

**A Sense of Place:**  
**Architecture, Culture, and History in the Arkansas Delta**  
**Interviewing, Editing, Publishing Project:**  
**Documenting History Through Oral Interviews with Witnesses and Experts**  
**July 13, July 20, Workshop at the Allen House**  
**Conducted by Mark Spencer**

**Prep work:** Ideally, everyone will have read *A Haunted Love Story: The Ghosts of the Allen House*, but it's okay if you have not.

**Introduction:**

Our workshop will be divided into three parts.

- First, we will discuss a multi-faceted oral-history project for public-school students that will enhance their development in a number of ways.
- Second, you will do an on-site written assignment.
- Third, you will share and assess each other's work.

**PART I:**

**Project Summary:** Through research, students will find a historical topic lending itself to an oral, recorded interview of a witness of the historical event *or* a person who received firsthand accounts of such *or* an acknowledged expert of such.

- Students will write appropriate, informed, effective questions for their interview.
- After the interview, students will write an introduction to the interview and a critical analysis of the interview.
- Students will edit the interview for publication.
- Students will publish the interview, along with their introduction and analysis, on Amazon's free publishing platform.
- Students will market the publication through free social media platforms, such as Facebook, X, Instagram . . .

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

Through completion of this project, students will

- Increase their knowledge of a historical topic

- Develop interviewing skills
- Develop critical-thinking skills via an enhanced understanding of the role of personal perspective/point of view in interpreting history
- Develop their expository writing skills
- Develop editing skills
- Develop publishing skills
- Develop marketing skills

### Steps of the Project:

1. Choosing a historical topic and focus (likely local so that the student can find witnesses or experts to interview, possibly a family-history topic)
2. Finding an interview subject (a person who witnessed an historical event or period or a person who received first-hand accounts of such or an acknowledged expert on an historical event or period)
3. Developing interview questions to ensure full coverage of the topic.
4. Creating a permission form for the interviewee to sign giving the student permission to record and publish the interview. Also, the student and teacher will need to determine use of any money received from the publication and secure the interviewee's permission in that regard.
5. Conducting the interview (which should be recorded with the subject's written permission).
6. Writing an introduction to the interview
7. Writing an analysis of the interview (should not be critical of the interviewee but should assess his/her objectivity and compare the interviewee's perspective with other historical perspectives of the event or period)
8. Editing the interview for publication
9. Doing layout, formatting, and performing all other necessary steps for publication on Amazon (with guidance from the teacher)
10. Developing a marketing strategy using free social-media platforms.

## PART II

Workshop participants' on-site exercise.

- Determine a manageable focus for a project related to the Allen House.

Examples:

The architecture of the house—historical context of its construction, its architectural styles, cultural and historical implications of its styles, reflections of its owners in its styles, history of modifications to the house and historical implications of those modifications up to the present day.

The role of the Allen family in the cultural and economic development of late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Monticello.

The life of Ladell Allen Bonner (1894-1949)

The history of paranormal activity at the Allen House—forms of activity, investigations, evidence, media attention . . . .

- After determining a focus, create a list of appropriate interview questions for Mark Spencer. The questions should demonstrate critical-thinking skills—analysis beyond facts. Your questions—as should your students’ questions—should delve into complexities and ambiguities and historical uncertainties. Write as many questions as you can in the time allotted. You will have an opportunity to ask your questions in the next portion of the day’s workshop, and we will assess the questions.

### **PART III:**

Sharing and assessment of interview questions.