



# Common Bond

MTSU Center for Historic Preservation Newsletter

## Creating a Regional Sense of Place: Four Counties Focus on Heritage Tourism



*Swan Creek in Lewis County is one of the region's several scenic and historic waterways.*

The region of Tennessee encompassing Hickman, Lewis, Perry, and Wayne counties is part wilderness and part small town and farms. An abundance of natural and cultural resources make this place unique and yet fragile as development continually moves west. In each of these four counties, residents and local government officials are working to strengthen the economy by attracting visitors, new residents, and diverse industry and business. This balancing act is difficult. The goal is to make each county a better place to live and work while not exchanging unique natural and cultural resources and authenticity for something far less appealing, lasting, and economically stable.

This goal is the focus of a project involving local, state, and federal partners. **Creating a Regional Sense of Place** was developed and implemented by the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University with assistance from the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area (TCWNHA) and in cooperation with the Buffalo/Duck River Resource Conservation and Development Council (United States Department of Agriculture, USDA).

Working with local government officials, heritage groups, libraries, and interested residents, the project included an initial compilation of cultural and natural resources such as National Register properties, Century Farms, and architecture; workshops on developing local resources and marketing them regionally; and a resulting guide to assist counties as they proceed with their individual and collective efforts. The research and fieldwork, carried out by CHP assistant director Caneta Hankins and TCWNHA preservation specialist Michael Gavin, was funded in part by the USDA Forest Service, Economic Action Program-Rural Development. The workshops produced by Hankins, Gavin, and Spurgeon King, Ph.D. candidate in Public History at MTSU, and the published guide (*Creating a Regional Sense of Place*) received funding from the USDA Farm Service Agency. Additional technical assistance was provided by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

In summary, the project emphasizes and encourages conservation of natural landscape and waterways, identification and preservation of historic properties and sites, and promotion of traditional crafts and culture vital to sensible, sustainable growth. Such an approach offers options for building capacity to achieve long-term success. A collective approach to heritage tourism that looks beyond boundaries and competes as a region encompassing several individual destinations (1) leverages available and future funding; (2) broadens the work force and provides jobs; (3) offers more options for residents and visitors for recreation and education; and (4) provides a keystone for economic stability for the area.

The challenge and reality of marketing a place in a regional sense is certainly not a new concept. It does require a broader base of support and a spirit of cooperation within each community and across county lines. These four

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## CHP Student Workers, Fall 2007

### Ph.D. Students

**Heather Bailey** (B.S., Psychology, Tennessee Technological University; M.A., History, MTSU) is in her second year as a Public History Ph.D. student. Her research interests include heritage tourism, Southern history, and rural and small town life. She has worked for the Paris-Henry County Heritage Center and the Albert Gore Sr. Research Center, and was a teaching assistant in the History Department. She is the current assistant editor for *West Tennessee Historical Society Papers*. This year, she will be working with the Montgomery Alumni Association of Lexington, Tennessee, and other heritage tourism projects.

**Kevin Cason** (B.A., History, Belmont University; M.A., History MTSU) is pursuing a Ph.D. in Public History see page 4.

**Brian Dempsey** (B.A. and M.A., James Madison University) please see page 3.

**Spurgeon King** (B.S., History and International Affairs, Florida State University; M.A., History/Historic Preservation, MTSU) worked for more than 20 years as a preservation consultant in upstate New York and is now a second year Ph.D. candidate in Public History. King is researching the Civil War in East Tennessee.

**Susan Williams Knowles** (B.A., French and Art History, Vanderbilt University; M.L.S. George Peabody College; M.A., Art History, Vanderbilt University) is an independent museum curator who has organized exhibitions for the Frist Center, the Tennessee State Museum, and the National Museum of Women in the Arts. Knowles is continuing research on Tennessee art and architectural history and the marble industry in Tennessee.

### Graduate Students

**Roda Ferraro** (B.A., Anthropology; B.A., Italian Studies, Emory University) pursued graduate work in anthropology at Indiana University. She worked with the Hermitage Archaeology Division throughout the 2006 excavation season and previously worked in

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## CHP Offers Academic, Career Support

Fulfilling the CHP's mission of student-centered learning and following the University's academic master plan, the center supports students from several University departments. Working in the same facilities as CHP colleagues, students become active participants in the research culture fostered by the center and contribute important research and professional skills to its many projects. This year, the center will house and provide support for five Ph.D. in Public History students. Our commitment to graduate and undergraduate learning remains strong, and six students are now working for the Center for Historic Preservation, some specifically for the CHP's Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area and the Heritage Center of Murfreesboro and Rutherford County.

Once trained, students receive CHP assistance in professional or academic placement. CHP graduate assistant Lauren Nickas received a full doctoral scholarship to continue her research in American religious history at the University of Notre Dame. Graduate assistant Ashley Tate recently accepted a curatorial position at the Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site in Flat Rock, North Carolina. Brian Heffron, an undergraduate student working at the Heritage Center, is leaving to work with a partner agency, the planning department for the City of Franklin. Good luck to each of you in your next adventure.



*Center research assistants (l-r) Spurgeon King, Brian Dempsey, Julie Lenger, Susan Knowles, Betsy Snowden, Kevin Cason, Roda Ferraro, and Andrew Skaggs. Not pictured are Heather Bailey, Jake Potts, and Elizabeth Smith.*



*Brian Dempsey at the Muddy Waters Home Site on the Mississippi Blues Trail*

## Partnering with the Ph.D. Program

Brian Dempsey  
Ph.D. Candidate

### *Mississippi Blues Commission and Arts Center of Cannon County*

Combining his interests in American history, material culture, and museums with his passion for music, Brian Dempsey's professional residency with the Mississippi Blues Commission suits him well. Under the direction of Dr. Van West, CHP director, Dempsey is assisting the commission with research and implementation of a statewide Blues Heritage Trail as part of an ongoing partnership with the MTSU Center for Historic Preservation. In acknowledging the value of this residency, Dempsey said "The fieldwork, community interaction, and landscape interpretation involved with this project provide invaluable professional experience as well as critical research for my dissertation, which involves the use of blues culture within Mississippi Delta heritage tourism efforts." This year, he will also contribute related research to the National Park Service, Heritage Areas Division.

Before his involvement with the commission, Dempsey worked with another CHP partner, the Arts Center of Cannon County. Creating a museum registration system and cataloging their extensive white oak basket and folk

*Ph.D. Program continued on page 4*

## CHP Student Workers, cont. from page 2

refugee resettlement and public health in Nashville. Ferraro is an MTSU graduate student and volunteers at the Heritage Center.

**Julie Lenger** (B.S., Education-History and Spanish, Missouri State University) has completed her coursework in the M.A. in Public History program at MTSU. A native of mid-Missouri, she taught high school social studies in Missouri and worked for the South Carolina Labor Department. She is working on exhibits and publications for the Heritage Area.

**Jake Potts** (B.S., Industrial and Organizational Psychology, MTSU) is an M.A. student in Quantitative Psychology. He serves as the CHP's network administrator and computer support person.

**Elizabeth Smith**, (B.A., History, California University of Pennsylvania) is a graduate student in Public History at MTSU. A native of Aston, Pennsylvania, Smith has worked and interned at living history sites such as Harpers Ferry NHP and Fort Delaware State Park. She is volunteering at the Heritage Center.

**Betsy Snowden** (B.A., University of the South) is from Clemson, South Carolina. Having finished her coursework in the archives track of the Public History M.A. program, she is now completing her thesis. Betsy spent two years as a graduate assistant at the Center for Popular Music. At the Center for Historic Preservation she will assist with projects for the Arts Center of Cannon County and the Cumberland County Military History Memorial Museum.

### Undergraduate Students

**Andrew Skaggs**, a senior at MTSU, expects to graduate in December 2007 with a B.A. in Art with a concentration in Graphic Design. A native of Brentwood, he is a graphics intern at the Heritage Center in Murfreesboro.

## Partnering with the Ph.D. Program

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art collections allowed him to explore first-hand some of the issues raised in the classroom. The Arts Center's oral history collection of regional basket maker interviews provided the basis for Dempsey's paper "White Oak Basket Making in Cannon County, Tennessee: From Survival to Folk Artistry." Dempsey said working at the Arts Center significantly helped him focus his research interests, enabling him to explore topics associated with Southern heritage tourism, folk art/criticism, and cultural commodification.

Kevin Cason, Ph.D. Candidate

### *Cedars of Lebanon State Park and Tennessee Century Farms Program*

Kevin Cason, a Ph. D. candidate in the Public History program, is very interested in learning about state and local history, and the Center for Historic Preservation has offered many valuable opportunities to explore this interest. This year, Cason's professional residency is at Cedars of Lebanon State Park in Wilson County, Tennessee. Although the park's main mission is to provide recreation for residents of Tennessee and other visitors, the park's staff has recently seen a need to preserve records and enhance interest in the park's history through an interpretive exhibit for its visitors' center. During his residency, Cason will organize, file, and prepare a finding aid for the park's existing collections of documents and photographs. In addition to working with the archival collection, Cason will assist in the development of an exhibit plan for the visitors' center by selecting images and items that interpret



*Kevin Cason speaking at a meeting of the Moore County Historical Society*

the historical significance of the site. Highlights will include farm families who once lived in the area, the Works Progress Administration's role in constructing structures on the land, and World War II army training maneuvers that happened nearby.

Cedars of Lebanon offers Cason an opportunity to learn more about state history and develop his skills in collections management and exhibit development, but Cason has also worked on other projects during his time at the CHP. As part of an internship cosponsored by the CHP and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Cason helped in the development of a new Tennessee Century Farms Web site by preparing farm entries, selecting photographs, and designing Web pages. He also prepared a walking tour brochure and curriculum packet for Lynchburg and assisted with the Iron Furnace Trail projects.

## Creating a Regional Sense of Place . . . . continued from cover



*This log barn in Wayne County is an example of the region's 19th-century architectural resources.*

counties, already involved in the multi-county Tennessee Iron Furnace Trail project, recognize the opportunities that come from working together and are addressing new ideas to benefit their "own place" as well as the region as a whole.

Copies of *Creating a Regional Sense of Place* and *Tennessee Iron Furnace Trail* are available from the CHP (please see contact information on page 6 of this newsletter).

## Center Staff Updates



*Elizabeth McDonald*

Elizabeth McDonald came to the Center for Historic Preservation in July 2007 after working for several years as a buyer in the MTSU Procurement Department. Before MTSU, she worked at Cavalry Banking as a marketing assistant. McDonald is a native of Columbia, Tennessee, and now lives in Murfreesboro with her husband and son. She graduated from MTSU with a B.F.A. in Art with an emphasis in Graphic Design and a studio emphasis in Painting in 1994. McDonald has had artwork published in art and literature publications in South Carolina. She is a member of the National Society of the Magna Charta Dames and Barons.



*Nancy W. Smotherman*

Nancy W. Smotherman, a member of the Center for Historic Preservation staff since 1989, recently announced her retirement effective December 31, 2007. Smotherman has seen many changes during her tenure at MTSU. When former center director Dr. James K. Huhta hired Smotherman, the staff included five professional members and a few students. Over the years, the center has grown to twelve staff members and 12–13 student assistants spread through two on-campus buildings on East Main Street and the new Heritage Center of Murfreesboro and Rutherford County, located off the courthouse square. In response to the growing demands of her job, Smotherman became executive aide to Dr. Carroll Van West, CHP director, in 2003. She has been responsible for daily operations, student personnel, and fiscal reports of the CHP and the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area.

While at MTSU, Smotherman has received numerous awards and recognitions. She received her certification as a professional secretary in 1993. A member of the MTSU secretarial clerical staff, she received the MTSU employee quarterly award for Exemplary Performance and served on the administrative professional organizational chair com-

mittee for CPS/CAP certification. She has been awarded Outstanding Young Woman of the Year, has been recognized as “Someone Who Makes a Real Difference in the Lives of MTSU Students,” and has served as president of the service organization Beta Sigma Phi. Smotherman served as president of the MTSU Dames Club, an education and service organization, from 2005 to 2007.

A Murfreesboro native, Smotherman is well-known on campus and in Murfreesboro. Before coming to the center, she was a service representative at South Central Bell (now BellSouth) for 14 years and then served as administrative assistant to the senior vice president trust officer at Mid-South Bank and Trust for five years.

We wish Nancy all the best in her retirement!

## National Register

The CHP’s National Register program, carried out by fieldwork coordinator Elizabeth Moore and Dr. Van West, CHP director, provides efficient, cost-effective technical services to property owners, towns, and agencies while training students in valuable documentation techniques.

The Tennessee State Review Board recently approved the following CHP-prepared nominations:

### May 2007

- Pi Beta Phi Community Outreach Historic District, Gatlinburg, Sevier County
- McGavock-Gatewood-Harris Webb House, Nashville, Davidson County
- Elmwood (Hord Farm) Expansion, Rutherford County
- Triangle School, Fairview, Williamson County
- Montgomery School, Lexington, Henderson County
- First United Methodist Church, Gatlinburg, Sevier County

*National Register continued on back page*



*Montgomery School in Lexington, Henderson County*

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TENNESSEE**  
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September 2007  
Beech Grove, Davidson County  
Dunbar Public School, Loudon, Loudon County



*Beech Grove, Davidson County*



*Dunbar School in Loudon, Loudon County*

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