



EAST TENNESSEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Making history personal

— since 1834 —

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Cherel Henderson  
(865) 215-8823  
[cherel@eastTNhistory.org](mailto:cherel@eastTNhistory.org)

### **East Tennessee Historical Society Honors Eight Knoxville Initiatives with History Awards of Excellence**

KNOXVILLE, Tenn., May 15, 2017 – The East Tennessee Historical Society’s (ETHS) annual Awards of Excellence were presented at the organization’s Annual Meeting on May 2, 2017, at the Foundry on the World’s Fair Site in Knoxville. Since 1982, the Society has annually recognized individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to the preservation, promotion, programming and interpretation of the region’s history. Eight Knoxville projects and leaders were among the 27 awards presented.

- **Dr. Paul H. Bergeron**, Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Tennessee, was honored with the ***Ramsey Award for Professional Achievement***. Dr. Burgeron has been an active supporter of local history sites and organizations and was especially involved with Blount Mansion and the East Tennessee Historical Society, where he served as Knoxville Vice President, Treasurer, and as a content advisor for the ETHS signature exhibition, *Voices of the Land: The People of East Tennessee*. He has directed M.A. theses and Ph.D. dissertations across his career and holds the distinction of having directed the Ph.D. dissertations of the first three executive directors of the East Tennessee Historical Society. From 1987-2000, he was editor of *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*. A sampling of the other works for which he is well known includes *Antebellum Politics in Tennessee* (1982), *Paths of the Past, Tennessee, 1770-1970* (1979), and *Andrew Johnson’s Civil War and Reconstruction* (2011).
- **Mike Steely** received the ***History in the Media Award*** for his busy career as a writer for *The Knoxville Focus*, where he manages to add articles on a wide variety of historical topics and to inform readers of current events in the history community. His popular “A Day Away” column spotlights sites and attractions within a day’s drive of Knoxville. His articles are a great contribution to the public’s knowledge and interest in history.
- **Camille Benson** received a ***Teaching Excellence Award*** for her role as a teacher at the Tennessee School for the Deaf, where she teaches history to students whose first language is American Sign Language and the second, English. Benson believes that an understanding of American history is important to being a good citizen, and she works to help students overcome language and reading delays so they can relate to history on a personal level. On her own time, she raises funds to take the children to

Washington, D.C., to learn history and to visit Gallaudet University, the world's only university designed for the deaf and hearing impaired.

- **Tom Jones and Cam Basden**, teachers at the Episcopal School of Knoxville, received a ***Teaching Excellence Award*** for combining East Tennessee history with an introduction to primary source research to create an immersive historical research program, facilitated and hosted by East Tennessee History Center staff. Students research an assigned Civil War topic, complete a timeline, and present on the subject.
- **Knox Heritage** received a ***Preservation Award*** for their success in preserving the home of artist Lloyd Branson (1853-1925) and restoring it into a vibrant home once more. Born in Union County, Branson moved to Knoxville where he was mentored by artist Flavius J. Fisher. He became known for his portraits of Southern politicians and depictions of East Tennessee history.
- **Wanda Sobieski** received a ***Community History Award*** for her consistent and persistent efforts to preserve and promote East Tennessee's significant role in the battle for woman suffrage. Wanda speaks frequently to both student and adult groups and was the force behind a statue on Market Square in downtown Knoxville to memorialize three women suffrage leaders in the state.
- **The Major William A. McTeer Camp No. 39, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War** were honored with an ***Award of Distinction*** for "Readmission Day 2016," celebrating the 150th anniversary of Tennessee's readmission to the Union. Held at the grave of Governor William G. "Parson" Brownlow, Old Gray Cemetery, Knoxville, the event featured re-enactors, speeches, period music and costume, military ceremony, and a memorializing of Brownlow's efforts and others who gave their lives to preserve the union.
- **NOLPIX Media, LLC**, received an ***Award of Distinction*** for the documentary *Secrets of the Nolichucky River*, a beautiful and educational exploration of recently discovered "Cane Notch," a prehistoric Cherokee settlement located in Washington County. Leading scholars accompanied this journey to chronicle the complexities and techniques of an archaeological dig.

**About the East Tennessee Historical Society:**

Established in 1834, the East Tennessee Historical Society has 2,000 members across the United States. Its active publications program includes the biannual genealogy magazine *Tennessee Ancestors*; the annual *Journal of East Tennessee History*; and *Newsline*, as well as other books pertaining to the region's history. The Society also sponsors the Museum of East Tennessee History, East Tennessee National History Day, and the family heritage programs "First Families of Tennessee" and "Civil War Families of Tennessee."

###