BACK TO SCHOOL

Stephanie Hartman, K-12 Social September 2006 Volume 1, Issue 1

Nevada Has A State Social Studies Consultant!

Greetings and Welcome Back to School!

I hope you all found the summer to be restful and fun! My name is Stephanie Hartman and I am the new K-12 Social Studies Consultant for the state. I began in this position in January, 2006 and hit the ground running with a million projects!

The first of these projects was to take over the Nevada History Day program. I hired Amy Henderson to be the new Nevada History Day State Coordinator. She is a social studies teacher at Damonte Ranch High School in Reno. I have also created a new website for NVHD, this site can be found at: http://www.doe.nv.gov/teachers/social_studies/nevada_history_day.html. One of the changes that I think is most exciting is the development of a student/teacher curriculum guide to NVHD! Amy and I worked over the summer to create a handbook that would be a user friendly guide the NVHD. This handbook is now available in hard copy FREE of charge! In addition, there is an electronic copy (PDF) available on the NVHD website listed above.

This spring, I established a state social studies council. The primary goals of this group is, " to preserve, promote, and advance the value and integrity of K – 12 social studies education in an effort to create better citizens, and to establish relevancy of the discipline through the dissemination of information and the coordination of all Nevada's social studies educators." We met for the first time in June to develop the above mission statement and to devise a plan for ways to further involve Nevada's social studies teachers in a variety of different projects and professional development opportunities. To learn more about your council representative, see the NV Social Studies website.

My next major project was the development of the new Social Studies website (see article below).

The last project I'll discuss in this issue is the monthly newsletter. A new newsletter will be posted every month on the social studies website to help keep teachers informed on the most recent developments in social studies education. So, if you have requests or ideas for topics, please contact me, Stephanie Hartman at: shartman@doe.nv.gov!

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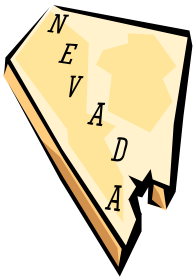


New Social Studies Website!

Well, it's finally arrived! A social studies website has been developed just for the educators of Nevada!

This site is filled with important news, events, and information regarding social studies in Nevada and across the country! The Nevada Social Studies Standards can be found on this site, along with other topics such as Nevada History Day and Constitution Day. In addition, a teacher can find a wealth of resources to use in the classroom! This site is meant to grow, so if you have suggestions or comments for the site, please email Stephanie Hartman at: shartman@doe.nv.gov.

This new site can be found at: http://www.doe.nv.gov/teachers/social_studies.html.

BACK TO SCHOOL

THE NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM AND THE PRESERVATION AND TEACHING OF NEVADA HISTORY

By Frank Ackerman, Curator of Education

Nevada State Railroad Museum

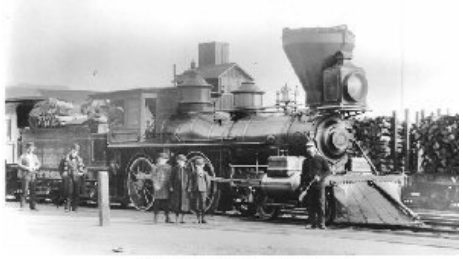
"The railroads of northern Nevada enabled settlement and the rapid, profitable exploitation of resources in a hostile environment."

–Core Interpretive Message, Nevada State Railroad Museum.

The Nevada State Railroad Museum houses more than sixty pieces of equipment from railroads throughout Nevada, but especially from the Virginia and Truckee Railroad which served the Comstock mining district from 1869 to 1938. The V&T's last run took place in 1950 between Reno and Minden. Activities at the Nevada State Railroad Museum include seasonal operation of historic railroad equipment, lectures, school field trips, changing exhibits, special events and, every October, a railroad history symposium.

This year's symposium will focus on Nevada in the first decade of the 20th century, a time when development of railroads and actions of railroad companies did much to shape the future of the State. It was then that the second and third transcontinental railroads through Nevada were built; railroad expansion led to the founding of Las Vegas, Minden and Sparks; the Pacific Fruit Express Company pioneered shipment of California produce by train through Nevada to the rest of the country; and railroad construction allowed large-scale development of copper mining in White Pine County and gold and silver mining in Nye County.

The symposium is a professional development opportunity for Nevada teachers. Those who attend from 4 PM Friday, October 20 through noon Sunday, October 22 will receive one recertification credit. For further information, please email me at gfackerm@clan.lib.nv.us.



V & T #12 - Genoa

NNCSS & SNCSS: Looking for New Members!

Northern Nevada Council for the Social Studies

NNCSS

Promoting the quality teaching of Social Studies to all of Northern Nevada's students

Join Now! Southern and Northern Nevada have affiliate organizations of the National Council for the Social Studies! NCSS is a professional organization for social studies teachers across the country. The national organization provides awesome professional development opportunities, as well as resources for teachers! To learn more about the opportunities available visit the NCSS website at: http://www.ncss.org/.

The local chapters of NCSS are the Northern Nevada Council for the Social Studies (NNCSS) and Southern Nevada Council for the Social Studies (SNCSS).

More information regarding membership in these important professional organizations can be found at: http://www.nevadasocialstudies.org/ (NNCSS) and http://sncss.org/ (SNCSS). Join today—you won't want to miss out on this exciting opportunity!

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DISCOVERING MONTICELLO: INSIGHT INTO THE LIFE OF THOMAS JEFFERSON

By Jeffrey A. Hinton

For me there is a fine line between what I do for a living, and what I do for enjoyment. Those similar paths truly crossed when I was chosen to receive the Barringer Research Fellowship for teachers of American history. The award is given to teachers who wish to do research at the Robert H. Smith International Center for Jefferson Studies located just a few minutes from Jefferson's historic home, Monticello, near Charlottesville, Virginia. For two weeks I studied and researched the life of Thomas Jefferson, as well as engaged in a number of "coffee socials" with Jefferson scholars and attended talks given by prominent Jefferson historians.

The fellowship is unlike anything I have ever done as a teacher. It is designed as an independent research opportunity and it is truly just that. Unlike other "teacher institutes" that have rigid itineraries and syllabi, we were truly on our own to set our own research agenda. We were not limited to just doing research on the premises but had access to the University of Virginia library, as well as local public libraries. The Jefferson library is in its fourth year of operation and the facility is dedicated to all things Jefferson. Besides the book stacks and periodicals there is also a special collections and a full-time staff working on the Retirement Series of the Jefferson papers. The building, although new, has a special charm and warmth typically found in more historic places. Jeffersonian architectural designs can be seen throughout and is the ideal place to think and write about Thomas Jefferson.

The cornerstone event of this fellowship was visiting Monticello. Despite being over two hundred and thirty years old, the house and grounds looked amazing. The Jefferson foundation, a nonprofit organization, keeps the mansion looking beautiful, and the grounds breathtaking. One of the things that astounded me about the house was the amount of thought that went into constructing it; Jefferson said it was an "essay in architecture." Monticello is clearly a product of Jefferson's desire for order, and the finer things in life. His home seems to be as much a product of the enlightenment as he does.

Entering Jefferson's home one is immediately awestruck by the magnificent entryway, which is decorated with Native American artifacts from the Lewis and Clark expedition and a massive clock and calendar. In his "cabinet" or study, the intellectual hub of Jefferson's world, resides his personal library of over 7,000 volumes; one of the most complete in North America at the time. Upon his desk is his "polygraph" for copying letters, scientific instruments and a rotating book caddy designed to hold up to five books at a time. Jefferson's bedroom is connected to his cabinet by an alcove bed, a space saving devise he admired while in France.

The parlor is where Jefferson would have spent time with his family or met with visitors. It is resplendent with beautiful parquet floors, detailed woodworking, (musical instruments, and over forty-eight works of art including "my trinity of the three greatest men the world had ever

(con't on page 4)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AT YOUR FINGER TIPS!

This is your place to find out more about professional development opportunities here in Nevada!

The Geography Alliance in Nevada (GAIN) offers resources and PD possibilities throughout the school year and in the summer. To learn more, visit the GAIN website at: http://www.ngsednet.org/community/index.cfm?community_id=274

The National Council for the Social Studies is holding it's annual conference in Washington D.C from Dec. 1—3, 2006. The conference offers numerous tours, workshops, and presentations from noted national speakers such as Eleanor Clift (Contributing Editor to NewsWeek magazine), Henry Louis Gates (A noted African American scholar), and John Stossel (ABC News). To learn more about how you can register for this conference, visit the NCSS website at: http://www.socialstudies.org/conference/.

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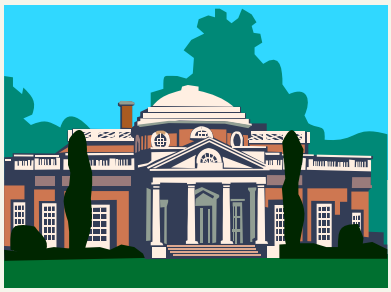
DISCOVERING MONTECELLO (CON'T) …

produced" Locke, Bacon and Newton. The parlor looks out upon the west lawn and the view is stunning. Jefferson incorporated many features in his home that would create "open-air-living-spaces" these included numerous skylights, and full-length windows that could be opened and used as doors to the outside property. Being a gentleman and planter Jefferson was well versed in southern hospitality and took exceptional delight in hosting elegant dinners. Jefferson explored the use of dumbwaiters as a way to not interrupt dinner conversation, the wine cellar is connected to the dining room also by dumbwaiters hidden the fireplace's mantel. His dinning room is connected to a charming tearoom where after dinner coffee, tea and desserts were served The house's kitchen, smokehouse, storage areas and slave quarters are all under his house, accessible through a partial subterranean passageway. Jefferson incorporated this design to preserve the integrity of the view of the surrounding gardens and orchards.



As a Barringer Fellow I was able to receive the "special" tour. Tourists are not allowed onto the second and third floors because the staircases to get to them are extremely small and incredibly steep and pose a safety liability. The famous "dome room" On the third floor is a beautiful room built in Jefferson's favorite geometric shape, the octagon. The walls are painted a deep yellow and one feels instantly at ease when entering the room. It is said that Jefferson would go to the domeroom to seek refuge when he suffered from one of his migraine headaches. Others claim Jefferson built the room with musical performance in mind; the acoustics are wonderful as a natural echo is produced. The upstairs bedrooms are utilitarian in function and do not have the same elegance as the downstairs part of the house.

What truly makes Monticello extraordinary is the way in which Jefferson built his house in balance with the beauty of the surrounding countryside. Monticello is Italian for "little mountain" and is indeed built upon a peak with a breath taking view of his plantation and the Rivana River Valley. Jefferson was interested in gardening and designed Monticello with flower gardens, groves, vegetable gardens and orchards. Jefferson said, "No occupation is so delightful to me as the culture of the earth, and no culture comparable to that of the garden." Jefferson used Monticello as a laboratory in studying plants from around the world and the west. He notated his data for much of his life in his garden books where he famously wrote, "the greatest service which can be rendered any country is to add a useful plant to its culture."

Monticello was a plantation covering over 5,000 acres and had anywhere between 120-150 slaves working at any given time. Jefferson is said to have owned up to 600 slaves over his lifetime. Monticello was broken down to several smaller "quarter farms" and the slaves who worked these fields lived in shacks near their workplace. Domestic slaves such as cooks, maids, and servants as well as skilled laborers like joiners, and blacksmiths lived and worked on a stretch of land adjacent to Monticello known as "Mulberry Row." When one visits it easy to be taken with the splendor and refinement of the property but at the same time the reality is that hundreds of people were enslaved in order to provide Jefferson with the resources necessary to live in such opulence. Mulberry Row is dotted with the foundations of slave quarters and one gets the sense of how small the shacks were, unlike the mansion above Mulberry Row the only comfort of the slave quarters was there clay lined wooden chimneys.

Thomas Jefferson was a man of contradictions. He wrote, "all men are created equal" yet was a slave master; he espoused republican simplicity but lived a life of luxury and refinement; he was a strict Constitutional constructionist but purchased Louisiana from France with no constitutional authority. However it is these qualities that make Jefferson human and thus more interesting. No other founding father challenges us to examine ourselves as Jefferson does. He stands alone among great men of the time, but despite his accomplishments he remains flawed. In Jefferson we see our own shortcomings, our own inability to live up to the ideals of our own creation. Jefferson's vision remains upon a lofty pedestal that challenges others to reach, even though he himself was unable to.

Note: While at Monticello I wrote several Jefferson related lesson plans, created Power Point Presentations, and produced a documentary and lesson titled "Jefferson and the West: Frontiers of the Imagination." For these resources as well as photos from my visit to Monticello please visit my http://mrhinton.org

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Finally… A parting thought:

There is much work to do in social studies education in Nevada. Social studies is being marginalized, especially in the elementary school classroom, because of NCLB. As educators of the next generation of civic participants, I believe it is our job to provide students with the tools and skills they need to be effective, participatory citizens. With this premise in mind, how do we get students actively engaged? Okay, so that's a questions that could be answered in a dissertation, but let me start with a basic answer: professional development. The more we continue to grow professionally in our practice and our beliefs, the better prepared we will be to teach students about the importance of social studies in their lives. Consider this… if you were faced with heart surgery, would you be more likely to go to a surgeon who had been doing heart surgeries the exact same way for the last 30 years, or would you rather go to a surgeon who had attended numerous conferences and ??? And was well practiced in the latest techniques for heart surgery? So, what kind of teacher do you want to be?

"History is a guide to navigation in perilous times. History is who we are and why we are the way we are."
- David McCullough