Welcome Kathryn Sikes, New Public History Faculty Member

The History Department welcomed Dr. Kathryn L. Sikes to the Public History faculty in August. Dr. Sikes, a historical archaeologist with a specialty in underwater archaeology, received her M.A. from Florida State University (2003) and her Ph.D. from the College of William & Mary (2013).

When asked what attracted her to MTSU, she said, “I consider hands-on teaching and public outreach to be the most important and rewarding components of my research and fieldwork, so I was delighted to find a graduate program in public history seeking to add historical archaeology to a curriculum that already included coursework in material culture, archival research, architectural history, and oral history. I was impressed by the ways that both public history faculty and graduate projects at MTSU make meaningful contributions to specific communities. To me, history has the most impact when it encourages public discussion about the past from a new perspective and prompts us to revise our view of the present in the process. As a historical archaeologist, I aim to bring the experiences of poorly documented or undocumented communities to light through their material remains, and this program offers a wonderful opportunity to do just that in cooperation with other agencies and members of the public.

“The Public History program’s [concentrations in] historic preservation, cultural resource management, and museum management also overlap with and complement my background in a way that I find very appealing. In my past work for Colonial Williamsburg Foundation’s Research Division, I enjoyed working across disciplines with traditional historians, architectural historians, museum curators, and both academic and professional archaeologists. It was both personally rewarding and professionally productive in that it led to deeper insights into the past. I had fairly low expectations of being able to find that kind of dynamic collaboration and varied expertise elsewhere and so was very pleasantly surprised to be proven wrong!”

Dr. Sikes hopes to take MTSU students into the field very soon to give them practical experience in interpreting cultural resources for public audiences. She is beginning to design long-term local research at MTSU that will combine fieldwork with graduate instruction in archaeological ethics, theory, and artifact interpretation.

Dr. Kathryn L. Sikes is the new historical archaeology professor in the Public History program.

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Dr. David P. Thelen, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of History at Indiana University, spent three weeks in residence at MTSU teaching the graduate course that has come to be known as the Maymester Experience. Known to public historians as coauthor of Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life, Dr. Thelen challenged students to think like visitors, introduced them to museum professionals who have pioneered in visitor studies, and accompanied them into the field to engage with visitors firsthand. The Hermitage, home of President Andrew Jackson, and the Country Music Hall of Fame partnered with MTSU by allowing students to mingle with visitors and converse informally with as many people as possible about their museum experience.

Many students called the class “transformative.” Thomas Flagel said, “[Thelen] asked us to question all that we know about the public and their history.” Angela Sirna said, “In the classroom, we fall into the dangerous habit sometimes of referring to the public as an abstract concept, but this was a splendid opportunity to focus solely on how public historians engage visitors.” Work in and out of the classroom strengthened their knowledge and understanding of the field. As Dallas Hanbury put it, the class “enriched my understanding of public history, its potential for inspiration and its aspirations.”

Guest speakers included David Northrup of York University, coinvestigator with Jocelyn Letourneau of the national survey known as “Canadians and Their Pasts”; Barbara Franco, founding director of Seminary Ridge Museum in Gettysburg; and Ellen Rosenthal, president and CEO of Conner Prairie Interactive History Park.

Student Joshua Howard said, “Spending virtually every day in intense discussions with classmates, Dr. Thelen, Dr. Conard, Barbara Franco, and Ellen Rosenthal truly drove my research idea to new heights.” On May 29, an appreciative audience of museum professionals, graduate students, and faculty gathered to hear Franco and Rosenthal speak reflectively about their own careers and explorations in learning from visitors. Excerpts of their talks were published in the fall 2013 issue of History News. Full transcripts and a video of the program are available at www.mtsu.edu/publichistory.
Alumni Spotlight

Jeffrey L. Durbin (M.A., ’89)

Section 106, an important part of the National Historic Preservation Act, requires that all federally funded projects undergo a review process to determine how they may affect sites listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Jeffrey Durbin, Section 106 compliance program manager in the National Park Service (NPS) Washington Service Office, is the agency’s service-wide compliance expert. Before joining the NPS in 2010, Durbin worked in historic preservation and architectural history for state and private preservation groups. Durbin’s job is coordinating compliance work across the six NPS regional offices and advising national parks on Section 106 matters. When asked about his favorite part of his work, he said, “I enjoy all aspects of my current position at NPS, but the one I particularly enjoy is getting to work with a wide range of other NPS cultural resource specialists (historians, archeologists, ethnographers, curators, historic architects, landscape architects) in a wide range of programs (National Register of Historic Places, National Historic Landmarks, National Heritage Areas, National Historic Trails, and National Parks).” Every aspect of his job is related to furthering the goals of the National Historic Preservation Act. Durbin said, “While many of the NPS historians do a significant amount of historical research in their positions, those of us who manage programs spend a greater amount of time reviewing technical reports, writing programmatic agreements, helping to set public policy, or advising this agency on proposed laws which may affect historic preservation. In all of these areas, we are also interacting with others from outside of cultural resources management, so it challenges us to think beyond our normal fields of expertise.”

Lisa Oakley (M.A., ’93)

As curator of education at the East Tennessee Historical Society, Lisa Oakley keeps a busy schedule managing teacher and student outreach and museum-based programming. She joined the society in 1991 as collections manager and volunteer coordinator, became curator of collections and exhibits in 1997, and moved to her current position in 1999. Her responsibilities include coordinating the National History Day program for the East Tennessee District competition and coordinating classroom and on-site programs for students. As with many museums that have only a few staff members, she also continues her work as volunteer coordinator and museum store manager. Oakley also serves as project director for a number of grant projects, including the 2010 Enduring Visions: Teaching American History Grant project, funded through the U.S. Department of Education. Enduring Visions is a partnership of Anderson, Sevier, and Union County schools, the East Tennessee Historical Society, and the University of Tennessee Department of History.

Oakley is well known throughout the state for her professional contributions. She serves on the Tennessee Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission and the boards of the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area and the Tennessee Council for History Education. She has been published in History News (“Designing a Summer Teacher Institute,” 2005) and has written entries for the Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture (1998) and Encyclopedia of Appalachia (2006).
Keeping Up with Alums and Recent Grads

Dorothy Davis Fouché (M.A., ’08, C.A.) has joined the Alabama Department of Archives and History as a processing archivist in the Government Records section. Dorothy previously worked for Ancestry.com.

Lauren Baud (M.A., ’13) joined the staff at Nashville’s Belle Meade Plantation in July.

Heather Bailey (Ph.D., ’10) has returned to Colorado to take the helm of a new field office of the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office and State Historical Fund in Durango. Previously, she served as preservation and housing planner for the East Tennessee Development District.

Heather Adkins (M.A., ’13) recently joined the Tennessee State Library and Archives as an assistant archivist in Public Services.

Papers Presented and Published

Ginna Foster Cannon presented “The Stories Hotels Tell about Themselves” at the Ohio Valley History Conference in October.


Rachel Lewis presented “Finding the Swedish in Andersonville: How a Chicago Neighborhood Maintained Its Ethnic Identity” at the Loyola University–Chicago History Graduate Student Conference in November.

Internships

This year, seventeen M.A. students had summer internships encompassing a wide variety of institutions and locations. On December 6, 2013, they presented the results of their experiences. To learn more about the internships, please visit the Public History Professional Development page and click on “internships.” (http://mtsu.edu/publichistory/internship_summaries.php)
Keeping Up with Alums and Recent Grads

Thomas Flagel, Cyrana Wyker, and Abigail Gautreau, Ph.D. students, and M.A. students Lauren Baud and Jessi Klinedinst presented papers at a special double panel at the Oral History Association Conference in Oklahoma City in October. Under the direction of Dr. Martha Norkunas, the students had all conducted life history interviews with African Americans as a part of the seminar “Oral History Theory and Methodology.” The panels, chaired by Dr. Norkunas, were titled “Hidden Stories as Subversive History.” The panels were very well received, generating lively discussions with audience members.

Thomas Flagel
“Lessons for a Traditional Historian: The Unveiling of Microcosmic Hidden History through the Co-creation Process”

Abigail Gautreau

Cyrana Wyker
“Oral History: Reflections on a Transgressive Methodology”

Jessica Klinedinst

Lauren Baud
“Narrating Transgenerational Black History in Middle Tennessee to a White Listener: Hidden Story or Racial Inflection?”

Five MTSU Students Present Research Papers at the Oral History Association Conference

(L–R) Thomas Flagel, Martha Norkunas, Abigail Gautreau, Cyrana Wyker, Lauren Baud, and Jessica Klinedinst at the Oral History Association conference in Oklahoma City
News from the Centers

Center for Historic Preservation

For the 2013–14 academic year, the Center for Historic Preservation (CHP) has received over $600,000 in external funding to support the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area and Teaching with Primary Sources across Tennessee programs; a survey of Trail of Tears historic resources from North Carolina to Oklahoma; the Tennessee in the Jim Crow era digital humanities website; National Register projects on the civil rights movement in Selma, Alabama; and a National Register Multiple Property Nomination for Alabama agriculture. Graduate students in history and public history have played important roles in all of these regional projects.

Other projects this fall include a heritage tourism study for Owingsville, Kentucky; a heritage development plan for Jackson’s West Bemis Rosenwald School, the oldest Rosenwald school in Tennessee; and a preservation assessment of the Marble Springs Farm, a state historic site in Knox County. Museum exhibit projects include installations at the Hiwassee River Heritage Center in Charleston, the Arts Center of Cannon County, Travellers Rest Museum in Nashville, the Longstreet House Museum in Hamblen County, and Parker’s Crossroads Battlefield visitor center in Henderson County. Spring 2014 projects will include a study of the historic Engel Stadium in Chattanooga and historic cemetery projects in Davidson, Rutherford, and Maury counties.

To carry out these projects, the CHP supports the largest number of graduate assistants outside the History Department. Our assistants include Ph.D. students Amber Clawson, Lydia Simpson, Aleia Brown, Ginna Foster Cannon, and Jessica French, and M.A. students Cassie Bennett, Ashley Armstrong, and Savannah Grandey.

In July, Governor Bill Haslam appointed CHP director Dr. Van West as state historian. Also in the summer, Katie S. Randall became the CHP’s new fieldwork coordinator. This fall, Dr. Rachel Martin joined the CHP as its new assistant director. Martin, who holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of North Carolina, was previously with the public history program at the University of Massachusetts–Amherst.

—C. Van West

Albert Gore Research Center

With the addition of three new graduate assistants this fall, the Gore Center’s push into social media continues apace. Master’s students Brad Miller, Evan Spencer, and Lane Tillner have begun exploring the wonderful world of finding aids, inventories, and collection processing in their first semester. Periodically, each of them posts a blog entry at www.gorecenter.mtsu.edu describing their archival projects.

Brad recently finished work on the Veterans History Project files. The center earlier this year shared its 250th interview with the Library of Congress. Brad said, “The veterans’ stories are captivating and provide a great tool for researchers to gain a personal perspective on a historical event or era.” Audio files for more than 600 interviews are available on the center’s website. Lane—keeping up with all the “national days” and finding relevant items from the center’s holdings to post on Twitter, Facebook, and Tumblr—posted an entry for National Men Make Dinner Day titled “Women Kicked Out of the Kitchen.” Evan, reflecting on his immersion in the newly reorganized MTSU subject files, wrote, “Like many new college students every year, I knew little to nothing about the history of the college I was attending. However, unlike most college students, I have a job in the best place to learn about that history: the archives!”

Meanwhile, second-year graduate assistants Kayla Utendorf and Aja Bain have continued the Louise Mott Miles (class of 1928) Twitter feed from Miles’s diary from her student days at Middle Tennessee State Teachers College. Follow her daily entries—and all the sizzling drama they contain: @LouiseMottMiles.

Last summer we welcomed Maggie Romer, a practicum student from the University of Tennessee information sciences graduate
program. Her blog post shares some of the fascinating material in the Marion Skeen Coleman Peck papers, a recent acquisition that supports our strength in women’s history.

Finally, the archivists and director congratulate recent program graduates and project archivists Natalie Goodwin and Rachel Smith, who passed the certification exam of the Society of Certified Archivists in August.

—Jim Williams

Center for Popular Music

Three Public History graduate assistants are now working at the Center for Popular Music (CPM): Dallas Hanbury (Ph.D.), Elaura Highfield (M.A.) and Olivia Beaudry (M.A.).

Dallas Hanbury is processing and creating a finding aid for the Joel S. Herron Collection. The collection includes approximately 50 linear feet of business correspondence, scores, arrangements, contracts, photographs, and other materials from professional songwriter, arranger, and bandleader Joel S. Herron (1916–2012), who worked extensively in radio and television. A gift from Herron’s children, the collection came to the CPM in six original four-drawer filing cabinets with contents relatively untouched since the mid-20th century. Dallas describes the Herron Collection as “a great look at jazz in its heyday of the 1930s, ’40s, ’50s, and into the 1960s. The collection represents a complete look at Herron from his early involvement in music and his transformation from musician to businessman.”

Elaura Highfield has inventoried and assisted with accessioning several recently donated collections including the notable Hutchins Collection—which consists of approximately 2,000 pieces of fox-trot orchestrations, sheet music, and rare concertina music from the 1910s to the 1930s—and the collection of Walter G. Samuels (1903–1994), a composer and performer of Broadway and film music and friend of George Gershwin and Irving Berlin. Elaura also has been assisting with the creation of exhibits in the reading room.

Olivia Beaudry began working at the CPM in fall 2013. She has been cataloging CDs from the Cory Stockburger Collection into the sound recording database. She also is assisting with the organization of hundreds of audiotapes from the Charles K. Wolfe Collection, discerning between original interviews, dubs of commercial recordings, and copies of home recordings.

—Lucinda Cockrell

Rutherford County Archives

Beth Rouse and Candace Cupps, both M.A. students concentrating in Public History, are working at the Rutherford County Archives as graduate assistants. In addition to their daily tasks of helping run the archives, Beth and Candace have been pushing forward on long-term projects. Beth has been processing and digitizing photos from the Shacklett’s Historic Images collection, and Candace has been processing loose court files from the early 1900s.

We are also excited to announce that we will be partnering with the Center for Historic Preservation, Bradley Academy Museum, Rutherford County GIS Department, and the MTSU Public History program for the final phase of our Rutherford County Historic Cemetery Project starting in January 2014. This has been a huge undertaking to locate, document, and provide Web access to all of the historic cemeteries in our county.

—John Lodl

Congratulations to Our Recent Graduates

M.A. in History, Public History concentration

Fall 2013
Claire Ackerman
Heather Adkins
Lauren Baud
Mason Christensen
Sara Beth Gideon
David Sprouse

Summer 2013
Morgan Byrn

Claire Ackerman
Heather Adkins
Lauren Baud
Mason Christensen
Sara Beth Gideon
David Sprouse

Morgan Byrn
Mark your calendars!
The National Council on Public History will meet in Nashville, Tennessee, April 15–18, 2015

For more information, contact Dr. Bren Martin, Chair, Local Arrangements Committee Bren.Martin@mtsu.edu