

Middle Atlantic American Studies Association

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Middle Atlantic ASA

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK:



Welcome to another year of American Studies in the Middle Atlantic Region! I can assure you: this year promises to be as good a year as any on record. And so that you can remain up-to-date, we have produced a newsletter that is chock-full of spiritual and intellectual nourishment for your American Studies soul. However, neither I nor my staff can really take credit for all the tantalizing textual nuggets you are about to savor. No, no. Really, all credit must go the field of American Studies itself and, more to the point, to the people of the Middle Atlantic states who make our region such a happening place for the study and enjoyment of American culture. For we at the newsletter understand and accept that, in the greater scheme, we are not the creators of culture so much as the conduits – anonymous desk workers who gather, digest, and reconstitute the region's

wonderful cultural offerings so that they can appear before your eyes, twice a year, in a highly usable form. Is it an august responsibility? Indeed, it is. Do we shoulder it with great humility and reverence? Indeed, we do. Should I continue in this vein, or should I move on to more pressing matters? Indeed, the latter! For the time has come for me to review a few of the highlights to be found in the present issue.

John Adams famously used the following words to describe the office of the Vice Presidency: "My country has in its wisdom contrived for me the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived." Yet we in MAASA expect more from our VP – real doers and shakers – and we have yet to experience disappointment. In the long line of distinguished MAASA VPs, no one has better epitomized this vision than Francis J. Ryan of La Salle. Already lauded as the inventor of the Undergraduate Roundtable, Dr. Ryan is expanding his role this year, serving as on-site organizer of the Spring Conference (La Salle University, March 19-20, 2010). Dr. Ryan and others on the planning committee composed the Call for Papers, which you will find on page 3. If you have research you would like to share, we invite you to submit a proposal. Though the spring edition of the newsletter will offer more details

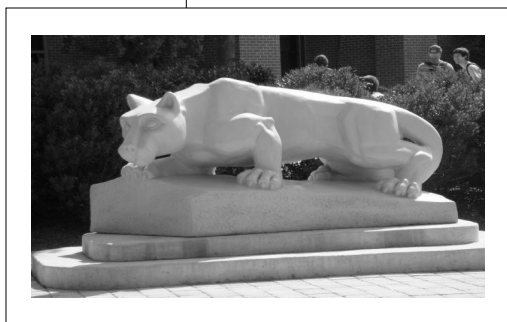
about the conference, we have included one article to whet your appetite. Jennifer Dutch, doctoral student in American Studies at Penn State Harrisburg, has written an incisive piece on Belfield – the one-time home of that great American polymath, Charles Willson Peale. We hope that you will read about this historic home today and become inspired to take the guided tour in March as a part of your conference experience.

I hope you did not think we were going to let the President off the hook. Also contributing to this issue is Angus Gillespie of Rutgers. Given that this newsletter goes to press in October, we thought that a Halloween-themed piece was in order. Many of you already know that a mysterious monster is rumored to lurk in the dark Pine Barren woods of New Jersey – yes, the fabled Jersey Devil. But did you know that Dr. Gillespie stands as the world's authority on the history and lore of this creature? In recent months, Dr. Gillespie shared his knowledge with a national television-viewing audience by appearing on the program *Monster Quest*. Find out more in our news-maker interview!

And with that, I will sign off! Rake leaves, eat apples, carve pumpkins, and – above all else – *enjoy culture!*

John Haddad, Penn State Harrisburg

WELCOMING THE FIRST AMERICAN STUDIES PH.D. STUDENTS TO PENN STATE HARRISBURG...



Penn State's Nittany Lion

By Dr. John Haddad

This fall, nine doctoral students in American Studies begin study at Penn State Harrisburg. The Ph.D. in American Studies becomes the only one of its kind in Pennsylvania and complements the college's long-established undergraduate and master's programs in the discipline. Several trends, both national and regional, contributed to the university's decision to establish a new program.

At the **national** level, Philip J. Deloria, former president of the American Studies Association and a faculty member at the University of Michigan, has detected increased interest in the field. "American Studies programs have been growing over the last several

years, particularly in public institutions of higher education. Contemporary students value the interdisciplinary sweep of the field, which pushes them to practice the kind of quick moving, eclectic thinking about culture and society that many see as central to their lives in a rapidly changing world." Speaking specifically of the program at Penn State Harrisburg, Deloria added, "Penn State Harrisburg has long had a sterling reputation in these areas and we in the field are looking forward to the future faculty members who will be trained in the program and, as important, to the work of those who will use their degrees to advance the practice of American Studies in a range of public settings."

Indeed, public settings will play a crucial role in the mission of the new program. For while offering a broad-based curriculum, Penn State Harrisburg's doctoral program – mindful of the rich cultural resources and employment opportunities of the **region** – has elevated Public Heritage as an area of special focus. Brent Glass, director of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History and former executive director of the Pennsylvania

Historical and Museum Commission, explained the need for the new program. "The interdisciplinary perspective of a program in American Studies complements the research needs of museums dedicated to preserving and presenting American history and culture. Doctoral candidates in the American Studies program will be in a strong position to compete for fellowship opportunities and permanent positions at the Smithsonian Institution and other history and cultural museums." Glass continued, "Furthermore, there is an extensive network of historical sites, archival repositories, historical societies, and museums in Pennsylvania and neighboring states that could offer a source of employment and consulting opportunities for students in the program." To support the emphasis on Public Heritage, the faculty maintain close ties with local educational and cultural institutions, including the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, State Museum of Pennsylvania, Landis Valley Museum, National Civil War Museum, Hershey Museum, and other public heritage resources within the region.

*"We in the field are
looking forward to
future faculty members
who will be trained in
the program..."*

INTRODUCING PENN STATE HARRISBURG'S INAUGURAL PHD CLASS 2009-2010

Trevor Blank received the MA in Folklore from Indiana University and BA in American Studies from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He has edited a book, *Folklore and the Internet: Vernacular Expression in a Digital World* (2009). He plans on pursuing research into vernacular expression in cyberspace for his dissertation.

Mary Clater holds graduate degrees from Penn State Harrisburg (MA, American Studies) and the University of St. Andrews, Scotland (PGDip, Modern History). Her undergraduate work was at Clearwater Christian College (BS, Interdisciplinary Studies – *cum laude* – and Music). She

has received awards for best graduate student paper at the Middle Atlantic American Studies Association and the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association conferences. She plans research in twentieth-century cultural history and politics.

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CHARLES WILLSON PEALE AND BELFIELD

By Jennifer Dutch

LaSalle University is not only a historic university, established in 1863, and centered in historic Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, but its campus buildings are also brimming with their own stories. Perhaps none more so than Belfield Mansion which was once the home of Charles Willson Peale.

Charles Willson Peale (1741-1827) was influential in the early days of American history. Even if you have never heard his name, there is a good chance that you have seen some of Peale's work. As a painter, he captured portraits of many of the key figures of the day including

George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin.

If that was not enough, Peale founded the nation's first natural history museum. Because of Peale's museum, Americans could see, many for the first time, a wide variety of birds, mammals, lizards, fish and more; stuffed and mounted and displayed in replicas of their natural habi-



Charles Willson Peale's Belfield

tats. They could even gaze in wonder at the bones of a mastodon!

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"Even if you have never heard his name, there is a good chance you have seen some of Peale's work"

CALL FOR PAPERS FOR THE SPRING CONFERENCE!

THEME: SPACES: PERSONAL, CULTURAL, URBAN

The host of MAASA's 2010 conference will be **La Salle University**.

On the La Salle campus, one finds a cultural site of interest to all students of American culture: Belfield, the one-time estate of Charles Willson Peale. As a painter, civic leader, inventor, educator, taxidermist, museum curator, military commander, paleontologist, naturalist, and landscape gardener, Peale embodied the interdisciplinary ideal that continues to shape the field of American Studies. Fittingly, it is the spirit of Peale that inspires this conference theme.

In the American Studies tradition, we seek interdisciplinary papers that explore multiple and varied concepts of space: transnational or intercultural

spaces; public spaces; intellectual spaces; imaginary or fantastical landscapes; rural, suburban, and urban America; retail and shopping venues; religious spaces; city planning and architecture; artistic spaces; ethnic spaces; tourism; spaces shaped by memory and nostalgia; and spaces of food creation and consumption.

Undergraduates interested in presenting their work in the Undergraduate Roundtable should select a mentor and then contact Dr. Francis J. Ryan (ryan@lasalle.edu).

Accepted graduate students will be encouraged to submit their work electronically several weeks prior to the conference so as to be considered for our award – Most Outstanding Graduate Paper.

Deadline for Proposals is January 15, 2010.

Please send a one-page abstract and one-page CV to John R. Haddad either electronically (jrh36@psu.edu) or by mail:

John Haddad
American Studies
School of Humanities
Penn State Harrisburg
777 West Harrisburg Pike
Middletown, PA 17057

Conference Details:

- **Location:** LaSalle University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- **Dates:** March 19-20, 2010

Proposal Deadline:
January 15, 2010

NEWSMAKER INTERVIEW: ANGUS KRESS GILLESPIE

By Dr. John Haddad

How did you first become interested in the Jersey Devil?

After completing graduate work at the University of Pennsylvania in 1973, I came to the American Studies Department at Rutgers University with a mandate to teach introductory courses in folklore. Naturally I also wanted to carry out original fieldwork and research in my new home, New Jersey. Instinctively, I turned to the Pine Barrens which was still relatively rural and isolated. It had the kind of small and self-sufficient communities typical of folk communities. The Jersey Devil was an ominous crypto-zoological creature said to inhabit the Pine Barrens of South Jersey. It quickly became apparent that, among residents of the Pines, they took the legend of the Jersey Devil seriously and that it would make a good topic for folklore research.

Is the NHL hockey team named after the creature?

Yes, of course. This professional ice hockey team was named the New Jersey Devils in 1982. Over 10,000 people

voted in a contest held by local newspapers to select



locals would be "The Leeds Devil," after the original family, though some say it should be called "The Shourds Devil." There is some controversy locally about just which family has ownership of the monster.

According to eye witnesses, what does the thing look like?

The classic description is that the creature has the head of a horse, the torso of man, the wings of bat, the feet of a goat, and a long serpentine tail.

Is the Jersey Devil something people claim to have seen, like Big Foot? Or is it more like the Boogie Man – a fictitious monster, purely imagined, used to frighten children?

I would tend to classify the Jersey Devil as a creature of cryptozoology, defined as the study of animals that may or may not exist.

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"The Jersey Devil was an ominous crypto-zoological creature said to inhabit the Pine Barrens of South Jersey"



Newsletter Credits

Editor: Dr. John Haddad, Penn State Harrisburg

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Contributors: Dr. John Haddad, Jennifer Dutch, Angus Gillespie
Jose Feliciano (back photograph)

AMERICAN STUDIES IN ACTION: ANNOUNCEMENTS

This Fall, an exciting exhibit opens at the **Philadelphia Museum of Art**: "Common Ground: Eight Philadelphia Photographers in the 1960s and 1970s." Common Ground examines a critical period for the art of photography. In the 1960s, photographers including Emmet Gowin, Will Larson, and Ray K. Metzker, among the first generation of photographers trained in university art departments, all came to Philadelphia to teach in the city's renowned art schools, bringing with them experimental approaches to the medium. The exhibit is open to the public from September 12, 2009 to January 31, 2010.

Hagley Museum and Library in Wilmington, DE announces its upcoming conference:

"Understanding Markets: Information, Institutions and History." The Conference, which will take place over two days (October 30 and 31, 2009), is intended to recognize the contributions of **Ernest Dichter**, and to celebrate the opening of his business records at the Hagley Museum and Library. Dichter was a Vienna-trained psychologist who came to New York in 1938 to escape the Nazis. He became a pioneer in the development of motivational research, a marketing tool that used psychology to market products. His clients, such as Mattel, in connection with their launch of the Barbie doll, include an impressive list of American corporations. The conference is co-sponsored by the German Historical Institute and will

feature presentations on topics such as how businesses tried to adapt products as diverse as gas stations, synthetic fabrics, indigo dye, automobiles, and medicine to meet consumer expectations. Please consult our web site (<http://www.hagley.org/library/>) for registration information or contact Carol Lockman at clockman@hagley.org.

York County has emerged as a finalist to host the **National Folk Festival!** Early in the fall, representatives from the National Council for the Traditional Arts will visit York County to assess the area as a host for the 2011-2013 National Folk Festival. Good luck to York!

CHARLES WILLSON PEALE'S BELFIELD

Continued from Page 3

Happy with the state of his museum and eager to begin retirement, Peale looked for, and found, the perfect country estate – Belfield.

Peale's idea of retirement was far from leisurely. He first set about improving Belfield's buildings, even adding a painting room to the mansion. He also set his hand to farming, but proved to be only mediocre at the endeavor. More successful were his agricultural inventions intended to make life on the farm more bearable. These included a splash-proof milk cart and a design for a storm-resistant windmill.

Ever the artist, Peale put his

painting room to good use while at Belfield. He captured his surroundings on canvas. But it was into his garden that Peale poured much of his efforts and enjoyment. In correspondence with Thomas Jefferson, the two men discussed their gardens in great detail. To his dismay, Peale's garden was such a success that it became a "tourist attraction."

Peale's time at Belfield ended after the death of his wife, Hannah, in 1821. He was eighty years old and decided it was time to return to the city. By 1826, Belfield was sold off and Peale was once again at the helm of his natural history museum.

Today, LaSalle University is a bustling campus with over

7,000 students. But in Belfield Mansion traces of Charles Willson Peale's garden retreat still linger.

For more information on Charles Willson Peale and Belfield, see LaSalle University's local history webpage <http://www.lasalle.edu/commun/history/articles/pealeweb.htm>

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. James Butler of LaSalle University whose book *Charles Willson Peale's "Belfield": A History of a National Historic Landmark, 1684-1984* provided much of the information for this article. Dr. Butler has generously agreed to present Belfield to MAASA conference goers in March 2010.

*"But in Belfield
Mansion traces of
Charles Willson Peale's
garden still lingers"*

THE JERSEY DEVIL CONTINUED

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In other words, the Jersey Devil is an animal, rather than an imaginary monster. But this is an animal not recognized by mainstream biology because there is no proof of its existence. In this respect, it is similar to Big Foot, as you suggest. According to authors Ben Roesch and John Moore, "Cryptozoology ranges from pseudoscientific to useful and interesting, depending on how it is practiced." They further note that it is "not strictly a science," that "many scientists and skeptics classify cryptozoology as a pseudoscience" and that "papers on the topic are rarely published in scientific journals, no formal education on the subject is available, and no scientists are employed to study cryptozoology."

Dr. Gillespie, have YOU seen it?

Not yet. As a folklorist, I am open-mindedly skeptical. So

far, there has been no hard evidence of its existence. There have been no reliable photographs, no credible plaster casts of footprints, no skeletons—nothing that would constitute proof. Philosophically, however, the lack of proof of its existence is not proof that it does not exist.

When were the earliest sightings or encounters?

There was a rash of sightings in South Jersey in 1909. Many of these reports came from reputable people including a city councilman, a police officer, and a postmaster.

Does the Devil have an origin myth?

According to the legend, Jane Leeds of Leeds Point, New Jersey, had a large family of twelve children. She was mighty tired of all the household chores and taking care of so many children. When she learned that she was pregnant with her thirteenth

child, she was distressed. In a moment of understandable weakness, in saying her bedtime prayers, she said, "Lord, I hope this one is not a child. Let this one be a devil." On that terrible February night of 1735, when Jane Leed's thirteenth child was born, it started out as a normal baby. But in the space of less than twenty minutes, it grew to the size of two full-grown men with the head of a horse, the torso of a man, the wings of bat, and a long serpentine tail. With one swipe of his right hand, the creature slit the throat of the midwife in attendance, and flew out the chimney into the Pine Barrens, where he has terrified the people of South Jersey for more than 250 years.

Happy Halloween!



You're Invited! Food and Drink are on us!

Penn State Harrisburg's American Studies Program will host a **reception** at the Annual Meeting of the American Studies Association (ASA). The reception will take place on Friday, November 6, from 5:00 to 7:00 PM in Room 4 of the Renaissance Washington Hotel (999 9th Street, NW Washington, DC). For more information, please contact Dr. Simon Bronner at sjb2@psu.edu.



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*"As a folklorist, I am
open-mindedly
skeptical"*

AMERICAN STUDIES LECTURE: A GLOBAL ELECTION?

American Studies Lecture:
"A Global Election?: Barack Obama and the 2008 US Election as Seen from Abroad"



Dr. Matthias Maass is a member of the faculty at the Graduate School of International Studies, Yonsei University in Seoul, South Korea. He speaks and writes frequently on topics related to International American Studies, especially on the theme of the American image abroad. He is the author of *World Views of the Presidential Election, 2008*, to be published this December by Palgrave MacMillan, and of another forth-

coming book on small states in the international system.

Date & Time:
Tuesday, September 29, 2009 at 7:00 P.M.

Place: Gallery Lounge in the Olmsted Building on the campus of Penn



Dr. Matthias Maass

PHD STUDENTS CONTINUED

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Jennifer Dutch earned her MA in English (Nonfiction Writing) from the University of New Hampshire and her BA in History and English from Keene State College. She also studied Heritage Studies at the graduate level at Plymouth State University also in New Hampshire. In her doctoral studies, she plans on working in the areas of foodways, folklore, and popular culture.

Spencer Green received his BA and MA in English from Brigham Young University. He has conducted ethnographic research in Italy and England and worked with contemporary hiking narratives. He was the head editor of the humanities textbook, *Coming to Your Senses*, and an issue of BYU's creative writing journal. He continues to have research interest in travel literature and folklore.

Jennifer Hall holds the MA from the University of Leicester (UK) and her BA from Fordham University. She is Direc-

tor of Exhibits and Collections for the York County Heritage Trust in York, Pennsylvania. She teaches "Introduction to Museum Studies" at York College.

James D. McMahon, Jr. received his MA in American Studies from Penn State Harrisburg and his BA from Franklin & Marshall College. He is Director of the Milton Hershey School Heritage Center and Department of School History. He is the author of numerous publications, including *Built on Chocolate: The Story of the Hershey Chocolate Company* (1998) and *Milton Hershey School* (2009). He has research interests in material culture, educational history, and Pennsylvania German studies.

Amy K. Milligan completed her MA in theological studies and a certificate in gender studies at Duke University. She received her BA from Elizabethtown College in religious studies and German (Magna Cum Laude). She was a Fulbright Scholar at Philipps University in Marburg,

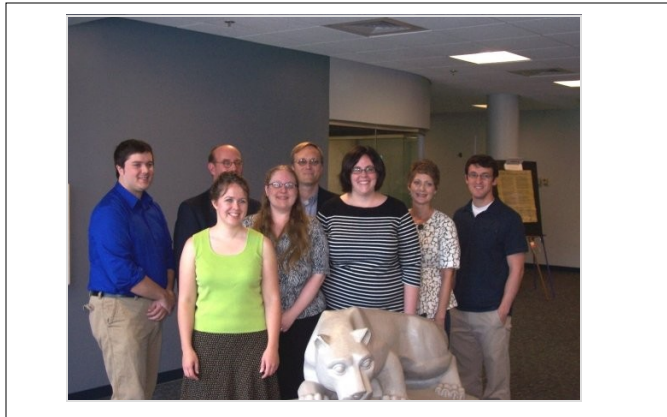
Germany in 2004-2005. Her research interests include the contemporary American Jewish experience, religious ritual, and gender studies.

Sheila Rohrer received an MA in American Studies from Penn State Harrisburg. She has a BA in history from Millersville University, graduating with honors. She is now a teacher at Linville Hill Mennonite School. Her research interests are in eighteenth and nineteenth century American history, Pennsylvania German culture, and the decorative arts.

Matt Singer received his MA in American Studies from Penn State Harrisburg and his BA in Communication Studies from Penn State-University Park. He is Senior Writer of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Curator for the Philadelphia Museum of Jewish Art. His research interests include modern art and material culture, Jewish studies, and Pennsylvania German culture.

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The Middle Atlantic American Studies Association (MAASA) is a regional chapter of the American Studies Association organized to promote and encourage the study of American Culture in the Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania areas. The MAASA sponsors an annual conference, special lectures and events, and publishes the newsletter twice a year.



The Middle Atlantic Region Welcomes its
New Class of PhD Students at Penn State Harrisburg:
Pictured (from left to right): Trevor Blank, Mary Clater, Matt Singer,
Jennifer Dutch, James McMahon, Jr., Amy K. Milligan, Sheila Rohrer,
Spencer Green. Not pictured: Jennifer Hall