

Many folklore students, especially those concentrating on material culture studies, have occasion to seek information about possible future employment in the museum field. The Indiana program has in the last two years placed two Ph.D. candidates in museum positions. Interest in such employment is growing among folklore students throughout the country, yet many of us feel that our own graduate schools are not preparing us adequately for museum positions (with the exception of Cooperstown, of course), and that we lack the knowledge of possible ways to get museum experience in order to familiarize ourselves with the types of museum work available to us. Many of us feel that our only chance is to go to Cooperstown as a student. But, unfortunately many of us also realize this too late; we are already beyond the M.A. level in our studies and only then recognize our interest in museum work.

There is no doubt that Cooperstown's program is the finest offered in this country for preparation in material culture studies oriented toward museum employment. There is no better way to get such a background than by taking the M.A. there. But for those of us in the predicament of realizing too late our material culture or museum interests, all is not lost for a chance at gaining a systematic introduction to museum problems and the opportunities offered by museums to folklore students for creative employment.

There is a six week summer program in museum administration offered at Williamsburg, Virginia (this will be its eleventh year) which deals specifically with the problems encountered in operating a museum. It is called the "seminar for Historical Administrators" and offers fellowships to twenty students at five hundred dollars each. I attended the seminar as a fellow last summer and feel I can speak to the question of its value. In general there is no doubt that the seminar is stimulating, informative and worthwhile for folklore students with a material culture bent.

Don't let the term "Historical" cause undue concern. The program is concerned with training people to work in agencies of the "preservation movement" which is a very broad phenomenon incorporating organizations ranging from local county historical societies (of the "cupcake corner" variety) to such prestigious organizations as the National Park Service, the Smithsonian Institution and the Winterthur Museum. Most of the organizations involved in the preservation movement are historical agencies, but by no means are all such. The term "Historical" comes in part from the influence of the four organizations which sponsor the seminar, The American Association of Museums, The National Trust for Historic Preservation, The American Association for State and Local History, and Colonial Williamsburg, Inc.

The purpose of the seminar is to intensively expose the student to the kinds of problems a museum or agency administrator may expect to meet in a museum career. This is achieved in three ways.

First, each fellowship holder is expected to complete a research project on an existing museum or agency in his home area, previous to attending the seminar. This project is assigned to you by the seminar coordinator. I, for instance, did a complete description, analysis and critique of

Spring Mill State Park in southern Indiana, concentrating on its restored log village and stone mill complex. Each of us presented the results of our studies in our own two and a half hour seminar session before our colleagues, complete with all visual aids and data possible. Our objective was to evaluate the museum's or agency's purposes and success or failure in meeting them.

Secondly, the seminar brought to us, from literally all over the country, really top experts in the various fields of museum administration. About forty well chosen people were brought to us; they each presented their information in a seminar session and we grilled them thoroughly. Most were very candid and evocative in their remarks. Some of the consultants who came last year (and there is a very high percentage of return each year) were Dr. Richard J. McCormick (Rutgers), who discussed research in state and local history, Mr. Ivor Noel Hume (Colonial Williamsburg), discussing colonial archaeology, Mr. Harry Lowe (Smithsonian), who dealt with museum exhibits and their installation, Mr. Russel J. Fridley (Director, Minnesota Historical Society), discussing the problems involved in fund raising, and William J. Young (Director, Department of Art Conservation, Boston Museum of Fine Arts and head of the American team of restorers involved in the aftermath of the Florence disaster), who discussed problems of preservation of museum objects. Many other specialists literally crammed us with useful information.

The third technique for exposing us to museum problems and ways of solving them was the liberal use of field trips to nearby museums. We visited and studied, of course, many of the departments of Colonial Williamsburg itself, the information center complex, the Abbey Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection, the curatorial warehouses, all of the important exhibition buildings (viewing how the public is subtly guided through them), the archaeological department and many others. We visited the Mariners' Museum in Newport News, Virginia, Jamestown Island (National Park Service), and Jamestown Festival Park, Carter's Grove Plantation, The Virginia Historical Society in Richmond (including the Barrows lab for the study of paper preservation housed there), The Valentine Museum (of the City of Richmond), The Confederate Museum and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, both in Richmond. All of these were behind the scenes tours, and we got quite skilled at spotting excellence or mediocrity in museum practices by simply observing the contrasts visible in the field. Follow-up seminars on each tour gave us a chance to figure out why various museums excelled or failed in their various objectives.

The basic format of each day was an 8 to 12 morning seminar, usually with a guest speaker whom we had ample opportunity to question; a 2 to 5 afternoon seminar for student reports or a field trip, and evenings free so that we could take advantage of our free passes to all of Williamsburg's exhibition buildings, as well as to visit its craft shops and its book stores. The craftsmen were particularly of interest; they included a cooper, a group of weavers and dyers, a gunsmith, silversmiths, a shoemaker, a printer, a brass forger, a blacksmith, a cabinetmaker, et al. These evenings were an education in themselves. We all lived in one of the dormitories of William and Mary College, had cooking facilities and the use of William and Mary's new library. Some brought their spouses, but those with children were encouraged to live outside the dormitory in eighteenth century restored homes in the Colonial Williamsburg restoration itself.

Generally the experience was very "compact" and extremely worthwhile.

The fellowship stipend was just adequate for living expenses and spending money. The contacts made with museum people are invaluable, and most important of all, one finds out how much folklorists studying material culture have in common with regional-cultural historians. Most of us were historians, but there were two folklorists; we all got along fine incoherently, and learned a great deal about each other's techniques, thus gaining sympathy for each other's approaches to the study of ordinary man in complex societies.

Finally, some nuts and bolts. Further information and application forms can be gotten by writing:

The Coordinator
Seminar for Historical Administration
National Trust for Historic Preservation
748 Jackson Place, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

The seminar takes place June 14 to July 25. The deadline for application is March 14, 1969. Twenty fellowships are available, and four non-fellows (who pay their own way) will be accepted. You must have completed one year of graduate work in history, architecture, fine arts, or an allied field such as folklore to be eligible for application. You can apply now if you are in your first graduate year.

I will not say that this seminar comes near replacing an M.A. at Cooperstown, but I will say that it is to my knowledge the next best thing for those interested in material culture and museum work. Again the training is directed principally to aspiring administrators, and less so to aspiring curators, but both sides of the museum field are treated. Most certainly you come away informed about the museum field, whether or not you wish to participate in it. If you intend to apply, do remember that your outside research project will be assigned by the coordinator of the seminar (and with some wisdom on his part) and you will be expected to have your research complete and ready to present when you arrive in Williamsburg in June. The work required on the project approximates that of a graduate term paper. Thus you should plan your course work accordingly.

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The editors of the FOLKLORE FORUM, in a rare expression of social conscience, will not be printing any grape jokes (or other vinillogical lore) for the duration of the California grape boycott.