Alumni Spotlight: Brad Hansen

03/22/2018

Brad Hansen

Brad Hansen attended USU and earned a BA in history in 2011 and an MS in environmental history in 2013. Recipient of the J. Duncan Brite scholarship, Brad worked closely with Phil Barlow and Chris Conte. He was an Undergraduate Teaching Fellow several times and also worked at USU’s Special Collections and Archives.

After graduating in 2013, he and his wife Janelle (USU English major ’09) went looking for their next adventure. Brad, an avid fly fisher, only applied for jobs in towns with trout streams, and they happily landed in Helena, Montana, where, Brad says, “there are trout streams in every direction.” He works full time as the Grants Contracts Coordinator for the Montana Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and Janelle works for the Montana University System as a program manager for the college access program Gear Up. Brad teaches a course on Montana History at Carroll College. “My history degree continues to shape how I teach,” he says. “I borrow heavily from my experience at USU.”

This past year he also began a side business as a contract oral historian. A current project with the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation allows him to interview women who have backgrounds in ranching and agriculture. These stories are available on the Montana state website. In the summer, Brad spends his weekends as a fly fishing guide. “Over the course of a summer,” he says, “I tell the story of York from the Lewis and Clark Expedition a hundred times. At least one client each summer will ask if I ever get tired of telling it. But issues of race, equality, labor, class and environment never get tired. These issues are just as much alive today as in 1804.”

As for advice to future USU history students, Brad encourages them to consider pursuing the growing field of public history. He also encourages them to “[s]tay out of debt. Avoid student loans. Live within your means. Be generous. Spend time outdoors. Take advantage of the excellent faculty and resources available in the history department.”

This year Brad and Janelle welcomed their first child, Hanna Hansen, and Brad is excited to get her out fishing.