

For Middle and High School Students of History

Spring 2023

A Partner of HISTORY®

Issue XLVII



Estelle Laughlin was born in Warsaw, Poland and came to the United States in 1948. She is a former 6th grade teacher and is the author of *Transcending Darkness: A Girl's Journey Out of the Holocaust*.

History illuminates the way out of ethical darkness. I learned this fact as a young person in the Warsaw Ghetto, in the extermination camp Majdanek, and in two slave labor camps. Of course, when I was ten through fourteen years of age, I did not yet understand that when you lose everything, your memories and

the collective memories of your people become your possessions and guides.

I had just turned ten when Germany invaded Poland. Four weeks of heavy air raids set my city in flames and reduced blocks in my street to desolate holes of rubble. The marching thunder of invaders' boots against cobble stones, the clang of rifles, soldiers' arms swinging in unison as if pulled by one fanatical thread still haunt my dreams.

My once peaceful streets were soon patrolled by foreign soldiers. They shouted hatred and contempt; snapped whips in our streets and houses; they slapped, kicked, and ripped beards off the faces of my neighbors. They cut off electricity, rationed all food and water, closed our schools, and made books illegal.

To make life more unbearable, they built a thick wall to isolate us in a ghetto and packed the area with Jews driven out of surrounding communities. The number of refugees far exceeded the available housing and food. Most died in the streets

of cold and starvation. Corpses, tragic heaps of corpses, littered our streets.

Yet, in this hell we found inspiration to not surrender our will to live, to mobilize our resolve to resist tyrannical laws, and to live according to the dictates of our conscience. Our inspiration came from history and tradition—the universal link to eternal values.

Just as our ancestors who were imprisoned in ghettos continued to create their own culture, so did we. Immediately, people in my community marshaled forces and instituted a far reaching Self-Aid Center to help the needy and to preserve quality of life.

Like the Maccabees in ancient times, we resisted barbaric ordinances. To own a book—a capital crime—was an act of defiance, and many defied. During night—windows blackened to keep our existence secret—in a small room illuminated by flickering carbide light, my father read to us his favorite stories about ancient Pharaohs, about

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Haman and Nebuchadnezzar, and life in old shtetls. The distant stories became real and immediate, the heroes as familiar as my best friends.

Memory of historical precedents and principals of morality gave us courage to carry on our traditions. In protest to strict bans, we celebrated holidays publicly. On Passover, the courtyard committee made sure there was matzo in every house.

We had no food, our lives teetered on a sword's edge, yet people sat at tables in dark rooms writing. For some, the pen was a weapon of resistance. Some wrote to mobilize spiritual strength. Others felt compelled to leave records for history to remember. Twenty years after the Warsaw Ghetto was annihilated, Chaim Kaplan's brilliant historical diary was found carefully preserved in a kerosene can. We cannot help but feel awed by the price these heroes paid to remind us what can happen to the conscience of a nation, what can happen to love and trust.

The voices of ordinary people who struggle to hold on to traditional values, to love, and to kindness, too, must be preserved for history to inspire us. Even in barbed-wire isolation in concentration camps—where no one could hear us, and we had no paper or pencils to record our thoughts—the women in our barracks gathered on bare bunk planks to tell stories and compose songs. Our words sanctified simple moments when life was good; they cried out against injustice and kept our souls and hope from dying.

The impulse to imprint human experiences for posterity is instinctive and essential for survival. It is passed down by word of mouth, expressed in poetry and prose, music and art, and inscribed upon the face of the earth by ancient traces and fossils. We must observe and listen thoughtfully and compassionately, if civilization is to progress.

In gratitude to the victimized people who paid the supreme price to live by their values, and for the inspiration they gave me to survive the Holocaust whole—with love, compassion, and joy of life—I volunteer at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Speakers Bureau, and the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center. I am honored to make my humble contribution to the two institutions dedicated to keeping truth alive and visible, so that we can find our way out of ethical darkness.

History always remembers. ■



The Concord Review would like to receive outstanding history research papers by high school students, on any historical topic, ancient or modern, domestic or foreign.

TCR has published exemplary history papers (around 9,000 words with endnotes and bibliography) by nearly 1,500 secondary students from 46 states and 45 other countries in 136 quarterly issues since 1987.

Find more information at: <http://www.tcr.org/submit>

Access to the NHC network, which includes chapters in 46 states and over 18,000 members, is a great benefit of joining the NHC. We encourage you to read about other chapters in your state or across the country and explore new opportunities! To explore specific sites click on the bolded text to be redirected!



Houston County High School (GA) traveled back in time last month to Renaissance Faire where they got to enjoy period theatre, crafts, entertainment, and unique food.



Humphreys High School (DoD School - South Korea) went on a DMZ tour of the 38th parallel between North and South Korea in April. Here you can see them standing by the house both countries have used to negotiate in over the years that looks over into North Korea.



Moline High School (IL) History Club members made handouts, tri-folds, and presented to the student body at their school about careers that exist in the history and social studies fields.



Caddo Magnet High School (LA) in front of the replica of the Old French Fort St. Jean Baptiste that was manned by French marines until their defeat in the French and Indian War.



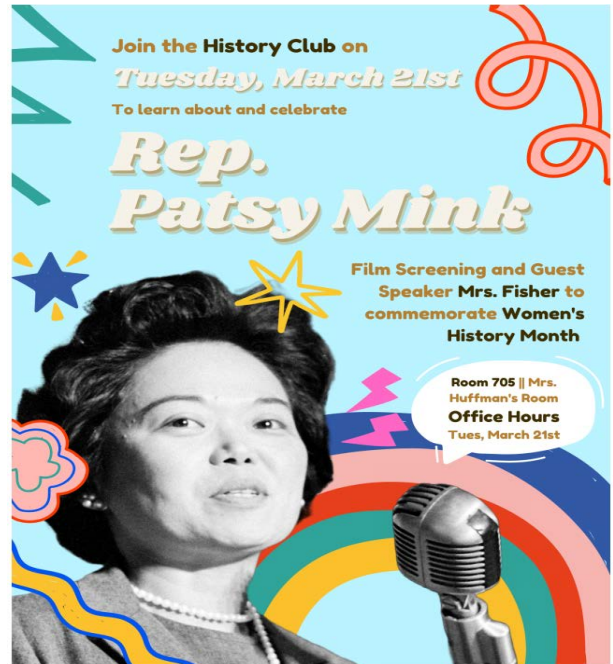
Bishop Brossart High School (KY) on a tour of the Culbertson Mansion, which was built in 1867 during the Gilded Age and is located in New Albany, Indiana by the Ohio River.



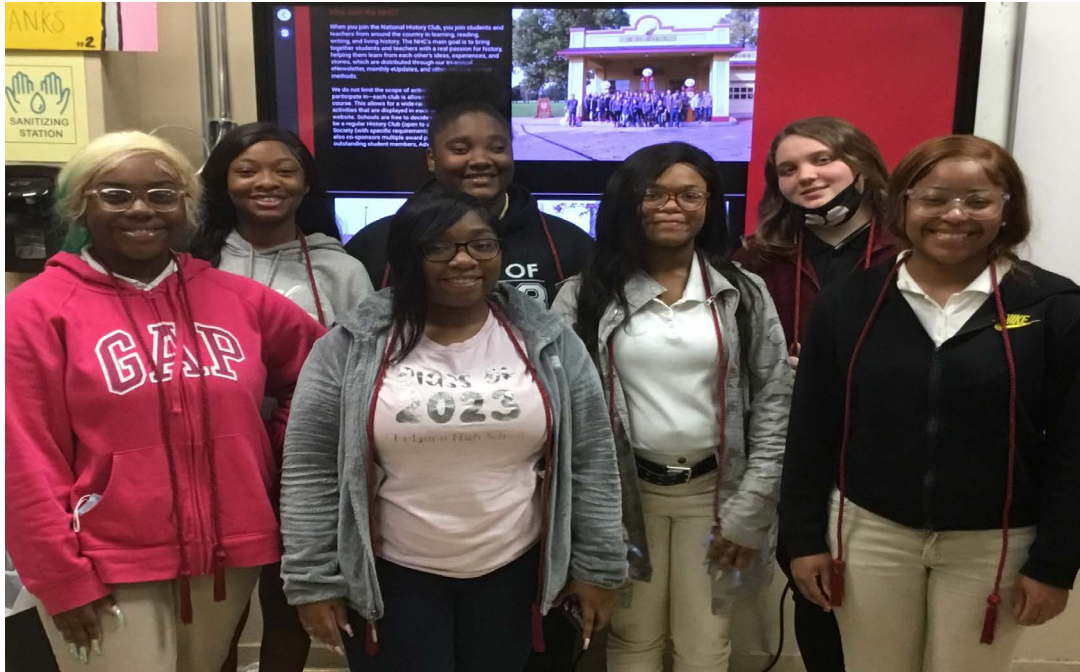
Rainier Jr/Sr High School (OR) held their 11th annual Rainier Revisited day this past April, for community members to get a look at life in 1853 in their town. Students dressed up in period era attire, presented period era crafts, and even held a hands-on blacksmith demonstration.



The First Academy's (FL) first formal National History Scholars Society induction ceremony with Advisor Jessica Damron (left) and Co-Presidents Enzo Sioson & Greer Reineke at the podium.



Cannon School (NC) hosted an event for Women's History Month, where they watched a documentary on Patsy Mink, the first woman of color in Congress who also was instrumental in helping to pass Title IX.



Charleston High School (MS) senior inductees into the National History Scholars Society, from left to right, are Lakeria McCord, Keasia Prince, Chelsey Cashaw, Dexteny Suggs, Audrenna Richardson, Sarah Smith, and Lamaya Tellis. Not pictured is Tatiana Cashaw.



Richlands High School (VA) was active in their community this year. They traveled to their local community college and had the opportunity to listen to Bill Barker and John Ragosta, who are both experts on Thomas Jefferson. They also recently took a trip to the D-Day Memorial in Bedford, VA and in this photo they are at Jefferson's Poplar Forest.



Frankton High School (IN) held a Local History Day where they took three student groups on a shuttle tour of their community, stopping at several locations and sharing local history. Among their stops were two "pioneer" cemeteries, one in which is buried the founding father of their town (there are actually two of his descendents in the Club), and the other in which a headstone stands for May Berry, who was born and raised in Frankton and then enlisted to serve in the Red Cross as a nurse during WWI. She was the first American woman to die in WWI when she died in France.



James C. Enochs High School (CA) journeyed to Japan in March for a truly extraordinary, life-changing experience. Throughout the entirety of the trip, they were able to participate in an array of traditional Japanese activities, visit an abundance of historical sites, including ancient temples and shrines, and indulge in a delicious variety of foods. The trip was made possible through the direction of EF Tours, and a film crew even documented the personal experiences of many students on the trip.

HISTORY STUDENT OF THE YEAR

This Spring the NHC and George Washington's Mount Vernon again co-sponsored the "History Student of the Year" prize. Each chapter chose a recipient for this award, and s/he received a copy of the Pulitzer Prize winning *The Revolutionary: Samuel Adams* by Stacy Schiff. This is the 19th year of the partnership between Mount Vernon and the NHC to sponsor this prestigious award. To view recipients please visit this [page](#) on our website.

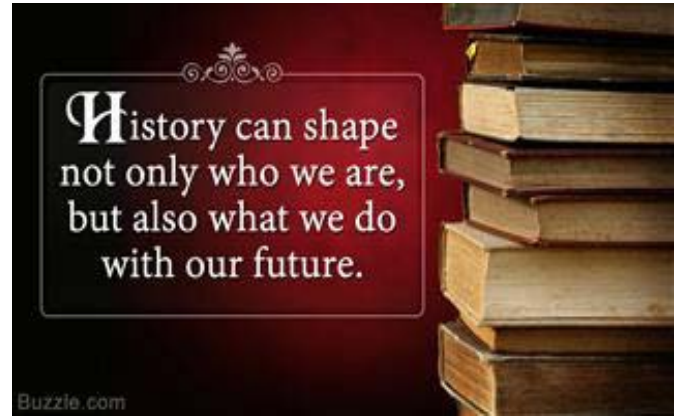
Mount Vernon is the most popular historic estate in America. The estate, gardens, and farm of Mount Vernon totaled some 8,000 acres in the 18th century. Today, roughly 500 acres have been preserved, and visitors can see 20 structures and 50 acres of gardens as they existed in 1799, as well as the tombs of George and Martha Washington. Mount Vernon welcomes over 1,000,000 visitors each year.



Forsyth Country Day School (NC) Advisor Ed McBride with History Student of the Year William Cavanaugh.



The NHC is proud to have the support of over 60 college history departments! We hope that any of our members who are interested in majoring in history in college will visit a college's website listed down below to find out more about the history department and its offerings.



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|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| American University | Loyola University Chicago | University of Alabama |
| Barnard College | Marquette University | University of Alabama Birmingham |
| Baylor University | Massachusetts Institute of Technology | University of Chicago |
| Boston College | Mount Holyoke College | University of Colorado |
| Boston University | New York University | University of Georgia |
| Brandeis University | North Carolina State University | University of Iowa |
| Carnegie Mellon University | Northwestern University | University of Illinois |
| Dartmouth College | Ohio State University | UMass Amherst |
| Centre College | Princeton University | Umass Lowell |
| Georgia Tech University | Rhodes College | University of Michigan |
| Gonzaga University | Rice University | University of Mississippi |
| Fordham University | Rochester Institute of Technology | University of North Carolina |
| Franklin & Marshall College | Santa Clara University | University of Pennsylvania |
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| James Madison University | Southern Methodist University | University of Rhode Island |
| Johns Hopkins University | Southwestern University | University of Texas at Austin |
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| Lewis and Clark College | Stony Brook University | University of Vermont |
| Louisiana State University | Suffolk University | Vassar College |
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NATIONAL HISTORY CLUB

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HarperCollins Publishing	Bill Haponski
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History 500	Elizabeth Jones
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National World War II Museum	Guy Rogers (Professor, Wellesley)
Omohundro Institute of Early American History	Henry Seng
Organization of American Historians	Art Snyder
Parkview High School (GA)	Rick Sperry
Penguin Random House	Lisa Wingate

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