American Studies Newsletter
The George Washington University
Spring 1998

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Completed Dissertations
1996 - 1998

Lynn Cotham, "Becoming Western: Gender and Generation in Mary Hallock Foote's Dual Career"


Carolyn Brucken, "Consuming Luxury: Hotels and the Rise of Middle-Class Public Space, 1825 - 1860"


Noriko Kawamura Ishii, "Americán Women Missionaries at Kobe College, 1873 - 1909"

Amy Bowles-Reyer, "Our Secret Garden: American Popular Young Adult Literature in the 1970s and the Transmission of Sexual and Gender Ideology to Adolescent Girls"

Notes From the Chair By Phyllis Palmer

The American Studies faculty have studied ourselves meticulously and perpetually for the past year. A department self-study, a strategic plan, a report on our doctoral program, and a review of the undergraduate curriculum, in addition to the regular course evaluations and faculty performance reviews, all document the current flourishing state of the department. (And, yes, some of you may remember when we were a "program" and not a department. We've finally accepted our status as a solid faculty of 8 and have been renamed to reflect our actual standing within the University.) Many of these reports move to senior administrators, and we do not yet know the consequences institutionally. But for faculty and students in the department, these planning activities have strengthened department morale and sharpened focus.

At a department retreat in February, the faculty rejected the idea of adopting "Cultures R Us" as our trademark, but we did affirm our commitment to linking our specialties within a framework loosely labeled "public culture/public history." Some of us work directly on questions of culture and how it is formed and fought over within the US, especially along lines of race, gender, and sexual identities. Some of us work on objects, artifacts, buildings, design, folklore, and how these embody and shape culture. Some of us are historians and some of us are students of popular culture. All of us have a dedication to studying culture within the public; how cultural identities are represented and displayed, studied and transmitted within public settings and by public institutions.

As you'll see in the next few pages, the faculty and alumni are writing books and articles, consulting on shows, giving outside lectures, and generally bringing fame to the department. Our graduate students are equally busy, with conference presentations, internships, and teaching to their credit. And our undergraduate majors, many of them double majors, win awards and recognition for scholarship and service. We continue to recruit first-rate faculty, graduate students, and majors.

I'm excited about being the titular leader of this group and believe that our work is creating the necessary and exciting links between cultural analysis, history, material life, and the presentation and representation of culture in public. I hope that you enjoy reading about the diverse ways our faculty and students have pursued this quest in the past two years.
Howard Gillette spent the 1997-1998 academic year on sabbatical as a visiting scholar at Rutgers where he worked on a book evaluating the human consequences of disinvestment, focusing on Camden, New Jersey, the city with the nation's fifth highest poverty rate. In conjunction with that research he presented papers in Seattle, Cambridge, and Chicago. The updated version of his class on Washington, DC's history, culture, and politics—which remains available to interested parties on the Internet at www.gwu.edu/dcenewal—received the university's Robert Kenny award for most improved introductory course.

His evaluation of James Rouse's contribution to the field of urban planning will appear soon in The Journal of the American Institute of Planners.

James Horton has had a busy and exciting time during the past two years, filled with new publications, a traveling exhibit, several public history projects, and a grandson, Dana Jeffrey, born in September of 1996. On the publications front, he and Lois Horton completed their long standing project with Oxford University Press, In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1850, which was published in 1997 and has recently been issued in paperback. Over the last year they have been engaged in a number of book tours which have taken them across the country and to Europe. Their latest joint venture was held at the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York City in April, 1998, where they lectured to an audience of 500 and autographed books.

He and Lois are also collaborating on three publishing projects which will be completed in the next few months. They are revising Black Bostonians for the 20th year anniversary of its original publication in 1979 which will consist of a new introduction, some comparative data taken from a research project at the Smithsonian and a new chapter on gender. They are also completing a collaborative effort with Norbert Finzsch, a friend and colleague in Germany, Von Benin Nach Baltimore: A History of African Americans and an American version Long Road to Freedom: A History of African America which will both be published in 1999.

They have also published a number of articles including "Power and Social Responsibility: Entrepreneurs and the Black Community in Antebellum Boston" in Conrad Edwick Wright, ed., Entrepreneurs: The Boston Community, 1700-1850 and "A Federal Assault: African Americans and the Impact of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850," co-authored, in Paul Finkelman, ed., Slavery and the Law. They have just completed an extensive article on African American history for Microsoft's Encarta Encyclopedia on CD ROM, which will be available in the fall of 1998.

He has also curated a traveling exhibit with David Brion Davis, of Yale, entitled "Free at Last: A History of the Abolition of Slavery." The exhibit had two grand openings at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati and at Federal Hall in New York City, both in the fall of 1997, and is now touring nationally. He is doing a number of lectures at exhibit sites in conjunction with local openings, including one with he is looking forward to in his home town of Newark, New Jersey at the main branch of the public library.

In addition to these collaborative projects, he is also involved in a number of projects of his own. He is the series editor of the Oxford University Press American Landmark Series of thirteen anticipated volumes which will link historical landmarks in thematic histories of the US. He is authoring the volume on landmarks of African American history and John Vlach is writing the volume on the landmarks of the Old South.

Horton has also been busy on the lecture circuit, doing papers for the Organization of American Historians, the American Historical Association, the American Studies Association, the National Park Service and a host of universities, historical societies, research libraries, and historical conferences in the US, Asia, and Europe. Some of these presentations included "Race and Historical Research" at the Connecticut Historical Society, "The Public Presentation of African American History" at the Unfolding of America's National Identity International Conference, "The Challenge of the Public Presentation of Slavery," at the Distinguished Scholars Series, "The History Wars" at the University of California at San Diego, and "Plantation Slavery in the US," National Park Service Conference on Slavery. He is looking forward to giving the paper, "Race and the Public Presentation of America's Past," at the University of Milan in Milan, Italy in June 1998.

Public history projects have taken up much of his time over the last two years; many of these are ongoing. These include acting as Historical Advisor to the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center; serving on the Advisory Committee on African American Interpretation for Monticello; working on the Advisory Board for the Gilder Lehrman Institute for American History in New York, NY; acting on the Historical Advisory Board for the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum; and being appointed to the National Park Service Advisory Board by Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt; and elected Chair of the Board. The release of the film, "Amistad" has presented several opportunities for teaching history to a broad public audience, and he has been involved in many public presentations which focus on the issues raised in the film, including programs on National Public Radio and the History Channel. He will also present a Keynote Address, "Celebrating the Amistad: Antislavery, the Underground
Snow Doubt About It: Snow in America Is a Hit!

Snow in America (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997) began as an answer to questions about the interplay of culture and nature. How do we know what we know about the non-human world and how that knowledge is manifested in thought and action? To me, these questions are fundamental to the study of American Studies.

I chose snow to represent nature for several reasons. Its importance in shaping climate, its social and economic impact, its links to vital water resources, and its metaphorical power in literature and art. By examining how snow has been described, explained, and used in the United States over the past 200 years, I try to show that the interplay of nature (snow) and culture (attitudes toward snow) creates specific beliefs that affect the ways in which we think and act when experiencing nature in general and snow in particular.

In addition to a literature search for primary and secondary materials relating to snow in America, I attended annual conferences of snow scientists talking with the men and women who study the physics, chemistry, hydrology, meteorology, biology, and ecology of snow.

Participating in the US Department of Agriculture’s Snow Survey School near Bend, Oregon in January 1991, to learn and practice snow surveying, avalanche prediction and rescue, and igloo building was a necessary post-graduate education. Explaining what I was working on to non-historians helped me write the book for a general audience.

My major problem in writing the book was to balance the history of snow sciences with literary and visual interpretations of snow. I opted to write chapters that are both chronological and topical, but certain themes run through the book: 1) the recognition of different kinds of snow and the creation of new words to describe them; 2) the conflicts between those who profit from snow and those who profit from its removal; 3) the development of an understanding that snow as part of a dynamic environment.

Several university presses expressed interest in the book, but I chose the Smithsonian Institution Press because acquisition editor Mark Hirsch understood most fully what I was trying to do. His encouragement and editorial advice helped me through the painful process of cutting an 800 page manuscript to less than 500 pages. Other editors, designers, and marketing experts at the SI Press have contributed to the book’s success.

Responses to the book have been good. Weatherwise magazine excerpted portions and included several color illustrations. It was reviewed in the Economist, Washington Post Book World, The Boston Globe, The Times Literary Supplement, and several newspapers throughout the US and Canada, and received brief notices in The Atlantic, Audubon, Outside, Snow Country, and The Chronicle of Higher Education. Sales have reached 3,400 and the Press thinks it has another season of hardcover sales before a paperback reprint.

Snow in America will, I hope, encourage American Studies students to expand the breadth of their interdisciplinary research and focus on issues that clarify the links between past and present, thought and action, nature and culture.

-Bernard Mergen.
Preservation and the National Park Service in Los Angeles (March 1998). He also chaired a session on “A New Retail Environment,” at the Seventh National Conference on American Planning History in Seattle (October 1997). He gave lectures for the Foundation for San Francisco’s Architectural Heritage; University of California, Berkeley; North Carolina State University; University of Texas, Arlington; Smithsonian Institution; National Building Museum; and Preservation Wayne.


Department Award Winning

Graduating seniors Rusty Stahl in 1997 and Alesia Young in 1998 received one of the University’s three Martin Luther King, Jr. Medals for exemplifying the human values embodied in Dr. King’s work. Young was also elected to Phi Beta Kappa in her junior year.

Three students, Sandy Zipp, Stephanie Batiste-Bentham, and Kate Krueckemeyer currently hold Presidential Merit Fellowships awarded by the University as 3-year stipends for doctoral study.

Melani McAlister joined the American Studies faculty as an Assistant Professor in the fall of 1996. She received her PhD from Brown University in American Civilization. Her book, which is forthcoming from the University of California Press, examines the history of the construction of US “national interests” in the Middle East since WWII, analyzing popular cultural texts, religious narratives, news media accounts, and US foreign policy documents. Her analysis of the meanings of the King Tut exhibit in relationship to the public concern about the oil crises of the 1970s was published in Representations in Spring 1996.

In 1998-99 Professor McAlister will be a Visiting Fellow at Princeton’s Center for the Study of American Religion. At GW, she teaches cultural theory, television and film studies, and 20th-century US cultural history.

Bernard Mergen spent the first six months of 1996 as a Fulbright Professor teaching American Studies at the National University of Mongolia in Ulaanbaatar. In August he and his wife, Claudia Spohrohlz, traveled in China, voyaging up the Yangtze River through the Three Gorges to Chongqing, then by train and bus to Chengdu, Leshan, and Mount Emei. In May 1997, as a USA Academic Specialist, he gave a keynote address to the Belarusian Association for the American Studies meeting in Minsk. In November 1997 he drew on these and other international contacts to organize a post-ASA colloquium on “American Studies Outside the US,” which was attended by more than 40 scholars from two dozen countries.

Also in November 1997, the Smithsonian Press published his new book, Snow in America, which is available in better bookstores everywhere and, thanks to the Price Club, in supermarkets throughout Minnesota. The reviewer in The Times Literary Supplement caught the spirit of the book best: “[It] is alert both to the meanings we impose on snow and to the challenge snow imposes on us.” He is currently writing articles on winter recreation, environmental history, and journals of American Studies published abroad. He has book, exhibit, and media reviews in recent issues of American Studies, The Journal of American History, The Public Historian, and American Studies International of which he is Senior Editor.

Teresa Murphy has been involved in an exciting team project involving faculty and graduate students in the American Studies department for the past couple years. The project, “Historical Interpretation and the National Park Service,” allowed us to evaluate the historical interpretations at four local historical sites operated by the National Park Service including Arlington House, George Washington’s Birthplace, Booker T. Washington’s Birthplace, and Hampton House. Following their initial assessment, they wrote an extensive bibliographic and historiographic essay for Park Service personnel. The project has led to continuing work at the park sites for some of GW’s students and
Phyllis Palmer spent most of the past two years immersed in the administrative tasks of chairing the department and leading the University's decennial accreditation effort. These two jobs eventuated in the University's successful reaccreditation on March 3, 1998, and the department's producing a five-year review and strategic plan in February, 1998. She has also continued work on the project on interracial connections in postwar America, delivering a paper on "Recognizing Racial Privilege: White Girls and Boys at National Conference of Christians and Jews Summer Camps, 1957-1972" at the annual meeting of the Oral History Association in September, 1997. She published a number of articles last year, including "Personhood and Power: Creating a Curriculum for All," in Mary Anderson et. al., eds., Doing Feminism: Teaching and Research in the Academy (Michigan State University Press) and "Black Dominace During the Depression: Workers, Organizers, Social Commentators," in Prologue, the journal of the National Archives and Records Administration, in Summer 1997. Along with Ann Romines of the English faculty, she wrote an introduction for a collection of endowed lectures in the GW Women's Studies Program, The Yulee Lectures: Six Years of Domestic Controversies, in which appeared her essay, "Housework: To Do or Not to Do, or, Why are We (White Women) Still Asking the Housework Question?" Palmer also served on the ASA Program Committee for the 1997 conference under the presidency of Mary Helen Washington.

### Class of 1998 Senior Theses Titles

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aderonke Adenikinju</td>
<td>&quot;Roles for Black Women in Contemporary Black Cinema&quot;</td>
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<td>Angela DiMauro</td>
<td>&quot;The Effects of Federal Relocation Policies on Residents: A Neighborhood Case Study in Cleveland&quot;</td>
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<td>Sally Douglas</td>
<td>&quot;How Do Articles in Cosmopolitan Magazine Affect American Women Readers' Self Perceptions?&quot;</td>
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<td>Elliot Freeman</td>
<td>&quot;The Western Drama and Silent Film: How Cecil DeMille Helped Legitimize Film as an American Art Form in the mid-1910s&quot;</td>
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<td>Erin Heilbrunn</td>
<td>&quot;People Didn't Get the Point I Was Making: Gender, Power, and Ambiguity in Francis Ford Coppola's 'The Godfather'&quot;</td>
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<td>Kristen Heinzler</td>
<td>&quot;Motherhood, Race, and Resistance: Women Organizers in the Civil Rights Movement and the Anti-Apartheid Resistance&quot;</td>
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<td>Jill Kiah</td>
<td>&quot;Loving Lucy: Lucy Ricardo as a Figure of Rebellion and Resistance for Middle-Class Housewives of the Postwar Era&quot;</td>
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<td>Tameria Lewis</td>
<td>&quot;Necessity and Hope: Residents' Motivations for Remaining in the H Street, NE Neighborhood of Washington, DC&quot;</td>
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<td>Catherine Rickard</td>
<td>&quot;The Changing Face of Race: Tiger Woods and Black Racial Classification&quot;</td>
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<td>Rusty Stahl</td>
<td>&quot;Reading Resurgent Labor: Public Relations, Symbolism, and Ideological Change in the 1990s Labor Movement&quot;</td>
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<td>Rose Stapp</td>
<td>&quot;From Blue Ridge to Blue Ridge: White Migration through Southern Appalachia, 1750-1900&quot;</td>
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<td>Kristina Whiting</td>
<td>&quot;Eva A. Whiting: A Single Woman and Female Relationships in the Late Nineteenth Century&quot;</td>
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<td>Alesia Young</td>
<td>&quot;Moving Truth: An Analysis of Racial Discourses in Dance&quot;</td>
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<td>John Michael Vlach</td>
<td>received an important honor from his academic peers; in 1996 he was invited to join the Society of Fellows of the American Folklife Society. He was also appointed Editor for the Journal of American Folklore and selected as a Trustee of the Fund for Folk Culture. His exhibition, &quot;The Cultural Landscape of the Plantation,&quot; continued to tour the country with stops at the Virginia Historical Society, Boston Public Library, Wake Forest University, Jena Lafitte National Park, and the Lincoln Museum in Fort Wayne, Indiana. He has most recently published a chapter on urban slave quarters in the South in a volume entitled Shaping Communities as well as articles in American Folklore: An Encyclopedia, The Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World, The Encyclopedia of African-American History and Culture, and Folklore: An Encyclopedia of Beliefs, Customs, Tales, Music, and Art. He continues to work on a book that will examine the image of the plantation in landscape art. He has also been active on the lecture circuit making almost forty speeches since January 1996. Locations have included St. Paul, Baton Rouge, Raleigh, St. Augustine, Austin, Vicksburg, Seneca Falls and Liverpool, England as well as the Smithsonian (on at least four occasions). Venues have ranged from museums to national park sites and even the Shelter Rock Universalist Church on Long Island.</td>
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Shannon Bell, MA candidate, received a student fellowship to attend the Vernacular Architecture Forum conference on May 8, 1998. She will be on the panel Landscapes of Commerce and Entertainment for which she will read her paper "From Ticket Booth to Screen Tower: An Architectural Study of Drive-In Theaters in the Baltimore-Washington-Richmond Corridor."

Stephanie Batiste-Benthall, PhD student, presented a paper at the South Central Women's Studies Association Interdisciplinary Women's Studies conference in Houston, Texas in March 1998 entitled "A Voice from the Margins: Constructing Alternative Identity in Harriet Wilson's Our Nig" which focused on narrative strategy and fictional self-construction as a means to negotiate the race-based model of womanhood in the mid-nineteenth century. She will also be presenting "Taming the Yellow Peril: The Negotiation of Race through Gender Constructions in American Film, 1942-1957" at the upcoming American Studies Association conference in Seattle, Washington.

Robin Bernstein, PhD student, will be presenting two papers at the Conference of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education this August. The papers are entitled "Rudolph King, Shifting Modes of Vision, and Anna Deavere Smith's Twilight: Los Angeles 1992" and "A Living Museum of a Dead Race: Edwin Forrest's Performance in Metamora." She also has a picture book Terrible, Terrible, a feminist re-telling of a Jewish folktale, forthcoming from Kar-Ben Books in August 1998.

Lisa Pflueger Davidson, PhD candidate, will be presenting a paper entitled "Beautification and the Beast: Billboards in the American Landscape, 1910-55" on May 8, 1998 at the Vernacular Architecture Forum conference in Annapolis, Maryland. Lisa received a VAF Student Fellowship to attend this conference.

Kate Kruckemeyer, PhD student, presented her paper "Don't Call It Amateur: Putting on a Woodcutting Contest in the Era of Sports Professionalization" to the annual meeting of the Virginia Folklore Society in November 1997. This slide-illustrated presentation was based on her research in history and culture of logging competitions, and in particular on her continuing fieldwork with Western Connecticut woodsmen. She will be returning to the woods this summer to learn more about logging and whittling from show organizer Ken Anstett.

Sara Romeyn, PhD candidate, will be presenting a paper at the American Studies Association conference in Seattle, Washington. Her paper, entitled "Domestic Space as Political Tool: Early Women's National Indian Association" is part of a panel called "Indian Reform," Gender Anxiety and Domestic Empire, which she organized.

Laura Schlavo, PhD student, gave her paper, "Picturing the Colonized Body: Reading the Aesthetics of Race in the Work of Winslow Homer at the Points of Reference: Continuity, Change and Cultural Perspective conference at the University of Buffalo. She will be presenting a paper that focuses on similar themes at the American Studies Association conference in November 1998.

Werner Steger, PhD candidate, will read "German Immigrants, the Revolution of 1848, and the Politics of Liberalism in Antebellum Richmond, Virginia" at the annual symposium of the Society for German American Studies in Indianapolis, Indiana in April 1998. In November he will participate in a lecture circuit sponsored by the German American Institutes in Germany commemorating the 150th anniversary of the revolutions in Europe. He will present papers on German refugees to the slave states at the universities in Tuebingen, Stuttgart, Freiburg, and Heidelberg.


Michele Gates Moresi, PhD candidate, had the panel that she organized accepted for the American Studies Association conference in Seattle, Washington. Her panel raises questions of how nationhood and its racialized boundaries are constructed in public spaces and institutions: what oppositional practices of representing race and nation are developed in the same or alternative spaces; and how gender and race work to define national identity. The title of her paper is "Exhibiting the Negro: Displaying Race and Nation at the Smithsonian Institution, 1929 - 1930."


ALUMNI UPDATES:

Jeff Caltabiano, BA 1997, is at UCLA studying urban planning and development. In addition to taking classes, he is working with a research team to evaluate seventeen of Los Angeles's oldest redevelopment projects, including efforts in Watts, Hollywood, and the central business district.

Wilton Corkern, PhD 1985, is currently president of the Accokeek Foundation in Accokeek, Maryland, a museum and nature center. In March 1998 he organized a lecture series on “Regenerating and Rejuvenating Soils and Community.”

James Deutsch, PhD 1991, Visiting Professor of American Studies, North American Studies Center, University of Lodz, Poland, 1997-98, has been approved for a Fulbright Professorship at the University of Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria, for the academic year of 1998-99.

Jessica Elfenbein, MA 1989, completed her PhD in History at the University of Delaware in 1996 with a dissertation titled, “To Fit Them For Their Fight with the World: The Baltimore YMCA and the Making of a Modern City, 1852-1932,” which won the dissertation prize of the Association for Research on Non-Profit Organizations and Voluntary Action in 1997.

Jannelle Warren-Findley, PhD 1973, is completing her term as president of the National Council on Public History, she spent the fall semester of 1997 on leave from Arizona State University as Fulbright Professor at Victoria University in Wellington, NZ.

Patrick Frank, PhD 1992, has two books out this year: Posada's Broadsheets (University of New Mexico Press) on the work of the Mexican artist Jose Guadalupe Posada; and the sixth edition of the art history textbook, Art Forms (Addison Wesley) of which he is co-author. He curated an exhibit of Posada's work for the Colorado Spring Fine Arts Center. He is currently an Instructor in the Department of Art, University of Colorado.

Perry Frank, PhD 1991, President, American Dreams, a business that initiates and manages cultural projects, is managing a grant from the DC Humanities Council to support research on contemporary outdoor murals in the city. The planning grant will support the process of identifying and documenting the murals. A public program on the project is tentatively scheduled for the evening of May 6, 1998 at the DC Historical Society.

Roderick S. French, PhD 1971, accepted the position of Chancellor, American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, in January 1998.

Catherine Griggs, PhD 1996, Program Coordinator and Assistant Professor of American Studies, Eckerd College, has received fellowships from Florida GTE and Florida AT&T to develop a course on the Great Depression using oral history and a variety of visual materials. She has also recently developed programs for the Florida Humanities Council on the opening of baseball spring training and on women's professional baseball.

Nancy Gwinn, PhD 1995, became Director, Smithsonian Institution Libraries in 1997.

Joel Hodson, PhD 1992, is teaching at the American Studies Centre, National University of Singapore.

Jane Levey, MA 1991, founded a public history firm called Summit Historians, which specializes in corporate history. She also continues to edit Washington History.

Patrick Loughney, PhD 1988, Director, Motion Picture Division, Library of Congress, represented the library at the International Silent Film Festival in Pordenone, Italy, October 11-19, 1997.

Mimi Minnick, BA 1987, is an archivist with the Center for Advertising History at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, has worked on a major collection of advertising agency business records and personal papers of Caroline Robinson Jones, the first African American woman ever trained as a copywriter at a major US advertising agency.

Dennis Pogue, MA 1981, completed his PhD in Anthropology, with an emphasis in Historical Archeology, at the American University. His dissertation is entitled “Culture Change along the Tobacco Coast, 1670-1720.” Pogue is an adjunct lecturer in Anthropology at AU, in addition to serving as the Director of Restoration at Mount Vernon.

Kevin Ruffner, PhD 1991, has served as a historian for the Central Intelligence Agency since 1991. He published and edited a documentary volume entitled CORONA: America's First Satellite Program, when the CIA declassified hundreds of thousands of linear feet of worldwide satellite imagery.


Phil Terrie, PhD 1979, published Contested Terrain: A New History of Nature and People in the Adirondacks (Syracuse UP, 1997), which the reviewer in The New York Review of Books (February 5, 1998) described as "the finest general Adirondack history yet written, the book to which all subsequent accounts will have to refer."