

Kreilick finds a way to meld practicality and passion in career

Springfield at Work

By Joe Barron
Staff Writer

When Scott Kreilick was applying to colleges back in the 1970s, he saw he had a choice.

He could study history, his first love, or he could be practical and study engineering.

Practicality won out, but after working for a decade with metals and superconductors, Kreilick found a way to combine his training in metallurgy with his passion for the past.

In 1996 he established Kreilick Conservation, and, as a specialist in stone and metals, he earns his living preserving buildings and statues.

"It's absolutely a great business," Kreilick said Monday at his home on Toll Road in Oreland. "It brings together a lot of the things that I enjoy — history, travel, working with my hands, being outdoors, and there's a component of laboratory analysis."

The results of his work are visible all over town and as far afield as New Mexico. He helped to plan the ongoing clean-up of Philadelphia's City Hall and the restoration of Memorial Hall in Fairmount Park.

He has cleaned the LOVE sculpture at John F. Kennedy Plaza and The Clothespin at 15th and Market Streets, and he is at work repairing a troublesome rip in the bronze banner held aloft by the statue of

Joan of Arc at the Museum of Art.

His company — which at present consists entirely of Kreilick himself — has a standing purchase order with the Public Art Office of Philadelphia, which, according to Kreilick, has the largest collection of outdoor statuary in the country.

Whenever part of that collection falls victim to graffiti or other vandalism, the city calls on Kreilick for emergency treatment.

Only about 100 other people in the country specialize in conservation of metals and architectural stone, and Kreilick never lacks for work. Most of his jobs come through referrals.

"I consider myself extremely fortunate to have to do very little marketing," he said. "I don't have a Web site."

Kreilick came upon the road less traveled in 1993, while he was working in New York State for a company trying to cash in on the federal government's drive to develop superconductors.

The funding dried up, and Kreilick found himself facing unemployment.

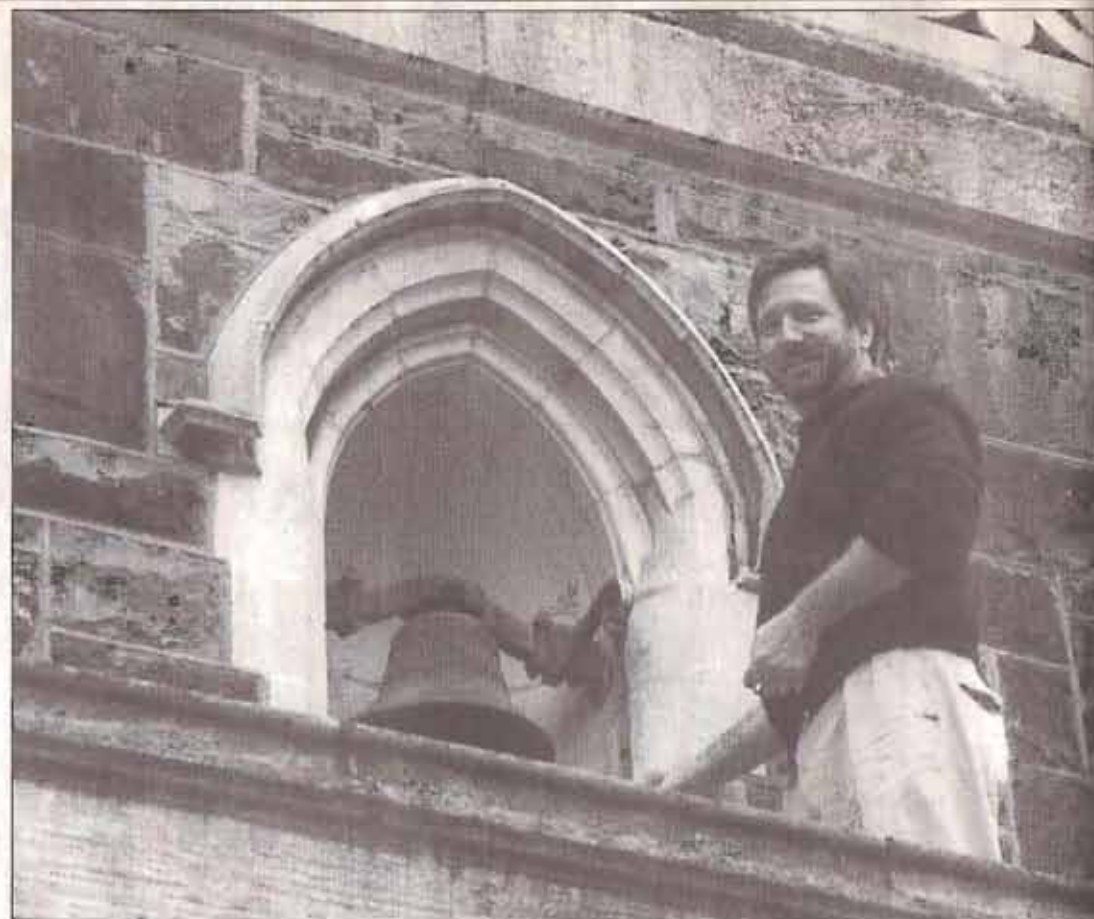
"I actually saw the layoff coming, so I had the opportunity to start redirecting," he recalled.

He began thinking of history again, and looking through a college guide, he found architectural conservation listed under the discipline as a possible career.

The guide also said the University of Pennsylvania



Scott Kreilick



Kreilick at work on the Allentown Liberty Bell at Zion Lutheran Church in Allentown, above, and taking a break atop the LOVE sculpture in Philadelphia, below.

was one of only two schools in the country where he could get a degree in it.

Kreilick moved to Springfield, where his wife, Cynthia, had grown up, and settled into classes full time. He completed an undergraduate degree in history and the sociology of science and earned a master's in historic preservation.

Courses for the undergraduate degree focused heavily on the history of technology.

"I know a fair amount about cut nails," Kreilick said with a wry smile.

That topic might seem like arcane trivia, but Kreilick's expertise made him an asset to the National Parks Service in establishing the age of a house at the Manassas Battlefield in Virginia.

Rangers needed to know whether the house had been standing at its present site during the Civil War. From inspecting the nails, Kreilick concluded some parts of the house predated the conflict,



although he added that the lack of damage from artillery or rifle fire probably meant the house was moved to the site afterward.

"The jury is still out," he said.

In light of his interests and training, it was only natural that Kreilick would ultimately ally himself with the Springfield Township Historical Society. As chairman of the society's historic resource committee, he has become a familiar figure at meetings of the planning commission and the board of commissioners, arguing softly but relentlessly against a developer's plan to move the Black

Horse Inn.

Kreilick defines a "historic resource" as any building with historic value, and Springfield Township is rich in that kind of resource, he said, and the controversy over the Black Horse has left him convinced the township needs a historic preservation ordinance.

"We have a lot of 18th century and 19th century buildings and hopefully we'll have the opportunity to enjoy them for a long time to come," he said. "It's disheartening to see developers enter the township with no constraint. A good preservation ordinance would go a long way toward stopping them at the border."