

University News

Appalachian State University

[Student to research history of African Americans and the Blue Ridge Parkway](#)

Posted May 11, 2009 at 3:31 pm · By ASU News

Filed under [Communication](#), [General](#), [History](#), [Research](#)



BOONE—Rebecca Jones has been selected by the Blue Ridge Parkway and Appalachian State University for a summer internship researching the history of African Americans and the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Jones, a senior communication major and Appalachian music minor from Denton, graduated in May with a concentration in media broadcasting. She will enter Appalachian's master of arts program in Appalachian Studies.

Jones will work under the supervision of Appalachian State University/Blue Ridge Parkway Liaison Dr. Neva Jean Specht from the Department of History and Dr. Pat Beaver, Director of the Center for Appalachian Studies. The internship is a joint effort between Appalachian and the Blue Ridge Parkway's Cultural Resource Management Team to research the historic relationship between African Americans and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Jones' research, which will come from both archival research and fieldwork, will be presented to the Blue Ridge Parkway Management Team in September for use in developing historic interpretation for underrepresented audiences.

"We have a number of sites in the park that were planned and/or constructed as separate gathering areas for African Americans," said Bambi Teague, chief of cultural and natural resources with the National Park Service. "After World War II, construction of separate facilities was prohibited by policy, not legislation, and those Parkway sites either planned or already constructed were abandoned." Teague said design drawings and construction remnants that still exist are important aspects of the Parkway's history.

"It is important for the public to understand the tension between giving special consideration to a group of people often forgotten and acceptance of separation and isolation as a way of life, and the vision of a different world prior to national legislation and inequality visibly at work."

Teague said that Parkway-administered lands contain several African-American cemeteries and home sites that reflect a changing lifestyle after the Civil War, including construction of terraces to facilitate agricultural uses of the land and a slave cemetery separated from a white cemetery near the Meadows of Dan.

"Compiling all of this information into one comprehensive document will become the basis for park decisions on how and where to interpret and share this story with the public," Teague said. "With the help of Appalachian State University Professor Pat Beaver and student Rebecca Jones, these stories will be told."

"The study of under-represented groups, including African Americans and their role with the Blue Ridge Parkway is an important aspect of the parkway's history that has had little visibility," Specht said. "With the parkway's 75th anniversary next year, this is an opportune time to conduct this fieldwork. I'm thrilled that Rebecca has agreed to take on this important work."

During her time as a student at Appalachian, Jones produced several video documentaries and audio productions about the people and places of North Carolina. She hosts the “Blue Ridge Bluegrass Show” on the campus radio station WASU and worked as an intern with MerleFest Music Festival.

In her spare time Jones enjoys playing the banjo and contra dancing. She has traveled all 469 miles of the Blue Ridge Parkway with her family, but said she was previously unaware of the stories of racial segregation along the parkway.

“I would love to talk to some people who can give me some stories they might have experienced about segregation on the parkway,” Jones said. “I hope to uncover some mysteries about that so that others can learn about it too.”

###

[ShareThis](#)
