



News Release
Office of University Relations

Contact: Jennifer Hill
January 17, 2019

NOTE: The Johnson City Sesquicentennial logo is available at <http://photolab.etsu.edu/images/SesquicentennialLogo/>.

History Harvest aims to preserve history of Johnson City

Public invited to share stories, memorabilia for Sesquicentennial project

JOHNSON CITY – This spring, the East Tennessee State University Department of History is sponsoring its second History Harvest, an effort to locate and digitally preserve documents, photographs, artifacts, and personal and family histories. The title of this year’s effort is “Johnson City’s History Harvest: Preserving Our Heritage.”

The first History Harvest, held during the 2016-17 academic year, focused on the heritage of tobacco farming in the region and yielded a number of good artifacts and stories. The “harvest” grew from a course designed and taught by adjunct faculty member Kim Woodring during the fall 2016 semester titled “Digital History: Preserving and Presenting the Past Digitally.”

“Johnson City’s History Harvest,” being held as part of the city’s yearlong Sesquicentennial Celebration, gives a chance for citizens to contribute new information and artifacts to the history already held by the Archives of Appalachia and Carroll Reece Museum in ETSU’s Center for Appalachian Studies and Services, area historical societies and other organizations.

“It’s worth noting that both the Reece Museum and Archives of Appalachia have quite a lot of material on Johnson City and the region, but this stands to add to that material, especially when it comes to people’s stories and experiences,” said Dr. Tom Lee, ETSU associate professor of history.

Lee added that organizers hope to reach a broad, diverse representation of the community, including residents from the World War II generation, to get a better sense of the ways in which the city evolved and grew through the years.

During “Johnson City’s History Harvest,” participants may bring physical artifacts or memorabilia to be digitally recorded and preserved. Documents and photographs will be scanned, artifacts photographed and stories recorded. Participants are welcome to donate physical items to the Reece Museum or Archives of Appalachia, Lee said, but whether they donate the items or keep them, participants will receive a digital copy of their materials.

“ETSU offers the possibility of preserving those memories, but the fact that it can be digitized and its significance preserved, even if ETSU doesn’t keep the object, that’s a big deal,” Lee said. “That means that people who are interested, potentially generations from now, even if they don’t have the physical object, can have reference to it through these records.”

“Someday, somebody may find it useful, and if it’s not collected now, it may never be. For the people who want to participate, it’s an opportunity to contribute part of their family’s legacy, their part in the story of this city and region, to the city’s legacy in a very direct and meaningful way.

For the current History Harvest, focused on the history of Johnson City, individuals and families who have stories, photos, artifacts and memorabilia to share are invited to contact the Department of History by Feb. 1. Those contacting the department are asked to share brief summaries of their stories and descriptions of memorabilia. Several of these will be selected, and those who submitted them will be invited this spring to bring items to donate or have digitally preserved.

The department may be reached by email at jchistory@etsu.edu, by phone at 423-439-4222 (leave a voice message), or by mail at History Harvest/ETSU History Department, Box 70672, Johnson City, Tennessee, 37614.

###