

East Tennessee History Day Dispatch

HISTORY DAY IS NOT JUST A DAY,
IT'S AN EXPERIENCE!

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NHD IN EAST TENNESSEE: 2011-2012, A BRIEF LOOK BACK



East Tennessee History Day opening ceremony

Three years ago, in our inaugural issue of the *East Tennessee History Day Dispatch*, we proclaimed "the state of National History Day in East Tennessee is stronger than ever." Today, we can echo those same sentiments once again. Heading into the Twelfth Annual district contest this March, the district may look much different than it did three years ago (several counties to the northeast were added to the Northeast district and a few counties to the south were added to the Southeast district), but the bar across the region—as well as across the state—has continued to be raised.

For the past 6 years, East Tennessee students

have advanced to the final rounds of nationals and won medals. Last year saw a talented group of young historians join their colleagues from across the state to represent the Volunteer state in a record breaking performance at nationals. A group of Sevier County High School students (*see inside*) won gold for their exhibit, another Concord Christian middle school student (**Hadley Peters**) advanced to finals to claim 14th in websites, and 6 other East Tennessee projects were either 1 or 2 places shy of advancing to the final round.

The ETHD staff continues to offer introductory workshops for teachers as well as travel to schools to introduce NHD to teachers and students. The staff has expanded its number of teacher workshops (offering additional levels of instruction for experienced NHD teachers and parents) and added student workshops. Lastly, due to the generosity of our presenting sponsors Jenny and Randy Boyd, the ETHD staff has been able to travel to more schools across the region and spread NHD cheer.

EAST TENNESSEE HISTORY DAY DISPATCH

A DISTRICT CONTEST
OF TENNESSEE
HISTORY DAY

A STATE AFFILIATE
OF NATIONAL
HISTORY DAY



FROM THE COORDINATORS' DESK

The *East Tennessee History Day Dispatch* is back for the 2013 contest season by popular demand! In this issue, we will catch up on what has happened in the district over the course of the past 2 years. In the coming months, we will begin to look more in depth

into the 2013 NHD theme, "Turning Points in History: People, Ideas, Events," developing a winning "NHD Thesis," suggestions for various categories, and the students' favorite part of their NHD projects—the dreaded Process Paper and Annotated Bibliography!



LAUREN COLLINS WINS THE GOLD MEDAL NHD 2011



Lauren Collins, 2011 NHD gold medalist

On her first try, Lauren Collins made history by becoming the first Tennessee student to win first place at the 2011 National History Day competition held at the University of Maryland (June 12-16). Collins, an eighth grade student at White Pine Middle School in Jefferson County, won the documentary division for her project entitled, "Eminent Domain: Private Tragedies for the Public Good." Collins's film, which traces the history of her family over the course of four generations, tells the story of how the use of eminent domain has threatened the farmland and livelihood of an East Tennessee family—the Bacon's.

Collins's great-great grandfather, Samuel Bacon, first purchased land in Hamblen County in 1884. Bacon and his family set to work farming two hundred and forty acres along the river bottom of the Holston. The Bacon family's farmland was first affected by the 1933 passage of the Tennessee Valley Act (TVA), which set in motion a series of events that changed the lives of tens of thousands of Tennessee families. "The pain was personal and felt by one family at a time," said Collins. "One of those families was my own." TVA first purchased land from the Bacon's for

"The pain was personal and felt by one family at a time. One of those families was my own."

— Lauren Collins, Eminent Domain: Private Tragedies for the Public Good

the construction of Cherokee Dam. Collins interviewed her grandmother, who, though only six years old at the time, vividly recalled pleasant memories spent with family and friends on the farm, as well as the pain felt by both her parents and grandparents as they were forced to give up their land: "It was hard to leave all that behind."

Following their removal from Hamblen County, the Bacon's settled in the White Pine community in neighboring Jefferson County and resumed farming. However, the threat of eminent domain followed the Bacon's across county lines. In 1965, the state of Tennessee condemned eleven acres of the Bacon farm for the construction of Interstate 81. The interstate, which cut a wide swath through their property, split their farm in half thus forcing them to sell their land once again.

In 1995, eminent domain threatened the Bacon family for a third time. Fourth generation East Tennessee farmer Rusty Bacon's property in Jefferson County was wanted by the city of Morristown in Hamblen County for the construction of a 2400 acre industrial park that would be built on land in both counties. The Bacon family helped organize a group of farmers called STIP (Stop The Industrial Park) to protest the cross-border condemnation of land by a neighboring county. STIP members successfully lobbied lawmakers in the Tennessee General Assembly to pass legislation preventing a municipality from employing eminent domain cross county lines. Collins stated that the

Bacon farm is currently safe; however, the "family is still skeptical about the security of their farm and future." Throughout Collins's documentary, folk musician Tom Goodkind's "Taken Away," which depicts a family's suffering caused by eminent domain, adds to the emotional quality of her film.

Though recounting numerous hardships suffered by her family, Collins offered a balanced conclusion to her project: "The legacy of eminent domain has definitely left its mark on my family. It is often met with much criticism; yet it is necessary for the growth of our nation. Although unknown to many, the sacrifices of American families because of eminent domain have benefitted the lives of thousands of people, including myself."

Tying her family's history to the larger context of eminent domain, Collins requested, and was granted, an interview with Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia. With her family in tow, Collins traveled to Washington D.C. and interviewed Justice Scalia in the Supreme Court, where she asked him several questions related to the 2005 landmark ruling by the Court in *Kelo v. The City of New London* (Conn.), which decided that private land may be taken for private development provided that it results in economic development for the public good. "She was able to take a personal story and demonstrate why it matters on a national level," said Lisa Oakley, co-coordinator of East Tennessee History Day.

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LAUREN COLLINS WINS THE GOLD MEDAL NHD 2011

Collins conducted extensive primary and secondary research. She spent nearly nine months, including most weekends, combing through various local, state, and national archives, newspapers, family albums, and conducting interviews with family members. Shocked after winning at district competition at the University of Tennessee, Collins said, "I never imagined that I would go on to state and then national."

(Lauren's sponsoring teacher at White Pine Middle is Jackie Collins)

TEAM TENNESSEE AT THE NATIONAL HISTORY DAY CONTEST

Tennessee's National History Day students react to the calling of "Tennessee" by Dr. Cathy Gorn, NHD Executive Director, during the state roll call as part of the NHD opening ceremony.



2012 NHD GOLD MEDAL-WINNING EXHIBIT COMING TO THE MUSEUM OF EAST TENNESSEE HISTORY

In the Fall of 2012, Rebecca Derby's and Rachel Emond's NHD gold medal winning exhibit, "Ignition of a Revolution: The Fire that Changed America," will be on display at the Museum of East Tennessee History. Further information will be distributed via e-mail to East Tennessee's NHD teachers.

(For a featured article on their project, see the next page)

**12TH ANNUAL
EAST TENNESSEE HISTORY DAY
MARCH 4, 2013
UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE**

Online registration begins Tuesday, January 1, 2013 and closes on Thursday, February 14, 2013 at 11:59 p.m.!

Papers and Websites Due Feb. 14, 2013

Register online at www.tennesseehistoryday.org



REBECCA DERBY & RACHEL EMOND WINS THE GOLD MEDAL NHD 2012



**Rebecca Derby (left) and Rachel Emond (right),
2012 NHD gold medalists**

1500 hours. That's how many hours Sevier County High School sophomore students Rebecca Derby and Rachel Emond conservatively estimate they put into their national winning History Day exhibit project entitled, "Ignition of a Revolution: The Fire That Changed America." They acknowledge that this estimate may sound high, but they point to the countless hours spent researching, acquiring photographs, documents, and quotes, developing their arguments and thesis, not to mention numerous trips to department and hardware stores in search of the perfect paint, moldings, and realistic effects to construct their board. "During the school year we dedicated every weekend," says Derby. "However, once summer started every day was National History Day!"

This was not their first attempt at National History Day (NHD). Emond first participated in 2009 as a seventh grade student, producing an exhibit focusing on John Mitchell, President Richard Nixon's embattled Attorney General. The following year, Emond teamed with Derby to develop a project focusing on the innovation of denim in the fashion industry. On entering high

"During the school year we dedicated every weekend. However, once summer started every day was National History Day!"

— Rebecca Derby, Ignition of a Revolution: The Fire that Changed

school, both Emond and Derby decided that they did not have the time to dedicate to another project, a decision made easier by the fact that their social studies teacher did not require students to create a history day project. But with a year of high school under their belts and looking for something to enhance their college applications, they decided to collaborate once again on a project.

The inspiration for their project derived from Margaret Peterson Haddix's *Uprising*, which they had read previously. Written for young teenagers, the historical novel traces the lives of three young women during troubled times in early 1900s New York City. Together, they are swept up in the struggle for women's rights and the chaos of labor strikes when working conditions worsen. All three girls are working on the afternoon of March 26, 1911, when a spark ignites some cloth at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory and the building is engulfed in flames, killing 126 (mostly young, Jewish immigrant women). Although they immensely enjoyed the novel, neither pursued any further research at the time. But upon hearing that NHD had chosen "Revolution, Reaction, and Reform in History" as the 2012 theme, Emond and Derby realized immediately that the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire would be a perfect topic to investigate. While they knew critical details of the fire and its victims, they did not yet understand the historical context. Other than briefly recalling class lectures on the industrial revolution and early twentieth century

reformers, they acknowledged that they knew little about the period in which the fire took place.

They began the research process with a trip to the local library, where they collected information from books and newspapers. They also found information online, using the internet as a guide to find digitized primary sources from numerous archives. "I can't imagine how many nights I was up until 2 and 3 in the morning searching for genuine primary sources," recalls Derby. They acknowledge that obtaining these crucial primary sources was difficult, but that proved to be a thoroughly rewarding experience.

Even as they continued to research, their thoughts turned to developing an informative exhibit presentation. Drawing from their past experiences at the district contest at the University of Tennessee, they knew that they had to do create something original, rather than the typical six foot cardboard projects that most students use to display their research. "We knew that to be competitive in the exhibit category required a visually stunning, but also highly informative presentation," says Derby. Their original design of their exhibit board featured a painted scene of the fire. But they soon scrapped this idea in favor of constructing a 3-D model of the Asch building, the scene of the tragic fire. Examining photos taken by photographers at the scene of the fire, they built a replica of the Asch Building to

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REBECCA DERBY & RACHEL EMOND WINS THE GOLD MEDAL NHD 2012

scale, and then inserted firemen and victims to capture the grisly scene. Even the fire ladder is raised to the sixth floor, five floors short of the raging inferno, to emphasize that the New York City fire department did not have ladders that could extend far enough to reach the victims. They also painstakingly dyed each piece of paper containing quotes and their own words by hand so that everything appeared antique.

At the district contest, their exhibit received a lot of attention from fellow competitors, parents, teachers, parents, and even the judges who were not assigned to the project. Dr. Daniel Feller of the University of Tennessee regarded Emond and Derby's project as the best that he had ever seen at the district contest. The judges awarded their project first place, thereby making them eligible to advance to the state contest in Nashville. There, they earned second place and became eligible to represent Tennessee at the national contest at the University of Maryland. Although they regarded their silver medals as an honor, they were not content. "Unfortunately, we made the mistake of not improving our exhibit," says Derby. "It motivated us to dedicate all we had into our project." It was at this point that they sought out advice from teachers and the district coordinators. Overwhelmed with suggestions, they comprised a list of revisions. By the end of the following weekend everything was ripped off the board, which was scrubbed clean and disassembled. They then set out to redevelop their panels and strengthen their arguments and thesis statement. In the process, they also delved deeper into the Progressive era, the labor disputes within the garment industry, the lives of those who perished in the fire, and the significant reforms that were enacted in the aftermath of the fire.

With a few weeks before nationals, Emond left for Tennessee's Governor School. She

was selected from among thousands of Tennessee's most talented and gifted high school students to attend. It was at this critical juncture that Derby pressed forward and continued to make the changes that they had discussed. At nationals, Derby was overcome with a rush of emotions. She was nervous to be there, yet honored to represent her school and state. It proved humbling to look at the work of other students and to talk to students from across the nation that shared similar experiences while creating their own projects. "Shocking," says Derby as she describes the moment of hearing their names called by NHD's executive director, Dr. Cathy Gorn. "I needed assistance getting to the stage!" Emond and Derby describe their favorite part of their history day experience as seeing others learn from looking at their exhibit board. "Sharing this glimpse of history with others is our biggest reward," says Derby. *(Rebecca and Rachel's sponsoring teacher at Sevier County H.S. is Jeffrey Williams)*



Rebecca and Rachel's project at the district contest at the University of Tennessee.



Rebecca and Rachel's gold medal winning-project , with Thesis statement, at the National History Day contest at the University of Maryland.

—Courtesy of National History Day

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CLICK ON EAST TN DISTRICT



The University of Tennessee

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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**History Day is not just a day,
it's an experience!**

The East Tennessee History Day district serves East Tennessee teachers and students by supporting their The East Tennessee History Day district contest is coordinated by the East Tennessee Historical Society (ETHS) staff and co-sponsored by the ETHS and the University of Tennessee's Department of History.

In Tennessee, the National History program is coordinated by the state affiliate Tennessee History Day, sponsored by the Tennessee Historical Society in Nashville.

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NEXT ISSUE: OCTOBER 2012



Dissecting the 2013 National History Day Annual Theme

- What is a Turning Point?
- Altering the Trajectory of History
- The Best Way to Approach your Turning Point
- *So What* about your Turning Point?

Local History vs. Big History? That is the Question!

Let's Design A Winning Website!