Origins and Background

The Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University was established in 1984 as the university’s first Center of Excellence and one of the nine original centers at the state’s universities administered by the Tennessee Board of Regents. In 1989, the Center received accomplished center status and two years later became a full-time research and public service institute. One of the Center’s very first programs, the Tennessee Century Farms program, began as a partnership with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture in 1985 and continues more than 35 years later.

In 2001, the Center became the administrator of the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area, a partnership unit of the National Park Service. Since then, Heritage Area staff and students have worked seamlessly within the Center to enhance the effectiveness of statewide Civil War interpretation, preservation, education, and heritage tourism efforts. In 2008, the Center began to administer the Library of Congress’s Teaching with Primary Sources program in the state of Tennessee. The program has established itself as a leader in providing hands-on workshops and in-depth online resources for teachers across the state. In 2012, the Center began partnering with the National Trails Intermountain Region of the National Park Service to identify and document historic buildings associated with the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail. This partnership was extended in 2017 to include the Santa Fe Trail and the Mormon Pioneer Trail in 2020-2021. The national trails projects regularly take the Center and its students to projects throughout Tennessee and surrounding states, extending to the Midwest and Southwest.

We aggressively pursue our mission of training the next generation in the skills they need to compete for jobs nationally and to place students into impactful careers. To achieve this mission, we join with communities to interpret and promote their heritage assets through education, research, and preservation. We discuss with local and state officials and the private sector on how our work can enhance Tennessee communities through heritage tourism and smart historic preservation policy. Key to our pursuit of this mission are our MTSU graduate and undergraduate research assistants as well as other MTSU students who take historic preservation classes taught by Center faculty.

By working with so many collaboratively, 2020-2021 has been a productive year even as the impact of COVID-19 stretched into spring 2021. We worked with communities and groups to ensure that field visits and work could continue, starting in July 2020, with proper safety protocols in place. Once vaccinations became available, we took our shots and moved aggressively in April, May, and June 2021 to serve our students and audiences. We now want to share several of our major accomplishments.

Impacting the Nation

The Center prides itself in preparing MTSU students to gain the experience they need to work in all sorts of professional opportunities. Graduate Research Assistants from the Center upon graduation are always nationally competitive and work for history and design firms; state and local governments; federal agencies, non-profit organizations, and colleges and universities. They create their own success but the Center provides an invaluable platform for their training in preserving and telling the whole story of the past, especially in our community-anchored programs in rural communities and African
American communities. These graduates from the Center are constantly taking our message of reciprocal community engagement to every section of the nation.

Concerns about the pandemic delayed the field investigations for the historic buildings and structures assessment of the Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail. This partnership with the National Park Service, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Community of Christ church began in mid-April, with National Trails Historian Amy Kostine and Center Director Van West surveying the first half of the trail from Carthage, Illinois, to North Platte, Nebraska. Further assessment will take place in the fall of 2021, and then the second part of the survey will take the Center from central Nebraska to Salt Lake City.

National Trails Historian Amy Kostine documents a portion of the trail in Nebraska, work which included a log cabin, later used by the Pony Express, in Gothenburg, Nebraska.

Fieldwork at a Mississippi River bank campsite in Iowa began on a snowy April day.

To support a project to establish an Ethnic Community History Center in Butte, Montana, Center Director Van West participated in a community planning meeting at the Butte-Silver Bow County Archives in early June 2021. Butte, Montana, is a National Historic Landmark famous for its mining history and ethnic diversity. Tori Peck, an M.A. Research Assistant, carried out an internship with the project, a successful collaboration that led to an agreement between the Center, the Butte-Silver Bow County Archives, and Preserve Montana that will allow a Center graduate student to work every summer with the project for the next four years so the Ethnic History Center becomes a reality.
Center M.A. Research Assistant Tori Peck listens intently during a June 2021 tour of a historic Jewish synagogue in Butte, Montana, and then takes notes during the discussion of next steps for the Ethnic History Center at the Butte-Silver Bow County Archives.

**Addressing the history of those once silenced**

Ever since its Rural African American Churches of Tennessee documentary project of almost 25 years ago, African American communities and leaders have turned to the Center to ask for its assistance to preserve their invaluable but still too often neglected contributions to American history and culture. In 2004, The Center expanded its efforts to give greater voice to those once silenced by working with the Cherokee Nation and the Eastern Band of Cherokee on the public interpretation and preservation of properties associated with the Trail of Tears. Requests for assistance from once marginalized groups intensified in 2020-2021, but Center staff and students rose to meet the challenge from communities in Tennessee and Alabama, even during COVID-challenged times.

We continued partnership efforts to give greater voice and inclusion and identify neglected resources along the **Cherokee Trail of Tears National Historic Trail**, which stretches from Tennessee, North Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama to Oklahoma. This invaluable partnership involves the Cherokee Nation, the Eastern Band of Cherokee, the

Savannah Knies, Van West, Amy Kostine, Tori Peck, and Danielle Shelton during their work on the Georgetown Road segment of the Trail of Tears while Stefanie Haire climbed a ladder to record details for the National Register nomination of Brown’s Ferry Tavern in Hamilton County.
National Park Service, and scores of communities across Tennessee and the South. PhD Research Assistant Stefanie Haire worked with the Center's Amy Kostine and Dr. Van West to develop an updated and expanded nomination for the Brown's Ferry Tavern in Hamilton County, and then took a position with the Southeast Tennessee Development District. PhD Research Assistant Danielle Shelton finished her cultural landscape study of Red Clay State Park near Cleveland and then took a position with the U.S. Forest Service. Amy Kostine also prepared new interpretive panels for the Trail of Tears Heritage Center in Pulaski while she and Shelton collaborated on a National Register of Historic Places nomination for a Trail of Tears segment at Georgetown, Tennessee.

At the Macon County High School in Notasulga, Alabama, the Center worked with alumni, educators, and county officials to put together an interpretive site where visitors and residents could learn the school's compelling story, including a bombing by segregationists in April 1964 after African American children were first admitted. The school is associated with the legal landmark Civil Rights case Lee v. Macon County Board of Education, which set a new precedent for on-the-ground, federal enforcement of school integration.

In Selma, Alabama, the Center continued its Civil Rights history work. Dr. West and Ph.D. Research Assistant Kate Hughes met with city officials and local citizens to begin the process of nominating Elmwood Cemetery, a historic African American property, to the National Register of Historic Places.

Work on Elmwood Cemetery in Selma, Alabama, began on a muggy day in May 2021. PhD Research Assistant Phyllis Aztalos carried out document searches throughout the summer.
In Chattanooga, the Center continued its assistance to a city-supported citizens group wanting to landmark two historic African American cemeteries. The Center-prepared National Register nomination for **Beck's Knob Cemetery** was approved in May 2021.

In spring 2021, the Center’s Research Professor Dr. Stacey Graham carried out a public cemetery preservation workshop at Chattanooga’s historic African American cemetery, **Pleasant Garden Cemetery**, which was created during the Jim Crow period.

In Memphis, Dr. West joined with the Memphis Chamber of Commerce and Rhodes College to explore new priorities for the preservation and public interpretation of **Zion Cemetery**, the city’s largest historic African American cemetery that dates to the last years of Reconstruction. Listed in the National Register, Zion Cemetery needs to be better recognized and used as a heritage asset for the city and state.

Another effort at identifying key historic Black cemeteries and invaluable church records took place at **Bethel Missionary Baptist Church** in Rutherford County, where Dr. Van West and cemetery historian Dr. Michael Fletcher worked with Mary Watkins and Dr.

Mary Watkins speaks to Center faculty and staff at the original location of the historic Bethel Missionary Baptist Church.
Rosemary Owens of the Rutherford County African American Heritage Society to assess the cemetery's location as well as the historic location of the church building. Then M.A. Research Assistant Phillip Staffelli worked with the church historian to digitize the invaluable church records. M.A. student Alexis Matrone carried out a similar digitization project for the records at **Emery United Methodist Church**, also in Rutherford County. Another collaboration with the Rutherford County African American Heritage Society has led to the Fall 2020 Essentials of Historic Preservation seminar preparing research and analysis for a National Register nomination for the Jim Crow-era **Benevolent Cemetery** in Murfreesboro. In Clarksville, Dr. Stacey Graham carried out a hugely successful cemetery preservation workshop at the **Mt. Olive Cemetery**.

Two major African American history projects launched in Franklin in spring 2021. Dr. West worked with the property owners and the Williamson County African American Heritage Society to assess and then preserve the historic **Merrill-Williams House** on Natchez Street as a future heritage center about the history of Natchez Street--which the Center had placed on the National Register in 2004--as well as the history of the remarkable Williams family and its many contributions to the city. As part of the Natchez Street Cultural Corridor initiative, the Center again worked with the Williamson County African American Heritage Society and Shorter's Chapel AME Church on heritage development planning for the "**Green Book**" **House**, which is adjacent to the church. Dr. West's Spring 2021 Seminar in Historic Preservation class developed a heritage plan for the house's conversion into a historic site and neighborhood center. Dr. West prepared an initial interpretive handout that visitors receive at the property. Both projects will receive much attention over the next two years, as preservation steps are completed and exhibits are installed.

In Appalachia Tennessee, the Center has returned to assist local and state officials in the preservation and rebirth of the **Tanner Center**, a restored historic African American
Rosenwald School, in Newport. In April 2021, Dr. West met with the Tanner Center staff and government supporters to discuss plans for an installation of an exhibit on the history of the school and the adjacent African American neighborhood this fall.

The Tanner Center in Newport. From the left Mayor Roland Dykes III, State Representative Jeremy Faison and City Administrator James Finchum review the exhibit location with Dr. West.

An important rural Tennessee African American project happened outside of Portland, with the Center's Fieldwork Coordinator Savannah Knies and Ph.D. Research Assistant Meggan McCarthy preparing a National Register nomination for Parker's Chapel Baptist Church and Cemetery. The congregation formed c. 1865 and has been a center for African American religion, education, and community service ever since.

For educators in Tennessee and across the South, the Library of Congress continues to encourage and fund the Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS) Civil Rights Fellowship project. This partnership with TPS programs at Mars Hill University and the University of South Carolina, was reworked due to COVID delays to add a slate of virtual programming in the fall to introduce our eighteen fellows to best practices for teaching about the long arc of the history of the civil rights movement. In addition, M.A. Research Assistant October Kamara developed "I Didn’t Learn That!" guides. These guides tackle little-known topics, such as black abolitionists and the role of early African American churches, to provide materials that can supplement the textbook and enhance our program-wide focus on citizenship.
Preserving the Nation's Musical Heritage

The spring and early summer of 2021 returned the Center to its role of national leadership in the preservation of important properties associated with twentieth-century American popular music. In collaboration with the owners and Metro Nashville Historical Commission, Dr. West and Ph.D. Research Assistant Jen Ruch began the research and analysis for nomination of the Exit/In music club in Nashville to the National Register of Historic Places. Many music historians consider the Exit/In, the Troubadour in Los Angeles and the Bottom Line in New York City as the most important 1970s music clubs still operating in the nation. Ruch and West collaborated with the non-profit and nationally renowned Fiddlers' Jamboree in Smithville, Tennessee, to produce a history of the event for its 50th anniversary in the summer of 2021.

Dr. West also worked with MTSU music industry professor Charlie Dahan to nominate Cincinnati’s King Studios--where James Brown recorded--to the National Register while they met with local and state officials to being a similar National Register project for the Gennett Music Works in Richmond, Indiana.

Top left: The Exit/In Stage in Nashville. Top Right: The unassuming exterior of King Studios in Cincinnati. Bottom left: MTSU music industry professor Charlie Dahan talks with group at Gennett building in Richmond, Indiana. Bottom Right: Cover the Fiddlers' Jamboree History.
Providing Leadership for Tennessee’s Civil War Legacies

Over the past 20 years, the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area, which is housed at the Center for Historic Preservation, has become a go-to institution for communities, non-profit groups, government officials, and property owners who wish to join the Heritage Area’s efforts to “tell the whole story of America’s greatest challenge.”

Requests for assistance with the African American Civil War story also intensified in 2020-21, especially with cemeteries that date to either the pre-Civil War period or the Reconstruction era. Dr. Michael Fletcher met with concerned citizens and prepared a cemetery preservation and interpretation assessment for the Decherd Negro Cemetery in Franklin County and, at the request of State Representative Mike Sparks, a new assessment for the Evergreen Grave Yard in Murfreesboro. Dr. Fletcher and Dr. West also discussed possible solutions with Rep. Sparks in response to constituent concerns on the preservation of the adjacent Cemetery community. A new project for 2021-22 will be Mt Nebo Cemetery in Maury County, which developed out of the Great Revivals of the early 1800s. Dr. Fletcher will lead the analysis of the cemetery, which has separated White and Black sections, while Dr. Graham is planning a cemetery preservation workshop. In the summer of 2020 Dr. West visited the Haywood County Poor Farm (1868) outside of Brownsville and prepared an analysis of its history. The county commission next asked for the MTSU Geosciences Department to conduct ground penetrating radar to find the cemetery’s location.

Mt. Nebo Cemetery, Maury County

Haywood County Poor Farm meeting
The Matt Gardner Farm, the home of a freedman named Matt Gardner who established the farm by 1870 and contributed to many community institutions for the next 50 years, is a recognized Heritage Area property that is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. For 20 years the family operated the farm as a non-profit educational site but in the fall of 2021 the family asked the Heritage Area for help in creating a sustainable future for this invaluable property in Elkton, Giles County. The Heritage Area, in turn, asked the Land Trust for Tennessee to collaborate on possible solutions. Planning and assessment continued throughout the COVID year, with Heritage Area intern and M.A. Research Assistant Abby Coomes developing an inventory and assessment of the historic artifacts at the farm.

Left: Gardner family members discuss issues at the farm with Land Trust for Tennessee director Liz McLaurin and staff. Right: MTSU Graduate Research Assistants Abby Coomes and Kate Hughes assess a historic quilt at the Gardner Farm.

In southeast Tennessee, the Old Copper Road project, after delays due to the pandemic, is back on course. Assisted by Programs Manager Dr. Lydia Simpson the project provides preservation and public interpretation to a road that connected the Civil War-era copper mines at Ducktown to the railroad in Cleveland. Controlling the road and the mines were key to both Federal and Confederate officers during the Civil War. Dr. Simpson and Dr. Antoinette van Zelm, the Center's Assistant Director, also continued a comprehensive study of the Davies Plantation, a historic site in Shelby County.

Dr. Simpson and Dr. van Zelm along with Dr. West, Rutherford County Archivist John Lodl, and Graduate Assistant Philip Staffelli are preparing exhibits at the Civil War-era...
Rutherford County Courthouse. The exhibits will transform the courthouse into a “working museum” where the county’s whole story of accomplishments and challenges are interpreted. A major donation from a Rutherford County family, combined with objects from the Rutherford County African American Heritage Society will allow the museum to have a strong emphasis on county history before and after the Civil War.

The new courthouse exhibits will complement and expand the public programming at the Heritage Center of Murfreesboro and Rutherford County, which reached over 2,000 visitors despite being closed for almost four months and reopening under reduced visitation hours. This ongoing sustainable public/private partnership between the Heritage Area, City of Murfreesboro, Rutherford County government, and Main Street Murfreesboro served visitors and groups safely by following recommended protocols. It continued to host MTSU historic preservation classes, provide a hands-on learning laboratory for training MTSU students and serve as the meeting location of various county heritage groups. A new exhibit, “Rutherford County’s Farm Women and Families,” documenting the roles of women in the county’s agricultural development from the Civil War through the present, opened in the summer of 2021, while a new self-guided mobile tour of the historic downtown launched in fall 2021.

Toward the 250th of the American Revolution

In 2019-2020: the General Assembly set forth a new statewide heritage agenda with Tennessee’s plans to commemorate the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence. In December 2020 the newly formed Tennessee Commission for the Semiquincentennial of the United States named Dr. Carroll Van West as its initial chair. Throughout the summer of 2021, the commission has been developing its mission statement, its plan for community outreach meetings, and establishing a partnership with the America 250th Foundation.

The Center also continued its initiative to study intently key properties associated with the Revolutionary War period. Its focus in 2020-21 was Stony Point, almost 240 years old, located outside of Surgoinsville, Hawkins County. Center staff and graduate students have been painstakingly evaluating the house, its associated outbuildings, and its rich collections to inform the family owners on the next best steps to take.
Historic Preservation of Tennessee's Farms and Open Spaces

Our oldest historic preservation program, **Tennessee Century Farms**, welcomed 59 farms from 32 counties to the Tennessee Century Farms Program. The oldest is a Pioneer Century Farm, the Holston View Farm, founded in 1795 in Hawkins County. Also in the past year, Center Graduate Research Assistant Ethan Holden did a survey and in-depth report on the Century Farms in Wilson County, which has certified more than 100 farms, the most in the program’s history.

The Center also worked with urban and state parks on their preservation needs. At the request of Tennessee State Parks, Dr. West has assisted with the National Register nominations of the **Booker T. Washington State Park** outside of Chattanooga and the **T.O. Fuller State Park** in Memphis. He took his spring 2021 Seminar in Historic Preservation class to Shelby Park in Nashville, where they worked with the Friends of Shelby Park to produce a historic assessment of the National Register-listed **Naval Reserve Building** within the park boundaries.

**Best Practices for Tennessee Educators**

A new partnership developed suddenly in the pandemic when the Nashville Opera Association decided to produce its first filmed opera, "One Vote Won," which addressed the African American suffrage story of Tennessee. Nashville Opera asked Dr. West and PhD Research Assistant Layla Smallwood to create a **Teacher's Guide to One Vote Won**, with pertinent history and primary sources, which was distributed to educators across Tennessee.
Teaching with Primary Sources – MTSU, the Tennessee affiliate of the Library of Congress’s nationwide education outreach consortium, continued to connect with educators although the pandemic meant that most sessions and workshops were online. We introduced several new programs and approaches. The webinar series, “Digging In,” in which we take a closer look at each month’s newsletter resources, has led us to make these events part of our monthly schedule. Like most of our other online events, we archive these webinars on the TPS-MTSU YouTube channel, so educators can watch when they can and still receive professional development credit. Other educators joined us in reading Jill Lepore’s These Truths: A History of the United States. Ph.D. Research Assistant Layla Smallwood created resource guides to accompany each chapter, and the group met four times over Zoom for in-depth discussion. Our partnership with the East Tennessee Historical Society developed “watch party,” in which participants joined us (again via Zoom) as we watched the first three episodes of the Netflix docu-series Amend, followed by a discussion of themes and resources.

Partnerships, in particular the Tennessee Historical Society (THS), the East Tennessee Historical Society (ETHS), and the Discover Tennessee History collaborative remain central to the program. We support THS' Tennessee History Day program with webinars, resources, and mentoring. With ETHS we offered content-based webinars on such topics as manifest destiny, a thematic approach to revolutions in history, and the World War II homefront, with contributions from PhD Research Assistant Colbi Layne Hogan. We provide both support and content to the Discover TN History webinar series, which has enjoyed steady viewership through the TPS-MTSU YouTube channel. In addition to a variety of virtual events, TPS-MTSU has continued to add value to its Web site (library.mtsu.edu/tps) through primary source sets, lesson plans, newsletters, and tools, helping educators and students during this pandemic period. We plan to continue to disseminate resources and professional development opportunities through the internet, and to carefully reintroduce in-person events in the coming year.

Digital Humanities Scholarship and Outreach

Digital Humanities at the Center means not only informative websites, such as the award-winning Shades of Gray and Blue and Trials, Triumphs, and Transformations, but it also means community outreach and student training. The foundation of the program is the MTSU James E. Walker Library’s Southern Places collection, which includes significant historic sites that have been researched and recorded during more than thirty-eight years of field work by Center faculty, staff, and students. With over 3000 objects, it includes significant images and histories related to the Civil Rights Movement, Rosenwald Schools, Tennessee’s Jewish Heritage, Southern Music, and rural African American churches in Tennessee. Dr. Susan Knowles who established this initiative in 2010, retired in the summer of 2021. Her contributions were invaluable and will be sorely missed.
Benchmarks, 2020-2021

Awards

Peer-Reviewed Books, Chapters, Articles, Booklets:


Professional Digital Publications and Websites:


Professional Exhibits, Research Reports, National Register Nominations:

Holder, Laura S. Rutherford County’s Farm Women and Families exhibit. Prepared for the Heritage Center of Murfreesboro and Rutherford County, June 2021.


van Zelm, Antoinette G. *In the Footsteps of Notable Women: A Self-Guided Tour of Rutherford County* (revised and updated for woman suffrage centennial), August 2020.


Professional Papers and Presentations


Kostine, Amy M. “Rivers, Rails & Roads: Transportation During the Cherokee Removal, 1837-1839.” Teaching with Primary Sources-Middle Tennessee State University Discovery Tennessee History Series, March 2021.


Professional Teacher Workshops and Curricula


Graham, Stacey R. “Cemetery Preservation Workshop.” In-person presentation followed by on-site workshop, Clarksville, October 2020; and virtual presentation followed by on-site workshop, Chattanooga, March 2021.


**Professional Recognition:**

Duke, Kira V.
Tennessee Council for History Education: Board Member
Discover Tennessee History Consortium Member

Holder, Laura S.
Secretary, Battle of Franklin Trust Executive Committee
Board Member, Battle of Franklin Trust Board of Directors
Franklin’s Charge, Inc. Board of Directors
McLemore House African American Museum Tourism Committee

Knowles, Susan W.
Friends of Tennessee State Library & Archives: President, Board of Directors,
Humanities Tennessee: Advisory Committee for Nashville Humanities Alliance

Kostine, Amy M.
Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation: Board of Directors

van Zelm, Antoinette G.
MTSU President’s Commission on the Status of Women.
Southern Association for Women Historians (SAWH), 2nd Vice President and
Professional Development Committee.
Manuscript reviewer for University of Tennessee Press, Journal of Women’s History, and
Tennessee Historical Quarterly.

West, Carroll Van
Tennessee State Historian, appointed 2013
Chair, Tennessee Semiquincentennial Commission, appointed 2020
National Historic Landmarks Committee, National Park Service
Board of National Advisors, National Trust for Historic Preservation
Board of Advisors, Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts
Board of Advisors, Oak Ridge Atomic Energy Museum
Board Member, Shiloh Community Restoration Foundation (AL)
Manuscript Reviewer, Vanderbilt University Press, University of Tennessee Press
Preservation Education and Research
Faculty and Staff of the Center for Historic Preservation

Dr. Carroll Van West, Director
Dr. Antoinette van Zelm, Assistant Director
Dr. Stacey Graham, Associate Research Professor
Dr. Lydia Simpson, Programs Manager
Kira Duke, Education Specialist
Savannah Grandey Knies, Fieldwork Coordinator
Dr. Susan Knowles, Digital Humanities Fellow
Dr. Crystal de Gregory, Research Fellow
Amy Kostine, National Trails Historian
Laura Holder, Heritage Area Federal Liaison
Alexandria McMahan, Executive Aide
Krystal Marin, Interim Secretary

MTSU Graduate Research Assistants, 2020-2021

Ph.D. students
Phyllis Asztalos
Stefanie Haire
Mandy Hamilton
Victoria Hensley
Colbi Layne Hogan (graduated August 2021)
Ethan Holden
Kate Hughes
Robby Kurtz
Meggan McCarthy
Steph McDougal
Brandon Owens (graduated December 2020)
Jennifer (Jenn) Ruch
Danielle Shelton (graduated August 2021)
Layla Smallwood

M.A. Students
Noha El-Bobou
October Kamara
Keneisha Mosley (graduated May 2021)
Danielle O'Brien
Tori Peck
Phillip Staffelli (graduated August 2021)
## Schedule 7

### CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE ACTUAL, PROPOSED, AND REQUESTED BUDGET

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<tr>
<td>Carryover from Previous Matching</td>
<td>$15,405</td>
<td>$15,405</td>
<td>$4,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Revenue</td>
<td>$483,586 $179,900 $663,486</td>
<td>$497,283 $184,800 $682,083</td>
<td>$573,236 $184,800 $758,036</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>