

Public History

at Middle Tennessee State University

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Fall 2014

MTSU Students Leave Mark on Jekyll Island's Historic District

Over the course of three weeks in May 2014, thirteen Public History students worked to leave their imprint in a national historic site. The jam-packed Maymester field school took place on Georgia's Jekyll Island, where America's Gilded Age millionaires once retreated from harsh northern winters. Despite the tropical climate, students experienced little leisure time as they worked long days to develop an interactive website, create and design three exhibits in the historic district's cottages, coordinate and conduct four oral history interviews, create a pamphlet interpreting Jekyll Island's African American voice and influences to local history, implement a records-management training program for incoming employees and volunteers, and develop STEM programs on local history for schools.

For a needed change in perspective, MTSU students worked to incorporate the voices of women and children, as well as the servants who worked tirelessly in the "cottages," or small mansions, to create the extravagant lifestyle that these millionaires often referred to as the "simple life." Previously, the historic district's prominent interpretive focus had been on wealthy club members and the millionaires.

While fleeing the French Revolution, the Du Bignons, a French Huguenot family, settled on the island where they introduced slavery and established

plantations. Du Bignon family descendants later sold the land to wealthy northern investors in the late 1880s, who then established and sold shares in the Jekyll Island Club, an exclusive hunting club and retreat. Owned by the state of Georgia since 1947, the Jekyll Island National Historic Landmark District is an ongoing restoration project.

Students worked under the direction of Dr. Brenden Martin and with Jekyll Island Museum curator Gretchen Greminger and Dr. June Hall McCash, MTSU Professor Emerita of French. Martin notes that staff members of the Jekyll Island Authority and Museum were impressed with the field school's accomplishments and have invited MTSU to come back. Students' exhibits and contributions will remain part of Jekyll Island's interpretation for years to come. Visit the students' website for more information on Jekyll Island and their work there! <http://jekyllislandmuseum.wix.com/jekyllislandoralhist>



Students outside of the Jekyll Island Clubhouse. Shown left to right are Aleia Brown, Lane Tillner, Katie Brammel, Torren Gatson, Beth Cavanaugh, Caleb Knies, Veronica Sales, Lindsay Hager, Mark Mullen, Michael Fletcher, Rachel Lewis, Kayla Pressley, and Jenna Stout.



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New Graduate Students

M.A. in History, Public History concentration

Bradley Boshers
B.A., Abilene Christian University

Sarah Calise
B.A., University of Florida

William Carroll
B.A., Auburn University

Chloé Costilla
B.S., Martin Methodist College

Laura Darnell
B.A., University of Missouri-Kansas City

Casey Gymrek
B.A., University of Florida

Graham Henderson
B.A., University of Northern Iowa

Callie Lopeman
B.A., Middle Tennessee State University

Tiffany Momon
B.S., Tennessee State University
B.A., The University of Memphis

Ethan Morris
B.A., Western Kentucky University

Haley Seger
B.A., Xavier University

Kathryn Slover
B.A., University of Redlands

“Warriors with Words and Faith” at the Albert Gore Research Center

Public History graduate assistants Sarah Calise, Casey Gymrek, Brad Miller, and Evan Spencer worked throughout the fall semester to research and design a new exhibit based on the Albert Gore Research Center’s participation in the Veterans History Project, an initiative of the Library of Congress in collaboration with academic institutions and cultural organizations across the nation.

“Warriors with Words and Faith” explores the lives of Marion Skeen Coleman Peck and Donald A. Price. Both Tennesseans, Peck and Price led remarkable lives of service at home and abroad. Marion Peck’s extraordinary journalism career led her on a journey through the Tennessee Maneuvers, World War II, the Berlin Airlift, and the Civil Rights Movement. Originally from Lebanon, Tennessee, Donald Price went on to attend the United States

Military Academy at West Point and serve in the United States Army in Korea, Vietnam, and Germany. After retiring in 1982 as a lieutenant colonel, Price now resides in North Carolina.

The graduate assistants are also processing the Price and Peck papers from which the exhibit is drawn and which were donated in recent years to the center’s Archive of American Veterans and the Home Front.

The exhibit officially opened to the public on December 11 to a great turnout. Donald and Faye Price as well as two of Marion Peck’s grandchildren attended the premier. They shared personal stories with the audience and helped bring this history alive. Check out the new exhibit at the Albert Gore Research Center in Todd Hall. [↗](#)

“The Veterans History: Global Service, Individual Service” exhibit (left wall) and “Warriors with Words and Faith: Marion Skeen Coleman Peck and Donald A. Price” exhibit (right wall).



Alumni Spotlight



Kevin Cason (M.A. 2005, Ph.D. 2009)

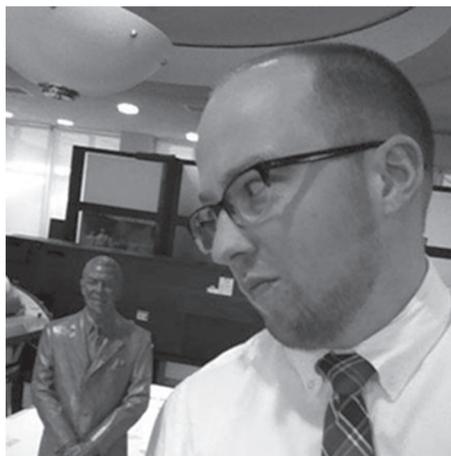
In September of 2014, Kevin Cason became a full-time archival staff member at the Tennessee State Library and Archives (TSLA). As a member of the Public Services Department, Kevin's main duties are to help researchers and genealogists who come to do research at the archives. Kevin primarily works in the microfilm reading room, which contains county records, Tennessee newspapers, military records, vital records, and manuscript collections. In addition to guiding researchers, he responds to reference requests that come to the archives by e-mail and mail. Kevin is excited to be working at TSLA because it combines his interests in Tennessee history and archival studies. ↗

Ph.D. Residencies

Dallas Hanbury is conducting his residency at the Nashville Public Library, Special Collections Division. His work mainly consists of planning and conducting public programs. Currently, he is working on two projects. The first involves working with Alma Barnes, an adjunct instructor of Spanish at Tennessee State University and Cumberland University, to create a semester-long project that incorporates oral history into the teaching of Spanish and Hispanic culture. The other program involves creating a small exhibit and planning a public program about baseball in the Old Hickory section of Davidson County. The DuPont Corporation maintained a large mill complex in Old Hickory. Many of the various DuPont factories in Old Hickory had baseball teams that competed with each other and the squads of other companies in Middle Tennessee. The Nashville Public Library's Old Hickory branch will display the exhibit while the public program will take place at the Old Hickory community center.

Josh Howard recently completed his residency with the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum (NBHOF). Josh worked on-site in Cooperstown, New York, this past summer and worked remotely during the two months before and after. His primary project was to create a web exhibit and digital archive of the Wendell Smith Papers. Smith, the first African American sportswriter to work for a white newspaper, is primarily remembered for his role in desegregating major league baseball. The final product appears on the NBHOF's website at

<http://baseballhall.org/node/373>. Josh will also teach HIST 3110, Explorations in Public History, in Spring 2015 to complete the second part of his residency.



Josh with the 2014 Buck O'Neil Lifetime Achievement Award a few days before it was presented to Joe Garagiola.

Ashley Bouknight is completing her residency at Andrew Jackson's Hermitage: Home of the Peoples' President, in Nashville. As a special project for the Hermitage, she is processing the Ladies' Hermitage Association Collection under the mentorship of archivist William Thomas of the Tennessee State Library and Archives. The purpose is to create an archival collection that can be used by Hermitage personnel as well as external researchers. She will also create a finding aid for the collection. ↗

New Graduate Students

M.A. in History, Public History concentration (cont.)

Taylor Stewart
B.A., University of Alabama Birmingham

Ph.D. in Public History

Charles Dahan
B.A., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
M.M., State University of New York, College at Purchase

Matthew Follett
B.A., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
M.A., Syracuse University

Jennifer Harris
B.F.A., Texas State University-San Marcos
M.A., Texas State University-San Marcos

Marquita Reed
B.A., Florida State University
M.A., Florida International University

Savanna Teague
B.F.A., Middle Tennessee State University
M.A., Middle Tennessee State University

Brittany Walker
B.A., Smith College
M.Ed., Lipscomb University
M.S., School of the Art Institute of Chicago



*Armour's Hotel in
Red Boiling Springs, TN*

Lydia Simpson is currently living in Rome, Georgia, and gathering resources pertaining to the Celanese Mill Village for Walker Library's Southern Places Digital Collection. In addition to scanning photos and documents regarding the history of the village, she is working on a GIS map, which she hopes to incorporate into a crowd-source application that will allow past and present residents and former mill workers to have a direct voice in shaping the narrative about the community. By moving to the town, she has been able to make new connections and learn about aspects of the town that would have proved nearly impossible from afar. Additionally, Lydia is living in one of the village houses and getting hands-on experience in preserving a structure that is directly related to her dissertation.



Walking Horse Inn in Wartrace, TN

Ginna Foster Cannon is writing a "white paper" on National Register-listed hotels and inns in Tennessee for the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development. This heritage development plan will provide an updated inventory of the twenty-five identified properties to assess their potential as heritage assets. Because African Americans were not allowed to stay at inns and hotels that served white travelers in Tennessee during the era of segregation, she will do additional research on properties listed in the guidebook for African American travelers known as the Green Book, published by Victor Green from 1936 to 1964. The "Colored Hotel" in Union City is the only African American hotel property listed on the National Register in Tennessee (2008). If you would like to follow Ginna's travels across the state, please visit her blog, "Reflections on Historic Hotels in Tennessee." ↗

Of Note

Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library, awarded Ph.D. candidate **Amber Clawson** a short-term research fellowship. During the month of August 2014, she conducted research in Henry Francis duPont's renowned collection of early American furniture, duPont's library of rare books, Winterthur's decorative arts photographic collection, and the Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera. During her time in Delaware,

Clawson attended weekly colloquium meetings with Winterthur staff.

December grad **Elaura Highfield** immediately stepped into the position of Museum Program Coordinator with the Tennessee Agricultural Museum beginning January 2015. Her responsibilities include educational programming, especially with school groups. ↗

Conferences Attended and Papers Presented

On October 12, two students presented at the Oral History Association Conference in Madison, Wisconsin. **Denise Gallagher** presented her paper “Narrative of Race, Violence and Identity,” and **Lindsey Whitley** presented “Narrating Race, Labor and Identity in a Coal Mining Town.” Their panel explored issues of the movement of identity across time, space, and difference, while papers discussed topics associated with race, labor, and identity.



(L-R) Dr. Norkunas with Lindsey Whitley and Denise Gallagher



(L-R) Lane Tillner, Caleb Knies, Rachel Lewis, and Jenna Stout after their presentation at SEMC.

Four students presented at the Southeastern Museums Council Conference in Knoxville on October 21, 2014. **Caleb Knies, Rachel Lewis, Jenna Stout, and Lane Tillner** discussed their exhibit creations on Jekyll Island during MTSU’s 2014 Maymester.

Six students presented at the Loyola Conference in Chicago on November 15, 2014. **Brad Miller** presented his paper “Interpreting the African American Experience: Slavery, Civil War, and Reconstruction in Jackson County, Alabama, 1819–1870,” for which he won the Excellent Conference Presentation Award. **Caleb Knies, Rachel Lewis, Kayla Pressley, Jenna Stout, and Lane Tillner** participated in a roundtable discussion of their work at Jekyll Island on creating exhibits and working with the museum as outside partners. ↗



(L-R) Moderator Dr. Patricia Mooney-Melwin, Rachel Lewis, Jenna Stout, Lane Tillner, Kayla Pressley, and Caleb Knies during their roundtable discussion.

News from the Centers

Albert Gore Research Center



GRAs Casey Gymrek (middle) and Sarah Calise (right) at the premier of "Warriors with Words"

The Albert Gore Research Center welcomed two new master's graduate assistants, **Sarah Calise** and **Casey Gymrek**, both from Florida. Sarah and Casey joined graduate assistants **Brad Miller** and **Evan Spencer** to research and compile the Center's newest exhibit, "Warriors with Words and Faith: Marion Skeen Coleman Peck and Donald A. Price."

The center's innovative work on an interface to the Intranet Quorum (IQ) constituent services databases received from Congressmen Bart Gordon and Zach Wamp took major steps forward in 2014. Director Jim Williams and archivist Jim Havron demonstrated the MTSU software product to meetings of the Congressional Papers Roundtable at the Society of American Archivists in August and the Best Practices Exchange in November. The Gore Research Center has proposed leading a consortium of archival institutions that are struggling to deal with this type of electronic records from Congress and state governors' offices.

Nearly completed is the Cheek family history project of twelve oral history interviews and archival accretions to the Cheekwood Botanical Garden and Museum archive. AGRC students and professional staff have enjoyed assisting this venerable Nashville cultural institution with its ongoing master planning.

—Jim Williams

Williams Steps Down as Albert Gore Research Center Director

Dr. Jim Williams, AGRC director since August 2008 and professor in the History Department since 1996, left MTSU at the end of December in order to take a new post at his alma mater, Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. There he will be executive director of the National Churchill Museum and the Sandra and Monroe Trout Professor of Churchill Studies. "It was thirty years ago that I was a tour guide at what was then the Winston Churchill Memorial and Library," Williams reflected. "From writing my senior thesis on the memorial project to several research projects involving Harry Truman and Winston Churchill, it seems fitting for me to return to Missouri and to the National Churchill Museum. I will carry with me the great deal that I have learned directing the Gore Research Center and feel confident that the new director will be able to move forward strategically."



Williams is already in discussions with the MTSU History Department to establish a cooperative BA-MA program for graduates of Westminster's new minor in museum studies. The AGRC welcomes Dr. Mary Hoffschwelle who will serve as interim director while the search for a new director proceeds.

Center for Historic Preservation

Public History graduate students are involved in all facets of the Center for Historic Preservation's work, and this semester has been no exception. **Brittany Walker** and **Ethan Morris** have helped Dr. Stacey Graham and Kira Duke produce a record number of materials for the Teaching with Primary Sources-MTSU program. Highlights include math- and science-related activities and lesson plans for the new Trials and Triumphs digital collection spearheaded by Dr. Susan Knowles.

The American Democracy Project's many Fall activities were supported by **Amanda Barry**, **Aleia Brown**, **Ginna Foster Cannon**, and **Denise Gallagher**, who helped welcome Tennessee Secretary of State Tre Hargett to MTSU for Constitution Day. Barry has worked throughout the semester with Dr. Mary Evins in promoting civic learning, and Brown moderated a candidate forum for the League of Women Voters.

Students have played a key role in exhibit projects within several program areas. Gallagher and Barry worked with Dr. Van West and Dr. Antoinette van Zelm to complete panels on African American education for the Tina Turner Museum at the Flag Grove School.



Denise Gallagher (left) and Amanda Barry with their exhibit panels at the Tina Turner Museum at the Flag Grove School.

Joey Bryan has been collaborating with West and Graham on panels for the revitalized Smyrna Depot. **Jenna Stout** is assisting with updating exhibits at Red Clay State Historic Park that examine the intersection of politics, government, and Indian removal. **Torren Gatson** and **Marquita Reed** are researching the McLemore family and the Hard Bargain community in Franklin for a new exhibition at the McLemore House.

In the field, **Michael Fletcher** worked with community partners on the Rutherford County Cemetery Survey. **Noël Harris** assisted with developing a historic structure report for the Harding Cabin at Belle Meade Plantation, while Bryan assisted with a heritage development plan for Glenmore Mansion. Students also contributed to the success of the educational programs at November's Civil War Sesquicentennial Signature Event in Franklin.

Our graduate assistants post in-depth updates about their work on our weekly blog, Southern Rambles, so be sure to follow us there.

—Antoinette van Zelm

Center for Popular Music



GRA Dixie Johnson processing CPM materials and records.

Public History graduate assistants at the Center for Popular Music (CPM) were busy completing a variety of important projects and programs during spring semester.

Dallas Hanbury, Ph.D. candidate, has continued to process the Joel S. Herron Collection. Materials

connected to the songwriter, composer, arranger, and conductor of popular music from the 1940s to the 1960s comprise 44.8 feet of records in 86 boxes and include business correspondence and records, sheet music, compositions, commercial music, orchestrations, drawings, advertisement scripts, and other writings. The CPM received the collection in six filing cabinets that had been untouched since the 1960s. Dallas has been the principal processor, arranging and describing everything according to archival standards. He is also responsible for writing the final finding aid and library record (MARC), which will be published on the CPM website and then in the Walker Library catalog and larger bibliographic catalogs.

Elaura Highfield, M.A. candidate, researched and mounted two exhibits of original materials for the center's reading room. The first was a tribute to country-music legend George Jones, and the second was connected to the CPM's inaugural lecture series, "The American Guitar." Elaura inventoried and accessioned several donated collections and preserved many rare music books by creating custom-made, acid-free phase boxes for them. She also cataloged more than 1,400 pieces of sheet music, checked new acquisitions against existing holdings, edited

existing database records, and helped with research requests.

Olivia Beaudry, M.A. candidate, has continued to inventory hundreds of cassette and reel-to-reel tapes from the Charles K. Wolfe Audio Collection. The center received a Grammy Foundation Grant in 2013 to

identify, catalog, digitize, and make available the nearly 4,000 audiotapes that relate to vernacular musical styles of the American South circa 1920–2000s. The tapes contain oral histories and interviews with many pioneering country and gospel musicians, singers, songwriters, producers, and publishers, as well as commercial dubs. Olivia has also been cataloging newly acquired photographs for research access.

—Lucinda Cockrell



Olivia Beaudry rummages through archival boxes as she works to file collection items.

Rutherford County Archives

Throughout the fall, the Rutherford County Archives continued its efforts on the "Rutherford County Cemetery Survey" project, a continuing partnership with the MTSU Center for Historic Preservation. Ph.D student **Michael Fletcher** is currently working with **Catherine Hawkins** (M.A. 2011) to locate and document all Rutherford County cemeteries. While Michael serves as the "historian" on the team, documenting gravestones and taking pictures, Catherine is using GIS technology to digitally map their findings. This project should be completed in 2015.

During the summer of 2014, RCA hosted **Evan Spencer** as an intern. Evan worked with the Rutherford County Register of Deeds Office to scan and microfilm ten years of historic tax volumes. Over the past three years, the Deeds Office has purchased scanning and microfilming equipment in order to perform these operations in-house instead of through a third-party vendor.

Lastly, RCA witnessed some changes in "staff" over the fall semester. **Candace Cupps** graduated in August and accepted an archivist position with the History Center in Diboll, Texas. **Veronica Sales** joined RCA as a graduate assistant. She and **Beth Rouse Cavanaugh** continue to process historic images and documents as RCA strives to protect the records of our county's rich history.

—John Lodl 

Congrats to Recent Graduates!

M.A. in History,
Public History
concentration

Summer, 2014

Candace LeeAnn Cupps
Bethany Lynn Hawkins
Rebecca Paige Robinson

Fall, 2014

Michelle Gauthier
Elaura Highfield
Benjamin Morrill

MIDDLE TENNESSEE

STATE UNIVERSITY

Department of History

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Mark your calendars!
The National
Council on Public
History will meet
in Nashville
April 15-18, 2015.

Details coming soon for an alumni event
at NCPH!

For more information or volunteer
and sponsorship opportunities,
please contact Dr. Bren Martin,
chair, local arrangements committee,
at Brenden.Martin@mtsu.edu.

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