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A SPECIAL COLLABORATIVE ISSUE:
TEACHING PENNSYLVANIA HISTORY

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Pennsylvania History

A JOURNAL OF MID-ATLANTIC STUDIES

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Pennsylvania History presents previously unpublished works that are of interest to scholars of the Middle Atlantic region. The Journal also reviews books, exhibits, and other media dealing primarily with Pennsylvania history or that shed significant light on the state's past.

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THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED TO WILLIAM PENCAK: SCHOLAR,
COLLEAGUE, TEACHER, MENTOR, FRIEND.

On the cover: Students at Temple University's Teachers College, Philadelphia,
Sept. 1938. Philadelphia Record Photograph Collection, Historical
Society of Pennsylvania.

On the back cover: William Pencak, October 8, 1951–December 9, 2013.
Personal photograph.

FROM THE EDITOR

Tamara Gaskell

Several years ago now, Bill Pencak and I sat down to talk about how we might, as editors of *Pennsylvania History* and the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, work together on a joint issue of our journals that would serve to introduce our respective members and subscribers to our sister state history journal and promote a fruitful partnership between the state's professional organization of historians with an interest in Pennsylvania history and the largest special collections research library housing the documentary record of our commonwealth and region. These two different but complementary organizations, it seemed to us, had much to offer one another—and to each other's members. As we began to discuss the focus of such a joint enterprise, Bill quickly suggested that we focus on the teaching of Pennsylvania history—a topic that both organizations are strongly committed to promoting and facilitating and that also defined Bill's daily life and to which he was devoted. This special issue is the result of that early conversation. Sadly, Bill did not live to see the fruits of our collaboration. This issue is dedicated to his memory.

FROM THE EDITOR

Different from our usual fare, this issue includes a selection of articles that provide suggestions for teaching specific subjects or for using nontraditional methodologies in teaching Pennsylvania history to undergraduates. Many of the ideas presented here can be adapted for other topics, courses, or levels, including secondary school. In an even greater departure, a couple of the articles include supplementary materials, which we have posted online at <http://www.pa-history.org/publications/pahistory.html> and <http://hsp.org/publications/pennsylvania-magazine-of-history-biography/pmhb-january-2015>. These materials include primary sources used in the lesson described, a sample syllabus, guidelines for conducting an oral history interview, and a grading rubric. Other articles include links to online resources either for use in the classroom or for further guidance. You can access these sites directly from the online editions of these journals on JSTOR or Project MUSE or go directly to the URLs provided.

If you are a member of both organizations, or subscribe to both journals, you will receive two copies. If you don't need both to complete your library collection, please share one with a colleague or friend.

For those of you who do not teach Pennsylvania history, or do not teach at all, we hope that you will still find value in these essays. Together, they remind us of why it is important to engage students—and others—with the past. Through the study and presentation of history, we learn to empathize as we come to better appreciate the motivations and actions of people in the past as well as of the audiences we serve in the present. We learn how to evaluate evidence, construct arguments, and think critically. Perhaps most importantly, through history, we connect with our families and our communities, and even ourselves.

I believe that Bill would have been proud to share this special issue with you.

A CENTURY OF TEACHING WITH PENNSYLVANIA'S HISTORIC PLACES

Seth C. Bruggeman

Abstract: During the early twentieth century, amid growing interest in the pedagogical significance of heritage landscapes, Pennsylvanians took a leading role in demonstrating the value of teaching with historic places. A forward-looking Pennsylvania Historical Commission (the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission since 1945) and significant investments by the federally sponsored Works Progress Administration paved the way. This essay reflects on that history toward assessing the role of historic places in education today. It suggests that historic places offer important lessons beyond what they reveal about how Americans lived in the past. Most significantly, we gain new insight into Pennsylvania history by interrogating the reasons why historic sites are preserved and how their management changes over time. Several examples illustrate how challenging students with nuanced considerations of historic places encourages all of us to be mindful of persistent threats to Pennsylvania's public historical resources.

I am standing in the second-floor front parlor of the old Powel House (circa 1756), a pre-Revolutionary holdover in Philadelphia's exclusive Society Hill neighborhood. With me are a dozen shifting undergraduate students from Temple University where, this semester, I am teaching a course about the history of museums. Our guide is the executive director of the organization

that since 1931 has preserved this and several other historic buildings. The students, many of whom have never visited a house museum, or any museum for that matter, are pleased to discover that George Washington himself once stood in this very building. "But he wouldn't have seen these walls," our guide quips. The students are silent; a few grimace. Much of this room's wood paneling and ornate plasterwork, we discover, replicates original features harvested by collectors during the 1920s. In fact, if you want to see what this room really looked like, you've got to go across town to the Philadelphia Museum of Art where, remarkably, it's been on display in toto since the 1920s.¹ One incredulous student speaks for us all: "No way!"

Such is the magic of teaching with historic places. Within mere minutes, and without reading a single page, my gang of neophytes has just grappled with the complicated fact that the past is not always what it seems, that history, whether written in books or in buildings, is always constructed for us. This, of course, is not Powel House's only lesson, but it is an important one that demonstrates the power of historic places to enrich history pedagogy at all levels. It is a power that teachers of Pennsylvania history have wielded for a long time, at least since the early decades of the last century, and certainly since the dawn of the new social history, when field trips to places with spinning wheels and open hearths became rote for school kids growing up across the commonwealth, including me.

My purpose in this essay is to reflect broadly on the factors that have encouraged Pennsylvanians to make pedagogical use of historic places over time and to consider what lessons that history holds for those of us who still do so today. Our story begins during the early part of the last century amid a confluence of new ideas about history and education, a rising tide of historical preservation, and seismic shifts in the nation's economic landscape. In particular, I look to early issues of the journal *Pennsylvania History* for reports from schoolteachers about how and why they gravitated toward the commonwealth's historic places during the 1930s. From this survey I attempt to discern what it is that we can learn from historic places and how they enrich the classroom. Finally, I offer several examples here of how I use historic places in the college classroom so that others might adapt them to different settings. I hope readers will discover, as I have, that historic places can enhance learning far beyond their usual role in illustrating the past.

It is worth saying, at the outset, a few words about my own reasons for teaching with historic places. Born of the Bicentennial decade's dogged

commercialization of all things colonial, it may be that my generation is somehow predisposed to value—perhaps literally, as some have suggested, in terms of dollars and cents—historic places.² I certainly encountered my fair share growing up in south central Pennsylvania. But it wasn't until later, as an undergraduate at Penn State, that I began to appreciate how each historic site tells, as James Loewen puts it, “a tale of two eras”: one associated with the years deemed most significant in the site's history, and one about the period during which preservationists made those decisions.³ My mentors, including Bill Pencak, to whom this volume is dedicated, encouraged me to explore the years that bind those eras together. I did and have continued to do so in my research and teaching for the last two decades. Why? Because what I learned those many years ago is that historic sites reveal far more about ourselves than they possibly can about our distant pasts. Nobody ever fought to save a house simply because George Washington slept there; we fight to save fragments of the past because we see our lives somehow entwined with them. For this reason, historic sites provide fascinating insights into how Americans' attitudes toward the past have changed over time and, presumably, continue to evolve. They also prompt our students to consider why it is that historic places are worth preserving. In fact, the perilous fiscal climate that has severely limited programming at Pennsylvania's public historical places, and has, indeed, cast a pall upon the nation's heritage landscape, prompts a new kind of teachable moment, one that history teachers cannot afford to ignore.⁴

A Brief History of Teaching with Pennsylvania's Historic Places

Historians have been teaching with historic places for a long time. History reformer Lucy Maynard Salmon, for instance, argued at the beginning of the twentieth century that understanding the past has as much, if not more, to do with the banal actualities of everyday places as it does with facts and memorization. In her 1912 essay “History in a Backyard,” for instance, Salmon dismissed “the treasures of Europe” as wanting “in comparison with the wealth of the whole world that is ours . . . when claimed from the back steps.”⁵ A similar notion animated Doylestown's Henry Mercer, who, also at the turn of the century, erected his idiosyncratic museum and tile works as monuments to the didactic qualities of bygone objects and places associated with the nation's preindustrial landscape. Salmon and Mercer typified a burgeoning interest during those years in the promise of Progressive educational

reform, which, among other goals, sought to bolster American democracy by inculcating in students an appreciation for the pragmatic concerns of daily life.⁶

In time, the Progressive impulse to learn from historic places found an unwitting accomplice in the conservative impulse to preserve historic places. In Pennsylvania, as was the case throughout much of the nation after the Civil War, old white families chafed at what seemed like dire threats to their longstanding patrimony: immigrants flocking from eastern Europe and Asia, African American freedmen seeking opportunity in the North, industrial landscapes run amuck, labor violence in every quarter, and mystifying technological transformations emerging daily. And because what fortunes they once claimed had largely succumbed to the new economy, old guard Pennsylvanians looked elsewhere to assert their ownership of the past. As Roy F. Nichols put it, between 1876 and 1889 “there grew up a series of hereditary patriotic societies” whose eagerness to save bits of the past owed to the “very practical need of finding genealogical data to support their claims of descent from colonial and revolutionary ancestry.”⁷ The claims of this self-styled elite extended to historic sites such as Fort Pitt in Pittsburgh, where in 1930 the Daughters of the American Revolution erected a marker celebrating “Anglo-Saxon supremacy in the United States.”⁸

Chauvinisms notwithstanding, lobbying by Pennsylvanians from across the spectrum of historical mindedness—genealogists, educators, nascent preservationists, and all manner of amateur and professional historians—succeeded in establishing the Pennsylvania Historical Commission (PHC) in 1913 to, among other tasks, identify and protect the commonwealth’s “historic public buildings, military works [and] monuments.”⁹ Chronic underfunding and organizational flux, however, slowed the commission’s work during its early years. Appeals to private donors bound it almost exclusively to commemorative work, such as the hanging of bronze placards on boulders abutting land associated with William Penn. To make matters worse, commission appointees shifted with each gubernatorial election. Nonetheless, a few managed to stay on, including Frances Dorrance who, over thirty years, slowly encouraged the PHC away from its early filiopietism. In fact, Dorrance’s 1929 tombstone inscription survey, for which she enlisted schoolchildren across Pennsylvania, likely ranks among the commonwealth’s earliest teaching-with-historic-places initiatives.¹⁰

It was amid the instability of its first decades, too, that the PHC acquired its first historical properties, including Ambridge’s Old Economy Village

(1919), Sunbury's Fort Augusta (1920), the Conrad Weiser Homestead (1920) near Womelsdorf, and Drake's Well (1931) in Titusville. This is not to say that the commission was prepared to manage a stable of historic properties. Rather, in most cases the PHC simply propped up the work of local historical societies seeking logistical support wherever they could find it. Indeed, the PHC's hand only strengthened as it responded to calls such as from the Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies (PFHS) to encourage the teaching of Pennsylvania history in schools and universities.¹¹ How to do that, however, was not entirely clear, especially as Pennsylvania confronted the reality of a national economy in rapid decline during the early 1930s.

It was the Great Depression, in fact—or, rather, three consequences of it—that laid the groundwork in Pennsylvania for what evolved into a remarkable statewide apparatus for teaching history with historic places. First, voters responded to the economic collapse by electing a Democratic governor in 1935 who, of course, appointed a new slate of history commissioners. Among them was Frank W. Melvin, president of the PFHS. Melvin's aggressive lobbying of the state legislature generated more support for history programming in the commonwealth than ever before. Second, thanks to Melvin's advocacy, the commission managed to hire a state historian, Penn State's S. K. Stevens. Stevens, as Brent Glass notes, brought a "growing interest in the educational value of historic sites and museums."¹² It was an interest he championed in Pennsylvania throughout his thirty-five-year career. Third, and finally, the PHC received considerable support from President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal by way of the Works Progress Administration's Federal Writers Project and its Museum Extension Project (MEP).

The WPA's activities, especially, forged a link in Pennsylvania between teaching and historic places. Most visibly, it assisted with curatorial and preservation projects, such as the full-scale recreation of William Penn's Pennsbury Manor in 1939, which committed the PHC to telling "Pennsylvania's history . . . through buildings, furnishings and landscapes."¹³ But in other ways, too, the WPA connected classrooms with historic places. The MEP, for instance, managed by the WPA's Division of Women's and Professional Projects, churned out all manner of classroom teaching aids related to state history. By filling out a simple order form, teachers could purchase any of the MEP's almost thirty handmade, detailed scale models of historic Pennsylvania buildings, including the Betsy Ross House, Washington's Valley Forge headquarters, Daniel Boone's birthplace, and the Ephrata Cloister.¹⁴ Josephine Kerns, supervisor of a fifth-grade laboratory school

at East Stroudsburg State Teachers College (now East Stroudsburg University), reported that “from models of Historic Buildings in Pennsylvania made by the WPA,” students “learned to recognize those most important.”¹⁵ At a time when history education still revolved around antiquity, the commonwealth’s historic places, including some in Kerns’s students’ very own backyards, had begun to find their way into the classroom.

The intersection of progressive educational reform, historic preservation, and the New Deal’s various programs also compelled schoolteachers like Kerns to venture beyond the classroom during the 1930s. The trend is evident in the pages of *Pennsylvania History*, a scholarly journal that during those years devoted a portion of each issue to the concerns of public school teachers. Monroe County assistant county superintendent Nathan G. Meyer recommended in 1938, for instance, “that history classes visit the Pennsylvania State Museum at Harrisburg,” especially since classroom materials concerning Pennsylvania history were so scarce.¹⁶ Earl W. Dickey, an Altoona Senior High School history teacher, reported that students in his Pennsylvania history course visited “the Blair County Historical Museum, early homes of the county, old mills, industrial plants, historical markers, [and] the Old Portage Railroad.” Dickey argued, in terms that sound starkly familiar today, that field trips to historic places empowered his students to understand “such problems as confront our state in reforestation, soil conservation, slum clearance, flood control, [and] the migration of industries to other states.”¹⁷

Accounts of high school history clubs also shed light on how historic sites figured in commonwealth classrooms during the years just prior to World War II. The PHC’s involvement in Old Economy Village prompted students of Ambridge High School to form the Ambridge Local History Society in 1933. Avis Mary Custis Cauley recalled, “when we had climbed the tree said to be the descendant of one located on the site of the old octagonal powder house erected by Anthony Wayne[,] walked around and over a trench dug by soldiers of the ‘legion’ of 1792–93, and searched the plain for other evidences of legion occupation, we were all fascinated by the possibilities unfolding before us.”¹⁸ Ella Marie Schmuck, student president of East Huntingdon Township High School History Club, recounted a stunning array of activities sponsored by her organization in coordination with the school’s local history class. Schmuck and her peers sought out archeological remnants of the Braddock expedition at Dunbar’s Camp, worked with a local history professor to clear portions of Braddock’s Trail, and searched for and evidently discovered a local hunting cabin where George Washington supposedly

visited. This is to say nothing of annual daylong tours of regional historic sites—one trip included Joseph Coulon de Villiers, Sieur de Jumonville's grave, Fort Necessity, Washington's gristmill, and Christopher Gist's plantation—capped each year by a visit to the Overton Historical Museum to admire Henry Frick's birthplace.¹⁹

These examples demonstrate that the PHC and its supporters had by the middle of the twentieth century made a significant educational investment in historic places shaped by national trends and sustained by enthusiastic local demand. It was their success that prompted legislation in 1945 that reconfigured the PHC, along with the commonwealth's Archives Division and the State Museum, into the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC), which to this day exists to "preserve the Commonwealth's natural and cultural heritage as a steward, teacher and advocate for the people of Pennsylvania and the nation."²⁰ Under S. K. Stevens's leadership, the PHMC's capacity to augment teaching with historic places expanded considerably throughout the postwar years, particularly with the acquisition of new historic properties—totaling forty as of 2014—and the development of modern interpretive strategies. And, inasmuch as the PHMC sought to implement during Stevens's tenure what it learned about the educational potential of historic places during the New Deal, the commonwealth's expanding system of historic sites provided a living classroom in which students could witness examples of how Pennsylvanians lived in the past and, as Schmuck's account suggests, could infer lessons for the future.

These lessons, however, were never quite as pure as Schmuck, Dickey, and many of their successors have suggested. Celebratory visits to Henry Frick's birthplace, for instance, recall an era when learning about the commonwealth's past meant studying the accomplishments of its financiers, industrialists, and entrepreneurs, and not the anonymous throngs who made those accomplishments possible. After World War II as well, what students learned at Pennsylvania's historic sites was largely informed by the ideological underpinnings of the nation's postwar heritage landscape. The spinning wheels and costumed reenactors I recall from school field trips, for instance, typified a mingling over time at historic sites of Cold War-era consensus history with the bottom-up sensibilities of new social historians. Kids like me learned time after again how hardscrabble Pennsylvanians had prevailed together against all odds to build a better future. The ring of the blacksmith's hammer and the ever-present aroma of smoldering coals seemed to prove it.

And yet, even for children of my generation, the message just didn't square with what our parents were saying about the problems at Three Mile Island or the layoffs at Bethlehem Steel. Even by the 1990s, well after history scholarship had complicated old ideas about power and prosperity, particularly with regard to matters of race, class, and gender, historic site interpretation tended to toe the old celebratory line. A 1987 guide to the commonwealth's historic places published by the PHMC—and still in circulation, incidentally, eight years later when I bought it for John Frantz's undergraduate survey of Pennsylvania history—recalls a network of historic places still wed to the notion that the story of Pennsylvania's past is primarily a story about scientific, industrial, and military accomplishment.²¹

Nationally, however, conversations concerning the pedagogical potential of historic places had taken an important turn. Contractions in academic hiring, alongside Bicentennial fever and an expansion of the National Park Service's history corps, sent more and more university-trained social historians to work at American historic sites by the late 1970s. The consequent, and largely unprecedented, mingling of young progressive historians with old heritage landscapes spawned new methods for doing history at historic places and even a professional association, the National Council on Public History, to advance the cause.²² Evidence of the shift appeared in Pennsylvania. In 1982, for instance, the University of Pennsylvania's Philadelphia Social History Project devised its Historymobile program "to provide a portable bank of skills . . . through which people could help discover and build that history for themselves."²³ Elsewhere, as at the flood museum in Johnstown, big-dollar interpretive revisions during the 1980s attracted national attention to how historic sites could confront the complexities of Pennsylvania's industrial past, and its class anxieties, without alienating visitors.²⁴

Delivering these lessons to classrooms was another challenge entirely. The National Park Service (NPS) and the National Trust for Historic Preservation discovered, amid the push toward outcomes-based education in American schools during the late twentieth century, that teachers lacked the time and resources to take advantage of properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Beginning in 1991, therefore, the two organizations partnered to create the Teaching with Historic Places program to develop lesson plans, primarily for middle-school teachers, that bring historic sites within easier reach while providing important lessons about doing and understanding history, especially in local communities, while also doing the hard work of adapting these lessons to changing state teaching goals and standards.

Evocative of the WPA's Museum Extension Project, the program's success is evident in the awards it has received and the projects it has inspired, including Pennsylvania's own ExplorePaHistory.com.²⁵ It is this initiative, in fact, that has made the phrase "teaching with historic places" a touchstone in history education.

In many regards, the NPS and the National Trust have set the standard for teaching with historic places across the curriculum in Pennsylvania and beyond. Their work preserves the WPA's concern with community history but augments it with a more nuanced engagement with problematic pasts typical of the new social history. What's more, when expanded with service-learning projects and advanced readings, the model is applicable to college classrooms as well. It's precisely this blend of history education with community engagement and historic site interpretation that has become a bulwark of public history curricula for graduate students and, increasingly, undergraduates.²⁶ In Pennsylvania today, several models can be found, including the one here at Temple, where teaching with historic places is a staple of our public history curriculum. Elsewhere, as at Slippery Rock University, the operation of a historic site has been integrated into public history courses. Most impressive are hands-on projects such as those at Shippensburg University, where students recently grappled with the history of racial discrimination through the lens of a grassroots cemetery restoration project.²⁷

In the Classroom: Historic Sites as Evidence

Although this brief survey cannot possibly account for the myriad ways that education happens in conjunction with the commonwealth's historic places, it does shed some light on how these sites have functioned over time as educational tools. And it certainly demonstrates that their value in that capacity is determined in significant ways by the quality and quantity of local, state, and federal resources allocated for their support. But it also prompts us to ask a question of historic places that Dwight T. Pitcaithley poised nearly three decades ago: "what can be learned from them?" Field trips and museum visits are useful regardless of what information they provide about the past because they encourage students to think broadly about how and where learning can happen. But what is history's added value? I agree with Pitcaithley, who concludes that we stand to learn as much from how historic sites are "made" as we do from the history they purport to represent.²⁸ In fact, with

an eye toward teaching students how to think historically, we might better ask: what is it, exactly, that historic sites are evidence of?

The most obvious answer is that historic sites are evidence of how our ancestors lived in the past. They *show* us what happened. This was precisely the notion that inspired educators during the 1930s to embrace Pennsylvania's historic places. Historic buildings and landscapes, as one of Independence Hall's midcentury champions put it, "speak quite as eloquently as do the journals, contemporary newspapers, diaries, and correspondence preserved in manuscript or early imprints in our libraries."²⁹ They are, in other words, primary sources akin to any the historian might call upon. And with the trend toward introducing students at earlier and earlier ages to primary sources, historic sites are one of the easiest and most experiential ways to "show" students historical evidence. What's more, preservation is itself generative of historical data. During the early days of historical archeology, for instance, researchers at Fort Pitt and Fort Duquesne demonstrated how digging through the dirt could answer important questions about eighteenth-century military strategy.³⁰ The physical immediacy of historic places thus conspires alongside their evidentiary value to conjure a sense of authenticity that animates the past; it makes us feel like we're *really there*. It's exactly this conceit that has sustained costumed interpretation and other vestiges of high-order living history, especially battle reenactment, in educational programming at PHMC properties for decades.

But, as my students discover within minutes of entering Powel House, historic sites are not "real," inasmuch as we do not actually step into another time when we visit them. Rather, every historic site is the culmination of choices made over time about which facets of the past to preserve and which to ignore. These choices always reflect the particularities of the historical moment in which they are made, and so, by examining them, we discover that historic sites are also evidence of how our memory of the past has changed over time.³¹ The wealthy Philadelphians who preserved Powel House during the 1920s, for instance, did not choose, as we might today, to preserve those facets of the home, such as its kitchen or servants' garret, that would help us understand the lives of working people across categories of difference such as race and gender. They preferred, rather, to remember a discrete historical moment seemingly unsullied by the kind of social conflict that was by the 1930s evident everywhere in Philadelphia's urban milieu. Powel House, then, though evidence of life in colonial Philadelphia, also unwittingly documents the worldview of twentieth-century preservationists during Philadelphia's interwar years.

Sifting through these layers of accumulated interpretive meaning is a real challenge, especially for the underpaid skeleton crews charged with maintaining our nation's historic places. In fact, the extent to which historic site managers struggle to balance quality interpretation with facilities management and fundraising is itself evidence of the increasing difficulty inherent in sustaining public cultural resources in the United States. This third strain of evidence—what historic sites reveal about their own day-to-day management—provides crucial lessons not only for students considering careers in public history but for anyone concerned about the role of government in public life. Government funding for arts and cultural programming, including history-related activities, has been on the decline for decades. And, although there appears to be some improvement at state and local levels, overall public funding for organizations such as museums and historic sites has declined by over 30 percent during the last two decades. In Philadelphia, arts and cultural organizations receive less than 20 percent of their contributed income from public sources. For the rest, site managers rely on private gifts, corporate donations, and hard-earned grants from charitable foundations.³²

The problem with this situation, beyond its obvious threats to the material welfare of our nation's historic resources, is that the history that gets done at historic places looks more and more like it did a century ago, during the early years of the PHC. As Carolyn Kitch concludes in her recent survey of the commonwealth's industrial heritage landscape: "the future of [public history] is increasingly up to private funders." We have seen how the PHC's early reliance upon wealthy donors obligated it to celebratory commemoration. If Kitch's study is any indication, we may be in for more of the same. She demonstrates how increased demand placed upon commonwealth historic places to lure private monies has incentivized noncontroversial interpretation wherein Pennsylvania history is reduced once again to vague platitudes about heroic ancestors and industrial prowess.³³ Even more troubling, Kitch reveals how Pennsylvania's increasingly privatized heritage economy seems to have pitted a new generation of corporate factory tours and Civil War reenactments against the old "new" social history, which, for a time at least, flourished amid the PHMC's late-twentieth-century salad days. Without public support for responsible history making at commonwealth historic sites, what will Pennsylvania's next generation learn about its past? What lessons about economic, environmental, and labor history, for instance, would young people gather from sites funded by US Steel, Sunoco, and Aramark?

The question, then, is how history teachers might wrangle with these problems by incorporating the three evidentiary aspects of historic sites into classroom learning experiences. Although I've had success doing it in a variety of history classes, here I offer examples taken from *Museums and American Culture*, the undergraduate course that has elicited the most positive response from my students. I sense that students enjoy this class because it surprises them. Many who sign up do so to fill course requirements outside their majors. Some expect it to be easy, particularly given its reliance on field trips—as many as ten in some semesters. Everyone discovers early on, however, that the course is neither easy nor only about museums. Rather, *Museums and American Culture* uses museums and historic places as a lens through which to examine how what we learn about the past is often shaped for us by forces unseen. Understanding why and how that happens, I contend, empowers us to exert greater agency in a world where cultural power can be had in unexpected ways. Because my expertise lies in the history of history museums and historic sites, they become our focus. And because I agree with Salmon that every place is a historic place, we begin in our own backyard to understand how the commonwealth's past can be read in the history of its cultural institutions.

Each iteration of *Museums and American Culture* is built around a semester-long research project for which students must choose a local historic site or museum early on and “live” with it throughout the semester. By the end, if all goes well, each student will have spent considerable time at a museum or historic site not included on our field trip circuit, considered the broad sweep of its institutional history, met with at least one member of its staff, reckoned its success against standards established in class discussions, and given hard thought to what its future might hold. Although the project's themes shift from semester to semester, often to accommodate opportunities for collaboration with particular historic sites or organizations, in each case it calls upon students to identify the three strains of evidence outlined above. They must consider their site for what it tells us about the distant past; what it reveals about contests of memory over time; and what it portends for the future of cultural nonprofits in Philadelphia and beyond.

In its simplest form, this assignment yields mini-institutional histories reminiscent of those produced by organizations such as the National Park Service in conjunction with cultural resource management studies. In this model, I assign four writing assignments over the course of the semester. The first, due early on, simply requests that students identify a local history

museum or historic site that they would enjoy learning more about. Several weeks later, everyone must submit a site profile summarizing the particularities of each site's institutional history, including founding dates, founder profiles, funding histories, visitation trends, and shifts over time in administrative structure. Completing this assignment, of course, requires that the students spend time at their sites and, in most cases, make contact with staff members. A third assignment, due in the third quarter of the semester, requires that students identify their sites' stakeholders with particular attention to who has been included and excluded from shaping mission directives over time. Finally, everyone submits a long research paper, which builds upon the preceding assignments, explaining the historical origins of each site and its institutional and intellectual evolution over time and suggesting ways that each site might better serve its various stakeholders in the future while remaining solvent amid a dire funding landscape.

The ability of students to succeed with this assignment typically hinges on their willingness to engage a wide variety of course readings that I draw from history, museum studies, anthropology, and cultural studies. Keeping them motivated, however, is my job, and I've found it is vitally important to lead by example—in this case, by peppering class conversations with examples from my own research. Familiarizing everyone with the language of cultural nonprofits early on is also important. I build entire class meetings, for instance, around the meaning of “stakeholder” and “public trust,” particularly as they relate to the preservation of public historical resources. It's important, too, that we work together. On days when students submit assignments, we exchange our work with one another and consider how various historic places, and our responses to them, compare. By the end of the semester, the results can be really fantastic. I recall, for instance, a student who argued convincingly, using archived documents and site reports, that the institutional particularities of the Pennypacker Mills historic site in Schwenksville had, over time, led it to obscure Governor Pennypacker's nativist impulses and his indifference toward suffrage, in part to avoid grappling with the Colonial Revival's ideological underpinnings. Confronting the reasons why the obfuscation occurred, this student reasoned, might be the perfect way for site managers to entice new audiences and, of course, new donors.

Although casting this assignment as institutional history can yield great returns, it also risks alienating students whose interests are not necessarily aligned with museum history. One solution, especially for classes consisting

primarily of non-majors, is to reshape it around a group project tied to a particular theme. One semester, for instance, I taught a version of this course retooled for students majoring in fields related to business, marketing, and hospitality. Rather than select just any historic place, however, I requested that everyone select a site that had been included in the WPA's 1937 visitors guide to Philadelphia.³⁴ Our challenge would be to study those sites and then collectively rewrite the guide for modern audiences. The result, though admittedly mixed, lives on digitally even today. More importantly, although the assignments leading to the final project remained largely unchanged, as did the broad arc of our classroom conversations, the thematic focus allowed us to think about the development of historic site management since the 1930s through the lens of tourism, which appealed mightily to this particular cohort of students. Better yet, examining the WPA's impact on historic places in Pennsylvania during a semester, as it happened, when Pennsylvania's General Assembly announced radical reductions in funding for public schools and universities prompted hard but productive conversations about the necessity of public funding for sustaining Pennsylvania's cultural health. More than a few students, many who had never taken a history class before, left the course impassioned advocates for Pennsylvania's historic places and the power of teaching with them.

Making students into history advocates is, perhaps, the greatest outcome of teaching with historic places. It enriches their lives and can make useful contributions to those of our colleagues who manage historic sites. In this vein, I offer one final example drawn from *Museums and American Culture* wherein I partnered with a colleague, Temple's Kenneth Finkel, and Historic Germantown, a nonprofit coalition of sixteen museums and historic sites scattered throughout a portion of Philadelphia distanced from the city's usual tourist haunts by deep postwar economic and social dislocations. Our task was to consider how these sites, which have traditionally dwelled on the lives of wealthy, white Americans, might build stronger constituencies among Philadelphia's usual coterie of heritage tourists and within Germantown's predominantly working-class African American communities. I divided students into small groups and assigned each to work with a partner site throughout the semester. The highlight of the course was a "dashboard tour" of Germantown, engineered by Finkel, during which students had just seconds to answer a series of questions about each historic site we drove by during a two-hour bus tour.

The dashboard tour, designed to assess what factors encourage young people to visit historic sites, generated particularly fascinating insights, which we gathered and distilled using Twitter. We learned, for instance, that our students were most likely to visit historic places in neighborhoods that reminded them of home and that they'd pay far more for the opportunity than most sites charge. This kind of data can be useful for historic places, where identifying new audiences and planning for fiscal uncertainty has become a matter of survival. Gathering it, as I've suggested here, gives students a sense of investment in our community's historic places that they wouldn't typically garner from watching costumed reenactors spin wool and reminisce about the olden days.

Museums and American Culture represents my effort to teach with historic sites in ways that showcase, but also challenge, their value as historical evidence. I'm not always so ambitious. Although I incorporate historic sites into all of my courses, including those concerned with themes and issues more traditionally associated with Pennsylvania history, I often rely primarily on their ability to illustrate the past. I have, for instance, taken students to the Independence National Historical Park to search for material expressions of republicanism in Philadelphia's colonial architecture. We've also sought to understand the city's antebellum transformations at sites such as Eastern State Penitentiary and the Wagner Free Institute of Science. And yet, my students are never so satisfied, nor so inspired, as when we contend with the messiness of historical representation that is particularly evident at those of Philadelphia's historic sites that celebrate its Revolutionary past. These are young people, after all, who have lived the majority of their lives amid the aggressive patriotism of the post-9/11 years. For them, it is often a first opportunity to question claims about American exceptionalism without fear of reprisal. That it can happen at historic sites is a revelation.

By merit of studying these places in Philadelphia, however, a town that is itself a museum of museums, we do manage to confront an awful lot of Pennsylvania history. Even if we were to focus on historic places typically concerned with Revolutionary history—say, the Betsy Ross House, Valley Forge, and Independence Hall—the multiplying effect of Loewen's "tale of two eras" would also obligate us to understand Pennsylvania's social and political landscape during the times when Americans worked most vigorously to enshrine these places: the 1870s, the 1890s, and the 1940s.³⁵ In this sense, then, teaching with historic sites creates ample opportunities to explore facets of the commonwealth's past that often escape notice in typical Pennsylvania

history courses. Moreover, and especially for those of my students who grew up nearby, it combats the boorish notion that all Pennsylvania history is either Revolutionary or Civil War history. And it certainly still makes clear, as did Lucy Maynard Salmon and the Museum Extension Project, that there is nothing provincial about local history. Rather, teaching with historic sites encourages us away from the rigid chronologies that often alienate students whose interests are much broader. Unlike historians who, as David Glassberg observes, typically begin with a topic and then look “for the places where it happened,” the audience we’re charged with inspiring “begins with a place that it cares about and then asks, ‘What happened here?’”³⁶

But perhaps the most important outcome of teaching with historic places in nuanced ways is that we, the teachers, discover precisely how difficult it is for our colleagues who manage historic sites to do their work well. It is true that nonprofit cultural organizations charged with the stewardship of historic places are bound by law and mission prerogatives to serve their publics. But the burden of serving an uninformed public amid this era’s attack on public funding is too great for even the most established of our nation’s historic places. If the commonwealth’s historic places are to nourish our classrooms for generations to come, as they have since the early twentieth century, then we must return the favor by making advocates of our students, by joining the fight to expand public funding for the arts and humanities, and by devising partnerships that remind everyone just how fortunate we are to be inheritors of Pennsylvania’s rich and complex past.

NOTES

I am grateful to Larry Cebula, Tamara Gaskell, Mary Rizzo, and Jennifer Zwilling for connecting me with a host of useful sources. The journals’ anonymous readers helped me along, too. Hilary Iris Lowe is, as always, my first reader.

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2. Consider, for instance, Tammy Gordon’s argument that the 1976 Bicentennial celebration’s dual emphasis on patriotism and private enterprise encouraged Americans to view the past through the lens of individual profit. See *The Spirit of 1976: Commerce, Community, and the Politics of Commemoration* (Amherst, MA, 2013).

3. James W. Loewen, *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong* (New York, 2013), 21–22.
4. As of 2012, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission received less than one-tenth of a percent of the state budget. In the most recent state budget, despite a recommended 3.8 percent increase in general government support for the PHMC, the agency received a \$507,000 cut. The commonwealth did, however, make \$2 million available in grants to eligible museums during 2013–14. See <https://www.philaculture.org/groundswell/pennsylvania-state-budget-update>.
5. Lucy Maynard Salmon, “History in a Back Yard,” in *History and the Texture of Modern Life: Selected Essays*, ed. Nicholas Adams and Bonnie G. Smith (Philadelphia, 2001), 83. For more on Salmon, see <http://vcencyclopedia.vassar.edu/faculty/prominent-faculty/lucy-maynard-salmon.html>.
6. On Mercer, see Steven Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876–1926* (Chicago, 1998), 151–91.
7. Roy F. Nichols, *The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission: A History* (Harrisburg, PA, 1967), 5. For the classic treatment on the nation’s turn-of-the-century “modernity crisis,” see T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (Chicago, 1981).
8. Quoted in Brent D. Glass, “Expanding a Vision: Seventy-Five Years of Public History,” *Pennsylvania Heritage* 15, no. 1 (1989): 26. This essay is reprinted in *The Commonwealth’s Memory: A Symposium on the Occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the PHMC* (Harrisburg, PA, 1991), 1–8.
9. Nichols, *Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission*, 8.
10. *Ibid.*, 12–13. For a discussion of Dorrance as a pioneering public historian, see Glass, “Expanding a Vision,” 26, 28.
11. Nichols, *Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission*, 15.
12. Glass, “Expanding a Vision,” 28.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Curtis Miner, “‘Art with a Purpose’: Pennsylvania’s Museum Extension Project, 1935–1943,” *Pennsylvania Heritage* 34, no. 2 (2008): 14–23; Pennsylvania Works Progress Administration, “State-Wide Museum Extension Project Catalog Number Three,” Digital Archives of Broward County, Bienes Museum of the Modern Book, Pennsylvania Pamphlets and Handbooks Collection, <http://digilab.browardlibrary.org/u/?wpa,76>.
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18. Avis Mary Custis Cauley, “The High-School History Club as a Builder of Morale and Citizenship,” *Pennsylvania History* 9 (1942): 212.
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26. See, for instance, Deborah Welch, "Teaching Public History: Strategies for Undergraduate Program Development," *Public Historian* 25, no. 1 (2003): 71–82; and Elizabeth Belanger, "Public History and Liberal Learning: Making the Case for the Undergraduate Practicum Experience," *Public Historian* 34, no. 4 (2012): 30–51.
27. To learn about Slippery Rock's Old Stone House, see <http://oldstonehousepa.org/about/>. Steven B. Burg summarizes the Shippensburg project in "'From Troubled Ground to Common Ground': The Locust Grove African-American Cemetery Restoration Project: A Case Study of Service-Learning and Community History," *Public Historian* 30, no. 2 (2008): 51–82.
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29. William E. Lingelbach, "Philadelphia and the Conservation of the National Heritage," *Pennsylvania History* 20 (1953): 341.
30. Wesley L. Bliss, "The Interdependence of Archaeology and History Illustrated by Excavations at Fort Pitt and Fort Duquesne," *Pennsylvania History* 12 (1945): 73.
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33. Kitch, *Pennsylvania in Public Memory*, 173–76.
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THREE MILES, TWO CREEKS: LOCAL PENNSYLVANIA HISTORY IN THE CLASSROOM

Edward Slavishak

Abstract: This article describes an undergraduate history assignment at Susquehanna University, through which students create virtual museum exhibits on the local history of Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania. Students narrate and interpret the Penn's Creek Massacre of 1755 and the Stump Massacre of 1768. The goal is to tell a cohesive story and offer a clear viewpoint on the events while adhering to the research and design standards used by public history professionals. The historical content of the assignment emphasizes the diversity and violence of the American frontier in the decades before the Revolutionary War. The exhibition format highlights the need to think carefully about audience, voice, and storytelling, three aspects of making history that are often disregarded in student research papers. The ultimate value of the assignment is its ability to increase students' awareness of the manipulation involved in the process of historical interpretation, even as they attempt to "get it right."

Students in my Pennsylvania History course at Susquehanna University create mock museum exhibits to interpret two eighteenth-century events that occurred near present-day Selinsgrove: the Penn's Creek Massacre (October 1755) and the Stump Massacre (January 1768). The massacres, which took place on creeks three miles apart, bounding Selinsgrove to the north

and south, offer students the chance to ask what the historian Charles Joyner has called “large questions in small places.” One of those questions is about the role of grisly violence in the stories we tell ourselves about our region, state, and nation. No matter how they are told, these stories are not happy ones. The project tests students’ ability to integrate local history with larger scales of the past, all the while creating an exhibit that reaches out to the public and does not sensationalize the violence. The idea is to give students a creative way to consider local history as a practice while also identifying the global processes that produced this particular local place.¹

A small percentage of the students in the course plan on working in the field of public history, but the point is not to prepare them for their profession of choice. Rather, the goal is to use the format of the museum exhibit to bring out into the open the often hidden relationship between researchers and their audiences and underscore the concept of usable pasts. Local history has traditionally been an active site for the construction of common grounds and heritage narratives. It has also, at times, been a realm for insiders; genealogy and antiquarian studies reward an investment in a particular place. My students tend to have few links to the area being studied, and they mostly view local history as a quaint and pleasant pursuit lacking a critical edge. The discussions in and out of the classroom that help students complete the course project are ultimately about the value of local and state history in the twenty-first century.

The Course

As a cultural historian interested in work, play, and matters of space and place in the United States since the late nineteenth century, I am not the most obvious choice of instructor for a course on Pennsylvania history. As one of two Americanists in my department, however, I share responsibility for the course and teach it every two or three years. In a sense, my lack of experience with Pennsylvania as a unit of analysis has determined the style in which I approach the material. When I teach HIST 322: Pennsylvania History, the course does not operate on the coverage model. Instead, students and I follow three themes that come into focus as we move in a rough chronological fashion from the precontact period to the early twentieth century. One of those themes is the fragile nature of empire and Pennsylvania’s geographic and political role in that fragility. We focus on British, French, and Iroquoian attempts to maintain territorial power and diplomatic swagger in the face of fragmentation and encroachment.

The imperial theme, and the museum project itself, were inspired by the historian Joshua Piker's work on lying as a fundamental practice at the heart of interactions between European American officials and Native American leaders. Piker encourages historians to think about the everyday practices of empire by examining "events that are not earth-shattering but rather world-revealing." I impress upon students that, as a contested zone between overlapping systems, the land that is now Pennsylvania offers a vivid case study in the importance of temporal and geographic context. Taking Piker's point seriously means thinking of discrete events like the killings in 1755 and 1768 as moments when the ordinary and extraordinary converged, when the "mundane but potent" quickly transformed into something less prosaic and no less powerful. Local history becomes not a microcosm of regional and global systems, then, but a study of the very conditions that allowed the systems to exist in the first place.²

One of the prevailing imperial conditions was the existence of violence. Patrick Griffin makes an extreme case for the prevalence of violence on the colonial frontier, calling the woods of Pennsylvania a "world of all against all" in the years before the Revolution. Griffin might overstate the frequency with which Native Americans and European Americans lashed out at each other, but scholars have certainly demonstrated that a pervasive sense of fear and distrust characterized frontier interactions in the mid-eighteenth century. Chaotic violence formed the foundation of these strained relationships. Jane Merritt's work on the increasingly bloody nature of western Pennsylvania after 1750 emphasizes that the antagonists knew each other all too well; decades of trade, negotiation, encroachment, and cultural exchange led to clashes that were shaped by territorial aspirations. Kyle Somerville agrees, noting that the "intimate" violence between western settlers and Native Americans, characterized by ambush and scalping, can be read as a symptom of an ever-present social pressure for retaliation. The retaliation ethos grew from (and further aggravated) that "choking cloud of contention" that James Merrell finds on the southern frontier in the 1750s. In Pennsylvania, Merrell observes, settlers and Native Americans viewed each other in the kind of stark, polarized terms that led to quick confrontation as early as the 1720s.³

The main text for the course, Jeffrey Davis and Paul Douglas Newman's *Pennsylvania History: Essays and Documents*, contextualizes the violence while never suggesting that it was inevitable. Davis and Newman selected readings and wrote editorial introductions to their seventeen chapters with complexity and "hyper-diversification" in mind. The first three chapters successfully set

up my focus on the frontier by considering cultural mistranslation, forms of Native American agency, and the difference between official pronouncements and conditions “on the ground.” I devote class sessions to discussions about these readings and to mini-lectures about political, religious, and economic backgrounds, giving persistent attention to how regional trends relate to broad patterns. In the fourth week of the course, students start the museum project.⁴

Project Learning Goals

I give students the following guidelines and evaluation criteria:

Successful designs will: (1) combine panels of descriptive/interpretive text and images that could be mounted on form board; (2) tell a cohesive story about the central Susquehanna Valley in the mid-eighteenth century; (3) reveal the events according to a prescribed path through the exhibit; (4) target an adult audience (both SU & local residents) unfamiliar with either event; and (5) total sixty items, arranged to conform to the wall space and floor plan of [Susquehanna’s] Lore Degenstein Gallery.

Evaluation criteria:

- Clarity/detail of description
- Strength of scholarship
- Clarity/strength of interpretation
- Spatial “flow” of the design
- Overall narrative (*does it tell a cohesive story?*)
- Evidence from primary sources
- Selection of meaningful imagery
- Visual appeal of text layout
- Visual appeal of imagery
- Spelling, grammar, punctuation

The museum project is designed with five learning goals in mind. First, the project teaches students to demonstrate interpretive skills. In the annals of colonial American history, these violent events were commonplace in terms of causes and effects. The Penn’s Creek Massacre occurred in the third week of October 1755, when a Native American raiding party attacked Swiss and German settlers along Penn’s Creek. After killing men and capturing women and

children, the displaced Delawares soon returned across the western mountains. With over two dozen people dead or removed, the area around Penn's Creek became largely uninhabited for the next decade. The Stump Massacre (and the "affair" that followed) began in January 1768, when the German American squatter Frederick Stump killed six Native Americans in his cabin along Middle Creek and four more in their camp some ten miles away. Arrest and imprisonment in Carlisle followed, but the colony's legal process was thwarted when Cumberland County vigilantes helped Stump and his servant escape for good.

Neither event was unique; both rose from the slurry of rumor, animosity, reprisals, and government impotence that pervaded the western border of colonial Pennsylvania. Students *could* present these episodes as merely representative of local manifestations of broader developments that composed the colonial American frontier. The result might be an argument for the typicality of the central Susquehanna Valley—a claim that the area functions as a microcosm. On the other hand, students could accentuate the strategic value of the area at the time, thus heightening the meaning of sudden violence in 1755 and 1768. Interpretation, therefore, becomes the process through which students decide how to explain periodization, causation, and significance. The act of framing a museum exhibit about these events forces students to move quickly from chronicling facts to making analytical ventures that are supported by the available evidence. Even the act of labeling the events as "massacres"—or judging that one was a massacre and one was something else—raises questions of how such violence should be understood, if not condoned. The interpretive stakes are high in the project, particularly because some students are eager at first to act out a police procedural, with victims to avenge and suspects to interrogate.

Second, the project focuses directly on history as storytelling and trains students to use multiple narrative strategies as they present the past. The format of the two-by-three-foot exhibit panels, with limited space to house text and the ever-present threat that a viewer will give up and move on, pushes students to think in two ways: what do visitors need, and how can I keep them engaged as I give it to them? A great help here is students' awareness of their own experiences in museums. Although they generally remember little specific material that they have encountered in museums, they do retain strong opinions about which museums were better at presenting material. Along with an attractive visual design and the use of interactive media, the ability of museum staff to cultivate an engaging voice for its interpretive panels is crucial (Fig. 1). The student project highlights the ways in which exposition and analysis support each other.

A Reversal of Roles

The call for blood was strong within the settler community of what is now central Pennsylvania. This need for vengeance manifested in violent acts against Native Americans. Murders, rapes, massacres all occurred at the hands of settlers.

As you continue along you will learn about the Frederick Stump affair, which signaled a shift in roles between Native Americans and settlers. The balance of power had changed after the French and Indian War. The Natives were now the victims of terror and violence.

FIGURE 1: A student panel that develops an engaging voice.

Third, the exhibit requires a moderate level of primary source research. This is certainly not the main component. In an exhibit of sixty items—a collection that is already quite “busy” in a single gallery—there is not enough space to report adequately on detailed primary source research. What the project emphasizes, then, is locating and analyzing a handful of primary sources to demonstrate conclusions borrowed from secondary sources, especially those that illustrate the meanings we can make from conflicting accounts of the events. Students become well-versed in using scholars’ footnotes to track down accessible primary sources.

Fourth, the project compels students to reflect on the ethics of manipulating the past. Telling the story of these events is not a simple matter of getting the chronology straight but rather an effort in balancing accuracy and thoroughness with the students’ perceptions of what their audience “deserves.” Conceptualizing this work as a museum exhibit instead of a research paper makes students think deliberately about who would benefit from their efforts. As the education researcher Veronica Boix Mansilla has noted, history students may presume that the residents of certain geographical regions exhibit cultural patterns that barely change over the course of centuries. An area that was a colonial frontier in the eighteenth century and

remains largely rural in the early twenty-first century, for example, could be misinterpreted as intrinsically and stubbornly parochial. The vast majority of my students grew up outside of central Pennsylvania, and not a semester goes by that I do not hear the term “Pennsylvucky” used to characterize the lifestyles and worldviews of local residents. When that vague Other becomes part of the hypothetical target audience of a museum exhibit about local history, students acknowledge their own calculated packaging of the past. They ask themselves questions that address and challenge what Boix Mansilla calls “simplistic linkages between past and present.” *Would local residents be offended if we criticized their eighteenth-century “counterparts”? Are there modern-day political investments in how we explain interactions between Native Americans and colonists?* Such reflection prompts students to clarify their standards of accuracy and argument.⁵

Finally, the museum project is meant to model a process of self-assessment that is readily applicable beyond the course. In the written rationale submitted with the final panels, students must justify each decision they make with respect to sources, narrative strategies, design elements, and overall organization. I give them the following instructions:

Submit a one-page, single-spaced rationale that explains and justifies your group’s approach to the museum project. The rationale should avoid describing the events themselves and instead focus on:

A. Your interpretation of the events:

- i. How do you fit the two events together (beyond geography and chronology)?
- ii. How do you handle causes and effects?
- iii. Why should visitors care about these events now (besides being local)?

B. Your techniques to “refresh and stimulate” visitors. Be specific about:

- i. how you encourage interaction
- ii. how you convince visitors that they are in an “exploratorium” instead of a gallery
- iii. what visitors will get from your exhibit that they couldn’t get from a book

Think of your task in this project as providing the type of space for local history that Frank Oppenheimer dreamed about for science.

I adapt the physicist Frank Oppenheimer's concept of the "exploratorium" to stress that their exhibits should do what textbooks rarely attempt—teach while also "arousing latent curiosity" and encouraging viewers to see themselves in a new light. Every step toward that goal must be documented and defended. Achieving this level of intentionality is difficult at first, but students learn to keep asking themselves how they could justify their choices. The aim is that this type of reflexivity carries over into other work, especially independent research at the senior level.⁶

The Process

One month before the first draft panels are due, students complete three readings that introduce and interpret the two events. From the Davis and Newman text, they read an abridged version of Matthew C. Ward's article about the changes wrought on the Pennsylvania backcountry by the Seven Years' War. Ward argues that war prompted unlikely affiliations between backcountry settlers and the colonial authorities whom they held in low esteem. A collapse of harmonious relations between colonists and Native Americans soon followed. In particular, he notes, Indian raids such as the Penn's Creek Massacre created "traditions of violence" in an arena where "government authority had all but evaporated." These ideas suggest to students that taking a simple snapshot of the middle Susquehanna Valley in the 1750s produces a blurry image; everything was in motion. Students also read G. S. Rowe's case study of the Stump Massacre as legal history and Alden Vaughan's article about vigilante violence on the frontier before the Revolution. (Linda Ries's work on the Stump Massacre remains the definitive chronicle of the event, but I do not refer students directly to her article. I prefer them to "earn" that source by following the footnote trail.) Rowe argues that backcountry and colonial reactions to Stump's killing spree reveal the deep distrust that white settlers had in Pennsylvania's legal system and the near-impossible position in which local magistrates found themselves when they had to do Philadelphia's business in places such as Carlisle. Vaughan examines the consequences in the 1770s of the colony's "inability to maintain order" on the frontier a decade before.⁷

During the week that students read these articles, we take class trips in a university shuttle to the sites themselves. Over the course of an hour at each site, I talk about the general sequences of events, quote from official records

and correspondence, and orient students to the geographic layouts. Two things become clear during these trips. First, except for a state historical marker and two plaques erected by the county historical society (both concerning the Penn's Creek Massacre), there are no physical references to either event. This brings to mind the geographer Doreen Massey's definition of an "unspoiled" place: "it is as we have imagined it to have been in some distant past." The sites we visit seem spoiled by steel bridges, power lines, "no trespassing" signs, and barking dogs. The inaccessibility of the sites makes it difficult to imagine the homesteads in and around which the killings took place (Fig. 2). An exhibit created in Selinsgrove, in other words, would become *the* public reference point. Second, the sites that we visit are only a part of the narratives that students will eventually create. Both violent episodes occurred at multiple spots along waterways over the course of two days; no single patch of ground encompasses the "action." In this way, the creeks become key parts of the analysis; settlement followed creeks, and the violence we study here followed settlement.⁸

I divide the class into groups of three. I assign the groups myself, rather than allowing students to decide. One of the reasons for this is that I try to distribute talents evenly. Creating digital panels that are sophisticated and



Welcome to Middle Creek

FIGURE 2: A student panel that presents the reference-free Stump Massacre site.

coherent requires basic graphic design skills and familiarity with design software. Before I form the groups, then, I ask students if they consider themselves skilled at using Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, Quark, or (at least) PowerPoint. A few have used one of the first four applications, and everyone has used PowerPoint since high school. I evenly distribute the students who identify themselves as adept at any of these applications and build groups around them. This does not guarantee success, of course, but it makes it more likely that each group will manage the technical side of the project.

After reading the scholarly articles and compiling notes, audio recordings, and/or photographs from the trips, the students begin primary source research. I encourage them to start in the Pennsylvania Room of the campus library. In addition to local histories written since the mid-nineteenth century, students use this collection's *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania* and regional gazetteers. The research branches off from there to the local history collection of the Snyder County Library and the libraries and archives of the Snyder, Union, and Northumberland County historical societies. The groups decide for themselves where to go and what to use. They supplement this work with use of online versions of the *Colonial Records* volumes and Penn State's Digital Bookshelf.⁹

The group work leads to the first of three in-class workshops. For the first workshop, the groups prepare four panels of interpretive or expository material pulled from any one section of their exhibits in progress. For the second workshop, two weeks later, the groups revise the same four panels and prepare a draft of their written rationales. For the final workshop, two weeks later, the groups prepare a new series of four panels that apply the techniques they have learned over the month. Only the first of these is a true workshop, in the academic spirit of mutual exchange and debate. In that session, groups critique the work of other groups and respond to the feedback of their peers. Critiques at this stage follow four of the project criteria (clarity/detail of description, clarity/strength of interpretation, visual appeal of text layout, visual appeal of imagery). After this session, I encourage groups to turn inward and not focus on what others are doing. My goal here is to encourage different approaches in interpretation, organization, and design. The second and third workshops involve more individual consultation with the groups and classwide discussions of general principles.

For all workshops, students submit their work to me using a Moodle assignment drop box. Groups have consistently chosen to create their

panels with PowerPoint, due to their own familiarity with the application and the massive storage size of panels produced in applications such as Photoshop. I provide panel-by-panel feedback using the commenting tools within PowerPoint and by manipulating and marking up their panels in Photoshop. The former allows students to address my concerns sequentially, but it is rather time consuming for me to add dozens of comments to PowerPoint slides. The latter technique allows for easy presentation on a screen, but it requires more effort from students when they revise. I use a combination of the two reviewing methods, making sure that I do not make the revisions for the students. Rather than tell them how exactly to revise a panel about John Harris Jr., for example, I might indicate that Harris comes across as a cipher. The choice of how to flesh him out is up to them.

During the workshops and in meetings outside of class, I use three resources to get students thinking about how they package their information: the museum consultant Beverly Serrell's book on writing for exhibits, the psychologist Stephen Bitgood's work on the manipulation of human attention in museums, and a website with general museum design tips. These sources provide basic guidelines such as the number of words that should appear on a single panel, how to anticipate visitors' movement and attention with design, and how to enliven dull exposition with devices such as direct questions. Although Serrell becomes our DIY guru, students have the option of rejecting her advice if they can explain why their plans require something different. We consider best practices, then, but we agree that they might be ignored or improved.¹⁰

Two months after the initial workshop, groups submit their complete, sixty-item exhibits. I refer to these as "mock exhibits" to stress that these are meant to be complete but not final. The groups are, in effect, testing out their entire vision for the first time. By this point, students' digital files, laden with text and images, become too large for Moodle drop box limits. We exchange files via USB drives or Dropbox.com. The sheer scale of the material that I review at this stage (three hundred mock panels) means that the course takes a week's hiatus as I meet with groups individually to troubleshoot and discuss their strategies. This stage is grueling for all parties involved, but this is also when I first appreciate students' combined creativity and grunt work. Viewing the panels in sequence makes it quite clear whether the groups have mastered the organizational challenge or merely dumped material in to meet project requirements.

One week after I meet with the groups to discuss their mock exhibits and offer final tips for improvement, they formally present their projects to me in individual sessions. In twenty minutes, the groups explain the following points:

- (a) specific learning goals for visitors
- (b) interpretations of the events and how those interpretations achieve the learning goals
- (c) strategy used to link the Penn's Creek Massacre and the Stump Massacre
- (d) strategy behind the spatial flow of the exhibit
- (e) contributions to our understanding of the events

The heart of this exercise for students is to prioritize their most significant objectives and select several examples from the exhibits that illustrate their techniques. This is how I describe the intended approach:

The presentation requires you to “walk” me through the exhibit on a screen. But you should not plan to show all panels. The limited time means that you should select several focal points and use them to demonstrate your points. Treat this as if I am a museum curator and you are pitching me an exhibit design. Assume that I know what happened in 1755 and 1768.

It is at this stage that students must be conscious of how their materials work in physical space. The layout of the exhibit must conform to the shape of Susquehanna's 1,700-square-foot art gallery. They annotate a gallery floor plan to indicate how visitors move through their exhibits. Some groups have used Prezi to facilitate this movement through virtual space; another group created a miniature version of the gallery with foam board and balsa wood. All the while, students use the presentation to defend the choices they have made throughout the semester.

One week after the oral presentations of their work, students submit the final version of the project, and I begin evaluating them. I ask them to e-mail me with feedback about their group experience. Specifically, they assign themselves and their peers grades for the following:

- Ability/willingness to meet with group
- Preparation for meetings
- Contribution of ideas, strategies

Thoughtful research (reading, taking notes on, and analyzing secondary and primary sources)

Significant “discoveries” (*what did this person bring to the table?*)

Quality of panel work (*did this person’s material have to be heavily edited?*)

Contribution of constructive criticism

Leading the group when needed

I look for patterns in the student feedback, focusing on the positives more than the negatives. If two group members remark that the third member performed wonderfully and led the group effectively, then I award that individual several additional points at the end of the tallying. This is admittedly fuzzy, but it corresponds to how disproportionate the praise is for any given student. If all members applaud everyone in the group, I reckon that the final product benefitted from such group excellence and therefore award no bonus points. I tend to know ahead of time when individual students have not been working well with the group, and their individual weaknesses are usually reflected in the unaltered final score.

My grading rubric is composed of the original evaluation criteria, each graded on a one-to-five scale, with an additional section addressing the oral presentation’s five criteria. I weight the oral presentation elements as 20 percent of the total grade. The end of the three-month process comes when I e-mail the students a PDF of their evaluation sheet with my handwritten comments about each element.

Conclusions

Student evaluations of the project show a few expected patterns. First, many comments praising or criticizing the assignment refer to the dynamics of the group in question. Collaborative work has been characterized by education researchers as one of the “most emotionally charged areas of a student’s life.” Dissatisfaction and resentment arise when the collective workload is not distributed evenly, when constructive criticism within a group is unilateral, and when members betray their lack of commitment by missing meetings or deadlines. In a project that demands technical, interpretive, and artistic skills, some students do not—or perceive that they do not—have much to offer to the group.¹¹ This can result in an unhelpful reticence despite a sincere commitment to the work. Students’ negative evaluations of the project, then,

tend to comment on the nature of collaboration (as one noted, “group work is frustrating”). On the other hand, students who enjoyed energetic, supportive groups echoed one respondent who wrote, “My group members also did a great job of explaining questions I had and helping me understand the relevance of the project and the material to the class.”

Excluding complaints about collaborative work itself, the most frequent critique of the project involves its narrow focus. Approximately one in five students have expressed the thought that limiting the scope of the exhibit to two local events also limited them creatively or analytically. A few local students who recalled their high school state history lessons had reservations about focusing on events that were “clear from the start.” Others noted that they were not particularly interested in the history of the area, so studying it for three months felt oppressive. History students at Susquehanna are used to choosing their own research topics, and some struggled to engage with material that would never have made their wish lists. One student was explicit about this, suggesting, “Maybe if we could have picked our own topic, I would have liked it better.”

A final student comment has led me to specific plans about how I will address these experiences in the future. One evaluator observed that the museum work “felt like we were doing a project that had a purpose besides making us work with material.” This appeared in a section of my course evaluation form that asks students to list a course element that was least helpful in learning about the past and briefly explain why. I agree with the student’s impression of the project’s intentions, even if I judge the value of that ulterior motive much differently. I plan to be more explicit in the next go-round about the pedagogical underpinnings of the project. Whether they liked the project or not, students tended to see the exhibit work primarily as training for the museum field. The future classroom teachers, lawyers, and civil servants in the course thought they gained experience at something they would never have to do again. I plan to devote two more class sessions to the project (bringing the total to ten out of forty-two) that will consider readings on the role of museums in popular understandings of the past and on the portability of the interpretive methods they learn while working on the exhibit.

Although I do not intend to let students choose their own topics in the future, I will provide them with a short menu of options. A smaller exhibit (of thirty to forty panels) with more variety between the groups will decrease the isolation that the groups might have felt as they worked out of sight of

each other. If five groups focus on local history topics that are all based in the same era (say, 1750–1800), they will be able to help each other instead of compete. They will also produce five group contributions that can be revised, pared down, and then combined into one master exhibit. This has interesting potential; I will encourage groups to work on their own material while thinking about how it can be incorporated into the whole. Finally, this simultaneous expansion of the scope and reduction of the scale will make room for aspects of local history that do not revolve around violence and struggle. The project as conducted thus far has shied away from the celebratory mode of some local history, but in doing so it has neglected much evidence of cooperation, exchange, and even happiness to be found in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania.

As for managing group work more effectively, I intend to up the ante somewhat by connecting the project to two initiatives that are growing on our campus and in the surrounding community. The faculty at Susquehanna University has committed itself to various styles of experiential learning, particularly service learning. Through our Office of Civic Engagement, students and faculty receive training in how to design and execute academic projects that leave the classroom to collaborate with community institutions. When I run the museum project again, I will connect the class with the staff of Selinsgrove Projects, Inc. (SPI), a local nonprofit group that is working to improve the town's heritage tourism profile. Recent internships conducted by history majors with SPI demonstrate that there is ample work to be done in background research on the local area and the development of public history resources. I intend to bring SPI staff into the classroom and take students to SPI gatherings in town. This is a risky tactic to use with respect to the dynamics of group work, but I think that speaking early and regularly about the connection between the course and SPI (and adding formal language into the syllabus about students' role as university ambassadors) will compel students to commit to the project or abandon ship.

A final insight that has emerged from students' choice of interpretive strategies is that the Davis and Newman collection has tangible effects on student understanding of colonial complexity. The authors' hope that readers of *Pennsylvania History: Essays and Documents* will think in terms of intersections, overlaps, and debates seems to have been fulfilled. The richness of students' explanations of causes and effects has been rewarding to see. This manifests itself most in the "bridges" that the groups have made to link two events that were located closely to each other yet occurred thirteen years apart (Fig. 3). From reading the essays on Pennsylvania's past, students learn

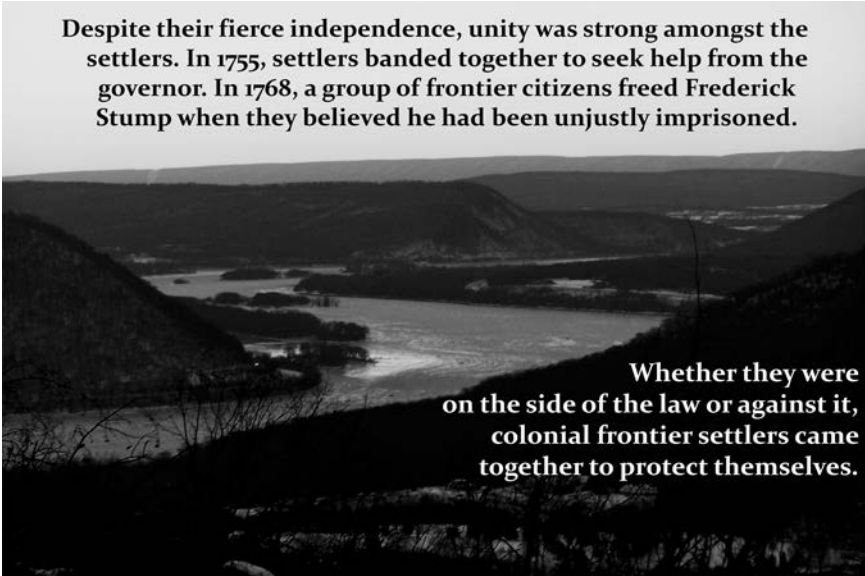


FIGURE 3: A student panel that “bridges” the two events.

that thirteen years was more than enough time for the local world to change several times over. Watching students as they find ways to position these lives altered (and lives ended) within the larger spectacle of colonial history has been illuminating.

By synthesizing primary and secondary sources while promoting close attention to the shifting meanings of place, the museum project has been an effective way to highlight the role of violence in threatening or supporting imperial power relations. Presenting the past to a hypothetical public audience has pushed students to think about the differences between two versions of the local: the eighteenth-century local, an area caught between contrasting cultural systems, and the present-day local, whose larger significance is more difficult to conceptualize. Today’s central Pennsylvania might seem peripheral to the urban power centers along the Eastern Seaboard or to the postindustrial belt to the west, but marginality is always a matter of perspective. The frontier of the eighteenth century seemed like a remote fringe when viewed from Philadelphia, but it was central to the lives of both Native Americans and European American settlers. Therein lies a final benefit of this project: it brings the political entity of Pennsylvania into focus while diverting students’ attention from

Philadelphia. Their exhibits have avoided equating Pennsylvania with its colonial capital, and that achievement is partially due to the presence of their phantom audience. As they ask their large questions of this small patch of ground, they come to understand that even small places contain worlds of their own.

NOTES

1. Charles Joyner, "From Here to There and Back Again: Adventures of a Southern Historian," in *Shapers of Southern History: Autobiographical Reflections*, ed. John B. Boles (Athens, GA, 2004), 153. For the approach to the global/local connection that I emphasize in the project, see Doreen Massey, "Places and Their Pasts," *History Workshop Journal* 39 (1995): 182–92.
2. Joshua Piker, "Lying Together: The Imperial Implications of Cross-Cultural Untruths," *American Historical Review* 116 (2011): 964–86.
3. Patrick Griffin, *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier* (New York, 2007), 4; Jane T. Merritt, *At the Crossroads: Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700–1763* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2003), 170; Kyle Somerville, "A Case Study in Frontier Warfare: Racial Violence, Revenge, and the Ambush at Fort Laurens, Ohio," *Journal of Contemporary Anthropology* 2 (2011): 97–98; James H. Merrell, *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1989), 182; James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York, 1999), 166.
4. Jeffrey A. Davis and Paul Douglas Newman, *Pennsylvania History: Essays and Documents* (Upper Saddle River, NJ, 2010). Two other course readings that provide models for presenting discord are Michael Zuckerman, "Authority in Early America: The Decay of Deference on the Provincial Periphery," *Early American Studies* 1, no. 2 (2003): 1–29, and Terry Bouton, "A Road Closed: Rural Insurgency in Post-Independence Pennsylvania," *Journal of American History* 87 (2000): 855–87.
5. Veronica Boix Mansilla, "Historical Understanding: Beyond the Past and into the Present," in *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives*, ed. Peter N. Stearns, Peter Seixas, and Sam Wineburg (New York, 2000), 391.
6. Frank Oppenheimer, "Rational for a Science Museum," *Curator: The Museum Journal* 11 (1968): 206–9.
7. Matthew C. Ward, "The 'Peaceable Kingdom' Destroyed: The Seven Years' War and the Transformation of the Pennsylvania Backcountry," *Pennsylvania History* 74 (2007): 247–79, quoted passages from Davis and Newman, *Pennsylvania History: Essays and Documents*, 84; G. S. Rowe, "The Frederick Stump Affair, 1768, and Its Challenge to Legal Historians of Early Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania History* 49 (1982): 259–88; Alden T. Vaughan, "Frontier Banditti and the Indians: The Paxton Boys' Legacy, 1763–1775," *Pennsylvania History* 51 (1984): 1–29; Linda A. Ries, "'The Rage of Opposing Government': The Stump Affair of 1768," *Cumberland County History* 1, no. 1 (1984): 21–45.
8. Massey, "Places and Their Pasts," 183.

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9. *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania*, 16 vols. (Harrisburg, PA 1838–53), <https://www.archives.org>; <http://www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/digital/digitalbookshelf.html>.
10. Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach* (Walnut Creek, CA, 1996); Stephen Bitgood, “The Role of Attention in Designing Effective Interpretive Labels,” *Journal of Interpretation Research* 5, no. 2 (2000): 31–45; Maria Lorena Lehman’s Sensing Architecture website, <http://sensingarchitecture.com/1713/top-10-tips-to-great-museum-exhibit-design/>.
11. Tom Burns and Sandra Sinfield, *Essential Study Skills: The Complete Guide to Success at University*, 3rd ed. (London, 2012), 118.

PENNSYLVANIA'S PAST FROM A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE: ORAL HISTORY

Mary Carroll Johansen

Abstract: An oral history project as part of a course on the history of Pennsylvania offers students an opportunity to connect to the history of their communities, make tangible the topics that we study in class, and provide documentation of a person, place, event, or community that might otherwise be lost. To be successful, students need to learn how to research their topic, work with recording equipment, conduct a pre-interview, structure an interview, ask open and closed questions, and transcribe an interview. While a challenging and time-consuming assignment, the oral history project is often the aspect of the course that students find most rewarding, as it offers them an opportunity to record a family member's story, to learn about an aspect of local history, or to make a contribution to the history of a neighborhood or organization. Reviewing my students' work is also one of my favorite aspects of the course; it gives me added insight into the lives of the people of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the recent history of the state. Supplemental resources are posted on the journals' web pages.

Each fall, students in my History of Pennsylvania course at Holy Family University complete an oral history research project in which they conduct and record an oral history interview, transcribe it, and research and write a related research paper. Student may choose any topic related to Pennsylvania history,

and their studies have ranged from neighborhood histories to education, holiday celebrations and traditions, the impact of national events—wars, economic crises, the civil rights movement, etc.—on local communities or individuals, employment, and community organizations such as churches and volunteer groups. The project offers students an opportunity to connect to the history of their communities, make tangible the topics that we study in the course throughout the semester, and provide documentation of a person, place, event, or community that might otherwise be lost.¹

The project is a challenging one for students, particularly because of the time involved. Among the hurdles students encounter are potential subjects who decline, unfamiliarity with recording equipment, the tedium of transcribing the interview, and, especially for those researching very local topics, the challenge of finding sources for their research papers. Nevertheless, with the perspective of hindsight, students—especially those who have interviewed relatives—have often said the project was the most rewarding aspect of the class for them.

While the oral history project is an important assignment, it is just one part of the History of Pennsylvania class I teach. Its textbook is Randall M. Miller and William Pencak's edited volume, *Pennsylvania: A History of the Commonwealth*, which looks at Pennsylvania history from two perspectives: the first half of the textbook provides an interpretive narrative, while the second half considers how different approaches to history, from archaeology to folklore to art to oral history, can enhance our understanding of the commonwealth. I intersperse these chapters with study of the chronological history of the state, employing a combination of lecture, discussion, and analysis of primary source materials. Through their oral history projects, students enjoy the opportunity to learn more about the experiences of an older family member or friend while also researching the effects of war or economic crisis, recording the history of a neighborhood or civic association, or chronicling traditional ethnic or religious celebrations.²

Oral history differs from storytelling because of the protocols to which historians adhere. These include, according to a recent oral history manual edited by Barbara W. Sommer and Mary Kay Quinlan, sponsored by the American Association for State and Local History, "a structured, well-researched interview format," "a controlled, recorded interview setting," "collection of first-hand information," "probing follow-up questions that seek depth and detail," and "attention to copyright and other legal and

ethical issues”—which entails meticulous processing of the recording and the transcript of the interview and ensuring access to them. Above all, “careful planning and objective inquiry” are keys to good oral history.³

Miller and Pencak’s textbook includes a chapter on oral history by Linda Shopes, a former Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission historian and past president of the Oral History Association.⁴ The association also has a pamphlet on classroom projects using oral history, available through online booksellers.⁵ Approximately five weeks into the semester, I assign Shopes’s chapter for reading, and we spend one or two classes (depending on whether the course is meeting once or twice a week that semester) addressing the process of oral history.

To introduce students to oral history, I begin by playing an excerpt from Charles Hardy’s radio series *I Remember When* that focuses on the romances and courtships of women from immigrant families who married as teenagers in post–World War I Philadelphia. Students quickly grasp the similarities and differences between their own experiences and those of these women, who were making lifelong commitments to marriage and family when many were younger than most students in the classroom. The openness and enthusiasm of the narrators also reveal to students how much they may learn from and enjoy the process of oral history.⁶

In preparing students to become interviewers, I encourage them to think about the information they will seek to gather and the kinds of questions oral historians ask. Oral historians use a combination of closed and open questions in their interviews; closed questions ask for specific information, such as the narrator’s name and age, where the narrator has lived, or the connection the narrator has to a community organization, while open-ended questions do not have specific answers and allow the narrator not only to provide information but to describe experiences and express opinions and feelings. Examples of the latter might be: How has a neighborhood changed over a period of years? Why did the speaker choose to enter a particular profession? What role did a church play in the local community? To encourage students to think about the difference between closed and open questions, we watch excerpts from Tom Brokaw’s documentary *The Greatest Generation* to determine which kinds of questions he used. We also watch excerpts from the documentary film *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*, which does not include the interviewers’ questions, and brainstorm about the inquiries that might have elicited the narrators’ answers. Another film that may be useful is *The Bombing of Osage Avenue*, a documentary about the 1985 MOVE confrontation.⁷

An important topic of our discussion is the etiquette of the interview. Interviewers should be careful not to rush the speaker, to avoid leading questions, to allow the speaker to tell his or her own story without contradiction or comment, to refrain from turning the interview into an opportunity to swap stories, and, above all, to be respectful of the person interviewed. The interview is the story of the speaker; an interviewer may privately disagree with the point of view of the respondent, but he or she must respect the narrator's beliefs and allow him or her to communicate them. Student interviewers sometimes say they must bite their tongues, but they do try to remember that the story and the point of view belong to the respondent.

We speak, also, about the structure of the interview. Interviews should begin with closed questions, then move on to questions that are more open ended. But students must also consider how the topics they wish to cover may influence the structure of the interview. An interview focusing on how the qualifications for and demands of a particular field of employment have changed over time, for example, will probably move chronologically, whereas an interview about how a person's ethnic heritage has shaped his or her celebration of holidays will likely be topically focused.

We also discuss the release form that students must have their narrators sign and submit with the final project. The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission has a sample release form on its website; other sample forms are available in Sommer and Quinlan's *Oral History Manual*. I include a sample release form on the course syllabus and on our Blackboard course system (see supplementary materials posted online). The release form is necessary because only by signing such a form does the narrator grant permission for others to hear the recording, view the transcript, or use the interview.⁸

As students think about the questions they will ask in their interviews, I guide them toward several helpful resources. The Library of Congress has published an outline that may be useful for interviewing veterans of the armed forces on its website as part of its Veterans History Project. Carl Oblinger, who led an oral history project for the state of Pennsylvania, provides examples of questions that can be used to prompt discussion about local history, ethnic history, and family life in his guidebook, *Interviewing the People of Pennsylvania*.⁹

We address, as well, what may be the most time-consuming aspect of the project: transcribing the interview. There is disagreement within the oral history community about the utility of transcription; it does provide easy accessibility, and it is a hedge against changing recording formats, but, as Linda Shopes has written, "transcribing strips oral history of the oral," so the reader

loses “the nuances of embodied expression, paralinguistic cues to meaning, the interpersonal dynamic that occurs when two people talk face to face.”¹⁰ It is also difficult to do well. The Minnesota Historical Society’s website provides an excellent guide to transcription that addresses how to deal with false starts in sentences, filler sounds such as “uh” and “ah,” the ambient noise of a household, and a host of other situations.¹¹ I have not required students to transcribe the entire interview if it is lengthy, but I stipulate that they must transcribe about twenty to twenty-five minutes of it, indicating breaks in the transcription with ellipses. I warn students repeatedly throughout the semester not to leave the transcription to the last minute, as it will take a lot of time.

We also discuss the brief (five-to-six-page) research paper in which students must investigate a topic related to the focus of the interview. For example, if a student interviews a person about his or her recollections of a neighborhood in the 1950s and 1960s, the paper might provide an extended history of the neighborhood, from its development to the present. If the interview is with a Vietnam veteran, the paper could set his experiences within the context of other soldiers in that war. If the interview focuses on one person’s participation in the civil rights movement in Pennsylvania, the paper could discuss the history of the civil rights movement in the commonwealth more broadly. I encourage students to work on researching and writing the paper before they do the interview, as the research process will give them a better understanding of the topic and allow them to prepare better questions before and to follow up more appropriately during the interview.

I emphasize that the paper is not a reflection about—nor is it a summary of—the interview. It is a research paper, based on primary and secondary sources. Students must use at least two sources in addition to their textbooks. No more than one secondary source may be from the Internet, and any Internet sources must be from .gov, .org, .edu, or a few approved .com websites; students may not use other .com websites, except with special permission.¹²

Students most often choose to do neighborhood studies, though they often find such local studies among the most challenging topics to research. Because most of my students live in and around Philadelphia, several histories of the city have been useful, including those by Sam Bass Warner, Dennis Clark, Russell Weigley (editor), Jean Seder, Harry Silcox, and August Tarrier.¹³ The Arcadia Press books cover specific Philadelphia neighborhoods, such as the Lower Northeast, Frankford, Bridesburg, and Tacony, but they contain far more pictures than descriptive and analytical content.¹⁴ Local historical societies, both in the city and elsewhere, often have private publications, clippings

files, and knowledgeable local historians. In Philadelphia, the Northeast Philadelphia History Network, Historic Germantown, the East Falls Historical Society, and the Southwark Historical Society are among many organizations chronicling the city's neighborhoods.¹⁵ The Historical Society of Pennsylvania has extensive local history collections and collections of immigrant and ethnic history, as well as digital collections online.¹⁶ Information about smaller repositories of local history in the Philadelphia region can be uncovered through the Hidden Collections Initiative for Small Pennsylvania Repositories project web page on the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries site.¹⁷ For western Pennsylvania, the online site Historic Pittsburgh serves as a clearinghouse for resources on local history found at several universities, libraries, and historical societies, while the Harrisburg area is home to the Historical Society of Dauphin County. Other historical societies throughout the state may be contacted through the index listed on the Pennsylvania Genealogical & Historical Research website, as well as through the Pennsylvania Department of Education's website.¹⁸

Publications based on oral histories can help students think about topics that can be explored using oral history methods and can also be used to set students' interviews within a larger context. Good examples are the works of John Bodner et al. and Matthew S. Magda on western Pennsylvania and studies by Walter Licht, Thomas Dublin, and Kenneth Wolensky et al. on the disappearances of the coal and women's garment industries from northeastern Pennsylvania.¹⁹ Brian Lockman and Joseph Rishel have published compilations of World War II veterans' interviews. Notably, Rishel interviewed both soldiers and civilians, including some respondents who were children during the war.²⁰ The Oral History Project of the Vietnam Archive of The Vietnam Center and Archive includes some interviews of veterans from Pennsylvania. The Veterans History Project of the Library of Congress includes oral interviews with veterans of all American wars of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.²¹

Finally, we discuss how to choose a person to be interviewed and the protocol for conducting the interview. Students must interview someone who is at least one generation older than they are and a Pennsylvanian by birth or residency. The interview must be on a topic about which the narrator has first-hand knowledge so that he or she can serve as a primary source. The interviewee may be a family member, a friend, a co-worker, or someone from our university. Students must begin by doing a pre-interview with the subject that covers the topics to be addressed in the interview. This step is crucial in establishing what will be discussed in the recorded interview; more than once I have heard

recordings submitted by students who failed to do a pre-interview in which the narrator repeatedly answers “I don’t know anything about that.” Such lack of preparation makes for a brief, uninformative interview and a low grade.

The project has many due dates, spread throughout the semester. The week after we discuss how to do oral history in class, students must submit the name of the person to be interviewed and the topic on which their interview will focus. The following week, which is seven weeks into the semester, students must submit a preliminary bibliography for the research paper. By the next week, students must have completed the pre-interview and submit a one-page interview outline.

The outline provides me an opportunity to help students make sure they are asking closed and open questions appropriately, are focusing the interview around a manageable number of topics, and are considering how to follow up on the answers they hear, although I also caution students against scripting themselves too tightly; a list of topics to discuss may be better than a list of specific questions, as the topical approach may encourage the interviewer to listen more attentively to the speaker’s story and thereby ask better follow-up questions. Students e-mail me the interview outline so that I may quickly comment and advise without having to wait until the next class to return it to them. I urge students to refrain from conducting the interview until I have had a chance to review the outline, but they do not always heed my advice.

Four weeks later, students e-mail me a thesis statement for the research paper, which I help them refine. At this point, students have three weeks to work on the project.

On the last day of class, students must submit the completed project, which has five components: a five-to-six-page research paper; a five-to-six-page interview transcript; a release form; a bibliography of sources used; and an audiotape, CD, flash drive, or recording device of the interview with the student’s name attached to it. Then comes my challenging, though enjoyable, task—evaluating the projects.

I use a detailed rubric for the grading to assess the organization and comprehensiveness of the interview, the accuracy of the transcript, and the quality and thoroughness of the research and research paper (see supplemental materials online). Students like it because it allows them to earn points throughout the project for submitting the topic on time, preparing a preliminary bibliography, etc., providing them with some reassurance that they are making progress; I like the rubric because it speeds up the grading significantly. Nonetheless, it is impossible to go swiftly through the interview recordings. Over the years, I have acquired a collection of listening devices

for these recordings, including tape recorders adapted to standard-sized and mini cassettes, and VCR, DVD, and CD players; other recordings are playable only on Apple or Windows computer systems. Some students have provided a video, as well as an audio, recording, but most include just an audio recording.²² Regardless of the format, listening to the recordings to check for transcript accuracy is time consuming, but also fun. I have learned much about Pennsylvania's local history by listening to the narrators' stories.

One question that has arisen in recent years is whether oral history research is subject to oversight by Institutional Review Boards (IRBs). Must oral historians submit their research agendas and interview questions for prior approval by university IRBs? In 2003, the US Office for Human Research Protection, a section of the Department of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with the American Historical Association and the Oral History Association, determined that "oral history interviewing activities, in general, are not designed to contribute to generalizable knowledge and therefore do not involve research as defined by Department of Health and Human Services regulations at 45 C.F.R. 46.102(d) and do not need to be reviewed by an institutional review board." Health and Human Services defines research that falls under IRB guidelines as "a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge." The Oral History Association defines oral history as "a method of gathering and preserving historical information through recorded interviews with participants in past events and ways of life." According to the Oral History Association, it is because the information gleaned through interviews is not "generalizable knowledge" that Health and Human Services excluded oral history from IRB review. Instead, as the association points out, those selected for oral history interviews have been chosen "because of their often unique relationship to the topic at hand. Open-ended questions are tailored to the experiences of the individual narrator. Although interviews are guided by professional protocols, the way any individual interview unfolds simply cannot be predicted" in the way that a written questionnaire can be standardized and controlled.²³

Although Health and Human Services has determined that oral histories need not be subject to IRBs, many universities do require review by an IRB before commencement of an oral history project. For this reason, it is best to contact your university's IRB to determine its requirements. The Oral History Association has information about IRBs on its website, including a helpful essay by former president Linda Shopes that suggests strategies for working with IRBs.²⁴

Because oral histories should be made publicly available, when I started using oral history to teach Pennsylvania history, I contacted the Urban Archives Oral History Collection at Temple University to ask if the archive would accept my students' work. Temple has agreed to accept the recordings and transcripts related to the history of the city of Philadelphia; I have not yet persuaded any of my students, however, to release their recordings to them. This is in part because students do not wish to transcribe the entire interview, as Temple requests, and in part because their families and friends prefer to keep the recordings out of a public archive. Still, there is some personal value in these oral history projects for the students, their families, and various constituencies, such as the volunteer fire department that one student profiled or the local historical society whose president another student interviewed.

Former students from years past have written touching letters to me about their interviews of their grandparents; after their family members passed away, they appreciated having the tangible artifact of their stories and voices. On course evaluations, students have noted that they "liked conducting the research because it was an interesting way to gain knowledge on a particular subject instead of just writing a research paper." One student commented about having "gained skills in interviewing, particularly by having to prepare good questions." They have commented, too, that the project is a lot of work, particularly the research—if they have studied a narrow topic such as the history of a neighborhood—and the transcription, but that overall they enjoyed the experience.

I have really enjoyed the oral history projects as well. As a nonnative of Pennsylvania, I have learned much about the informal history of the commonwealth: the ambience of Philadelphia neighborhoods from Tacony to South Philadelphia, the enduring ethnic traditions, the importance of unique events such as the Mummers' parade, and the strong, visceral reactions that inhabitants still have to people such as Frank Rizzo and events such as the MOVE tragedy. Every semester, I learn from my students as much as they learn from me.

NOTES

1. My assignment is based on one developed by Dr. Karl E. Campbell, associate professor of history at Appalachian State University, for his History of North Carolina course.
2. Randall M. Miller and William Pencak, eds., *Pennsylvania: A History of the Commonwealth* (University Park, PA, 2002). A sample syllabus for my class and other resources can be found with this article's supplementary materials, found online at <http://hsp.org/publications/pennsylvania-magazine-of-history-biography/pmhb-january-2015> and at <http://www.pa-history.org/>

- publications/pahistory. html. Digital Commons includes a syllabus for a course focused on the topic of oral history; see Barbara Allen, "History 650 Syllabus, Spring 2012," All Oral Histories, paper 18, <http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/histdeptohall/18>.
3. Barbara W. Sommer and Mary Kay Quinlan, *The Oral History Manual*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD, 2009), 1, 3.
4. Linda Shopes, "Oral History," in Miller and Pencak, *Pennsylvania*, 553–74. In addition to the chapter by Shopes and Sommer and Quinlan's *Oral History Manual*, other useful guides to oral history include Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*, 2nd ed. (New York, 2003); Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2nd ed. (Walnut Creek, CA, 2005); Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers, and Rebecca Sharpless, eds., *Handbook of Oral History*, paperback ed. (Lanham, MD, 2008); Charlton, Myers, and Sharpless, eds., *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology* (Lanham, MD, 2007); Charlton, Myers, and Sharpless, eds., *Thinking about Oral History: Theories and Applications* (Lanham, MD, 2007).
5. Marjorie L. McLellan, introduction to *Oral History Projects in Your Classroom*, by Linda P. Wood (Carlisle, PA, 2001), part of the Oral History Association pamphlet series; information about oral history projects, technology, best practices, and getting started is available on the Oral History Association website, <http://www.oralhistory.org/>.
6. "The Heart is an Involuntary Muscle," *I Remember When: Times Gone But Not Forgotten*, produced by Charles Hardy III, aired Jan. 11, 1983, WUHY 91.1 FM, Public Radio in Philadelphia, <http://www.talkinghistory.org/hardy.html>. Six other shows from the series are also available at the website, as are five programs from *Goin' North: Tales of the Great Migration*, produced by Charles Hardy III, aired 1984, WHYY 90.9 FM, Public Radio in Philadelphia. Hardy discusses his experiences with these projects in Charles Hardy III, "A People's History of Industrial Philadelphia: Reflections on Community Oral History Projects and the Uses of the Past," *Oral History Review* 33, no. 1 (2006): 1–32.
7. *The Greatest Generation with Tom Brokaw*, produced by Tom Brokaw (Timeless Media Group, 2005), 390 min.; *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*, directed by Connie Field (1981; Direct Cinema Ltd., 1999), 65 min.; *The Bombing of Osage Avenue*, produced by Louis Massiah, written by Toni Cade Bambara (Scribe Video Center, 1986), 58 min. Scribe Video has additional documentaries of the Philadelphia area created through its Precious Places Project available for purchase at <http://scribe.org/about/preciousplaces>.
8. "Oral History Deed of Gift Agreement and Copyright Release," Oral History Resources, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/oral_history/4351; Sommer and Quinlan, *Oral History Manual*, 84–85, 14.
9. Veterans History Project, Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/vets/>; Carl D. Oblinger, *Interviewing the People of Pennsylvania: A Conceptual Guide to Oral History* (Harrisburg, PA, 1981).
10. For discussion of the utility of transcription, see Linda Shopes, "Transcribing Oral History in the Digital Age," *Oral History in the Digital Age*, <http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/2012/06/transcribing-oral-history-in-the-digital-age/>; Elinor A. Maze, "The Uneasy Page: Transcribing and Editing Oral History," in Charlton, Myers, and Sharpless, *Handbook of Oral History*, 237–39.
11. The Minnesota Historical Society's Oral History Office has a comprehensive guide to oral history on its website, including interview tips and suggested questions, as well as two PDF files, "Oral History Project Guidelines" (2001) and "Transcribing, Editing, and Processing Guidelines"

- (2001); see “Oral History,” Minnesota Historical Society, <http://www.mnhs.org/people/mnng/stories/oralhistory.htm>. Baylor University’s Institute for Oral History also provides excellent, step-by-step information; <http://www.baylor.edu/oralhistory/>.
12. For example, an acceptable site is “Stories from PA History,” which details information from the state’s Historical Marker Program; ExplorePAHistory.com, <http://explorepahistory.com/stories.php>. Linda Shopes’s essay in Miller and Pencak includes a bibliography of sources based on oral history, including Mildred Allen Beik, *The Miners of Windber: The Struggles of New Immigrants for Unionization, 1890s–1930s* (University Park, PA, 1996); John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington, IN, 1985); Thomas Dublin, *When the Mines Closed: Stories of Struggles in Hard Times*, photographs by George Harvan (Ithaca, NY, 1998); Peter Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way: Southern Blacks’ Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916–30* (Urbana, IL, 1987); *Struggles in Steel: The Fight for Equal Opportunity*, produced by Raymond Henderson and Tony Buba (California Newsreel, 1996), 58 min.; Judith Modell, *A Town Without Steel: Envisioning Homestead*, photographs by Charlee Brodsky (Pittsburgh, PA, 1998). The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission portal also provides a list of repositories for oral history and of oral history holdings in its own collection; http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/oral_history/4351.
 13. Sam Bass Warner, *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Growth* (Philadelphia, 1968); Dennis Clark, *The Irish in Philadelphia: Ten Generations of Urban Experience* (Philadelphia, 1973); Russell F. Weigley, ed., *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History* (New York, 1982); Jean Seder, *Voices of Kensington: Vanishing Mills, Vanishing Neighborhoods* (Ardmore, PA, 1982); Alicia M. Freitag and Harry C. Silcox, eds., *Historical Northeast Philadelphia: Stories and Memories*, 2nd ed. (Holland, PA, 1994); Jamie Catrambone and Harry C. Silcox, eds., *Kensington History: Stories and Memories* (Philadelphia, 1996); Lillian M. Lake and Harry C. Silcox, *Take a Trip Through Time: Northeast Philadelphia Revisited* (Holland, PA, 1996); Harry C. Silcox, *Remembering Northeast Philadelphia* (Charleston, SC, 2009); August Tarrier, ed., *The Forgotten Bottom Remembered: Stories from a Philadelphia Neighborhood* (Philadelphia, 2002).
 14. Louis M. Iatarola and Lynn-Carmela T. Iatarola, *Lower Northeast Philadelphia*, Then and Now Series (Charleston, SC, 2008); a complete list of regional books is available at Arcadia Press’s website, <http://www.arcadiapublishing.com>.
 15. Center for Northeast Philadelphia History, <http://www.nephillyhistory.com/1cnephtest/cnepphome.htm>; Historic Germantown, <http://freedombackyard.com>; East Falls Historical Society, <http://eastfallshistoricalsociety.com>; Southwark Historical Society, <http://www.southwarkhistory.org>.
 16. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, <http://hsp.org>.
 17. Hidden Collections Initiative for Small Pennsylvania Repositories, Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries, <http://dla.library.upenn.edu/dla/pacscl/ancillary.html?id=collections/pacscl/repositories2>.
 18. Historic Pittsburgh, <http://digital.library.pitt.edu/pittsburgh/>; Historical Society of Dauphin County, <http://www.dauphincountyhistory.org>; “Directory of Pennsylvania Genealogical and Historical Societies,” Pennsylvania Historical & Genealogical Research, <http://www.pennsylvaniairesearch.com/directory.html>; Pennsylvania Historical and Genealogical Society, Pennsylvania Department

- of Education, http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/genealogy_and_local_history/8730/pennsylvania_genealogical_and_historical_societies/524110.
19. John Bodnar, *Steelton: Immigration and Industrialization, 1870–1940* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1977); John Bodnar, Roger Simon, and Michael P. Weber, *Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900–1960* (Urbana, IL, 1982); Matthew S. Magda, *Monessen: Industrial Boomtown and Steel Community, 1898–1980* (Harrisburg, PA, 1985); Thomas Dublin and Walter Licht, “Gender and Economic Decline: The Pennsylvania Anthracite Region, 1920–1970,” *Oral History Review* 27, no. 1 (2000): 81–97; Dublin and Licht, *The Face of Decline: The Pennsylvania Anthracite Region in the Twentieth Century* (Ithaca, NY, 2005); Kenneth C. Wolensky, Nicole H. Wolensky, and Robert P. Wolensky, *Fighting for the Union Label: The Women’s Garment Industry and the ILGWU in Pennsylvania* (University Park, PA, 2002).
20. Brian Lockman, with Dan Cupper, *World War II in Their Own Words: An Oral History of Pennsylvania’s Veterans* (Mechanicsburg, PA, 2005); Lockman, with Cupper, *World War II Reflections: An Oral History of Pennsylvania’s Veterans* (Mechanicsburg, PA, 2009); Joseph Rishel, ed., *Pittsburgh Remembers World War II* (Charleston, SC, 2011).
21. The Oral History Project of the Vietnam Archive, The Vietnam Center and Archive, <http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/oralhistory/>; Veterans History Project, Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/vets/sights.html>.
22. Information about recording equipment is available through Oral History in the Digital Age, <http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu>, which includes an “Ask Doug” section to help researchers find the best equipment to meet their needs. Doug Boyd, director of the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History at the University of Kentucky Libraries, served as guest editor for a special issue of the *Oral History Review* 40, no. 1 (2013), focused on Oral History in the Digital Age; Clifford Kuhn’s essay, “The Digitization and Democratization of Oral History,” *Perspectives on History*, Nov. 2013, is available on the American Historical Association website, <http://historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/november-2013/the-digitization-and-democratization-of-oral-history>. Additional information about recording equipment is available through the Vermont Folklife Center Archive Field Research Guides, <http://www.vermontfolklifecenter.org/archive/archive-fieldguides.html>, and through Transom.org, <http://transom.org>.
23. Linda Shopes and Donald Ritchie, “Exclusion of Oral History from IRB Review: An Update,” American Historical Association, *Perspectives on History*, Mar. 2004, <http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/march-2004/exclusion-of-oral-history-from-irb-reviews-an-update>; “AHA Council Reaffirms Position on Oral History and Institutional Review Boards,” June 8, 2004, http://archive-org.com/page/1615527/2013-03-14/http://www.historians.org/press/2004_06_08_Council_IRBs.htm.
24. Linda Shopes, “Oral History, Human Subjects, and Institutional Review Boards,” Oral History Association website, <http://www.oralhistory.org/about/do-oral-history/oral-history-and-irb-review/#pagestart>.

TEACHING THE RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF PENNSYLVANIA IN PHILADELPHIA

R. Scott Hanson

Abstract: Until 2006, when faculty in the Departments of History and Religion at Temple University designed the course Religion in Philadelphia, no university in Pennsylvania offered a course specifically on the religious history of the state. The following essay outlines the rationale for a course on religion in Philadelphia, the issues involved with teaching such a course, available texts and resources, and possible field trips and assignments. It also describes how the course has been adapted for online instruction and suggests how part(s) of it might be used in a more general course on the history of Pennsylvania or American religious history.

When William Penn was given the largest land grant in colonial history by King Charles II in 1681 and first conceived of the “holy experiment” for his colony of Pennsylvania, he was guided by a belief in the importance of religious freedom (or liberty of conscience, as it was then called) and sought to create a haven for Quakers and other religious minorities to live in harmony with Native Americans in a “Peaceable Kingdom” that was unique in the colonial world. Less than forty years later, by the time of Penn’s death in 1718, the colony had already grown to include a religious mix of Amish, Mennonites, Moravians,

Pietists, Lutherans, Rosicrucian hermits, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Catholics, Jews, African slaves, free blacks, and members of other religious and ethnic minorities that soon outnumbered the Quaker elite by the end of the century. Penn could see early signs that his colony was prospering during his last stay from 1699 to 1701, but he could not have imagined that Philadelphia would rise to become the commercial, intellectual, and political center of British colonial America and, soon thereafter, the site of the founding of the United States—as well as of the first African American church and denomination. Over time, the holy experiment of religious pluralism in Pennsylvania would continue over the centuries to enfold increasing numbers of people from diverse religious traditions, including, by the late twentieth century, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists.

Just as historian Oscar Handlin realized it was impossible to write a history of America without talking about immigration, it is impossible to write or teach the history of Pennsylvania (or of America) without talking about religion. Students need to see that Penn's holy experiment was a precursor to the larger national experiment of religious freedom and that Pennsylvania is still a place where the experiment continues today.

How does one teach a religious history of Pennsylvania? When does it start? When does it end? What areas or regions are we talking about? What are the main themes, and who are the principal groups and individuals? How does Pennsylvania's religious history fit into the larger histories of religion in America and of America in general? Many textbooks in American history that touch on religion often start with New England Puritanism, but what happens when you start the narrative of American history in Pennsylvania and the mid-Atlantic region?¹

While there are undergraduate courses on the history of Pennsylvania and Philadelphia, and many courses in American religious history, no course (to my knowledge) was offered on the religious history of Pennsylvania at any university until 2006, when professors from the history and religion departments of Temple University designed a course called *Religion in Philadelphia* as part of the university's general studies curriculum. As one Temple professor sums it up: "Religion in Philadelphia was proposed by faculty members in the Departments of Religion and History . . . who were interested in creating a course that, through a focus on the Philadelphia experience, would allow students to engage larger themes in American religious history through a local lens." I have been part of a group of professors who have taught this course for several years and who periodically meet to collaborate on its evolution and

recertification. As might be expected, faculty from these two departments come from different backgrounds and have taught the course in different ways. Professors of religion tend to emphasize more contemporary material, whereas history faculty may start in the precolonial period and continue to the present. All, however, seek to engage students as active participants in the learning process by requiring them to experience religion in Philadelphia outside the classroom by going on field trips and doing local historical and ethnographic research. Students' skills have been developed through assignments that require that they understand, observe, and write about various phenomena that define religious life in Philadelphia now and in the past—for example, a paper assignment to map religion in one Philadelphia neighborhood, or a history and/or ethnography of a particular neighborhood, community, or place of worship. An online version of the course replaces required visits with videos of Philadelphia's sacred sites.

While a course that focuses primarily on Philadelphia may not seem relevant to faculty teaching in other parts of the state, there are reasons still to consider it, or at least to borrow certain components. As the course description states:

The argument is sometimes made that religion in dense urban spaces is characteristically very different from religion as it appears elsewhere. A study of religion in Philadelphia provides numerous ways to explore that idea, especially since the city encompasses a variety of ethnic and immigrant groups, encouraging the generation of new and hybrid forms of religious life that are less possible in smaller populations. Learn how ideas of toleration and freedom, the urban environment, and immigration helped to define the role of religion in the life of this city. Study various religious traditions as they are manifested in the greater Philadelphia area and look at the influences religion has had on the fabric of Philadelphia's history and cultural life including politics, art, education, journalism and popular culture. You will be asked to visit and write about various religious sites and institutions.

Religion in urban Philadelphia may indeed be different in some ways from religion in more suburban and rural areas of the state. In the introduction to *Gods of the City: Religion and the American Urban Landscape*, Robert Orsi notes that “ever since the publication in 1938 of Louis Wirth’s influential article ‘Urbanism as a Way of Life,’ American sociologists and urban scholars have debated whether the conditions of urban life . . . give rise to distinct

subjectivities. Is there a characteristic city self? Does the city [because of its large size, density, and heterogeneity] . . . make people more or less tolerant, more or less nervous?"² This is an interesting question to explore with students, and I often begin each semester by asking where they are from and discussing Wirth's essay (followed by a video clip from the opening scenes of Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* to illustrate Louis Mumford's description of the city as a "theater of social action").³ Orsi goes on to state that "urban religion is what comes from the dynamic engagement of religious traditions . . . with specific features of the industrial and post-industrial cityscapes and with the social conditions of city life."⁴ In particular, he highlights the remarkably persistent vitality and improvisation of immigrant religion in the face of what seems like an inhospitable place for religion to thrive: "Into every space hollowed out by contempt for the city and its peoples . . . or the demands of capital, migrants and immigrants have inserted themselves, making themselves present, indeed at times over-present, usually on their own terms."⁵ Jay P. Dolan has stressed the importance of immigration in American religious history, noting that it can "provide historians with a perspective through which they can view the development of American religion" because it is "a phenomenon that cuts across denominational boundaries" and that "studying the immigrant experience in the United States will force historians to acquire a comparative perspective."⁶ Since the point of entry for immigration to America through the nineteenth century took place in the major seaports, we look to the history of cities such as Philadelphia, Boston, and New York for an understanding of the immigrant experience. Allen F. Davis has noted that while Philadelphia's immigration history has not received the same kind of attention as that of New York or Chicago, Philadelphia was and still is a city of immigrants.⁷ If Arthur M. Schlesinger was right about the importance of the city in American history—that the experiences and problems of American society are those of an urban society—then we stand to learn a lot from the study of religion in Philadelphia.⁸

Religion in Philadelphia in the Classroom

While the Temple course focuses on Philadelphia, I broaden the scope to make occasional connections to the larger history of religion in the mid-Atlantic region, an area that Randall Balmer has called "the proving ground for pluralism," in comparison with Puritan New England and Anglican Virginia.⁹ Another reason for broadening the geographic reach of the course

to include Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, and New York, as one participant has noted, is that “the number of absolutely first-rate secondary works [about religion in Philadelphia] from which we can choose is rather limited.” On the other hand, the limited number of good secondary sources could also lead professors and students to focus on primary sources for class discussion and paper assignments and encourage further historical research.

So what are the issues, texts, themes, and problems in a class on religion in Philadelphia? For starters, most students have little knowledge of religion in America, or even religion(s) in general. Many have few opportunities to study religion in college, and teachers also bring different backgrounds. Part of the reason for the lack of opportunities to study religion in high school and college may be a fear among educators that religion in the classroom is taboo, which perhaps goes back to a local episode in American history: the Supreme Court case of *Abington School District v. Schempp* (1963), which declared school-sponsored Bible reading in public schools in the United States unconstitutional (itself another great teachable moment that faculty can link to a discussion of the Philadelphia nativist riots of 1844, when violence erupted between “natives” and Irish Catholic immigrants over the use of Bibles in the public schools). Among scholars of religion and American religious historians in particular, there is a growing movement to include more discussion of religion in American history courses in a way that is constitutionally permissible and educationally sound.¹⁰ My own background and training is in American religious history as well as in urban and immigration/ethnic history, so I feel some background in American religious history is important to frame the discussion for a course on religion in Philadelphia and to see what part Pennsylvania played in a larger, national story. In addition to the introductory essays mentioned earlier about cities, I also find it helpful to begin with readings from Stephen Prothero’s *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—and Doesn’t* as well as the survey textbook by Catherine Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion*, which I use throughout the semester.¹¹ After this introduction, the course roughly follows a chronological history of religion in the Delaware Valley, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and beyond.¹²

An early unit focuses on Native American religion, contact and encounters with European settlers, the remarkable story of Penn’s holy experiment in which Christians and Indians could live together in a “Peaceable Kingdom,” and its unfortunate, gradual dissolution in the eighteenth century as Penn’s agents and successors undermined that vision in their quest for land.¹³ We also watch clips from the 1991 film *Black*

Robe—though it is about French Jesuit missionaries among the Huron and Iroquois in seventeenth-century Quebec, the film is an excellent window into the role of religion in European and Native American relations of the time.¹⁴ For the Quakers, we read a chapter from David Hackett Fischer's *Albion's Seed* on "The Friends' Migration, 1675–1725," and we visit Arch Street Meeting House, where the class sits on the old benches and a guide talks and answers questions about the Society of Friends before the group visits the excellent in-house museum on Quaker history.¹⁵ The field trip to the meetinghouse is juxtaposed with another field trip to Christ Church to explore the striking architectural and religious differences between the simplicity of the Quaker meetinghouse and the more ornate Anglican church.¹⁶ To retrace the steps of Johannes Kelpius, the seventeenth-century Rosicrucian monk from Transylvania who led a mystical religious order that met and meditated around a stone portal overlooking the Wissahickon Creek in the section of Fairmount Park between East Falls, Roxborough, and Manayunk, we read a recent cover story in the local weekly *City Paper* on the "Quest for Kelpius." Interested students with their own transportation can opt to join the professor for a weekend morning field trip to the site along the creek.¹⁷ Next we read John A. Hostetler's *Amish Society*, visit the Amish shops in Reading Terminal Market for lunch (Lancaster is a bit too far from campus for a trip during class time), and watch a variety of film clips on the Amish.¹⁸

After covering the settlement of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, I move into a discussion of religion in colonial Philadelphia through the American Revolution. I assign the first several chapters in Russell Weigley's edited tome, *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History*, and supplement it with lectures on early American urban history based on readings from Howard Chudacoff's *Evolution of American Urban Society* and primary sources from his volume on *Major Problems in American Urban History* as well as Edwin S. Gaustad's *A Documentary History of Religion in America*.¹⁹ For the Enlightenment and Deism, we read excerpts from David L. Holmes's *Faiths of the Founding Fathers*, along with excerpts from Locke's *Second Treatise on Government* and the Declaration of Independence. We also watch clips from the HBO miniseries *John Adams* and visit the American Philosophical Society to see one of Jefferson's drafts of the Declaration. It also can be powerful to connect the past to the present at this juncture by reading and discussing the 2008 presidential campaign speech that Senator Barack Obama gave at the National Constitution Center, "A More Perfect Union" (widely available on the web). We continue discussion of religion in Revolutionary and early national Philadelphia by reading Richard Newman's book about Richard Allen, the founder of the African Methodist

Episcopal denomination, and we visit Mother Bethel Church and the excellent A.M.E. museum adjoining the tomb of Richard Allen in the basement.²⁰

We continue with the explosion of Protestant denominations in the early nineteenth century and the growth of Catholicism and Judaism in Philadelphia from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. We consider *Federalist Papers* 10 and 51 and the First Amendment by James Madison, along with selections from de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. Next comes a segment on Irish Catholic immigrants and the Philadelphia nativist riots of 1844, supplemented by a chapter from Katie Oxx's recent book, *The Nativist Movement in America*, and clips from the film *Gangs of New York*.²¹ Isaac Weiner explores the new topic of religious sound and public space in a chapter about the clanging bells of Philadelphia's St. Mark's Episcopal Church in the late nineteenth century.²² For a discussion of religion, wealth, and social status among Protestants, Catholics, and Jews in industrial-era Philadelphia there is another recent book, *Church and Estate*, by Thomas F. Rzeznik.²³ To explore the long history of Judaism in Philadelphia, we discuss readings that look back to colonial Jewish communities in the eighteenth century and the later arrival of Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We also watch clips from a PBS special, *The Jewish Americans*, and visit either Rodeph Shalom or Mikveh Israel as well as the Chapel of Four Chaplains on Temple's campus, where the Protestant-Catholic-Jewish ethos born during World War II is enshrined in a nondenominational chapel built in the basement of the Baptist Temple (now the Temple Performing Arts Center).²⁴ The 2008 documentary film *Praying with Lior* also offers a moving look into the Jewish Reconstructionist community in Philadelphia and a rabbi's son with Down syndrome.²⁵ For Italians in Philadelphia, we read chapters from Robert Orsi's book on the *fešta* of the Madonna in Italian Harlem in New York and compare it to religious processions in South Philadelphia by reading Richard Juliani's *Priest, Parish, and People: Saving the Faith in Philadelphia's "Little Italy."*²⁶

The course ends by tracing developments in African American religion in Philadelphia from the mid-twentieth century to the present, comparing different urban congregations and new religious movements, and exploring the religions of new immigrant communities. First we consider the dense concentration of black churches along Germantown Avenue with Katie Day's recent book, *Faith on the Avenue*.²⁷ For new religious movements in Philadelphia, the 2013 documentary film *Let the Fire Burn* offers a good look at the controversial standoff between MOVE and the police.²⁸ I sometimes include a class on (or at least a reference to) professional sports teams and fans in Philadelphia

as religion, which can be fun if the Eagles, Phillies, or Flyers are doing especially well.²⁹ David Harrington Watt's *Bible-Carrying Christians* is a fine ethnographic analysis of three different conservative Protestant congregations (a megachurch, a Mennonite church, and a Church of Christ) and social power in Philadelphia.³⁰ Finally, we end with a discussion of the religions of immigrants since the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 by reading from Diana Eck's *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* and by exploring the new religious landscape of the city, which now includes mosques and Hindu and Buddhist temples.³¹ Of course, we do not always get to all of these readings or site visits, but I hope this overview shows something of the range of possible topics. There are many other readings and sites I have not mentioned that are on my list, so please consult other resources, such as the Old Philadelphia Congregations website, especially its main essay, "Philadelphia: Cradle of Religious Liberty."³²

Mapping Religion in Philadelphia

The culmination of the course is a semester-long paper project in which students focus on a person, place, or group of their choice associated with religion in Philadelphia or the Delaware Valley. For the assignment, students write a history of their chosen person, place, or group by doing archival research and relating their study to relevant historical context. Part of their research involves gathering sources, but students also need to explore the particular history of the neighborhood or area associated with this person, place, or group and trace its evolution up to the present. Philadelphia is rich in the number of sources for such projects. Temple's Paley Library has a good section on Philadelphia neighborhoods and is also home to the Urban Archives. The various branches of the Free Library of Philadelphia have many good sources on their particular neighborhoods, as do local historical societies and specialized libraries such as the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the American Philosophical Society, and the Library Company of Philadelphia. Finally, I encourage students to do basic ethnographic research that may involve oral history and/or observation and field notes. Over several years of teaching the class, students have covered virtually every neighborhood of the city and a wide range of persons, groups, and institutions.

Religion in Philadelphia Online

In the spring of 2012 I was asked to work on an online version of Religion in Philadelphia.³³ Our General Education Program (GenEd) had recently launched a Distance Learning Course Development initiative to “convert a new cohort of face-to-face courses and also to develop new online sections, thereby expanding the accessibility of needed courses to satellite campuses, adult learners, veterans/armed service members.” Faculty who apply have to submit a proposal and gain approval from their department, dean, the director of the university’s Office of Distance Learning, and the GenEd Executive Committee. Once approved, applicants are required to participate in a twenty-hour Virtual Teaching Program; they receive a stipend to develop and then teach the course.

Since I already had compiled a lot of content on Blackboard (daily writing assignments based on readings, PDFs, a discussion board, video clips, and external links) from teaching Religion in Philadelphia in the traditional classroom format over several years, I had a good head start for an online course. I had collaborated with several other faculty members who teach the course and a librarian who began working on an online course guide. The challenge was rethinking how to present the material in the most effective and engaging way—a process of conversion that takes a good deal of time and planning.

There are three different types of online courses at my university: courses that are fully online and require no virtual, campus, or face-to-face meetings; virtual courses that do require regular online meetings; and hybrid courses that blend virtual teaching with some amount of campus meetings (for instance, field trips). Religion in Philadelphia was designated as a fully online course, so this presented another challenge: how does one teach a course online that is so site specific? In the past, I typically led six field trips to different places of worship throughout the city.

The Virtual Teaching Program that I completed with a cohort of about a dozen other faculty members from a wide range of disciplines “met” online once a week over the summer using the Wimba Classroom program on Blackboard to discuss readings on a variety of topics related to distance learning and learn how to navigate and use all the different features of Wimba and several other online teaching platforms. In addition to the presentation of lecture material via PowerPoint slides on the Wimba Classroom eboard, we learned it is possible for the instructor to lecture and lead discussions as in a classroom but also to utilize a number of very powerful features that would not be possible in a face-to-face course. For instance, students can click on a button to “raise their hands” to ask a question. The system assigns a number to each student’s “hand” depending

on the order in which he or she clicked the button. Students can click on an emoticon to express confusion, interest, request the instructor to slow down, or convey other messages. Students can be broken up into “breakout rooms” for group or individual work where they can write text on the screen. The instructor can toggle back and forth between windows to check in on each group or individual and interact with them. The online course environment seems to encourage some students who might otherwise be reserved in class to be more engaged. Students can be instructed to read a PDF or watch a video clip that resides on the Blackboard course website and then come back to the Wimba Classroom to discuss it (I have begun making short videos using my iPhone of various places of worship in the city and posting them on Blackboard). Another feature allows faculty to conduct polls and surveys. Lectures and sessions can also be “archived” (recorded) and saved for students to watch at any time. Finally, the audio and video features help make the online experience feel more personable and immediate. Assessment can be similar to a face-to-face course; quizzes can be completed on Blackboard, papers can be uploaded to SafeAssign on Blackboard, and participation/attendance can be based on the level and quality of interaction in the Wimba Classroom. Although Religion in Philadelphia was approved as a fully online course so that we would not be required to have virtual meetings, I wanted to try out some of the features of the Wimba Classroom and I made weekly virtual meetings optional.

The paper assignment on mapping religion in Philadelphia was largely unaffected by an online version of the course. Students still used the same course texts, but their research time in the university’s library or even a branch of the public library was not equal to what a student on campus could do. As a result, online sources for papers are common, but here there is an opportunity to teach about the distinction between scholarly sources vs. unacceptable ones.

With students checking in at different times from different places, creating a sense of structure and community is something that faculty who teach online have to constantly keep in mind. However, when Wimba Classroom (or another online teaching platform such as WebEx) is combined with what one can do with all the other features of Blackboard, the possibilities for any course in an online environment are exciting.

Conclusion

Whether one teaches a course on religion in Philadelphia online or in the classroom, what educators ultimately need is a good survey textbook and perhaps

a primary source collection/reader on the religious history of Pennsylvania. In the meantime, librarian Fred Rowland in Paley Library at Temple has created an excellent online “Religion in Philadelphia Course Guide” for the class, which includes a comprehensive bibliography of books, journal articles, newspaper articles, websites, and films that will be of interest to anyone teaching the religious history of Philadelphia or Pennsylvania in general.³⁴ Finally, it is worth noting that the many texts discussed throughout this essay were not all used in one semester but have been adopted and tested at different times over the years in various forms (entire books or sometimes just excerpts), so it is possible to pick and choose based on the purposes and scope of a course. In the end, the goal is for students to reach their own conclusions about the role that religion has played in the history of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the Delaware Valley, the mid-Atlantic region, and the United States. Whether for a course focused on a particular geographic region or a general survey of American or religious history, Philadelphia’s—and Pennsylvania’s—experience can be used to explore the significance of religion in American life and the ways in which religious diversity has shaped our past—and our present.

NOTES

1. For an illuminating discussion about questioning historical narrative(s) of American religious history, see the introduction in Thomas A. Tweed, ed., *Retelling U.S. Religious History* (Berkeley, CA, 1997).
2. Robert A. Orsi, introduction to *Gods of the City: Religion and the American Urban Landscape*, ed. Robert A. Orsi (Bloomington, IN, 1999), 5.
3. Louis Wirth, “Urbanism as a Way of Life,” *American Journal of Sociology* 44 (1938): 1–24; Lewis Mumford, “What Is a City?” *Architectural Record* 82 (Nov. 1937): 56–62.
4. Orsi, introduction to *Gods of the City*, 45.
5. *Ibid.*, 41.
6. Jay P. Dolan, “The Immigrants and Their Gods: A New Perspective in American Religious History,” in *Religion in American History: A Reader*, ed. Jon Butler and Harry S. Stout (New York, 1998), 150.
7. Allen F. Davis, preface to *The Peoples of Philadelphia: A History of Ethnic Groups and Lower-Class Life, 1790–1940*, ed. Allen F. Davis and Mark H. Haller (1973; Philadelphia, 1998), ix.
8. Arthur M. Schlesinger, “The City in American History,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 27 (1940): 43–66.
9. Randall Balmer, introduction to *Religion and Public Life in the Middle Atlantic Region: The Fount of Diversity*, ed. Randall Balmer and Mark Silk (Lanham, MD, 2006), 9.

10. See Bruce Grelle and D. Keith Naylor, guest eds., "Spotlight on Teaching about Religion in the Schools," special issue, *AAR Religious Studies News* 17, no. 2 (2002), <https://www.aarweb.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/RSN/Print%20Back%20Issues/2002-02MAR.pdf>; the Oxford University Press's Religion in American Life series, ed. Jon Butler and Harry S. Stout; and Stephen Prothero, *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—And Doesn't* (New York, 2007).
11. Prothero, *Religious Literacy*; Catherine L. Albanese, *America: Religion and Religions*, 5th ed. (Belmont, CA, 2012).
12. The bibliography of good works on early American religion that have some focus on Philadelphia and Pennsylvania is extensive. In addition to the works mentioned in the text, see: Gregory Evans Dowd, *War under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations, and the British Empire* (Baltimore, 2002); Craig D. Atwood, *Community of the Cross: Moravian Piety in Colonial Bethlehem* (University Park, PA, 2004); Jeff Bach, *Voices of the Turtledoves: The Sacred World of Ephrata* (University Park, PA, 2002); Katherine Carté Engel, *Religion and Profit: Moravians in Early America* (Philadelphia, PA, 2009); Aaron Spencer Fogleman, *Jesus Is Female: Moravians and Radical Religion in Early America* (Philadelphia, 2007); Beverly Smaby, *The Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem: From Communal Mission to Family Economy* (Philadelphia, 1988); Mark Häberlein, *The Practice of Pluralism: Congregational Life and Religious Diversity in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1730–1820* (University Park, PA, 2009); Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophesying in the Colonies and Abroad, 1700–1775* (New York, 1999); Jack D. Marietta, *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748–1783* (Philadelphia, 1984); Jean R. Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit* (Princeton, NJ, 1985); Stephen L. Longenecker, *Piety and Tolerance: Pennsylvania German Religion, 1700–1850* (Metuchen, NJ, 1994); Janet Moore Lindman, *Bodies of Belief: Baptist Community in Early America* (Philadelphia, 2008); Margaret C. Reynolds, *Plain Women: Gender and Ritual in the Old Order River Brethren* (University Park, PA, 2001).
13. See Paul A. W. Wallace, *Indians in Pennsylvania*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, 1981); William A. Young, "The Lenape (Delaware): The Grandfather Nation," in *Quest for Harmony: Native American Spiritual Traditions* (New York, 2002); and Kevin Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn's Holy Experiment* (New York, 2009).
14. *Black Robe*, directed by Bruce Beresford (Alliance Communications Co. and Samson Productions, 1991).
15. David Hackett Fischer, "The Friends' Migration, 1675–1725," in *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York, 1989).
16. Also see Deborah Mathias Gough, "Founding an Anglican Church in a Quaker Colony," in *Christ Church, Philadelphia: The Nation's Church in a Changing City* (Philadelphia, 1995).
17. Ryan Briggs, "The Quest for Kelpius," *Philadelphia City Paper*, Nov. 7, 2013, <http://citypaper.net/Cover/300-years-later-the-mystic-of-the-Wissahickon-still-has-a-following/>. The online version of this article lists the publication date erroneously as 2012.
18. John A. Hostetler, *Amish Society*, 4th ed. (Baltimore, 1993). There are many film-clip options for the Amish, but I like to use *Trouble in Amish Paradise*, a 2009 BBC documentary available on YouTube and also at <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/trouble-in-amish-paradise/> and "A Bill Moyers Essay—On Amish Grace," Oct. 5, 2007, a PBS news segment about the 2006 tragedy in

- Nickel Mines, PA, also available on YouTube and <http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/10052007/watch4.html>.
19. Russell F. Weigley, ed., *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History* (New York, 1982); Howard P. Chudacoff and Judith E. Smith, eds., *The Evolution of American Urban Society*, 7th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 2005); and Howard P. Chudacoff and Peter C. Baldwin, *Major Problems in American Urban and Suburban History*, 2nd ed. (Boston, 2005); Edwin S. Gaustad, ed., *A Documentary History of Religion in America*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI, 1982–83).
20. David L. Holmes, *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers* (New York, 2006); *John Adams*, directed by Tom Hooper (HBO miniseries, 2008); Barack Obama, “A More Perfect Union” (speech, National Constitution Center, Philadelphia, PA, Mar. 18, 2008), at, among other sites, <http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2008/03/18/text-of-obamas-speech-a-more-perfect-union/>; Richard S. Newman, *Freedom’s Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York, 2009).
21. Katie Oxx, *The Nativist Movement in America: Religious Conflict in the 19th Century* (New York, 2013); *Gangs of New York*, directed by Martin Scorsese (Miramax, 2003). Also see Kenneth W. Milano, *The Philadelphia Nativist Riots: Irish Kensington Erupts* (Charleston, SC, 2013).
22. Isaac Weiner, “Church Bells in the Industrial City,” in *Religion Out Loud: Religious Sound, Public Space, and American Pluralism* (New York, 2014).
23. Thomas F. Rzeznik, *Church and Estate: Religion and Wealth in Industrial-Era Philadelphia* (University Park, PA, 2013). Also see Thomas F. Rzeznik, “‘Representatives of All that is Noble’: The Rise of the Episcopal Establishment in Early Twentieth Century Philadelphia,” *Religion and American Culture* 19 (2009): 69–100.
24. Murray Friedman, *Jewish Life in Philadelphia, 1830–1940* (Philadelphia, 1983); *The Jewish Americans*, directed by David Grubin (PBS, 2008).
25. *Praying with Lior*, directed by Ilana Trachtman (Ruby Pictures, 2008).
26. Robert A. Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880–1950*, 3rd ed. (New Haven, CT, 2010); Richard N. Juliani, *Priest, Parish, and People: Saving the Faith in Philadelphia’s “Little Italy”* (Notre Dame, IN, 2006).
27. Katie Day, with photographs by Edd Conboy, *Faith on the Avenue: Religion on a City Street* (New York, 2014).
28. *Let the Fire Burn*, directed by Jason Osder (Amigo Media, 2013).
29. For prayer and sports, see Julie Byrne, “Praying for the Team,” in *O God of Players: The Story of the Immaculata Mighty Macs* (New York, 2003).
30. David Harrington Watt, *Bible-Carrying Christians: Conservative Protestants and Social Power* (New York, 2002).
31. Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a “Christian Country” Has Become the World’s Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (San Francisco, 2002). Also see the resources for Philadelphia and Pennsylvania on the related Harvard University Pluralism Project website, <http://www.pluralism.org>.
32. “Philadelphia: Cradle of Religious Liberty,” Old Philadelphia Congregations website, http://www.holyexperiment.org/pages/b_text.html.
33. R. Scott Hanson, “Piloting an Online Course in the City of Neighborhoods,” *Temple University Faculty Herald* 43, no. 1 (2012), http://www.temple.edu/herald/43_1/PilotinganOnlineCourseintheCityofNeighborhoods.htm.
34. See <http://guides.temple.edu/religionphiladelphia>.

AN AUTHENTIC ARCHIVAL EXPERIENCE FOR THE COLLEGE CLASSROOM IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Kathryn Shively Meier and Kristen Yarmey

Abstract: One of the most treasured experiences of historians is archival research, and yet university professors frequently struggle with viable ways to include archival research in their lecture courses. Further, historians, who are generally focused on the content of documents, often fail to provide students with a sense of the process by which historical documents and artifacts are gathered, preserved, and made available. This essay describes a partnership among faculty at the University of Scranton, the Lackawanna Historical Society, Weinberg Memorial Library, Scranton Public Library, and Everhart Museum to create an archival-based digital project for a course on the Civil War and Reconstruction. The students from the course uncovered uncataloged Civil War-era documents and artifacts, preserved, digitized, and transcribed them, and organized them into an online collection. The project acquainted students with local, firsthand historical accounts; introduced them to the complexity of recreating history from archival sources; exposed them to careers in archives, museum studies, and librarianship; and forged a partnership between university students and local institutions.

*R*esearching in the archives is a defining and treasured experience for historians. It is a rite of passage that teaches scholars how to read archaic handwriting, handle priceless artifacts, and

intimately connect with subjects long dead. Archives provide access to materials that would otherwise be lost to the historical record. They also teach budding historians about the problematic nature of retrieving and compiling the scraps left behind by humans in order to construct accurate narratives and compelling arguments. Professors of history frequently try to devise ways to share the pleasures and tribulations of archival research with college students but are hindered by significant challenges. Often the archives to which students have access do not possess manuscript collections relevant to the course subject matter, and professors do not always have the time or resources to train students in archival skills. Further, historians, who are generally focused on the content of documents, often fail to provide students with a real sense of the process by which historical documents and other artifacts are gathered, preserved, and made available—all crucial to understanding the process of historical inquiry. Even historians do not always understand this circuitous process, especially given how new technology has reconfigured archival practices; there is, therefore, considerable value in collaborating with librarians and archivists.

In spring 2011, we—Kathryn Shively Meier, assistant professor of history, and Kristen Yarmey, associate professor and digital services librarian, then both at the University of Scranton—partnered with the Lackawanna Historical Society, Scranton Public Library, and Everhart Museum to create an archival experience for Meier's course on the Civil War and Reconstruction that was relevant to the digital age. The project would have the more traditional pedagogical goal of providing a vibrant local history experience for students, but it would also pursue the novel aim of introducing students to the processes of procuring, preserving, and providing access to archival sources. The project thus expanded the college classroom beyond content learning to inform students about how historical knowledge is constructed and to expose them to job skills in various history-related career paths. Because of the experimental nature of the project, it is our goal in this essay to be forthcoming about its strengths and weaknesses in the hopes that it will be adapted to a variety of topics and circumstances, depending on available university resources.

The primary objective of *The Civil War and Reconstruction*, an upper-level course taken predominantly by history majors, was to master a thorough understanding of the causes, experiences, and outcomes of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Instructional time was almost exclusively

devoted to traditional content-based lectures and discussions of assigned scholarly readings. The digital project, then, was only one component of the course. While it spanned the entire semester, the project consumed few in-course instructional hours and took place largely outside of class (consuming roughly five to ten hours plus limited class time). The only significant project activities that took place in class were group presentations; we used a small amount of class time for administrative purposes (e.g., introducing the project, assigning groups, and other coordination). Our objectives for the project, a blend of traditional and novel pedagogy, were: (1) to complement the lecture and reading content with first-person narratives from the local home front; (2) to introduce students to the complexity of recreating history from archival sources; (3) to expose students to careers in archives, museum studies, and librarianship and their related skill sets; and (4) to forge a partnership between university students and resources and local institutions.

The project began in the archives. Working in task-based teams, students first sifted through uncataloged artifacts at the Lackawanna Historical Society for Civil War-era primary sources such as objects, letters, newspaper clippings, photographs, and receipts. The students then prepared the objects and documents for cataloging. Next, they digitized and transcribed the materials. Finally, students designed an online exhibit to display the artifacts to the public. Along the way, staff members at the Lackawanna Historical Society, the Everhart Museum, and the University of Scranton Weinberg Memorial Library trained, supervised, and advised the students.¹ After the conclusion of the project, the students' work was published by the Lackawanna Valley Digital Archives in an online collection entitled "Out of the Wilderness: The Industrialization and Development of the Scranton Area 1850–1865."² The project thus became a lasting public resource in addition to a vehicle for helping students learn how to conduct archival research, exposing them to the skill sets of a range of careers, and engaging them directly in local Civil War history.

Our first step in project planning was to meet and consult with our community partners. Together, we established a project timeline, outlined expectations for students and partners, and agreed upon description and digitization standards so that the students' work could easily be incorporated into the "Out of the Wilderness" collection. We broke the project down into five major student tasks—(1) discovery, (2) preservation, (3) digitization, (4) transcription, and (5) interpretation—each to be completed by a group

of five to seven students under the direction of a community partner. At the start of the semester, we asked students to rank their group preferences, and we assigned them to groups accordingly. The Lackawanna Historical Society agreed to guide groups 1 and 2 in finding and preserving primary sources in its collection, which is conveniently located next door to the students' regular classroom building. The Weinberg Memorial Library, also close by, would help groups 3 and 4 digitize and transcribe these materials; and group 5 would receive guidance on interpretation from the Everhart Museum and user-interface design from the Weinberg Memorial Library. Finally, the Scranton Public Library would publish the students' work in an online collection of the Lackawanna Valley Digital Archives.

After confirming student group assignments, we began the project in the second week of the semester with a class visit to the Everhart Museum for a guided tour of the featured exhibit, *"With bullets singing all around me": Regional Stories of the Civil War*. Composed of artifacts on loan from historical societies throughout northeastern Pennsylvania, the exhibit focused on social aspects of the war, such as African American wartime experience, prisoners of war, local musicians, the women who supported the soldiers from home, and medicine (highlighting museum founder and Civil War surgeon Dr. Isaiah Fawkes Everhart). The museum tour was designed to ignite interest in primary sources, to introduce students to museum work as a potential career path, and to provide training for the "Interpreters" (group 5). The museum's head curator talked with group 5 about the goals and strategies of interpretation, pointing out how the exhibit highlighted individual stories to convey broader historical themes in interesting and accessible ways, just as they should strive to do with the archival resources with which they would create their exhibit. The museum visit was a crucial part of motivating students to embrace a learning experience that extended beyond the four walls of the traditional classroom.

One week later, group 1 (affectionately referred to as the "Diggers") met at the Lackawanna Historical Society to comb through the institution's genealogy materials, a collection of mostly uncataloged papers donated by community members, filling twelve filing cabinet drawers. The society's staff believed that the genealogy collection included some original Civil War-era letters and documents, but they had never had time to methodically review the family folders. Organized into pairs, the students searched for items dated between 1848 and 1870 from soldiers or civilians at home or artifacts that related to Civil War memory, such as materials from the Grand Army of the Republic or newspaper articles reflecting back on Civil War topics. For each piece, the students wrote

down a basic description of the item (creator, type of artifact, date, geographic location, etc.) and in which genealogical file it had been found. They recorded this information on a cataloging form prepared by the Weinberg Memorial Library to streamline the development of the digital collection.

One of the risks of the project was that we were unsure what (if any) Civil War content the students would discover. Happily, the Diggers' findings were more numerous and diverse than we had anticipated. The students uncovered sixty-two items that illustrated personal, local accounts of the war. Some artifacts revealed the experiences of soldiers on the front lines. The written reminiscences of Patrick DeLacy, who served in the 143rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, detailed his memories of fighting at the Battle of the Wilderness, for which he won the Medal of Honor. Students discovered an 1862 British halfpenny coin that was the long-lost lucky charm of Sergeant Benjamin H. Crippen, another member of the 143rd Pennsylvania who at the battle of Gettysburg shook his fist at advancing Confederates instead of surrendering the Union flag. In a bitter twist of fate, he had given the coin (Fig. 1) to his brother for safekeeping before Gettysburg and perished on the battlefield. The coin was accompanied by reproductions of documents related to Crippen's death, including an inventory of his personal effects and his discharge certificate (Fig. 2). In another reminder of the material costs



FIGURE 1: A lucky coin belonging to Color Sergeant Benjamin Crippen of the 143rd Pennsylvania Volunteers. Crippen, who died on the battlefield at Gettysburg, had given the coin to his brother Martin for safekeeping. Courtesy of the Lackawanna Historical Society.

CASUALTY SHEET.	
Name: <u>Benjamin H. Crippen</u>	
Rank: <u>Sergeant</u>	Company: <u>B</u> Regiment: <u>143</u>
Arm: <u>Infantry</u>	State: <u>Pennsylvania</u>
Nature of Casualty: <u>Death</u>	
CAUSE OF CASUALTY—(NAME OF DISEASE, &c.)	BY WHOM DISCHARGED.
<u>Guns Shot Wound</u>	
DEGREE OF DISABILITY.	FROM WHAT SOURCE THIS INFORMATION WAS OBTAINED.
	<u>Register of Deceased Soldiers</u>
BY WHOM CERTIFIED.	<u>Dec 1st 1863</u>
<u>Capt. M. L. Blair</u>	REMARKS.
DATE OF DISCHARGE, DEATH, &c.	
<u>July 1st 1863</u>	
PLACE OF DISCHARGE, DEATH, &c.	
<u>Gettysburg Penn</u>	<u>Thos A. Quigley</u> Clerk.
	(118)

FIGURE 2: Reproduction of a casualty sheet documenting Crippen's death on the Gettysburg battlefield. Courtesy of the Lackawanna Historical Society.

of battle, an 1865 receipt documented the price of a leg amputation for an anonymous soldier. A newspaper article titled "Lincoln Still a Hero to Local Man Who Met Him," in which Corporal Henry Earley told the story of how he met Abraham Lincoln while on guard duty at Petersburg, illustrated the extent to which politics remained intimately connected to the battlefield experiences of soldiers (Fig. 3).

Lincoln Still a Hero to Local Man Who Met Him

Henry Earley Maintains Emancipator Was Neither "Cold Nor Mannerless," as Described by Edgar Lee Masters

Prying biographers may strip the glamorous cloak from the stooped shoulders of Abraham Lincoln, son of the Illinois backwoods, but to Henry Earley, who felt the tight grip of the president's bony hands and heard his cheerful greeting, he remains a hero that neither time nor man can disfigure.

Gray haired and with blue eyes glazed by his eighty-seven years, Earley yesterday recalled the four years spent on shell-hacked southern battlefields—the fields where he left his youth.

"Say, mister, did I know the president? Why I shook hands with him. Yes, sir. Back in '64 I was adoin' guard duty before General Hartsuff's headquarters at Petersburg. I was sentry No. 1 when who walks up to the door but the president.

"How are you, soldier?" he said, and smiled. Say, mister, you should have seen him smile, by golly, his face wrinkled all up. I was spell-bound. He shook my hand and chatted for several minutes.

"He didn't stay long. Two Negro



HENRY EARLEY

"How Are You, Soldier?" Was Greeting He Gave To Scranton Veteran Doing Guard Duty in '64 at Petersburg

didn't know him. So after the president went inside, I walks over to them and tells them who the tall, lanky fellow was.

"Mister, you should have seen them. One folded her hands, and murmured, 'Lawd bless him, Lawd bless him.'"

Something besides the years glazed the old veteran's eyes as he reminisced.

Saw Lincoln Second Time

Behind the battle lines of Cold Harbor, Corporal Earley saw the president a second time. Abe Lincoln was riding a donkey, his long legs dangling dangerously near the ground, as he unceremoniously toured the camp.

Edgar Lee Masters, contemporary lawyer-poet, may say Abraham Lincoln was "cold, mannerless, unkempt and at times neurotic," but Corporal Earley who served four long years at the call of the tall, mellow-eyed, bearded leader and saw him riding a jackass, says, "God, mister, he was a man."

mammies, mister, were on the other end of porch ascrubbing. He saw them and hurried over. The president shook their hands but, by golly, they

FIGURE 3: "Lincoln Still a Hero to Local Man Who Met Him," undated newspaper article. Courtesy of the Lackawanna Historical Society.

Other items related to life on the home front. In some cases, daily activities carried on with relatively little disruption from the war; for instance, much of the correspondence belonging to prominent businessman Joseph H. Scranton (whose 1871 estate forms the heart of the University of Scranton campus) was routine. But other transactions were relevant to the ongoing war: in a letter dated September 3, 1862, Colonel Richard A. Oakford of the 132nd Pennsylvania Infantry asked for Scranton's aid in purchasing a horse at an affordable price (Fig. 4). (Oakford would be killed just two weeks later at the battle of Antietam.)

Several letters unearthed by the Diggers included commentary on national politics and civilian morale, especially those from Scranton's brother-in-law David Davis, a Supreme Court justice and associate of Abraham Lincoln. Davis even sent Scranton a document addressed to Abraham Lincoln recommending Scranton's son Joseph for a civil service appointment, though he wrote that he preferred it not be used "unless it is necessary," since "with Mr. [Hendrick B.] Wright's aid and Mr. [Galusha A.]

Head Quarters 132 Regt PV
Camp Whipple Sept 8 1862

Dr H Scranton Esq
Dr Sir

It is an old adage that there is no use in having friends unless you can use them, Now I think this saying is true. To take the liberty of calling on you for a little help just now.

When School Wilson & myself left home we intended & expected to get our horses from the Government at Government prices this ordinarily we could have done, but just now the Army having lost very heavily in horses as well as men has sent all the spare horse forward to the front & it is utterly impossible for us to get horses from the Government. As for buying from individuals in Washington that is also out of the question. Now I thought that among your horses you most likely would have one that would answer my purpose. I want one of some dark color, good size, tough & sound from 7 to 9 years old. I do not want a fancy horse, but a good serviceable horse.

FIGURE 4: Excerpt of an 1862 letter from Colonel Richard A. Oakford to Joseph H. Scranton. Courtesy of the Lackawanna Historical Society.

Grow's there will be no trouble whatever" (Fig. 5). The students also found several letters belonging to the family of George Peck, a Methodist minister and grandfather of author Stephen Crane. The correspondence includes a letter written by George's brother Andrew Peck, also a Methodist minister, in which he outlined his views on references to slavery in the Bible. Another

Bloomington, Ill.
 July. 14. 1862
 His Excellency
 A Lincoln. President U. S.
 My Dear Sir -
 I would
 like exceedingly, if consistent
 with your views, that you
 appoint my nephew, Joseph
 A. Scranton, of Scranton, Pa.
 Collector for the Congressional
 district in which he lives -
 He lives in Luzerne Co.
 Pa. which is represented in
 Congress now by Col Henonick.
 B. Wright. - By the new appor-
 tionment, the County of Luzerne
 is placed in the district with
 Mr. Grow the Speaker -
 Joseph A. Scranton
 Esq. the father of this young

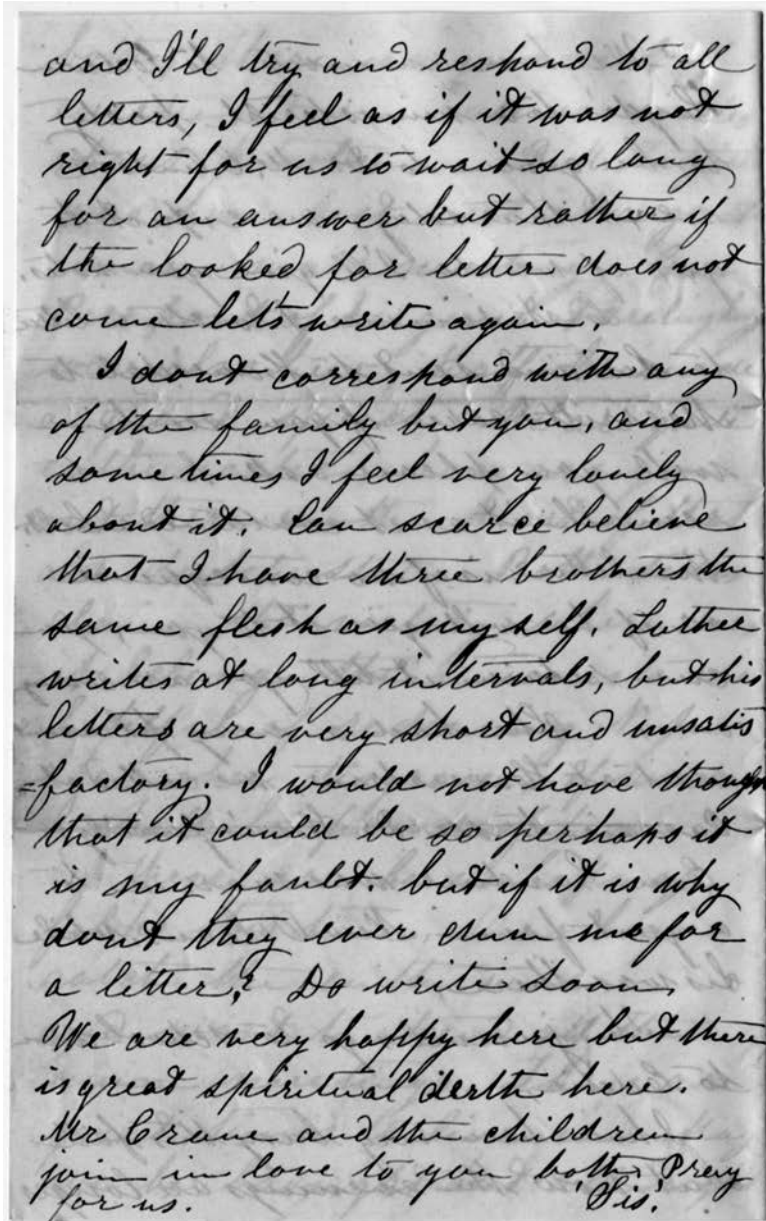
FIGURE 5: Excerpt of an 1862 letter from David Davis addressed to Abraham Lincoln recommending Davis's nephew Joseph A. Scranton for a civil service position. Courtesy of the Lackawanna Historical Society.

letter written by Peck's daughter Mary Crane, mother of Stephen Crane, describes labor union meetings taking place in New Jersey in the fall of 1864 (Fig. 6).

Students from group 2 began work at the historical society approximately one week after group 1. Group 2 was charged with assessing the condition of the documents and artifacts group 1 had uncovered, noting and reporting the presence and location of tears, discoloration, folds, wrinkles, or ink blotches. After examining the items, the students rehoused them for long-term preservation in protective Mylar sleeves and acid-free folders. They also completed loan forms so the items could be transported to the nearby Weinberg Memorial Library for digitization and transcription. Along the way, these students had to study and interpret the content and physical characteristics of primary sources.

Groups 3 and 4 were responsible for digitizing and transcribing the artifacts at the Weinberg Memorial Library. Working in pairs during scheduled shifts, group 3 students scanned each item and recorded important technical and administrative information, such as the equipment and settings used for digital capture, the date of digitization, and the format of the files they produced. Group 3 was, furthermore, responsible for standardizing the descriptive information provided by groups 1 and 2 so that dates and names would be consistent across the whole digital collection.

Once digitization was complete, group 3 transferred the digital files and original documents to group 4 for transcription. Group 4 was responsible for converting handwriting into searchable, machine-readable text. Working in pairs, group 4 students typed out transcriptions that retained the capitalization, punctuation, and spelling of the original items. They carefully noted words or phrases that were unclear or entirely unreadable, informing future researchers of possible gaps and inaccuracies in the transcripts. The students struggled with scrawling, cursive handwriting, unfamiliar abbreviations and terms, and "creative" spelling and grammar. With practice, however, they began to make sense of the texts they were trying to decode and to experience the thrill of the researcher in growing personally conversant with people of the past (see Fig. 7). Several students exclaimed over connections between the letters they were reading and the names of people and places they had learned about in class. For instance, learning about the staggering death toll at the battle of Gettysburg in class was one thing; transcribing the discharge paper for Sergeant Benjamin H. Crippen "by reason of death caused by gunshot wound" was quite another, bringing home the personal nature of the war for



and I'll try and respond to all letters, I feel as if it was not right for us to wait so long for an answer but rather if the looked for letter does not come let's write again.

I don't correspond with any of the family but you, and sometimes I feel very lonely about it. Can scarce believe that I have three brothers the same flesh as myself. Luther writes at long intervals, but his letters are very short and unsatisfactory. I would not have thought that it could be so perhaps it is my fault. but if it is why don't they ever cum me for a letter? Do write soon. We are very happy here but there is great spiritual death here. Mr Crane and the children join in love to you both. Pray for us.
D.S.

FIGURE 6: Excerpt from an 1864 letter from Mary Crane, mother of author Stephen Crane, to her parents, George and Mary Peck. Courtesy of the Lackawanna Historical Society.

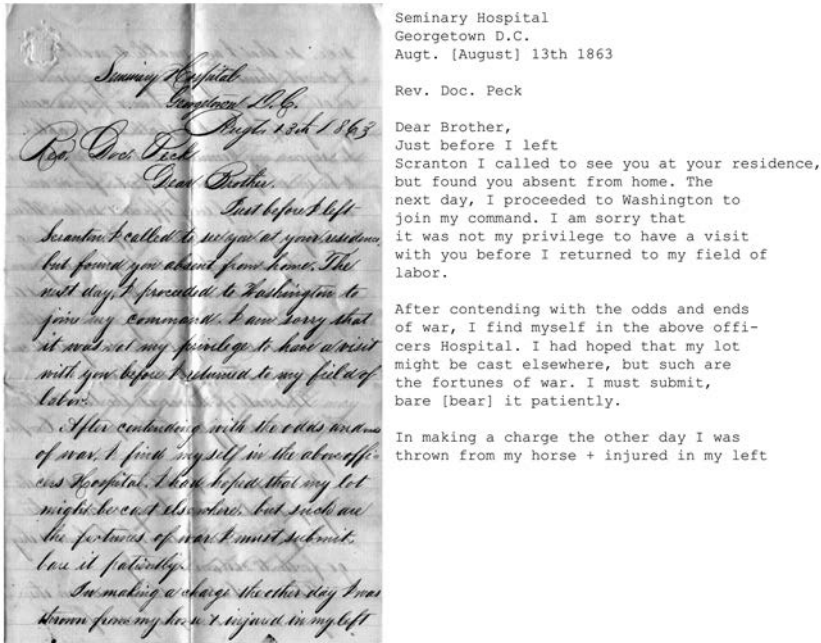


FIGURE 7: Excerpt of an 1863 letter from W. B. Herring to Rev. George Peck, with transcription by University of Scranton students. Courtesy of the Lackawanna Historical Society.

the students. While groups 1, 2, and 3 all engaged with the primary sources they found, preserved, and digitized, the students of group 4 had the most in-depth interaction with the texts, and they found it particularly gratifying to be able to connect local stories to the larger narrative of the Civil War.

After groups 1 through 4 completed their tasks, they presented their group experiences and findings to the class. They described their training and the skills they had acquired, reflected upon the local history stories that had most resonated with them, and explained the pleasures and tribulations of their rehearsed temporary professions. Importantly, the presentations afforded the members of group 5 the opportunity to gain an overview of the collection they would be organizing, as well as the process by which it had come together.

At this point, with just a month left in the semester, all of the digital images and their accompanying transcripts were given to group 5 for interpretation. Group 5 was charged with designing a web-based public interface that would help users search the digital collection and convey a

sense of the content it contained. Due to the time constraints of the class, and because few students had any experience with web design, group 5 prepared a mock-up of a website rather than a functional interface. Having already received guidance from an Everhart curator on interpreting primary sources for the public, group 5 reviewed other online collections of Civil War materials and then consulted with Yarmey on strategies for making digital content accessible, searchable, and user friendly. The students categorized the digitized items into themes (business transactions, death records, military records, personal correspondence, public documents, the Scranton family, and visual artifacts), laid out a home page with search and browse tools, and compiled photographs and presentation slides from their classmates to describe how the collection had come together. Group 5 students then presented the completed project to their classmates.

At the end of the semester, we returned the original documents to the Lackawanna Historical Society and transferred the digital collection files to the Scranton Public Library, where staff members selected the artifacts they wished to include in their collection. Out of the sixty-two items found and digitized during the project, fifty-four were uploaded into the Lackawanna Valley Digital Archives, approximately doubling the size of the “Out of the Wilderness” collection.³ In October 2011, the Lackawanna Valley Digital Archives formally launched, with “Out of the Wilderness” as its inaugural collection. As a result of the University of Scranton students’ work, these Civil War-era materials, previously uncataloged and accessible only to researchers who could physically visit the Lackawanna Historical Society, are now full-text searchable on the web, just a search box away from an interested public (Fig. 8).

Because of the unusual nature of the project and its many moving parts, we also designed several means by which to evaluate whether the project was meeting our learning objectives. Students provided informal comments on their groups’ progress at the beginning of each class, while we communicated regularly with our supervising partners. At the end of the semester, Meier also led a classroom discussion on the overall project. What we learned from monitoring the progress of each group and reflecting back upon the project was that we largely accomplished our learning objectives, but the project certainly had room for improvement.

Our first project objective had been to complement course content with first-person narratives. The students valued the experience of connecting local Pennsylvania perspectives to the larger wartime picture, remarking upon the

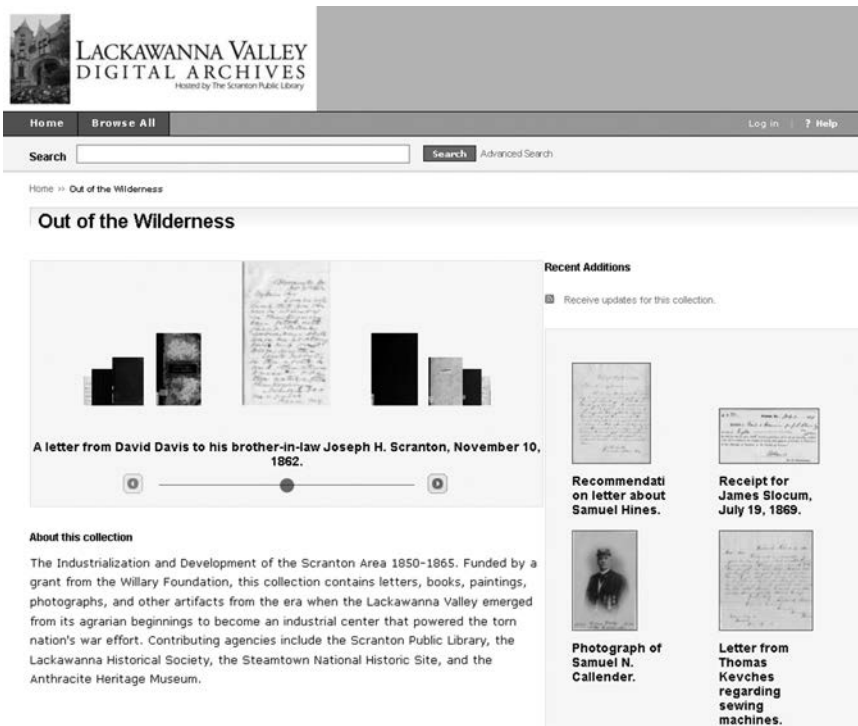


FIGURE 8: Lackawanna Historical Society items digitized and transcribed by University of Scranton students are now available to the public via the Lackawanna Valley Digital Archives (hosted by the Scranton Public Library at <http://www.lackawannadigitalarchives.org>). Courtesy of the Lackawanna Valley Digital Archives.

fact that, in some cases, life on the home front progressed with minimal impact from the war; in other cases, such as the deaths of a number of local men at the battle of Gettysburg, war changed Scranton forever. They also recognized the importance of framing the local history they uncovered in terms of the context they had learned through course lectures and readings. At the same time, the local primary sources brought the history learned in the classroom to life. The Battle of the Wilderness, for example, became more vivid because of a letter from a soldier who wrote of rescuing a fallen comrade from the forest fires that raged in the hand-to-hand combat of the Spotsylvania Wilderness.

Our second objective had been to introduce students to the complexities of working with primary sources. Handling the artifacts taught students the difficulty of reconstructing history from fragmented evidence and to

become more critical of what is presented as historical “fact” in textbooks. Items they might have once considered rubbish, such as receipts, suddenly became their only viable links to the local past. They began to learn firsthand the common problems with primary research—that many voices, especially those of women and African Americans, were often lost to the local record, while the voices that remained, often of more prominent male citizens, were fragmented and decontextualized. Students gained a deeper understanding of what primary sources are, where they may be found, and how their audience, purpose, and tone may differ from more familiar secondary sources. Furthermore, recognizing names and places from class lectures in the primary documents, they began to grasp the value of context, applying knowledge gained from their secondary source class materials to help them understand the primary sources they uncovered. At the same time, the project brought into clear relief the significance of archives and digital collections, not only to the class but to scholarship in general. In short, they discovered the arduous tasks of professional historians and archivists, while getting a taste of the painstaking process of assembling and creating knowledge.

Our third project aim was to expose students to careers in archives, museum studies, and librarianship and their related skill sets. Students in group 1 not only gleaned experience in the archives as historians, but, through the process of digging through the historical society files, were exposed to processing and arrangement challenges that are central to the archival profession. Group 2’s task introduced the students to archival preservation practices, such as proper handling and storage of fragile and unique primary resources, as well as the fundamental archival concept of provenance. As they worked, the students gained experience in recognizing the significance and potential uses of primary sources and gained an appreciation for the role archivists play in fostering historical preservation and knowledge. Group 3 learned the important role of digital librarians in providing online access to archival materials. Group 3 expressed surprise at the resource-intensive, time-consuming nature of digitization as well as at the attention to detail required for the creation and preparation of the descriptive, technical, and administrative information researchers rely upon to discover relevant information. Group 4 students had gained the most experience as historians, carefully reading the content of primary sources and pondering how the local stories they read fit into the larger picture of the Civil War. Group 5 learned about museum curation and the myriad interpretive decisions involved in designing meaningful public displays of artifacts.

Our final objective for the project had been for the students to contribute a valuable information resource to the local community. To assess this objective, we asked our community partners for their input and received positive feedback. The Lackawanna Historical Society stated, “The project was a great way for the LHS to uncover valuable primary documents and provide better storage and accessibility for the items.” The staff of the Lackawanna Valley Digital Archives described the project as a “great example of fortuitous timing and community cooperation” and noted that the “the fruits of [the students’] labor are available for all to see.” For the Everhart Museum, the project’s benefits were less informational than promotional: “The project was also very beneficial in bringing University students into our site and educating them about our mission and related activities.” All expressed interest in collaborating on more digital projects in the future.

From the instructor’s perspective, evaluating student content learning on the project proved the greatest challenge. While the digital project was only one component of the course, it did constitute 25 percent of the students’ grades. Content knowledge gleaned from lectures and scholarly reading was assessed as part of the broader course via two long-form essay exams. Student work on the project was evaluated via a group presentation about their task (40 percent) and a final reflective paper, which explained the students’ experiences and roles in their groups and connected their local history finds to the larger themes and readings of the course (60 percent). In retrospect, the greatest deficiency of the project was the lack of a long-form research paper that would have systematically analyzed the content of the artifacts. Such a project would have helped students learn to construct cohesive historical arguments from primary sources. Unfortunately, one of the challenges of digital history is the amount of time it requires to build an online resource. In this course, digitization and transcription were not completed until nearly the end of the semester, and the published digital collection was not available online until several months later, making it difficult for students to analyze the documents in a systematic way.

The students who expressed the most gratification with the project were in groups 1 (the Diggers), 2 (the Preservers), and 4 (the Transcribers). They had interacted most intimately with the primary sources. Group 3 students (the Digitizers) found their process arduous, leaving them with less time to read and analyze the documents, while group 5 students (Interpreters) felt they lacked the technical and creative skills necessary for collection curation. Part of their difficulty was that they had received training at the beginning of the semester during our group field trip to the Everhart, and their task did not

take place until the last few weeks of the semester. These deficiencies led us to consider the possibility that the entire class should have a more extensive opportunity to work with the primary sources, perhaps reserving digitization for library staff and replacing organization of the artifacts with a classwide end-of-term research paper on local history that utilizes the collection. Overall, however, the project was a success. It enabled students to venture outside of the classroom to learn about the underpinnings of historical research and experience the process by which knowledge is created.

Many of the opportunities digital history can provide for university learning remain unexplored. What truly set this project apart from similar endeavors was its explication of the archival experience for students, including the roles of historians (both traditional and public), archivists, librarians, and museum curators. While the project was not perfect, it successfully introduced students to local history, provided them with a range of skills, and even served as a window into a variety of career opportunities.

NOTES

We extend our utmost gratitude to our community partners: Mary Ann Moran-Savakinus, executive director of the Lackawanna Historical Society; Sara Strain, a Pennsylvania Conservation Corps member then stationed at the historical society; Nezka Pfeifer, curator at the Everhart Museum; and Scott Thomas and Martina Soden of the Scranton Public Library, project coordinator and collection manager for the Lackawanna Valley Digital Archives, respectively.

1. A fortunate confluence of events set in motion the initial design for this project. As 2011 was the first year of the Civil War Sesquicentennial celebrations, rising popular interest in the war meant that several of Scranton's cultural heritage organizations were featuring Civil War collections that spring. The city's Everhart Museum had assembled an impressive Civil War exhibit entitled *"With bullets singing all around me": Regional Stories of the Civil War*. Additionally, a group of five Lackawanna County heritage organizations, led by the Scranton Public Library, had jointly secured funding from the Willary Foundation to digitize Civil War-era photographs, maps, books, and artifacts for the "Out of the Wilderness" project, which would become the inaugural digital collection of the collaborative Lackawanna Valley Digital Archives. One of the contributing organizations was the Lackawanna Historical Society, whose unique nineteenth-century collections, knowledgeable, enthusiastic staff, and physical proximity to the University of Scranton were driving forces behind our project. Lastly, the university's own recent investments and efforts in digitization and digital collections, coordinated by the Weinberg Memorial Library, meant that the class would have access to equipment, software, and expertise from the library's Digital Services department.
2. "Out of the Wilderness: The Industrialization and Development of the Scranton Area 1850–1865," Lackawanna Valley Digital Archives, Scranton Public Library, Scranton, PA, <http://content.lackawannadigitalarchives.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/outwild>.
3. The remaining items were either deemed out of scope or not included due to copyright concerns.

THE BLOOD DEMONSTRATION: TEACHING THE HISTORY OF THE PHILADELPHIA WELFARE RIGHTS ORGANIZATION

Kim Gallon

Abstract: Despite a growing body of scholarship that documents civil rights activism in the North during the 1950s and 1960s, college educators continue to rely on traditional understandings of African Americans' struggle for civil rights as being rooted in the South. Moreover, history professors continue to privilege a male-centered narrative that tends to define the civil rights movement through mass marches and protests. In an effort to challenge this pedagogy, this article describes a method for teaching the history of women's role in the struggle for social justice in the 1960s through their participation in the Philadelphia Welfare Rights Organization (PWRO). Through the use of primary sources such as the *Philadelphia Tribune* and the PWRO's newsletter along with secondary sources such as Lisa Levenstein's *A Movement Without Marches*, this article offers a way to expand and complicate students' understanding of the civil rights and women's movements of the late twentieth century. Just as importantly, it assists teachers in stressing the significance of African American women's fight for equality in Pennsylvania history. Supplemental resources are posted on the journals' web pages.

*A*t 9:30 p.m. on a cool autumn night on Wednesday, November 8, 1967, a group of twenty-seven mostly African American mothers of young and school-age children quietly lined up at the Episcopal Hospital Blood Center in Philadelphia to donate their blood for

five to eight dollars a pint. A smaller number of local clergymen and social workers accompanied these women to stage what they described as a “Blood Demonstration.” These would-be donors were no ordinary women but leaders and members of the Philadelphia Welfare Rights Organization (PWRO) who were determined to call attention to the insufficient money allocated for clothing by the state of Pennsylvania for mothers and children through the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program. The Pennsylvania State Department of Public Welfare’s refusal to increase the clothing allowance for women on relief, according to the PWRO, had forced the women to sell their blood so that they might provide clothing and shoes for their children.¹

To the chagrin of the women, the center rejected all but two of the twenty-seven women’s donations due to deficient iron levels in their blood. A medical technician on duty that night informed the women that this was most likely due to inadequate nutrition and recommended that the women eat vegetables and red meat. In response to this advice, PWRO chairwoman Hazel Leslie remarked, “When you don’t have money . . . you eat hotcakes and gravy, and fried potatoes, and stewed potatoes.”² Her comments underscored the PWRO’s arguments that their welfare grants provided insufficient means on which to live. Yet, despite the setback, the women had made their point. News coverage of the demonstration motivated city and suburban residents to make thousands of dollars worth of donations to the women over the following few weeks.³

The women of the PWRO were not alone in their campaign for higher welfare benefits and for recognition of the difficulties they faced as poor mothers. The PWRO’s blood demonstration was one of the earliest protests connected to the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO); it would be followed by other crusades, marches, and sit-ins to call attention to the plight of poor women and children across the nation. The quest for welfare rights developed out of the antipoverty activism and social policy of the early 1960s, typified by President Lyndon B. Johnson’s “Great Society” programs. Johnson’s declaration of “war” against poverty occurred in the midst of a set of established and emerging social movements, including the civil rights movement, the gay rights movement, the women’s movement, and the activism of Students for a Democratic Society. These movements influenced and were shaped by welfare recipients’ struggle for recognition and for rights.

The blood demonstration and the story of the PWRO is virtually unknown to college students and is rarely taught, despite NWRO director George Wiley’s statement in 1971 that the PWRO was “the most dynamic local group in the country.”⁴ Ironically, the PWRO made such an impact

on politics in the 1960s that Laurence Geller, columnist and reporter of the *Philadelphia Tribune*, would pronounce in 1970, “the name of the Philadelphia Welfare Rights Organization (WRO) is well-known to everyone from ‘man-on-the-street’ down to the Governor of the State of Pennsylvania, and if they do nothing else from this day on their place in history is assured.”⁵ As prescient as Geller’s prediction may have appeared to him and his contemporaries, history has yet to find a spot for the PWRO.

As a historian of the modern United States, I teach the PWRO’s blood demonstration to undergraduate students at a small liberal arts college in Pennsylvania to create a place for the PWRO in the history of civil rights activism and the women’s movement. I often teach this topic in the second part of my African American history survey. In doing so, I make the history of the black experience in Philadelphia central to the larger narrative of African Americans’ quest for civil rights; the topic would also work well in women’s studies or history of social movements courses. Teaching about the PWRO broadens students’ understanding of activism and allows them to explore how the intersection of class, gender, and race generated specific types of actions focused on inspiring social change.

African Americans in Philadelphia in the 1950s and 1960s

Many students enter my class without a clear sense of a history of African Americans in the northern United States in the latter half of the twentieth century. They often associate this time period with the struggles of African Americans in the South—a reflection, perhaps, of historical narratives that tend to emphasize the southern civil rights movement as the hallmark of the African American experience. Nevertheless, the history of the black experience in northern locales such as post–World War II Philadelphia is beginning to come into sharper view. Thus, in an effort to help students contextualize the PWRO, I briefly lecture on African Americans’ social condition in Philadelphia in the middle of the twentieth century.

In 1967, when the PWRO staged its blood demonstration, Philadelphia was the fourth-largest city in the United States.⁶ The PWRO women and other African Americans were becoming an increasingly visible segment of the city’s population as their white neighbors left Philadelphia for developing suburban communities surrounding the city. I inform students that Philadelphia, like other major American cities in the North, had long been a

place to which many southern African Americans migrated, both to seek new labor opportunities during the world wars and to flee Jim Crow racism. By 1960 African Americans comprised over half a million, or over 26 percent, of Philadelphia's population. Black residents of North Philadelphia, the location of the blood center where the PWRO staged its protest, made up 69 percent of the neighborhood's population.⁷

In my lecture, I establish that African American poverty was highly concentrated, making it extremely difficult for black Philadelphians to escape the limits placed on them, even as a small number of African Americans experienced post–World War II economic prosperity. The interlocking systems of race, gender, and class created particular hardships for African American women. The challenges faced by black women in Philadelphia who relied on welfare to care for their children, I tell students, were compounded by deindustrialization and an increase in racially exclusionary housing in the mid-to-late 1960s. The women of the PWRO were calling on Philadelphia and Pennsylvania welfare agencies to make changes that might address these social inequities for women and children.

African American Women in Philadelphia and Welfare

My students tend to enter this class with significant preconceptions about welfare and its recipients. Many assume that individuals who receive welfare lack a work ethic. As Kaaryn Gustafson observes, "Mention the word welfare in a room full of people in the United States and you can expect to see brows furrow and mouths tighten in disgust."⁸ Usually, one or two students will also admit that they associate welfare with African Americans in general and black women in particular. Together, students and I explore the roots of these associations. Students typically reveal that representations of welfare recipients in the media and popular culture often drive their beliefs about welfare. Scholars who research social attitudes regarding welfare echo students' comments. Marisa Chappell reveals that politicians used images of the "welfare queen," the stereotype of an African American woman who purposely has children to receive monetary benefits from state welfare agencies, to justify cuts to welfare programs.⁹

I find that the best way to challenge students' negative preconceptions about welfare is to assign the chapter "'Tired of Being Seconds' on ADC" in Lisa Levenstein's *A Movement Without Marches: African American Women*

and the Politics of Poverty in Postwar Philadelphia. This reading provides a brief but helpful overview of the history of welfare for students. Early forms of welfare in the United States were associated with local charity and relief organizations, which sought to alleviate poverty among members of communities. However, Aid to Dependent Children, or ADC (later renamed Aid to Families with Dependent Children, or AFDC, in 1962), which originated in the Social Security Act of 1935, is the form of assistance that most Americans, including my students, associate with the term “welfare.” From the beginning ADC mainly provided federal grants to help states maintain their mothers’ aid or mothers’ pension grants, which forty states passed between 1910 and 1920. These laws mostly supported white, immigrant women with children and explicitly emphasized the idea that enabling mothers to care for their children was better than investing in institutional care via orphanages or workhouses.¹⁰

Levenstein also introduces students to the racialization of welfare in Philadelphia beginning in the late 1930s. By 1940, reports Levenstein, 62 percent of women on welfare identified as African American. This proportion increased to 85 percent in the early 1960s.¹¹ Contrary to the commonly held assumption, African American women’s increasing presence on the welfare rolls in Philadelphia did not stem from migration from the South. A one-year required residency in Pennsylvania actually made it quite difficult for new residents in the city to participate in the welfare program, and 65 percent of Philadelphia’s African American female welfare recipients in the 1960s reported living in the city for more than five years.¹² Students learn that structural conditions deeply steeped in racism, sexism, and classism compelled a growing number of African American women to seek ADC assistance.

Indeed, black women’s disproportionate numbers on welfare reflected that they were far less likely to possess assets—such as homes, automobiles, life insurance, and personal savings—that disqualified individuals from receiving assistance. Moreover, discriminatory and exclusionary labor forces kept African American women tied to domestic and seasonal work, which unemployment insurance did not typically cover. In essence, African American women found themselves seeking welfare because they had few or no other options.¹³ Despite this information, many students reveal in discussions that they view African American women as victims or African American families as dysfunctional. I also use Levenstein’s book to disrupt this tendency. The complexity of ADC recipients’ lives is revealed in her

analysis of a study of 239 Philadelphia welfare recipients conducted between 1959 and 1962 by Jane C. Kronick, a professor of social work at Bryn Mawr College.¹⁴ Levenstein's work allows students to hear the voices of African American women expressing their desire for gainful employment to care for their families. Students learn about black women's difficulties in finding work and how they were bound to low-skilled labor by their race, gender, and class. In other instances, students discover that the expense of safe childcare made working impossible for many women. If chronic underemployment and lack of childcare were not enough, students gather from the reading that disproportionate rates of poor health and injuries due to poverty also caused some women to resort to welfare to support their families.¹⁵

Levenstein argues that one of the most compelling reasons for African American women's decision to seek welfare assistance in the 1950s and 1960s was difficult interpersonal relationships with men who were former husbands and partners. Although 75 percent of the women on ADC indicated that they had been married at one point, many women had sustained broken and lost relationships by the time their names appeared on the welfare rolls. Women reported that the failure of these relationships strained already vulnerable financial situations and pushed them to apply for welfare. As single parents who often could not count on support from former husbands and partners, many African American women depended on ADC stipends to sustain themselves and their children. Even when black women found love, companionship, and support within their marriages, strict guidelines that forbade two-parent households from receiving assistance caused some couples to make the difficult decision to separate so that women and children could receive monetary support.¹⁶

The reasons for African Americans' disproportionate presence on ADC, then, were complex and often defy students' assumptions about African American women and welfare. To add greater emphasis to this point, I distribute a paper with quotes from Levenstein, such as "Women's status as single mothers enabled them to qualify for ADC, but it did not single-handedly push them onto welfare" (42), and "Women applied for welfare because they had exhausted all of their resources and ADC provided them with a more stable source of income than they were otherwise able to obtain" (46). I ask students to work in groups of three or four to discuss and list all of the ways that Levenstein supports these statements. Students find evidence from the book and cite page numbers for their classmates to refer to in the larger class discussion. Then, I ask the class to reconvene as a group

and discuss the quotations. As students identify support for Levenstein's statements, they become more informed about the historical discrimination that black women faced.

I also require students to read the introduction and chapter 4 of *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (1965) by then assistant secretary of labor Daniel Patrick Moynihan. The text, popularly known as the "Moynihan Report," helps students to understand that the evolution of the civil rights movement was accompanied by particular discourses on African American women, families, and poverty.¹⁷ President Lyndon B. Johnson's 1964 "War on Poverty," which included a set of laws dedicated to eradicating economic inequality in the United States, served as one of the driving forces behind the Moynihan Report. In the report, Moynihan argued that the demise of the black nuclear family was an emerging crisis that lay at the heart of the pervasive poverty found in heavily black-populated urban areas. High unemployment, low wages, and households headed by single women were, according to Moynihan, responsible for the breakdown in black family life.

I ask students to critically analyze the report's language and define terms such as "stable Negro family structure," "matriarchal structure," and "tangle of pathology"—phrases Moynihan employs in chapter 4. Having students engage with the Moynihan Report is crucial, as it helped to popularize stereotypes of African American single mothers on welfare—stereotypes that the PWRO's activism attempted to challenge. The Moynihan Report offers me an excellent opportunity to help students locate the root of the stereotypes they all can cite about welfare. Reading *The Negro Family* also encourages students to make connections to Levenstein's work and to consider whether the women and children she discusses are representative of the family structures described in Moynihan's report. Finally, I ask students to explore the sources of poverty in black communities that both Levenstein and Moynihan point to in their work. I encourage students to analyze the reasons both authors supply for the persistence of disproportionate rates of poverty in black communities in the 1960s by asking them to compare how their conclusions are similar and different.

African Americans and Civil Rights in Philadelphia

To prepare students to discuss black women's activism in the PWRO, I provide them with a broad overview of the history of African Americans'

struggles for civil rights in Philadelphia. As Matthew Countryman writes in the opening of his book *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia*, “Philadelphia is rarely depicted as a significant place in the history of the modern civil rights movement.”¹⁸ However, an installment of the documentary series *Philadelphia: The Great Experiment* entitled “The Fight: 1965–1978,” which I show to students, highlights African Americans’ involvement in civil rights as a key component of the city’s history.¹⁹ The episode helps students understand how black women of the PWRO fit within a tradition of African American female activism in Philadelphia. Greater details of civil rights activism in Philadelphia in the 1960s are presented in Countryman’s essay “Why Philadelphia?” included in *Civil Rights in a Northern City: Philadelphia*, an online archive of over 1,500 digital primary sources.²⁰

Countryman’s essay is illustrated with photographs of African Americans in Philadelphia involved in various forms of activism, including the Columbia Avenue riot in August 1964, which sparked looting and vandalism of predominantly white establishments in the heavily populated African American community, and the Girard College protest in 1965, which called on the school to desegregate. Both events, argues Countryman, challenge students to consider the civil rights and black power movements from a Philadelphia-centric perspective.²¹ While Countryman successfully chronicles key events in the history of civil rights activism in Philadelphia, his essay and the site as a whole still focus on a conventional civil rights agenda centered around the desegregation of educational and public institutions. The challenge I often face in teaching students about the PWRO is in moving beyond a conventional, male-centered view of civil rights history and inserting the PWRO into the history of African American social activism. I have found that the best way to do this is to ask students to comment on the photographs in Countryman’s essay and make observations about how activism is defined through the images. Then, I ask students to suggest other ways that struggles for social change might occur and who would be at the center of these battles. Focusing on the photographs accompanying Countryman’s work helps me transition to the history of the PWRO and the blood demonstration.

The Philadelphia Welfare Rights Organization

Because the PWRO has yet to receive a full treatment in the scholarship on the welfare rights movement, I provide students with the history of

the organization. The drive for a national welfare rights movement reached Philadelphia with the incorporation of the PWRO at its founding conference on April 21, 1967. However, the PWRO had local roots that predated the national movement. Philadelphia's early push for welfare rights grew out of Crusade for Children, a coalition of clergy, social workers, and welfare recipients committed to increasing public assistance in Pennsylvania; the group was established by the Philadelphia Health and Welfare Council (HWC) in 1966. While the Crusade for Children was not the first organization to advocate for Philadelphia's poor, the HWC developed Crusade for Children in an effort to respond to the War on Poverty's premise that the poor should have a leading voice in antipoverty programs. Despite this, as Countryman has pointed out, the leadership of the Crusade for Children initially consisted of far more middle-class activists than welfare recipients. Two recipient-led demonstrations during the summer of 1966 would change this, however, and spearhead the development of the PWRO.

First, on June 8 1,000 impoverished mothers and children marched on the Pennsylvania state capitol to demand that legislators increase public assistance grants.²² Later that month, on June 29, 500 mothers and children, along with activists, held an all-night vigil in front of the Pennsylvania State Office Building in Philadelphia. Approximately 135 individuals picketed and carried signs to bring attention to the national effort to get the federal government to increase monthly welfare subsidies.²³ Two photographs from this demonstration depict African American women at the center of the demonstration. African American women's participation in the march challenged stereotypes surrounding poverty, blackness, and motherhood and asserted their right to state support to care for their children (Figs. 1 and 2).

I give students printouts of the photographs and tell them to write a caption for each based on what they see and what they have learned from their prior reading. This activity allows students to apply what they have learned and also serves as a way for me to evaluate their interpretive skills. The photographs also make it easier for students to understand how the Crusade for Children organization evolved into the PWRO in 1967. Swept up by the growing voices of local antipoverty groups across the nation, Philadelphia welfare recipients attended meetings in Chicago in the months following the June 1966 demonstrations to discuss the developing national welfare rights movement. That following spring, three hundred welfare recipients from ten chapters across the city and their supporters met at the opening conference of the PWRO.²⁴

THE BLOOD DEMONSTRATION



FIGURE 1: PWRO demonstrators marching, Broad and Spring Garden Streets, June 29, 1966. Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries, Philadelphia, PA.

I ask students to read an article from the *Sunday Philadelphia Bulletin* for a fuller picture of the organization. The article is striking in its detail and length; it serves in some sense as a history of the organization's early years. Predominantly made up of and led by poor and working-class African



FIGURE 2: PWRO demonstrators marching, Broad and Spring Garden Streets, June 29, 1966. Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries, Philadelphia, PA.

American women, the PWRO also included white middle-class activists serving in the John F. Kennedy Volunteers in Service to American (VISTA) program. Hazel Leslie, the first chairwoman of the PWRO, reported that the group welcomed anyone at their meetings and found that both men and women attended meetings to seek advice and support in dealing with public assistance agencies.²⁵ The organization charged between one and four dollars for yearly membership, which included a membership card and a subscription to the PWRO's monthly newsletter, *Straight Talk*.²⁶ Yet, with such low yearly membership dues, the PWRO required additional financial support to operate. Donations and associate memberships from middle- and upper-class city and suburban residents made up for the shortfall caused by the low membership rolls and affordable dues.²⁷

I also assign students to read the PWRO's "Summary of Goals" statement, which outlines different levels of the government's responsibility to support poor women raising children. The document reveals that the PWRO's

primary objective was to call on the state of Pennsylvania to increase public assistance grants to 100 percent of the minimum requirement established by the State of Pennsylvania; the state government should “Immediately allocate \$70 million more to increase Public Assistance Grants to 100% of the minimum standard of health and decency and establish annual adjustments for changes in the cost of living.” In 1967, Philadelphia’s AFDC grants were 71 percent of the Pennsylvania standard.²⁸ The government had, according to the PWRO, a responsibility to financially support poor women raising children.

The PWRO also argued for the need for welfare recipients to be treated respectfully and equitably by their caseworkers.²⁹ In the months preceding the blood demonstration, the PWRO filed a petition with the Philadelphia County Board of Assistance that listed thirteen complaints of mistreatment by caseworkers toward AFDC recipients. Approximately two hundred people staged a protest in front of the State Office Building to support the petition.³⁰ PWRO members saw their advocacy for radical systemic transformation as intricately connected to their protests against the regular slights and insults they faced in welfare offices across the city. As the “Summary of Goals” reveals, the PWRO believed that their “aim to improve the total welfare system at every level of government” would guarantee “Dignity—Full freedom, rights and respect accorded others.”³¹

Depending on the number of students, I divide students into groups and assign each group a section of the “Summary of Goals.” For example, I ask the first group to summarize the “Federal Government” section of the document and list the things the PWRO believes the national government should do to help them achieve their goals. After each group completes its section, I ask a group leader to report back to the entire class. I follow up by asking students if they believe the PWRO’s goals are similar to the ones established by civil rights movement groups. Students learn how the civil rights movement served as a model for other groups’ activism and organization, including the PWRO’s.

Another way I help students gain a greater understanding of the PWRO is to have them examine an issue of the organization’s newsletter, *Straight Talk*. While many of the PWRO’s calls for change were intended for state agencies and programs, direct protests to the federal government are also evident in the newsletter. The September 20, 1967, issue provides a list of activities the organization was involved in during the first year of its existence. An article on the first page reveals that members of the PWRO had traveled to Washington, DC, to support the national organization’s testimony against

an “anti-welfare bill” that would include a work requirement for welfare recipients, including mothers with small children, as well as stipulations that would freeze welfare rolls. The PWRO called on its readers to “send telegrams immediately” to their federal and state representatives. Other evidence of the PWRO’s involvement at the national level is evident in the newsletter’s account of six PWRO delegates who attended the first National Welfare Rights Convention.³²

Even more importantly, the newsletter documents the PWRO’s repeated attempts to advocate for special grants for poor children’s school clothing in the months prior to the blood demonstration. According to the newsletter, members of the PWRO met with the head of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare to propose that it not pay the maximum amount of rent for welfare families to the Philadelphia Housing Authority in order to supply the money necessary to fund the clothing grant for schoolchildren. The PWRO newsletter also noted that the organization was able to get the department to investigate charges of discrimination against welfare recipients applying for housing with the Philadelphia Housing Authority.

I ask students to read articles from local newspapers, which also document the PWRO’s activities. Doing so helps students understand that the most effective protest and advocacy tactics the PWRO developed involved highlighting the challenges faced by poor mothers who, through no fault of their own, could not work. PWRO members understood that stereotypes about African American women influenced much of the public’s perceptions about welfare. In order to overcome the stigma imposed on them, PWRO members disclosed personal details about their lives to stress their commitment to work and their high moral values. PWRO president Hazel Leslie revealed to a news reporter that a doctor ordered her to stop working for fear of complications arising from her diabetic condition. As a single parent to her nine-year-old niece and daughter, Leslie explained, she received less than thirty-eight dollars a week to care of herself and her child. Out of that amount, Leslie noted, she paid fifty-eight dollars monthly for housing.³³

A narrative such as Leslie’s undermined the pervasive idea that welfare recipients lacked initiative and drive. When students read the article featuring Leslie’s story, they gain a greater sense of the struggle she and other African American welfare recipients experienced. Students often remark on Leslie’s resiliency and clear rejection of stereotypes. At one point in the article, Leslie remarks in frustration, “It gets so exasperating sometimes . . . I wish I could get drunk.” Without missing a beat, though, she adds, “But that’s only

for respectable, rich folks.”³⁴ Playfully sarcastic in tone, Leslie’s comments highlight the role class plays in defining respectability. She understood that, as a welfare recipient, her alcohol consumption would be viewed as a moral failure whereas the drinking habits of her affluent counterparts would not. Leslie’s full disclosure of her private life and her critique of classism in American society helps spark a discussion among students about the rhetorical strategies that PWRO members employed to generate attention to their cause. The PWRO’s blood demonstration dramatized the gravity of welfare recipients’ situation even further and catapulted welfare rights into the eyes of Philadelphia residents.

The Blood Demonstration

Historians have barely discussed the PWRO’s blood demonstration, just as they have rarely touched on the history of the organization. To compensate for this void in the historiography, I ask students to read newspaper articles about the demonstration from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Philadelphia Tribune*. The publications’ articles on the demonstration provide a frame for a comparative analysis of the blood demonstration with the nonviolent strategies of the southern branch of civil rights movement. Civil rights activists’ participation in nonviolent protest was effective in highlighting the injustice of racism and forcing the public to grapple with issues in American society, rather than fixating on violent resistance against discrimination. With this idea in mind, students might consider the following questions: Did the blood demonstration function in the same way as the nonviolent resistance tactics of the southern civil rights movement? What separates it from other civil rights activism? Who were these events designed to target? What is the significance of donating blood? Before students can begin to answer these questions, however, I provide them a brief overview of the events leading up to the blood demonstration to help contextualize the newspaper articles they have just read.

In September 1967, PWRO members met with Secretary Thomas Georges, head of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, to discuss their request to cover school clothing and supplies for poor children through one-time grants of seventy-five dollars per child for the school year. Welfare recipients’ small monthly stipends, as they regularly pointed out, could barely house and feed them, let alone provide for their children’s

school supplies. At the meeting Georges acknowledged that welfare recipients did not receive enough in their monthly grants to allow for clothing and other things needed for schoolchildren. Still, Georges recommended that the PWRO lobby state legislators to vote for the increase, despite its suggestion that Georges's office stop paying the Housing Authority maximum rate for welfare recipients' housing to make it possible to award the seventy-five-dollar grants.³⁵

Two months after the meeting with Georges, the PWRO learned that state officials had denied its request. To protest the state's decision and to bring attention to their circumstances, PWRO members developed a plan to sell their blood. PWRO leaders called the media to announce their plan, knowing they would need sufficient publicity to highlight their financial needs. Yet, as several PWRO members pointed out, the decision to sell blood went beyond a protest tactic. Many of the women intended to use the money earned from selling their blood to purchase clothing and shoes that the seventy-five-dollar grant would have helped them buy. One of the few women who passed the health requirements necessary to have her blood drawn happily remarked, in reference to the payment she received, "They'll buy a pair of shoes for my oldest son. . . . He'll have them first thing the morning. He's wearing sneakers to school now, and it's too cold for that."³⁶ The blood center's rejection of most of the women's blood due to health issues was a blow that struck the women as particularly painful. Although donations would make up for the loss of money for the majority of women who failed to sell their blood, Leslie, who expressed her gratitude, stated, "if people really want to help us in the long run, we are asking them to write to their Congressmen and help us change some laws."³⁷

After providing them with the details of the demonstration, I ask students to conduct a comparative analysis of the *Inquirer's* and the *Tribune's* coverage of the story. The *Inquirer* was considered to be a mainstream newspaper with a large white readership; African Americans made up the *Tribune's* main audience. Students should keep this in mind as they read the articles, noting differences in the way the articles present the story. While the *Inquirer* used the word "scheme" to describe the PWRO's actions, the *Tribune* heavily emphasized the PWRO's activism and reported the group's objectives and future plans for organizing. The headlines of the articles also played into the different depictions of the demonstration by the papers. The *Inquirer's* headline was "Can't Even Sell Our Blood," while the *Tribune* reported, "Mothers on Relief Sell Blood to Buy Children's School Clothing."³⁸

The variation in coverage is emblematic of how white and black newspapers covered civil rights activism in the 1950s and 1960s. White papers' coverage of civil rights activism was often less strident than black papers and depicted African Americans more often as victims than as actors.³⁹ Students are often surprised to discover that the *Tribune* featured the story on the second and third page of two issues, respectively, while the *Inquirer* published the story on the front page of both issues. The *Tribune's* regular and longstanding coverage of African American civil rights activism made the blood demonstration an important story but perhaps not a lead one, given much of the other civil rights and social activism occurring at the same time. Another idea I explore with students is whether black newspapers chose to not cover the demonstration on the front page for fear of reinforcing stereotypes about African American women and welfare.

I continue this line of thought as I instruct students to examine the *Inquirer's* and *Tribune's* photographs of the blood demonstration to help them gain deeper insight into the event's ability to bring about social change and challenge stereotypes of welfare recipients. The *Tribune's* photograph depicts a group of PWRO members before they entered the blood center to make their donation (Fig. 3). The women's stance and powerful gaze into the lens of the camera defies the stereotype of the shiftless mother that has come to dominate the discourse around welfare. I ask students to recall Levenstein's book and compare the *Tribune's* photograph with the women featured in her work or Moynihan's portrayal of African American women. The *Inquirer's* photograph offers another way for students to consider how these women were depicted. A picture of a woman with a small child was accompanied by a caption that revealed that the woman in the photograph was caring for the child of a mother who was waiting in line to sell her blood. The *Inquirer's* photograph indicates that the PWRO's activism depended not only on individual women's initiative but also on support networks—for example, women willing to care for other PWRO members' children while they engaged in activism. I encourage students to develop analyses that demonstrate how the two photographs work together to construct a historical record of an event and how both can be interpreted very differently.

The articles and photographs reveal to students that PWRO members claimed and used their status as mothers to demand state assistance as a right. At the same time, their tactics shamed Philadelphia residents and created awareness of poverty in the city. PWRO members, as largely black and poor women, redirected public attention from negative stereotypes and recreated a



THE "BLOOD DEMONSTRATION"
sponsored by the Welfare Rights Organi-
zation last Wednesday as they move on to
the Episcopal Hospital Blood Center to

"sell" blood. The mothers complain that
they do not receive enough money for
clothing for their children from the State
Department of Public Welfare.

FIGURE 3: Mothers participating in the blood demonstration and their children. *Philadelphia Tribune*, Nov. 11, 1967. This image is courtesy of the *Philadelphia Tribune*, America's oldest historically black newspaper and the Greater Philadelphia region's largest newspaper serving the African American community. Digital images produced by ProQuest LLC as part of ProQuest® Historical Newspapers. <http://www.proquest.com>. Digital facsimiles of the articles are published with permission of ProQuest LLC. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

sympathetic portrayal of welfare recipients.⁴⁰ Students are often disappointed to learn that even after the blood demonstration, the state welfare department did not award PWRO members a special clothing allowance. I help them understand, however, that the demonstration nevertheless assisted the PWRO in establishing a tradition of innovative protests and lobbying activism. Newspaper coverage reveals that the group, just one week after the blood demonstration, picketed the Pennsylvania State Office Building in Philadelphia to protest the proposed cutbacks to the "Operation Alphabet" program, which provided welfare recipients with allowances for childcare, clothing, and transportation expenses so they could attend school and develop skills that would make them more competitive in the labor market.⁴¹

The PWRO would also picket landlords who refused to rent to welfare recipients or leased them substandard housing, campaign local department stores to extend credit to PWRO members, and lead eight hundred welfare recipients to march on the state capitol to call on the state appropriations committee to approve the governor's proposal to raise welfare grants from 71 percent to 90 percent of the minimum family requirement.⁴²

Conclusion

As we move further away in time from the modern civil rights movement in the United States, it is important to develop alternative and diverse narratives of African American activism. Educators must make it difficult for students to view African American activism as solely a southern movement with figures such as Martin Luther King Jr. at its center. This hardly means that traditional narratives of civil rights activism must be eliminated. Indeed, educators can help students open up critical and analytical spaces for the coexistence of multiple histories about African Americans' quest for equality and rights.

Teaching students the history of the Philadelphia Welfare Rights Organization holds great potential for broadening students' understanding of the centrality and significance of social movements in the 1960s and the ways they inspired other movements for change. Perhaps more importantly, teaching about social change through the actions of poor African American women shows students how power does come from below.

NOTES

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2015 ANNUAL MEETING CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The Pennsylvania Historical Association invites proposals for its 2015 Annual Meeting to be hosted by Lebanon Valley College, Annville, Pennsylvania, October 8-10, 2015.

The program committee welcomes and encourages proposals on all aspects of Pennsylvania and Mid-Atlantic history.

In addition, the committee invites submissions on the theme "Rethinking Pennsylvania History in the Digital Age," as well as those focusing on events commemorated in 2015, including, but by no means limited to, the convening of the Second Continental Congress, the conclusions of the War of 1812 and Civil War, and the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act and the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Sessions may focus on pedagogy, public history, or material culture as well as traditional historical scholarship. Full session proposals are strongly preferred, but the committee will also consider individual paper proposals. The committee also invites proposals from undergraduate and graduate students for poster sessions. Proposals must be submitted electronically by March 1, 2015 to:

<https://sites.google.com/site/pha2015meeting/home>. All participants must be members of the Pennsylvania Historical Association at the time of the meeting.

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