

# Public History

at Middle Tennessee State University

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Fall 2006



## Public History Program Welcomes David McCullough

On October 24, 2006, the Public History program hosted an evening reception at the Gore Center for faculty, students, alumni, and friends. After hors d'oeuvres and conversation, the group adjourned to the Tucker Theater to hear two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning author David McCullough's address, "The Qualities of Leadership and the History You Don't Know."

Guests of the Public History program joined a capacity crowd at the highly anticipated event, listening as the best-selling author of *1776* and *John Adams* shared anecdotes and insight. McCullough spoke seriously about the importance of the past, urging the audience to see the humanity of our nation's great leaders and to find inspiration in their actions. McCullough especially thanked educators for the roles they play in developing an appreciation for history in young minds. The lecture was followed by a brief



(L-R) Sean Todd, Paul Hoffman, John George, Spurgeon King

question and answer session on topics posed by graduate students in the History Department, and a book signing was held in the lobby. The lecture was made possible by the MTSU Distinguished Lecture Fund, the Office of the Provost, the Teaching American History Metro Nashville grant, the College of Liberal Arts, the College of Education and Behavioral Science, and the Departments of History and Political Science.

## Rethinking the Civil War at 150 Years: A Public Forum

On June 22, 2006, the Public History program hosted a lively public forum called "Rethinking the Civil War at 150 Years." Moderated by Dr. John Coski from the Library at the Museum of the Confederacy, the forum brought together seven panelists from throughout the South to discuss issues such as remembrance, commemoration, and changing perspectives of the Civil War. The forum was hosted in conjunction with the residency at MTSU of panelist Dwight Pitcaithley, former chief historian of the National Park Service and 2006 Visiting Distinguished Public Historian. Dr. Pitcaithley taught Current Issues in Public History Practice, a course that focused on interpretations of the Civil War at historic battlefield parks and heritage areas.



Panelists included Nancy Basset (Biblical Resource Center and Museum), Walter Durham (Tennessee State Historian), Robert Hicks (Author, Widow of the South), Norman Hill (Tennessee Historical Commission), Stuart Johnson (Stones River National Historic Battlefield), Dwight Pitcaithley (MTSU 2006 Visiting Distinguished Public Historian), and Wayne Wilson (Sons of Confederate Veterans, Rutherford Co. Chapter).

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Unlock the Past The Key to Your Future



(L-R) front row: Toshia Williams, Amy Lundell, Amada Hall, Becka Hackett, Sean Todd; back row: Brian Allison, Paul Hoffman, Scott Anderson

## Entering the Program, Fall 2006

Four students entered the M.A. program this fall:

**Brian Allison**  
Austin Peay State University

**Rebecka Hackett**  
Muskingum College

**Amada Hall**  
MTSU

**Amy Lundell**  
Maryville College.

We are also pleased to welcome four new Ph.D. students

**Heather Bailey**  
B.S., Tennessee Technological University; M.A., MTSU

**John George**  
B.A., Faulkner University; M.A., University of Alabama

**Spurgeon King**  
B.A., Florida State University; M.A., MTSU

**Susan Knowles**  
B.A. Vanderbilt University; M.L.S. George Peabody University; M.A. Vanderbilt University.

## SAEC Holds Annual Meeting at MTSU

In November 2005, Middle Tennessee State University entered into a partnership with the Southeast Archives Education Collaborative (SAEC), an intercollegiate distance education program funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services that also includes Auburn University, the University of Kentucky, Louisiana State University, and Indiana University. The purpose of SAEC is to provide archivists in training with the resources and expertise of each institution through the use of distance education and in turn assist archives educators in the development of a uniform and comprehensive curriculum that can be adapted to both traditional classroom settings and the needs of distance education. The 2006 annual meeting was held September 8–10 at MTSU, with discussions focusing on project directives and sustainability.

Although a recent addition to the collaborative, MTSU is already experiencing the benefits of its involvement. Through SAEC, students in Archival Management may enroll in up to five courses a year developed and hosted by member institutions. These courses, administered by MTSU and offered at no additional cost to the student, utilize distance education technology and allow students to interact with and receive instruction from peers and educators on a wide variety of topics. Dr. Ellen Garrison, archives educator for the MTSU Public History program, believes that MTSU's membership in SAEC will be invaluable in helping archivists in training to lay the foundations for professional networking. Garrison looks forward to the introduction of newly developed SAEC courses, which will appear in the University's schedule as Topics in Archival Management. ↗



## Public History Students Develop Museum Exhibit

Graduate students in Dr. Brenden Martin's Seminar in Museum Management have spent the fall semester developing a new permanent exhibit for the Sam Davis Home titled *Recovering Their Story: African Americans on the Davis Plantation, 1850–1925*. The exhibit opens December 7, 2006, and will illustrate the



(L-R) Harry Klinkhamer, Brian Hackett

complexity of African-American life on the plantation in the years surrounding the Civil War. The exhibit will highlight several major themes in the lives of the Davis slaves and the freed men and women who lived on the farm following emancipation. Themes include husbandry, farming, education, and skilled labor such as blacksmithing and carpentry.

At the heart of the exhibit are objects found on the property two years ago during an archaeological dig conducted by MTSU students and directed by Dr. Kevin Smith. Objects such as a writing slate fragment, a piece of a china doll's face, and bricks made by slaves on the property add depth to the exhibit. ↗

## Rethinking the Civil War at 150 Years cont. from front page

"At 150 years after the fact," said Dr. Coski as the forum began, "are Americans ready for a constructive, productive exploration and discussion of the Civil War?" Dr. Coski's opening remarks led to a frank exchange for the next hour and a half, with panelists sharing many of the challenges they face while working to broaden the context of the Civil War as well as addressing concerns from the audience in a question-and-answer session. The forum was videotaped by the Instructional Technology Support Center and was cosponsored by the office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, the College of Liberal Arts, Eastern National, and the Center for Historic Preservation. ↗

## Heritage Partnership of Rutherford County Launched

On October 23, 2006, the Heritage Partnership of Rutherford County (HPRC) formally elected Dr. Lorne McWatters of the MTSU Public History program to its first board of directors. HPRC's mission is to educate the community about historic preservation values and procedures and to advocate for the preservation of the culture and history of Murfreesboro and Rutherford County. As a preservation educator and vice chair of the Murfreesboro Historic Zoning Commission, Dr. McWatters has witnessed firsthand the difficulties of promoting preservation in the face of rapid growth in middle Tennessee.

Historic preservation supporters became deeply concerned by two events that occurred in 2006: an announcement by MTSU of a plan to include a significant portion of Murfreesboro's local Historic Zone (also part of a National Register of Historic Places district) in its property acquisition plans and the approval by the city of Murfreesboro to demolish the Hiram Jenkins House, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Spurred by these two events and a long-standing fear that historic properties in the city and county are seriously threatened, members of a wide array of middle Tennessee organizations came together to establish the HPRC as a coalition that will provide a stronger and louder voice for preservation than any single entity. ↗



## Graduate Student Films Explore Historic Preservation in Murfreesboro

During the fall 2006 semester, students in Dr. Lorne McWatters's Seminar in Historic Preservation/Cultural Resources Management continued their work on three documentary films dealing with historic preservation issues in Murfreesboro. Donna Baldwin, Ben Hayes, and Scarlett Miles are working with facilitator Angela Smith to film and edit three separate but related 15-minute films dealing with the impact of population growth in Murfreesboro, Rutherford County, and MTSU; the history and status of existing historic sites; and the current problems facing historic preservation in middle Tennessee.

Dr. McWatters believes that the film project is an excellent opportunity for experiential learning because students not only learn the technical skills of filming, lighting, and digital editing, but also explore their community by conducting interviews, attending public forums, and gathering historical documentation.

The History Department and the Public History program underwrote the cost of creating a small studio with basic filmmaking equipment. Dr. McWatters received a Creative Project Grant from the College of Graduate Studies to underwrite Angela Smith's participation. ↗



(L-R) Angela Smith, Benjamin Hayes, Scarlett Miles, Donna Baldwin

## Students in the News

**Sara Elizabeth Hickman** recently presented "Narrating Hurricane Katrina through Oral History" at the 2006 Oral History Association Conference.

In January 2007, two Public History students will be presenting their original research at the American Historical Association's annual meeting. **Susan Knowles** will present "The Rise of an Industry: Tennessee Marble Comes to the Nation's Capitol," and **Elizabeth Lambert** will present "Urban Exploration: The Search for Authenticity in a Postmodern Metropolis."

Congratulations to Ph.D. candidate **John George** on his forthcoming article in the Spring/Summer issue of *Southern Studies* entitled "Imaging Tee-Tot: Blues, Race, and the Legend of Hank Williams." ↗

## Student Internships, Summer 2006

This summer, eleven M.A. students held internships designed to broaden their experience in public history practice:

**Scott Anderson**, Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, Nashville

**Dorothy Davis**, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville

**Benjamin Hayes**, National Endowment for the Humanities, Landmarks of American History Workshops for Schoolteachers, Nashville

**Sarah Elizabeth Hickman**, Maury County Archives, Columbia, and Discovery Center at Murfree Spring, Murfreesboro

**Elizabeth Lambert**, National Endowment for the Humanities, Landmarks of American History Workshops for School Teachers, Nashville

**Julie Lenger**, Liberty Memorial Association Museum, Kansas City

**Scarlett Miles**, Metropolitan Nashville Historical Commission

**Rachel Shaver**, Grassmere Historic Farm, Nashville

**Betsy Snowden**, MTSU Center for Popular Music

**Ashley Tate**, Stones River National Battlefield, Murfreesboro

**Sean Todd**, Abraham Lincoln Birthplace, Hodgenville, Kentucky ↗

# Alumni Spotlight

## Rhonda Wilson Young

Rhonda Wilson Young (M.A. 2000) has been employed as an archivist for the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) since 1999. In addition to managing federal records in Regional Records Centers and Archives across the country, NARA also manages presidential libraries, which house records generated during presidential administrations. Rhonda was hired by NARA to work at the now-completed Clinton Library in Little Rock, Ark., but received her initial training at the Reagan Library in Simi Valley, Calif. She transferred to the Clinton Presidential Materials Project in Little Rock in October 2000. Processing presidential records is her primary job, but she is also involved in all aspects of working in presidential libraries, such as providing textual support for museum exhibits, participating in special programs for the public, giving tours to groups and individuals, and working with volunteers and student workers on various projects. She provides orientations to researchers and instructs them on procedures for handling original documents in NARA's Research Room. She has been trained in processing White House photographs and video/audio tapes and has special training in handling and processing classified records. In addition to her duties at NARA, Rhonda has also made presentations to the Southwest Society of Archivists and the Arkansas Historical Association as well as contributing to the scholarly work of the *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* project. Rhonda describes her career at NARA as challenging and interesting and recommends that future archivists consider employment opportunities at presidential libraries. ↗



## Class of 2005-06

Eight students received master's degrees in 2005-06

### Dan Allen

Thesis: "Over the River Jordan; Mortuary Patterning and Seriation of Material Culture from the Edgefield Benevolent Society Cemetery"

### Holly Barnett

Thesis: "Myth and Mayberry: *The Andy Griffith Show* and the Small Town Myth"

### Siony Flowers

Thesis: "Peter Jennings: A Free African American Resident of Antebellum Murfreesboro, Tennessee"

### Andrea Gales

Thesis: "Historic Preservation in Murfreesboro, Tennessee: A Case Study of Historic Preservation in a Mid-Size Community"

### Gena Gilliam

Thesis: "Preserving Community: The Heritage Foundation of Franklin and Williamson County, Tennessee 1967-2006"

### Kristen Luetkemeier

Thesis: "Antagonist, Cosmic Drama, Playground: Tourists' Impressions of Death Valley, 1919-1928"

### April McCauley

Thesis: "Telling Our Stories Well: An Evaluation of Two Local History Exhibits in Northeast Tennessee and Southeast Kentucky". ↗

## Whatever happened to . . . ?

Please let us know where you are and what you are doing: [rconard@mtsu.edu](mailto:rconard@mtsu.edu).

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