing and producing the society's first promotional brochure. Following his term as president, he chaired the Nominations and Elections Committee, and subsequently served on the Newsletter Editorial Advisory Committee during Norman Barka's lengthy term as newsletter editor.

In the years that followed, Karlis continued as unofficial liaison officer between the SHA and Parks Canada, an agency that played a pivotal role in North American historical archaeology and material culture research. Through Karlis's efforts, a number of important research articles prepared by members of the Parks Canada Material Culture Researcher Section (PC MCR) were made available for publication in *Historical Archaeology*. In the late 1990s, Karlis approached the SHA with a plan to compile a reader for publication with papers contributed by PC MCR staff if the society would provide a publication conduit. Unselfishly, Karlis worked the manuscripts into publishable form and had appropriate artwork prepared. He then worked with Parks legal staff to get the papers, considered "Crown" property, released to the SHA for publication. This resulted in the *Studies in Material Culture Research* volume, published in 2000. Karlis also conducted luncheon roundtable workshops, workshop sessions, and symposia on beads at several SHA meetings.

For years, Karlis was active in seeking Canadian nominees for the SHA Board of Directors and recommending them to the nominating committee. He felt strongly that Canadian representation should, if possible, always exist on the board, and he was the most active Canadian in the early development of the SHA. When it comes to the SHA in Canada, Karlis was and is Mr. Canadian SHA. To this day, Karlis is a storehouse of knowledge relative to the history of the SHA, not only in Canada but for the society at large. He seems to have made it an unconscious career goal to do everything in his power to promote the SHA and to see that it thrives. More than possibly any other SHA member Karlis has, for well over 30 years, traveled across Canada, to Western and Eastern Europe, and to Southeast Asia to attend bead conferences and promote historical archaeology and the SHA. Karlis has been a worldwide "SHA Ombudsman!"

Since the early 1980s, Karlis has actively sought to disseminate information relevant to historical archaeology and has been a near-permanent fixture in the SHA conference book room, offering Parks Canada and other publications of interest to the historical archaeological community. Karlis has had a long-standing interest in the SHA and has promoted it whenever and wherever possible. He has attended all but a handful of the SHA's annual meetings since his first one in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in 1970. He maintains a serious interest in the society and always attends the business meetings, making comments and suggestions when he sees fit.

Through all the years that Karlis has worked to promote and serve the SHA, he has been a strong supporter of student participation. Recently he has become a financial supporter for student receptions, although he is reticent to acknowledge his contributions.

In addition to his work for SHA, Karlis has been very active in the Society of Bead Researchers. He became a member shortly after it was formed in 1981 and took over as editor in 1983, producing the *Bead Forum*, the society's newsletter. While interest in beads was increasing dramatically worldwide at the time, most archaeological journals were reluctant to devote their limited page space to reports that dealt solely with beads. Furthermore, those that were willing to publish such reports could not afford color illustrations, something bead researchers deemed essential. So it was that Karlis created a scholarly journal devoted solely to beads and beadwork. Its title was short and to the point: *Beads*. The first issue rolled off the presses in 1989 and is still in production, with Karlis as its able editor. Since retiring in 2002, Karlis has continued to research beads and beadwork, and has been invited to present papers at various conferences, some as far away as Istanbul and Borneo. He is always willing to give a helping hand to other researchers and promotes sound scholarship.

What does all of the above mean? Karlis Karklins is a person who, throughout his entire professional career, has been and continues to be selfless, to the extreme, in volunteering his time and talents to serve the society. Rick Sprague commented many times over the years, with great admiration, that Karlis really cared about the society, giving considerably of himself to ensure that the then-young SHA and the field of historical archaeology would survive, thrive, and mature as a discipline. That's what it means!