

**American Institute  
FOR HISTORY EDUCATION**

*"Well done is better than well said"*

# The AIHE Gazette

Vol. 4, Issue 5, May 2009

**May's Featured  
AIHE Historian:**

**Dr. Thomas Connors**

University of Northern Iowa • [thomas.connors@uni.edu](mailto:thomas.connors@uni.edu)



As a historian, I tend to think geographically. I enjoy nothing more than reading a landscape for clues about its history and examining how the past has marked the land.

All history is local, to paraphrase Tip O'Neill. My interest is how it is commemorated, or why it has been forgotten.

In almost any community, the richest landscape of memory is its cemetery. Strolling its grounds, you can determine much about the community's age, economy, class divisions, immigrant and religious groups, and find memory of its sacrifices, heroes, and tragedies. Its monuments will show the progression of architectural styles in marble, granite, iron, and zinc. Even its landscape reflects the tastes of each period. You may find the improvisation of pioneer burial grounds, the rational grid of the Enlightenment, tangled paths of Romanticism, pastoral ponds of the Victorians, or sterile lawns of 20th century memorial parks, each speaking of an era's beliefs about nature, beauty, and death. It is, of course, the most recent era, our own, that casts a cloud over anyone intrigued by cemeteries, those who breach a deeper taboo against acknowledging death.

I've been working on Teaching American History (TAH) grants for many years, and have had the opportunity to get to know a lot of the country in the process. At many sites, I've had the chance to research and lead a historical tour of a local cemetery, putting its landscape into broader historical context, while highlighting its unique qualities. Through the American Institute for History Education (AIHE), I've developed tours of cemeteries in Bakersfield, Calif., and Dubuque, Iowa, churchyards in Swedesboro, N.J., and a campo santo in Corrales, N.M. This summer I hope to add an Idaho graveyard to that list. The rich and diverse historic landscapes of these places express each community's character and together reflect the rich regional diversity still to be found across the nation.

I do have some interests beyond the cities of the dead, of course. I'm passionate about using a wide range of primary sources to engage students in learning about history. I've presented on using the Blues for teaching the Great Migration, Thomas Nast cartoons for the Gilded Age, and speeches for the 1960s. In Albuquerque, N.M., we listened to 19th century Irish songs of immigration. I've talked about Civil War military strategy and analyzed some of its cartoons, songs, and speeches with teachers in North Dakota and Indianapolis. With the Dubuque grant, we followed up talking about Industrialization, Immigration,

and Political Machines with a daylong tour of Chicago's South Side. For the Clovis, Calif., grant, we looked at how the Civil Rights Movement has been commemorated in preparation for the teachers' field-study trip to the South this summer.

I grew up in suburban Chicago and have been interested in American history since I was a boy, thanks to good teachers and my parents, who took us to historic sites when we traveled. After high school, I went to study history at Washington and Lee University in Virginia. There, my first experience in an archive sold me on being a historian. I spent a semester researching how McCarthyism affected the relationship between Eisenhower and Marshall in Marshall's papers (housed in the Marshall Library on the Virginia Military Institute campus). Upon graduation, I taught freshmen and sophomore history at Mount St. Michael Academy, a Catholic high school in the Bronx. Afterward, I completed a doctorate in history at the University of Illinois in Urbana. Since 1996, I have been responsible for the University of Northern Iowa's History Education program, teaching its Methods course as well as classes in American, British, and Irish history. I've served as president of the local historical society, and I am active in the city's historical preservation issues. I've been piloting a service learning experience where our undergraduate majors explore public history by volunteering at local museums and archives. This year students have inventoried a one-room schoolhouse, developed a plan for interpreting a historical mill site, transcribed college letters from the 1910s, created a guide to Cedar Falls' historic houses, and indexed a local high school teacher's scrapbook documenting her students' service in World War II in letters and newspaper clippings.

My own research has ranged on topics from early modern Ireland to 19th century America. I've edited letters of an Irish rebel exiled in Tasmania and published

See **CONNORS**, page 4



**American Institute  
FOR HISTORY EDUCATION**

*"Well done is better than well said"*

**1514 Kings Highway  
Swedesboro, NJ 08085  
856-241-1990**

# Teachers from the Governor Livingston TAH Grant Share Their Experiences



**Pamela Isaacs, Deerfield School  
— Mountainside, N.J.**  
(6th Grade Ancient World History)

Participating in the Governor Livingston Liberty Fellowship the past three years has been an amazing experience. I have gained a renewed interest in exploring the connections between American history and ancient history with my students. Every colloquium and trip I have attended has invigorated my teaching techniques and my knowledge base.

I have had the privilege of learning from some of the most renowned professors in the country. The tools and information that are imparted on us during our session are invaluable. During our trips, we are given tours that seem to jump right out of the pages of history. It is as if we have been given a backstage pass to the past.

I cannot even begin to explain how much the past three years have impacted my teaching experience. But I have adapted and continue to use many of the tools I have gained from this valuable practice. It has given me the opportunity to participate in the sharing of ideas with people from other schools, given me access to many programs for use in my classroom, and has expanded my knowledge of American history exponentially. It has been and continues to be a wonderful experience.

[PLsaacs@mountainsideschools.org](mailto:PLsaacs@mountainsideschools.org)



**Ken Karnas, Watchung Hills  
Regional High School —  
Warren, N.J.**  
(12th Grade U.S. History II)

A year and a half ago when I began the school year I was enjoying everything that comes with being a first-year teacher. I was experiencing the myriad of feelings that, assuredly, all first-year teachers go through.

In October of that year my supervisor asked me if I was interested in participating in a professional development opportunity to further my understanding of U.S. history. I had very little sense of what this prospect would entail. At the time, I was uncertain as to how big of a commitment I would be making if I said yes. After all, I was concerned that it would preoccupy my time, which for a first-year teacher is minimal.

Despite these feelings, I quickly lost all reservations after my first seminar with the Governor Livingston Liberty Fellowship. The program has given me invaluable opportunities that have increased my content knowledge in U.S. history as well as my performance in the classroom. It is not often that one gets the chance to listen to and interact with acclaimed historians from throughout the country. The chance to listen to Dr. Alan Brin-

kley discuss FDR and the Great Depression or Dr. Ralph Young discuss dissent in America quickly made me realize I had made the correct decision in joining the program. In addition, I also have taken advantage of the field-study trips to Gettysburg and Washington D.C., which have allowed me to see some of the most historically rich places in the country. The new historical perspectives offered by these historians and the field-study trips have helped build my confidence as a new teacher and have allowed me to bring engaging stories back to the classroom.

These were just some of the advantages of the program. I also acquired new teaching techniques that have been helpful in applying my newfound knowledge in the classroom. After all, having historical knowledge is one thing, knowing how to effectively teach it is another. While the Governor Livingston Liberty Fellowship program was particularly helpful to me as a new teacher, the insights and resources provided by the program have undoubtedly been beneficial to all teachers involved.

Through my participation in the Governor Livingston Liberty Fellowship I have recognized the importance of continuing my own education outside of the classroom. It has been a fresh reminder of why I do what I do — teach.

[kkarnas@whrhs.org](mailto:kkarnas@whrhs.org)



**Mary Hillebrenner,  
Dr. Antonia Pantoja School  
#27 — Elizabeth, N.J.**  
(7th Grade U.S. Civics, 8th Grade  
World History)

Since November 2006, American history aficionados such as me have broadened their knowledge base of key American conflicts by participating in a three-year grant offered by the American Institute for History Education (AIHE). The Governor Livingston Liberty Fellowship is facilitated by Mr. Ron Nash, retired colonel of the United States Army and retired history teacher at our host's campus in Berkeley Heights, N.J. A group of teachers representing several New Jersey districts was brought on board in an effort to form a cadre of American history experts who would lead young minds through the use of Binary *Paideia*, song, interpretive recollections, and primary sources. (I am from the Elizabeth, N.J., district, which is home to the largest high school in America.) This program has been so well thought out and effective, it has brought the best instructional methodology to my students through me.

The first year, entitled "The Empire versus The Colonies" saw visits from history scholars from many parts of the country, several of whom are published authors. Animating American history using unique perspectives, such as Dr. Dennis Denenberg's masterfully executed puppet show, to Dr. Bill Ross' word clues and "bracketing history" as an aid to help students remember

See **LIVINGSTON**, page 4

# National Constitution Center Provides a Hands-on Educational Experience for Teachers

A workshop at the National Constitution Center is a perfect fit for recipients of the Teaching American History (TAH) grant. The Center serves as a museum, an education center, and America's town hall on constitutional issues. It is located in Philadelphia — only steps away from Independence Hall. Workshop participants can see and experience all the area has to offer, and in doing so, gain a deeper understanding of the materials presented at the Center.

A TAH workshop at the National Constitution Center begins with the Center's signature theater presentation, "Freedom Rising", which brings the story of the U.S. Constitution to life in a dramatic and engaging way. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor deemed the presentation "the best 17-minute civics lesson in the country." Teachers can then tour the Center's main exhibition, The Story of We the People, with a member of the education staff, who will explain the many ways in which the exhibition can be incorporated into the classroom. The tour ends in Signers' Hall, a stylized evocation of the Assembly Room where the signers of the Constitution met. The room contains life-sized bronze statues of the 42 delegates to the Convention, and is an excellent place to discuss American history and the importance of deliberation. Periodically, the Center also hosts traveling exhibitions, which

can be incorporated into the workshops.

Following the visit through the museum, teachers are introduced to the Center's education philosophy, which is designed to promote active citizenship through a comprehensive framework for civic learning, comprised of civic knowledge, public action, and democratic deliberation. The Center also shows how educators can easily apply the civic learning framework to their teaching. Workshops can be custom tailored to fit specific grant topics, and a featured presentation will simulate a lesson related to the workshop theme. In the Joseph and Marie Field Resource Room, participants can access teaching materials for all grade levels related to American history, government, and civics, as well as online resources developed by the Center and other institutions across the country, such as the National Archives.

These workshops are facilitated by the Center's Education Manager, Lauren Cristella, who has served in this capacity for the past three years. The most rewarding part of the job, in her eyes, is working with teachers from around the country and having a positive impact on them and their students. "I have a dream job providing an experience that excites teachers," Lauren says. She particularly enjoys making connections between the founding of the Constitution and contemporary issues, so that both teachers and students can understand and appreciate the ongoing relevance of our history.

Through engagement with the Center's talented staff and a wealth of educational materials, teachers will leave a TAH workshop with resources and new methods for their classrooms. For more information about hosting a TAH workshop at the National Constitution Center, please visit the Center's web site at [www.constitutioncenter.org](http://www.constitutioncenter.org) or contact Lauren Cristella at [lcristella@constitutioncenter.org](mailto:lcristella@constitutioncenter.org).

---

**"I have a dream job providing an experience that excites teachers."**

— Lauren Cristella,  
*The National Constitution Center's Education Manager*

---



Lauren Cristella



Teachers gather inside the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia.

# Tea Party Chronicles a Boy's Journey Through Time to Preserve a Historic Event

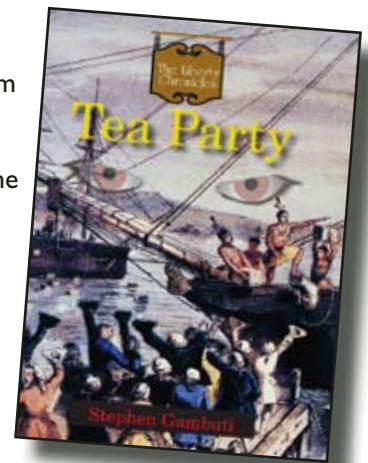
*The Liberty Chronicles: Tea Party* is an engaging adventure that will turn young readers into future historians. This historical novel, designed for fourth- and fifth-grade readers, is the first installment of what will be a series chronicling events of the American Revolution.

This novel was written to engage students in learning about one of our country's first steps toward the American Revolution while keeping their interest through the world of fantasy.

The main character, Timmy, is a middle school aged boy who is tossed back into the year 1773 by a book known as *The Liberty Chronicles*. Little does Timmy know that there are evil forces attempting to reverse historical events so that they can rule the world. Our junior time traveler discovers it is his job to make sure that the Boston Tea Party happens just the way it did in the pre-revolutionary days of the American colonies.

*The Liberty Chronicles* takes students on a fantasy adventure and educates them at the same time about life during the colonial period. Students love to compare the modern schools to that of the colonial period.

Author and middle school teacher Stephen Gambuti has also created several activities to accompany *The Liberty Chronicles*. Both the activities and the novel have been "kid" tested and "teacher" approved in several classrooms.



*The Liberty Chronicles: Tea Party* is available at the AIHE Bookstore by visiting [www.aihe-bookstore.com](http://www.aihe-bookstore.com).

From **LIVINGSTON**, page 2

important dates and facts showed that history can be exciting. The fellowship's field work included an outing to Philadelphia, where we were greeted by Governor Livingston "in character."

Year two proved to be as enriching as the first year. Dr. Ralph Young, professor at Temple University and noted author, enriched the fellows' knowledge base by offering viewpoints of the "Antebellum Reform Movements" and "Slavery and Its Expansion." Introducing the use of primary sources as effective methods for teaching adolescents as well as the use of [www.cicerohistory.com](http://www.cicerohistory.com) was confirmation that there is so much more than the textbook, which should be used interchangeably with other sources to create a sense of excitement and enthusiasm for history students. The talent of Steve Missal, by singing American history, showed yet another way to get the message out. Our field work brought us to Gettysburg, Penn., where we spent three days under the direction of the knowledgeable Ken Gavin of AIHE.

Now in the final year of the grant, our Fellowship examined the Great Depression (and comparisons to recent economic events), and the events that led up to and into World War II. Our field-study trip was to Washington D.C., where we were able to visit many sites such as Frederick Douglass' house, Abraham Lincoln's Cottage at the Soldiers' Home, and George Washington's Mount Vernon home.

The discovery that primary sources, hands-on experiences and alternate methods of learning and teaching has certainly not only broadened my knowledge, but is now an integral part and everyday conscious decision when I walk into my classroom.

[hillebrennerma@edu.elizabeth.k12.nj.u](mailto:hillebrennerma@edu.elizabeth.k12.nj.u)

From **CONNORS**, page 1

articles on religion in Reformation Ireland and Washington Irving and the landscape of Sleepy Hollow. My current research is on using cemeteries as teaching tools, exploring how their geography, architecture, and symbolism reflect cultural divisions and eras.

Besides my delight in exploring the nation's historic landscape, I most enjoy the chance to meet and learn from teachers across the country. Perhaps the greatest accomplishment of the AIHE TAH grants has been to create communities of history teachers by bringing them together to share their ideas and enthusiasm. Like the rest of AIHE's presenters, I feel lucky to be able to share in those communities.



Experience the newest interactive resource from AIHE that will help teachers infuse the African-American journey -- filled with social, political and economic contributions -- into their U.S. History classes.

[www.sojournerhistory.com](http://www.sojournerhistory.com)



Demo a **FREE TRIAL** at [www.TryCicero.com!](http://www.TryCicero.com)