

John L. Cotter Award in Historical Archaeology



Sarah E. Cowie

Sarah E. Cowie is the recipient of the Society for Historical Archaeology's 2013 John L. Cotter Award for her research on power dynamics in a broad range of historical contexts that has expanded the interdisciplinary reach and influence of historical archaeology. The award was presented at the society's 2013 annual conference in Leicester, United Kingdom.

In her 2008 doctoral dissertation, *Industrial Capitalism and the Company Town: Structural Power, Bio-Power, and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Fayette, Michigan*, Dr. Cowie successfully examines power and control in an early American industrial landscape by combining archaeological field data, archival research, material culture analysis, and innovative GIS methods within a sophisticated theoretical framework. She subsequently revised her dissertation as a postdoctoral fellow supported by the Wenner-Gren Foundation, and in 2011 Cowie published *The Plurality of Power: An Archaeology of Industrial Capitalism* in the Springer "Contributions to Global Historical Archaeology" series. Both her dissertation and this volume are extremely well written and sophisticated. Most researchers have difficulty applying the abstract concepts of social power to real datasets, and very few succeed in writing about them in an understandable way. Her articulation of theory and data was right on the mark and illustrates her ability to conceive of a complex research design, implement it successfully, and convey the results lucidly and engagingly.

Dr. Cowie is an exceptionally well-trained historical archaeologist in all critical areas—fieldwork, archival research, and material culture studies. Her experience includes sites dating from all historical periods up through to the present day. She received her M.S. in industrial archaeology

from Michigan Technological University and completed her Ph.D. in anthropology at the University of Arizona. At the same time, few scholars at this stage in their careers have as much experience in the applied archaeological world. She has over a decade of experience in cultural resource management and has worked extensively on historical mining landscapes and communities in Utah, Idaho, Nevada, and Arizona. She has also done archaeological work in Alabama, Georgia, and Missouri. Dr. Cowie developed oft-cited guidelines for recording Western mining landscapes, which were published by the National Park Service in 2005. She has worked for several private cultural resource management firms and two government agencies. Her experience with historic preservation topics extends from all phases of archaeological fieldwork to analysis and report writing. She has worked on both the agency side and the consultant side of heritage management.

Dr. Cowie's work on power dynamics is grounded in her experiences in industrial archaeology, historic preservation, and the archaeology of working communities. One of her research foci is the historical archaeology of Native Americans, and she has considerable experience working with contemporary native peoples and is committed to incorporating their perspectives into her research. Her approach also applies critical perspectives to studying identity formation among disenfranchised peoples. The ideas she continues to develop are creative and significant, and have both historical and contemporary relevance.

Dr. Cowie is an accomplished and creative teacher. Her first teaching job after receiving her Ph.D. was at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and since 2011 she has been an assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Nevada, Reno, filling a position there after the retirement of Donald L. Hardesty. Her extremely positive teaching evaluations document her teaching competence and abilities. She is an active member of a number of professional and academic organizations, has published peer-reviewed articles and book reviews in several journals, and presents regularly at scholarly meetings. Dr. Cowie's commitment to being an engaged member of her discipline is a model for students learning how to be professionals, and she is an excellent example of the perseverance and dedication needed to succeed as a young professional given the economic stresses and challenges to higher education and critical thinking prevalent not only in the United States but also worldwide.

Her academic qualifications and performance have garnered her numerous grants, scholarships, and fellowships. Dr. Cowie was recently invited by the U.S. Army Research Office to submit a proposal for consideration for a Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE). PECASE is the highest honor bestowed by the U.S. government on outstanding scientists and engineers in the early stages of their independent research careers, and only invited participants are considered. Cowie proposed to apply the principles and findings of her research on power relations in historical archaeology to a contemporary issue of great relevance—the apparent impasse in tribal/federal discourse regarding heritage consultation as currently practiced in the United States.

Her proposed research on conflicting discourses in heritage management, addressed through collaborative training in indigenous historical archaeology, draws together lessons learned from her previous work on power and social theory, on indigenous historical archaeology, and on federal/tribal relations. Her proposed use of postmodern theoretical concepts to develop a strategy for humanizing the process of respectful consultation between tribes and the federal government is highly innovative and has strong potential to revolutionize the way consultation is currently conducted, which should provide significant and lasting benefits for all concerned.

Dr. Cowie's work has brought historical archaeology to the attention of audiences that heretofore have seen little potential in its contributions. This has been recognized at the national level, as indicated by PECASE's invitation, but she continues to introduce historical archaeology to new audiences through university outreach and collaborative activities, and through service to professional societies and the public.

In summary, Dr. Sarah E. Cowie has made exceptional contributions to historical archaeology while a student and now as a young professional. She has embarked on a career of scholarly excellence, with the impact already being felt within historical archaeology and beyond.

References

COWIE, SARAH E.

2008 *Industrial Capitalism and the Company Town: Structural Power, Bio-Power, and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Fayette, Michigan*. Doctoral dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Arizona, Tucson. University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI.

2011 *The Plurality of Power: An Archaeology of Industrial Capitalism*. Springer, New York, NY.

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