



TO: Eric Gable, Ph.D., University of Mary Washington
Conference Program Chair, Southern Anthropological Society
RE: Session Proposal for the 46th Annual Meeting of the Southern Anthropological Society
Richmond, Virginia - March 2011

(Re)constructing West Virginia: Preservation, Progress, and the ‘New Economy’

SESSION ABSTRACT: Having long played a significant role in railroad commerce and manufacturing, extractive industries such as coal, and concomitant struggles of labor, West Virginia stands geographically and socioeconomically at the “Rust Belt’s” fuzzy edge – a term used to conjure images of decaying industrial places from a different commercial era. At the same time, through the work of generations of social scientists and others, Appalachia has come to be seen in popular imagination as a kind of repository, a reified national “attic” inhabited by cultural remnants, survivors from an, in turns, idealized and depreciated past. Within this context, we may observe the construction of competing narratives of preservation and progress put to an array of purposes and motivated by a range of ideological positions. This session is designed to critically examine ways that West Virginia has been constructed as a place with near mythic identity by scholars, writers, politicians, and journalists. Our purpose is to discuss how that identity is variously embraced and contested by its residents in their own struggles to define or redefine themselves and, most significantly, position the State within an emerging post-industrial economic order with its own unique imperatives. While our approaches range from the archaeological and historical to the ethnographic and explore sources from the material and archival to the everyday, we share a deep appreciation for the need to capture lived experience and contribute to public discourse.

PAPER ABSTRACTS & PRESENTER BIOS

Brian A. Hoey, Session Organizer & Presenter

TITLE: The Art and Ethnography of Place Making and Marketing

ABSTRACT: This paper explores the creative act of using place in the making of self and other as well as how place, and particularly its attendant notions of heritage, are at times artfully employed to promote particular political and/or economic agendas. Despite prevailing images of backwardness and isolation as well as recent history of often-bleak economic conditions, many communities in West Virginia are ideal places to observe innovative forms of entrepreneurship, community building, and place-marketing according to emerging cultural and economic models that stand in sharp contrast to a once dominant paradigm that encouraged capital investment by

relying simply on tax breaks and the provision of cheap land and labor to attract large, typically industrial and manufacturing, employers. While rooted in earlier work conducted in Michigan, this paper discusses ongoing ethnographic research in West Virginia on the efforts of activists and others to redefine the meaning and purpose of development for individual and community identity. In prevailing economic discourse, particular places have been regarded as little more than commodities to be marketed and consumed much as any product. This research contributes to the effort to understand how the constituents of these variously competing and sympathetic discourses have practical consequences for individual and community identity.

BIO: Brian Hoey is an Associate Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Marshall University. He received his B.A. in Human Ecology from the College of the Atlantic and Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Michigan. His ethnographic research explores the social, cultural, and personal effects of post-industrial economic restructuring, migration, and place marketing. In addition to a continuing interest in career change, identity, and the moral meanings of work, Hoey has a longstanding interest in the anthropology of space and place and, in particular, therapeutic ideals attached to particular natural and built environments. Hoey has published on these and other subjects in the *American Ethnologist*, *City and Society*, *Journal of Anthropological Research*, *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *Ethnology*, and several book chapters.

Carl DeMuth, Presenter

TITLE: Mapping the Power in Coal: Recreating the Story of an Appalachian Coal Town

ABSTRACT: Much of Appalachian history is tied up "company towns" managed by extractive companies within the industries of lumber and coal. Unfortunately, much documentation for these towns is unavailable. This is particularly true for the town of Nuttallburg - an historic site in Fayette County, West Virginia listed on the National Register. Prior to this research, all maps of the town were based off of an inaccurate hand drawn sketch. This project used modern sub-meter GPS technology to accurately, and artfully, recreate roadways and distribution pathways within the abandoned coal town. The objective of this research is to both aid the National Park Service in its efforts to construct a cultural history trail at the site through construction of the first accurate map of the abandoned coal town of Nuttallburg and to develop a better understanding of people and culture that existed within the community surrounding Nuttallburg. To best accomplish this, the site was approached archaeologically, taking into consideration the extant material record. This viewpoint was combined with geographic survey methods and the written record in order to understand power structures that may have existed, ranging from an overarching power of mine operators to the personal agency that miners themselves may have exercised over these operators in early Appalachian coal towns. This work will help scholars to better tell the story of Appalachia's, largely marginalized, industrial past.

BIO: Robert Carl DeMuth is senior undergraduate major in anthropology at Marshall University with minors in religious studies and integrated science and an undergraduate certificate in GIS Science. He is anticipated to graduate with a B.A. in Anthropology in May of 2011. His current

research deals with Appalachian coal towns and understanding the lives and culture of early coal miners and the personal agency they may have exercised. DeMuth's other research interests include geographic information systems, and public archaeology. He hopes pursue a graduate degree the following fall and begin research into indigenous archaeology within West Virginia, reconciling native histories and the archaeological record to produce a new prehistoric narrative for the state. DeMuth has presented his research at two archaeological conferences within Appalachia.

Amanda Payne, Presenter

TITLE: Economic Transition in West Virginia: Impacts on the Cultural Landscape

ABSTRACT: This paper focuses on post-industrial economic transition from the manufacturing to the tertiary economic sectors of West Virginia and its effects on local identity. In particular, the study focuses on why economic development occurs at different rates throughout the state. The author investigates place-based experience and memory and how residents are able to both romanticize and sanitize the manufacturing sector despite a long history of labor exploitation and class struggle. The author employs semi-structured interviews and questionnaires around the state and collects secondary data focusing on poverty rate and GDP growth per county around the state. The author asserts that areas not transitioning will view the manufacturing sector not only as a job but also as representative of years of struggle. By moving to a new sector of the economy, residents fear that long family traditions defined by occupation will be lost together with the memory of hardships endured by ancestors to achieve a better life. Areas in the state that have transitioned are experiencing economic growth, a rise in educational attainment, and lower poverty rates. These areas have also found an identity centered on protecting and celebrating West Virginia's biological diversity rather than treating this as a commodity. The study's results will contribute to academic discourse of place and identity and assist state government to better provide funding, training, and education to all areas of the state.

BIO: Amanda Payne is a graduate student and an adjunct faculty member in the Geography Department at Marshall University. She received her B.A. in Anthropology from Marshall University and is anticipated to graduate with her M.S. in Geography with an emphasis in Anthropology in the spring of 2011. Her current research is centered on space and place change due to post-industrial economic transitioning in West Virginia. Amanda's other interests include globalization, industrial archaeology, urban systems, class struggle, and capitalism. Payne has lectured, researched, and presented on these topics at Marshall University.

Ennis Barbery, Presenter

TITLE: Crafting Narratives of Heritage: Mountains, Mines, Folk Art, and Public Space in the New River Gorge

ABSTRACT: This research explores competing narratives of heritage within one region of West Virginia, focusing on how groups and individuals use these varying narratives to frame their

discussions of local economic development. Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork in Fayette County, West Virginia, the project identifies several dimensions of competing narratives, ranging from national versus regional ideas of heritage to industrial versus geographic and environmental heritage. Simultaneously overlapping and conflicting, these highly nuanced and artfully articulated narratives are employed in the discussion of sometimes controversial development projects, from heritage and eco-tourism to industrial sites. Through examining narratives of progress versus preservation, this project provides a context for explaining how ideas of heritage in Fayette County can and have been used to argue both for and against the continuing privatization of public, shared space. Notions of economic progress and preservation of heritage frame both the coal and tourism industries' arguments for continuing to obtain local land that has traditionally functioned as a commons. Emerging from interviews, observation, and examination of the narratives of heritage tourism sites, this paper contributes to the discourse about the roles heritage plays in the enclosure of public space.

BIO: Ennis Barbery is a senior undergraduate major in cultural anthropology at Marshall University. She is anticipated to graduate with a B.A. in Anthropology in May of 2011. While studying abroad at the University of Ghana in 2009, she discovered an interest in the anthropology of heritage and ecological tourism. Her undergraduate research focuses on narratives of heritage, identity, and sense of place. More specifically, she is interested in how individuals narrate their interaction with and give meaning to the natural environment, assigning it a part in individual or community identity. Upon graduation, Ennis hopes to continue pursuing her research interests in anthropology through a graduate degree program in fall 2011.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

Brian A. Hoey, Ph.D.
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Marshall University
One John Marshall Drive
Huntington, WV 25755-2678

Phone: (304) 696-3747

Fax: (304) 696-2803

www.marshall.edu/sociology