
OHMAR Newsletter

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DELAWARE TO HOST FALL OHMAR CONFERENCE

The First State will welcome OHMAR members for the first time in nearly a decade when they gather for the fall conference Saturday, October 14 in Wilmington. As always, the program will feature the presentation of the Forrest Pogue Award. This year's winner is Pamela M. Henson, director of the Institutional History Division of the Office of Smithsonian Archives.

The Historical Society of Delaware will host the event at the Delaware History Center, 506 Market Street. Registration, along with coffee and doughnuts to reward early attendance, will begin at 8:30 a.m., and the program will continue until 4 p.m.

Keynote speaker for the conference will be Howard L. Green of the New Jersey Historical Commission, who will present "You Want History? Now Here's History: The Many Varieties of Oral History."

The program will spotlight Delaware oral history projects and oral historians, including Jennifer Dolde, curator of the Delaware Agriculture Museum and Village; Annette Woolard, assistant director of the Historical Society of Delaware; Kim Burdick, Delaware folklorist; and Jim Newton of the University of Delaware.

At the noon hour, Lewis M. Purnell, chairperson of the Delaware Oral History Network, will lead a brainstorming session on "What needs to be done in Delaware."

Following presentation of the Pogue award, the conference will offer two workshops: a beginners' workshop, instructed by Donita Moorhus, partner in R&D Associates, Alexandria, Va.; and an advanced workshop, led by Roger Horowitz of the Hagley Museum and Library, addressing the topic "The Questions We Ask: Oral History, Patriotism, and World War II."

Fall is a special time to visit northern Delaware. The Brandywine Valley offers what has

been called "an embarrassment of riches." In addition to the beautiful setting all around Wilmington, the area boasts such world-class museums as Wintherthur, Longwood Gardens, the Brandywine River Museum, and the Hagley Museum. The newest addition to this prestigious roll call is the Delaware History Museum, where the conference will take place. The museum, operated by the Historical Society of Delaware, features exhibits on Delaware and its people.

The Wilmington area offers a range of places to stay. The Holiday Inn, 700 King St., (302) 655-0400, is closest to the meeting room and has singles and doubles available October 13 and 14 for a special OHMAR rate of \$60 per night. The DuPont Hotel, 100 W. 11th Street, (302) 594-3100, is also nearby, with singles or doubles priced at \$139.50. For further information on local arrangements, call Ellen Rendle (302) 655-7161.

The Forrest Pogue Award

The Forrest Pogue Award, presented annually by OHMAR, is named for the man who pioneered oral history in combat during World War II and served as an early president of the Oral History Association. The award recognizes outstanding and continuing contributions to oral history.

Pamela M. Henson, this year's winner, has been active in oral history since the 1970s. She served as president of OHMAR in 1981 and as a member of OHA's membership, publication, and nominating committees, as well as ad hoc committees to revise guidelines on evaluation, principles, and standards. Her degrees include B.A. and M.A. in American Studies from George Washington University and a Ph.D. in History and Philosophy of Science from the University of Maryland. She is the author of numerous articles, including several on videohistory. She is also a member of Potomac Craftsmen.

Editor's Marks

You'd better get used to it: for the next three years--or until the OHMAR Board fires me and finds another volunteer--you're my captive audience. If I went easy on you in the first issue, it was because I wanted to make sure that the big story, our joint meeting with MARAC, was the central focus.

Of course, I'll welcome your comments and ideas. I hope for the next three years we can use the *OHMAR Newsletter* as a forum, a sort of printernet, to exchange ideas about the practice of oral history, what it means to do oral history, and how we should deal with the materials we gather in the course of the oral history process.

First and foremost, the *Newsletter* is the voice of its membership. We need information about programs, projects, grants, and activities, and we can only get that from you. We invite those members in grantmaking institutions to keep us apprised of oral history projects that they find or come upon in their travels. We invite all of you who are conducting oral histories to share your experiences and accomplishments with us.

Have you produced a book? An exhibit? A video, film, stage, or radio production? Let us know, and we'll talk about it. If we can, we'll assign a reviewer so we can discuss and describe it in these pages.

Are you planning a workshop? We represent a seven-state region, and we are eager to let our members in all of our far-flung communities know about the opportunities to learn and expand their oral history horizons.

Would you like to review a book? An exhibit? Submit an article?

In the next months, I'll try to prod the people I know are active in the hopes that they will want to describe their work to our audience. At the same time, I hope to hear from members on a regular basis.

In subsequent issues, this column will address some of the editor's concerns about oral history. I hope we can expand conversation among a group of people who make their living or pass their time asking questions and listening.

Get to your computers. I'm waiting!

Joel R. Gardner, Editor

The OHMAR Newsletter is published three times a year by Oral History for the Mid-Atlantic Region, an affiliate of the Oral History Association. Send articles, news, or books to be reviewed to Joel R. Gardner, Gardner Associates, 1060 N. Kings Hwy #315, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034. Deadlines are January 15, June 15, and October 15.

Newsletter ad rates for a one-time ad are as follows: Business card \$25; Half-page \$50, Full page \$75.

OHMAR News

Workshop Committee Chooses

Wilson College Group for First Award

The OHMAR Workshop Committee and the OHMAR Board have selected the Wilson College Alumnae Preservation Committee, Chambersburg, Pa., as the first recipient of an OHMAR pro bono workshop.

The college, which has been in existence for 125 years, has a rich tradition of educating women, but until 1976 it had no archives, no formal archival history, and no centralized location for collecting items related to its history. The Preservation Committee was formed when a group of alumnae banded together in the early 1980s, following the threatened closing of the college and the subsequent decision to keep it open.

The application was submitted by Kay Ackerman, assistant professor of history and acting archivist at the college, and Beth Alphin, director of alumnae programs. The Preservation Committee hopes to acquire oral history skills in order to interview older alumnae who can share their knowledge of the college, its history, and important events over the past sixty to seventy years.

The award is the culmination of three years of work by the Workshop Committee, chaired first by Martha Ross and then by Brien Williams. The committee wrestled with guidelines and procedures before opening the application process. OHMAR hopes to offer two pro bono workshops in 1996.

OHMAR NEWSLETTER

SPECIAL INSERT

OHMAR FALL CONFERENCE



Saturday, October 14, 1995

***Delaware History Center, Historical Society
of Delaware, 506 Market Street, Wilmington***

OHMAR FALL CONFERENCE

**DELAWARE HISTORY CENTER, HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF
DELAWARE, 506 MARKET ST.
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE**

PROGRAM

8:30 a.m. Registration, Coffee, and Doughnuts

9-9:15 a.m. Welcome.

9:15-9:30 a.m. Plenary Session. "You Want History? Now Here's History: The Many Varieties of Oral History." Howard L. Green, New Jersey Historical Commission.

10 a.m.-noon. Delaware Oral History Projects
Century Farm Family Project, Delaware Agriculture Museum and Village, Jennifer Dolde, Curator.
World War II Project, Historical Society of Delaware, Annette Woolard, Assistant Director.
Ghost Stories, Delaware Folklore Program, Kim Burdick, Folklorist
Getting Information from People of African American Descent, Jim Newton, University of Delaware.

Noon-1:30 p.m. Lunch on your own in the city or box lunch available for \$5.50

"What Needs to be Done in Delaware." Lewis M. Purnell, Chair,
Delaware Oral History Network.

1-1:30 p.m. OHMAR Business Meeting

1:30-2:15 p.m. Forrest Pogue Award. Pamela M. Henson, Director, Institutional History Division, Office of Smithsonian Institution Archives.

2:30-4 p.m. Concurrent Workshops

Beginner Workshop, Donita Moorhus, Partner, R&D Associates,
Alexandria, Va.

Advanced Workshop, Roger Horowitz, Hagley Museum and Library.
"The Questions We Ask: Oral History, Patriotism, and World War II."

life on the waterway. Thus, it "brings back the Bay" to and for the memories of those who have lived on it and with it.

The title also carries the environmental message for people to heed the warning signs of its destruction and to make the changes necessary to bring back the Bay to a truly healthy life-sustaining state. There is nothing pedantic or preachy about the way this call is made here. Cautionary quotes from people working with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation periodically convey the specific issues and describe the environmental education programs the Foundation conducts in promoting remedial action and environmentally prudent community decision making.

Though the excerpts from the oral history interviews are not necessarily descriptive of nearby photographs, they are always complementary and do provide descriptions and stories of this water-centered life. Captions provide the reader just enough information as to subject, time, and location. For the more curious and for the professional photographer, the "Photographer's Commentaries" at the end of the book provide a plethora of information that would have otherwise made the main body of the book cumbersome. The commentaries contain Marion Warren's descriptions of each photo, circumstances around the shoot, as well as Maryland Archive catalog numbers. In addition, short biographies of the narrators appear at the end. These sections are an archivist's dream.

As unfortunately is often the case in so many otherwise excellent regional histories, the book lacks a good map of the region. Various aerial photos serve to show the grandness and scale of the bays, the marshes, the fragile wetlands with their myriad fingers of streams, but the inability to flip to a map and place Smith Island, Ewell, Taylor's Island, or Annapolis, or to relate Maryland to Pennsylvania and Virginia in this part of the United States was frustrating to this reviewer.

Overall, this is a fine example of the meshing of folklore and oral history, and much of the lore is woven throughout the text. We are advised, however, in the very first quote of the book--by narrator Larry Chowning--that "I don't think it matters whether it's true or not. If you're collecting stories you're going to get embellishments. My job is simply to present the information as it's given. Embellishment is what oral history is all about. That's part of the problem with the Chesapeake.

Not much was written about it, when you look at the scope of it and how long it's been around. So we have to write down what's available to us. We don't have to accept it as the gospel truth." Gene Cronin also cautions, "The legends should not be lost, but they should not be recited as fact."

Bringing Back the Bay is a tribute, compiled by loving hands, to a life, a career, and a waterway. It is all this and also a tribute to the relationship of a father and a daughter working and traveling the Bay region together. One is also reminded through Mame Warren's words about the fact that the joint project represents part of the continuity in her life. "I often joke that as a child I thought we needed passports to cross the state line, so seldom did our family leave Maryland. We rarely stayed home, however. Every weekend we were off exploring some obscure community, traveling back roads that seemed to lead nowhere, but they always offered a picture opportunity when we stopped." This book is as much about tradition in the Warren family as it is about the traditions in the Chesapeake Bay.

Anne M. Gefell is an independent scholar whose oral history background includes a project on the St. Lawrence Seaway.

Book Notes

Fifty Years of Building Community: the Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation describes the philanthropy founded in 1944 by Eugene Meyer, financier, adviser to presidents, and ultimately the publisher of the *Washington Post*, and his wife, a community activist. Written by Kathryn Schneider Smith, who described the project at the Spring 1994 OHMAR Conference, the book uses oral histories to complement documentary records. Although it is clearly a promotional piece, this handsome, oversize, 100-page softcover book provides a worthwhile glimpse into the origin and maintenance of an important philanthropic institution.

Publications

Avril Johnson Madison, director of the Voting Rights Oral History Project at Howard University's Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, published an interview with Dorothy Porter Wesley in the Winter 1995 issue of *The Public Historian*.