Public History Newsletter Spring 2009

Public History Concentration

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The students and alumni who attended the event thoroughly enjoyed the open forum and utilized the opportunity to ask questions about the field and his work. The Public History students and alumni would like to thank Dr. Crouch for taking the time during his brief visit to the area to speak with them.

On June 2, 2009, Tom Crouch visited the Dayton area for a book-signing event and was gracious enough to stop by Wright State to speak with Public History students and alumni. Dr. Crouch is Senior Curator of the Division of Aeronautics at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC. Since 1974, he has worked at both the National Air and Space Museum and the National Museum of American History in a variety of curatorial and administrative positions. Dr. Crouch has a Ph.D. in American History from Ohio State University and an honorary degree in Doctor of Humane Letters from Wright State University. He has won several major writing awards during his career and in the fall of 2000, President Clinton appointed him chairman of the First Flight Centennial Federal Advisory Board.

Dr. Crouch is the author or editor of many books and even more articles. His leading books include "The Bishop's Boys: A Life of Wilbur and Orville Wright" (1989); "Dream of Airships" (2008). Dr. Crouch spoke candidly and openly about his work and experiences in the public history field. He spoke of controversial exhibits he has curated, such as Enola Gay and A More Perfect Union. He told of the problems faced in exhibiting such delicate subjects and how these problems were handled. Dr. Crouch also discussed how the field has changed, challenges within the field, and offered advice for those entering the field.

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Today I’m up about 7:00, in my flat in the Senior Staff Quarters provided by the University. My flat is right above the playing fields of HKU at the edge of the sea in Sandy Bay so I have a wonderful sea view of Lamma, Cheung Chau, and Lantau islands from my balcony. I will be going out to Cheung Chau for the annual Bun Festival in a couple of weeks. We will be cheering on our favorites as the men try to climb 60 foot, cone shaped towers made out of sweet, rice flour buns stuffed with sweet, red bean paste.

Our workday generally runs from 8:45 to 5:45 Monday through Friday, however we were still on a 6 day work week when I came here, which meant 9-5 during the week and 9-1 on Saturdays for just about everyone. The first thing we do when we come in is dump the de-humidifiers (5 independent units in a 91 sq. meter space) because the battle in Hong Kong is against the never ending damp. Then I spend about two hours on my e-mail, trying to catch up with everyone.

At 11:30 my assistant, Hemans Cheng, comes in with a small stack of purchase orders and petty cash vouchers for me to sign and chop (stamp). We must put our departmental chop on all of our official documents, just as I put my personal chop on my correspondence. I had my chop carved from stone by a local “seal maker”. My name in Chinese sounds like Gwu Da Si and means ancient, open minded seeking, poetry. I am very flattered by this name my colleagues gave me but most people here just call me Daisy Gwu.

I spend one hour on writing yet another letter to the Finance Office about our need to order a large amount of archival supplies from Australia because they are not available here in Hong Kong. The shipping alone will be well over $10,000 Hong Kong but there is no other way to get what we need.

Finally it is about 5:30 and we are winding up. We have dumped all the dehumidifiers again before we leave, a reminder of the prosaic nature of much of our work. I am off to the Central District/ Cheung Wan for a meeting of the Council of the Royal Asiatic Society, Hong Kong Branch. I am the Honorary Archivist and tonight I am presenting the draft of a Deed of Gift for a collection that is to be donated to HKU’s Libraries.

8:00 p.m. and back out into the downtown traffic to catch a cab home to my kitty, Billie Holiday, who is complaining vociferously about my long absence and wants to know “Did I bring home tuna?” I do my yoga in front of the T.V., cat snuggling, and then bed. I drift off to sleep listening to the fog horns of the big container ships as they push towards the Fragrant Harbour.

NEW COURSE: PUBLIC HISTORY FIELD STUDY

Students were offered a new course this spring—Public History Field Study taught by Dr. John Shermam. This new course offers students an opportunity to evaluate historical sites and museums outside of the Dayton area. This spring students visited five sites in the Lexington area: the Hunt-Morgan House, Ashland: the Henry Clay Estate, the Aviation Museum of Kentucky, Old Fort Harrod State Park, and Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill.

The course required the enrollees to evaluate all aspects of the site: effectiveness of the exhibits, conservation/display issues, effectiveness of the tour guides or interpreters, and evaluation of the brochures and site websites. Students were challenged to look beyond the site and to think about what sort of acquisitions the curator might consider for the future.

This course offers the students an opportunity to go beyond the Dayton area and see what other states and regions are doing with museums and historical sites. The course is offered again in the fall and will focus on Civil War museums and sites in the Lexington area.
Catherine Wilson (2008) is the Executive Director of the Greene County Ohio Historical Society. Greene County Historical Society is celebrating its 80th anniversary and is planning to have its 1799 log house restored later this summer, plus they’re having a quilt show in October. Catherine is working with the Greene County Convention and Visitors Bureau on a cemetery driving/bicycling tour brochure. She also provides the Xenia and Fairborn newspapers with information for a section of the paper dedicated to past events from 35 to 50 years ago. Collette Hill-McDonough (2007) is teaching History at Sinclair Community College and National College. She developed an Ohio History class for seniors at SCC and at National and also taught a course on the Vietnam War. She volunteers at Carillon Park in her free time. Daniel Schiegel (2009) is currently a Lead Interpreter for Dayton History. Most of his time is spent at Carillon Park and leading tours at Hawthorne Hill (Orville Wright’s success mansion). He is helping to prepare the Paul Laurence Dunbar House for opening under Dayton History custody and also with the preparations for the reopening of Old River Park (owned by NCR) to the public. Andrea Spence Pudas (2004) is an Archivist with Target Corporation in Minneapolis, MN and serves on the Archives and Heritage Services team. While with Target, Andrea has expanded into the broader information management field and currently works on the Information Protection team. Jeffrey Landis (2006) was hired by Kansas City Books to perform the biographical research on the Rev. George C. Warvel for the book, The Circuit Rider’s Quilt: An Album Quilt Honoring a Beloved Minister. The book was published in October 2008. In the summer of 2008, Mr. Landis began Landis Historical Consulting, a historical consulting business. In April 2009, Mr. Landis was elected to the Board of the Patterson Memorial Committee, the advisory board to the City of Dayton on behalf of the Patterson Homestead House Museum. Timothy Binkley (2005) In April 2009 Scarecrow Press published A Higher Moral and Spiritual Stand: Selected Writings of Milton Wright, a book edited by Mr. Binkley. His paper “A Proving Time for God’s Children: Defenseless Community During the First World War” is being published in the June and July issues of Quest: A Religious Newsletter. Since April of 2005, Tim has served as Archivist of United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Oh and Curator of the seminary’s Center for the Evangelical United Brethren Heritage. Beginning September 1, he will begin a new position as Archivist of the Bridwell Library, Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX.
The mission of the Public History program at Wright State University is to prepare professionals who are well-grounded in knowledge of historical content, professional training, and hands-on experience.

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http://www.wright.edu/cola/Dept/hst/pubhst/index.html

STUDENT PROJECTS AND INTERNSHIPS
Spring/Summer 2009

Sarah Boteler—Internship
New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum
Las Cruces, New Mexico

Rachael Bussert—Internship
University of Dayton Archives
Dayton, Ohio

Elizabeth Morgan—Internship
Kent State University Museum
Kent, Ohio

Amanda Brewer—Internship
Clark County Historical Society
Springfield, Ohio

Rachael Bussert—Project
Beavercreek Historical Society
Beavercreek, Ohio

Ashley Nittle—Internship
German Village Historical Society
Columbus, Ohio

Veronica Buchanan—Internship
Cincinnati Museum Center
Cincinnati, Ohio

Melissa Dalton—Project
Dayton Society of Natural History
Dayton, Ohio

Matthew Peek—Internship
Turner Foundation
Springfield, Ohio

Veronica Buchanan—Project
Clark County Historical Society
Springfield, Ohio

Jeremy Feador—Internship
Western Reserve Historical Society
Cleveland, Ohio

Ryan Qualls—Internship
National Parks Service
Dayton, Ohio

Jennifer Budzek—Project/Internship
Special Collections & Archives, WSU
Dayton, Ohio

Tiffany Knapp—Internship
Think TV
Dayton, Ohio