

Wyoming Awarded Teaching American History Grant

A coalition of Wyoming educational and historical institutions, including the American Heritage Center (AHC) and other University of Wyoming (UW)



departments, has received a Teaching of American History grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Besides the AHC, the members of the collaborative effort are the Natrona County School District, University of Wyoming (History, Elementary Education, and Secondary Education departments), and the Natrona County Historical Society. The three-year grant, which totals nearly one million dollars, will directly serve more than one hundred Wyoming teachers and impact many students in the state's elementary, junior high, and high schools. The Natrona County School District will administer the grant.

The grant aims to improve the knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards history of teachers and students. The members of the coalition will demonstrate creative and innovative ways to teach history, provide a variety of information, materials, and technologies that can be incorporated into classrooms, and instruct the teachers in various aspects of the grant's three themes, "Government," "Time, Continuity and Changes," and "People, Places, and Environments."

Carol Bowers, AHC's reference manager, has taught history to many students using primary sources. At the fall workshop at the AHC she and other AHC faculty will instruct forty Wyoming teachers how to use letters, photographs, and other primary sources in their classes to enhance the teaching of history.

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From the Director



Mark Greene

Careful readers of our newsletter and annual report may have noticed that this past year I published a short article in an archival journal on the topic of deaccessioning. Deaccessioning is a term and a process used comfortably by museums for many decades—it means to formally remove an item from the collections (“accessioning” is the term used to describe the formalities involved in accepting an item into the collections). The AHC has employed selective deaccessioning for a decade, though recently it has become a more integrated part of our overall collection analysis and management.

The American Association of Museums (AAM) makes clear in one of its policy statements, that “Deaccessioning is part of a long-term, thoughtful decision on the part of the museum about how to best fulfill its mission with available resources. It is conducted in accordance with standards and best practices in the field, and with the museum’s own code of ethics, collections planning, and collections policies.”

Unfortunately, in the archival profession, deaccessioning has been for far too long, as the AHC’s Mark Shelstad observed once in an article, “a word never to be uttered aloud.” Archivists, unlike their colleagues in the museum field, had created a myth for themselves and their constituents, that the decision to accept material into an archives was a decision to keep the material “permanently.”

This was a myth for two reasons. Most importantly, it is not within our power to make human documentation “permanent” in a literal sense—whether on paper or in electronic form, the material will degrade and disappear eventually no matter what heroic measures we employ. Thus our profession’s scholars began some fifteen years ago to educate us that we could only accurately talk about “enduring preservation,” not permanent preservation.

“Permanence” was a mythic concept for another, more programmatic reason. As the AAM statement implies, collections in museums—and in archives, libraries, and other cultural institutions—are part of an overall mission and set of priorities for the institution. Over time, missions, priorities, and resources change, if the institution is to remain

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strong and relevant. For the same reasons, therefore, the collections may need to change.

Done well, the changes in collections happen gradually, thoughtfully, and as AAM has it, “in accordance with standards and best practices in the field, and with the museum’s own code of ethics, collections planning, and collections policies.” In the last few years, the AHC has helped lead the archival profession away from the myth of permanence and toward a realistic, pragmatic, clearly articulated, set of standards and best practices for deaccessioning.

This has taken place as part of rigorous attention to collections planning and collections policies at the AHC. Since the fall of 2002, our faculty and staff, in consultation with UW teaching faculty and supported by wide research into the holdings of other repositories, have been critically analyzing our collection areas and significantly clarifying our collecting policies. This summer we will have completed work on six of our collection areas, representing approximately two-thirds of our total holdings. We have at least another eighteen months of similar work to come.

The outlines of this work—its purpose and institutional context—are discussed in our Academic Plan (available on our web site), approved this spring by the university’s administration. The procedures and ethics that guide this work are explicated in our Collection Management Policy (also available on our web site). These procedures and ethics drew heavily from the standards established by AAM, because the US archival community has yet to do that difficult work.

Collections considered for deaccessioning—based on our collection analysis work—are those which are outside our Western or U.S. collecting areas, little used by our researchers, and usually integral to holdings at other archives where the material will be more heavily used. In almost every case, the material is transferred to a receptive, highly qualified repository. The careful removal of material from our holdings strengthens the focus of our overall collections (and the collections of other repositories) and makes room available for more important acquisitions.

As a subjective process, the decision about what to accept into an archives and the decision about what to remove from an archives is always open to disagreement. But as is true for appraisal, I believe strongly that deaccessioning must not be a professional secret, but open to the light of day—and open to discussion and even disagreement.

I hope this column represents a further step in making our work here at the AHC open and understandable. Our continued efforts to order and transform the AHC’s collections will, we believe, result in a stronger institution. This includes—though it may seem paradoxical—creating a better foundation for the acquisition of new collections. Having clearer, better-defined collections and collecting areas will permit us to focus our limited acquisition resources much more effectively. In fact, then, our deaccessioning will ultimately result in accessioning. As always I welcome your comments on this or other aspects of the AHC’s work.



New AHC Business Manager Named



Cricket Hoskins,
AHC's new business
manager.

The AHC recently hired Cricket Hoskins as the new business manager. She replaces Steve Bangarter who accepted a position at the University of Houston. Cricket will plan and administer the AHC's budget, manage and supervise the accounting department, serve as personnel officer, and direct departmental computer support.

Cricket received from UW Bachelor of Science degrees in accounting and business administration. From 1994 to 2002 she worked for Western Water Consultants, a Laramie engineering firm, where she managed the accounting and personnel areas. For the past eighteen months she worked for the UW Division of Information Technology as supervisor of accounting operations and human resource administrator. Cricket started her new position September 6.



Atlantic City Project Records



The facility for the U.S. Steel Atlantic City Project located in Wyoming's Wind River Mountains operated for more than twenty years before shutting down in 1984. Photo from the United States Steel Corporation Atlantic City Project Records.

The U.S. Steel Corporation's steel division broke ground on June 30, 1960, for a new facility to mine iron ore near Atlantic City, Wyoming. The Atlantic City Project was located in Fremont County, twenty-eight miles south of Lander near the Wind River Mountains. The mine was the highest open pit iron ore mining operation in the United States, operating at an elevation of eighty-three hundred feet.

U.S. Steel completed the facility in only twenty-six months. The mine began operation by August, 1962, and was in full operation by the spring of 1963. In addition to the open pit operations, the mine included an ore crushing and screening facility; a concentrating plant where low-grade ore was magnetically upgraded; an extensive water storage and handling system built to recover most of the process water and recirculate it back through the mills; and storage, loading, and shipping facilities, including a seventy-six mile industrial spur track to Winton Junction, ten miles north of Rock Springs. The Union Pacific Railroad shipped the ore to the blast furnaces at Geneva Works in Provo, Utah, which converted the ore to a variety of high-grade steel products. U.S. Steel shut down the mine during the spring of 1984.



The records of the Atlantic City Project held by the AHC contain primarily the files of the engineering department of the operation. Included are the administrative records; the initial project plans and studies; correspondence; legal files; public relations files; information about the railroad spur; and reports which cover research on various processes, equipment, and methods applicable to its ore operations. Also included in the collection are photographic prints, movie film, and aerial photographs of the plant, dams, reservoir, railroad spur line, and plant employees. The records are now open to researchers.



Willard Bethurem Robinson Papers

The AHC staff recently completed the process of the papers of Willard B. Robinson, noted architect and academician. He specialized in historic preservation and restoration of nineteenth century buildings, primarily in Texas and the Southwest. Robinson was the Paul W. Horn Professor of Architecture at Texas Tech University at Lubbock. Born in Sheridan, Wyoming, he received a bachelor's degree in architecture from Montana State University in 1958 and a master's degree from Rice University in 1960. Robinson's thesis work consisted of a study of the nineteenth century architecture of Northwestern buildings.



During the early part of his career, Robinson worked extensively with the Historic American Buildings Survey for Jefferson, Texas; for the state of Rhode Island on the restoration of Fort Adams; as the restoration architect for the Ranching Heritage Center Museum at Texas Tech; and as a research associate for the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth, Texas. He served as a consultant architect for the Texas Historical Commission in Austin, the Tennessee Valley Authority in Knoxville, and the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming. Robinson was recognized as an expert in both Euro-American and Spanish-Mexican architectural styles. His most unusual and ambitious project was to form a cultural exchange program with Texas Tech and the University of Guanajuato in Mexico to study the cultural influences of architecture in both regions and how American technology may have influenced both.

Robinson published extensively. Besides his many articles, his books included *American Forts: Architectural Form and Function*, *Texas Public Buildings of the Nineteenth Century*, and *Reflections of Faith: Houses of Worship in the Lone Star State*.

The collection contains Robinson's correspondence, materials related to his publications on forts, and extensive photographs and drawings of forts and public buildings.

Tourists enjoying Fort Jackson near New Orleans, one of the historic sites on which Willard Robinson served as a consultant. The fort was built in 1822-32 to protect the lower Mississippi River and named for Andrew Jackson. During the early part of the Civil War Confederate forces controlled the fort until its surrender in 1862. In 1961 the fort was declared a national monument. Photo from the Willard B. Robinson Papers.

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The AHC will organize and host two workshops for each year of the grant. The first workshop will be held December 3 and 4, 2004. Speakers will include Dr. Phil Roberts and Dr. William Howard Moore of the UW History Department; Dean Jerry Parkinson of the UW Law School; Dr. Carol Bryant of the UW College of Education; Patty Smith, Laramie High School teacher; AHC faculty members Carol Bowers, Mark Shelstad, and Rick Ewig; AHC Director Mark Greene; and Natrona County teacher Kim Ibach, who is the director for the grant.

Wyoming History Day is an important part of the grant. Kori Livingston, the state coordinator for the contest which is coordinated by the AHC, will instruct the participating teachers about the value of using History Day in their classrooms. Kori and Mark Greene will also serve as members of the grant's executive board. This grant is the first Teaching American History grant awarded to Wyoming.



Willard Bethurem Robinson Papers *continued from Page 5*

Also included are histories of buildings undergoing restoration and materials in English and Spanish related to the cultural exchange program between Texas Tech and the University of Guanajuato.



Wyoming History Day



After attending the awards ceremony at the National History Day competition, Wyoming students posed for a group photo at the Albert Einstein statue on Constitution Avenue in Washington, D.C.

Wyoming History Day concluded a successful year when sixty students, teachers, parents, and state coordinator Kori Livingston returned from the National History Day competition held at the University of Maryland, College Park, in June. The group spent a week on campus competing against two thousand other students from around the country as well as seeing as many museums, historic sites, monuments, and attractions as possible.

Wyoming students placed in the top ten in several categories. Erin Hammer, from Lander, with her senior individual documentary about Mardy Murie, a pioneer in the area of conservation, placed seventh in the nation and won the Our Documents Special Award sponsored by the National Archives. Eric Pince and James Kindle of Riverton placed third in the senior group documentary category with their history of the Fetterman fight which took place near Fort Phil Kearny on December 21, 1866, near present-day Buffalo, Wyoming. The group also won the Military History Special Award. Two students from Jackson, Keane Anderson and Brian Cain, placed tenth in the Senior Group Exhibit category with their entry titled "Congo Free State: Exploration and Exploitation." Keane and Brian also won



the Outstanding Award for Seniors from Wyoming. Five Cheyenne students, Catlynne Calvetti, Mila Lemaster, Kristina Harter, Kelly Ceballos, and Austin Stevenson won the Outstanding Award for J60uniors from Wyoming with their performance about the 1918 flu epidemic.

During the week in the Washington, D.C. area, the group toured the recently opened World War II Memorial, the White House, the U.S. Holocaust Museum, the International Spy Museum, the National Aquarium in Baltimore, laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery, and had time to enjoy “Seven Brides for Seven Brothers” at a dinner theater. One of the highlights of the trip was a tour of a Civil War historic site, the Gettysburg battlefield in Pennsylvania.

Wyoming History Day is coordinated by the AHC and sponsored by the Wyoming State Historical Society and the Wyoming Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources. The Wyoming Community Foundation also contributed to the program this year and Taco John’s sponsored a three thousand dollar scholarship for a student to attend a Wyoming college.

The theme for the 2005 National History Day contest is “Communication in History: The Key to Understanding.” The upcoming contest will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of Wyoming History Day and special events are planned at the state contest to be held at UW on April 25, 2005, to commemorate the twenty-five years of a successful educational program.



The junior and senior winners of the Outstanding State Awards for Wyoming at the National History Day contest. From left to right, Kristina Harter, Austin Stevenson, Mila Lemaster, Catlynne Calvetti, Keane Anderson, Kelly Ceballos, and Brian Cain.

AHC Notes

This spring AHC Director **Mark Greene** and Dennis Meissner (from the Minnesota Historical Society) presented the preliminary results of their federal Archival Research Fellowship at a symposium in Boston. Their research focuses on developing more efficient methods of cataloging the backlogs of 20th century collections plaguing most archival repositories.

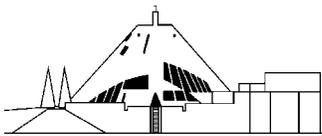


President John F. Kennedy visited the University of Wyoming campus on September 25, 1963. He had just started a “conservation tour” around the West. That morning he arrived in Cheyenne, then flew to Laramie. His motorcade traveled from the Laramie airport to the UW Fieldhouse, where he spoke to thirteen thousand people. His speech discussed the resources, recreation, and resource development in the West. Kennedy stated, “this



country has become rich because nature was good to us.” Governor Cliff Hansen welcomed the president to Wyoming and U.S. Senator Gale McGee, a former UW history professor, introduced him to the crowd. After meeting with the press Kennedy flew to Jackson. He stayed the night at the Jackson Lake Lodge. The photograph is from the papers of Gale McGee.

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