



EAST TENNESSEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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“Alvin, We Thought We Knew You” to be presented by Michael Birdwell, Ph.D. for ETHS Annual Meeting

(Knoxville, Tenn.) “Alvin, We Thought We Knew You” will be the topic of Dr. Michael Birdwell’s address at the annual dinner of the East Tennessee Historical Society on Tuesday, May 1, at the Foundry on World’s Fair Park. Both members and the general public are invited to attend. The event begins with a cash bar reception at 5:30 p.m., followed by the dinner, lecture, and awards presentations which begin at 6:15 p.m. Tickets are \$40 per person and include both the lecture and dinner.



“Don’t want to fight,” wrote conscientious objector Alvin C. York of Pall Mall on his draft registration. Yet after grappling with his conscience, the reluctant warrior went on to become one of the most decorated soldiers of World War I, an amazing and inspirational story captured in the film classic, *Sergeant York*. Dr. Michael Birdwell will discuss the public and private sides of the American hero, the search for the actual battlefield location, and the making of the movie and its influence on World War II.

Dr. Birdwell is the curator of the York Papers in Pall Mall, Tennessee, and has studied the life of York for more than a quarter of a century, often working directly with the family. Most recently, he was part of a team that conducted battlefield archaeology to locate the actual York battle site near Chatel-Chehery, France. Birdwell has also researched extensively into film history, with an emphasis on Tennessee films and films influenced by World War I and World War II. Dr. Birdwell is a professor of history at Tennessee Technological University, serves on the Tennessee Great War Commission, the Tennessee Preservation Trust, Sergeant York Patriotic Foundation, and chairs the state of Tennessee’s National Register Review Board.

The occasion will also feature the presentation of Awards of Excellence to organizations and individuals for special projects to preserve and promote the region’s history, these include the Teaching Excellence Award, History in the Media, Community History Award, Award of Distinction, and the Ramsey Award for Lifetime Achievement. Established in 1834, the East Tennessee Historical Society is widely acknowledged to be one of the most active history

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organizations in the state and enjoys a national reputation for excellence in programming and education.

The event will be held at the Foundry on the World's Fair Park, 747 World's Fair Park Drive, Knoxville, and is open to the public. Reservations are required and are requested by April 26. To make reservations or for additional information call 865-215-8883 or visit our website at www.eastTNhistory.org.

About the East Tennessee Historical Society

Established in 1834, the East Tennessee Historical Society has been helping East Tennesseans hold on to our unique heritage--recording the events, collecting the artifacts, and saving the stories that comprise the history we all share. The historical society pursues its education mission through publications, lectures, conferences, school programs, museum exhibits, and heritage programs such as the popular First Families of Tennessee and Civil War Families of Tennessee. The East Tennessee History Center houses the staff and programs of the East Tennessee Historical Society, the Museum of East Tennessee History, the Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection, and the Knox County Archives.

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