

## FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the spring 2026 edition of the *New England Journal of History*. This is a special issue with a focus on pedagogy. Our mission is to publish historical inquiries that inform readers from novice to scholar. This goal will be met with articles that encompass the world's events, and analyses that share reflections on pedagogical strategies. Our timely book reviews examine works that expand our knowledge base. First published in 1944 as the *New England Social Studies Bulletin*, this well-rounded journal will continue to provide historical analysis for educators who seek to bring history to life for future generations through thought-provoking interpretations and the best offerings of pedagogy.

While the news in America and the world overwhelms us with unlimited distressing and hate-filled events, history educators and historians gathered in March and April to determine ways to incorporate AI safely into the classroom, share our knowledge of and teaching expertise on the American Revolution, organize to retain the sanctity and reliability of our nation's documents, and research the more silent members of society despite America's political rhetoric. The professional development workshop I attended on March 13, 2026, was co-sponsored by our New England History Teachers Association and the Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies. This multi-layered conference welcomed over 240 educators and administrators from the area and explored A.I., Media Literacy, the American Revolution and Critical Thinking. Seeing so many presenters and educators enthusiastically sharing their expertise and curiosity with colleagues demonstrated the resiliency and determination of our profession, even as it is under attack.

In April, I attended the Organization of American Historians multi-day conference in Philadelphia. This would be my first visit to Philadelphia. Given the current political climate, I felt that attending the conference would be an act of resistance to the increased marginalization of women, people of color, multi-layered historical studies, as well as the less than nuanced intellectual engagement that dominates the national conversation. Listening to Annette Gordon-Reed, Smithsonian Secretary Lonnie G. Bunch and Jon Meacham with over 1700 fellow scholars of history, I knew that historians are standing on

the side of justice, knowledge and unity. Enjoying workshops on the international impact of the American Revolution, the intersection of race, fear and politics in American history, the evolution of the American military, the historian's craft, and Indigenous identities in early America recharged my belief in the resourcefulness of historians to continue to research, publish and engage in hard conversations. Attending the Sunday morning program on advocacy and activism sponsored by the History, Archives, and Records Preservation Project (HARPP) expanded my understanding of the severity of erasures happening at our museums, national parks and national archives. Feeling pride at the resistance of this collaborative organization, there is much we can do to reject the current efforts at whitewashing history. Knowing that these collaborations exist is a first step. Educating young Americans about the economic, cultural, ethnic, gender and racial diversities who built America is another critical step. Check out HARPP's substack <https://www.oah.org/2025/09/10/oah-launches-harpping-on-history-substack/> and join the fight to protect the full dimension of historical knowledge. After attending both conferences, to use the phrasing of the presidential State of the Union: "the state of our historical union is strong."

From the Archives is a fascinating exploration of "The Ordeal of Jolley Allen: A Tory Merchant of Boston" by Robert J. Cormier from Spring 2004-2005. Examining the experiences of one man and his family during the American Revolution demonstrates the divisions that existed among family members while simultaneously dividing the colony in two. Jolley Allen appeared to be on the path to rebellion over the Townshend Acts but eventually shifted his allegiance to better reflect his business interests and purchased clandestine tea to keep his shop alive. Allen's life after Lexington and Concord saw tremendous hardship and loss for himself and his family. Imagining oneself suffering physical and emotional pain creates profound insights into the victims of war in the past and now. On a human level, a community divided whether now or in the past, has deep ramifications for the individual.

With much pleasure, we have for The Pulse an essay by Gary Best entitled, "Public History in Action: A D-Day Tour Guide's Story." I first met Gary last September when I traveled to France to learn primarily about the events of D-Day. Gary was our tour guide during our visit to Normandy and educated us in so many aspects of D-day. An enthusiastic and engaging presenter with unique insights, I thought it would be interesting to learn how he became a tour guide, fell in

love with learning about D-Day specifically, and how he translates this knowledge into information for his listeners. His essay is even more entertaining than I had anticipated and provides a detailed process of his actions on becoming a tour guide.

The Novice Corner this month is an impressive article on John Calvin entitled, “Practice What You Preach: Doctrine and Discipline in John Calvin’s Genevan Consistory, 1542-1544” by Alexandra Oestman. Knowing very little about John Calvin’s life experiences, I was impressed with this in-depth exploration of his time in Geneva and the creation of the Consistory. Exploring the question of how real life and spiritual doctrines intersect in a two-year window exposes a detailed examination of how sinning and their social consequences played out in peoples’ lives. Not attending sermons, stealing a cloak, following Catholic traditions, and saying prayers incorrectly were examples of cases brought to Calvin and the Consistory. Calvin’s leniency in many cases was surprising as that was not the image I had held. Calvin belonged to his era however, as his determinations for women who complained about severe domestic abuse focused on reminding the couple to live together harmoniously. These glimpses into understandings of local beliefs, superstitions, and overall responsibility of the members of the Geneva community to each other provide a rich image of the era.

Our focus for the Spring 2026 edition is on pedagogy. Jonathan Tyler Baker from Landmark College shares his article “Accommodations Can Be Built into the Architecture of Our Classrooms.” Baker suggests that educators create instructional design that begins at “point zero” or where students are in their knowledge when they enter your classroom. Incorporating the concept of “micro-uniting” with “point zero” provides students with a manageable set of tasks while building their knowledge base in the material. While many educators are providing these services, expanding our repertoire is always appreciated! Baker discusses diverse ways for students to demonstrate required learning outcomes and shares his strategies with us in this creative article.

Eric Bennett’s “Dear Fellow College Teachers, Foster Student Learning through Letter Writing” connects students with people outside the classroom while also discouraging the use of artificial intelligence – quite the win! Bennett describes the process by which he requires students to write letters to a friend or a family member to demonstrate mastery and reflection over course content. His initial

experiment became a recurrent part of his curriculum since he discovered that students wrote interesting and thoughtful letters. If a student's pen pal responds, all the better for the student's grade. Bennett explains the grading system, the expected and unexpected benefits of the assignment and how he became more reflective since his professorial reach expands to the pen pals. An excellent point Bennett makes is that the letters are less stressful for students to complete than other assignments, and the letters build morale and resilience in his students when they approach more challenging assignments.

Martial Fanga Agbor's review of *Communism's Public Sphere: Culture as Politics in Cold War Poland and East Germany* by Kyrill Kunakhovich critically engages scholars of Eastern Europe with its examination of active cultural spaces, transnationally negotiated spaces for social unrest, and nuanced communist efforts beyond suppression. Examining cultural spaces during early America, Rebecca Dawson reviews *Roger Williams and His World: A History in Documents* by Charlotte Carrington-Farmer. Focusing on providing primary source documents, Carrington-Farmer defines the world in which Williams lived as well as his beliefs in response to his society provides a resource for educators and students of early America. *Belonging: An Intimate History of Slavery and Family in Early New England* written by Gloria McCahon Whiting and reviewed by William Morgan transfers our attention from the focus on freedom in general to explore the basic desires of enslaved people to engage in family life and intimacy.

Coincidentally, *For the Unremembered: A Journey of Reflection into Cape Cod's Connection to Slavery* continues the humanistic exploration of the enslaved in part of New England – Massachusetts. Written by Susanna Graham-Pye and reviewed by myself, this text encourages readers to experience the landscapes and historical sites where the enslaved lived while deeply appreciating Graham-Pye's compassionate and inspired writing. Moving to another side of the world, William Patterson reviews *A Slow Reckoning: The USSR, the Afghan Communists, and Islam* by Vassily Klimentov. Klimentov exposes the significant hubris and lack of effort to understand the Afghani culture leading to the Soviet's demise of their ten-year occupation of Afghanistan. Jeffrey A. Fortin brings us back to America's early days with *Captain Paul Cuffe, Yeoman: A Biography* reviewed by Richard J. Stocking who notes that Fortin brings forward an in-depth discussion of Cuffe and his place in the Atlantic world of his time. This

“microhistory” addresses beliefs about race and identity while using Cuffe’s experiences in education, religion, abolitionism and shipping to create an insightful vision of the interconnectedness of the Atlantic world.

For details on submitting your articles and book reviews, please check our manuscript submission policy at [www.nejh.org/general-guidelines](http://www.nejh.org/general-guidelines). We welcome all historical topics, pedagogical articles on the teaching of history or social studies and reviews of books and permanent museum exhibits. In addition, we offer a local documentary film series entitled “History in Your Backyard.” This project allows those who love local history to create a video and submit it to our editors for potential publication. We also launched an open access primary source reader on our website called “Citizen Historian Sourcebook.” Students, under the guidance of faculty and with feedback from our editors, publish edited primary source excerpts for other students and teachers to use in the classroom. Also, please submit any comments you may have on our articles to [editors@nejh.org](mailto:editors@nejh.org).

As we continue to study the past, let us remember the importance of historians. Their research and analysis of events and persons inform the policy and decision-making of presidents and leaders around the world. Historians form think-tanks that influence public opinion, and encourage us to engage in discussions of ethics, morals and truth. Their indispensable contributions provide context for understanding current events and allow us to observe our common flaws, our universal strengths and our shared humanity. Historians have been, and continue to be, activists, shaping movements and writing books that changed society. We hope our publication will inspire readers to engage in their communities and to follow the timeless words of Abraham Lincoln and “strive on to finish the work we are in.” Educating about the past and how it relates to the future is our superpower.

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