


Historic Preservation

at University of Mary Washington

Summer 2009



"Brief" News from the Chair

The Department of Historic Preservation Welcomes Michael G. Spencer

Professor Doug Sanford

Our program is pleased to announce its latest faculty member, Michael G. Spencer, who will become an assistant professor for building forensics in the coming 2009-2010 academic year. Mr. Spencer fills the position formerly held by Prof. W. Brown Morton, who retired last year after 22 years of teaching, particularly in the realm of architectural conservation. "Building forensics" represents a more current and broader term that encompasses intervention-based conservation of structures and building materials, but also varying degrees of architectural investigation, documentation, assessment, and stabilization. Michael Spencer's experiences and skills will allow our program to cover the long-standing essentials of the field, while taking us in exciting new directions with recently developed technologies.

Having Mr. Spencer join our faculty is exciting for another reason, namely that of a homecoming of sorts. Besides being a native Virginian, Mr. Spencer graduated from Mary Washington in 2003 with a B.A. in historic preservation, where amazingly enough, he focused on architectural history and conservation. Since leaving us Mr. Spencer earned a master's degree in historic preservation from the University of Kentucky, while establishing both professional work in that area and most recently, serving as an assistant professor for the Department of Historic Preservation within the College of Design at the

University of Kentucky. His courses there included: historic properties management; historical structural systems and building materials conservation; a preservation design studio; and introductory and advanced documentation. Mr. Spencer regularly led field exercises, guided research assistantships and master's thesis projects, and helped establish a preservation lecture series. Winning awards for teaching excellence at the University of Kentucky has not hurt his cause as well.

Mr. Spencer's professional expertise has centered on historical structural systems and materials analysis, including non-destructive assessment techniques, such as infrared thermography (photography) and the application of resistance drilling. While in Kentucky, Mr. Spencer undertook applied preservation projects through the university's Center for Historic Architecture and Preservation. He also worked for an architectural firm in Lexington, conducting architectural documentation and investigation activities, along with participating on design teams, including those in the United Kingdom, Netherlands, and Germany. Please join us in welcoming Mr. Spencer (back) to the Department, where our current and forthcoming students will encounter him in such instructional fare as Documentation and Fieldwork, American Building, and the newly titled Laboratory in Building Forensics.

2

Spring
Break
2009

3

Bring Back the
Amp!

4

Historic
Preservation
Club

5

Shamrock Run
'09

Spring Break 2009, a Snowy Museum Adventure

Professor Elisabeth Sommer

On the morning of Saturday, February 28, six students and I began our four-day trip down to Winston-Salem, North Carolina, to have a first-hand experience of museum education at the historic town of Old Salem. Michelle Arbulu, Malinda Bonner, Allison Dixon, Alessandra Naich, Rebecca Pomerantz, and Kim Powell, all students in the Museum Education and Interpretation class, gave up the first days of spring break to broaden their experience of the "real world" of museums – and, as it turned out, their culinary experience as well. The trip was made possible by the Center for Historic Preservation.

We arrived on Saturday afternoon, checked into the hotel, and promptly began the most important aspect of the trip, determining where to eat dinner. We were able to combine food with historic preservation by dining at the Cotton Mill, a restaurant in a rehabbed 19th century cotton mill. The next day proved rainy, windy, and freezing, with dire predictions of many inches of snow (I thought this was supposed to be spring break). We braved the weather and saw some of Old Salem, including the Toy Museum, the Timothy Vogler Gunsmith Shop, and the Tavern. We had lunch in the Tavern restaurant, which is in the c.1810 annex to the original tavern, thus continuing our preservation dining theme.

All of our special activities were scheduled for Monday, and, of course, we woke up to five inches of snow. I explained to some very puzzled northerners that snow of this level in the south meant that no one was going anywhere by car, so we made our own walking tour of downtown Winston. This meant seeing some very nice art deco buildings, including the 1929 Reynolds Building that was the model for the Empire State Building, but it was not the museum education exploration that we had expected to do. Fortunately the sun took care of the roads and in the afternoon we were given a private tour of Old Salem's education workshop building with the former director of the workshop program. Our preservation dining theme continued that evening when we had dinner at a restaurant in a restored 1920s movie palace that now serves as a concert hall.

Before we left town on Tuesday, we gathered at the education workshop building for some hands-on experience with Old Salem's "Experience Tours" for elementary grades. The workshop includes a reproduction 18th century kitchen, so we made apple fritters using 18th century tools and cooked them over hearth coals. The group then wrote with quill pens by candlelight. During all of this activity, the Old Salem educators shared their insights about the rewards and challenges of museum education. We finally headed home, after stopping in Greensboro for some genuine North Carolina barbeque.

As for the students, here is what a few had to say:

"The apple fritters were delicious and I am sure that they tasted better because we made them ourselves in an open hearth fireplace. Then as for the quill pen writing exercise, it was a lot harder than it looked. You had to hold the pen just the right way in order to write an entire word instead of a partial letter. But, all-in-all I had a lot of fun and can't wait to get go back and take my family."

– Malinda Bonner

"The interpretation at Old Salem was incredible and I enjoyed seeing crafts and activities being created and presented to the public in an accurate setting. The educational program that the village has created is wonderful in its ability to convey to the audience various aspects of life at Old Salem. It was a great trip; we all had a lot of fun and learned a great deal about museum education and interpretation in a historic village setting."

– Rebecca Pomerantz



(standing, from left) Kim Powell, Allison Dixon, Professor Sommer, Malinda Bonner (seated, from left) Michelle Arbulu, Alessandra Naich, Rebecca Pomerantz

Preserving Memories

Madeline Lyerly

During our years in the historic preservation department we learn how to appropriately preserve material culture, but as graduation approaches I have begun to switch my focus to preserving the memories I have made as a student at Mary Washington.



Professor Hudgins and our HISP 461: Building Conservation class in Williamsburg during one of the many field trips.

Long, tiring, and caffeine-induced crazy-time in the drafting lab, field trips, weekend trips, handling lethal acid, hanging out/bothering professors in the Department, Thursday nights, 8K runs, the list goes on... and I hope that in some ways it never ends. These are some of my greatest memories with my classmates, but more importantly, my friends. We make up the graduating class of 2009, and rest assured there will never be another class quite like us.

I often feel that someone was looking out for me when I chose historic preservation over the other majors I was considering when I came as a transfer student in 2006. The Department and the students were immediately welcoming and accepting. The friendships that I have made over the past three years were not solely the result of trying to break into Combs Hall at 1a.m. the night before a project was due, but were born from a common desire to make a difference in the world. We all believed, and despite the trials and tribulations we still believe, that preservation can make a difference. Of course, we have the so-called "realists" and the "idealists," but we learned that both types of people are catalysts for change and progress in the field.

This ability to work together in junction with unconventional and "outside of the box" thinking makes me certain that not only will I one day see my peers succeed in preservation-related fields, but that they will be innovators and trendsetters. I hope we all will continue the preservation conversations that began in the classroom and take them with us into the real world, using each other as resources and support. Because it is the unbending support and encouragement from each other that keeps our aspirations for preservation alive, and it does not end with graduation.



Yeah Pres. Party! HISP 505: Sanity Preservation. Andy, Ashton, Maddie, Becca, and Kari imbibing in Lime Mortar's, Portland Cement's, and Morton's – to name a few.

Bring Back the Amp!

Madeline Lyerly and Rebekah Sargeant

It often goes unnoticed by the tours given to prospective students or faculty members, but the Mary Washington community knows the amphitheater and the majority do not want to see it go anywhere. This past school year, the threat of loosing another one of UMW's historic structures became a true concern. Not wanting to see the amphitheater meet the same fate as Lee Hall or Monroe Hall, a group of HISP 461 students became interested in saving and advocating the 1923 open-air theater. While studying the structure for a condition report, it became very obvious that the amphitheater was suffering from deterioration by neglect.

"Bring Back the Amp" was the group that formed from initial student interest. Students advertised the campaign through the historic preservation club, preservation classes, and among friends in other departments. The group's Facebook page totaled more than 200 members from the UMW network, but we soon discovered that the current students were not the only ones who wanted the amphitheater to stay. Alumni remember the amphitheater as a desirable venue and a place that holds special sentimental value and many great memories. Many alumni were shocked to see the theater in such neglected condition during recent tours and wanted to know ways they could help bring life back to such a unique place. As word spread about the condition of the amphitheater, local community people soon began contacting Bring Back the Amp members, inquiring about what they could do to help.

After doing some research, Bring Back the Amp discovered why the University was no longer interested in the amphitheater. First, it was time consuming to maintain, and second, it was not up to code regarding the American Disabilities Act. To get it up to code could be very costly. This news did not discourage members for long; students were determined to find a consultant who would give us an estimate of exactly the amount of money needed. The group also brainstormed about how to raise campus- and community-wide awareness, as well as funds. A team of five people, named "Bring Back the Amp," ran in the Virginia Beach Shamrock 8K run.

Meanwhile, it seemed that a small group of alumni were already addressing our concerns and soon we discovered that a potential donor was interested in investing in the amphitheater. Bring Back the Amp was thrilled to hear the news and today the group is interested in playing an active role in bringing events and entertainment back to the amphitheater.

A Little Bit Faster Now: Shamrock Run '09

Rebecca Gall

On Saturday, March 21, I did something I thought I would never do: I ran an 8K! In the past, I joked that I only run if I am being chased, but when some friends approached me in the fall about doing the Virginia Beach Shamrock 8K run as a platform to save the UMW amphitheater, I decided to give it a try. The amphitheater, previously known for its use during May Day celebrations and as an outdoor theater, has fallen into disrepair and decline. Today, most students know the amphitheater as an old theater in the woods deemed unsafe for students.

After studying the classically designed structure's deterioration in Conservation Lab, Rebekah Sergeant, Madeline Lyerly, Andy Fitch, Kari VanKommer, and I decided that something needed to be done to save this lost treasure. After meeting to discuss fundraising options and race sponsorships, Andy Fitch approached the university president, Judy Hample, about what could be done.

To our surprise, we found that plans were already being made to preserve the amphitheater with alumni donations. With enthusiasm built, our action team gathered fellow students in an informational meeting and created an online group to raise awareness about the future of the amphitheater, even though money was no longer an object.

After months of training and building support, finally the anticipated date of the race arrived. On the chilly day of March 21 at eight in the morning, five determined conservation students ran five miles up and down the boardwalk of Virginia Beach, all defying personal expectations and crossing the finish line in good time.

It is our hope that more students are now informed about the amphitheater's preservation, and that the project to preserve this forgotten resource begins soon. As seniors, we will not be able to see this project come to fruition, but we hope that underclassmen will continue to be interested in the amphitheater's preservation as the rest of us race to the next finish line, graduation, May 9th.



Sinking into the sand, Maddie, Becca, Kari, and Andy relax after the chilly morning race.

The Fredericksburg Full Gospel Fellowship

Tom Roberts

Sometime during my freshman year I rode past a strange stone and frame Fredericksburg structure and thought, "Whoa, what an awesome building!" Since then I have been fascinated by the church at the corner of Hanover and Prince Edward streets. Once Trinity Episcopal Church, it is now Fredericksburg Full Gospel Fellowship, a small Pentecostal congregation. It was built in 1881 and is a stunning example of Victorian Gothic Revival, and certainly rather unique for Fredericksburg.



View from corner of Prince Edward and Hanover.

Fall of 2008 I met the son of the pastor, a junior at UMW. When an architectural conditions assessment project came up in Dr. Hudgins' American Building class, I jumped at the opportunity to see more of the church. Our group analyzed the various repointing campaigns, the severe settling of the rear portion, a whole lot of slate, and gorgeous wooden trusses with designs of crosses and trefoils. We found some of the systems in need of attention, hardly a surprise for a building that age.

This spring, I decided to continue working with the assessment, doing a little more research and expanding the final report to include recommendations for maintenance and future repair. It is exciting to be working on this project because of its coincidence with a desire by the congregation to "spruce up" the building (I was even able to help paint for a few hours!) and its growing interest in its significance in Fredericksburg's architecture.

As the semester wraps up, I will be meeting with leaders of the church and discussing the report, as well as speaking to the congregation about how wonderful their building is as a house of worship to God.



Fredericksburg Full Gospel Fellowship as seen from Hanover Street.

A Parting Gift

Andy Fitch

As sure as the dogwoods are to bloom, spring seems to evoke sentimental discourse as seniors suddenly reminisce about their academic days of yesteryear. Fortunately, I long ago resolved not to partake in any such walk down memory lane and have since held steadfast to this conviction. That was until I changed my mind.

So as I reflect back on my short time at Mary Washington, as well as on my near decade-long journey of undergraduate scholastic fortitude, I cannot help but to conclude that I will miss dearly this crazy world of academia. I must warn the others, however, that such an epiphany does not come without a requisite of further responsibility.

Many a night have I lay awake, wrestling with the notion that I should probably share some parting knowledge with someone before I graduate. Like the driving bass line of a funky disco beat, this thought has haunted me until it finally manifested itself in a form so pure that it can only be described as solid intellectual gold. In lieu of a few tantalizing tidbits of parting knowledge so powerful that each could serve as a life motto if need be, I have instead found my inspiration in a more succinct method of delivery.

As many of you are probably aware, the haiku is the most artful form of lingual mediums; renown not only for its command but for its brevity. A literary device that was first made famous by Burt Reynolds in the early 1970s, the haiku is so powerful that it would be unadvisable to use haphazardly. Therefore I would caution those unfamiliar to first experiment with other forms of verse before attempting to decipher the following. With that being said, I now leave you with a parting gift that will long resonate to advancing graduates as they prepare to enter the big bad world of real life. As follows:

Emergence from cocoon
Fledgling preservationist
Monarch butterfly

Historic Preservation Club

The Preservation Club never ceases to amaze me with all of its energy and willingness to go out and DO! We began the semester with a very successful Victorian Ball with the theme, Manifest Destiny – Wild West, anyone? The club took a day trip per month, allowing groups to visit Mount Vernon and Montpelier and to museum-hop in Washington, D.C. Jackie Wright, Laura Heemer, Erin Glennon, and Catherine Cox got to practice historic building repair techniques with other Mary Washington students on an alternative spring break in New Orleans. Spring Trip to Williamsburg was an exciting visit into the world of first person interpretation, and Spring Event allowed us to celebrate how valuable our

Where to...

As our young, brilliant minds head off to beaches and bars post-commencement and pre-real – or real-er – world, some already know where the money for their next tab will be coming from. Congratulations and Thanks for Playing, Class of 2009!

Allison Dixon is applying to a master's degree program in museum studies with a focus in education. After graduation she will continue working for the National Park Service at Clara Barton National Historic Site and Glen Echo Park in the STEP (Student Temporary Employment Program) Program.

Caitlin Eichner is attending Washington and Lee University School of Law in the fall. "Go Lawyers!"

Rebecca Gall plans to receive her master of arts degree in historic preservation from the University of Kentucky, where she has been accepted for the fall.

Rebekah-Ann Sargeant will pursue a master of arts degree in architectural history at the University of Virginia in the fall. Her focus is undecided, however she is interested in the American architecture of the late 19th and 20th centuries as well as what defines sacred space and the associated architecture of how people make a place "sacred."

Lauren Souza graduated in the fall and is working hard at two internships. At Mount Vernon she carries alongside the manager of restoration, Steven Mallory, on various conservation and restoration projects involving the mansion and outbuildings. A stone's throw away at James Madison's Montpelier, she and Gardiner Hallock are documenting the barns for the National Trust of Historic Places. Lauren would also like to leave her fellow classmates with her signature send-off, "Peace and Preserved Hair Grease."

Jackie Wright will begin her studies for a master of arts degree in teaching in museum education at The George Washington University this summer. She looks forward to living closer to the D.C. area and networking with museums in and around the city. The program lasts one year and offers several internships and hands-on experiences to enhance what she has already learned from Mary Washington.

field really is with a Fredericksburg scavenger hunt and trip to Culpeper, Virginia. We also hosted a great Senior Toast to celebrate all of the senior majors' accomplishments with friends, faculty, and family. We look forward to an exciting fall semester packed with trips, service projects, and fundraisers. If you are interested in joining us, to get on our mailing list, or to get information, email hisclub@umw.edu.

A few club members outside Montpelier.

