Image courtesy of Jack Himel, taken in Providence, Rhode Island during the 2026 AASLH-NCPH Joint National Conference

PUBLIC HISTORY
UL LAFAYETTE
Community-Engaged History

The Public Record:
News from UL Public History

VOL. 1 | NO. 2 | FALL 2026

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From the Director

UNIVERSITY of LOUISIANA LAFAYETTE



DR. IAN BEAMISH
Associate Professor &
Director of Public History
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I am eager to share the many exciting updates from the UL Public History program since we sent out our first issue of *The Public Record* in March. As you will see in the rest of this issue, our students have been doing excellent work in a variety of internships and capstone projects that have taken them from San Diego to Oxford, England. Public historians Marissa Petrou and Sarah Rodriguez, along with College of Liberal Arts Dean Ani Kokobobo and English professor Em Kightley, are leading a major 18-month Mellon Foundation grant. The Museum on the Move, a pillar of our program since 2013 (based in a 1954 Airstream!), is spending the year in Arizona for a complete overhaul. Theodore Foster III is in his second year of a postdoctoral fellowship at the Center for Civil Rights History and Research. We have established an Alumni Advisory Council to help provide additional perspective on the future of the program. I am excited for you to read about all of these things (and many more) in this issue.

From the Associate Director



SARAH I. RODRIGUEZ
Associate Director of Public History
& the Guilbeau Center
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We have had a busy summer in UL Public History, which moved into an equally busy and exciting semester. Over the summer, I worked with the Public History Program Coordinator, Lindsey Foreman, to design and purchase cool UL Public History swag for the NCPH-AASLH Conference in September. We got badge ribbons, stickers, embossed power banks, pens, notebooks, and more! For the Guilbeau Center, the summer UGRA Codi Falterman successfully jumped headfirst into Adobe Premiere Pro to edit and finalize the recordings of the Louisiana Historical Association's 2026 conference sessions, which we were able to send to LHA for them to post on YouTube. The Center is joined this fall by GA Connor Cruse and UGRAs Sydney Spiers and Ava Arnold. I have enjoyed getting to work with them so far on assisting the campus and surrounding community with their public history and other documentary projects, collaborating with interns for the Southwest Louisiana LGBTQ+ Archive on their Mellon Foundation-funded outreach project, hosting an open house for the Center, and redesigning exhibits on the 5th floor of Griffin in the History, Geography, & Philosophy department. My favorite part of this semester so far has been getting to chat with new and continuing undergraduate and graduate students in the department who stop by my office. It's a fun change from the quiet summers in Griffin!

Ruth Foote Memorial Scholarship



We have a new scholarship coming online. The Ruth Foote Memorial Endowed Graduate Scholarship supports students pursuing a graduate degree in Public History. Established to honor the late Ruth Anita Foote, an award-winning journalist and historian dedicated to preserving Louisiana's Black and Creole histories, the scholarship provides financial support to students pursuing their academic and professional goals. You can donate to the scholarship fund via: → *tinyurl.com/ruthfoote*

Photo by Milton Arceneaux.

Dr. Jim Coby Receives Guilbeau Collections Research Grant



Dr. Jim Coby, Associate Professor of English at Indiana University Kokomo, has received the Jamie and Thelma Guilbeau UL Lafayette Collections Research Grant. Funded by the Guilbeau Charitable Trust, the grant supports outside researchers working with UL's archival holdings, including the University Archives and Acadiana Manuscripts Collections, Ernest J. Gaines Center, Cajun and Creole Music Collection, Center for Louisiana Studies, and Guilbeau Center for Public History. Dr. Coby will visit the Ernest J. Gaines Center to explore connections between literature of the American South and Southern Hemisphere, examining shared themes of wartime experiences, race, and environmental concerns in the work of Louisiana author Ernest J. Gaines.

Guilbeau Professional Development Grant

The Guilbeau Charitable Trust offers the Guilbeau Professional Development Grant for alumni of the UL Public History MA program. Funds may be used for:

- training workshops
- conferences
- professional courses
- skill development opportunities

Funds should be spent within 12 months of award and recipients will be asked to send documentation of how the funds were used in order to be eligible for future grants.

To Apply:

Submit a one-page proposal, brief budget, your graduation year, and CV/resume to sarah.rodriguez@louisiana.edu.

Award amount:
up to $750

Application deadline:
July 1, 2027

Career Resources

American Alliance of Museums
→ *aam-us-jobs.careerwebsite.com*

National Council on Public History
→ *ncph.org/jobs*

Southeastern Museums Conference
→ *semcdirect.net/jobs*

MuseWeekly
→ *udel.edu*

PreserveNet
→ *preservenet.org*

For Employers

Submit jobs, internships, and announcements for UL Public History students and alumni. Contact:

sarah.rodriguez@louisiana.edu

Program Mission

- Train students for public history practice through shared authority, civic engagement, and reflexive educational work.
- Support public history work across Louisiana and beyond through community-driven fieldwork and public engagement.
- Promote ethical, inclusive historical work rooted in relationships, reciprocity, and responsibility.

Graduating Fall 2026
M.A. in History - Public History Concentration



Ashley Birdsall

Capstone: "A Lady's Natural Science," research on a 19th-century chemist & mineralogist in partnership with the Oxford History of Science Museum

Research: Women, gender, and sexuality studies; history of science and early modern English history.

Career goals: Museums and archives; with a dream job in colonial history.



Connor Cruse

Research: American public history

Current project: Historic Black Descendant Communities Initiative, in partnership with Iberia African American Historical Society (IAAHS)

Connor is graduating with experience in oral history, community history, and digital archiving, and is looking for jobs in the industry!



Madelynn Dunn

Research: Military history, particularly WWII, Vietnam, and the Marine Corps.

Continuing Graduate Students
M.A. in History - Public History Concentration



Ethan Campisi

Current Research: 19th- and 20th-century Indigenous and American history

Focus: The Federal Indian Boarding School System and Indigenous involvement in American sports culture

Graduating 2028



Emily Lindner

Current project: Digitizing St. Landry parish records (Center for Louisiana Studies); research on the origins of the Rougarou in Louisiana folklore

Graduating Spring 2027



Morgan Pierce

Capstone: *Louisiana Music Minutes* and *This Day in Louisiana Music* (Louisiana Music Museum)

Research: Oral history and community archives; LGBTQ+ history; gender and women's history; Civil War and Lost Cause memory

Producer: Zoom In Zoom Out (KRVS 88.7 FM)

Graduating Spring 2027



Abby Thibodaux

Research: Women, gender, and sexuality history.

Graduating Spring 2028

Public History Minors



Jack Himel

Research: Cajun identity and its intersections with popular culture in film, television, and comic books.

President of the History Graduate Student Association (HGSA).

Graduating Spring 2027



Ezra Jett

Research: American labor history; 20th century radicalism; intentional communities; Southern history

Vice President of Phi Alpha Theta (PAT)

Graduating Spring 2027



Left to Right: Dr. Nichole Stanford, Ezra Jett, Jack Himel, and Morgan Pierce at La Poussierre Cajun Dance Hall in Breaux Bridge, LA for the Chubby Carrier Birthday Bash, June 27, 2026.



Left to Right: Morgan Pierce and Grammy Award-winning Zydeco artist Chubby Carrier at his Birthday Bash at La Poussiere Cajun Dance Hall in Breaux Bridge, LA June 27, 2026.



Left to Right: Alex Robinson and Morgan Pierce at Tipitina's in New Orleans for Grammy Award-winning band Lost Bayou Ramblers June 13, 2026.

MORGAN PIERCE

Summer 2026 Intern, Center for Louisiana Studies

This summer, I completed my Public History practicum with the Center for Louisiana Studies, documenting Louisiana's living musical traditions through oral history interviews, live performance recordings, photography, and videography. Working with musicians across the state, I collected interviews and archival documentation that will be preserved as part of a dedicated collection at the Center for Louisiana Studies. The experience strengthened my skills in oral history, audiovisual documentation, archival preservation, and community engagement while laying the groundwork for my M.A. capstone with the Louisiana Music Museum. The project continues through ongoing interviews and public history initiatives with community partners.

CONNOR CRUSE

Summer 2026 Intern, Iberia African American Historical Society



I was the collections and operations intern for the Iberia African American Historical Society (IAAHS) at the Shadows on the Teche in New Iberia. During the summer I was responsible for digitizing and archiving a 700+ item personal family collection from the Hadnott family. The Hadnotts are a very prominent Black family from New Iberia, whose experiences from the 1960s to the 2010s include having one of the very first Black graduate students at LSU, working from the very beginning at segregated and then integrated schools in Iberia Parish, organizing women's clubs and hospital volunteer organizations, and serving as one of the first Black administrators in the government of New Iberia. I was also responsible for working with various community partners, including the UL anthropology department and several historically Black descendant churches with projects of their own, including books, surveys, and interviews. It was a very interesting and informative summer, and I learned an absolute ton about what it is actually like to work in public history serving underrepresented historical communities. I hope to continue that work once I graduate in the winter!

PHI ALPHA THETA AT FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL

On April 25, 2026, Phi Alpha Theta students volunteered in Artist Hospitality at the Musician's Village Café during Festival International de Louisiane. The students helped welcome and assist visiting musicians during the festival.



Public History Goes to Providence

In September, UL Lafayette Public History traveled to Providence, Rhode Island, for the 2026 joint conference of the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) and the National Council on Public History (NCPH), bringing along hundreds of stickers, badge ribbons, collectible cards highlighting program projects, and other giveaway items. UL Lafayette was there with a sponsored booth to share the program's work and connect with potential collaborators.



Visitors to the UL booth entered raffles held on two separate days, with prizes awarded to two participants. To enter, visitors were invited to write down any memory they wanted to preserve. Responses included memories of loved ones and time spent with family, places that held personal significance, protests and important events, and even experiences from the conference itself. Among the many thoughtful and heartfelt responses, one that stood out was from a mother who wrote about how proud she was that her son had presented his research at the conference's poster exhibition.



UL Public History students, staff, and faculty attended sessions and workshops throughout the conference. Topics varied widely, from museum projects and artificial intelligence to Black genealogy, Latino immigration history, LGBTQ+ oral histories, and community efforts to preserve underrepresented histories.



UL Public History also hosted a couple of opportunities to get together outside the conference. On Wednesday afternoon, attendees were invited to Bolt Coffee for "Panic Work + Coffee," a chance to catch up on last-minute work, share a little conference-related panic, and enjoy some coffee in good company. On Friday evening, UL Public History hosted a group dinner at Mill's Tavern, a short walk from the convention center, across the river near the Rhode Island School of Design. Students and public history professionals shared a meal and talked about their work and experiences, sometimes beginning the evening as strangers and leaving as friends.

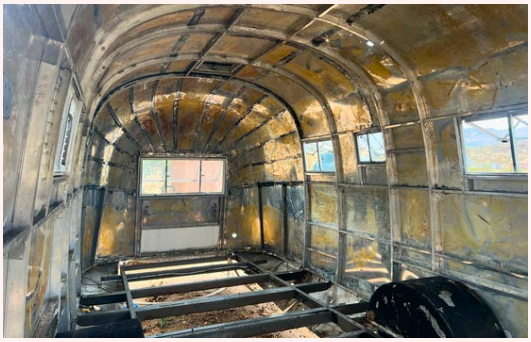


Students returned to Lafayette with new ideas from sessions and workshops, connections to peers and professionals in the field, and hopes of participating again in the future.

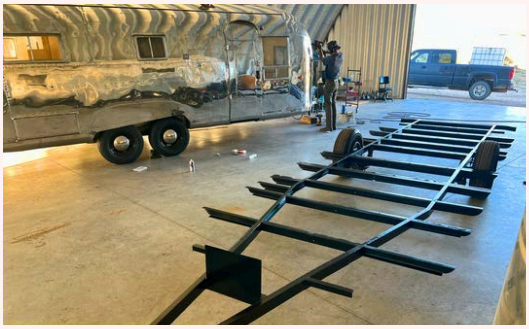
















Past in Motion, Future in Focus: Museum on the Move for the Next 15 Years



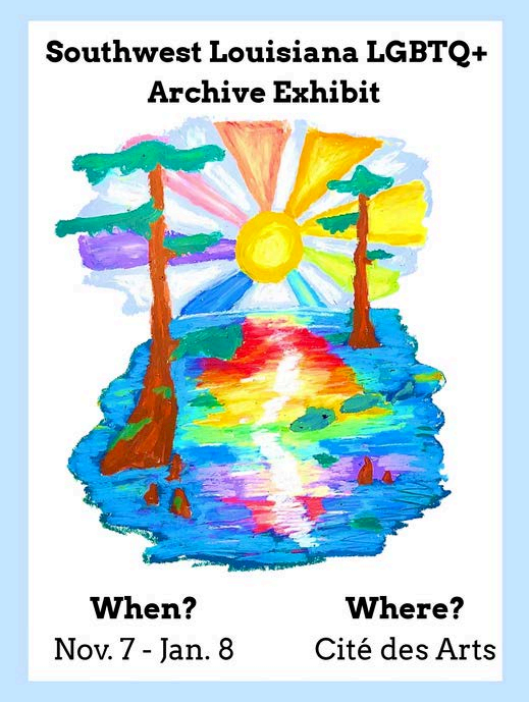
Since 2013, UL Public History has operated a 1954 Airstream as the Museum on the Move, traveling all over Louisiana to bring history to festivals, libraries, and even the state Capitol *(see the full timeline here!)*. After over a decade of service, the MotM desperately needs repairs (from broken windows to major structural issues) and modernization to continue to operate in the challenging Louisiana environment. On September 10, the Airstream hit the road, headed to Arizona where Patina Restorations will spend nearly eight months helping the program create a second life for the MotM. After the work, funded by years of saved funds from the Guilbeau Charitable Trust, which also covered the initial purchase of the Airstream, is complete in the spring, the MotM will return ready for the next fifteen years of public history students. With solar, battery, and generator power, the upgraded MotM will operate fully off-grid, indoors or outdoors, and across long distances. Capable of hosting a wide range of exhibits, from multimedia-focused to quick pop-ups, the new flexible setup prioritizes increased accessibility, the ability to easily install and swap materials, and ease of use. Special thanks go out to all of the faculty, staff, students, alumni, and stakeholders who spent time over the past year helping reenvision the museum for its next phase. We look forward to bringing the museum to you soon!

Meet Our Public History UGRA

Lindsey Foreman is an undergraduate majoring in History and Spanish, expecting to graduate in December 2026. Her research interests center on Latin American identities and the relationships between languages, cultures, and migration across borders. Since becoming the Public History Undergraduate Research Assistant (UGRA) in January 2026, Lindsey has produced the first two issues of *The Public Record* (including the one you're reading right now!), handling the design, editing, and gathering contributions from students, faculty, and alumni. For the September AASLH-NCPH Joint Conference in Providence, Rhode Island, she planned and assembled the program's exhibit booth and created promotional materials including bookmarks, stickers, collectible cards, a banner, and digital advertisements. Outside the conference, she organized a group dinner at Mill's Tavern and "Panic Work + Coffee" at Bolt Coffee. Most recently, she has been helping organize a November collections workshop featuring guest speakers and a hands-on activity. More details coming soon!



Lindsey Foreman with promotional items she designed for the UL Public History program's exhibit booth at the 2026 AASLH-NCPH joint national conference.



Artist: S. Burrell, student intern



Advancing the Southwest Louisiana LGBTQ+ Archive

Public History faculty Dr. Marissa Petrou and Associate Director Sarah I. Rodriguez are collaborating with English professor Dr. Em Kightley and Dean of the College of Liberal Arts Dr. Ani Kokobobo on an 18-month grant from the Mellon Foundation to advance the Southwest Louisiana LGBTQ+ Archive. Dr. Petrou and Dr. Kightley are teaching a course this semester to 12 undergraduate and graduate students who will complete a one-year internship for the Archive. Students are collaborating with the campus organization *UL GLASS*, as well as with *Acadiana Queer Collective* and *Acadiana Cares*, two local organizations that have donated materials to the archive. By connecting classroom learning with hands-on archival research and community collaboration, the project gives students practical experience in oral history, digitization, archival description, community engagement, and exhibit development while helping them develop the skills to preserve and share underrepresented stories. Sarah and the Guilbeau Center are providing equipment, oral history and archiving expertise, and administrative support to the student interns in service of ensuring that LGBTQ+ histories are not only preserved but also made accessible to the communities whose experiences they reflect. Keep an eye out for the student-created exhibit highlighting stories and objects from the archive showing at Cité des Arts in Downtown Lafayette from November 7 through January 8.

Ezra Jett Presents Research on the 1868 Opelousas Massacre



Images courtesy of Mary Baudoin, History grad student



On September 28, UL Lafayette history graduate student Ezra Jett presented their research on the 1868 Opelousas Massacre at the Opelousas Museum, marking the 158th anniversary of the event. Jett spent the summer completing a practicum at the museum, where they researched the massacre, one of Louisiana's most violent episodes of voter suppression during Reconstruction. Their work involved identifying key individuals, mapping important locations, and examining the political and social climate surrounding the violence, in which more than 200 Black citizens were murdered by white supremacists. During their presentation, Jett shared their findings with community members and explored the massacre's lasting significance for voting rights and political participation. Originally from Vernon Parish, Jett earned their bachelor's degree in history from Northwestern State University in 2025 and is currently pursuing their M.A. in History at UL Lafayette.

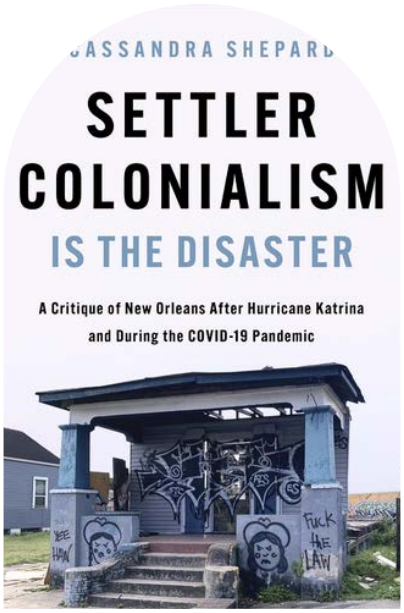
Dr. Theodore Foster III Discusses Louisiana's Civil Rights Trail



On September 19, UL Lafayette history professor Dr. Theodore Foster III presented on the Louisiana Civil Rights Trail at the Opelousas Museum and Interpretive Center. Foster discussed how the making of the trail reproduces broader problems with remembering the modern Civil Rights Movement through tourism, racial icons, popular images, individual names, and events. His talk considered what aspects of Black life fall in and out of the narrative of civil rights, both in Louisiana and beyond. The presentation was part of the museum's “Opelousas, Up Close and Personal” speaker series. Foster is currently on sabbatical as a postdoctoral Civil Rights Scholar research fellow at the University of South Carolina.

Dr. Cassandra Shepard Discusses Settler Colonialism & Katrina

On September 21, Dr. Cassandra Shepard gave an author talk and discussion at the Ernest J. Gaines Center on her recently published book, *Settler Colonialism Is the Disaster: A Critique of New Orleans After Katrina and During the COVID-19 Pandemic* (2026). Shepard, an assistant professor of African American Diaspora Studies at Xavier University of Louisiana, examines how the conditions that naturalize disaster and catastrophe are rooted in settler colonialism and slavery's afterlife as ongoing processes rather than concluded events. The talk was part of the Map to Black Studies Library Collections Development Project, which seeks to expand access to Black Studies scholarship across disciplines.





Dr. Cassandra Shepard (left) and Cheylon Woods, Head of the Ernest J. Gaines center (right). Image courtesy of Dr. Theodore Foster.

Alumni Advisory Council

UL Lafayette Public History has established an Alumni Advisory Council to strengthen connections between the students and the professional field. Council members bring experience in museums, archives, historic preservation, and historical consulting, offering guidance on career preparation and opportunities for students and alumni. The council held its first meeting this fall and plans to meet again in the spring.



ADAM FOREMAN

Dr. Adam Foreman has more than two decades of experience leading museums and historic sites. Currently, he is the Executive Director at The Shadows-on-the-Teche. He is an AAM Peer Reviewer, a past member of the AASLH America250 Education Committee, and is certified by the National Association for Interpretation. His scholarship and professional practice examine power, memory, and how museums navigate contested narratives.

MARIANNA LUQUETTE



Marianna Luquette is a lifelong Louisiana resident. She earned her master's in Public History in 2018 from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Once completing her master's degree, she began her career as the Tribal Archivist for the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana. She worked with the Tribe for four and a half years, updating their collections management system, collecting oral histories from Tribal members, and curating three exhibits on the Tribe's history. In 2022, she joined the LSU Museum of Art as Museum Registrar. Here she has led a storage remodel and dealt with a few disasters in between. She is the Southeastern Registrar's Association state representative for Louisiana and their incoming Secretary for 2027. When not working, she is often with her family, husband and daughter, or friends wandering throughout Lafayette.



ELISTA ISTRE

Dr. Elista Istre, an avid traveler with a passion for cultures across the globe, founded Belle Heritage to offer consulting expertise and create cultural experiences that inspire individuals and organizations to celebrate the beauty of heritage. Istre earned her Ph.D. in Heritage Studies at Arkansas State University. During her career thus far, Istre has established, directed, and supported several historic sites and museums in Louisiana and served as historical consultant and assistant director for the documentary film *First Cousins: Cajun and Creole Music in South Louisiana* and authored the book *Creoles of South Louisiana: Three Centuries Strong*. Her latest publication is a children's book: Josette and Friends Cook a Gumbo.

ANNABELLE MATT

Annabelle Matt is a Senior Historian at History Associates, Incorporated (HAI), a Washington, D.C.-based consulting firm, and a proud graduate of UL Lafayette's Public History program. She directs numerous projects in both Litigation and Heritage service lines, including several high-profile engagements for federal agencies and nationally ranked law firms.

Roslyn Green Brings History to the Hallways

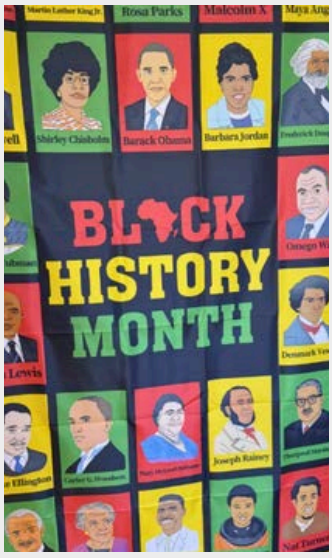
Roslyn Green has been the Administrative Assistant for the Department of History, Geography, and Philosophy since she joined the University in August of 2021. In this time, Ms. Green has been integral to keeping the Public History program (and the Department more broadly) running smoothly. Since her arrival, it has been much more possible to navigate the myriad challenges of learning and working in a complicated bureaucratic world. She has most visibly brought History beyond our classrooms by starting and managing, with her student-workers, the celebration of history-themed months on the Fifth Floor. The images here are just a small sample of that work. We encourage you to stop by the Department to see the constantly changing displays each month!





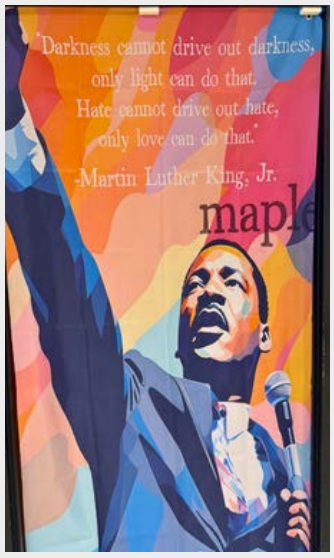












Internships in the Avery Island Archives

SHANE K. BERNARD, PH.D. UL CLASSES OF 1990 & 1992

After earning my M.A. in History from UL (then USL) in late 1992, I learned from a former professor of mine that "the McIlhennys who make TABASCO® Sauce on Avery Island are looking for a historian." What was intended to last only a few months evolved into a thirty-year-plus career as curator of the Avery Island Archives (comprising the McIlhenny Company Archives, the Avery Island Inc. Archives, and the E. A. McIlhenny Collection).

A department of one, I oversee about 4.5 million pages of business and personal records, from 19th-century letters and diaries to more recent advertising, marketing, and legal documents. I also curate artifacts from the Island's 52 state-registered archaeological sites, along with fossils, audiovisual recordings, and over 15,000 photographs.

I have relied on UL interns to help manage these collections. In fact, I have supervised eleven interns, most serving a semester or two, though some remained longer.

Mollie DeMoor-White, for example, worked with me for three years before moving to Oxford University's Bodleian Library. She now serves as an Oxford tour guide. Stephanie Fontenot Simon likewise interned for three years, and her Public History project about German POWs on Avery Island grew from materials encountered in the Archives. She is currently associate archivist for the Diocese of Lafayette. A Planner II for Lafayette City and Parish, Laura Hughes interned with me for over a year, inventorying a great many historical documents. Taylor Townsend recently spent two semesters cataloging materials and using Evernote's AI Transcribe to convert oral-history interviews to text. (She also spotted half-buried bricks in the woods on the Island that prompted a UL archaeological survey!)

If this sounds interesting, consider applying for a spring or fall internship in the Avery Island Archives, which—while preserving and interpreting the Island's history—has shaped not only my own career but those of several UL students. → *learn more*



Dr. Bernard and UL History intern Taylor Townsend examine an archival document in the Avery Island Archives, 2026.



UL Public History intern Stephanie Fontenot Simon poses with a 19th-century steam engine on Avery Island, 2022. Built in 1899, the engine was used in salt mining on the Island.

Upcoming Events

Nov 7 - Dec 31, 2026 - Southwest Louisiana LGBTQ+ Archive Exhibition at Cité des Arts in downtown Lafayette

November 20, 2026 - Collections Care Workshop, featuring hands-on activity and guest speakers. Griffin Hall, Room #523, 1 pm

December 18, 2026 - UL Lafayette Fall Commencement, College of Liberal Arts, 9 am → *learn more*

January 6-8, 2027 - Phi Alpha Theta Biennial Convention; Nashville, TN → *learn more*

January 7-10, 2027 - American Historical Association Annual Meeting; New Orleans, LA → *learn more*

March 4-6, 2027 - Louisiana Historical Association Annual Meeting; Alexandria, LA → *learn more*

Stay Connected

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If you are an alumn, → *add yourself to our directory*.

Share Your News

Submit announcements, project updates, internships, and job opportunities for future issues!
Contact: sarah.rodriguez@louisiana.edu

Dr. Ian Beamish, Director of Public History | ian.beamish@louisiana.edu

→ *Public History at UL Lafayette*
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