

Appalachian Curator

Volume 2, Issue 3, Winter 2021



The *Appalachian Curator* is a publication of the
Special Collections Committee of the
Appalachian Studies Association

Volume 2, Issue 3, Winter 2021

The *Appalachian Curator* is a newsletter by and about special collections and archives that collect primary and secondary materials related to the Appalachian mountains. Our intended audience is scholars, students, researchers, archivists, librarians, and anyone else with an interest in resources that document Appalachia.

The *Appalachian Curator* is a publication of the Special Collections Committee of the Appalachian Studies Association. It is a free, online newsletter published triannually (Spring/Summer, Fall, and Winter) and hosted at the University of North Carolina at Asheville.

We welcome questions, comments, ideas for articles, news about Appalachian repositories, updates on new acquisitions, and anything related to Appalachian resources.

Editorial board

Gene Hyde, Editor

Liz Skene Harper, Assistant Editor

Marc Brodsky

Stewart Plein

Dustin Witsman

Ramsey Library

University of North Carolina Asheville

8504, 1 University Heights

Asheville, NC 28804

Cover photo: Swinging bridge, The Little Pigeon River, Edgar Purdom (1900-1987), Hunter Library Special Collections, Western Carolina University

ISSN 2642-8822

Editor's Column

Gene Hyde, University of North Carolina at Asheville

We're pleased to offer the latest issue of *Appalachian Curator*, which unsurprisingly continues to document how the pandemic has challenged how Appalachian special collections provide basic services. In this vein, we have an article describing how various repositories are chronicling (or not chronicling) COVID at their institutions. Another article discusses how Foxfire and Blue Ridge Public Radio are collaborating on a crowd-sourced oral history project documenting COVID.

During our most recent ASA Special Collections Committee meeting (virtual, of course) we started talking about plans for reopening our repositories as the pandemic wanes and things return to some new version of "normal." Curious as to what other repositories might be doing, we will be hosting a Virtual Town Hall to discuss re-opening on Wednesday, June 9, at 3 PM. Registration is free. Please check the article in this issue for details on how to register.

Several collections are highlighted in this issue, including Marshall University's Archives and Special Collections and the Buncombe County Special Collections in Asheville, which is completing an exciting new community-focused reorganization of their public space as well as changes in their programming and collection organization.

We also have a paired set of articles about the Appalachian Studies Association's official records at Berea College. One article discusses the records themselves, while the other article contains reflections by UVA Wise history professor Jinny Turman on researching in the ASA records as part of a student team that published "Where Have We Been? Where Are We Going? A History of the Appalachian Studies Association" (*Appalachian Journal* Vol. 31, No. 1 (Fall 2003)).

We round this issue with an article on how the University of Tennessee implemented a reparative description program for their records, a link to a video presentation *Curator* editors did on the formation of the Special Collections Committee and the creation of the *Appalachian Curator*, a report on the Special Collections Committee's activities this year, as well as a modest list of new acquisitions in Appalachian Collections.

On a final note, I hope everyone is getting through the pandemic and beginning to see some light at the end of this long, dark tunnel. We hope to see many of you at the re-opening Town Hall on June 9. And, as always, please send us your story ideas and lists of

your new acquisitions. We look forward to hearing from you. Until then, I leave you with this snapshot of a rainbow taken from the Blue Ridge Parkway near Mt Mitchell.



Rainbow near the Blue Ridge Parkway

Have an idea? Please contact the editors – Gene Hyde (ghyde@unca.edu) or Liz Skene Harper (lizmarieharper@gmail.com).

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Join us at a virtual Town Hall to discuss re-opening!

Special Collections: Let's Discuss Re-Opening!

In these days of changing health and safety protocols, questions abound. Some institutions are being directive; others are indecisive or non-communicative.

Are you in a quandary about re-opening your archives and special collections this fall? Do you have reopening ideas and news that you would like to share with regional colleagues? If either answer is yes, please plan to participate in a special Online Town Hall meeting of the ASA Special Collections group. (If both answers are yes, be sure to sign up ASAP.)

When: Wednesday, June 9, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. (Eastern)

How: Via Zoom. The link will be provided upon registration.

Cost: Free! (Taxes and gratuities included. No cover charge.)

Seating is limited to the first 300 people who register, so don't be shy about inviting others.

To register, please send an email to speccoll@unca.edu and we'll send you a link to the meeting.

FAQ:

Will my topics of interest be covered? If you submit your questions ahead of time as part of the registration process, we will work them into the agenda.

Will refreshments be served? Yes- but you will have to bring your own and serve yourself. This is a virtual meeting!

How do I register? Send an email to speccoll@unca.edu and we'll send you a link to the meeting.

For additional information, who may I contact?

Tim Binkley: binkleyt@berea.edu

Mark Brodsky: marc9@vt.edu

Liz Harper: lizmarieharper@gmail.com

Gene Hyde: ghyde@unca.edu

Chronicling COVID-19 at Appalachian Special Collections

In March 2021, as the pandemic entered its second year, *Curator* editors asked Appalachian archivists if they were collecting information about how their institutions were responding to COVID-19. Had repositories collected information? If so, why types of information? Several institutions responded, and their reports are below:

Appalachian State University

As Coordinator of Special Collections and the University Archivist, I made the decision not to pursue creating an online location for individuals to submit their COVID stories. The decision wasn't made lightly but was made for a number of reasons, including working towards what I believed to be higher priorities as they pertained to our faculty, staff, and students. We did receive permission from library administration to "hire" library student assistants to create and keep their own COVID journal as a "work from home" opportunity last spring and into the summer. Several students took us up on that. This spring, the library's Diversity & Inclusion Committee also partnered with App's Creative Justice Institute to co-sponsor a Zines for Creative Justice project, which culminated in a couple of COVID-focused, student created zines. There is also the potential for us to receive student journals that were assigned as semester-long projects, but only if the individual students are willing to formally gift them to the University Archives. Otherwise, I'm confident that in time, other COVID-related will eventually trickle in.

- Kim Sims, Coordinator of Special Collections & University Archivist

Berea College

In early April 2020, I started the *Bereans and COVID-19 Initiative* to collect and archive not only Berea College records created during and as a result of the pandemic, but also the stories and work of Berea's staff, faculty, students and alumni as they dealt with and made their way through the pandemic. In addition to collecting official records of the college, which include everything from official announcements from the president's office to flyers created by the student-led Campus Activity Board, this initiative invites all Bereans to tell their story and share their experiences during the pandemic. Bereans can share their story in whatever format that fits them – from a single photograph to a piece of poetry. These records and stories can be submitted online, by mail, or in person. For more information

on this initiative, please see:

<https://libraryguides.berea.edu/COVID-19DocumentingInitiative>

In addition to official college records and those of the Berea community, I am also collecting COVID-19 related articles written by or about Berea College or Bereans since the pandemic started. The collection will also contain a small number of class projects that focused on the pandemic in some way.

- Lori Myers-Steele, Berea College Special Collections and Archives

East Tennessee State University

The Archives of Appalachia at ETSU launched the project "Telling Your Story: Documenting Covid-19 in East Tennessee" in May 2020:

<https://www.etsu.edu/cas/cass/archives/covid19story.php>. The project sought to be a gathering place for residents of the region to contribute stories of how they, their families, and their friends experienced everyday life during the pandemic, as it was happening. Over the past year we have received about 100 submissions, including written accounts, artworks, photographs, business records, audio and video recordings, and social media posts. While the project is still technically open, there haven't been any new submissions in several months. Once the project closes, we will create an online digital collection through the Archives' Omeka account where the materials can be accessed.

- Jeremy A. Smith, Director of the Archives of Appalachia

Morehead State University

The Covid-19 Oral History Project is a series of video taped interviews conducted on the Morehead State University campus by members of the History Club during the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020. The project was conceived and initiated by the Morehead State University History Club during the first few weeks of the 2020 fall semester and the interviews scheduled after September 17th. The objective was to document the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the campus community and record the personal sentiments of the students, staff, faculty and administration.

https://scholarworks.moreheadstate.edu/covid_oral_history_project/

- Dieter Ullrich, Head of Special Collections and Archives

University of Pikeville

As the Archivist at the University of Pikeville, I felt personally responsible for recording as much information during the pandemic as I could. Because our archives serves the university, the local community, and Appalachia, it was especially important that I record how the school, local area, and the greater region were impacted. I used social media to request personal experiences and expressions from anyone willing to share. I created a drop box for submissions, so individuals could upload their digital files whenever they felt ready to contribute. I teamed up with our Art Department on a COVID-19 exhibit entitled: “Reflections on a Pandemic: Life during COVID-19.” Throughout the course of this exhibit I collected personal writings and expressions from those involved. Expression formats included art work, a journal, personal essays, and photography which told the individual story of their experience, all now collected for the university archives. I gathered facemasks printed with branding for local businesses, digital photos of signage used to encourage community support and resilience, and various changes throughout the town during the earlier stages of the pandemic. I collected email correspondence from the university administration in reference to the changes taking place within the university based on CDC regulations. I also collected documentation as it became available that denoted the changes within the community (mask requirements, social distancing, etc.). Many of my coworkers contributed by bringing in items they found during their daily lives. Pamphlets, facemasks, and infographics were picked up whenever they saw them and delivered to me for cataloging. Though some photographs were provided by the university community, the majority of them were taken by me during daily commutes to and from work.

-Elisha Taylor, University Archivist

Featured Collection: Marshall University Archives and Special Collections

Elizbaeth James, Archivist & Digital Preservation Librarian, Marshall University

Founded in 1972, Marshall University Archives and Special Collections has collected materials documenting the rich history of Appalachia, especially the West Virginia and the Huntington areas, for nearly fifty years. While the archives considers all of its more than 850 collections important, standout collections include the WSAZ media archives documenting news in the greater Huntington area between 1955 and 1995, [oral histories](#) documenting Appalachian traditions and experiences, the [Nelson S. Bond Collection](#) of science fiction writings, and the records of numerous local social and civil rights organizations. The [Fred B. Lambert Papers](#), which consists primarily of notebooks documenting Lambert's family and local history research, are a particular draw for genealogists.

0482: Huntington State Hospital Records, 1897-1984

Marshall University Special Collections

Document Type
Finding Aid

Publication Date
1988

Abstract
This collection consists of historical materials from the Huntington State Hospital during the period 1897 through 1984. The collection includes correspondence of hospital personnel and patients, administrative records, newspaper clippings, and a large number of photographs. Significant to the collection are files relating to transorbital lobotomies performed by Dr. Walter Freeman in the early 1950's as part of a larger lobotomy project in West Virginia. The large time period over which the materials are dispersed means that most materials are present only in smaller quantities.

Rights
Special collections material is obtained from many sources and is intended primarily for research and educational purposes. Certain works may be protected by copyright, trademark, or related interests not governed by the department. It is up to the researcher to verify that they have permission to use these materials for publication or other activities.

Accession Number
1988/08.0482

Collection 0584 has been merged with this collection.

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Marshall University
One John Marshall Drive
Huntington, WV 25755
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Huntington State Hospital Records Finding Aid Screenshot

One smaller collection (4 linear feet) that draws interest from researchers, students, archivists, and genealogists alike is the [Huntington State Hospital Collection](#). State

hospitals in West Virginia served as psychiatric and long-term care facilities for individuals prior to the existence of scientifically-backed treatments and knowledge of mental health issues. This collection primarily documents the lobotomy experiments conducted by Walter Freeman, including restricted patient files, photographs, and other records, but also includes other materials documenting the running of a state hospital, especially from the 1920s-1940s. These latter materials include letters from mistreated patients, pamphlets from organizations designed to further goals related to eugenics, sterilization orders, and business records.

Additionally, as a University Archives, Marshall holds institutional records created by Marshall University during its existence as Marshall College and as the State Normal School. These materials span in content from prior President's papers that include letters received after the 1970 plane crash which killed 75 players, coaches, staff, supporters, and flight crew to 19th century financial ledgers to film props from the 2008 movie *We Are Marshall*.



History Graduate Open House

Marshall University Archives and Special Collections prioritizes access to its collections. As such, all finding aids, exhibits, and some digitized materials can now be accessed on Marshall's institutional repository, [Marshall Digital Scholar](#). The remainder of the more than 10,000 item digital collection is being added to Marshall Digital Scholar throughout summer and fall of 2021. All items with textual information are full text searchable, making it even easier for users to find what they are looking for.

More than a research collection sitting in wait for scholarly use, Marshall University Archives and Special Collections is used like a laboratory for the humanities, both digital and traditional. Currently, the archive partners with faculty and community groups to delivered tailored instruction both in-person and remotely, providing access to these materials for students and community members of all ages. Archivists use the collection to work with students on critical thinking and primary source literacy skills, telling stories and providing historical context that is critical for understanding contemporary events and inspiring ambitious futures.

Do you have questions about this feature or want to learn more about Marshall University Special Collections? Contact the archivists at speccoll@marshall.edu or learn more about how to access and use our collections on our [website](#).

Cultivating Community Access in a Time of Distance: Transforming Buncombe County's Public Archives Space

Katherine Calhoun Cutshall, Buncombe County Libraries

When I think back on the last year, I often feel like I was better prepared than others for the changes brought by 2020. When I submitted [this article](#) for the January 2020 *Curator* my colleagues and I were already bracing for transformation at our institution. Buncombe County hired a new, progressive library director in fall 2018, and in December 2019 a most valuable colleague with more than 25 years of experience with our collection retired. Pandemic or not, change was on the horizon.

The previous article discussed the community-driven archives programs our library has facilitated over the past several years and our plans to ramp up our newest effort, the Black Asheville History Project. Just as we were gearing up for a year of large community gatherings, everything came to a sudden halt. Slowly, it became clear that there would be no History Harvest in 2020. Instead of planning events and working with collections, I was at home helping the Buncombe County Emergency Operations team keep up with rapidly evolving information about Covid-19.

By late April, staff were able to return to the library in a limited capacity. About the same time, Lydia See, founder of [Engaging Collections](#), reached out wondering how Engaging Collections (EC) could partner with our archive despite public health restrictions. EC's mission is to collaborate with libraries, museums, and special collections to "fund underrepresented artists to share untold narratives through creative initiatives that build community." Together with Lydia and EC Artist in Residence, Honey Simone, we began brainstorming ways to bring art and equity to our archives space. By May, we landed on a small installation curated by Simone in the North Carolina Collection's reading room called the *Carolina Record Shop*.

Days later, the murder of George Floyd and its aftermath completely changed our plans. Our conversations shifted away from small aesthetic changes, instead we began to identify all of the systemic barriers between our archives and the communities we serve, especially communities of color. The size and scope of the *Carolina Record Shop* project shifted and changed quickly. By the late summer, our goal grew beyond a small installation to a complete reimagination of our archives' reading room and disruption of traditional library and archives systems. We wanted to create a space where everyone, especially traditionally marginalized folks, could feel comfortable and supported accessing their own

history.

Over the past year a team including library staff, EC's Lydia See, Artist in Residence Honey Simone, and two Research Fellows, have made a series of significant changes to improve equity and access in our library. Both environmental and systemic changes are working together to help us reach our goal of creating a welcoming, accessible, and engaging special collections library.



Working on the new Buncombe County Special Collections room

Overhauling Existing Library Systems to Promote Equity and Access

Library staff worked alongside community partners to identify ways to make discovery and navigation of resources more accessible for all of our patrons. The following are just a few of the changes we made to library systems to encourage equity, inclusion, and access.

Name Change

One of the first issues our team considered was the name of our archives. We wondered: *Does the name “North Carolina Room” provide the public with an adequate description of our services? Does it inspire curiosity in community members that have never visited the archive?* After deliberation with Buncombe County administration, and seeking input from patrons, we changed our name to *Buncombe County Special Collections* (BCSC). The change brought us in line with county-wide branding and made it more apparent that our library is part of the Buncombe County system. Besides creating brand continuity, we liked

the idea that patrons would know, just by hearing our name, that we provide specialized services.



Buncombe County Special Collections

Ditching Dewey

The Dewey Decimal System was just not working for BCSC patrons and staff. While useful in most public library settings, the system doesn't work well for our relatively small, specialized collection. When evaluating our stacks, we discovered that more than half of the books fell into just three Dewey classifications. This made locating materials cumbersome for staff and patrons. In fall 2020 we took the plunge and [“genrefied”](#) our open stacks to promote browsing and discovery of resources. Throughout the process of subject classification, BCSC staff weeded hundreds of titles, moved rare and fragile books and manuscripts into secure storage, and refocused the reference collection on Buncombe County, western North Carolina, and Southern Appalachia. During the weeding process, BCSC staff discarded and re-homed the majority of reference materials relating to NC Piedmont, Coastal Plain, and Outer Banks communities. We also created a section called “The Literature of Prejudice” to contextualize titles in our collection published to promote White Supremacy, Anti-Semitism, and Scientific Racism (For example, [Thomas Dixon Jr.’s *The Leopard’s Spots*](#)).

New Collection Development and Access Policies

BCSC's collection development plan and access policies had not been updated in more than a decade. Throughout 2020 BCSC staff worked with the Library Director and community members to revise these policies. Some significant changes include a move away from requiring a photo ID to access special collections, and changing our collection development policy to refocus our reference stacks on western North Carolina and nearby Appalachian counties in neighboring states.

Improved Digital Accessibility

Finally, one of the biggest changes to library and archives systems at BCSC is an upcoming migration to new archives management software. The move to a new ILS ([Lucidea's ArchivEra](#)) will help BCSC staff better organize our online finding aids and digital archives, ultimately providing patrons with an improved user experience while browsing collections online. The plan will also consolidate our web presence. When this project is complete our online database will merge with our blog, [HeardTell](#), to become a single local history hub.

“When you see us, see us,” Centering BIPOC Narratives in the Archives Reading Room



Buncombe County Special Collections

In a [January 2021 interview](#) with the *Mountain Xpress*, Artist Honey Simone remembered when she first visited the Special Collections room, she didn't see herself reflected anywhere. She explained, “that's a common experience for a lot of Black Americans. You

just never really see yourself in places where you want to see yourself.” To rectify this issue of visual representation Simone and her team worked together to modify the design and atmosphere of the BCSC reading room; creating a space that is inviting to, and reflective of, Buncombe County’s diverse communities. The team tackled three distinct focus areas to complete the transformation.

Refreshing the Reading Room

One of the first goals of the redesign project was to make the space feel more open, bright, and comfortable. Simone worked with BCSC staff to make intentional, practical changes to the functionality of our public space. With a few changes to the furniture arrangement (made possible by weeding the reference stacks) and paint color, the atmosphere completely transformed. The team also brought in several pieces of comfy furniture, some truly beautiful (fake!) plants, and selected new images for semi-permanent display.

The Carolina Record Shop

With the goal to create a space in the room that centers the stories of Black mountaineers, Simone took inspiration from the legacy of Black-owned record stores. These shops served as safe, cultural and social spaces for Black youth throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Her installation inside the Buncombe County Special Collections reading room invites visitors to flip through archival “records” as a tactile method of discovering the history of Buncombe County’s Black communities. Simone hopes the interactive exhibit will “feel joyful, [like a] celebratory exploration of Asheville’s rich and dynamic Black legacy, and an instigation to consider Black Asheville’s resiliency and future.”

Buncombe County Timeline and Land Acknowledgement Statement

As part of the redesign process, Simone wanted to ensure that there was some way for visiting patrons to visualize the untold stories hidden in the BCSC archives. This resulted in a large timeline exhibit that is still in progress, but will be complete by summer 2021. The timeline exhibit begins with a land acknowledgement statement, a paragraph that recognizes that our library is situated on land traditionally owned by the Cherokee people and their ancestors, and the [systemic erasure](#) of American Indian and Black American narratives from primarily white-dominated memory institutions. Other pieces of the exhibit highlight consequential milestones in Buncombe County’s history, like the Rutherford Expedition and the closure of Asheville Motor Speedway.

Although 2020 was a tragic year in so many ways, I am beyond grateful that it provided the space and time required for this thoughtful transformation. As public health restrictions ease, BCSC is moving forward with reopening our space with limited service hours. Though we are just now beginning to welcome patrons back into our reading room, we're already feeling confident about folks' reactions to the new space. This challenge has the BCSC team energized and looking forward to what lies ahead.

Katherine Calhoun Cutshall is Collection Manager at Buncombe County Special Collections, Asheville, NC



Katherine Cutshall, left, Honey Simone, center, and Lydia See at Buncombe County Special Collections.
Photo by Lydia See.

Appalachian Studies Association Records at Berea: An Overview and Reflections on Research

Editor's note: The Appalachian Studies Association's official records are housed at Berea College. As many reading this probably know, these records were used extensively in the research of the 2003 article, "Where Have We Been? Where Are We Going? A History of the Appalachian Studies Association" (Appalachian Journal Vol. 31, No. 1 (Fall 2003)), written by Howard Dorgan and students in his "Colloquium in Appalachian Studies" course at Appalachian State University. We thought it would be interesting to pair Lori Myers-Steeles' article about the ASA archives with Jinny Turman's reflections on researching the 2003 article as a student. Dr. Turman shares author credits on the 2003 article and is Associate Professor of History at UVA Wise and a member of the ASA Special Collections Committee.

The Appalachian Studies Association Records: Time for a Revival

Lori Myers-Steele, Collections Archivist, Berea College Special Collections and Archives

In the Fall 1986 (Vol II No.2) edition of the *Newsletter of the Appalachian Studies Conference*, Jean Haskell Speer, 1986-1987 Chair of the Appalachian Studies Conference, spoke to the 1987 conference theme of "Remembrance, Reunion, and Revival." Regarding the theme of revival, Speer discussed new initiatives of association committees based on the principals on which the association was organized. Included in these initiatives was the work of the By-Laws Revision Committee in making recommended changes to association by-laws for membership consideration at the upcoming conference. In the Spring 1987 (Vol II No. 3) newsletter, Speer provides further details about recommended by-law changes, such as the need to officially change the organizations name from Appalachian Studies Conference (ASC) to Appalachian Studies Association (ASA) as had been approved by membership vote at the 1983 meeting but not formally changed in the by-laws. Contained in the newsletter was a copy of the newly proposed Bylaws which included *Article IV: Archives*. This proposed by-law formally designated Berea College as the location for the association's archives



Boxes from the ASA records housed at Berea College

Although membership formally approved Article IV and Berea College as the repository for its records at the 1987 Conference, association records had been placed at Berea College since as early as March of 1981 when the archives accessioned three boxes of Appalachian Studies Conference materials. Additionally, in a February 1981 memorandum, Anne Campbell, outgoing ASC Secretary/Newsletter Editor, noted: “Near the completion of term of office, sort files. Originals are to be placed in the Archives of the Appalachian Studies Conference (Special Collections, Hutchins Library, Berea College)” (Memorandum, Feb 1981. Series 4: Administrative Correspondence, Secretary/Newsletter Editor, 1980-1981. SAA 28: Appalachian Studies Association Records, Berea College Special Collections and Archives, Berea, Ky.). It appears as if the 1987 by-laws made official particular association practices already in place. Since this time, Berea College has accessioned ASA records received from a variety of individuals; however, there does not appear to be a regular retention/acquisition policy in place.

Since the early 1980s, the association records have been renamed the Appalachian Studies Association (ASA) Records, the archives at Berea College were formally named the Berea College Special Collections and Archives (SCA), and guidelines for processing the association records have been created. Guidelines for processing the collection are detailed and include everything from how many copies of items to archive to instructions—fourteen to be exact—for labeling folders. The author and date of the guidelines are unknown. What is known is that the processing of the collection needs a bit of a revival. While the finding aid was last updated and made available online in 2017 (see: <https://berea.libraryhost.com/index.php?p=collections/findingaid&id=30&q>), collection

processing needs to be resumed as the latest materials processed into the collection are dated 1995.

While not formally processed into the collection, ASA records through 2017-2018 have been accessioned and are available to researchers upon request; however, a regular retention policy needs to be implemented and materials need to be discoverable by researchers through an online content management system. Reviving the collection will entail not only the resumption of processing but, most likely, the addition of new series to accommodate for technological and association changes. Revitalization of the collection will take initiative and time; however, SCA archivists look forward to working with ASA leadership to revive this very important collection and make it discoverable by all.

Note: Volumes 1-44 of the *Newsletter of the Appalachian Studies Conference/AppalLink* can be found on the ASA website at: <http://appalachianstudies.org/appalink/>

Thoughts on researching the history of the Appalachian Studies Association

Jinny Turman, Associate Professor of History, UVA Wise

Although there were no mass celebrations, exploding confetti cannons, or television cameras present, I think I might have won the academic lottery in the fall of 2000. The research project I conducted as part of the Colloquium in Appalachian Studies course—a class required for the Master of Art in Appalachian Studies at Appalachian State University—helped to set me on a path of academic study that eventually led me to public history. The fact that I took the class with Dr. Howard Dorgan is the reason I feel I won the lottery. As it turns out, he was preparing to retire at the end of that year. He determined that our semester project was to research the history of the Appalachian Studies Association. Not exactly a small undertaking. But Dr. Dorgan, being the consummate scholar that he was, guided Theresa Burchett, Donovan Cain, Logan Brown, and me through oral histories and a visit to the Berea College Special Collections and Archives. We were also, of course, treated to his delightful stories and intriguing memories of the academic field in which we were entering. Little did I know at the time that Professor Dorgan, along with my other professors at ASU, set me on a career path that would one day come full circle when I started working as a public historian in the Department of History and Philosophy at the University of Virginia's College at Wise.

The Appalachian Studies Association Records at Berea College proved to be vital

to my class's efforts to recover institutional memory. This was my first true archival research adventure. I had survived Dr. Fred Hay's intense Bibliography and Research course well enough and was not necessarily nervous about working in an archive, although I did feel slightly intimidated. Dr. Dorgan had tasked me (or perhaps I had offered—this was over twenty years ago) with researching the earliest years of the ASA following the pivotal 1976 Cratis Williams Symposium. This research I remember well, because it was during those heady years that academics and activists attempted to flesh out their creative tensions, which define the organization to this day. I also remember it for more colorful reasons; that period included the 1979 meeting at Jackson Mill, an evidently poorly insulated 4H camp in West Virginia where conference attendees nearly froze. Attesting to the severity of the conditions, one document from camp officials alleged that somebody had stolen four blankets from the premises.

Frigid conferences aside, it was the creative tension between academics and activists that likely left the biggest impression on me as I entered into academic work. I chose public history because professors like Dr. Dorgan had imparted upon me the necessity of doing scholarly research that mattered to my community and my region. The field of public history has an origin story very similar to that of the ASA. Although the field itself has deeper roots, public history's contemporary manifestation was born of sixties-era social movements and new social historians' desire to meet the demands of marginalized groups rightly insisting on the democratization of historical knowledge. These historians strove to share, rather than assert, scholarly authority, a mission echoed by many of the early Appalachian Studies scholars.

In light of the conflict that erupted at the 2018 Appalachian Studies Conference in Cincinnati between young activists and established scholars, it appears that it may be time to revisit this component of our institutional history.[1] As a public historian, I can also say that for our organization to live up to its democratic roots, it is imperative that we attend to the preservation, processing, digitization, and accessibility of the Association's records. Archivist Lori Meyers-Steele's appeal to *Appalachian Curator* readers, and to the ASA, to implement a regular retention schedule and develop an online content management system is both timely and consistent with the organization's dynamic history.

[1] Y'ALL, "Y'ALL Statement Regarding J.D. Vance Roundtable," Open Letter to ASA Leadership, Urban Appalachian Community Coalition, Wendy Welch, ASA Membership, April 20, 2018, email in author's possession.

Foxfire Museum's crowd-sourced COVID oral history project

Kami Ahrens, Curator and Educational Outreach Coordinator, Foxfire

In March 2020, the Foxfire Museum responded to the nation-wide shutdowns by launching a crowd-sourced oral history program, as so many museums and archives did. For over 50 years, Foxfire has been collecting oral histories, including experiences during the Influenza Pandemic of 1918. This project aligns with our organization's mission to preserve, protect, and promote Southern Appalachian history.

Initial submissions to the project were largely from a class assignment out of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, which created an unintentional regional bias in the collection. Around the same time that the first waves of submissions were coming in, reporter Lilly Knoepp with Blue Ridge Public Radio (BPR) reached out to us about a possible collaboration. Throughout the pandemic, BPR has been actively collecting and reporting on covid-related stories. This communication began the initial conversations that led us to grow a healthy partnership dedicated to capturing stories of the pandemic throughout the Southern Appalachian region.



Foxfire Museum COVID Oral History Project graphic

In the summer of 2020, the local high school students who participate in the annual Foxfire leadership program dedicated their fall magazine issue to investigating the impact of covid on their community. For this project, they collected over 40 oral histories,

adding a substantial amount of content to the special collection. Their interviews focused on local businesses, teachers, and students. This material, along with oral histories submitted by the general public, became the focus of the partnership with BPR.

The partnership was formally announced at the beginning of March 2021, in honor of the first anniversary of covid in the United States. BPR released a series of four short pieces share excerpts of just a few of the many interviews submitted to and collected by Foxfire. BPR has also submitted select interviews from 2020 to be archived at Foxfire as part of the special collection. As they continue to acquire related materials, we hope their contributions to our archive will grow and fill in some of the collecting gaps that have inherently grown out of a crowd-sourced program.

Our workflow for the project is relatively simple: submissions are sent to a project email (covidhistory@foxfire.org) with completed release forms and optional demographic data, along with a digital file containing the oral history, photographs, written pieces, etc. These are then assigned a unique accession number and entered into a shared log, with descriptive keywords. Any audio is transcribed, and all documents are printed and filed in our paper archives. The digital materials are copied to external hard drives for long-term storage.

Working with BPR, we review the materials and select some for broadcast. While BPR produces short non-narrated audio features, we have also worked together closely to produce long-form podcast episodes for Foxfire's podcast *It Still Lives*.

The next phase of the project will focus on public outreach and education, to collect more oral histories. As noted by several museums and archives in the region, public interest in documenting covid has waned. Our crowd-sourced submissions are coming in slowly, but we want to seek out more stories. Beginning in June, Foxfire and BPR will lead virtual information sessions and workshops in collaboration with regional libraries to promote the project and increase submissions. Foxfire staff and BPR reporters will also continue strategic interviews as part of larger projects.

Ultimately, we see this project evolving into chapters of a Foxfire book and an interactive digital project where the general public to access and explore submission from the region. We would also be interested in partnering with institutions who've conducted similar projects somewhere down the line to create a covid collective that will serve as a comprehensive resource for future researchers to better understand the effect of the pandemic from a holistic perspective.

We welcome any questions or feedback regarding the project. Please contact Kami Ahrens at kami.ahrens@foxfire.org or Lilly Knoepp at lknoepp@bpr.org. Learn more at www.foxfire.org/covid19/

Reparative Description at University of Tennessee's Special Collections

Amanda Touchstone and Laura Romans

Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee

For a long time, the [Manuscripts unit](#) of the Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives has wanted to conduct an audit of every published finding aid description in [SCOUT](#) that represents a Manuscripts collection. (SCOUT is an online catalog of our special collections.) It was a priority — but often put off in favor of a collection that needed to be processed on a deadline or to tackle the ever-present backlog. Then March 2020 happened, and we were handed our opportunity to undertake this project as our university made the decision to switch to remote teaching and research services in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. This project was one that could be accomplished remotely and be worked on by multiple people, including our student workers, making it an excellent option for our new work arrangements.

With over 3,000 Manuscripts finding aids, some of which were written decades ago, we knew that there were many with errors going unnoticed. And, most importantly, we wanted to identify and update problematic language in our descriptions. This project was the first time we were going to systematically take a look at every Manuscripts finding aid. It was exciting but also overwhelming! We set the goal for progress, not perfection, and dove in.

While we wanted to focus on reparative description (defined by the [Society of American Archivists](#) as “remediation of practices or data that exclude, silence, harm, or mischaracterize marginalized people in the data created or used by archivists to identify or characterize archival resources”), we felt it was important to use this project to catch as many problematic entries as seemed feasible. Over the course of six months, we reviewed 3,240 published finding aids; we identified description problems such as outdated language regarding sex and race, missing finding aid elements, and many grammatical errors and typos.

Our project is ongoing. We are making headway on performing the corrections identified in this first phase. And we continue to learn from those in our field doing similar work. Especially in regards to reparative description, we know that this project is just one step toward making our collections and descriptions more accurate and inclusive. This project was not perfect, but we achieved our goal of progress. Our finding aids are not —

and never will be — perfect. We are only human, and there are bound to be things we missed. That said, we are pleased with the work accomplished so far. As we update old finding aids and create new ones, we will continue to apply what we have learned about writing more accurate and inclusive descriptions.

Raising Archival Awareness in a Regional Studies Organization: The Appalachian Studies Case

Gene Hyde and Liz Harper

In September 2020 Gene Hyde and Liz Harper presented a virtual Ramsey Library Brown Bag Talk at UNC Asheville. Their presentation, "Raising Archival Awareness in a Regional Studies Organization: The Appalachian Studies Case," was originally accepted for the 2020 Society of North Carolina Archivists' Conference in March 2020 at Elon University, which was canceled due to COVID. Their presentation describes how archivists led efforts to create a Special Collections Committee in the Appalachian Studies Association and also discusses the creation of the newsletter you're reading now: the *Appalachian Curator*. The virtual Brown Bag Talk was presented on Zoom and the recording was placed on the UNC Asheville library YouTube channel.

<https://youtu.be/XxcHkrgjvAI>

ASA Special Collections Committee 2020 Year in Review and 2021 Conference Update

Stewart Plein, Chair, ASA Special Collections Committee

Looking back on 2020 I can certainly say that this was an eventful year filled with unexpected challenges. The year began with an ending. Racheal Vagts,' the first chair of the Special Collections committee, departed for a new position in Colorado. Following her departure, I was asked to fill the position. Next up was the emergence of the COVID 19 virus. Due to the virus and the subsequent cancellation of the 2020 conference, the first meeting of the Special Collections Committee, which was to be held during the conference, was delayed.

"Appalachian Understories," the theme for the 2020 conference, aimed to grow hope and resilience within the region. With this theme in mind, the special collections committee proposed a session called "Roots of the Region." In this session the committee planned to discuss special collections as our regional roots, the archival understory composed of the papers, oral histories, books, films, photography, recordings, and other materials that make up the history of Appalachia. The assembled accumulation of our collections, spread throughout the mountains, provide the groundwork for our collective histories, by gathering, sharing, and preserving the multi layered voices of the diverse region that is Appalachia. We hoped to share all of this, as well as news of the committee and its goals with conference attendees.

Though delayed, the meeting was held via Zoom on April 17. The full committee membership, representing special collections across our region, hail from repositories and institutions in North Carolina, Tennessee, Ohio, Kentucky, Virginia and West Virginia. Committee members in attendance were: Gene Hyde, Jeff Dey, Jeremy Smith, Scott Skies, Cassie Patterson, Marc Brodsky, Liz Skene Harper, Jinny Turman and myself, Stewart Plein, Chair. As a committee we discussed five topics or goals for the committee to address. Among the topics discussed during the first meeting included: 1. the impact of COVID 19 as it affects institutional electronic reference and the inability to access physical collections, 2. providing an outlet for the committee to perform region wide reference under the suggested tag line "Ask an Appalachian Archivist," 3. Issues faculty face across the region during the pandemic, 4. readership and visit statistics for the *Appalachian Curator*, and 5. development of a web presence.

Over the course of the year the Special Collections committee has addressed each of

these goals and added new ones. Since the April meeting, the voice of the committee, the *Appalachian Curator* newsletter, added the “Ask an Archivist” tab on the web page. This is an important addition. Similar to the “Ask a Librarian” feature at many colleges and universities, the “Ask an Appalachian Archivist” tab allows anyone to inquire about Appalachian collections, their repositories, and contact information. It’s an outreach service for the entire region.

In addition, five issues of the newsletter are now available on the web: <http://libjournals.unca.edu/appalachiancurator/> Many thanks to Gene Hyde as editor, and the entire editorial board, for making the newsletter a success. The impact of COVID as it affects special collections repositories, and the issues faculty have faced have been addressed in the *Curator* as well. Readership and visit statistics have also been shared during meetings. Gene reported at our most recent meeting that statistics report 6,200 visitors for all pages with 16,000 page visits. These numbers point directly to the success of the *Appalachian Curator* and its connected outreach in the region.

We welcomed two new members this year. Julie Fox-Horton, at the ETSU Archival Studies Program, and Tim Binkley, Head of Special Collections and Archives at Berea College. Their experience and expertise will be of great value to the committee and the region as we continue to address challenges faced by special collections in Appalachia and celebrate their significance.

In September, committee members Gene Hyde and Liz Harper presented a webinar, “Raising Archival Awareness in a Regional Studies Organization: The Appalachian Studies Case.” The talk was originally scheduled for the Society of North Carolina Archivists’ Conference last March. With that conference cancelled, Gene and Liz gave the presentation as part of UNC Asheville’s Library Brown Bag Talk series. The presentation described archivist led efforts to create a Special Collections Committee within ASA, as well as the newsletter, the *Appalachian Curator*. The talk also reviewed the creation of the Special Collections Committee as a group focused on historical as well as current initiatives and programs, with an aim to provide a forum for news and information about Appalachian archives.

The committee met three times in 2020: April, September, and October, with plans to meet on a quarterly basis. The October meeting was added in order to discuss the committee’s plans for the upcoming ASA 2021 Virtual Conference. Together, as a committee, we discussed a variety of topics with Liz Harper’s monuments concept emerging as the best among them. With input from Tim Binkley we added a restorative justice concept to the initial topic. In November we submitted a conference panel proposal, “Reclaiming the Edifice: Restorative Justice and the Archives.”

As I write this review, the special collections committee panel presentation has come to pass. It was held Thursday, March 11, at 10:30. The presentation explored the role of archival repositories in the work of restorative justice, examining the decisions regarding the removal, placement of historical context, and the creation and renaming of monuments and buildings as entities of public memory. The panel addressed the work of researchers, students, and community organizers using archives to inform their advocacy as part of the movement for restorative justice. Our thanks go to the 86 attendees who joined us for the panel presentation.

Four panelists discussed critical topics with a focus on restorative justice. Panelists and presentations were:

- Juan Pacheco, B.S., Virginia Tech. "Confronting Legacy at Virginia Tech: The Struggle over Lee Hall"
- Sharyn Mitchell, Research Services Specialist, Special Collections, Berea College. "Reclaiming Our Histories: Invisible No More"
- Gene Hyde, Patrick Bahls. "UNCA Housing Authority Records/Urban Renewal Reparations Project"

The first year of the ASA Special Collections committee has produced some significant achievements: from the creation of the *Appalachian Curator* newsletter, to the implementation of the "Ask an Appalachian Archivist" link, to the outreach of programs designed to introduce others to the importance of primary resources and special collections throughout our region.

As we enter our second year, the most recent committee meeting, held April 12, discussed upcoming plans for the 2022 conference to be held in person at West Virginia University, the formation of a Reopening subcommittee to look into the reopening plans for special collections repositories across the region and report those findings in a future *Appalachian Curator* article. Also of importance to our discussion was an initial query into the search for members of diverse communities to add their voice to the committee, as well as the inclusion of student(s) representation.

Through these outlets, and others yet to be determined or under development, the Special Collections committee documents the broad knowledge of this region; including the archives and oral histories that recall the voices, the stories and communities recounting the lives of the people who live here.

If you'd to be a part of the Special Collections committee, please contact Stewart Plein at Stewart.Plein@mail.wvu.edu

What's New in Appalachian Special Collections?

East Tennessee State University

Scott Honeycutt Ramble Maps, 2020, AppMs 879. Three (3) hand-drawn pictorial maps of the Cherokee, Pisgah, and Nantahala National Forests created by ETSU professor Scott Honeycutt with funding from the Margaret Byrd Huffman Grant.

<https://archives.etsu.edu/repositories/2/resources/825>

Johnson City Centennial Time Capsule, 1969, AppMs 877. The contents of the time capsule that was buried in 1969 and open during the Johnson City, Tennessee Sesquicentennial Year (2019). Documents include local city, industry, and school information.

Masengill's Store Records, 1916-1959, AppMs 878. Thirty-four (34) ledgers from Masengill's women's wear shop in downtown Johnson City, Tennessee. The ledgers primarily contain customer accounts, with three volumes of accounts payable and three volumes that list the daily weather and sales with mention of special events and early or late closings. <https://archives.etsu.edu/repositories/2/resources/826>