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Narratives Afield: An Oral History Experience

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NARRATIVES AFIELD:
AN ORAL HISTORY EXPERIENCE

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By

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Lexington, Kentucky

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2020

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

NARRATIVES AFIELD:
AN ORAL HISTORY EXPERIENCE

This paper documents the comprehensive process of designing and executing a video oral history project through a case study of *The Living History Oral History Project* which is accessioned to the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History. Discussions of each phase of the project from concept, design, field work, archiving, and interpretation demonstrates how expanding technology increases the narrative opportunities presented by oral history research. The added feature of digital video technology creates visuality, which is an expansion on Alessandro Portelli's concepts of orality and history telling. Since discoverability and accessibility is a traditional problem in using oral history recordings as research materials, the case study includes discussion of the accessioning process, including indexing using the Oral History Metadata Synchronizer or OHMS. The paper also proposes a format for scholarly citation style to be used with OHMS indexing, based on the Chicago Style Manual. The paper concludes that the combined narrative elements of orality and visuality which rely on recording of sensations, goes beyond memory as the substance of oral history and taps into shared experience as the basis of memory.

KEYWORDS: Oral History, Oral History Metadata Synchronizer, Visual Narrative, Visuality, Orality, Experiential Learning.

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05/27/2020

Date

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

When I sat down in the early afternoon of July 9, 2016, with J.R. Sharp to begin conducting the first interview in my oral history project, I had a clear vision of the subject I wanted to research, and how I intended to go about doing it. I was interested in Civil War reenactors and living history interpreters because of the innovative ways they appealed to public curiosity about the past. Much of that vision would change by the time I conducted my last interview in the project, almost two years and forty interviews later, in a foreign country, on another continent. My conversation with Sharp that first afternoon centered on his life-long involvement with the reenacting hobby as an ordinary Confederate soldier, later to be promoted to be his unit's commanding officer upon the retirement of his father who was the former commander. Sharp had a wonderful array of memories to relate about reenactors he met and knew as he grew up in the hobby, events he had attended, of nights spent out in the freezing cold and long marches under a blazing sun. The story he told made an excellent oral history because it was filled with such a rich and interesting range of vivid memories that he was eager to share with me and anyone else who might review the recording we made later on.

However, it was not only Sharp's memories that we shared and recorded on that afternoon. The very essence of reenactment, or living history, is the creation of a sensory experience which is informative to the living history interpreter himself, and to any visitor who might be privileged to witness the presentation. Living history creates experience by combining persona with material culture and physical location and social milieu in a way that can either take a person back in time to imagine what it was like to live in the past, or alternatively to bring the time of the past forward into the present for a lesson in history. The critical factor to understand living history interpretation is that it appeals to all forms of sensory perception, sight, sound, smell, touch, and even taste. Living history is a sensory package deal grounded in shared experience.

Very early in the project the existence of an important nexus occurred to me. I was aware that a critical and valid criticism of living history as a practice was its temporary and ephemeral qualities. How can living history be considered history if there is no way to record and analyze its informative content? However, if one argues that sensation creates experience, and experience in turn is recorded upon the imagination as a memory, would not oral history serve as a uniquely admirable method of creating a record of living history activities? I had anticipated that in recording oral histories with reenactors and living history interpreters that reliance on traditional audio recording would not be enough to do the subject justice. While it was not possible to capture the full array of sensations presented at a living history event, it was critical to capture both the sound and the vision of the interpreter as well as the physical surroundings. The recognition of the memory-experience nexus drove the focus my project in a new direction to investigate the development of oral history methodology as a primary goal, with an understanding of video recording technology as a critical theme.

How do the cumulative developments in digital humanities including recording technology, internet connectivity, and management software expand the narrative capacity and meaning conveyed by oral history as a practice?

The addition of video technology to the array of digital tools available to the oral historian contributes to an expansion of Portelli's concepts of orality and history telling by adding a graphic dimension to the narrative. An integration of oral with visual characteristics in the record results in transcending the traditional concept of preserving memory through oral history to achieve a sharing of sensation and experience between the historian and the storyteller, and that experience is in turn, the foundation of memory. By accessioning the integrated audio and visual records and rendering them discoverable through digital cataloging, and accessible through digital indexing, the circle of shared experience is enlarged to include researchers visiting the archive online.

To illustrate each aspect of creation and access of shared experiences, this paper engages in a multi-phase case study of an oral history project from concept to completion. A comprehensive case study of this oral history project provides an opportunity to explore in detail the full range of oral history activities in general, as well as demonstrating how the digital turn and development of new technologies directly contributes to the enhanced capacity for oral history practice to communicate narrative meaning. The paper is organized into five chapters, beginning with a review of the current fundamentals of oral history in "Scholarly Landscape." This chapter traces the origins and development of oral traditions and oral history through technological and theoretical developments and positions this project in relation to the existing scholarship, especially embracing Portelli's concept of history telling. This chapter concludes with a proposed citation style to be used with OHMS indexing. The "Project Design" chapter describes the personal experience that motivated the origins of this project. A section describes the equipment and technology necessary to record audio and video oral histories as well as the economic costs associated with each phase of the project. A section on best practices outlines a series of principles developed during this project that are generally applicable to oral history field research. The "Field Methods" chapter discusses how to develop an interview strategy that provides the storyteller the maximum level of freedom to share his memories and experiences and provide shape to the resulting narrative. Additional sections discuss the criteria for selecting field locations for conducting interviews, and the unique micro oral history technique developed to make efficient use of the storyteller's time. "Archiving Methods" discusses the post-interview phase of the project including administration, editing, accessioning, and indexing using OHMS. The final chapter, "Interpretation" discusses the two theoretical elements that expand upon Portelli's views on orality and history telling. Orality and soundscapes considers how an oral history recording can provide meaning through capturing sound input from a broader environmental context. The section on visuality provides an analysis model based on graphic elements that can assist an oral historian in deciding whether the additional cost of video is justified, and how a recorded narrative is enhanced through motion graphics.

CHAPTER 2: SCHOLARLY LANDSCAPE

History and Technology

Humans tell one another stories. We love to do this as part of our nature as gregarious creatures with a fundamental drive for social interaction, to share with one another our memories, our experiences, our imagination. Our stories are the foundation upon which culture is constructed which both links us to and distinguishes us from our fellow humans. Oral tradition as a cultural phenomenon is a basic form of storytelling which includes a familiar set of narratives featuring character archetypes, common storylines, prose and verse forms, rhetorical structures, and is early and pervasive throughout human cultures, and constitutes the earliest form of history.[1] In Western Civilization the Abrahamic religions derive their scriptural origins in the oral traditions later rendered in textual form such as the Torah or the New Testament which was communicated orally for over thirty years after the death of Jesus.[2] In Arab culture the origins of the Qu'ran incorporated the of memorization of the complete scripture by pious *hâfiz* and recitation during *Tarâwîh* or late-night prayers during the month of *Ramadzân* before the text was eventually transcribed. [3] German philologist Friedrich Wolf asserted in 1795 that that Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* must have originated as oral traditions because the Tenth-Century BCE Greeks did not use written language as literature.[4] The premise that oral tradition is pan cultural human experience is supported by evidence of African *griots* or tribal elders who specialized in memorizing and reciting historical narratives.[5] An old African proverb holds that "When a knowledgeable old person dies, a whole library disappears."[6]

Oral history, however, is a distinct creature from its progenitor oral or folk traditions. Some of the key elements are shared such as an oral recitation or performance

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[1] Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 19.
[2] Charles Morrissey, "Beyond Oral Evidence: Speaking (Con)Strictly About Oral History," *Archival Issues* 17, no. 2 (1992), 91.
[3] *The Holy Qur'ân as Explained to Allamah Nooruddin*, trans. Amatul Raman Omar and Abdul Mannan Omar, "Introduction to the Study of the Holy Qur'ân" 2013: 15-16A.
[4] Homer, *The Odyssey of Homer, Harvard Classics Edition,* ed. Charles W. Eliot, trans. S. H. Butcher and A. Lang (New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1937), 3.
[5] Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 19; Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 21-23; Alex Haley, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), 674.
[6] Angela Bartie and Arthur McIvor, "Oral History in Scotland," *Scottish Historical Review,* Vol. XCII, Supplement: No. 234 (April 2013): 110.

which is grounded upon memory or experience. The transition from oral tradition to oral history occurred with the development with two additional elements. The first element in oral history development involved the concept of interview. Dialog replaced recitation as an additional dimension of oral tradition, where the participation of a guide or historian established direction the conversation with a purpose and subsequently transcribing the spoken word either personally or with the assistance of a scribe.[7] Whereas the basic function of telling a story within a group, family or local community is cultural folklore, transcription introduced a scholarly investment in preserving narrative content.[8] The second element was the introduction of transcription, a technological enhancement where spoken words could be preserved as written language and distributed in a literary format. The process of transcription standardized and preserved traditional oral culture handed down over the generations and provided for greater communication and distribution across space and time. There has always been a strong link between oral history and recording technology which has progressed through stages as new forms of recording technologies emerged.[9] Rendition of information in text with a written language may be thought of as a form of technological advancement providing for both curation and propagation of the informative content of oral traditions.[10] The next stage of technological development in oral history was the introduction of audio recording which not only captured a verbatim record of the narrator's speech from a content standpoint, it

[7] Ritchie, *Doing Oral History,*1.
[8] Alessandro Portelli *They Say in Harlan County* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 10.
[9] Joel Gardner, "Oral History and Video in Theory and Practice," *Oral History Review* 12, (1984): 106.
[10] Michael Frisch, "Oral History in the Digital Age: Beyond the Raw and the Cooked," *Australian Historical Studies* 47, no. 1 (March 2016): 95.

also captured the added informative content in the form of tone of voice, inflection and defects.

Oral history is often thought of as relating information from the past by relying on a storyteller's relevant memories, which may seem like a risky and subjective source for crafting history upon first consideration. However, it is arguable that all historical sources emerge from the same minds, the same human imagination that stores information as memories, and therefore all historical sources should be evaluated with the same critical eye rather than ranking them in an artificial hierarchy of reliability.[11] As Portelli suggests, "As a matter of fact, written and oral sources are not mutually exclusive. They have common as well as autonomous characteristics, and specific functions which only either one can fill."[12] For Portelli, an oral history is more than a mere recitation of facts which might be found recorded on a sheet of paper stored in an archive. The key importance of oral history is not only what is told but how it is told, which involves an incorporation of the interview subject's personal narrative combined with concept of *orality* which Portelli describes as "an essay in sound."[13] Abrams elaborates on the concept by observing the enriching qualities of a speaker's "intonations and style," as well as "volume, tone and speed" tease out deeper emotional meaning conveyed by the original voice that is lost in the process of transcription.[14] The directed interaction between the historian and interview subject is a reconstruction of memory with the object

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[11] Abrams, *Oral History Theory,* 22-23; Alessandro Portelli, "The Death of Luigi Trastulli: Memory and Event", 3

[12] Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*, (Albany: State University Press of New York Press, 1991), 46.

[13] Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County,* 10.

[14] Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 20.

of producing an artifact in the form of an audio recording. This "history-telling" to oral history differs from mere story telling because of the emphasis on memory.[15]

The creation of a sound recording of a storyteller's voice opened new horizons of possibility in communicating meaning through oral history, although the opportunity was not initially clear to many oral historians. The tradition of considering history as a literary and therefore textual form was difficult to overcome, and the initial response from historians was to consider the audio recording as a means to an end, a preliminary source upon which a primary source of a transcript would be based.[16] The high regard for transcription held by historians was not merely a commitment to a traditional literary artform, but was also a practical recognition of the limitations of the technological medium of audio recording. Without a textual conversion of the audio recording of an oral history, the content would be accessible only through the investment of time to monitor the entire recording in search of a relevant piece of information which may or may not exist. This time investment was too much of a demand for most researchers prompting an underutilization of oral history as a resource.[17] The next stage of technological advancement to have an impact on the practice of oral history was the digital turn, which not only exploded the opportunities of propagating narrative content broadly through the internet, it also supplied the resources necessary to access the recorded content efficiently. The critical factor to achieving accessibility of oral history

[15] Alessandro Portelli, "History-Telling and Time: An Example from Kentucky," *Oral History Review* 20 no. 1&2 (Spring-Fall, 1992): 51-52.

[16] For detailed discussion of the tension that exists between transcription and orality see e.g. Portelli's "The Orality of Oral Sources" in *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories*, 46; Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County,* 10; Frisch, "Oral History in the Digital Age: Beyond the Raw and the Cooked," 95; Abrams, *Oral History Theory,* 19-20; Kopana Terry and Judy Sackett "Making Oral History Interviews Accessible at the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History" *Kentucky Libraries* 80 No. 3 (2016).

[17] Doug Boyd, "OHMS: Enhancing Access to Oral History for Free," *Oral History Review* 40

content is discoverability of the existence of a research source such as an oral history collection at a general level, and then again at the detailed level of discovering specific information in a specific interview. The Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History developed digital tools to accomplish these tasks through the creation of SPOKEdb which serves as a catalog and content management system, and Oral History Metadata Synchronizer or OHMS, which provides the capacity to synchronize transcripts or metadata to a specific segment of an oral history recording.[18] The combined force of technology applicable to recording, archiving and distributing via the internet accomplishes a vision of oral history that is liberated from the necessity of transcription, and is describe by Frisch as, "embracing the recording as the defining primary source for oral history collection, access, study, meaning, and use… ."[19]

OHMS Citation Style

A crucial aspect of this project was the use of Oral History Metadata Synchronizer or OHMS as means of indexing the content of the collection content thereby making that content discoverable and accessible for research purposes. While there is a growing body of academic scholarly literature in the use of OHMS for indexing, there is little such literature on how properly to cite metadata or segments once an interview is indexed. The Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History includes

[18] For an expanded discussion of accessibility of oral histories through the use of digital tools see Boyd, "OHMS: Enhancing Access to Oral History for Free,"; Terry and Sackett, "Making Oral History Interviews Accessible,"; Lisa Miller, "Talk to Me: Using the Oral History Metadata Synchronizer to Index an Oral History Project," *Kentucky Libraries* 78 no. 4 (2014); Janice Fernheimer, et. al., "Sustainable Stewardship: A Collaborative Model for Engaged Oral History Pedagogy, Community Partnership, and Archival Growth," *Oral History Review* 45 no. 2 (2018); Kristopher Turner, "Creating History: a Case Study in Making Oral Histories More Accessible in the Digital Age," *Digital Library Perspectives* 33 no. 1 (2017).
[19] Frisch, 95.

bibliographic notes for MLA, APA and Chicago citation style manuals, however there is no guidance for long and short form foot or endnotes, nor intertextual parenthetical notes. After consultation with Nunn Center Director Dr. Doug Boyd and UK History faculty Dr. Kathryn Newfont our general concurrence was that in the absence of guidance to citation style in the academic literature it would be appropriate to develop a standard footnote style based on Turabian for OHMS citations made in this paper and adhering to the principles of clarity and consistency.

The bibliography entries for the oral histories cited in this paper rely on the Chicago style citations provided by the Nunn Center in the online catalog SPOKEdb. For footnote references to an interview in general, the note elements will be the narrator's first name and last name, followed by the project title in italics, followed by the archive name and interview year within parentheses as would be the case in a Chicago style long form footnote. References to a segment of an interview will treat the segment title as a journal article title enclosed in quotation marks. Thus, a long form footnote citing a segment would appear as:

> J.R. Sharp, "Authenticity and experiential learning," *Living History Oral History Project* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016).

For subsequent references to an interview segment a short form note of the narrator's surname and segment title enclosed in quotation marks will be used as a short form footnote appearing thus:

> Sharp, "Authenticity and experiential learning."

In cases where the reference is made to the interview in general and not to a specific indexing segment, the citation for long and short notes will simply omit the segment title.

For references to a specific moment in an interview, the interview will be described by the narrator's name and a time stamp representing a few seconds of lead before the moment in question will be drafted within the text to appear as "… the Sharp interview at 47:05:15…" This type of textual reference will dispense with footnotes in order to avoid unnecessary clutter. An alternative style not used in this paper but that other scholars might consider for citation clarity would be to treat the time stamp as analogous to a page number to be inserted at the end of a long or short form footnote.

One final note is worth mentioning regarding citation style. All the references to oral history interviews in this thesis are based on the *Living History Oral History Project* in the collections of the Nunn Center. Accordingly, the italicized title has been omitted from short form footnotes. However, to extend the logic of citation style developed here and apply it to other scholarly works referring to multiple oral history projects, it would be necessary to include the italicized project title as a footnote element which would appear thus:

Sharp, "Authenticity and experiential learning," *Living History Oral History Project.*

The development of OHMS citation style for other manuals such as MLA or APA presents a rich opportunity for additional scholarly discussion.

CHAPTER 3: PROJECT DESIGN

Concept and Overview

An understanding of *the Living History Oral History Project* design and objectives should begin with the project summary from the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History where the project has been accessioned and indexed:

> The Living History Oral History Project is a collection of oral history interviews with living history interpreters and reenactors on video recorded during living history events. The project focuses on the process of research supporting living history interpretation, experiential process, and public interpretation. The interviews were recorded at a variety of locations ranging from Massachusetts to Florida in order to capture the geographic component involved in living history. The interview subjects were selected somewhat at random during visits to living history events or living history museums, but the selection was designed to capture a wide variety of occupations and time periods. Selection of interview subjects was also designed to achieve gender, racial, and cultural diversity. The interviews were video recorded in order to show the interview subject interacting with the material culture involved in living history as well as the geographic environment and interaction with the public.[20]

The inspiration for this research project derived from the author's experience as a volunteer docent and later as board member at the James A. Ramage Civil War Museum in Fort Wright Kentucky. The museum was formerly the residence of Fern and Sheldon Storer, built atop a wooded hillside with a grand vista overlooking the Licking River Valley. The view from the hillside of what would become the Storer front yard gained significance during the Confederate invasion of Kentucky in 1862 with the construction of Battery Hooper, one of a series of defensive works built to defend Cincinnati during the invasion. Upon the death of Fern Storer her will left the property to nearby Northern

[20] JD Carruthers, ed., "Living History Oral History Project," Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, accessed January 29, 2020, https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt79057cv999.

Kentucky University to fund scholarships. Dr. James A. Ramage lead a community project to sell the property to the city of Fort Wright to operate as a city park and museum for local Civil War history. The Ramage Museum incorporates a combination of public park, local history museum and public archeological site. Each year the city hosts a signature event at the museum called Battery Hooper Days which traditionally included Civil War era living history reenactors as an attraction for visitors. Through working with reenactors as a board member, the author began to recognize living history as a potentially powerful means of engaging the public with an interest in history, and as a method potentially subject to serious misuse or misdirection.

The author's experience working as a researcher for the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History at Special Collections Research Center provided the methodological concept to accompany the substantive element from the museum. The combination of living history methodology as the subject matter and the application of oral history methodology as the research approach was the first of several themes of convergence in the concept of this research project. By applying one public history methodology, oral history, to another public history methodology, living history, the author hoped to explore how to achieve a larger convergence of the disciplined approach of academic history with the popular appeal and relevance of public history.

The research project included a total of forty-one completed interviews with forty-seven narrators totaling just over twenty-six hours of edited video recording. Because a communication process involving a wide array of senses is a key element to understanding the practice of living history, I considered it crucial that the oral history interviews be video recorded in the locations where the practitioners were engaging in the activity. Living history practitioners were most conveniently accessible during special public events which posed numerous challenges for recording interviews. The first challenge was technical because producing a good quality video recording in an outside public setting where crowds are typically gathered is difficult especially given my limited experience using the recording equipment before the commencement of this project. The Best Practice of conducting interviews in a quiet location with minimal background noise and possible distractions had to give way to the second element of that best practice, gathering soundscapes or ambient sounds. A review of many of the interviews in the collection will reveal just those kinds of background distractions. However, rather than represent a faulty practice or distraction, the background soundscapes recorded in the interviews in this collection help to illustrate the public nature of the practice of experiential history and constitutes a positive element in the research materials. The expanded soundscapes reflect a broadened view of orality as will be discussed below.

A second challenge of recording interviews under these conditions is that many of the contacts to initiate the interview process were done in person at the event with little or no opportunity for specific preparation for the individual narrator. The author addressed this consideration by preparing for the interviews with general background research into the historical period and theme of the public events where the interviews were to be conducted. For example, before conducting an interview at the anniversary event at Waterloo in Belgium, the author studied the events leading up to the battle as well as the major personalities involved in the conflict. Additionally, when approaching potential narrators at public history events to solicit participation in the research, the author adopted the practice of engaging the prospect in casual conversation and describing the nature of the research project. In this way the author was able to conform to the guidelines for preparing in advance of oral history interviews even while approaching strangers during an event.

A third and final challenge of recording oral histories in these conditions was that in most if not all cases, the prospective narrator was already primarily engaged with interpreting a persona for the public. Taking time away from that primary mission was granting a favor to the author who in turn had to be cognizant of showing appreciation by making careful use of the time. During the Old Sturbridge Village research trip, I found myself compelled to conduct shorter interviews on the fly with a considerable repetition of lines of inquiry. This was due to the public nature of the event and my desire not to interfere with the activities of the living historians. Because of this consideration, many of the oral histories in this collection are shorter in duration that one might find in other oral history projects as a matter of necessity. Of the forty-one interviews in the collection, only five are longer than an hour in duration. In many cases, the recordings include discussion of a need to limit the duration of the conversation or a need to break off so the narrator could return to his or her primary activity. To compensate for interviews of limited duration, the author prepared a general set of open-ended interview questions relevant to the period and historical theme represented at the respective event and focused on limited thematic objectives in questions such as use of material culture or the nature of authenticity.

Equipment and economic considerations

A key consideration of any research project must be the economics behind conducting the research. The cost factors of conducting this oral history project included acquisition of kit, travel expenses, and time allocation. Time allocation is composed of multiple elements beyond merely the travel to field interview locations and interview time. Also included in this element is the time necessary to acquire technical skills necessary for editing and indexing the recorded interviews. A final economic consideration involves the cost of accessioning and archiving the completed collection to make it available for third party research.

What is the value of a picture? According to Kopana Terry, archivist at the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, the differential cost of digital storage for video files is ten times the cost as that for audio recordings.[21] A decision to select video technology in project design for this project had to be made carefully, which is likewise true for any other oral history project which includes video and is intended for archival accession. Because the essence of living history presentations is based on sensation and experience, a more traditional approach to recording an oral history in the form of transcribed notes or audio recording was not considered suitable for this project. Key components of living history practice include the visual appearance of the practitioner in his or her period attire and equipped with appropriate material culture such as tools or weapons. An equally important feature is the geographic setting which is often a historically important location. Oftentimes the reenactor or interpreter was engaged in a

[21] Kopana Terry, "Question about video storage costs," e-mail message, December 2, 2019.

craft or some other type of performance. Only a video recording was suitable for capturing these key elements of visual information conveyed by the material culture and geographic setting. The decision to video-record the oral histories in this project naturally led to two sets of related design considerations. First is the set of economic and technical considerations in choosing video recording technology over merely audio recordings for this project or for any oral history project. Second, a related set of design considerations requires evaluating how the addition of motion graphics justifies the additional economic costs and technical challenges. These two issues provide the basis for developing a set of guidelines for evaluating the utility of video recording as an element of oral history projects.

The accessioned cost of video files is dramatically higher than audio due to a variety of factors. As previously discussed, the equipment kit required to produce video recordings for this project was significantly more complicated than the requirement of a mere audio recorder or even a notebook needed for taking notes during an oral history interview in the style of Forrest Pogue. A differential in time investment is higher for video recording in setting up the additional equipment, as well as the editing of video files. The acquisition of skills necessary to accomplish both of those tasks is perhaps the most time intensive requirement. These costs can be characterized as technical costs or the additional investment of resources necessary to produce a video recording exceeding a comparable investment to produce a simple audio recording. Technical costs include differentials in production equipment, skill sets, and storage costs when comparing video to audio.

The Living History Oral History Project was the first oral history project which I undertook, and therefore the necessary kit had to be assembled from origination. One alternative to obtain the necessary recording equipment was to borrow from units at the University of Kentucky where the plan called for accessioning the completed research materials where as a UK graduate student and employee of the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History I had the option of borrowing digital audio recording equipment. I also consulted with the Student Media Depot at the W.T. Young Library and learned that I could borrow video recording cameras and supporting equipment such as tripods and auxiliary microphones. Ultimately, since I intended this project to be the first of several oral history projects, I decided to purchase my own kit of equipment in gradual steps so that I would be fully prepared for subsequent research projects.

For audio recording I procured a Zoom H5 digital audio recorder which was recommended by the staff at the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History and is a model currently kept in inventory for loans to oral history researchers. This recording device features the capability of recording digital audio on multiple tracks and includes a built-in microphone system as well as two input plugs for using external microphones. The unit comes standard with and X – Y stereo microphone which I used for recording audio tracks in the early interviews. However, I was somewhat dissatisfied by the sound quality captured by the X – Y microphone module because it was very susceptible to wind noise, which was commonplace when recording outdoors even if the foam dampening cover was used over the microphone module. As will be discussed later, recording a broader soundscape was an objective in the interview process. However, the noise of wind occasionally obscured the conversation between interviewer and narrator which was not desirable. For later interviews of the project I acquired a Zoom H5 Stereo Shotgun microphone module with a furry 'dead cat' wind screen cover, better to dampen the noise of ambient wind. The shotgun microphone also had a narrower range of sound collection so it was easier to focus on the narrator and interviewer and reduce extraneous background noise that might cover up some of the conversation. The Zoom H5 saved data on a standard SD card which is the same medium used by the other digital recording equipment in the project. This audio recorder accepts standard AA batteries which proved to be an important consideration in preparations and best practices for field work discussed below.

For video recording, I used two different cameras acquired in stages. The first camera was a Canon Vixia HF R500 digital video recorder. A critical decision factor in acquiring this unit was its small size and lightness in weight. Since I anticipated much of my recording work would be completed in the field, it was vital to have a video camera that was easy to transport. Another important feature was that this model included an external microphone input jack which supported the capability of recording in conjunction with the Zoom H5 recorder or with a separate external microphone. A final benefit was that this model was recommended by the staff of the Student Media Depot at the Young Library. The Canon Vixia is simple to operate and mounts on a standard tripod. The power source for this unit is a rechargeable lithium battery, and the data is stored on an SD card as with the Zoom H5 recorder.

Near the end of the interviewing for this research project I added a second camera to my equipment list which was a Canon EOS Rebel T6i DSLR camera. I learned at an early stage of the project that research featuring graphics in motion would be well supplemented by static images. The Canon Vixia video camera was not well suited for capturing still images, so for much of the early interview series I was forced to take photographs either using an Apple iPhone or a Kodak EasyShare Z740 camera that is over ten years old. Both these options were limited in versatility, thus prompting the acquisition of the DSLR. In addition to supporting a wide range of still photography options, the Canon DSLR also includes a video recording feature which added a redundant video recording capability to my research project either as a secondary camera or a back-up camera. For example, the last interview in the project with Donald Meulmans and Bastian Becker recorded at Hougoumont Farm on the Waterloo battlefield I used the Canon DSLR as the primary video recorder. This option was immensely practical because of the extensive travel that was involved in recording this interview. As part of my library science graduate studies I was taking a class in Amsterdam and The Hague Netherlands as a study abroad, and the first weekend of the class offered free time on Saturday 23 June 2018 which happened to coincide with the 203rd anniversary of the battle. In advance of the trip to the Netherlands I planned on taking a side trip to Brussels on free time to attempt to record an oral history interview with a European perspective at the observation event that weekend, however, I did not want to be burdened with extraneous equipment for the overnight trip to Brussels or for the three weeks I would be traveling in the Netherlands and Germany. The Canon DSLR proved ideal for multipurpose use and easily transported. However, I learned about important limitations and caution that must be used in recording long segments of video using this type of camera because of the possibility of recording data at such an advanced rate that the speed capacity of the recording medium is exceeded causing the device to shut down unexpectedly.

Another basic piece of equipment indispensable for recording oral histories in the field was a tripod. I began the project with a generic lightweight and light duty tripod that was acquired based on its inexpensive cost and easy portability. However, this initial choice proved ill-considered when a piece holding the telescoping leg broke and the extending piece became easily detached. This made the device unstable on uneven surfaces commonly encountered in field work outdoors. In time I added two more heavier duty tripods to the kit so that I could theoretically create an improvised recording studio with a separate tripod for each camera and the audio recorder. I also occasionally used a miniature "GorillaPod" style tripod which features ball joint connectors to create a table-top size flexible tripod, although this device can only support limited weight and was suitable only for the audio recorder. The audio recorder, video cameras and tripods constituted the basic equipment necessary to complete the oral history research project. Without this basic minimum kit, the oral and visual artifacts capturing the conversation between interviewer and narrator could not have been recorded as conceived.

Ancillary kit is equipment useful in supporting the research recordings, but not strictly necessary to accomplishing project objectives. Digital memory is a category which transcends both basic and ancillary equipment. While SD cards were necessary for each recording device, the amount of data recorded quickly exhausted space on the cards, especially those used to record video. Theoretically it was possible to reuse video SD cards by accessioning the video recording to the Nunn Center and then reusing the card. However, the principle of redundancy discussed as a best practice below recommended a single use of SD cards so there would be an original recording medium artifact as an extra copy of recorded material. Thus, spare SD cards were acquired as ancillary equipment as a means of preserving duplicate copies. Another critical support item was power sources. Each of the three recording devices operated using its own style of battery, none of which was interchangeable with the other devices. The Zoom H5 was the easiest to supply with power since it took AA batteries which were cheap and readily available. The manufacturer recommended using alkaline type batteries, so I chose not to consider rechargeable AA batteries for this device and opted for disposable batteries instead. The two cameras were purchased new with a single rechargeable lithium type battery, but a single battery was problematical for multiple recordings of considerable length. Spare rechargeable batteries may not have been strictly necessary, but the principles of redundancy and general preparedness directed adding this equipment to the kit along with charging devices. Another equipment expense that turned out to be ancillary was the acquisition of a set of Movo LV4-02 XLR lavalier omnidirectional microphones and an extended microphone cable to use with the Zoom H5. I acquired this equipment as a potential solution to reducing ambient noise while interviewing in uncontrolled and outdoor spaces, and in contemplation of other oral history research projects to be conducted later. However, in practice I realized ambient soundscape was an instructive addition to the orality of the project, so I elected to rely either on the audio track recorded by the Vixia video camera internal microphone, the X -Y microphone module or the stereo shotgun microphone for the Zoom H5 recorder. Furthermore, the graphic impact of living history reenactors and interpreters in their period attire and place in their respective historical settings was a critical element of the visuality of the oral history recordings in this project, and the anachronistic appearance of a lavalier microphone attached to the historical attire would spoil the impact of the desired visual effect. On the balance I decided alternative microphones and audio recording solutions were of greater advantage to the possible reduction of ambient noise.

A major cost element of this project was travel costs and associated expenses. The geographic distribution of interview recording series spanned Ohio, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Georgia, Florida, Virginia, Tennessee, and Belgium. Travel to reach these recording destinations involved thirteen field trips which passed through sixteen states and two foreign countries, touching every Atlantic coast state with the exceptions of Maine, New Hampshire, and Delaware. Travel expenses can be broken down as fuel and automobile maintenance costs; airfare; lodging costs; and food and miscellaneous expenses. In some cases, it was necessary to pay admission prices such as the Redcoats and Rebels event at Old Sturbridge Village and at Colonial Williamsburg. Because I was financing this project myself, I explored creative ways to manage costs. For example, on the trip to Massachusetts I elected to camp in a tent in Pennsylvania, Connecticut and at Buzzard's Bay on Cape Cod as an alternative to paying for a hotel room. On the trip to Colonial Williamsburg I opted for lodging in a rustic cabin at a campground. Another means of managing costs was to make multipurpose trips and visiting with friends and family. For the National Park centennial observation in August of 2016, I planned to conduct three series of interviews during one trip to Savannah Georgia, Saint Simon's Island Georgia, and Saint Augustine Florida. I was also able to save hotel costs on this field trip by lodging with friends in Savannah Georgia and Daytona Beach Florida. The Homeplace 1850's Farm interview series was recorded during a visit to my father who lives in Murray Kentucky, just a short drive from Land Between the Lakes. The final interview series of the project at Waterloo was a side trip from a study abroad program in the summer of 2018.

The most substantial cost associated with this research project is the allocation of time. Initially I tracked my time spent working on the project by keeping a research journal. However, I abandoned tracking time in this way early in the project because of the accounting paradox: taking the time to track the time investment artificially inflated the amount of time invested in the project without creating a substantive product. It takes time to account for time. Since I was financing the project myself and did not have to account to a grant making institution for expenditure of resources it was more efficient simply to classify the types of time investment for description. Many of the time allocation classes have already been alluded to in this discussion such as the time required to travel to field sites and time to conduct the interviews. Preparation time prior to each of the eight field trips included researching the living history event and venue where it was to be held; contacting management at those venues to advise them of my planned visit and negotiate terms; researching the historical period and themes of the event; making plans for travel and lodging. The most substantial investment of time was the post interview phase with editing, accessioning, and indexing. The details of editing and indexing during the post interview phase will be discussed below, however, a fair and conservative estimate of time involved in these activities is ten hours for every hour of recorded interview. This estimate excludes the time involved in writing this thesis. A separate time element which is not directly included in the process of editing and indexing was the time necessary to acquire the technical expertise to accomplish those tasks. Learning the basics of using the recording equipment, the editing software and indexing software required extended hours of time commitment that is difficult if not impossible to estimate, but nonetheless represents a significant investment in the project.

Best Practices

A significant part of the learning process in conducting this research project was developing a set of best practices to guide this project and for future projects, and to recommend to other scholars in conducting oral history research. In many cases these best practices are grounded upon common sense, but in other cases guiding principles were less obvious and revealed only upon making serious mistakes requiring remedy and future precautions. A summary of those principles includes preparedness; redundancy; technical assistance; and production values.

British war hero of the late 19^{th} and early 20^{th} centuries General Sir Robert Baden Powell, Hero of Mafeking, became famous for the motto he bequeathed to the worldwide scouting movement, "Be Prepared." This is intuitive and sound advice, but it merits some discussion, nonetheless. Multiple imperatives drive the advisability of advanced preparation in any research project and especially an oral history project. A distinguishing element of an oral history is the interaction between a historian and narrator, and the presumption is that the narrator is participating on a volunteer basis. Mindfulness of efficiency with time is a mandatory consideration in return for that voluntary participation, and that efficiency can only be achieved through advanced preparation. Wasting the time of a volunteer is not only impolite but makes recruitment of other narrators a greater challenge. Advanced preparation also enhances the efficient use of project resources whether the financing source is an outside grant institution or the researcher himself as in this project. To implement the principle of preparation for this project I adopted the practice of conducting thorough research on the event and venue for each series of interviews. Next, I devised checklists as a second step before undertaking any of the eight research field trips. Checklist items included a packing list of personal items; checking and double-checking equipment functionality; accessioning waiver forms; charging batteries; checking spare batteries and memory cards.

Another best practice principle is redundancy. Any aspect of the project that is critical for success and can be rendered in duplicate should be done accordingly. Redundancy applied both to processes and substance within the project and included recording methods, digital files, paper files, and memory and power source capacities. The project design included recording in two modes, audio, and video, with a view of capturing a broader expanse of narrative expression. Recording in two modes also offered the advantage of redundancy in recording which was especially important with respect to audio recordings. The video camera recorded its own audio track, which was not always of the best quality, but in several cases the duplication made the difference between saving valuable interview content or a loss in the event of a technical failure of which there were several during the course of the project. Technical failures were generally of two types, memory exhaustion and battery depletion. The interview with Tom Kelleher who was president of the Association of Living History Farm and Agricultural Museums was recorded at Old Sturbridge Village Living History Museum and was the ninth interview during a very long day of interviews.[22] Midway through the conversation I

[22] Tom Kelleher, "History of Old Sturbridge Village," *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016).

noticed that the audio recorder had stopped because the batteries were depleted. The redundant audio recording made by the video camera prevented any loss due to the second device shutting down. I was not always this fortunate. During the final interview at Battery Hooper Days in August of 2016 I began an interview with Judy Biedenharn who was a living history reenactor interpreting the persona of a 19th century housewife demonstrating primitive techniques of textile production using a functioning spinning wheel. She was accompanied by her colleague Sandi Cloppert. Once again this was an interview at the end of a long day of many lengthy interviews; the fifth of the day. Even though I was prepared at the beginning of the day with charged spare batteries for the video camera, the recording activity of the day had depleted all the available batteries and I had not the opportunity to recharge any of them. Barely five minutes into the interview the video camera shut down, and the lateness of the day precluded any meaningful opportunity to recover and solve the technical issue. Of all the interviews in the project, this was the only one that was not accessioned, and that was due to the limited duration of the conversation before the battery died. Redundancy also applied to the practice of creating duplicate digital files of all recordings. This was accomplished by uploading files from SD cards to Dropbox file folders at the earliest opportunity when internet service was available. On one occasion I was uploading files at midnight at a McDonald's on Cape Cod because the restaurant offered the quickest access to wireless internet service after a very long day of interviewing. As previously discussed, the original SD cards were not reused but rather preserved with the first recordings as a means of creating back up digital files and avoid the loss of information. Duplication also applied to the paper hard copies of consent and waiver forms for the Louie B. Nunn

Center for Oral History that each narrator was asked to sign. These forms were scanned into digital pdf files and stored in my personal Dropbox and the originals were submitted to the Nunn Center for their files.

The technical issues involved in the recording process recommend a best practice of employment of technical assistance or employment of a dedicated recording engineer during the interview process. Scholarly literature on the use of video recordings in oral history practice advises the oral historian to delegate technical duties to an assistant so that his or her focus can be devoted entirely to the developing conversation with the narrator.[23] The experience of this project confirms the soundness of this advice even though in practice an assistant was used in only one field trip during this project. Without the benefit of a grant or outside financial support I only had technical assistance during the interviews recorded at Boonesboro State Park when I was assisted on a volunteer basis by my daughter Rosemary Carruthers who monitored battery strength and continuing operation of both recording devices. This project is a case of the exception proving the rule; the many technical issues with recording that occurred during the project could have been avoided entirely with a dedicated assistant to attend to recording equipment, and the resulting interview would not have been impaired with distractions of the interviewer.

It was not my purpose to become a technically advanced videographer as part of the learning process in this research project. However, through experience I developed the best practice of acquiring and understanding of some basic video production values, which helped to preserve narrative content in the editing process. During the very first

[23] Whitaker, “Why Not Try Videotaping?”, 119.

project interview with J.R. Sharp, the video camera battery lost power near the end of the interview so several minutes of conversation at the close was lost. The audio recording made with the Zoom H5 was two to three minutes longer than the audio track from the video recording and might have been salvaged had I made some generic “B roll” video footage to pair to the extended audio file. At this stage of the project I was unfamiliar with the video production concept of recording B roll and so I opted to edit out the final moments of the Sharp interview before accessioning. A similar problem occurred during the Jim Hoffman interview recorded at Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate. During the editing process I discovered that the Canon Vixia video camera created separate files of approximately fifteen minutes each when the recording was lengthy. Normally these multiple files could easily be stitched together in the editing software with no noticeable interruption, but in the Hoffman interview for some unidentified reason there was a gap of several seconds between the two files. This gap only became obvious when I tried to pair the video files to the audio file recorded on the Zoom H5 which did not have a gap. This presented the technical problem of how to preserve the audio content within the gap when there was no video image to pair with it. The solution was for me to return to Ashland with my video camera and make several recordings of the house and grounds. I was able to close the video gap with the generic B roll footage thereby salvaging the conversation that would otherwise have been lost as in the case of the Sharp interview. It was fortunate that I learned this lesson regarding production values during an interview that was recorded locally, and it was convenient for me to return to make additional video recordings. During the very last interview in the project recorded using the Canon DSLR camera at the Waterloo battlefield, there was yet another technical interruption which shut down the camera near the end of the interview. There was plenty of power in the battery and memory space available which are the most common forms of technical failures. I have since learned that SD memory cards have some variation in recording speed and in a DSLR camera a card with insufficient speed on the SD card may become overwhelmed with data causing the device to shut off. This is a speculative cause for the technical failure in this case. This might have been a heartbreaking loss of content that could not be remedied in a recording made in a foreign country and foreign continent. However, the audio recording made with the Zoom H5 coupled with the B roll video I recorded with the DSLR and my cell phone allowed me to preserve the interview content that otherwise would have been lost.

CHAPTER 4: FIELD METHODS

Interview Question Strategy

The strategy I developed for interacting with narrators incorporated the elements of preparation, thematic lines of inquiry, open to closed question transitions, active listening, and paraphrasing. The design of this strategy derived from my extensive professional experience as a financial consultant where a clear mutual understanding with a client was critical because of the large values involved in the transactions under discussion. I also had the benefit of considerable experience reviewing and editing oral history transcripts and indexing oral histories using OHMS. I developed my own strategic style through combining my training and experience as a financial consultant with a critical evaluation of other oral historians.

Preparatory elements included a lifetime of worth of a general study of American and European history which provided the basis for participating in an informed conversation on the historical substance being portrayed by the living history narrators. The ability to converse in an informed and familiar fashion on the historical subject which a narrator portrayed as a living history practitioner established a sense of trust and mutual respect during the interview and is an indispensable common ground. In many cases preparation also included background research into the specific historical subject of the narrator or background research into the narrator himself or herself which typically took the form of an internet search to review a practitioner's personal website or organizational website. However, due to the random nature of selecting some narrators by attending events and striking up conversations with living history practitioners, it was often necessary to rely strictly on general background knowledge, and to treat the history of the specific persona as a learning experience. The interview with Carole Jarboe and Jake Book was an example of my having general and not specific background research to call upon in the interview.[24] An abbreviated form of advanced preparation was done before every interview in the form of casual conversation engaging the narrator on the historical subject that was being portrayed, that individual's approach to living history, and personal background. The purpose of this introductory conversation was to inform the potential narrator of the purpose of the research if this represented the initial contact. The introductory conversation also provided an opportunity to discover thematic lines of inquiry to be explored once the interview was being recorded. Finally, since in most cases the interview was the first meeting between me and the narrator, the introductory

[24] Carol Jarboe and Jake Book, "Introducing Carol Jarboe and Jake Book, who portray resurrectionists," *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016).

conversation helped to establish a sense of relaxation and personal rapport before commencement of recording.

Scripting of questions before an interview is generally an undesirable practice because it inhibits a free flowing and unrehearsed conversation. While a script might support a new or unexperienced oral historian in staying on track, the practice limits the opportunity for exploring new subjects as they arise in a narration. For this oral history project, the opportunistic nature of approaching narrators at events precluded any real opportunity for scripting questions even if that design element had been desirable. Instead of drafting specific questions, I prepared a list of general themes based on the research objectives and from information developed during previous interviews as the project progressed. Generally speaking, I wanted to investigate narrators' memories and experiences regarding their personal background with respect to occupation and education; their individual approach to researching, developing and presenting a historical persona; their acquisition and application of material culture; the organizational structure of professional and amateur living history. In many if not most cases the narrator would want to discuss the substance of their historical presentation regarding period and persona, which I certainly welcomed. However, the research objective of this project was not specifically to learn about the history under representation per se, but to explore the experiences of recreating a representation of that history. I was less interested in learning about the life of Abraham Lincoln or Elizabeth Hardwick, and more interested in the methods employed by each narrator to interpret and present those lives. This distinction represented the most difficult thematic challenge in the project, because the natural tendency for an unstructured conversation with a living history practitioner portraying a certain person from a certain time was to drift to a focus on that person instead of method. Complicating that natural drift tendency was the reality that in many respects the historical substance was relevant to understanding the process. For example, to achieve cultural and gender diverse perspectives in the project, certain narrators were selected due to culture or language or race or sex, and the personas they portrayed illustrated these diversity considerations. The ability to sort through these nuanced thematic distinctions while the oral history interview was in progress, and to keep the conversational inertia in line with research objectives was developed through experience and continued practice throughout the course of the project. Recognizing the desirability of maintaining a balance between established research objectives and a free-flowing unlimited conversation is skill oral historians must consciously work to develop on a continual basis.

In my previous profession as a financial services consultant, I received extensive training in customer service interactions which over time developed into personal interaction skills that were usefully applicable to conducting oral history interviews. An oral history interaction should combine the substance of the narrator's memories and experiences with the direction provided by the interviewing historian. A key factor is that the substantive content should *not* be contributed by the historian. Let the narrator tell the story. To accomplish this objective, the questioning strategy begins with open ended questions on a theme to provide the narrator the chance to converse freely in a guided direction. As the story unfolds, the historian interviewer can interject with three techniques to sharpen the clarity of meaning and provide direction to the conversation. First, if the narrator relates a story element which might seem ambiguous or unclear, the interviewer can transition from open ended to closed ended questions to sharpen the clarity of details. Asking the narrator "do you mean this?..." when an unclear point is made invites a simple "yes" or "no" response, resolving the detail with minimal interruption to the narrative flow. Second, the interviewer should use active listening skills such as confirming remarks or comments which reflects the interviewer's background knowledge in the subject matter. Third, paraphrasing a brief passage of narrator's conversation confirms that the interviewer is paying attention and understanding the meaning of the narration, and thus builds a sense of mutual trust as well as sharpening the clarity of the narration.

My experience as an OHMS indexer at the Louie B. Nunn Center for oral history provided me with many hours of experience monitoring oral history interviews conducted by other oral historians which provided me the benefit of reflecting on their techniques and experience. A key technique I developed through this experience was to pose a final "capstone question" at the conclusion of every interview I conducted. This question was as close to a scripted question ever used in any of the interviews of the project and it took the form of a structured open-ended question. For this project, the capstone question consisted of an opening comment about the role of living history recreating sensations of the past followed by an observation about the role of oral history to tap into the memory of a narrator. The preface was followed by an invitation "tell me about your favorite memory as a living history interpreter/reenactor." The invitation permitted the narrator to bring up some memory or other information he or she felt was important but may have not otherwise come up during the conversation. The purpose of the capstone question was to make a gift of final authority to the narrator as to what should be included in the interview. It is a momentary surrender of the interview agenda to the participant to have the final say at the end of the conversation. The structured piece of the preface element includes the respective role statements for the two methodologies under study in the project, and the invitation transfers closing control to the interview subject. This questioning technique was extremely useful in obtaining a fresh perspective and new information that would otherwise have been overlooked in a more scripted or controlled interview. Furthermore, the capstone was a vital element in the micro oral history interviewing style because it permitted capturing a more diverse discourse in a shorter length of time.

Location Selection

> "…the distinction between past, present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion."[25]
>
> Albert Einstein

As Einstein notes in his general theory of relativity, there is a strong relationship between time and space. In some cases, living history practice is a continuous process, especially at living history farms or museums. In other cases, the activity is event driven which might be organized around an anniversary such as the 203rd anniversary of the battle of Waterloo, or perhaps a yearly public festival designed to invite the public to visit a historic location. In chronological order, the settings and/or events included in this oral

[25] Paul Mainwood, "Einstein Believed In A Theory Of Spacetime That Can Help People Cope With Loss," Forbes, last modified December 28, 2016, accessed January 29, 2020, https://www.forbes.com/sites/quora/2016/12/28/einstein-believed-in-a-theory-of-spacetime-that-can-help-people-cope-with-loss/#6dce78bc55d2.

history project included: Civil War Weekend at Heritage Village Museum in Sharon Woods Park, Cincinnati Ohio; McConnell Springs Park in Lexington Kentucky; Fort Boonesboro State Park, Kentucky; Rebels and Redcoats event at Old Sturbridge Village Living History Museum in Sturbridge Massachusetts; Battery Hooper Days event at the James A. Ramage Civil War Museum in Fort Wright Kentucky; the National Park Service Centennial Celebrations at Fort Pulaski National Monument, Savannah Georgia, as well as NPS centennial events at Fort Frederica National Monument on Saint Simons Island Georgia, and Castillo de San Marcos National Monument in Saint Augustine Florida; the Fair at New Boston event at George Rogers Clark State Park at Springfield Ohio; Camp Nelson Civil War Days at Camp Nelson State Park, Nicholasville Kentucky[26]; Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate in Lexington Kentucky; Colonial Williamsburg in Williamsburg Virginia; the Homeplace 1850's Farm in Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area, Tennessee; and the 203rd anniversary event at Hougoumont Farm at Champ de Bataille de Waterloo near Braine-l'Alleud, Belgium.

To incorporate a sense of geographic diversity, the plan was to conduct interviews at different types of venues hosting living history events or living history portrayals, in as far a range as a limited personal budget would allow. Many of the sites chosen were anniversary event driven such as the centennial celebration events at the National Park Service sites in Georgia and Florida or the 203rd anniversary of Waterloo. Living history museums are a key element that supports the continuation of living history as an activity, so the design included a plan to visit the major living history museums on the east coast including Old Sturbridge Village, Colonial Williamsburg, and the Homeplace 1850's

[26] After the Camp Nelson interview the park was converted from a state park to a national park.

Farm. At these living history museums, the interpretive process is a continuous daily process rather than event driven. The plan also included visits to Plimouth Plantation in Massachusetts, and Connor Prairie near Indianapolis, Indiana, but ultimately these sites were passed over due to limitations in time and budget.

Many of the locations where interviews were recorded for this oral history project were historically significant in some way. Occasionally these places were historically significant because of major events occurring there, particularly military conflicts such as the battle of Waterloo. Examples of historical sites in the oral history project also included McConnell Springs where the city of Lexington Kentucky was initially settled, Camp Nelson which was a major recruiting and training center for federal forces during the American Civil War, and Fort Pulaski, Fort Frederica and Castillo de San Marcos which are sites that also incorporate significant historical architectural features. In the United States there is a decreasing tendency to conduct living history events on identical battle sites because of many of these places are preserved in the National Park Service system, and NPS management policy 7.5.9 adopted in 2006 placed a ban on battle reenactments on park property due to controversies during the centennial observation of the American Civil War in the 1960's.[27] Battle reenactments today are more commonly conducted at state parks such as Perryville or in anatopic locations that incorporate topography and scenery similar to the original.[28] However, the NPS does continue to host living history presentations involving themes on social history and demonstrations of material culture, avoiding recreation of a battle.

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[27] *Management Policies 2006* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service, 2006), 94.

[28] Anatopism is defined as something that is out of proper place or location, as compared to anachronism which is something out of proper time.

While in many cases the locations where events are hosted are significant because of historical events that transpired there, for living history presentations this is not strictly a matter of necessity. In many cases the locations are anatopic with respect to historical events for a variety of reasons. The historical period and theme of the experiential history event may be such that hosting the event in the identical location is impractical. For example, a historical periodic theme that is increasing in popularity with reenactors is the Vietnam era. According to Taylor and Kessen late nineteenth and twentieth century reenactment themes of the Spanish American War, World War I and World War II are also increasing in interest among practitioners.[29] There are even locations in the United States such as Shimpstown and Newville Pennsylvania that recreate the trenches and other defensive works typical of European battlefields of World War I and World War II.[30] It is certainly possible that European reenactors may engage in living history activities on the original sites in places such as the Ardennes Forest or Normandy, the cost of travel to these locations limits the ability of other participants living at distance from attending. Also, some battlefields such as the Somme are not suitable for experiential history events because of the continuing danger of unexploded ordinance in those places along with the efforts to reclaim land for agrarian purposes.[31] Several of the locations were interviews were recorded during the oral history project were either anatopic or partially anatopic due to the establishment of an open air or living history

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[29] Matthew Gravely and Taylor Kessen, "Diversity in living history periods and occupations." *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016).
[30] Jenny Thompson, *War Games: Inside the World of 20th-Century War Reenactors*, (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2004), 40-43.
[31] Henry Samuel, "Somme 'Iron Harvest' will take 500 years to clear, say bomb disposal experts on centenary of bloody battle," The Telegraph, last modified June 30, 2016, accessed January 29, 2020, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/30/somme-iron-harvest-will-take-500-years-to-clear-say-bomb-disposa/.

museum. Old Sturbridge Village is among the oldest living history museums, and yet historically speaking it is an entirely contrived location. as historical buildings were relocated to the site to create a simulation of a New England village dating to the early 19^{th} century.[32] Heritage Village Museum where the interviews with JR Sharp, David Walker and Stan Wertz were recorded is another example of a collection of historical buildings placed in a historically artificial location. Colonial Williamsburg is a variation on this theme because the site was historically significant as an early seat of government for Virginia, but the architectural features composing the museum are mostly 20^{th} century reconstructions.

Narrator Recruitment

Because of the author's previous experience serving as docent and board member with the James A. Ramage Civil War Museum, the initial concept for the research project focused on Civil War reenactors. This historical period and form of living history activity enjoys a high profile in the public imagination after the publication of Tony Horowitz's *Confederates in the Attic* and the recent Civil War sesquicentennial anniversary series of celebratory observation events. However, this limited notion of project design was quickly abandoned in favor of a broader exploration of time periods and occupational persona for the sake of adding an element of diversity to the project. I selected events to attend and initiated conversations with a purpose of diversifying the elements of occupation, gender, cultural background, and periodization. Selection of potential

[32] Kelleher, "History of Old Sturbridge Village."

narrators was made somewhat at random by striking up a conversation with a practitioner in period attire at living history events, and then explaining my project and inviting them to participate. The earliest interviews reflect a focus on Civil War reenactment in the introductory segments where the introduction states the name of the project as the *Living History Reenactor Oral History Project*.[33] However, during the initial project interview, J.R. Sharp made me aware of a key distinction in living history practitioners, that while many engage in living history as amateurs for a hobby, other practitioners are compensated professionals or at least semi-professional. A telephone conversation with the lead interpreter at The Homeplace 1850's Farm, Cindy Earls, confirmed that there are at least two distinct classes of living history practitioners, reenactors who portray the past as a hobby for entertainment, and interpreters who are educational professionals. Ms. Earls also made an important distinction during our telephone call which has prompted me to reconsider certain aspects of my project. When I mentioned reenactors, she pointed out that she and her staff were *not* reenactors but rather historical interpreters. She emphasized that they are professionals who are paid for their work. Clearly a limited focus on Civil War reenacting was too limiting in scope to capture the full range of experience that living history incorporated, and this contributed to a broadening of focus to include expanded historical periodization and greater diversity in occupation, gender, culture and language. In recognition of this distinction, I expanded the scope of my study to consider this distinction, and I also changed the name of the oral history project to

[33] J.R. Sharp, "Introducing J.R. Sharp, who portrays a Confederate colonel," *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016); Stan Wertz and David Walker, "Introducing David Walker who portrays Jefferson Davis and Stan Wertz who portrays Abraham Lincoln," *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016); Jonathan Hagee, "Introducing Jonathan Hagee, who portrays an 18th century Kentucky frontiersman," *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016).

Living History Oral History Project, thus omitting the reference to reenactors in the title. The project title change broadened the scope of narrators to be recruited for interviewing to include dedicated amateurs as well as paid professionals. By the time of oral histories recorded at the third site, Fort Boonesboro, the name of the project changed to the current iteration to reflect the broadened scope, and project planning likewise expanded to include design elements of diversity as described above.

Occupational diversity was the first design element to be developed. Generally speaking, living history has a strong military influence in the representation of occupations of the past, and through the course of the project many of the narrators portrayed military personnel including infantry, artillery, cavalry, engineers, militia, navy, enlisted and officers. In addition to the military occupational theme which I expected to be easy to develop through the project, I planned on seeking opportunities to solicit narrators to represent other occupational themes better to reflect the living history movement as well as reflect the underlying diversity in society and culture. I set a research objective to interview narrators representing occupational themes of medical, legal, religious, artistic, industrial craft, farming, musical, gaming, and industrial technology. The project successfully included most of these occupational themes through interviewing several surgeons, a justice of the peace, a sketch artist, a blacksmith, farmers and one vocalist. Unfortunately, plans to interview narrators from vintage team sports and industrial technology never developed. There is a distinct set of living history of vintage baseball in which teams of baseball players engage in public games wearing uniforms representing the late 19th century period and playing according to the established rules from that period. I attempted to contact the managers of two vintage baseball teams, the

Cincinnati Redstockings, and the Cincinnati Buckeyes, both of which represented historical teams from the 19th century. However, repeated attempts to set up interviews produced no results, and therefore this occupational line was set aside for future research. In previous visits to living history events I encountered a practitioner who interpreted and presented a 19th century traveling photographer who would have represented an industrial technology theme, but I was never able successfully to contact such a narrator. A final missed opportunity for occupation originally envisioned to be interviewed was members of a historical band or some other musical instrumentalist. There were such performers at several of the living history events attended for this project including a band at Heritage Village Museum, a fife and drum corps at Old Sturbridge Village, a dulcimer player at Battery Hooper Days, and a lute player at the Fair at New Boston. However, I was not able to arrange an interview with any of these potential narrators except the lute player, Jonathan Hagee, whom I had already interviewed. Otherwise, many of my specific goals for diversification to be represented in the project were successfully attained. For example, two of the narrators were either Native American or representing Native American culture.[34] African Americans were represented in the project with three interview subjects, all of whom were able to contribute to a discussion of the experience of racial divide and race based slavery.[35] The collection included one native Spanish language speaker and another narrator who represented a Spanish language persona.[36] Two of the narrators were native speakers of German, and two portrayed German or

[34] James Sawgrass, *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016); Jessica Diemer-Eaton, *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016).
[35] Ray Christie, *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016); Robert Bell, *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016); Elizabeth Lawson, *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2017).
[36] Orlando Ramirez, *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016); John Cipriani, *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016).

Hessian soldiers.[37] One narrator was a native Dutch speaker.[38] Nine of the forty-seven narrators were women.[39] By carefully planning for diverse demographic types for recruitment as narrators at the concept and design stages combined with the application of video technology for recording the oral histories derived a project that provides a glimpse of the cultural and demographic richness that can be achieved both in oral history and living history methodology.

Field Recordings

This project emphasizes how the application of recording technology to the practice of oral history increases the communicative content of the finished product. Included among the Best Practices published by the Oral History Association is the suggested guideline "The interviewing should be conducted, whenever possible, in a quiet location with minimal background noises and possible distractions, unless part of the oral history process includes gathering soundscapes or ambient sounds."[40] While many projects would benefit from the controlled recording environment described in the first phrase of this guideline, the conceptual nature of this project strongly suggested that a more robust presentation of the living history experience would be achieve only through fieldwork recordings. It might have been theoretically possible to invite living history reenactors

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[37] Yvonne Smith, *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016); Bastian Becker, *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2018); Steward Noe, *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016); John McGough, *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016).
[38] Donald Meulemans, *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2018).
[39] Note that due to technical problems with a recording, two female interview subjects were omitted from the accessioned project.
[40] "Best Practices," Oral History Association.

and interpreters into a controlled studio environment for interview recording, however that approach would be limiting in several important respects. First controlled studio recordings would have imposed a practical geographic limit on the potential group of living history practitioners from which to recruit. I certainly would not have been able to recruit participants into the project from Massachusetts, Florida or Belgium had the project been conducted in controlled studio conditions. Only seven of the forty-nine participant narrators were interviewed within a one-hour drive time of the project base in Lexington Kentucky.[41] Geographic distribution in narrator recruitment contributed to an enlarged potential group of participants which in turn increased the diversity of living history persona and historical periods and themes represented in the project. Second, since living history practice is largely a volunteer activity involving expensive costumes and artifacts, I anticipated that it would be a hardship to invite participating narrators to don their attire and take the time to travel to a central studio to record an interview. Finally, living history presentations do not occur in a vacuum or controlled environment. Living history is an experience of sensory totality incorporating a convergence of time, place, people, and circumstances. The only meaningful way to capture and record the totality of this sensory experience was through field recordings during living history events as the narrators were plying their interpretive practice and while visitors looked on. Thus, this project deliberately embraced the exception expressed in the OHA guideline as a design feature.

[41] Note that forty-one interviews with a total of forty-seven narrators were accessioned in the project. A fragmentary portion of an interview with two narrators Judy Biedenharn and Sandi Cloppert was not substantial enough to justify accessioning.

However, fieldwork presents an interesting set of challenges for the oral historian whether the interview and recording environment is indoors or out of doors. Sometimes these challenges result from the unpredictability of using digital recording equipment in uncontrolled conditions which can include several variables. Oftentimes in this project these variables presented advantages and disadvantages simultaneously as two sides to a metaphorical coin. For example, an important feature of the living history experience is that the interpretive presentations are commonly done in front of an audience of event visitors or observers. Interviewing the living history practitioner in this field environment created the opportunity to record some elements of the interaction between the narrator and visitors which contributes to a record featuring soundscapes rich with complexity and ambiance. However, it was not practical to obtain archival accession waivers from anyone who might incidentally be recorded during the interview, and in an uncontrolled environment it was not unheard of for interlopers to intrude into the recording while in process. When these intrusions occurred, they presented the ethical dilemma of asking for a signed waiver which could easily be denied by a surprised guest or editing the unwanted intrusion and hope that valuable content was not lost in the process. The first problematical intruder in the project occurred in the first interview with J.R. Sharp at 1:07:17 in the accessioned recording. The backdrop of the interview was the back corner of a historic building at Heritage Village in Sharon Woods Park in Cincinnati Ohio. A modern water spigot had been installed in the building and a hose attached to a series of faucets attached to the side of the building. At this early stage of the project I had not yet learned to post a sign advising visitors that an oral history recording was in process, and an unsuspecting visitor wandered into the video frame to fill a bucket of water from the spigot.[42] Not only was the visual intrusion disruptive of the frame, the audio recording of water tumbling into the bucket created enough noise to force the interview to pause for a few moments. The innocent bystander looked up and began to engage Sharp in a brief conversation before I politely mentioned we were making a recording. Her reaction was one of surprise and apparent embarrassment, placing her hand to her mouth in an expression of shock. We both reassured her the interruption was not an inconvenience, and she continued filling the bucket for a full minute while Sharp and I discussed other potential interview subjects. In retrospect this section of the video should have been edited since the interloper did not sign a waiver and the interview content was nonconsequential. However, the unedited section reveals something of the reality of recording oral histories under uncontrolled field conditions. A similar interruption occurred in the interview with Robert Caudill as another living history interpreter walked into the frame and sat down next to Caudill as the interview was in progress. This interruption prompted an edit with visually amusing results that are discussed below in the section on editing.

Another form of interruption that was less obvious in the final accessioned videos was intrusions that necessitated a pause in the interview and recording. A consequence of attempting to capture living history narrators in a public setting was that the interview was not their primary mission at any given moment; the public interaction was the mission. In most cases the interviews could be scheduled during a narrator's break time or before or after large crowds had gathered at the event. However, it was often the case that a visitor would approach the living history narrator with questions or conversations

[42] Sharp, "Funding for living history events."

regarding the interpretive performance which forced a break in my conversation with the narrator and a recording pause. This necessity was especially true when the narrators were professional interpreters although there were several cases of recording pauses during interviews with volunteer reenactors. A good example of a paused and restarted interview was recorded with Joseph Cauthen and Justin Keeling at The Homeplace 1850's Farm in Land Between the Lakes.[43] The first segment of the interview shows Cauthen and Keeling seated in the breezeway or 'dogtrot' of a period barn at the homeplace. A later segment shows the pair seated in front of a gate in a split-rail fence and the segment conversation opens with my comment that there was a break of a half hour or longer. The Homeplace 1850's Farm is an open-air living history museum which charges admission to visitors and pays the costumed interpreters a salary. In the planning stage of this series of interviews I arranged my visit on a Monday when the team lead advised me the visitor traffic would not likely be as heavy as might be on a weekend. Nonetheless, as the afternoon progressed more visitors arrived with questions and on each occasion, I needed to pause the recording and stand by while the narrators answered questions from visitors. During one break period, a series of visitors arrived in sequence, with one new group arriving just as the last was leaving thereby extending the pause in the interview to a point where I suspected I would not have time to finish. Eventually another living history interpreter relieved Keeling and Cauthen and we changed locations to the fence where we could continue uninterrupted. The consequence of facing these choices regarding editing of a recording when minimizing editing is generally desired in oral history was an unavoidable result of video as a design element in this project

[43] Joseph Cauthen and Justin Keeling, "Introducing Joseph Cauthen and Justin Keeling, who portray 19th century farmers," *Living History Oral History Project* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2017).

These challenges of having a second claim to the attention of the narrators I recruited combined with the prospect of frequent and potentially lengthy interruptions prompted me early on to adopt a style of micro oral history interview. The micro interview was driven by necessity, but also added a benefit greater diversity of narration within interview series. The Old Sturbridge Village Living History Museum series in Massachusetts was the first and most significant example of this style. My travel to Sturbridge was via automobile over the course of two days of driving so there was an imperative to make the most of the opportunities for interviewing at the event. In one day, I conducted nine interviews which was the most of any single interview series in the project. Most of the interviews ranging from fifteen to twenty-five minutes except for the final interview which was an hour. By conducting shorter interviews with a streamlined line of questions based on themes I was able to avoid interruptions in the recording while also contacting a greater diversity of persona represented by the narrators. A summary of these persona included an 18th century surgeon, an 18th century pedagogue, a colonial infantryman, a female civilian spy, a British officer engineer, two Hessian infantrymen, and a loyalist militiaman. The micro interview technique was ideally suited for fieldwork where distractions were possible but where there was a wide pool of potential narrators from which to recruit. This technique maximized the investment in the travel necessary for this type of fieldwork, and I applied it repeatedly throughout the project at events such as Battery Hooper Days, Fort Pulaski, Fort Frederica, Castillo de San Marcos, the Homeplace 1850's Farm, and Waterloo. A good case study of the micro oral history is the interview with Joshua Dummit at Old Sturbridge Village.[44] The unedited recording

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[44] Joshua Dummit, "Uniform elements," *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016).

was fifteen minutes and nine seconds long, which was edited down to fourteen minutes and forty-nine seconds. At 14:20 Dummit looks past the camera and says "Unfortunately, I have to go, I'm being called" which brought the interview to an abrupt and unplanned end. His urgency to report for duty prevented him from providing a thoughtful response to the closing capstone question I posed to him. The technique of micro interviewing can provide a broad range of opportunities for application in other field settings where a diverse group of people randomly assembled is the topic under study by the oral history project. Potential applications might include public demonstrations or festivals, political rallies, and events, or even crisis events such as refugee camps or migrant caravans. There may be a variety of practical benefits accruing to consciously shortened interviews, but the oral historian should remember the principle advantage which is to increase diversity of viewpoint within the project collection.

CHAPTER 5: ARCHIVING

Administration and Editing

Oral history has commonly been practiced by amateurs in the past, perhaps by a curious family member equipped with a cassette recorder asking Grandpa about his adventures during the war. Those amateur efforts are certainly a valuable addition to family lore, but they typically do not qualify as scholarship or research for the simple reason that those recordings will likely never be reviewed and analyzed for their content. Undoubtedly there are untold troves of shoeboxes stashed away forgotten in closets or attics brimming with analog recordings of such interviews.[45] The content on those moldering tapes is inaccessible because it is undiscoverable. The critical difference between an amateur oral history and scholarly research is the ability of a researcher to identify, locate and utilize a piece of information from an archive, which in turn depends on the administrative process of accessioning and indexing the oral history project content. This section describes the steps in the administrative process of organizing and managing this project from the moment interviews were completed to the fully indexed interview available to researchers online.

For organization and administration, I devised an internal cataloging system using an Excel spreadsheet to record and track critical data in the project. Each living history event was categorized as a series, and there was a total of fifteen series by the conclusion of the project, some series with only a single interview, and one series with as many as nine interviews. Each interview was assigned a distinct accession number based on the system used by the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History. The Nunn Center assigned the project the code "lhr" for Living History Reenactor based on the original title for the project, and this convention remained unchanged after the project name change. The catalog listings also included dates, locations, name of narrator, the persona portrayed, and the time length of each interview. In addition to keeping a catalog of interviews, another internal best practice developed during the course of this project was keeping a research journal to record contacts with potential interview sites or narrators, develop thematic lines of inquiry and record ideas for additional research and project organization.

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[45] Michael Frisch, "Oral History in the Digital Age: Beyond the Raw and the Cooked," *Australian Historical Studies* 47 (March 2016), 97

Ordinarily a best practice in recording an oral history using either audio or video technology would recommend limiting the editing of the recording prior to accessioning. Limited editing or no editing at all offers the advantage of minimizing the potential impact on the intended story related by the narrator. As a practical matter limited editing also offers the advantage of limiting administrative work invested in the project. However, the creation of redundant audio tracks using the video camera and Zoom H5 recorder made it necessary to edit the recordings before they could be accessioned to the Nunn Center simply to pair the separate audio and video files. It is important to note that recorded segments were only excised with great care not to influence the content of the message communicated by the interview subject. In some cases, short portions were excised because visitors or other third parties wandered into the recording area as an interruption, and there was no accessioning waiver form obtained from that person. An amusing example of such an edit may be found in the interview with Robert Caudill at 21:15 time stamp in which another interpreter walks into the frame and sits down without realizing an interview was being recorded. The edited version shows the person sitting down and then fading away in ghost-like fashion as a fade technique was used to excise the interloper but retain a smooth transition. This editing choice was made to preserve as much of the interview subject's comments as possible while also removing the third party who had unknowingly wandered into the recording. Also, there were some instances of information or images included in the original recordings that would not have been appropriate to include in a final accessioned interview. For example, one narrator discussed a personal medical condition that had no bearing on the topic of the research, and the comment was made in an off-hand manor. Even though the comment was voluntarily made without reluctance or expressed restriction by the narrator, I elected to excise that portion of the interview for the sake of narrator privacy. These editing choices reflect an important adaptation of what is normally considered a best practice in recording oral histories which is to control the environment to avoid interruptions. Adaptation of this best practice was necessary and important in recording the interviews in this research for a variety of reasons. To capture the living history practitioner in period attire and in the historical setting it was necessary in most cases to attend events where the public was also attending. Interruptions were unavoidable. Arguably, the occasional intrusions by visitors or other experiential historians is an informative element to the recordings because an interaction between the practitioner and others is a key element of experiential history. Living or experiential history is a social phenomenon that does not occur in isolation or a vacuum, which is demonstrated often in the recording by these interlopers.

I elected to use Adobe Premier Pro CC software to edit and pair the audio recordings made with the Zoom H5 to the video files recorded on the Vixia camera. Among the many capabilities of the application is to link multiple video and audio tracks as well as excising unwanted segments. I had no previous experience using Premier Pro CC and the application is complicated and advanced to a degree where its use is not intuitive. I invested a considerable amount of time into learning the basic skills necessary to do video editing and this investment should be considered among the economic costs of managing an oral history project that includes video recordings in the design. To acquire a sufficient mastery of Premier Pro CC I first turned to the Student Media Depot at W.T. Young Library for basic introductory instruction before relying on web tutorials available through YouTube for additional instruction. The editing process concludes with a "rendering" which converts the digital project in to .WAV files which is the format needed for accessioning to the Nunn Center. These files were typically large enough that they would not easily fit on storage media such as thumb drives and were too large to be sent as an email attachment. Therefore, I arranged with the archivist at the Nunn Center to create a shared folder on Google Drive for making the transfers by copying the file into the shared folder. The copying process also created a duplicate of the file which contributed to the principle of redundancy in the project. It was not uncommon for file transfers to take several hours of computing time especially if more than one edited recording was transferred at a time. My conversations with the archivist at the Nunn Center indicated that it was more efficient for the administrative process to transfer materials to the archive in batch mode with groups of interviews rather than one at a time. This was a personal preference of the archivist so as a rule an oral historian should be aware to ask about preferred accessioning processes with the archivist at their repository. In addition to the digital files of the interview recording the accession process also must include providing hard copies of the signed accession waiver forms from the narrators.

Indexing

Accessioning to an archive alone will not provide accessibility and discoverability to an archival collection. A question is raised how is a researcher to access the informative content within the collection? While the accessioning of materials to the oral history archive will create a catalog entry making the existence of a recording discoverable to a researcher, the content within the collected recordings remains elusive until the interview is either transcribed or indexed. The policy of the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History is that interviews in their collections which are not transcribed or indexed may be requested by a researcher and the archive will provide a digital file either by email or by a shared folder. However, before oral history interviews to be made available online the policy requires either indexing or transcription. An objective of this project was to create an oral history collection that was discoverable and accessible to researchers online which drove the decision to index the collection.[46]

The forty-one interviews in the *Living History Oral History Project* totaled over twenty-six hours of edited material so the next phase of the project involved indexing the collection using the Oral History Metadata Synchronizer or OHMS. In general, OHMS either synchronizes a transcript with an audio or video recording, or coordinates indexing capability by subdividing a digital recording into segments and providing metadata fields such as segment title, brief introductory transcript, keywords, subject headings, synopsis, GPS data and web links. Indexing using OHMS is a lengthy process just as transcription and should be regarded as an additional economic cost in an oral history project designed for accessioning. My experience of indexing the *Living History Oral History Project* indicates that a fair estimation of this economic cost expressed as time would be approximately five to six hours of indexing time for every hour of edited recording. Each indexer will invariably develop their own style and approach to indexing using OHMS. The method I developed during my work at the Nunn Center and during this project was to divide the entire collection into two priority groups based on my judgement of the significance of the materials within the respective interviews. This permitted me to

[46] Transcription was not considered a viable alternative since there was no budget for outsourcing transcription, and I already possessed skills with indexing using OHMS.

complete the indexing in batch mode, completing 25 interviews followed by the remaining 16 interviews. This was more efficient for the archivists at the Nunn Center to administer, more efficient for my administrative purposes as researcher, and permitted the highest priority interviews to become available online earlier.

After dividing the interviews into priority groups, the next stage of indexing was a "first pass." In this stage I would monitor the video recordings and focus on creating short segments of approximately five to ten minutes, giving each segment a descriptive one-sentence title, and drafting an introductory transcript of approximately two lines. The beginning of each segment ideally aligned with a question posed to the narrator so that the logic of question followed by response is preserved within the segment. The final task during the first pass phase was to take notes on important themes, words or concepts discussed during the segment. These notes serve as the basis for creating a controlled vocabulary to be entered as metadata in the form of key words or subject headings during the second pass phase. After completing the first pass of all interviews in the respective priority group, I compiled a general list of potential controlled vocabulary words to research using the Library of Congress Authorities from which standardized subject headings are obtained. I created two Excel files with a .csv or comma separated value extension, one to serve as a subject heading thesaurus and the other as a key word thesaurus. As with other indexing tasks, the order in which researching controlled vocabulary is a matter of personal preference to the indexer, but my experience is that researching in batch mode was more efficient because attention was focused on a single task rather than attempting to manage multiple indexing tasks simultaneously. In addition to efficiency in time devoted to researching, batch mode research using LOC Authorities provided for two completed thesauri to use during indexing which contributed to consistency in the controlled vocabulary throughout the indexing process. Allocation of controlled vocabulary terms between the two thesauri was by process of elimination. All the potential terms were researched in the LOC Authorities and if a matching authorized heading was available, that was added to the subject heading thesaurus. If there was no matching authorized heading the term was added to the key word thesaurus. Before the second pass phase, the thesauri were uploaded to the OHMS system so that typing a few letters in the respective metadata fields would pop a list of thesaurus terms from which to select.

The second pass of indexing in the method I developed involved listening to the interview again, this time concentrating on adding the key words and subject headings and drafting a segment synopsis. During the second pass the other metadata fields such as GPS and web links could be populated if that information was relevant to the segment. For this project, I generally added GPS data for the interview location and hyperlinks for venue websites in the first segment of the interview; or these fields may be populated if the narrator mentioned a place or a website during the course of a respective segment. Occasionally, I might also perform a third pass as a final editing of the indexing, but this review typically did not involve listening to the entire interview recording a third time. The entry of data into the OHMS fields creates a data set from which an extensible markup language or .xml file is created. This point is important for administration because the indexing documents supporting the online presentation of interviews are created in batch mode by the archivist and not easily updated on a continuous basis. It is inefficient to submit a partially indexed interview for updating later; the archivist needs the entire indexing process completed before submission for quality control and creation of the .xml files. An important lesson I learned about indexing during this project that occurred too late for implementation involved drafting of segment synopses. During the indexing process my research focus was on living history methodology, and so the synopses content generally reflected that concentration. However, in drafting this thesis I realized that there existed a considerable opportunity to study unique approaches to oral history methodology, specifically the question of visuality as a theoretical component of oral history research. This epiphany moment arrived too late to influence the segment draft indexing with discussions of visuality topics in the respective synopses. Because of the batch mode advantages of indexing it is impractical to retrofit this information.

CHAPTER 6: INTERPRETATION

Orality and Soundscapes

The traditional concept of orality in an oral history interview was based on the technical ability to capture a verbatim record of the narrator's voice during the interview. Many oral historians commonly accept that transcription loses the sensation of sound and in that conversion process nuanced meaning is subject to the editorial interpretation of the transcriber. As Portelli points out, "There is no such thing as a neutral transcript: each comma is an act of interpretation…"[47] The quality of orality preserves and communicates the emotional intent of a narrator through the rhythm of speech, intonation and speaking

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[47] Portelli, *They Say in Harlan* County, 10.

style.[48] This view of orality is predicated to a degree on the assumption of an oral history interview being recorded in a controlled environment where the focus is strictly devoted to the speech of the narrator. Capturing the literary complexity of the narrator's voice was certainly a key objective of creating audio recordings in this project, but the goals for this project regarding sound sensations were far more ambitious. Many of the sound elements associated with recording in an uncontrolled field environment that might otherwise be regarded as errors or interference in the oral history interview were instead subtle and layered background features that added richness to the meaning conveyed in the oral history recording. One sense living history methodology might be exclusive to the practitioner as a form of experiential learning known as experimental archaeology in which the practitioner learns about processes involving material culture through use and trial and error.[49] However, a much broader application of living history method involves a shared experience between the living history practitioner and an observer which could be an individual visitor to a living history event or venue, but more likely a collection of visitors. In this collective sense, the living history experience is a combination of elements such as historical persona, material culture, geographic location, assembled crowds and more. Each of these factors contributes a unique set of sounds to the living history experience, and a critical research goal of this project was to include that expanded soundscape experience as a feature of the oral history.

Many of the features of an expanded soundscape overlap with the graphic elements of visuality discussed below. A prominent feature of many if not most of the videos is the presence of crowds and their attendant noises. Oftentimes the presence of

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[48] Abrams, *Oral History,* 20.
[49] John Coles, *Archaeology by Experiment* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 13.

visitors was disruptive to the smooth flow of interview conversation through direct intrusion and interruptions. In terms of soundscape constant background chatter can be both informative of the environmental milieu of the moment as well as overpowering of the primary goal of recording the narrator. During the interview with Emily Burns at Boonesboro, her assigned area for conducting educational presentations was a cabin immediately next to the main entrance to the fort where visitors would purchase their tickets for admission. I had scheduled my trip at the fort's opening time before noon on a Sunday with the expectation that there would be some visitors, but the early hour would avoid disruptive crowds. However, Emily was the third and final interview of the day and her position with the admission office directly behind in the recording frame combined with the time of day when visitors began arriving in greater numbers ensured a steady stream of background traffic and noise.[50] At the opening segment an infant can be heard crying in the background, and a train whistle blows in the distance. Both these soundscape features are anachronistic for the 18th century time period being represented by the living history interpreters and the venue. However, the key point is not that the oral history was strictly about the historical period but the historical representation and educational performance method. By capturing these background sounds created by newly arrived visitors, the viewer of the resulting oral history had a richer understanding of the living history interpretive experience Burns was engaged in explaining through her narrative.

A corollary to the visitor ambience is the soundscape originating from the activities of the living history practitioners themselves. The living history experience is

[50] Emily Burns, "Introducing Emily Burns, portraying an early Kentucky frontier woman," *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016).

communal with multiple interactions occurring simultaneously often resulting in a symphony, or perhaps cacophony, of mixed sounds. Alice Bessonett was seated in front of a tent pitched by a rail fence alongside a woodland road relating the subtleties of her representation of a Revolutionary period civilian spy when her response to the capstone question was interrupted by the crescendo of drums followed by the trill of fifes. The rising noise soon overtook her voice as the interview drew to a close. On the road immediately behind her in the frame a parade of colonial infantry accompanied by their martial music marched by.[51] For conventional oral history recordings including the tramp of a regiment of marching troops and their drum and fife corps would be an absurdity and would certainly never make its way into a transcript. This illustrates the breadth of potential of Portelli's notions of literary structure waiting to be discovered in the sound quality of a narrator's voice. Those sounds relate the emotions and sense of the individual narrator, and the expanded soundscape achieves the same purpose with the living history community by archiving the sense of those extraordinary moments.

Visuality

The earliest cultural companion to the story telling tradition is the ancient human practice of recording their mundane and mythical experiences in graphic form as pictographs or petroglyphs. Evidence is found in Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia of paintings in caves dating back as far as thirty-five thousand years ago extending far

[51] Alice Bessonett, "Favorite memory of living history;" "Unit on parade," *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016).

beyond the reach of civilization itself.[52] The relationship between oral and visual traditions before the dawn of history is not well revealed by a body of evidence and must be a subject of some speculation. Thirty-four thousand years ago we do not really know how tales regaled around the campfire might have conversed with the images on cave and canyon walls. However, it is a fair speculation to suppose that a common set of figments and observations that captured the imagination and attention of early humanity found equal expression in separate modes of communication both orally and graphically. It is commonplace to illustrate books with pictures and artwork to elaborate and clarify the message conveyed by the text. Furthermore, there is considerable scholarly literature that develops theoretical concepts of visual narrative applied to a whole range of subjects including aesthetics, image indexing, and rhetorical visual communication.[53] In some cases, analytical theory such as the Grounded Theory Method developed for qualitative data is borrowed from other disciplines and applied to video oral history.[54] The missing piece in the scholarly literature is a theory to grapple with the visuality of narrative that can be achieved in an video oral history that emerges from the application of oral history methodology. Instead of borrowing theory from other disciplines to apply to oral history, this paper proposes to outline a basis for visual narrative theory that is derived directly from the execution of an oral history project.

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[52] Jo Marchant, "A Journey to the Oldest Cave Paintings in the World," *Smithsonian Magazine*, last modified January 2016, accessed February 11, 2020, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/journey-oldest-cave-paintings-world-180957685/.

[53] See e.g. Nikos Metallinos, "Aesthetic Theories of the Visual Communication Media Arts," *Journal of Visual Literacy* 18, (Autumn 1998); Hans Dam Christensen, "Rethinking Image Indexing?" *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 68, (2017); Keith Kenney, "Building Visual Communication Theory by Borrowing from Rhetoric," *Journal of Visual Literacy* 22, (Spring 2002).

[54] Sabrina Habib, "Doing Grounded Theory with Video-Based Research," *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research* 10, (2015).

If adding a verbatim audio recording of the narrator's voice to the oral history record adds a richer meaning through the concept of orality, a logical corollary is that including graphics in that record will enhance the richness of meaning even further. This is the concept of visuality which adds a key component to the design of *The Living History Oral History Project.* Visuality of an oral history can be achieved either by the augmentation of the transcript with static images or by the incorporation of motion graphics through video images. The imagery itself could be artistic renderings such as paintings, drawings or even maps, but for this project the images were exclusively photographic, and specifically video photography. However, simply adding a visual image is insufficient to establish the essence of visuality in an oral history. *Visuality is defined as recorded imagery linked to an oral history that enhances the meaning of narrative content.* The graphic must relate to the oral narrative in a relevant way that adds a deeper understanding or clarity to the story the narrator is telling. Merely adding images to an oral history does not establish visuality if the image content does not contribute to enriching the meaning of the story. Furthermore, the property of motion which is achieved in a video recording is an additional distinguishing element of visuality which extends beyond the informative content offered by still images. The visuality model developed for this oral history project has application possibilities to field recorded oral histories in general and includes two categories of nine visual elements. The first visual category includes those elements relating to the context or settings in which the interview is recorded which are milieu, multiple narrators, natural location, built environment, and atmospheric and temporal circumstances. This category is defined by the visual information originating from the background setting or the context in which the narrator interview is conducted. The second category is personal visual elements including iconic persona, material culture, body language, and performance. These elements relate to visual information directly associated with the narrator per se. It is critical to note that visuality shares with orality a quality of integration where features are not sharply defined or discrete. A person's voice might be analyzed in terms of its tone and pitch and rhythm, but the speaker still has only one voice. The same premise is true with visuality in that a person has one appearance that can be describe and analyzed in multiple ways. The visuality model is useful in providing a framework for analyzing the graphic information imparted by the appearance of the narrator on an elemental scale, but also demonstrating how those elements combine to communicate information greater than the sum of its parts.

Milieu as a theoretical concept was already discussed in the section on soundscapes. The visual impact of milieu broadens the sensory appeal of understanding the narrator in his or her social context. A more controlled approach to recording oral histories in a studio setting may offer the advantage of concentrating exclusively on the memories and experiences of the narrator being interviewed, but this degree of control potentially sacrifices the complex relationships that helped form those memories and experiences. As John Donne aptly reasons, "No man is an island entire of itself."[55] The sound quality of milieu was a necessary consequence of interviewing living history reenactors and interpreters because of the unlikelihood of luring volunteers from extreme distances as discussed previously. Given the interactive nature of the activity an interview with a living history interpreter in a studio setting would be arguably less informative

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[55] John Donne, *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions; Together with Death's Duel*, "Meditation XVII" Project Gutenberg, 2007 p. 109.

than a contextual interview. However, a significant shortcoming of relying strictly on an audio recording as a reflection of the living history narrator's milieu is that the disruptive nature of the broader setting is preserved, and the clarifying elements are lost. This point is well illustrated by listening to any segment of the interview with Margo Jang with one's eyes closed.[56] The considerable background noise of the crowd is at times overwhelming and confusing and would be even more so without the video images which reveal that Dr. Jang was seated at a vending area of a public event with a food service table in view immediately behind her. The interview with Dr. Jang illustrates an interpersonal interaction between the interviewer and narrator with a larger social gathering as context, but the visual milieu element can also reveal how a narrator interacts with greater complexity in a group setting. The introductory segment of the interview with William Farmer at Fort Boonesboro features his work on crafting a simple metal 'S' hook in the blacksmith shop.[57] However he is not simply attending his work but discussing historical aspects of his craft in reply to questions put to him by the interviewing oral historian as well as engaging in conversation with assembled visitors. The visuality of this segment discloses a subtle yet critical piece of his presentation method. In response to my questions Farmer addressed his answers to the collected assembly so that the group of visitors become vicarious participants in the oral history process. The complexity of this group interaction is only clearly established through the visuality of motion graphics as an integrated element in the oral history recording. The visuality of milieu has broader implications and applications beyond merely this oral

[56] Margo Jang, "Living history in higher education," *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2017).
[57] William Farmer, "Blacksmith shop," *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016).

history project. Any oral history interview of a narrator who is a member of a group within the context of a group gathering or setting will achieve enhanced communicative meaning with the addition of video representation.

Interviewing multiple narrators simultaneously may be thought of as an extension of the visual element of milieu in that there is a social interaction which is the source of the visual information which is enhancing the story being recorded. However, interviewing multiple narrators simultaneously justifies a distinct element of its own because that social interaction is brought forward as a primary focus of the interview rather than an incidental or background context as in the case of the milieu element. With multiple narrators the story converges from multiple centers in dialog with the interviewer rather than simply an interpersonal dialog between the narrator and interviewer with a social context as background. A comparison between the opening segment of the William Farmer interview and the Gravely and Kessen interview helps to illustrate the distinction between social interactions with milieu and with multiple narrators.[58] Farmer interacts with the interviewer by responding to questions and comments with an equally shared sense of authority as partners in crafting the dialog. However, his replies made to the members of the audience serving as the milieu are delivered from a position of authority as an expert in his craft and the historical period which serves as the theme for the location. The interactions in the Gravely and Kessen interview displays more of a three-way power structure equally distributed among the narrators and the interviewer. The key feature for the sake of visuality in the multiple narrator element is that the authority and power relationships between participants is only

[58] Farmer, "Blacksmith shop," Gravely and Kessen, "Introducing Matthew Gravely and Taylor Kessen, who portray artillerymen of the 5th Ohio Light Artillery."

clearly revealed through the medium of video. A transcript or audio recording would likely lose much if not all the nuance of these interactions which are revealed through gestures, glances, facial expression, and other visual aspects which convey either tension or relaxation among participants. Video may also uncover a relative disparity in authority between multiple narrators that would not otherwise be apparent in a transcribed or audio recorded oral history. Consider the interview with Joseph Cauthen and Justin Keeling. A transcript alone might reveal that Keeling does much of the speaking during the interview which may provide some clue to the dynamic between the two narrators. However, the video provides a dramatic visual contrast between the demeanor of Cauthen and Keeling which is far more illustrative. Cauthen is seated leaning slightly forward, appearing a bit tense with his hands clasped and nodding quietly in agreement while Keeling offers the first reply to the first question put to them. Keeling on the other hand is leaning back on his chair, appearing relaxed and speaking in a calm voice while making dramatic gestures with his hands.[59] A final illustrative feature of visuality when interviewing multiple narrators is the practical consideration of clarity. A transcript of an oral history may label who is speaking at a given moment, but if the transcript is prepared from an audio recording and the conversation involves cross talk or one participant speaking over another, attribution for a story element may be lost. Similarly, and audio recording of an oral history may not clearly distinguish who is speaking if the narrators have similar tone and quality of voice thereby complicating the interpretation of the story communicated. *The Living History Oral History Project* included five interviews with two narrators, which proved to be a useful technique to develop a more robust dialog and an efficient

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[59] Joseph Cauthen and Justin Keeling, "Introducing Joseph Cauthen and Justin Keeling, who portray 19th century farmers."

way to include more narrators in the project.[60] The visuality element provided by the video recording enhanced the ability of the end user of the oral history to distinguish power relationships within the conversation as well as clarity as to who was speaking at any given moment.

The next two visuality elements of setting involve the geography and physical location of the oral history recorded during field research. The first geographic visuality element is the natural location of the setting which might reveal topography or landforms, vegetation or lack of it, or ecosystems. These physical spaces could include any natural background such as a forest or a desert, mountains or prairies, a beach or a cave, or any environment that contributes information to the story related by the narrator. The *Living History Oral History Project* included many examples of natural settings as most of the interviews were recorded either outside or in an area adjacent to out of doors such as a porch or covered walkway. The interview with James Sawgrass at Fort Frederica on Saint Simon's Island Georgia provides an excellent example of the visuality of a natural setting adding to the informative content of the narrator's story. Sawgrass is a member of the Florida Muskogee Creek Tribe who portrays an educational interpretation in first person voice of Tomochichi who was a chief of the Yamacraw tribe that inhabited the coastal region of Georgia in the 1740's.[61] Sawgrass appears dressed in attire that is appropriate to the persona and period of Tomochichi, and his iconic persona would be instantaneously recognizable as an 18th century Native American even to someone unfamiliar with the history of Tomochichi. The live oaks festooned with Spanish moss in the background

[60] These interviews were Matthew Gravely and Taylor Kessen; Carol Jarboe and Jake Book; Sarah Lerch and Erick Waywood; Joseph Cauthen and Justin Keeling; Donald Meulemans and Bastian Becker.
[61] James Sawgrass, "Introducing James Sawgrass, who portrays a Native American of the Muskogee Creek Tribe of the 1740's," *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016).

completes the visual narrative of the oral narrative Sawgrass intends to convey. The natural visuality adds a layer of sensational quality to his story thereby creating a richer informative experience.

Another geographic visual element relevant to settings is the built environment in which the oral history is recorded. A built environment is a form of material culture in that it is the creation of human activity, however it is treated as a separate element in this model because the artifact or construction is fixed in place and not normally thought of as portable. The recordings in the *Living History Oral History Project* include several types of visual representations of built environments beginning with the distinction between exterior and interior locations. This distinction is relevant because exterior visuality often combines settings elements of natural location with built environment. For example, the interview with Jonathan Hagee in front of the improvement cabin at McConnell Springs Park includes a visual blend of woodland setting with a primitive structure constructed from materials extracted from that setting.[62] The combination of visual elements of natural location and built environment in the exterior setting adds nuanced meaning to the narrative Hagee is relating about living history interpretation of an 18th century Kentucky frontier explorer and hunter. Analytically, interior locations within built environments are not distinguishable from exterior locations from a visual standpoint beyond the excluded natural location visual element, although the visual impact may involve more nuance. Consider the example of Michael Pfeifer whose persona represented 18th century legal culture as a justice of the peace interviewed in the judge's chamber of the historic

[62] Hagee, "Log cabin at McConnell Springs."

Colonial Williamsburg courthouse.[63] The interior setting is more sparse in its visual impact compared to the woodlands and cabin of the Hagee interview. However, the simple desk and chair, quill and desk appointments within the narrow chamber are visually consistent and supportive of Pfeifer's persona as a justice of the peace during the colonial period in Virginia. The visual impact is greater precisely because of what is missing. The lack of clutter and extravagant artifacts speaks of a mind focused on frugality and austerity in the administration of colonial law, which is illustrative of the narrative content Pfeifer conveyed during the interview. Any manmade feature that is fixed in place and contributes to the story of the narrator may fall into the visual element of built environment and might also include agricultural projects such as farms and gardens, or earthen features such as fortifications and cemeteries.

An important consideration that applies to both geographic visual elements of setting is the concept of anatopism. Students of history are likely to be familiar with the term anachronism which is a thing that appears to be out of place in a temporal sense. One could fairly argue that the entire practice of living history is an exercise in some form of anachronism. Anatopism is anything that is recognizable as being out of proper place in a physical sense.[64] In the section discussing selection of locations for conducting oral histories anatopism was discussed in terms of living history events being conducted in places that were incorrect for the history being portrayed. There were multiple examples of anatopism that a critical eye might distinguish in the *Living History Oral*

[63] Michael Pfeifer, "Introducing Michael Pfeifer, who portrays a Justice of the Peace," *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2017).
[64] It may be debatable whether anatopism necessarily involves an element of recognition or whether it is implied. Since this discussion hinges on visuality the assumption is made that anatopism involves recognition.

History collection. The interview with Stan Wernz and David Walker created the appearance of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis seated together on a porch having a friendly conversation, an event that was unlikely in historical reality.[65] Aaron Bradford was representing a Revolutionary War era militiaman as was attired accordingly, however the background was a Civil War era masonry fort.[66] Dr. Margo Jang interpreted the persona of Bess of Hardwick, Countess of Shrewsbury from the 16th and 17th centuries in England, but her appearance at a public fair tavern would have been unlikely for her social class.[67] At the same public fair Carol Jarboe and Jake Book appeared as grave robbing 'resurrectionists' discussing their putative crimes openly.[68] However, the few examples of visual anatopism provided by the project help to define the concept in a way that is applicable on a broader scale. An oral historian who was interviewing refugees in a refugee camp would have an interest in visually presenting the narrator's dislocation and appearance out of place as a crucial thread interwoven into the tale of exile.

The final settings visual element is that of atmospheric and temporal conditions. Simply put, this element reflects the time of day and the weather conditions current at the time of the oral history recording that pertain to the narrative at hand. The interview with Gavin Kelly who was portraying a first-person interpretation of General Ulysses S. Grant provides a good example of atmospheric conditions visual element. At the time stamp of 9:44 during the segment entitled Kelly pauses his comments for a moment to turn his face

[65] Wertz and Walker.
[66] Aaron Bradford, *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016).
[67] Jang.
[68] Jarboe and Book.

to the sky as a gentle rain begins to fall.[69] During the interview with Tom Tringale at Old Sturbridge Village the impending weather change is even more dramatic. By comparing the opening moments of each segment sequentially and taking note of the sky behind the tree line in the background, it becomes obvious to the viewer that a thunderstorm is moving in quickly as the oral history progresses.[70] At the beginning of one segment, a low hanging branches in the left and right foreground framing Tringale are waiving vigorously as the wind increases.[71] Between the opening of the segment entitled "Specific portrayal and unit" and the next following "Changes in the living history movement over time" the clouds above the tree line turn pale and the setting sunlight that had illuminated Tringale's right side had faded noticeably leaving his face in shadows beneath his broad brimmed hat. These visual clues provide the viewer with a subtle understanding of the weather changes taking place as the conversation proceeds. Both the interviewer and the narrator were aware of the incoming weather and the knowledge that we were in a remote location far from shelter has an impact of the frame of mind of both participants. Several times such as at 12: 24 Tringale glances nervously to the sky with a concerned look on his face. In both the Kelly and Tringale interview the developing weather conditions visible in the video have an impact on the outcome of the interview. With Kelly, since the interview began with the interviewer and narrator seated in front of a tent, the incoming rain simply shifted the location of the interview inside the tent to be continued in another environment that was visually consistent with the narrator's story about Grant campaigning and living history interpretations conducted outside. In the case

[69] Gavin Kelly, "The rise of Grant," *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016).
[70] Tom Tringale, *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016).
[71] Tringale, "Researching for accuracy."

of the Tringale interview, the incoming weather prompted the nervous participants to cut the conversation short and to seek shelter. A recurring theme with the analysis of visual impact of video in oral history recording is the integration with orality or soundscapes and narration. In the Kelly interview the visual indications of incoming weather are subtle, with Kelly glancing to the sky and the change of location in the next segment. These visual indications are confirmed by the comments made by both the interviewer and narrator, and moreover by the soundscape feature of rain pattering on the tent as the interview resumes.[72] All of these factors combine to create a richer feel and understanding of the moment communicated to the imagination of the oral history viewer.

The iconic persona graphic element is defined as a visual representation of a narrator as a personality that is readily recognizable to a general audience. The persona image could include a variety of familiar features such as a famous person's face, hairstyle, clothing, cosmetic make up, recognizable gender features or gender representation. For the *Living History Oral History Project* an iconic persona also included features related to the identity under representation by a living history interpreter in a generic sense such as occupation and time period. These examples of iconic persona might be related to the attire worn by the interpreter or reenactor or the material culture in their possession, and these elements overlap with the material culture element discussed below. The interview with Stan Wertz interpreting Abraham Lincoln and David Walker interpreting Jefferson Davis provides the clearest examples of iconic persona in the *Living History Oral History Project.* From the first moments of the video

[72] Kelly, "Grant and Sherman."

Stan's black suit and chin whiskers leaves little doubt who his persona is due to the cultural familiarity of Lincoln images. Walker as Davis might be less immediately recognizable on his own because it is arguable that Davis is not as much of a cultural icon as Lincoln, however as the two are interviewed together in context the visual identification should be easy for most viewers to make. Walker elaborates on the visuality of iconic persona by noting that among his nine different suits he wears for his historical persona interpretations he must exercise caution wearing a solid black suit because the attire combined with his chin whiskers often causes visitors to mistake him for a Lincoln impersonator.[73]

The visuality of iconic persona has potential interpretive application beyond living history reenactors and interpreters portraying a recognizable celebrity or occupation from the past. Perhaps the most significant opportunity is to enhance the diversity of oral history projects by creating a visual representation of the factors of personal appearance that contribute to the project's diversity. There are numerous examples in the *Living History Oral History Project* where diversity was elaborated through visuality. Yvonne Smith adopted the persona of a woman masquerading as a man to serve as a Union cavalry soldier.[74] She discusses the subtlety of the gender representation in her portrayal during her interview. However, the significance of her narrative is enhanced by the visual impact of her iconic persona because the viewer can recognize the impact of a woman dressed in a Union cavalry uniform. This visuality element can be applied in a broad spectrum of oral history research projects to develop

[73] Wertz and Walker
[74] Yvonne Smith, *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016).

better understanding of diversity in narratives pertaining to stories of ethnic, racial, or religious groups, narrators identifying as LGBTQ, or narrators with disability.

Closely related to the element of iconic persona is that of material culture. This element includes any human made artifact such as a tool, weapon, or sartorial splendor that is visually represented in the video recording of the oral history and enhances the story under narration. David Walker's discussion of his choice of white or black suits in representing a first-person interpretation of Jefferson Davis demonstrates the potential overlap between an iconic personal appearance and material culture. The human appearance is often visually recognizable based on the artifacts in one's possession as well as their facial features, hairstyle, and gender. Material culture in a general sense might include architectural features already discussed, but in this analysis a distinction is made based on portability. Things built by humans that are normally fixed in place are categorized as visual element of setting, and all other artifacts are classified as personal visual elements. In many interviews throughout the *Living History Oral History Project* a collection of material culture became a central focus of the narration. Indeed, since representation of a historic persona was involved in all but two of the interviews, it is arguable that the visual element of material culture was critical throughout all the project interviews at least with respect to the narrator's attire. In many interviews collections of thematic material culture were central to the narrative discussion, and this was especially true for living history interpreters interviewed at public events. At Old Sturbridge Village, Peter Johnson represented an 18th century surgeon as his persona, and to support his interpretive portrayal he had an entire kit of period surgical instruments for display and demonstration.[75] Surgeons and medical culture were a common theme among the narrators interviewed for the project, and regardless of which time period they were representing they all had surgical kit as a visual enhancement to their living history interpretation, which in turn created a visual element to their oral history.[76]

Surgeons were not alone in having their personal appearance and narrative defined in terms of their artifacts. Robert Lecce portraying an 18th century pedagogue also had a collection of material culture including period educational artifacts such as an abacas, a horn book, and quills.[77] Carol Jarboe and Jake Book as grave robbers not only had specialized digging tools and lifting tackle designed for surreptitiously disinterring graves, they also had a collection of human teeth and hair to demonstrate the objectives of their putatively clandestine activities.[78] The teeth and hair were fake (I hope). Whatever the artifact might be, in all these examples the visual presence of the item or piece of attire helped to clarify and add meaning to the persona adopted by the living history interpreter which in turn created a richer sensory experience communicated through the oral history recording.

An important and relevant objective of using material culture in a visual display whether for living history interpretation or for visual narrative is to achieve a sense of authenticity. Authenticity is a broad ranging issue for living history in a variety of respects, but for material culture as a visual element for oral history the objective would

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75 Peter Johnson, "Professional metal working/Medical tool reproductions," *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016).
76 The *Living History Oral History Project* included interviews with three living history practitioners representing surgeons including Peter Johnson and Brad Spear representing 18th century surgeons and Frederick Schaefer doing a first-person representation of a Civil War surgeon. All of them had surgical kits on display.
77 Robert Lecce, *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016).
78 Jarboe and Book, "Artifacts from graves."

be to authenticate the narrator's story which generally focused on living history methodology rather than the historical period itself. Compare two artifacts used to visually illustrate the narratives in this project, Jonathan Hagee's flintlock rifle and James O'Brien's Bible.[79] Both of the artifacts contribute to defining who the narrator is and what story they are attempting to relate. However, the respective artifacts authenticate the narratives in different ways. Hagee's rifle was manufactured in the 21st century, not the 18th century. Essentially, it was a reproduction built according to period specifications and using period technology. Even though the rifle was not authentic to the historical period of the 18th century, it is authentic to illustrate visually a living history persona because an original frontier hunter would not have carried an antique weapon. On the other hand, O'Brien's Bible was an original period artifact that was published and printed in the 1850's by the American Bible Society.[80] This artifact is arguably authentic because of its date of manufacture, but it is only visually authentic because the book retains much of its new appearance due to careful handling over the past century and a half. O'Brien's story about how he interprets an itinerate clergy of the Civil War period relies more on the visual impact of authenticity rather than the period of manufacture of his artifact. Visual authenticity of material culture must be evaluated in terms of how the sensory presentation of the artifact validates and supports the experience the narrator intends to share with the oral historian and future viewers.

Portelli and Abrams agree that the verbatim rendition captured in an audio recording captures a greater degree of meaning conveyed by a narrator in the form of

[79] Hagee, "Pennsylvania rifles and material culture"; James O'Brien, "Authentic artifacts and realism," *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2017).
[80] O'Brien, "Authentic artifacts and realism."

voice inflection, intonation, and any other subtle aspect of voice quality.[81] This feature of orality relates to the visual element of body language which can only be captured through video recording. A posture, gesture, facial expression, and ease or anxiety of movement all reveal a glimpse into a person's frame of mind. Consider the opening moments of the interview with John McGough.[82] As I recite the opening disclosures for the interview, McGough is squinting in the sunlight, shifting his weight from side to side, and occasionally nodding his head in mute agreement. Even though he smiles from time to time through the interview, his eyes often turn away as he speaks, perhaps indicating a sense of stifled nervousness. An important focus of the interview was the reproduction of a fusilier's mitre cap featuring an elaborately engraved brass front piece that he held in his hands during his narrative. As he explained the origins of the artifact, he would gesture to different parts of the cap, explaining how each part related to originals discovered through archaeology. His gestures help to relate his discussion of the parts of the helmet to each respective piece as he points out each part. But there is a deeper meaning attached to McGough's gestures with the cap in his hands. In his narrative he describes the exhaustive process of repoussé or hand hammering of the bas relief images into the brass surfaces, and he discusses the expense and rarity of such reproduced helmets which results from the high cost and low demand of such helmets. A person merely reading the transcript of this interview might understand that the artifact is rare and expensive, but a person watching the video will understand that McGough's mannerisms indicate this fusilier's cap is a possession in which he takes a great deal of

[81] Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County,* 10; Abrams, 19-20.
[82] John McGough, "Introducing John McGough who portrays an 18th century Hessian soldier," *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016).

pride on an emotional level. His gestures reveal that the cap is more than an expensive piece of head ware, it is central to the identity of a Hessian solider which McGough portrays, and central to his interest in living history as an advocation. Transcript and orality alone are inadequate to communicate McGough's complex set of feelings of nervousness at being interviewed and recorded, overlaying his pride in owning such an exquisite and artistic cap and combined with personal satisfaction and enjoyment in reenacting the past.

Body language is informative not strictly because of the graphic information being conveyed, but because of the sensation of motion made by the narrator. A still image of the narrator would be inadequate to capture the full range of meaning incorporated in a narrator's body language. The same feature of motion is also critically relevant to the visual element of performance. One of the most unique interviews in the *Living History Oral History Project* which I refer to as the 'Breakfast Interview' demonstrates how narration and the visual representation of performance in motion combine to create an experiential effect in an oral history that represents an elaboration to Portelli's "history-telling" reconstruction of memory.[83] The creative object is to transcend memory by sharing the sensory experience upon which memories are based. The back story to this oral history is that the recorded interview was a continuation of an informal conversation that began about midnight the evening before as Steve Driesbach and I huddled under a canvas fly in a torrential thunderstorm, sharing stories of living history adventures and a bottle of bourbon. We talked until early the next morning when the rain finally relented long enough for me to make a run to the hospital tent set up in

[83] Steven Driesbach, *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2016); "Portelli, "History-Telling and Time," 52.

the living history encampment where I slept on a cot for the rest of the twilight hours alongside a half dozen other living history reenactors. Regrettably, none of Steve's witty commentary from the night conversation made it into the recordings in this project. However, at dawn the next morning I awoke to discover Steve had already stoked a campfire and was preparing to cook breakfast. I asked for permission to record an interview while he cooked, and he agreed. In a clinical sense, one might describe Driesbach's performance as a practical demonstration in rustic foodways culture. As the interview begins, he has just completed cooking a batch of bacon and he proceeds to prepare sliced potatoes to cook in the rendered grease before finally cooking sliced goetta.[84] However, the focus of his narration is not specifically on food items and preparation but on his involvement in the living history movement as a reenactor for many years. A sideline to reenacting Driesbach had developed over the years was to manufacture period authentic reproductions and market these to other reenactors as a merchant or suttler. During the interview he discusses a wide range of topics from his cooking to organization in the living history movement to artifact authenticity to his portrayal of a "Squirrel Hunter" militia man from the 1862 Confederate invasion of Kentucky.[85] This discussion is overlaid with the performance of his breakfast duties cooking over an open campfire in front of an open tent. The visual effect of the performance in the video coverts the oral history from a discussion of living history as a topic of conversation to a living history experience shared with the viewer watching the video online from the archive. The interview with Bill Farmer as he works in his

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[84] Goetta is a food product popular in German culture in the Cincinnati area as a breakfast item, which Driesbach describes as "Oatmeal and items of pork."
[85] Driesbach, "Interview with Steve Driesbach, who portrays a Squirrel Hunter militiaman."

blacksmith shop achieves the same effect.[86] His crafting of an 'S' hook as a implement to be used in a primitive utility item while cooking over a campfire does not rely on a recitation of memory but creates a shared sensory experience that includes the narrator, interviewer, milieu present at the recording session as well as shared with the viewer of the video in the archive. Perhaps the most charming, and most moving, example of performance visuality came from the interview with Kentucky Chautauqua performer Elizabeth Lawson who portrayed Henry Clay's household slave Charlotte Dupuy. Lawson's devout religious personality was strongly reflected throughout her interview and commingled with the persona of her living history interpretive portrayal. She discussed how "old negro spirituals" was a critical part of both her own personal life and the life of Charlotte Dupuy, and to illustrate how she brought that meaning to life she accepted my invitation to sing a verse of "Amazing Grace."[87] The visuality element of performance for all three of these narrators illustrates that what they do and the actions they perform in crafting an object, or cooking a meal, or singing a song provides a glimpse into the stories they have to tell about themselves and their respective persona.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

From the first interview in this project with J.R. Sharp at the Heritage Village Museum in July of 2016 to the last interview with Donald Meulemans and Bastian Becker at Hougoumont Farm at Waterloo in June 2018, all the conversations always

[86] Farmer, "Blacksmith shop."
[87] Elizabeth Lawson, "Singing as part of her presentations," *Living History Oral History Project,* (Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, 2017).

ended with the same capstone question: "Tell me about your favorite memory." In retrospect, perhaps this question should have been reworded. The capstone question was structured with the traditional concept of oral history methodology in mind; that the object is to understand social history by tapping into the memory of a narrator. As my research progressed, I learned that it was possible to transcend sharing of memories between a narrator and oral historian to be communicated to an archival consumer. Living history which served as the thematic subject of this oral history project is not a mere recreation of the past because such a grand ambition could never really be achieved. Instead, living history attempts to understand the past in terms of experience by recreating the sensations of sight, sound, touch, taste and even smell, and it is the experience of these sensations which serve as the foundation of memories which is the traditional focus of oral history methodology. Experience is the nexus which links oral history to living history. The living history practitioner shares an experience of the past by creating sensations through performance, and the oral historian shares the experience of memory between a narrator and an audience by a thoughtful application of a series of technological advancements which increase the opportunity to capture meaning through the addition of recording modes, and through discoverability and accessibility accomplished with software systems such as SPOKEdb and OHMS. The technology transforms oral history from a basis for a textual transcript to Frisch's vision of a recorded artifact that stands on its own merit. The various stages of this project described in this paper were designed to illustrate this vision by producing such an artifact.

The concept of visuality developed in the course of this oral history project has two key considerations that are important for other oral historians to consider as they design and develop their own projects. The first consideration is one of economics. Without a question there is considerably higher costs in a video recorded oral history collection over audio recorded or transcribed oral histories. Furthermore, the costs of video recording are higher at every stage of the oral history recording process including recording, post-production, and storage and maintenance. Video recording requires more equipment, more editing, more technical expertise, and more archival expense. Following the digital turn, the development of easily accessible video recording may represent the cutting edge in oral history methodology enticing scholars of digital humanities to explore the most recent innovations and trends. However, the mundane practicality of funding expensive projects remains, and oral historians must be prepared to analyze and justify the costs versus the benefits of using this technology to prepare grant applications and accessioning negotiations with repositories. The sum of production costs, technical costs and storage costs represents one side of the balancing scales in this analysis.

The second consideration occupies the counterbalancing side of the metaphorical scale, and that is the emerging theory of oral history visual narrative. How does the integration of motion graphics enlarge the message and the meaning of an oral history? While scholarly literature is rich with theoretical and analytical discussions of visual narrative, that discussion in the context of oral history is relatively undeveloped and presenting an opportunity for further study. The model for visuality discussed in this paper relies in large degree on an economic framework. What are the cost considerations of video recording an oral history balanced against the opportunities of richer nuance of meaning communicated by a visual representation of the narrator telling a story? The utility of constructing an argument in these terms includes two distinct advantages. The first is practical. Since production and archival maintenance of a video recording is exponentially higher than audio recorded counterparts, how is the oral historian going to justify the added costs when applying for research grants or accessioning the collected work to a repository? This paper provides a structure by which this economic argument can be satisfactorily answered. The second advantage dispenses with the considerations of costs and focuses exclusively on the theoretical possibilities. The visuality elements of setting and person augment the already existing interpretive concepts of oral history methodology. Narration and text and orality all represent various technical and theoretical features of oral history, and by adding a visual component the potential for communicating the experiences and memories of a narrator with an oral historian and a broader audience becomes complete.

A theme consistent throughout this research project and subsequent writing project has involved the notion of experience. Living history is a method of understanding the past by recreating the sensations of that past for a shared experience between an interpreter and an observer. Oral history traditionally is thought of as tapping into the relevant memories of an informed narrator as a means of understanding the past, but another way of viewing this is that memories are derived from experience. Finally, this entire project was an exercise in experiential learning, learning about a process by performing the work. At the outset of this research project I had a basic rudimentary understanding of what would be involved in conducting oral history research. I understood it would involve asking questions and making a recording and beyond that I had only the vaguest idea of how the project would develop. Hopefully, the description I have outlined of various stages of work that are necessary for executing an oral history project can serve as a guide to other aspiring oral historians in conceiving and designing their own projects. But the overriding lesson to be taken from my experiences related here is that learning, and research is an act of exploration and discovery that can be shared in retrospection, but impossible to anticipate in advance.

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