



Mountain
Heritage Center

“Explore. Connect. Preserve.”



The Mountain Heritage Center's Newsletter

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A Letter From Our Director



Pam Meister, Director | Mountain Heritage Center

Dear Friends of the Mountain Heritage Center,

I hope the photograph above made you smile; there's a story behind the gleeful display of our "I Love Museums" temporary tattoos. As an academic museum, we strive to involve our students in all aspects of the MHC's work, providing real-life museum experiences in collaboration with a variety of regional cultural partners. We are also firm believers in the power of mentoring and the importance of networking, so we encourage our students to participate in professional museum conferences along with MHC staff.

This photograph was taken when we were preparing to attend the North Carolina Museum Council's 2019 annual meeting in Asheville. The location changes every year, so this was an excellent opportunity for multiple students to be involved in the meeting. The young women in the photo, Paula Keeter Britt (left) and Becca Rhinehart Eaddy (right), participated in program sessions at the meeting and have already embarked on significant cultural resource careers. Just three years later, Paula is now a permanent National Park Service employee in Charlottesville, VA and Becca is a full-time historical interpreter for the South Carolina State House complex in Columbia, SC.

All four MHC staff members feel that working with students is the most rewarding part of our jobs. We are proud of their achievements, interested in their career paths, and delighted that so many of them stay

in touch with us. You'll find articles about other current and former students in this newsletter, and I encourage all MHC student workers and interns to share stories of their current life journeys.

-Pam

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Upcoming Exhibit

“Away from Home: American Indian Boarding School Stories”

On display starting 9/1/2022.

Coming this fall, we invite you to come view our upcoming exhibit, *Away from Home: American Indian Boarding School Stories*. Curated and organized by Janet Cantley and the Heard Museum of Phoenix, Arizona, the exhibit will feature several standing units tied to various thematic areas of interest regarding American Indian Boarding Schools.

Highlights of this exhibit include interactive timelines, semi-immersive environment-settings, photographs, artwork, and interviews. Come and discover the kaleidoscope of experiences held by Indigenous students and their families. Learn about the cultural and historical responses to these schools. Witness the many distinct aspects and challenges that made up a life in an American Indian boarding school.

Away from Home: American Indian Boarding School Stories will be on display in the Mountain Heritage Center, in the first floor gallery, 10am-4pm, September 1st, 2022 – October 20th, 2022.

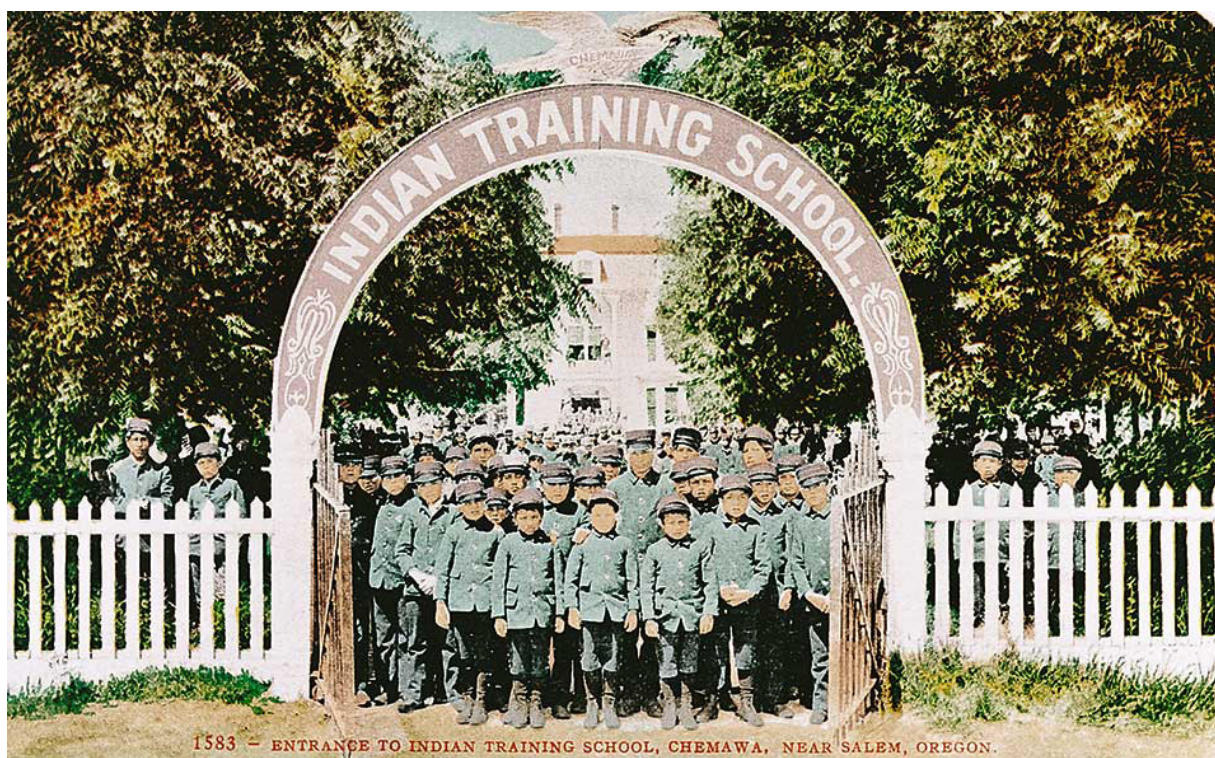


Image Credit: Harvey W. Scott Memorial Library, Pacific University Archives

Leaving Soon

“Quilts: The Stories They Tell”

Leaving the MHC Gallery on 8/31/2022.

There is still time to come and explore our current attraction, although that time is running out quickly! *Quilts: The Stories They Tell* features a varied collection of quilts from the 19th century up to the end of the 20th century. See it before it's gone!

Highlights include the many different traditional patterns on display; various art, friendship, and crazy quilts; and exhibits and placards teaching the intricacy and history of quilting culture. *Quilts: The Stories They Tell* demonstrates a lasting heritage of merging art with practicality in Appalachia, and how quilters who called this place home were driven by practicality, self-expression, and often a combination of the two.

Quilts: The Story They Tell will be on display in the Mountain Heritage Center, in the first floor gallery, 10am-4pm until September 1st, 2022.



Image Credit: Brian Fox, Mountain Heritage Center

Current Exhibits

“Discovering Appalachia”

Currently On Display.

Contrary to myths about isolated mountain settlers, western NC has been a cultural crossroads for thousands of years. Learn about the centuries of explorers and settlers who have come to this area, bringing varied skills, traditions, and beliefs to create a unique and vibrant cultural blend that is still living and changing today. Explore images and objects from the MHC’s rich collections that illustrate daily life in the mountains of western NC from the late 1800s to the present.

Currently on display on the second floor of Hunter Library.



“River Cane Renaissance”

Closed at the MHC on 12/10/2021

River Cane Renaissance just closed at the Mountain Heritage Center on December 10th, but now it is going on tour!

Highlighting the historic use of river cane in southern Appalachia, the “River Cane Renaissance” exhibit displays a wide assortment of river cane artifacts and reproductions. The exhibit also shares information about the biology of this native bamboo species and its historic decline and the current efforts to cultivate an improved habitat for the species to flourish again. As a collective representation of masterful work, resourcefulness, and community focused environmentalism, “River Cane Renaissance” brings to the forefront the multiple uses of river cane.

See if you can catch at it at these locations in 2022!

January – March:

Western North Carolina Historical Association/ Smith-McDowell House,
Asheville, NC

April – June:

Swannanoa Valley Museum, Black Mountain, NC

July – September:

Mountain Gateway Museum, Old Fort NC

October – December:

Museum of the Southeast American Indian, Pembroke, NC

Additional information about the biology, revitalization, and how river cane is used in basket weaving can be seen in companion videos created by Communications major Sara Stanley during the Spring 2021 semester.

Thank you for your support of this exhibit!

Upcoming Event

Mini-Mountain Heritage Day

Mini-Mountain Heritage Day, a major summer highlight for Mountain Heritage Center, is coming soon! The event will be free to attend, open to the public, and will display local storytellers, artists, MHC Staff, and other folks who can speak about the many fascinating aspects of Appalachian cultural heritage.

Mini Mountain Heritage Day will be held on campus at Western Carolina University, July 20th, 1pm-3:30pm, between the Forsyth and Killian Annex buildings. Look for the big purple chair!

Coming later on this year, regular-sized Mountain Heritage Day will be on September 24th from 10am-5pm.





*Photos: Tina Thames Leads cornshick doll making at mini-mountain heritage day, 2021.
Images courtesy of WCU Office of Public Relations*

Student Worker Highlight:

Jessica Wash



Who are you, and what kind of degree are you earning?

I'm Jessica Wash, and I graduated from WCU this past May with a M.A. in History.

How long have you been working for the Mountain Heritage Center?

I've been at the Mountain Heritage Center for about a year and a half.

What drew you to start working here, and what has made you stay as long as you have?

I started working here by pure happenstance. I was assigned to intern at the MHC for my undergraduate Public History capstone project, absolutely loved it, and have been here ever since. I think the main reason I've stayed is that the staff not only sets out to teach you so much about museum work, but also makes the workplace feel like home to everyone.

What is your favorite part of working with the MHC?

It's hard to pin down one singular favorite aspect of working with the MHC, but I would have to say I love being able to wear several different hats and help with many different projects. I love the variety of work opportunities at the MHC and getting to gain insight and assist with various museum undertakings.

How do you plan to use what you have learned working here in the future?

Since I'm going into the museum field, I plan on applying pretty much everything I've learned to my future job. Since I'm most interested in going into collections and archival work, I will primarily utilize the skills taught to me during my time as Collections Assistant.

What would you have to say to anyone who is interested in working or volunteering with the MHC in the future?

Do it! There's something to do for workers and volunteers of all majors and skills. There are so many different components that go into the behind-the-scenes work that produces the fascinating exhibits, talks, and demonstrations the MHC puts on that there is a place for everyone.

Student Worker Highlight:

John Kempf



Who are you, and what kind of degree are you earning?

My name is John L. Kempf III, I earned a Bachelor of Arts in History along with a minor in Japanese language.

How long have you been working for the Mountain Heritage Center?

I have been working with the Mountain Heritage Center since my initial internship there during the Fall semester of 2021. The following semester, I was hired back as a Gallery Attendant student worker for the center in addition to working as a post-graduate worker the following Summer.

What drew you to start working here, and what has made you stay as long as you have?

The opportunity to experience first hand the process of researching, developing, and displaying artifacts or information for exhibits.

What is your favorite part of working with the MHC?

The chance to teach visitors the uniquely rich history of Appalachia has allowed me to become an even greater historian due to the support received from all those at the Mountain Heritage Center.

How do you plan to use what you have learned working here in the future?

Working at the Mountain Heritage Center has taught me great amounts of information regarding the proper methods of museum exhibitions and inspired me to view Public History as a possible career path, one path that was not taken into consideration before working there.

With the analytical and linguistic improvements made to my work since working at the center, the skills acquired here will allow for greater job opportunities both within and outside of the Public History field.

What would you have to say to anyone who is interested in working or volunteering with the MHC in the future?

That it is a wonderful opportunity and learning experience. Working with Pam [Our MHC Director], Peter [Our MHC Education Associate], Lois [Our MHC Office Manager], and Loran [Our MHC Collections Manager] has been an amazing time period and they have taught me great amounts of information that I would not have learned on my own.

Working at the Mountain Heritage Center was tremendously fun and informative, once in a lifetime experience that has greatly influenced my life. I highly recommend this opportunity for anyone interested in working in the Historical field, even if it isn't museum work or Public History, as it teaches real world historical research experience.

Picture This:

Hibriten Mountain Overlook At Sunset



“Picture This” is a new segment of the Mountain Heritage Center Newsletter! The goal of this segment is to provide our wonderful readership an opportunity to share and interact with us by sending in pictures of what mountain heritage means to them!

This inaugural installment shows the Hibriten Mountain overlook over Lenoir, North Carolina. The photo was taken by Brian Fox on May 30th, 2021 while hiking with his sister, both of whom are currently students at Western Carolina University. Appalachian culture often emphasizes sense of place, and Hibriten Mountain is a distinguishing landmark for Lenoir, NC and the surrounding area.

To be featured in a future installment of “Picture This”, please send in your submission photograph to pkoch@email.wcu.edu, along with:

An optional short blurb regarding the background of the photo

Your name

(and/or the photographer’s if you are not the same person - we want to properly credit our sources!)

On-Site and Outreach Programs



As a regional resource for education, the Mountain Heritage Center's mission of connecting people with local history and culture and building bridges between Western Carolina University and the region, is the focus of our on-site and outreach programs. The Mountain Heritage Center provides educational videos, Zoom programs for offsite groups, in-house group visits, and physical outreach programs for offsite groups. For all audiences, these programs explore how history can relate to current events alongside the many facets of western North Carolina's past, present, and future.

These programs are developed in accordance with North Carolina's Essential Standards for Social Studies, Arts Education, and English Language Arts, and are offered free of charge. A complete list of programs is available according to grade level.

For those interested, please view our website for more information.

Hours of Operations

The Mountain Heritage Center's galleries are – once again – open to the public! Amidst the ongoing pandemic, we would like everyone to be safe while enjoying the displays, so the Mountain Heritage Center is following Western Carolina University's Catamounts Care standards. Masks or approved facial coverings are required. We thank you for your cooperation and we look forward to seeing you.

The Mountain Heritage Center galleries are located at Hunter Library 161 (next to Java City) and on the second floor of Hunter Library. Regular opening hours are listed below. To confirm hours or to arrange a special tour, please contact us at (828) 227-7129, by email, or visit our Facebook page. The Mountain Heritage Center follows the university holiday calendar.

Galleries: Monday – Friday, 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Offices: Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm

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