

The Visitor's Center Hour 23.01.21

SM Sarah McConnell
LM Lauren McMillan
PM Perri Meldon
KJ Kathleen Jenkins
JW Jolanta Wawrzycka

SM

If you're like me, you love to get outside on unusually warm winter days. There may not be leaves on the trees, but walking the trails in a nearby park still feels good. Then in recent years, some state parks have been working to be accessible to people who can't hit the trails or relax on a bench.

Speaker 1

All-terrain wheelchairs could be coming to some Georgia state parks by the end of the summer.

Speaker 2

People with disabilities can now hike some beautiful trails at a state park in Pine.

Speaker 3

This will be the first summer of Minnesota where trails in our parks will be accessible to all.

Speaker 4

The park now has four track chairs and one GRIT Freedom Chair.

Speaker 5

All-terrain chairs are going to be free to rent at several state parks, making unpaved trails open to all.

Speaker 6

It kind of feels like you're driving a tank.

Speaker 7

You can sign up online.

SM

From Virginia Humanities, this is With Good Reason. I'm Sarah McConnell. Today, new trails and new ways to traverse them. Later in the show, how students and faculty at the University of Mary Washington are working with the Potomac and Rappahannock tribes to develop the Virginia Indian Trail in King George County.

LM

The rivers get their names from those groups. So Rappahannock means

"The place where the tide ebbs and flows," and Patawomeck means "The place where people come and go," or "Meeting place."

SM

But first, Perri Meldon is a Fellow both at the National Park Service and at Virginia Humanities. She's working on the first ever disability history handbook for the Park Service.

SM

Perri, earlier this year, Georgia rolled out all-terrain wheelchairs at state parks. Did you hear about that? Do you know about these kinds of wheelchairs?

PM

I did. It's really exciting to see that happening. And I don't believe it was the only state. Colorado, I've heard, also has. But right now that is happening on a case-by-case basis, primarily through grants funding.

SM

What do all-terrain wheelchairs do? What do they make available to people?

PM

It allows people these all-terrain vehicles to go out into wilderness, or what we call the backwoods, and enjoy the outdoors in all its different forms beyond a paved trail or flatter terrain. It allows people to see different kinds of landscapes.

SM

I heard they were life changing. That they could go into crazy places like over fallen logs, into swampy areas.

PM

Yes, I see it really in contrast to a recent story I learned from the former actually National Park Service Director. Back in the early 80s, a group of men who use wheelchairs climbed a mountain in Texas, it's Guadalupe Peak, the highest peak in Texas. There were times that they ascended this mountain using their teeth at times to carry their wheelchairs with rope. There were just tremendous struggles to make that ascent possible. And with all-terrain vehicles, people can get outside and enjoy the outdoors in ways that they couldn't before. Or if they could, it would have been with tremendous difficulty.

SM

You know, I know all-terrain vehicles are just one thing and probably massively expensive. But really great as far as making parks and the great outdoors fun, right? Do you think that there has been a lot of attention paid, just in the last few years to making parks much more fun for people with physical limitations?

PM

Yes, to the more recent history, but it amazes me that these efforts date back decades. I think we really see it, that push for accessibility in parks and public lands, dating to the American war in Vietnam, when we see disabled veterans returning. And they're demanding access to public spaces, just as any non-disabled person would. They say, "Hey, our taxes are paying for these public lands, we deserve those rights." We also even see that dating back to after World War Two, as many disabled men are returning.

The goal is to get them back into the workforce. And so we see this rise of vocational rehabilitation. And part of that whole rehabilitation movement was also about getting people outside, getting people into public spaces. And so while we may think it's more recent, that effort to get people into parks, that really does go back at least to the 1960s if not earlier,

SM

Tell me this story that you wrote about of the young woman who wanted to ride a mule into the Grand Canyon like so many tourists do.

PM

Yeah, this is Eileen Szychowski. She is a person with multiple physical disabilities, and she is an expert horse woman. And when she visited the Grand Canyon with her friends, it was her intent to ride a mule down into the Grand Canyon as so many people do. And I believe they continue to do today. She explained, "Look, I already have extensive experience riding horses." And yet, the concessioner who managed those mule rides, told her "No, we can't allow you to do this. This is a liability for the park." And so she thought on it and returned to the concessioner some hours later and told them "This is my right." So she met with many staff at Grand Canyon, and eventually convinced them not only to let her ride, but they were so impressed by her that they hired her back the next year as a seasonal park ranger.

SM

You're a Disability History Fellow in the National Park Service. Tell me about your background before you got the fellowship. What sort of led you here?

PM

Before I began my fellowship and previous internships with the National Park Service, I decided to work on therapeutic farms, first in Virginia, and then in Germany. And while I was in Virginia, I was living right at the edge of Shenandoah National Park. And it astounded me just to see how there were trails that were available to us, there were storytelling opportunities in the national park that would intrigue us all. There were just many ways to enjoy the park, regardless of our preferred learning preferences, and, and mobility.

Now increasingly, I have also come to live with physically disabling conditions that affect my own mobility. And so I've come to appreciate these stories in not only this professional way, but also personal.

SM

You know, so true. Many of us have no thought about disability until it happens to us. And of course, it will happen in many forms to all of us over time. And once you have a physical limitation, you realize how you'd love to change everything, right?

PM

Yeah, I certainly look for more level terrain now than I used to. But it's also true that there are populations that face increased exposure to disabling conditions, and those are often tied to one's socioeconomic status. And in some cases, race, and ethnicity, and access to public health. When people are talking about disability, it's far more complex and nuanced than we often first think about or realize.

SM

You were specifically working on a handbook to improve the experience in parks for disabled visitors. Tell me about the handbook and what has been there before?

PM

Yes, so I should say first that when I'm talking about this, I'm talking about the work of many colleagues in the National Park Service. But this handbook is not a manual or a how-to guide. It is really a series of essays about different themes in U.S. disability history. That could include labor, gender, different time periods in history like the antebellum era, or the New Deal and the world wars. There is nothing comparable to this handbook. And the reason why it's important is that it will help interpretive and educational staff, like those who create programs or those who are park rangers, in talking about these themes.

As a quick example, if you were to go to Lowell National Historical Park up in Massachusetts, that's one of the first textile mills in the country. There were an unbelievable number of accidents occurred in the workplace. And how do you talk about those accidents without being too gruesome, disturbing your visitors, and also giving dignity to those workers in the past? How do we talk about the stories about people who do age in place and no longer can ascend to the second floor? How do we talk about forced labor conditions, whether it's those working on the border and migrant laborers, or enslaved African American people? These are all disability stories. And the goal with this handbook is to be able to expand that storytelling and also build representation of the stories of people with disabilities in American history.

SM

Are there any particular parks or museums that you think are doing this really well right now?

PM

Oh my goodness, yes. One of my favorite places to visit is the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park, which is in Maryland on the Eastern Shore. This is the general location where Harriet Tubman was born and enslaved. And it is believed, though we can't confirm it, that Harriet Tubman lived with epilepsy following an injury she incurred from an overseer. Part of the thinking behind developing the Visitor's Center is that we want this Visitor's Center to be accessible for all. Not only that it acknowledges Tubman's own disabling experience, but it's accessible for people with and without disabilities today.

So when you go to the visitor center, not only are there ramps and curb cuts – examples of accessibility that are built into our surroundings everywhere – but when you go into the exhibits, not only is there a statue of Harriet Tubman, but then there's also a miniature. And that miniature is intended as a tactile object for people to touch, to feel, that if they can't see that statue, they know what it feels like. There's also audio features that you can listen to what Tubman's world sounded like. That would include birds, that would include marshland. And the intention there is that audio experience allows you to tune in, but also to have that sensory experience. What did the 19th century marshlands feel like? That's just one example. But increasingly, when you go to parks, you do see these tactile features, you see these audio opportunities, there are videos.

It's exciting to go into this Visitor's Center, you you may have intended to go to the park itself, and you should, but definitely stop into the Visitor's Center and find out what different ways you can experience the park with your other senses.

SM

You are also a Fellow this year at Virginia Humanities, continuing your work on the Dismal Swamp. Tell me about the work involving the dismal swamp.

PM

Yeah, that actually isn't out of left field as it may seem. My interest in the Dismal Swamp starts first with the fact that most of my family lives out in the Hampton Roads area. And no one wants to take me to the Dismal Swamp because that's what it's called. But it's a beautiful and layered place. And in recent years, we have seen this real increase in attention to the stories of maroon communities that escaped and found refuge in the Dismal Swamp. These are self-emancipated, enslaved African Americans prior to the Civil War, who

were hiding out and creating settlements in the swamp. Incredible modes of survival. I honor these stories, and I'm interested in how a place like the Dismal Swamp became a public land. How it connects to the work that I'm doing right now with the National Park Service is an abiding interest in public lands, and who accesses them, and what are the stories we're telling.

SM

Perri Meldon, thank you for sharing your insights with me on With Good Reason.

PM

Thank you so much, Sarah. This was really a joy.

SM

Perri Meldon is collaborating with National Park Service staff to develop the disability history handbook for the park service. Her fellowship with the National Park Service is funded by American Conservation Experience. She's also a Fellow at Virginia Humanities.

SM

The Potomac and Rappahannock rivers in Virginia are named for the first people who lived there, the Patawomeck and the Rappahannock tribes. University of Mary Washington professor Lauren McMillan, and her students, are working with the tribes and the local tourism board to develop the Native American History and Culture Trail along the rivers.

SM

Lauren, you and your students have been collaborating with two tribes near Fredericksburg to create a heritage trail that points out some of the important aspects of this region that has been occupied for millennia. Pre-European contact, right?

LM

Yes. So the two groups that my students and I have been working with for about two years now are the Rappahannock tribe and the Patawomeck peoples who are along the Potomac River. There are multiple stories that they specifically wanted told, particularly the importance of the river to both groups. The rivers get their names from those groups. So Rappahannock means "The place where the tide ebbs and flows," and Patawomeck means "The place where people come and go," or "Meeting place." And the Potomac River itself is a great conduit for movement of people. And if you think about where D.C. is located, it's right on the Potomac River.

SM

What story has been traditionally told in history books about these two tribes?

LM

Well, Virginia history of indigenous peoples really kind of ends around 1607 with John Smith. Previous histories kind of took John Smith as 100%. Everything he said was true, and there's nothing more. But what indigenous peoples of Virginia have, have been telling us for hundreds of years is there's more to that story. And John Smith didn't understand everything that he was seeing. He was an Englishman, coming from Europe, coming into a completely new place, different languages, different customs, he didn't understand everything he was saying. There is a lot of propaganda in what he wrote. And one of the things we wanted to do with this project was bring indigenous history to the contemporary era.

SM

There are seven points along the Heritage Trail, which you and your students are marking, and others. But one of the important sights is noting – and the Rappahannock really wanted this – noting that the Rappahannock River was settled on both sides by the Rappahannock tribes. That they used both sides, although Smith had always said their villages were only on one side of the river. Why? Why is that important?

LM

Right, when John Smith came up the Rappahannock River, he was noting where he saw people living, all right? And so he was, he was looking at villages. And of course, what John Smith is actually interested in is warriors. He wants to know how many warriors there are, so he's trying to get a population count. So he's noting villages, and he notes them all on the north side, the north bank of the Rappahannock River. And so historians for hundreds of years have taken John Smith's word and said, "Alright, the Rappahannock are only living on the north side of the river." Well, the Rappahannock people for hundreds of years have said, "No, we use both sides of the river." And so what we now know, archaeologically, and through oral history, is that the north bank yes is where the villages were.

That's where the agriculture was that's up higher up on bluffs. But the south bank, that's where hunting, fishing, collecting, gathering, digging for clay, a major craft of the Rappahannock is pottery, and basket making. And so that's where they're collecting their resources to make their goods, while on the north bank they're growing their food, and their permanent villages are on the north bank.

SM

Does it have significance now? Is it important now to say, "We were on both sides of the river, we historically are on both sides of the river?"

LM

Well, one of the I think the big important thing is that we're

listening to indigenous voices and we're listening to indigenous knowledge. That's first and foremost, I want to say. But also there are many groups including the Rappahannock that are part of this Land Back Movement, which is about getting indigenous land back into indigenous hands through purchases or donation. And so the Rappahannock have been one of those groups that have worked really hard towards that movement of getting land back. And they want land on both sides of the river because both sides are important. The Rappahannock very famously last year received Fones Cliffs back, which was a traditionally important ritual space for the Rappahannock people's. It's a high bluff. It's at a curve in the river where you can see really far. You can see up the river down the river, there is a huge view shed from Fones Cliffs.

SM

The Heritage Trail sites that you all are working on for these tribes is not a walking tour. It's a driving tour?

LM

Yes, it's a driving tour. We really wanted to be able to tell both indigenous stories, the Rappahannock and the Patowomeck stories, which means we have to be able to be on both rivers, the Potomac River and the Rappahannock River. One of the things we wanted was for these interpretive signs to be embedded in the landscape, and the important part of the landscape that is the rivers. One of the interpretive signs that's important to the, to the Rappahannock people is the North Bank Hypothesis, and that is the understanding that both sides of the river were important to Rappahannock lifeways. Another important story of the Potomac is the story of the Potomac Waterman.

That interpretive sign discusses the use of the Potomac River by indigenous peoples for thousands of years, for fishing and subsistence, but particularly the 20th century kind of revitalization movement of traditional eel pot making, which this was a fish trap that's made out of white oak splints. In the 20th century, it had been converted to wires, wire traps, but recently in the late 20th century, and today, there's a revitalization movement to make them in the traditional wooden... out of wood.

SM

So interesting. I didn't know there was a real eel fishery going on by the tribes people on that body of water. You hear about crabs and menhaden, but there was a real eel fishing market.

LM

Of course, the Patowomeck people were relying on crabs and other kinds of fish as well, but it's kind of interesting. They move from subsisting on the river, to just purely feeding themselves fishing, crabbing, to in the 20th century, they move into commercial fishing. And particularly, first with carp, but then really the eel, and

catching eel in these eel pots that are then shipped all over the world, including to China. So they're still relying on the river, just in a modified way.

SM

There's also another point that you're marking that tells the story of creation, which tribes creation story is this?

LM

So this is the Patawomeck creation story. It's the only known Virginia Algonquin creation story that was told to the English. It was written down by the English in the early 17th century. Chief Japasaws of the Patawomeck told this story to Samuel Argall. And this is the story of Ahone, who was the great creator, and his creation of people and of the world. So Ahone loves his people that he created so much that he kept them in a bag to protect them. There were deities who were jealous of this new create... these new creations that Ahone loved so much. And they tried to... these spirits tried to attack the people. And Ahone decided that the bag was not enough and that he was going to create a whole new world for them. And I like to just read part of the story for you. "Using rituals, he created the water and the land, along with a great deer. The winds became jealous of the deer and killed it with their hunting poles. However, the great hare was not discouraged by the wrathful gods. He took the countless hairs of the slain deer and spread them across the land. Through powerful charms, he transformed each hair into a deer to sustain the humans. Then the great hare open the bag and placed a man and a woman in each country. The great hare returned to his dwelling place, leaving humanity to live in the world he created for them."

SM

There's another sign you have that has to do with the ecosystem and all the native plants that are nearby, and how important they were to the tribe.

LM

Yes, we have a sign that is going to go up at Caledon State Park. Caledon is a state park that is unique, and it has a unique ecosystem there because of where it's located on the Potomac River. And so we wanted to use that unique ecosystem in telling the story of indigenous uses of native plants. And so there is a sign, interpretive sign, that discusses the use of the paw paw, and of the white oak tree, and other plants that were important to indigenous lifeways.

SM

Another one of the signs talks about a tribe that the Europeans, back in John Smith's era, thought of as extremely hostile and that was sort of the only way they were known.

LM

Right the the story of the Dogue people, D-O-G-U-E, Dogue. The Dogue people, or the Dogue village was located on the Rappahannock River. They were probably loosely associated with the larger Rappahannock tribe. And the Dogue are written about in the 17th century and early 1600s by the English quite often. But almost every time the Dogue appear in the historical record, it is related to violence, that the Dogue attacked the English in some way. And so the Dogue are often characterized as being very violent people, this violent group of people.

But what we did, what the students did with this sign, in working with the Rappahannock tribe, they flip this narrative on its head. And they looked at these mentions in historical record and they said, "Well, what's going on? Why are the Dogue attacking the English?" It's because the English are encroaching on the Dogue in some way or another. They're, they're encroaching on their land. They're taking their land. They're taking something from the Dogue. And so the Dogue are just reacting to the English aggression to begin with.

SM

Is the Native American History and Culture Trail open now?

LM

Not yet. We are still working on some last minute logistics to get it up. We're aiming for the spring of 23', 2023. This was a class project. The Patowomeck and the Rappahannock would like this trail to expand to their cultural centers, their tribal centers.

SM

You know, the last 100 years have been very eventful for the tribes and other tribes like them in Virginia. There was a time in the early 20s where they were not even allowed by law to claim to be part of any tribe.

LM

Right, in the early 20th century, it was illegal to be an Indian in Virginia. And I do use the word "Indian." That is what indigenous peoples of Virginia, "Virginia Indians" is what they call themselves. So I do purposely use the term "Indian." The Racial Integrity Act in the 1920s, it made it illegal to be Indian. You had to be white or Black on legal government paperwork. And so many tribes responded differently to the Racial Integrity Act. So for example, the Patowomeck people, they chose to go with passing for white. And they integrated into the white society, the European American society. The Rappahannock responded in a slightly different way they created and incorporated their tribe, the Rappahannock tribe, to become an organized entity to try to fight against the Racial Integrity Act.

SM

Did that work?

LM

Not really, I mean, they are still an organization today, but they were not legally allowed to put "Indian" on their paperwork. However, they still did. They resisted the racial Integrity Act, and they continued to put "Indian" on their legal paperwork, including during the draft in World War Two. They would put "Indian" on their draft cards, and there's a, there are some stories of Rappahannock men who are arrested for breaking the law by putting "Indian" on their draft cards.

SM

It's interesting that now there is a renaissance, really, among the tribes people and finding their oral histories and other histories that they can begin to share more widely.

LM

Well, I don't think the oral histories are being found. I think they're being told to a wider audience at this point. I think we have to remember the, the generations that lived under the Racial Integrity Act, we're just about a generation removed from that. When... I know of many Patowomeck elders who talk about, "We were told never to tell anybody that we're Indian." Right? We don't want to be cat... you're either Black or white in the 1920s through the 1960s, until Loving v. Virginia. And so we're just a generation removed from that. Many of the, the tribal elders, they talk about how their grandparents told them, "Don't you tell anybody you're an Indian." So we're now at the point where people feel comfortable, confident, to come out and tell these stories to a wider public.

SM

Lauren McMillan, thank you for talking with me on With Good Reason.

LM

Oh, you're welcome. Thank you very much.

SM

Lauren McMillan is an Assistant Professor of Historic Preservation at the University of Mary Washington. This is With Good Reason. We'll be right back.

SM

Welcome back to With Good Reason from Virginia Humanities. Every year hundreds of 1000s of people take the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. And many take the hike for spiritual renewal. Kathleen Jenkins is author of Walking the Way Together: How Families Connect on the Camino de Santiago. She found a lot of parents and children were using the trail to spark something new in their relationship. Kathleen Jenkins is a Professor of Sociology at William and Mary.

KJ

The Camino de Santiago trail is... it's really a revival of medieval pilgrimage routes across Europe. And they all lead to this city of Santiago de Compostela in Northwest Spain, in Galicia. I think it's important to say that there are different lengths. For example, there's one way that comes down from the coast called the English Way, that's from this town in Spain Ferrol. And that path is about 118 kilometers. But other people walk a lot longer than that, like the most popular route, the Camino Francaise, is about 800 kilometers.

SM

Do you think it used to be primarily a truly religious pilgrimage?

KJ

Certainly religious, the Catholic Church and religion was, was at the core. But over time, most of the people who are walking, or a lot of the people who are walking, and especially people I talk to, talk about really wanting a spiritual experience and describe themselves as spiritual, spiritual people.

SM

And by spiritual, do they mean that by subjecting themselves to nights and days of exclusively walking, that they free themselves from the trappings of everyday life and just get more in touch with their essential being?

KJ

I think so. I think it's, it's not just their essential being, but... but I think a lot of them want to be in touch with others too, to kind of experience a communal group walking. They also might want to take in nature, really be in nature, and walk through the landscapes. I think also a kind of mystical, a lot of people want a mystical experience, where they feel like they're, they're alone and able to think about their own life experiences, where they want to go, they hope for some kind of transformative experience.

SM

How did you decide to look into families and how they make this journey together?

KJ

Oh, well, it was interesting. I, I'm a sociologist of religion and family, and I was working with a colleague, George Greenia, on developing a study abroad program. I had one student who became really interested in doing research on mothers who walked with young children. There weren't many of them. But how do... you know how does a young mother find the time to walk with, with a child? And I started to become interested in all of these parents who I saw who were walking with their young adult children.

And I thought, "Well, what does it mean to them? Why are they doing this together?" So that's how it started. And then over several years, I ended up walking a lot of paths and talking to people on paths, and also interviewing them, and volunteering at the Pilgrims Office too. The Pilgrims Office is in Santiago de Compostela. And when pilgrims arrive in the city, they go to this office to get a document of completion, it's called a Compostela. And the length is important here, because you have to walk 100 kilometers into the city to get this official document from the Catholic Church. So you can't, for example, walk halfway or walk 400 kilometers on a route and then go into the city and get the Compostella. You have to walk 100 kilometers in. And I would meet and talk to a lot of parents who were walking with their young adult children.

SM

You have young adult children. Were you thinking to yourself, "I'd love to do this with my kids"?

KJ

(Laughs) Yes. Yes, I was thinking that and I was not successful. And I think that speaks to many of the stories that people told me. Because they said this was a special time that the family was able to walk together. A lot of people walked because of graduations, the adult children had just graduated and they had grabbed that time together. But, yeah no, my children weren't really interested in it. Maybe one of them would have wanted to walk, but they were in grad school at the time. So... so it didn't, it didn't happen.

SM

You know, a number of people I know who've walked it were inspired by the deeply moving film back in 2010, called The Way starring Martin Sheen. Have you seen that?

KJ

Oh, yes, I have seen it. And in fact, more than half of the people I talked to were drawn to walking the Camino because of the film. They would... that's how they were introduced to the Camino. They found it incredibly inspiring, in some ways it's a fam... it's a family story, a father coming to terms with his relationship with his son in a way. And they wanted to go on this kind of spiritual, transformative journey that they saw happening in the movie, and they wanted to experience it together.

SM

And of course, underneath the movie and the the drive to go on this trail is grief. Did you find a lot of people were trying to sort of expunge grief?

KJ

Yes. I interviewed for example, one family who... they were walking

together, parents and young adult children after the loss of their son, and a sibling. And the mother talked to me about how they could feel at times the presence of the son walking with them. Another kind of grief... there were two other stories from the more formal interviews that I did where I talked with people, and they were about divorce. And I think there was a lot of loss and disruption in these families.

SM

Tell me about the story of the other divorced family ,the daughter in the mother.

KJ

Oh right. So yes, she instigated the trip. She wanted her mother to, to go on the Camino. And, and I heard this from a lot of people. She talked about hoping that would there would be some kind of miracle. And people talk about, in stories, of walking the Camino, and oh, there's a Camino miracle happens, somebody helps you along the way, or some relationship changes, or you have some, some big discovery. And so she was really hoping for a miracle. And in her... well she was hoping that the trip would help her mother be different. She didn't think that her mother treated people very well. And so the daughter just came out with it. "Why are you so mean?" You know, "Why are you being so mean to people?" And so the mo... she said, "My mother when... she apologized to the person and she said, I... that's rare. I don't I..." like she had never seen that.

So coming to this point in both of those stories of divorce, one in seeing a parent cry for the first time. And another in hearing a parent apologize was... they saw as this, you know, moment of, of something really meaningful. I think another story that represents hopes and connection among family members is the story of a father and a daughter who walked together. And I met them at a cafe after they arrived in the city. And we talked about, did you find it spiritual?

So when I asked the daughter this, she got really teary eyed and I thought, "Oh, no. Well, you know, you don't have to answer this question." And she was like, "No, no," and she told this story of walking. They'd been walking for a while, and it was the end of one day. And she ran across... she found this little place it said "hospital of the soul." It was a a building. And she walked in and there were meditation pillows, there was a garden, a place to make tea. And there was also a sign that said, "No phones and no taking pictures." And so she talks about sitting on the pillows and just being in that space. She was raised in the Catholic tradition, identified as spiritual and... but she's she said "I could feel the presence of God." And she said that it was the first time that she had truly felt at peace.

SM

I mean, I guess I shouldn't be surprised. But I'm a little bit surprised to think about the phones on the trip. I sort of would have expected maybe there'd be a no phones, no laptops, rule among the pilgrims. (Laughter). You laugh.

KJ

Oh, boy. Well, so when I started going in 2012, the phones were there, but not like they are in recent years where you, you walk... I mean people stop at cafes along the way to rest, of course, you're not walking straight, you rest, you get a coffee, you refuel. But people are on their phones. That's when people are on their phones. When I said earlier that some people didn't... were not happy with their experience on the Camino, one mother and daughter who said, "Oh, no, we would never do this again." She was she was trying to escape social media. I don't know what had happened. But it was something awful. And she was trying to get away from it.

Then the mother said that she had been telling somebody something about her life. And then she finds it on Facebook the next day on somebody's blog. And I remember that... I remember that happened to me, too. I was walking on the French Way. And I was talking with someone and, for quite a while, and I saw them the next day. And they said, "Oh, you should read my story from yesterday. You're in it." You know. so... this idea, this... Yeah, it was kind of jolting. And really, this, this idea that you are there, but you're not experiencing that kind of space away from everyday life.

SM

It really touches me to hear you describe the stories of all these different people. They're struggling to achieve or feel something we're all looking for.

KJ

Yeah, that kind of connection. I think that's why for me when you see the disconnect in the technology coming in, I mean, technology can bring people together too, (Inaudible) help them find each other on the Camino, or it helped them tell stories with each other. It, it helped build the structure of these Camino routes in a way. But it also... you can also come back with memories of, wow, competition, too much technology, and people telling your stories and those aren't great memories to have.

SM

Yeah. Well, Kathleen Jenkins, this has been a delight. Thank you for talking with me on With Good Reason.

KJ

Well, thank you so much. Thank you so much for inviting me.

SM

Kathleen Jenkins is the author of *Walking the Way Together: How Families Connect on the Camino de Santiago*. She's a Professor of Sociology at William and Mary.

SM

Now to another trail that people can walk in a day. James Joyce's masterpiece, *Ulysses*, follows its main character, Leopold Bloom, around Dublin during the course of a single day. So every year, Dubliners retrace Bloom's path reading excerpts from the book aloud. Jolanta Wawrzycka is an English professor at Radford University. She tells us more about Bloomsday and Dublin.

SM

Jolanta, February 2 is the birthday of James Joyce. But last year, it was especially significant. Tell me about that.

JW

Well, last year, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of publication of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. So not only his birthday, but also one of the greatest books of the 20th century came out on that day.

SM

You know, there is a one day festival every year in Dublin called Bloomsday. I understand during the pandemic, some people called it Zoomsday.

JW

Indeed, that was true. We had to cancel in 2020 completely, so we haven't really met.

SM

When is Bloomsday and what does it entail?

JW

Bloomsday is a celebration of *Ulysses* as Mr. Bloom, the main protagonist of the novel, wanders around Dublin. Celebrations have started in the 50s. And through the 60s and 70s and 80s, they have grown quite big. And it basically means that we gather in Dublin and we walk the walks, and talk to talks, and talk about books, and celebrate Joyce's not only *Ulysses*, but also *Dubliners*, and his novel *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and other writings.

SM

Did *Ulysses* by James Joyce make a big splash when it first came out in 1922? Were people eager to read it?

JW

Well, it would be difficult to say they were eager to read it in terms of general audience. There was a small select audience of people who were waiting for the book, who sponsored the publication of the book,

particularly since Joyce had the book serialized since 1918. So people have seen the episodes from Ulysses. And they were, of course, awaiting the book eagerly. The reception was also mixed. Some of the great writers like H.G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw, they didn't like the book.

SM

So for those who celebrated Ulysses when it first came out, what did it represent for them? What did they like about it?

JW

Well, it was a very new way of approaching the novelistic representation. There are no descriptions that will guide you, there is no narrator that will tell you what to think, or... or describing the characters. We basically are looking through the character's minds. Very much a break from the past, because Ulysses plays with lots of styles of writing, there are stylistic shifts. There's encyclopedic virtuosity where you have to really actually know a lot in terms of philosophy, history, literature, basically a great demand on reader's attention. I see that firsthand in, in, in classes when I teach the book. I see student's vexations because they cannot clearly follow the plot, because the plot is in the character's mind. So some people think that the book is pointless. The book has, however, irresistible humor. There's a deep humanity and humor about this book that I appreciate, and I see students appreciating after they have gone through the initial hurdles of learning about the style.

SM

You know, I read one account that claimed it was the second hardest book to read in the English language. Do you think that's fair?

JW

Um, you're asking the wrong person, I absolutely love the book. And, but of course, I have spent some 30 years learning how to read it, learning how to teach it, and, and traipsing the places that Joyce puts into the book. Which, which really opens up the understanding when you see the streets, when you see the sites such as, say, National Library, National Museum, or Sandymount Strand, or parks and schools. And so it's great to go to those places and see them. And I think it deepens the understanding of, of the book. Again, you're not being held by the hand by the narrator. You do the work of reading, and that is quite challenging to people who, who read for relaxation, for pleasure. I wouldn't say that the book is a pleasure to read but it becomes pleasure after you have read it and reread it

SM

Help us understand the moments that these characters go through in Ulysses, in this very ordinary day that passes, but so packed with ideas and ruminations and tiny little encounters.

JW

Well, if you begin with first three chapters... One, we have a protagonist from a Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man called Stephen. He's a young man who is sort of at the crossroads. He is not living at home anymore. He is living with friends in Martello Tower. He goes to school where he teaches, he collects money, he goes through the beach to, towards Dublin. He goes on the beach called Sandymount Strand to Dublin. And as he walks, he ruminates on experiences in Paris, his family, his fears, philosophy, famous quotation, "Am I walking to eternity on a Sandymount Strand?"

I understood the sentence for what it says. But until I went to Sandymount Strand, I understood the eternity aspect. There is this blending between sky and sea in that spot of Dublin and it does beckon eternity. So you can really almost understand the genesis of that thought in, in Stephen. There's also lots of onomatopoeic sort of sound imitating words that don't make semantic sense. They don't mean anything. But when you hear "crunch, crunch, crunch," you realize Stephen is walking on a beach. But until I walked on that beach, and I saw how many shells, seashells there are, and I heard them, I realized, "Oh, that is what, what's happening." And so, so little, little elements of writing like that, that demand us, that demand from the reader a different kind of awareness. Because nowhere in the chapter does it say that Stephen is walking on the seashells, it just says "Crunch, crunch crunch." So, so, so that's one example.

Another example would be Mr. Bloom walking about Dublin, distracting himself from a little worry that he has about what's going on in his home. But he's looking at shops, at advertisements, and at people, and he reminisces about a certain, certain object or building he would look at would remind him about something else connected to his past, and his wife's, Molly's, past. Colors will trigger a memory. Sound will trigger a memory. If he feeds birds, and is very unhappy that the birds won't even thank him. You know, little foibles... human foibles like that maybe not interesting on the first reading, but they become quite amusing, satisfying on the second, third, fourth read because they're so human. They're so tied to what we do every day when we go on a walk.

SM

You know, it is ironic that the Dubliners, which was a hit, a novel that came out before Ulysses, but the Dubliners disparaged his hometown. Yet nowadays, people flocked to Dublin to celebrate that single day portrayed in the life of a main character in the book, Ulysses, right?

JW

Well, Dubliners, the stories of Dubliners have by themselves an interesting history. Joyce has just left Dublin in 1904 when he published two stories in Dublin, and continued writing the stories

when he was in Trieste. He does not portray Dublin in any beautiful light because there was no beauty to portray. From Joyce's perspective, his family's fortunes have gone down throughout his childhood. And they lived in rather dire circumstances. Dublin itself featured lots of, well slum dwellings, where, you know, masses of people were piled upon one another in, into one, or two, or three rooms. There was squalor, there was, there was, there was... Dublin was even labeled by somebody: "Dear, dirty Dublin." Poverty, and death, and disease were rampant.

So, Joyce saw the city as a city of paralysis, as he says in one of his letters to, to, to his publisher, who would refuse to publish these stories, precisely because of the ugliness of their subject. And that ugliness would involve for instance, the fact that girls would sort of have to almost sell themselves to marry. That girl... that guys were walking the streets and, and, and exploiting young girls who did not see any good prospects for young people in Dublin, particularly young people with ambitions to be writers. There was already a Dublin scene of writing occupied by William Butler Yeats and his Irish revival friends. So he didn't see room for himself on that scene. So, Dubliner's stories are sad.

SM

So people want to go to Dublin to celebrate Bloomsday themselves. What day does that occur in 2023?

JW

Bloomsday is on June 16. So on that day when you walk around Dublin, you'll see maybe slightly strangely dressed people. They will be wearing Edwardian garb, and they will be reading fragments from Ulysses, or performing passages from Ulysses whether it's in the streets near pubs, National Library, variety of shops. So that... it's quite an exciting day. Even if the outsider does not know Ulysses, they will see that something grand and literary is happening, and it's a great cultural celebration.

SM

Jolanta Wawrzycka is a Professor of English at Radford University. With Good Reason is produced by Virginia Humanities, which acknowledges the Monacan Nation, the original people of the land and waters of our home in Charlottesville, Virginia. Our production team is Alison Quantz, Matt Darroch, Lauren Francis and Jamaal Milner. Cassandra Deering and Aviva Casto are our interns. Special thanks to Jennie Taylor for booking assistance. For the podcast, go to with good reason. radio dot org. I'm Sarah McConnell. Thanks for listening.