

Fall 2003

## History at SUNY Brockport Fall 2003

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### Recommended Citation

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## A NOTE FROM THE INTERIM CHAIR

It gives me great pleasure to be able to add this prefatory note to our newsletter, and to once more get in touch with our growing list of correspondents.

I last held this position from 1983 to 1988. At that time we had about 100 majors, many of whom reading this letter. Now we have close to 400, the largest number of history majors in any college - public or private in New York State. And we have a thriving master's program, which continues to send highly qualified graduates into secondary education, to doctoral programs, and to the business world.

This welcome development has not come without some pain. On my first tour of duty we had a department of 24. Now we have 15. This puts pressure on our curriculum, on our class size, and on our responsibilities as academic advisors and as citizens of the college community.

Our situation is only a reflection of the larger crisis that faces public higher education across the nation. Unfortunately, there are some who see public higher education as at best, a luxury that can be divested of its frills, or as an extension of the welfare system that can be safely rid of waste and inefficiency, all under the rubric of greater "productivity."

All of you who are reading this have benefited in some way from SUNY Brockport, from SUNY, and from public higher education in general. Chances are that members of your family have done so as well. And so have many of our own faculty families, including my own two sons.

My point is that we need to let others know of the importance of public higher education in today's atmosphere, not as a luxury or an extension of the welfare system, but as an important investment in the future of the Republic. We need to remind our friends, our local newspapers, and our elected officials, regardless of party, of this essential truth.

With best wishes for the coming year.

Lynn H. Parsons, acting department chair

## GRADUATE PROGRAM NEWS

By Jenny Lloyd

Congratulations to the following 2003 graduates of the history MA program: Amy Cudahy; Beverly Demma; Leigh-Anne Francis; Lisa Guernsey; Jane Oakes; Patrick Rausch; John Yager. Currently there are 40 active students in the program and most classes are full.

## HISTORY FORUM

The History Forum, despite the budgetary crunch, is continuing to maintain a high profile on campus. Under the leadership of James Wallington, Andy Collier, Melinda Cater and Randy Asby, the History Forum helped fund the James Axtell lecture which was a huge success. In November, the Forum will be representing the History Department in the College Bowl. This will be followed by the annual Christmas party in December. Coming up in the spring semester, the History Forum will be looking to bring more speakers to campus including co-sponsoring the Synnestvedt lecture.

## **VISITING LECTURE: Fact, Fiction and Native American History**

By Paul Moyer

The Department of History, in cooperation with the History Forum and the Brockport Student Government, sponsored a visit to SUNY Brockport by Dr. James Axtell. Dr. Axtell, the Kenan Professor of Humanities at the College of William and Mary, is an award winning scholar and teacher and an authority on Native American History. The centerpiece of Axtell's visit was a public lecture, "Fact and Fiction in Native American History," that he presented Thursday, October 2 in the New York Room of Cooper Hall. The talk was well attended by students and faculty. In fact, the turnout was so overwhelming that there was a shortage of seats and many of those who attended ended up standing or sitting on the floor! Axtell geared his talk toward his undergraduate audience. Specifically, he focused on several interesting and poorly known "facts" about Indians in colonial America (such as their success in adopting white captives into their communities) and then turned to debunking several strongly held "fictions" about Native Americans that pervade the history of early America. In particular, he singled out the myth of the "ecological Indian" and the idea that the Iroquois League provided the model for the US Constitution history, the history of colonial North America, and the history of American higher education. He is also the author of numerous books and articles on these topics including *Natives and Newcomers: The Cultural Origins of North America* (2001), and *The Pleasures of Academe: A Celebration and Defense of Higher Education* (1998).



## **SUNY BROCKPORT REACHES TIER II STATUS**

By Kathy Kutolowski

After five years of effort across campus, Brockport this fall achieved the selective rank of Tier II among all SUNY four-year institutions. In the words of SUNY spokesperson David Henehan, "This is a significant accomplishment."

To reach Tier II, 60 percent of a college's entering freshmen must have a high school average of 90 or above and/or a score of 1200 on the SAT exam. SUNY Brockport joins three university centers, Albany, Buffalo and Stony Brook, and only one other four-year comprehensive college, Fredonia, in Tier II. Geneseo is the lone SUNY comprehensive college in Tier I.

President Paul Yu, speaking to a *Democrat and Chronicle* reporter, explained the philosophy behind the College's all-out effort to recruit the highest quality of students possible: "We think that in order for a student to have a good learning environment, you need good peers." Yu credited the College's merit scholarship program, establishment of a Division of Enrollment Management, and advertising stressing academic quality for the increase in high parameter students. As a Tier III school previously, 60 percent of SUNY Brockport freshmen had a high school average of at least 85 and/or an SAT score of 1100.

## **SYNNESTVEDT LECTURE**

Blanche Weisen Cook, activist and biographer of Eleanor Roosevelt, will be speaking on Thursday, April 8. Please call the department closer to the date for the title of her talk and details (585-395-2377). As well as the two volume biography of Eleanor Roosevelt, her other books include: *The Declassified Eisenhower: A Divided Legacy of Peace and Political Warfare*, *Crystal Eastman: On Women and Revolution* and *Century of Change*. She is distinguished professor of history at John Jay College and at the Graduate Center, City University of New York.

## FACULTY NEWS

**MARY COREY's** article, "Matilda Joslyn Gage: A Nineteenth Century Women's Rights Historian Looks at Witchcraft," was published in the *OAH Magazine of History* in July. Corey also presented "History Takes Place, Local History in the Social Studies Classroom" at the Researching New York Conference in November; she contributed two essays, "Matilda Joslyn Gage, Woman Suffrage Historian" and "The 19th Century Woman Suffrage Movement," to the *Encyclopedia of Social Reforms*, edited by Immanuel Ness for Sharpe Publishers; has been accepted to present "Reshaping the Public Sphere: 19th Century Women's Activism" at the Social Science History Association Conference in November. In addition, she has just completed *United States History, Reconstruction to the Great Depression*, a mentored history curriculum for the children of migrant workers for the National PASS (Portable Assisted Study Sequence) Center for Migrant Education.

**JOHN DALY** once again enjoyed being summer chair and meeting students. Daly also taught a summer seminar on "American History and Film." Within the last two weeks, his cover article in *North and South*, a major scholarly and popular journal on the Civil War, appeared in print and has been solicited for an edited book on the Civil War ("Holy War: Southern Religion and the Road to War and Defeat," *North and South*, Official Journal of the Civil War Society, October 2003). He has already received rude emails about the article (and some nice ones). His book *When Slavery Was Called Freedom* recently received its first award: Honorable Mention from the Center for Civil War Studies Annual Seaborg Award for Outstanding Publication on the Civil War. His book was one of only 11 books out of the hundreds published last year on the Civil War designated finalists and honorable mention for this award.

**TERRY GORE** is a new adjunct, but knows SUNY Brockport well as he received his MA in history in 1989, and his wife Patricia DeRoller Gore, received her MA in English in 1987. He had a busy summer putting the finishing touches on the publication of wargame rules that he has written. This will be a full size, color set of miniature wargames rules for the medieval period available in the US through numerous hobby outlets, bookstores and distributors. He

has been working on these since 1996. Also, *Military Heritage* magazine has recently accepted two of his articles for publication. The first one deals with the de Hauteville family and the Battle of Civitate in 1053. He has also written a follow-up article to one dealing with Simon de Montfort and the Battle of Lewes that appeared in the April 2003 issue of *Military Heritage* magazine. The latest piece deals with de Montfort's death at the Battle of Evesham in 1265.

**KATHY KUTOLOWSKI** spent the summer writing a paper which she delivered at the annual meeting of the Social Science History Association in Baltimore on November 13. The paper, entitled " 'Rude Republic' Revisited: Looking Beyond the County Seat and Convention Leadership in the Rural North," was part of a session on "Campaigning in the Antebellum Republic." The paper utilized data on township wealth structure to which two SUNY Brockport graduate history students, Janet Begnoche MA '98 and Jessica Greenberg Dennis MA '82, contributed. Begnoche and Kutolowski collaborated under the auspices of a UUP grant.

**BRUCE LESLIE** is struggling to put the month before the day and to remove the *u's* that Noah Webster banned from American words as he re-adjusts to American life after Cambridge. The beautiful weather, winning football team, and (usually) responsive students remind him daily of the joys of American collegiate life in the autumn. With Prof. Halsey, he published "Britain's White Paper Turns Higher Education away from the EU," in *International Higher Education* and now they wait to see if the British Parliamentary debate fulfills their predictions. Reviews in the *Journal of Southern History* and on H-Net have enabled him to enjoy critiquing others while avoiding his own writing projects.

**JENNY LLOYD** used a faculty incentive grant to work in the Methodist Archive at Drew University on women preachers in the Primitive Methodist sect in Britain. She also spent a few days at the impressive new British Library in London.

**ANNE MACPHERSON** co-edited a book, *Race & Nation in Modern Latin America*, published in March 2003 by the University of North Carolina Press. She wrote one of its articles, "Imagining the Colonial Nation: Race, Gender, and Middle-Class Politics in Belize, 1888-1898." She also published journal article "Citizens v. Clients: Working Women and Colonial Reform in Puerto Rico and Belize, 1932-45," *Journal of Latin America Studies* 35 (May 2003), 279-310.

**MORAG MARTIN** spent the summer researching in Paris on a Scholarly Incentive Award and a UUP grant for travel. She had been invited to present a paper on medical advertising at the Centre National des Arts et Metiers. Back in the US, she traveled twice to California to present papers at conferences: in August at the International Society of 18<sup>th</sup> Century Studies Conference in Los Angeles, giving a paper on the politics of advertising luxury in 18<sup>th</sup> century France and in October to Newport Beach for the Western Society for French History Conference where she spoke about the orient in cosmetics advertising. Her recently published article "Casanova and Mille Clairon: Painting the Face in a World of Natural Fashion" has been translated into Portuguese for the Brazilian edition of *Fashion Theory* (October 2003).

**PAUL MOYER** has completed a draft of the first four chapters of his book manuscript, *Wild Yankees: The Struggle for Independence along Pennsylvania's Revolutionary Frontier, 1760-1820*. He also submitted an article to *Pennsylvania History* entitled, "A Dangerous Combination of Villains: Settlers, Speculators, and the Social Origins of Agrarian Insurgency along the Revolutionary Frontier."

**ALISON PARKER's** co-edited book, *Beyond Black and White: Race, Ethnicity and Gender in the US South and Southwest*, is being published this Fall by Texas A&M University Press. Also this fall, Parker will be chairing and commenting on a panel entitled "New York State and the Untidy Story of Woman's Rights" at the Researching New York Conference. During the summer, Parker reviewed manuscripts for the *Journal of Women's History* and the Ohio University Press. She also wrote book reviews for *Annals of Iowa* and the *Journal of Southern History*.

**LYNN PARSONS** was appointed interim chair of the Department of History for 2003-2004. Upon the invitation of the President of the American Historical Association, James McPherson, he has organized and will preside over a "Presidential Session", entitled "History and Biography: A Dialogue," at the annual American Historical Association meeting in Washington this January His article "In Which the Personal Becomes the Political: The Last Ten Years of John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson," appeared in the Fall issue of the *Journal of the Early Republic*. Upon the invitation of the Adams Family Historic Site in Massachusetts, he spoke on "John Quincy Adams: Reluctant Hero" as part of the festivities commemorating the visit of the replica of the ship *Amistad* to the city of Boston, October 12, 2003.

**SUZANNE SCHNITTMAN** returns to teach in the Department of History this fall after a nine-year absence. During that time Schnittman taught at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, then worked for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester for eight years. During the same period, Schnittman kept her finger in the world of history. She served as a speaker for the New York State Council of the Humanities for most of this time. Her talks focus on women in 19th-century New York State, most recently examining letters not previously published to determine themes that reappear in the lives of the women. Schnittman is pleased to rejoin the superb history staff at SUNY Brockport and accept the challenge to make her subject come alive to students.

## From the Erie Canal to the Cam, and Back

By Bruce Leslie



A semester (or “Lent Term” and “Easter Term” to the locals) at the University of Cambridge is an opportunity few historians would turn down. But for one who writes about the history of American higher education, returning to its fountainhead is a pilgrimage. Harvard was established in 1636 primarily by those who arrived in the New World with Cambridge degrees, especially from Emmanuel College, which harbored Puritan intellectuals who challenged the Anglican Church leaders. Indeed John Harvard, a promising young minister who died months after migrating and left his library and name to our oldest university, was an Emmanuel graduate.

Although my gaze was supposed to be on the past, I quickly turned my historian’s gaze to present-minded concerns. A few days after moving into my (comfortable) garret in a Catholic theological seminar, the Blair government issued the most significant “White Paper” (i.e., a statement of policy that is a blueprint for legislation).

Essentially, the UK has rocketed up the world league table from the least accessible higher education system in the industrialized world in 1990 to arguably the most accessible today. As participation in higher education rose from 15 percent to 43 percent (and Tony Blair has set a target of 50 percent), little money and

considerable confusion accompanied the astonishing growth. The White Paper is a mid-course correction, one that draws many of its ideas from the US. That it emerged simultaneously with the Iraq war unfortunately added irrelevant emotions to the debate.

Creating “mass higher education” in a decade is like post-GI Bill America fast forwarded! Many of the questions SUNY Brockport and SUNY wrestled with for decades were compacted over there. SUNY Brockport’s former president Albert Brown once famously asked “what is the model for Brockport.” There wasn’t one; we had to feel our way. In the UK too, existing models did not fit the new demands. Initially every institution was turned into a university with PhD programs. That clearly is not sustainable. The result was a “publish or perish” frenzy that has distorted priorities. The balance of liberal, professional and vocational education has changed dramatically on many campuses. All this has been more extreme in the UK as central government policy instantly affects all institutions. In addition, without a tradition of two years of general education, the entire curriculum was up for grabs.

Essentially the White Paper proposes an Australian funding system (study now, pay later) with an American structure (a few research universities, comprehensive colleges like SUNY Brockport, and a version of community colleges). Whether it survives attacks from left wing Labourites and opposition parties longing to hand Blair a defeat, remains to be seen.

I admit failure to reach one goal – seeing Prof. Lloyd’s Cambridge college, Girton. Founded as Cambridge’s first women’s college in the 1860s, it was strategically placed 1½ miles north of the town to discourage young men from visiting too often. The location was far more successful in deterring my visitation than it was in keeping 19<sup>th</sup>-century swains away.

## ALUMNI NEWS

### HOMEcomings FALL 2004

The Alumni Relations Office and the Alumni Association have decided to have Homecoming for those who have graduated in the last 30 years centered on departments rather than classes and organizations. History and political science will be the first in the School of Letters and Science in next year October 7 - 10.

**NICOLE CAMPANALI** BA '02 has been admitted to the graduate program in curriculum and instruction at Purdue University. She will begin in January.

**BEVERLY DEMMA** has moved to Florida to work as an export compliance officer for DRS Tactical Systems in Palm Bay. Beverly was recently working as a surveyor for the Asian Pacific-Islander American History Project of Greater Rochester, researching local Asian organizations.

**STEVEN C. EDSALL** BS '99 is a captain in the US Army, serving as commander of A Detachment, 516<sup>th</sup> Personnel Service Battalion in Seoul, South Korea. His battalion is in charge of processing paperwork for all of the US groups in South Korea.

**JEAN FERRARA** BS '97 is currently teaching third grade at Buckman Heights Elementary School in Greece, NY, and lives in Spencerport.

**JOHN FURGELE** BS '91, MS Education '96 is a sales representative with Steck-Vaughn Publishing. He lives in Delmar, NY with his wife Bethany and two-year-old son John Lewis.

**PETER GRANICK** BA '79 is a vice-president for global supply with Krone Group in Englewood, Colorado. He lives with his wife Claudia in Denver and their three children, David (2), Isaac (11) and Alex (16). Before that, he spent five years with PricewaterhouseCoopers Consulting in their Business Process Outsourcing Practice. In his current job he spends a tremendous amount of time traveling to various subsidiaries around the globe (China, Thailand, Australia, India, Germany, UK, Spain Italy and Mexico) always leaving time to visit local sites and museums (the latest being the Prada Museum in Madrid).

**DR. CHRISTOPHER M. GREEN** BA '95 sends encouraging words to SUNY Brockport students. He says that he greatly enjoyed Dr. Ireland's company and guidance, and has taken his influence as a mentor with him on his many travels since SUNY Brockport. After SUNY Brockport he moved home and taught seventh grade history for a couple of years, but then decided he needed a change. He moved from Amsterdam, NY, to Atlanta and entered Life Chiropractic College five years ago. Now he lives in Mandeville, LA and practices chiropractics in New Orleans.

**ALICE KAY MA** '91 has been teaching social studies at Honeoye Falls-Lima High School since 1992. She currently teaches AP US Government and Politics and AP US History. She has also served as the social studies department curriculum leader for the past five years. She feels indebted to the outstanding teaching and scholarship of all her professors in SUNY Brockport's Department of History, many of whom are still here. These many years later, her experiences in SUNY Brockport courses still inspire and guide her.

**DR. JAMES R KARMEL** BS '88 is now an associate professor of history at Harford Community College in Bel Air, MD. He teaches a lot of American history, including online sections, but also finds time for research. He recently published an article in *Pennsylvania History* (Winter 2003) and has been conducting oral history and other research on the social impact of casinos in Atlantic City, NJ. He wants to thank Professors Ireland, Herlan, Killigrew and Leslie for helping guide him at SUNY Brockport. His undergraduate experience was full of good memories and gave him a solid foundation for his academic career.

**KATHRYN A. KINDLE** BS '01 was an active member of the History Forum on campus and now hopes to be able to attend more history events. She is a substitute teacher for two school districts. She also advises new students and is the campus center student activities advisor at Genesee Community College in Albion.

**MELINDA KLEEHAMER** BA '83 talked to Professor Ireland recently. She raved about the quality of the education she received at SUNY

Brockport. She is retired now and is doing some consulting work. She is interested in setting up an endowment to benefit the Department of History.

**RICHARD LACROSSE, JR.** BS '77 is a site assistant at the Fort Ontario State Historic Site in Oswego, NY. He has authored two books on the American Revolution: *The Frontier Rifleman* (Pioneer Press 1989), presently in its third printing (13,000 sold) and *Revolutionary Rangers, Daniel Morgan's Riflemen and Their Role on the Northern Frontier 1778-1783* (Heritage Books, 2002), already in its second printing.

**JOSHUA LEATHERSICH** BS '02 is currently an eighth grade American history teacher at Lima Intermediate School in Ewa Beach, HI. He writes that he and his wife are sacrificing themselves by "relocating to Hawaii purely for the sake of the school children there."

**GILLETTE LEVAU KEMPF** MA '96 has moved to Columbus, OH, and has started a freelance technical writing business, "Write it Right!" with clients in Ohio and New York.

**CHET LUKASZEWSKI** BS '63 retired in 2001 after 36 years of teaching social studies at Lyosset High School where he introduced a senior elective on Native American studies. He still has his notes from Dr. Dedman's US Nineteenth Century history course. He keeps busy by teaching as an adult instructor at the West Suffolk BOCES part time. He returned to SUNY Brockport for his 40th reunion in July 2003.

**GARY A. PARISI**, BS '87 is a social studies teacher at Rush-Henrietta High School as well as the head football coach at Batavia High School.

**BRADLEY A. PESS** BS '91 is currently a legal assistant for a real estate law firm. He is also doing research on WWI and expects to submit articles to various history magazines. He thanks Dr. Ireland as the best history professor he ever had.

**WARREN C. SMITH** MSED '72. became Director of Housing and Neighborhood Development Department in Augusta, GA this past February, after having served four years as Florida State Director for the Corporation for National Service and Community, a federal agency. His son, Warren C. Smith II, an attorney, opened his own private legal practice in Atlanta in November 2002, and then gave him a granddaughter in January 2003.

**TRACY SNYDER** BS '03 recently landed a full-time position teaching global studies at Livonia High School. Tracy had been commuting more than an hour each way, for three years, while maintaining honors grades as a history major with secondary social studies certification. He was the co-recipient of the Schnell Award last year.

**ROBERT "BOB" SWINARSKI JR.** BS '95 is the owner of Master Web Services in Winter Haven, FL.

**MICHELLE M. TUYN** BS '93, MA '96 has returned to school after experiencing the joys and exhaustion of being a stay-at-home mom. She is getting certified to teach high school social studies and thanks Dr. Ireland, Dr. Parsons and Dr. Leslie for their guidance.

## THE GRADUATE STRUGGLE

By Leigh-Anne Francis

*Excerpt from a speech presented at the 2003 department graduation ceremony by MA graduate Leigh-Anne Francis.*

Graduate study is a mosaic of experiences -- events really -- that can be categorized as a series of challenges. These challenges can be defined as intellectual, personal, and for some of us, political struggles. In this way, graduate study in

history is an education on multiple levels -- a multidimensional struggle.

As developing scholars in history, we grapple intellectually with stories of the past. We struggle against the influence of our own biases on the story being told. Some of us see that history can never be entirely objective but that an awareness of each historian's perspective can help us formulate our own informed

interpretations. We come to understand that objectivity is at best a goal -- that history is told from countless perspectives -- that the story's shape is altered by the particular voice through which it is being told. We know that historians are intellectuals; we learn that historians are sculptors of the intellectual world -- that stories of the past are told through the lens of our cultural experiences, values and mores, and political ideologies.

History's subjectivity is not a matter to bemoan but merely to understand. The story's malleability does not annihilate its ability to awaken us to the realities of the human experience. And we are awakened. History awakens us -- at times shocks us out of our waking slumber (when we do not even know that we are sleeping)...awakens us to the reality of human failures and triumphs. We traverse the shadows of "not knowing" -- escaping into seemingly endless stacks of books, making our way through myriad documents --- to emerge newly confused. If we are fortunate -- our prejudices, or preconceived notions about what we might find are taken apart -- destroyed by the constructive research process. We are awakened -- we make our way through the dark alleyways of "not knowing" to discern truth. What is the truth? We learn there are multiple truths -- numerous parts and pieces to any story. Among the realities to which we are awakened are the ways in which humans disappoint each other, violate each other -- contradict and subvert the high principles upon which we construct our spiritual communities, our governments, our revolutions, our societies. To spite this darker side of the human condition -- stories of the past allow us to count on the ever existing possibility and potential for change. Human failures do not stall evolution -- we change, our societies change... we outlive and outlast experiences of oppression.

One aspect of the graduate student's personal struggle operates outside the realm of ideas. I'm sure I don't need to remind you about long days in the library where we sat, sometimes, utterly stupefied by the piles of books before us ("where to start?," we say to ourselves). I don't need to remind you about the sleepless nights we endured in order to meet a deadline. I sympathize with and am awed by those of you who faced the rigors of graduate study while balancing career and family. In this context, a substandard grade can be devastating. Some of us churn out 10-

page papers with ease. Many of us obsess over every sentence and a feeling of inadequacy because that sentence could always be better. Confronting and overcoming personal challenges such as these helps us grow -- gives us a deeper self-understanding.

Engaging the subject matter itself instills in us a richer self-knowledge -- it also intensifies our compassion for others. As developing scholars we are enlightened to the various personalities of the human and historical experience. Just as the participants in our narratives are not the same -- as historians we are not the same. It is honest communication from and about our varying perspectives that bridges any rifts between us. We share ideas, we challenge each other's interpretations... through this marvelous academic debate we make ourselves vulnerable to criticism and dissent, but also, areas of conceptual agreement are revealed. Ultimately, we are made to understand where someone else is "comin' from."

Therein lies the political component of the graduate struggle. As students, we engage the material in a dialogue between our personal experiences, cultural perspectives and mores. We engage scholars in the field and each other. We disagree ideologically -- we aggravate one another. That tension -- that gorgeous, uncomfortable political tension gives birth to endless possibilities for changes inside and outside ourselves. Political disagreements that occur in the classroom hold the potential for us to grow intellectually -- to broaden, reconfigure, and strengthen our ideological perspectives. Graduate study in history complicates our political viewpoints, which provides us with the opportunity to re-evaluate and revise them. Historical study inaugurates changes in our relationships to ourselves and to others. We can be most grateful for the moment when empathy unseats hostility -- and we understand where someone else is "comin' from."

Graduating class of 2003: My hope for you is that the struggles and the challenges, your confusion, your questioning of the historical interpretations of others, and your self-interrogation does not abate or cease. My hope is that you continually expand intellectually, personally, and politically to meet the range of your challenges -- that you outlast this "total" academic struggle. I hope that you rise up *to* and *in* your struggle -- that you engage history -- feed

off it -- surrender yourself to learning and the changes that come with it. Remain conscious of the gifts bestowed upon you by graduate study -- rewards extending beyond a master's degree (which is a wonderful reward). Remain awake -- eternally conscious of the knowledge that you

are empowered to guide others towards similar intellectual, personal, and political growth because you are people who seek to know and understand history.

## **SPOTLIGHT ON GRADUATE THESES IN ROCHESTER HISTORY**

### **Childcare During World War II: The Carver House for African-American Families**

By Beverly Demma, graduate student

In the age of the two-income families, the idea that parents would not have available daycare centers and nursery schools seems almost ludicrous. The increase in the number of children who attend a childcare facility during the late twentieth century speaks to the meteoric rise of disposable income. The concept of a childcare center was virtually non-existent prior to the 1960s. The centers, which existed, did so for a limited and exclusive clientele. Working families, particularly African-American, did not have the capacity to utilize such a luxury.

The entrance of the United States into World War II required a change in the way the American public viewed the necessity of childcare. As more and more men joined the armed services, single women and married women, without children, were seen as the best hope to maintain production levels. Even though the United States Employment Services vowed that married women with children would not be considered for employment, it quickly became apparent they were a necessary cog in the wheel to manufacture products needed by the military.

The federal government devised legislation providing working mothers child care while they worked. The Lanham Act of 1941 provided emergency funds for childcare needs to communities hit hardest by the transition to a wartime economy. Many cities found it difficult to attract large numbers of families to utilize the centers they built due to transportation difficulties and shift hours. In Rochester, 15 Lanham Act centers were underwritten by the Board of Education while three others opened outside the city-run facilities. One of these was Carver House on Ormond Street in the seventh ward of the city which specifically catered to African-American families. Not unlike the national trend, all of these centers drew no more than 900 children during their operation, from January 1943 until June 1945.

Although government guidelines dictated childcare centers were open for all families regardless of race or creed, few African-Americans made use of them. Inconvenience of locations, costs and hours of operations were all factors that caused many to turn to other alternatives such as grandparents, older siblings or nearby neighbors. But probably the biggest factor that promoted the establishment of Carver House was feelings of exclusion from the larger white community.

The center at Carver House operated through the auspices of the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester and Saint Simon of Cyrene Episcopal Church, receiving money to operate from the Lanham Act in March 1943. Programs such as music appreciation, art, simple writing exercise and field trips to see the local fire house, Santa Claus at the Sibley's Department store, or watching the circus unload the animals across the street at the Joseph Avenue train station, were available for the children at the center.

Both the local and state War Council Committee for Child Care and the local social agencies were responsible for monitoring all childcare programs in the city, but records indicate they scrutinized the Carver House activities more closely. Based on the prevailing attitudes of the day, the white social agencies believed an African-American run childcare center was in need of constant supervision. Even with the ever-watchful eyes of Rochester's social agencies, Carver House provided the African-American community an opportunity to access services which they would not have been able to use because of location, cost, or racial prejudices.

My research focus led me to the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester, the Howard Coles Collection at the Rochester Museum and Science Center, St. Luke's and St. Simon's Church on

Fitzhugh Street, and numerous oral interviews with surviving members of the original Episcopal Church. This research helped me understand the day-to-day difficulties many minorities must overcome to be heard. While other countries sponsor or provide money for childcare programs, the federal and many state governments have taken a hands-off approach to

providing a universal plan for the care of our children. Today we take the idea of daycare operations for granted, getting to this outcome and making it available and affordable for all is still an ongoing process.

### **Orphans and Indigent Children: Hillside Children's Center in the Progressive Era**

By Lisa Guernsey, graduate student

My thesis – the last thing I had to do to complete my master's degree. I was actually looking forward to doing original research. I have always been a “book person,” and the prospect of digging around in the lower catacombs of a library was exciting. The problem, of course, was narrowing down a topic. Settling on one idea proved to be challenging. I wanted to do research at the University of Rochester so I decided to look over their catalog of materials that were housed at the Rush Rhees Library's Rare Books Division. After several weeks of indecision, I chose to develop a thesis that related to the Progressive Era philosophy and finally settled on examining the way Rochester treated its orphans and indigent children during that time period. My research would focus specifically on Hillside Children's Center, formerly known as Rochester Orphan Asylum. I was familiar with Hillside and impressed with the changes in their programs over the years. It would be interesting to see what compromises and adjustments they made during this period and to determine whether or not they strayed from their original goals as set down by the founders of the Rochester Orphan Asylum.

The first step in organizing a large research project is always the hardest – where to begin. I spent an enormous amount of time researching background information on childcare policies in general in the United States during the 17<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. There were plenty of books on the subject and, at times, I felt I had all of them on my dining room table. Gradually, I began to develop a vision of how this paper would be constructed. I typed my notes on index cards, sorted them according to an outline I developed, and began the first of about a hundred drafts. When I was organized, both on paper and in my head, I headed to Rush Rheese Library where the entire collection of Hillside materials resided. I was in awe when I walked into the library. A sort of reverence hung about the rooms

and, for the first time in my academic career, I actually felt like a historian. Little by little I sorted through the boxes and volumes of notebooks, folders and photographs that were available, reading minutes of Board meetings, correspondence (mostly handwritten), newspaper articles, and reports of over 100 years ago. Many of the pages were brittle and delicate to the touch. Special precautions were necessary to ensure that none of the material was damaged. I could only bring in one pencil and notebook. I could request copies, but not make any copies myself. If there was no one else in the research room, I was allowed to bring in a recorder and dictate my notes.

What I began to find in my research was the personal stories of how a boomtown of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century coped with the problems of rapid economic, social and political growth. One of those problems was how to care for children who were orphaned, abandoned or whose parents simply could not afford to keep them. Middle-class women were the obvious choice to take up the issue of childcare reform. They had the time and the organizational experience of running a household. As the views of childhood began to change over the decades, the methods of caring for orphans had to be constantly reviewed and revised. It was no longer appropriate to commingle children with paupers, criminals and mentally ill adults in the almshouses. Reformers agreed that children needed special attention. Over the years, the managers and trustees of the Rochester Orphan Asylum responded to these changes and, in the process, successfully kept close to the goals set down by the original women founders. In fact, the amazing thing about the Rochester Orphan Asylum was its ability to consistently adapt to the changing concepts of childcare reform and, in the process, provide services that were in line with the needs of the children as well as the needs of the community. Today Hillside Children's Center,

now under the Hillside Family of Agencies, continues that legacy. Hillside has endured for over 160 years and continues to be a vibrant and integral member of the Rochester community.

Writing a thesis or doing any kind of in depth research project is never easy. The interruptions of the “real world” tend to pop up at the most inconvenient times. Children need consideration,

work projects have to be completed, family issues and responsibilities continue to require attention. In spite of all this, however, the thesis becomes personal and, through constant revision and modification, finally settles into completion. When it was finished, I not only felt a sense of closure but I gained a significant amount of pride and insight into Rochester’s history.

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