Graduate Students Produce Traveling Exhibit for Civil War Sesquicentennial

This Cruel War: Rutherford County Experiences the Civil War, a traveling exhibit commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, opened at Oaklands Historic House museum on Thursday, April 28, 2011. Working under the direction of Dr. Bren Martin, the graduate students in Essentials of Museum Management developed the exhibition, which interprets civilian life in Rutherford County during the war. Nine panels cover the following themes: Prelude to War, War Comes to Rutherford County, Occupation, Divided Loyalties, Mapping the War, Emancipation, and the Legacies of the War. The exhibit team included Kimberly Tucker, project manager; Ashley Brown, exhibit designer; Rachel Drayton, GIS coordinator; Jared Bratton and Claire Ackerman, image curators; Rachel Morris, marketing/public relations coordinator; Natalie Goodwin, historian; Jaryn Abdallah, youth education coordinator; Kristen O’Hare, adult education coordinator; Charles Nichols, multimedia curator; Kelsey Fields, object Curator; Leslie Crouch, exhibit fabricator; and Sade Turnipseed, web exhibit curator.

Cemetery Community was a sizable post-emancipation African American community located on a portion of what had been the battlefield during the Civil War Battle of Stones River in December 1862 and January 1863. When Stones River National Battlefield was formed during the 1930s, approximately 325 acres of the Community was acquired for the park. As part of current National Park Service initiatives to interpret slavery and its legacy at Civil War sites and battlefield parks, Stones River National Battlefield and Bradley Academy Museum are collaborating with the Public History program to further document the history of Cemetery Community.

This year’s Maymester Experience will bring together graduate students and community scholars with knowledge of local African American history to conduct historic preservation surveys, record oral histories, and produce web-based interpretive exhibits.

On May 24, field school participants will present preliminary research findings at a day-long community workshop hosted by Bradley Academy and open to the public. Featured speakers include Carla Jones, president of the Matt Gardner Homestead Museum in Elkton, Tennessee; Robert Sutton, chief historian of the National Park Service; Allison Dorsey, Swarthmore College, who has researched post-emancipation African American communities in Georgia; and Susan Eva O’Donovan, University of Memphis, who has compiled a documentary history of emancipation for the Freedmen and Southern Society Project and written about former slaves in the “cotton” south.
Awards and Publications

The Public History program congratulates recent graduates and students for their awards and publications this past year.

**Awards**

Katie Rosta won the 2011 Tennessee Association of Museums Annual Conference Scholarship. The conference, “Go Tell It on the Mountain,” was held March 23–25 in Johnson City.

Katie Stringer won the Bart McCash Award for Outstanding Graduate Student in History from the MTSU Department of History.

Cassie Sade Turnipseed was awarded a George Melendez Wright Student Travel Scholarship to attend the George Wright Society Biennial Conference in New Orleans in March 2011.

**Presentations**


News from the Centers

Center for Historic Preservation
by Dr. Stacey Graham

Research assistants continue their roles as main contributors on projects, reports, and exhibits. Undergraduate Sara Beth Gideon’s exhibit, *Community, Competitions, and the University Campus, 1926–2010*, highlights the intersection of the local community and state- and nation-wide high school athletic competitions at MTSU. It is the first senior Honors thesis to be presented as an exhibit and provided Sara Beth with hands-on experience in museum interpretation. It is available for viewing at the Heritage Center of Murfreesboro and Rutherford County as part of the center’s MTSU Centennial observance. A project that speaks to statewide history is the upcoming Trail of Tears driving tour, a partnership project with the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation. Graduate research assistant Amy Kostine is researching and drafting text for the driving tour and interpretive markers. Beyond Tennessee, nine students from Dr. Carroll Van West’s Essentials in Historic Preservation seminar (fall 2010), assisted by Katie Randall, worked on a heritage development plan for Skyline Farms, a New Deal community in Jackson County, Alabama. The plan includes historical context, a resource inventory, a preservation needs assessment of the Rock Store, a museum plan, a strategic plan for the Skyline Farms Heritage Association, and the possibility of a future multiple property nomination to the National Register.

Center for Popular Music
By Lucinda Cockrell

Public History graduate assistants in the Center for Popular Music produced several exhibits mounted in James Walker Library from January through March. Rachel Morris researched, produced, and mounted *Winter Music* in January, Valentine’s Day and *Songs of Romance* in February, and *Irish Music* in March. Abby Hathaway researched, produced, and mounted *Women in Music for Women’s History* Month in March. All the exhibits contained numerous materials from special collections at the Center for Popular Music such as sheet music, sound recordings, performance documents, photographs, and manuscripts. Abby Hathaway is also processing the Everett Corbin collection of traditional country music materials. Rachel Morris is processing the Gene Jones collection of jazz, ragtime, and Broadway music.

Stones River National Battlefield Wayside Exhibit
By John Lynch

Days of fighting and death in 1862–63 turned the fields and cedar forests at Stones River into a landscape of unimaginable carnage and destruction. Former slaves, soldiers, and freedmen helped bury the dead, restore the land, and build a thriving community on that land. Over the past several years, MTSU students have dedicated untold hours of research and thousands of words to telling the story of the Cemetery Community at Stones River National Battlefield. Public history students in Dr. Rebecca Conard’s Seminar in Cultural Resources Management spent the spring 2011 semester working to assimilate and distill that research into fewer than 300 words and a handful of images for a wayside exhibit proposal for the battlefield. The students held focus groups with interested community members at Bradley Academy Historical Center and Stones River United Methodist Church. Among those community advisors were Leonora Washington, teacher and advocate for Cemetery Community; Katie Wilson, chair of the Bradley Academy board; and Devora Butler, author of *African Americans in Rutherford County*.

Gore Center Receives Bart Gordon Papers

The Albert Gore Research Center (AGRC) received the Bart Gordon papers. In December 2009, congressman and MTSU alumnus Bart Gordon retired after 26 years as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, and the process of transferring his papers to the Albert Gore Research Center began. The center has received more than 600 cartons of papers and an electronic database, all of which will document Gordon’s career in Congress. Unusual for such donations, Gordon decided to include casework files that document the ways in which Tennesseans call upon their elected officials to assist with health care, Social Security, veterans, and other life issues. The Gordon papers also include the first significant set of electronic records to be donated to the AGRC. The AGRC’s partnership with the graduate program in Public History at MTSU allows it to offer hands-on experience in the processing of large collections such as the Gordon papers and to prepare M.A. students for careers in archival management.
National Council on Public History

Several students and the entire Public History program faculty attended the National Council on Public History (NCPH) Annual Meeting April 6–9 in Pensacola, Florida. We look forward to hosting NCPH in 2015.

Public History in Action by Zada Law

On Wednesday, April 13, 2011, Ph.D. student Zada Law participated in Nashville’s “Walk 100 Miles with Mayor Karl Dean” Challenge. They walked twice around Fort Negley for a total of one mile, and Zada provided a narrative for the mayor about the history of the fort, where federal troops were encamped during the Civil War, and what has been found archaeologically at the site.

Alumni Spotlights

Ashleigh Oatts, class of 2009, has served as education coordinator at Blount Mansion in Knoxville since July 2010. Blount Mansion recently received a Save America’s Treasures grant. The grant will be used in part for preserving a historic site on the property to be used as a new education center. Ashleigh is involved in planning for three new exhibits.

Scott Stroh, class of 1997, was named Florida state historic preservation officer and director of the Division of Historical Resources in November 2009. He also was elected to the Executive Council of the American Association of State and Local History (AASLH) in 2009 and serves as chair of the AASLH Mentor Committee and the 2012 AASLH Annual Meeting Program Committee.

Awards continued from page 2


On the Web

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