

History Department Website Archive

History Students Attend American History Seminar at the Russell Kirk Center

On April 9, 2011, nine Aquinas history students journeyed to Mecosta, Michigan, to attend an American history seminar at the Russell Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal. At this daylong event, arranged by Dr. Pinheiro for his Federal Union and American Religious History classes, students got the chance to dine with Annette Kirk at the late Dr. Russell Kirk's home, explore Dr. Kirk's vast library, and hear lectures by leading scholars on Alexis de Tocqueville and Orestes Brownson.

Dr. Bruce P. Frohnen, a Senior Fellow at Kirk Center, spoke on Alexis de Tocqueville. Also a visiting associate professor of law at Ohio Northern University College of Law, Dr. Frohnen is a Tocqueville scholar who also has published widely on Edmund Burke and the American conservative tradition. His talk was entitled, "Religious Liberty and the Soul of American Politics." Dr. Frohnen explained that Tocqueville tried to orient democracy toward virtue and community despite its inherent impetus toward radical individualism and utilitarian values. Tocqueville, according to Frohnen, understood how the lack of an established church in America allowed religion to play a full role in local life, thereby contributing to the maintenance of a public spirit and a natural community that neither requires nor requests control from the outside.



Dr. James Gaston, associate professor of history and director of the Humanities and Catholic Culture Program at Franciscan University of Steubenville, spoke on "Orestes Brownson and the American Republic." Dr. Gaston explained how, in The American Republic, the philosopher Brownson sought to recapitulate the

founding idea of the United States, which was liberty under the law. Like Tocqueville, Brownson also was concerned with the tension between the individual and the state in what he called a "territorial democracy."

The Russell Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal is a nonprofit educational institute based in Mecosta, Michigan, home of the American writer and thinker Russell Kirk (1918-1994). Continuing in the tradition of Dr. Kirk, the Center's mission is to strengthen the foundations - cultural, economic, and religious - of Western civilization and the American experience within it. The Center's efforts are directed at students, business and religious leaders, policy makers, and the general public. It identifies, educates, and mentors thoughtful men and women, and develops and promotes the writing of both established and emerging thinkers. Getting the wonderful opportunity to attend Kirk Center seminars is just one more advantage to being a history major at Aquinas College.



Pictured at left, (left to right) back row: Mark Murray (President of Meijer, Inc., and Catholic Studies Advisory Board Member),

Elizabeth Murray, George Wissmiller, Allyson Putt, Bruce Miller, Sam Johnson, Jason Beurkens.

From left to right, front row: April Spangler, Angela Batts, Roger Gonda, David Clark, Dr. Pinheiro, Annette Kirk

Students Earn Field Experience in History

As part of their education at Aquinas College, students majoring or minoring history have the opportunity to earn up to three semester hours for hands-on experience in fields related directly to history (See HY397: Field Experience in History). Working as an intern at a museum or an interpreter at an historic park gives students a broader education beyond the classroom. Field experience also provides students with a first-hand experience in the many types of careers open to those who possess a B.A. in history, such as preservation, archival work, interpretation, etc. Field experience also better enables future success for those who wish to pursue graduate studies in Public History.

In the past three years, seven students have interned at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum in Grand Rapids, others at Mackinac State Historical Park:

Jonathan Grobbel (history major): Being an intern at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum has given me

real world experience and has applied my education to the real world where I will soon be looking for a job. It has given me a head start by teaching me real job skills. Whether you choose to take your internship for college credit, like me, or take it just for the experience, you gain knowledge that will help to build your career and help you choose what job you want to get when you graduate. Aquinas has one of the best internship programs around. Everyone I talk to is very impressed at how well organized and informative our Career Services department is. I would highly recommend an internship to help "jump start" your career.

Stephanie Defouw (history major): Starting out as an intern at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, I was thrown into the chaotic world of exhibit rotation. After taking down one temporary exhibit, cleaning a missile for the lobby, and helping to put up the new "America in the Cold War" exhibit (all within the first 3 weeks) things finally slowed down a bit. Since then, I have re-rolled the quilts and textiles in the collection, completed records for artifacts in the collection on the computer database, accessioned new items into the database, helped to clean a few of the permanent exhibits (including the Oval Office), written a couple of blurbs on some of the more interesting artifacts in the collection for the Curator's Favorites section on the website, and even had the chance to take a day trip to the Ford Library in Ann Arbor. My experience at the Ford Museum has not only been incredibly valuable, but also incredibly fun, helping me to learn new skills while enjoying every second.

Nicholas Klein (history major): The internship at the Ford Museum was one of the best things that happened to me while at college. It was so fun to learn and work with the staff at the museum and it really helped me make my decision to follow a museum career path. The experience will be something that I never forget!

History Student visits Erie Maritime Museum and U.S. Brig Niagara

By: John LaCross

As a supplement to my research on the Battle of Lake Erie for Dr. Pinheiro's HY 401 Senior Research Seminar, I visited the Erie Maritime Museum and U.S. Brig Niagara in Erie, Pennsylvania, during spring break. Erie was the site of the construction of Oliver Hazard Perry's fleet which defeated a British squadron on Lake Erie during the War of 1812, securing America's northern border along the Great Lakes rather than the Ohio River as the British had hoped. I would venture to say that the battle was decisive in assuring that Aquinas College is located in Grand Rapids, Michigan, rather than Grand Rapids, Ontario!

The museum itself was fascinating, featuring many exhibits and, most interestingly, a live fire exhibit. The museum performed a novel study in the destruction of naval gunnery by constructing a portion of a ship's hull and firing upon it with carronades (short cannon) loaded with varying sizes of shot up to 32 lbs. The devastated hull section was on display in the museum. The highlight of the visit, though, was the Niagara itself, a traditionally built and fully functioning replica of Perry's relief flagship during the battle. The brig, when fully rigged, as it is when it sails the Great Lakes and the Atlantic seaboard during the summer months, is 198 ft. long and its main mast towers 118 ft. in the air. Pacing the weather deck on which 20 deadly guns were once mounted and hunching over beneath the 5 ft. clearance in the cramped spaces below deck where 155 men once ate and slept brought me closer to the Age of Fighting Sail than I had ever been.



More importantly for my research, the museum housed many important primary documents which related to the battle. I was able to explore Perry's correspondence and the sailing log of his initial flagship, the Lawrence, which suffered over 80% casualties during the battle, along with the museum's collection of rare books. The Director of Education at the museum graciously collected pertinent resources for me and lent me five volumes of transcribed primary documents which I found very useful and interesting.

My visit to Erie both personalized the history I was studying and provided important sources to guide the development of my work.

History Alumnus Now at Boston National Historical Park

By: Brandon A. Sexton



I spent the summer of 2006 as an Historical Interpreter at Historic Mill Creek, in Mackinaw City, which is part of the Mackinac State Historic Parks. I worked as a lumberjack, showing how the felling axe and broad axes were used.

I took a round log, scored it with the felling axe, and then would hew the log with the broad axe. This allowed me to get a square beam to cut into board or frame a house. This process takes about one hour and a half, with a 20 foot long beam.

To cut the log into boards, they would use ramps to get the beams onto a sawhorse and cut it into boards using a pit saw. Two men working all day 12-14 hours would cut about one board every 30-45 minutes. They would use this process to construct houses on the frontier or to get beams to frame a building. This process would be used before the sawmill was built or if the sawmill was just too far away to be practical.

In the pictures above, the axe I am using when I am on top of the log is the felling axe. The two person saw is the pit saw. When I am standing on the sawhorses I am the tillerman, and the person underneath in the period clothing is the pitman. It is the tillerman's job to guide the saw, and the pitman does most of the cutting.

My job at Mackinac helped increase my interest in history, and allowed me to share that love with others.

(Editor's Note: After graduation in 2009, Brandon earned an M.S. in Industrial Archaeology, Michigan Tech. He now works as a Museum Specialist with the Boston National Historical Park - www.nps.gov/bost - and the Boston African American National Historic Site - www.nps.gov/boaf.) His job entails being the the museum collections manager for both sites, plus all their disparate holdings at numerous locations around the city.)

History Major Awarded Fellowship

By: Jenny Coulon



My name is Jenny Coulon and I am a senior History major at Aquinas. I was given the opportunity to go to New York City under the Gilder Lehrman History Scholars Finalist Program. I had to turn in an application along with a sample of my historical writing, two letters of recommendation and a resume. I was chosen with forty other students out of over hundreds of applicants for the one week program in NYC, all expenses paid. There were students from all over the country, all serious history majors interested in pursuing a career in history. The point of the program was to foster an interest in American history.

We were housed in downtown NYC at the Columbia University dorms. We had walking tours everyday, led by an

American history professor from Princeton University. We were given tours of colonial New York, the Gilder Lehrman Historical Archives, downtown Harlem, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the New York City Public

Library archives, the New York Historical Society archives, and Central Park. We were given access to primary documents such as Paul Revere's drawing of the Boston Massacre and Abraham Lincoln's "House Divided" speech.

In addition to the historical walking tours, we also were given the wonderful opportunity to hear lectures from prominent historians. We heard lectures from Kenneth T. Jackson, Ric Burns, Pauline Maier, Gordon Wood, Ira Berlin and Sophia Lynn. The historians lectured to our group on their field of expertise in American history. We were also given the books they had published, completely free of charge. We were given the chance to ask questions, meet the historians and discuss the topics risen. Ira Berlin and Pauline Maier gave the most riveting talks, on slavery and then on the Declaration of Independence. We also had a panel discussion about graduate school led by students currently enrolled at Columbia University.

This was the best experience I have ever had. I am so grateful to have been given the opportunity to participate in such a program. It allowed me to get a good idea of what other careers there are in history. I also learned so much from the historians and the walking tours. The experience can never be duplicated. The program comes around once a year (application begins in the spring) and I strongly encourage all history majors with American history as their specialty to apply.

(Editor's Note: Jenny is now a Social Studies teacher at a Detroit Country Day Middle School in Michigan.)

Where Are They Now?

The Aquinas College history department has had a fine track record in recent years of launching students into careers in education, journalism, law, and other fields.

For frequent updates from alumni, visit the [History Department's Facebook page](#).

- Kristin Anderson-Bricker ('90), Ph.D., Associate Professor of History & Director of the Honors Program, Loras College
- Cassandra Armstrong ('04) Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme
- Mike Battaglia, Employee in GIS Dept. of Ducks Unlimited
- Jacob Baum ('05) Ph.D. Program in European History, University of Illinois
- David Berault ('96) John Marshall Law School, Chicago
- Elizabeth Chamberlain ('07) Ph.D. Program at Wayne State University
- Jenny Caylen (Coulén) ('07) Social Studies Teacher; M.A. Student at Saginaw Valley State Univ.
- Matthew Clark Dual Enrollment in Masters of Public Administration and M.A. in the Social Sciences, UM-Flint
- Stacey Dearing ('09) M.A. Student in Early American Literature at Auburn University
- Michael Deeb ('57) Author of Duty and Honor
- Andrew Demshuk ('02) (Ph.D., 2010, University of Illinois), Assistant Professor of German History, Univ. of Alabama-Birmingham
- Rachel Drenovsky ('92) M.A. Learning Center Coordinator, Michigan Supreme Court
- William Eberle ('10) Junior Staff Member, Senator Debbie Stabenow, Washington, D.C.
- Matthew Garner ('05) Marquette University, School of Law
- Andrew Giguere M.A. in Geography from Ohio University; M.S. Students in GIS at Eastern Michigan University
- Maria "Lupita" Garza-Grande ('01) M.L.S. Indiana University

- Christopher Hekman ('02) Wayne State University Law School
- Sandra Kay Hines ('05) Pastoral Associate, St. Pius X Church, Grandville
- Kristen Kaniewski ('03) Graduate studies, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago
- Ashley King M.A. Program in Higher Education and Student Affairs; M.A. in Geography
- Paul Konggaard ('05) Thomas M. Cooley Law School
- Matt Krevda ('05) Graduate studies, University of Southern Indiana
- Brandon Lacic ('04) Editor, Ionia Sentinel-Standard, Ionia, Michigan
- Joe Leestma ('09) M.A. Student in Latin American Studies at University of New Mexico
- Meghan Luckett ('01) Soccer Coach, Embry Riddle Aeronautical University
- Jonathan Marko, Esq. ('05) Law Clerk to Chief Justice Marilyn Kelly of the Michigan Supreme Court
- D. Wade McConnell ('98) Attorney, Siebers Mohny, Plc.
- Nate Mehren ('04) Musician & Producer
- Marius Nielsen ('01) M.A. in Medieval History, Western Michigan University
- Traci Jarka Parker, Student, Calvin Theological Seminary
- Andrea Petz ('03) ESL Teacher
- Lars Petzke ('03) American Studies Program, University of Alabama
- Jordan Raubolt ('04) Journalism School, Columbia College, Chicago
- Christopher Roof National Guard
- Ragan Savara ('03) Syracuse University, College of Law
- Tonya Schafer ('02) Technical Writer, Smiths Aerospace, Grand Rapids
- Brandon Sexton ('09) Museum Specialist with the Boston National Historical Park and the Boston African American National Historic Site.
- Jason Shoup ('01) M.A. Program in Medieval History, Western Michigan University
- Luke Sprunger ('11) M.A. Program in Public History, Portland State University, w/Caroline P. Stoel Editorial Fellowship at the Pacific Historical Review
- Tim Streasick M.A. Program in Education

Prof. Pinheiro Presents Book to President Bush



(left to right) Ted Crackel, Christine Patrick, President Bush, Philander Chase, John Pinheiro, Bruce Cole

On April 29, 2005, Prof. Pinheiro discussed presidential history with President George W. Bush in the Oval Office at the White House. The occasion was the publication of an 800-page book containing George Washington's correspondence that he co-edited while assistant editor of the "Papers of George Washington," a grant-funded project at the University of Virginia.

The small delegation included Prof. Pinheiro's co-editor, Christine Patrick, a past and current editor-in-chief, and Bruce Cole, chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

The historians spent about 30 minutes discussing Lincoln and Washington, the presidents Bush most admires (in that order). About history in general, Bush remarked that presidents who worry about their legacy are worrying about the wrong thing and failing to do their job because they're too busy worrying about their legacy. "A president can't take criticism personally. If he does, he will be unable to make decisions because he will always be second guessing himself." A president has to do his job and let historians worry about the legacy.

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