Public History

at Middle Tennessee State University

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From Historic Preservation to Public History

The origins of public history at MTSU are open to debate, but 1973 marks the point at which the History Department experimented with two courses offered during intersession: Historical Archaeology, Preservation, and Restoration and a field study course titled Problems in Colonial America: Colonial Society—Williamsburg. The experiment worked. In 1976 the department added an emphasis in historic preservation to the Master of Arts in History, and in 1981 the same emphasis was first offered in the Doctor of Arts degree program.

Historic preservation assumed a public dimension in 1984 when MTSU established the Center for Historic Preservation (CHP) under the direction of Dr. James Huhta. As a designated Center of Excellence by the Tennessee Board of Regents, the CHP began providing professional services for local communities and historical organizations throughout Tennessee. Thereafter, the center's reputation grew statewide, and the History Department began to attract national recognition for its graduate training program.

Another important development began as early as 1970 when the National Records Center transferred the papers of Senator Albert Gore Sr. to MTSU. In 1984 Senator Gore formally deeded his papers to MTSU, and Dr. James Neal chaired a committee charged with finding space to house them. Nine years later, in 1993, the Gore Research Center officially opened its doors, in affiliation with the History Department.

Other changes taking place in the 1980s drove program growth. At universities across the country, the study of public history became established in graduate education, responding to expanding career opportunities for graduates. Throughout the 1980s, the MTSU History Department added courses in museum studies, material culture, and archival management. After phasing out the undergraduate emphasis in historic preservation in the late 1980s, the department changed the master's program emphasis from historic preservation to public history in 1991.

Now public history at MTSU has taken another major step forward. In collaboration with the Center for Historic Preservation, the Gore Research Center, and the Center for Popular Music (also a TBR Center of Excellence), the History Department proposed, in 2004, a Ph.D. in Public History. Following formal approval of the

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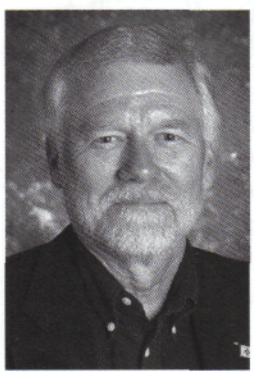
Dwight Pitcaithley, 2006 Visiting Distinguished Public Historian



Dwight T. Pitcaithley, chief historian of the National Park Service from 1995 to 2005, will be in residence June 5–July 7 as the 2006 (and first) Visiting Distinguished Public Historian. During his residency, Dr. Pitcaithley will teach Current Issues in Public History Practice, examining an issue that demanded his attention for a decade: broadening the interpretation of the Civil War at historic battlefield parks.

He also will participate, with six other invited panelists, in a public forum, "Rethinking the Civil War After 150 Years," cosponsored by the MTSU Provost, The College of Liberal Arts, Eastern National, and the Center for Historic Preservation. The public forum will take place on Thursday, June 22, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., preceded by a dinner for historic preservation and public history alumni. **Invitations will be mailed later this month.**

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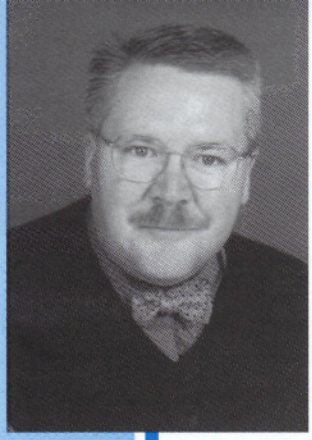
Unlock the Past · The Key to Your Future



Steven Hoskins, Center for Historic Preservation

Steven Hoskins, in residency at the Center for Historic Preservation, is serving as project manager for the new Green McAdoo Cultural Museum in Clinton, Tennessee. Green McAdoo, built in 1935 to house a segregated school for African American students, is the site for a museum that will interpret the history of desegregation at Clinton High School, which admitted African American students one year before Central High School in Little Rock.

Much of Steven's time has been spent managing a partnership comprising the Green McAdoo Cultural Organization, the City of Clinton, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the twelve original African Americans who integrated Clinton High School in 1956, and several local business and media companies. He also has worked on museum exhibit plans, board development, fundraising, and media relations. The museum is scheduled to open on August 26, 2006, the 50th anniversary of Clinton High's desegregation.

Tara Mitchell Mielnik, Nashville Metropolitan Historical Commission

Tara Mitchell Mielnik is completing her professional residency at the Nashville Metropolitan Historical Commission, where she also is on staff. During her residency year, she is working with Blythe Semmer (M.A. 1995) to develop the historical content and storyline for a commemorative installation on the Nashville Public Square, currently undergoing redevelopment in conjunction with the restoration of the New Deal–era Metro Courthouse.

The public square will contain granite piers with historical images and text, and a new Founders' Building honoring Nashville founders John Donelson and James Robertson. The Founders' Building will feature an overlook area containing historical maps of downtown Nashville and twenty-four panels interpreting the history of the public square.

Entering the Program, 2005–06

Eighteen students entered the M.A. program this year: **Scott Anderson**, Covenant College; **Donna Baldwin**, Eureka College; **Dorothy Davis**, Carson-Newman College; **Gary Ferguson**, University of Tennessee; **Cassie Goolsby**, Cumberland University; **Ben Hayes**, University of Kentucky; **Sarah Elizabeth Hickman**, MTSU; **Paul Hoffman**, Vanderbilt University; **Janine Hunter**, MTSU; **Elizabeth Lambert**, University of Tennessee; **Julie Lenger**, Southwest Missouri State University; **Scarlett Miles**, Rhodes College; **Kimberly O'Donnell**, Mt. Holyoke College; **Rachel Shaver**, Lipscomb University; **Betsy Snowden**, University of the South; **Ashley Tate**; University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill; **Sean Todd**, University of Louisville; and **Toshia Williams**, MTSU.

Five continuing doctoral students were admitted to the Ph.D. program, transferring from the D.A. program: **Steven Hoskins**, B.A., Trevecca; M.A., Nazarene Theological Seminary; **Tara Mitchell Mielnick**, B.A., University of the South; M.A., MTSU; **William Nelligan**, B.A., Monmouth College; M.A., University of Maryland; **Michael Strutt**, B.A., Edinboro University; M.A., William and Mary; and **Gwynn Thayer**, B.A., Brown; M.A., University of Texas–Austin.

New Ph.D. students in the first class are **Kevin Cason**, B.A., Belmont University; M.A., MTSU; **Brian Dempsey**, B.A., M.A., James Madison University; **Brian Hackett**, B.A., University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point; M.A., Eastern Illinois University; **Tom Kanon**, B.A., Tennessee State University, M.A., MTSU; **Harry Klinkhamer**, B.A., University of Illinios, Chicago; M.A., Loyola University–Chicago; **Uzoma Miller**, B.A., Morehouse College; M.A., Jackson State University; **Jane Townes**, B.A., Mary Baldwin College; M.A., William and Mary; and **Tara White**, B.A., University of Alabama–Birmingham; M.A. Cooperstown.

Bill Nelligan, National Park Service

Bill Nelligan works as a cultural resources management specialist for the National Park Service managing Section 106 compliance for the three park units of Gateway National Recreation Area in New York and New Jersey. He also serves as technical advisor on cultural resource management issues to park superintendents and staffs.

During his residency, Bill is detailed to the Fort Hancock Long-term Preservation Project, a public/private partnership project at the park's Sandy Hook (New Jersey) unit, which will result in the rehabilitation and adaptive use of 36 historic fort buildings. The Fort Hancock project dovetails with his dissertation topic, a history and critical analysis of public/private partnerships in the National Park Service.

Gwynn Thayer, Tennessee State Library and Archives

As a full-time archivist at the Tennessee State Library and Archives (TSLA) in the Archives Development Program, Gwynn Thayer is laying the groundwork for an online education outreach program as her professional residency project. Working in collaboration with a Teaching American History project directed by the History Department, she has developed several media presentations that integrate primary sources, drawn from TSLA collections, with historical context. Each presentation covers one of ten historical periods defined in the curriculum standards of the Tennessee Department of Education. Selected components will debut online later this year.

Class of 2005

Fourteen graduates received master's or doctoral degrees in 2005 and are launched in new careers or are now devoting full attention to their current positions: **Tammie Allison**, D.A., Tennessee Department of Transportation; **Perky Beisel**, D.A., assistant professor, Stephen F. Austin State University; **Gib Backlund**, M.A, National Park Service, Stones River National Historic Battlefield; **Heather Bailey**, M.A., director, Henry County (Tenn.) Heritage Museum; **Jenny Burney**, M.A., Saint Louis, Mo.; **Kevin Cason**, M.A., entered Ph.D. in Public History in fall 2005; **Taffey Hall**, M.A., Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives; **Laura Holder**, M.A., Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area; **Robin Kirby**, M.A., Goodlettesville, Tenn.; **Andra Kowalczyk**, M.A., East Tennessee Development District; **John Lancaster**, M.A., Tennessee Association of Museums; **Aaron Marcavitch**, M.A., Nantucket Historical Commission; **David Price**, M.A., New South Associates; **Van Zbinden**, M.A., Arkansas Museum of Natural Resources.

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new degree in January 2005, MTSU joined a handful of universities offering doctoral training in public history and became the first to declare public history as the major field of study.

Three decades of change and expansion are reflected in a growing body of alumni that we count with pride and in graduate students who increasingly come with professional experience in their portfolios. This past year, eighteen students entered the master's program. Eight began studies in the new Ph.D. in Public History, and five more were admitted from the D.A. program. Profiles of four continuing Ph.D. students who completed their professional residencies this year appear on these inside pages.

We celebrate these achievements with the inauguration of an alumni newsletter. Many of you are part of our middle Tennessee professional network; many more have moved away to make a difference through careers elsewhere. Wherever you are, let us hear from you!

Mark Your Calendars!

David McCullough, noted author of histories that routinely achieve bestseller status, is coming to MTSU October 24, 2006. Invitations for an alumni gathering preceding his public address in Tucker Theater will be mailed in September.

Alumni Spotlight

Teresa and David Brum

Teresa (B.S. 1989) and David (M.A. 1991) Brum prove that "careers in history" and "marriage" actually do belong in the same sentence. After a brief sojourn in Cincinnati, where David launched a career in museum education and Teresa a career in historic preservation, they moved to Spokane, Washington (Teresa's home state), in 1995. During the past eight years, David has worn many hats at the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture. Last year, he was selected to participate in the prestigious Seminar for Historical Administration, professional development he is putting into practice in the Education Department. Teresa, historic preservation officer for the city-county of Spokane, is former president of the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation and serves on the board of the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions. In 2004 the state of Washington presented her with its Outstanding Career Achievement award. She also is finishing a dual master's in planning and public administration from Eastern Washington University. For those of you who remember son Collin, he graduates from Xavier University this year; his younger brother Evan is 12.

Lyles Forbes

Lyles Forbes (M.A. 1989) is the curator of the Small Craft Collection at the Mariners' Museum in Newport News, Virginia. He oversees the new International Small Craft Center, which houses over 150 boats from 41 different nations. Nominated by Congress as America's National Maritime Museum, it has one of the finest collections of maritime history and culture and also is the repository for the recovered USS *Monitor*. In 2007 the museum will open its new conservation and exhibition complex: the USS *Monitor* Center.

Dawn Muir Frost

Dawn Frost (M.A. 2000) is an architectural historian and preservation planner with Vanasse Hangen Brustlin Inc. (VHB) in their Williamsburg, Virginia, office. Since joining the company in 2004, she has worked primarily as part of the National Park Service team. She also provides cultural resources review and support for all of the VHB Virginia offices including Richmond, Virginia Beach, and Annandale. While Dawn was finishing her M.A., she landed her first career position as an architectural historian for the Naval Air Station (NAS) in Patuxent River, Maryland. There she managed approximately 50 historically significant buildings on the base and served as the historic preservation liaison to the NAS Public Works and Environmental Departments, the Maryland Historical Trust, and federal regulatory agencies.

Whatever happened to . . . ?

Please let us know where you are and what you are doing: rconard@mtsu.edu.

Editor: Rebecca Conard, Director of Public History
Graduate Assistant: Paul Hoffman

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Department of History
MTSU P.O. Box 23
Murfreesboro, TN 37132

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