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# Ohio's Bicentennial: Exploring Nearby History

Marjorie L. McLellan

Wright State University - Main Campus, marjorie.mclellan@wright.edu

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## **Ohio's Bicentennial: Exploring Nearby History**

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**Ronald G. Helms and Marjorie L. McLellan**  
Wright State University

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**C**learly, the Ohio Bicentennial is an important event for celebration. This article seeks to promote the Ohio Bicentennial by reviewing a project devoted to the local or public aspect of history. The focus of the project was the study of the history of Dayton, Ohio. Wright State University developed the Nearby History Institute, which brought public historians, social studies professors and researchers from area archives and museums together with faculty from the public schools, to rethink and strengthen American history teaching in the Miami Valley. The Ohio Humanities Council and the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation funded the institute.

This project may be replicated in other areas of Ohio to extend the value of work done in many communities as part of the Bicentennial. Replication of the Nearby History Institute by other interested Ohio institutions of higher education will involve a collaborative effort with the Liberal Arts College and the College of Education. Central to the collaboration is the direct involvement of one or more school district partners. The institute served social studies educators at all grade levels. Replication might also involve funding from the Ohio Humanities Council and the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation or some other funding agency.

The mission of the Ohio Humanities Council is to encourage all Ohioans to become explorers of the human story, to use history, philosophy, and the other humanities as the means to arrive at new insights. Please visit <http://www.ohiohumanities.org/>The Martha Holden Jennings Foundation provides educational opportunities for students and teachers in the state of Ohio. Please visit <http://www.mhjf.org/>.

Wright State University plans to offer a similar summer institute in 2005.

Wright State University offered a Great Migration summer institute and City Folk institute in the summer 2003. Both institutes were offered for social studies educators as part of Dayton's centennial events named the "Celebration of Flight" (Ohio Bicentennial-Signature Events. Available from <http://www.ohio200.org/signature/>).

The Nearby History Institute focused on integrating local history resources and research across the K-12 social studies and language arts curriculum. Given the area's history and the exciting public history partners, this project viewed Dayton and the surrounding Miami Valley area as a laboratory for engaging students in an exciting and meaningful exploration of the American experience. Local schools, the History Department of Wright State University, the College of Education at Wright State University, and the Montgomery County Historical Society collaborated to offer the Nearby History Institute as part of an ongoing program of the Teaching American History Grant, for the years 2002-2005.

The institute was offered to teachers in Southwest Ohio during June 2002. The Nearby History Institute is an integral part of this process of assisting teachers to connect local history resources and research with Ohio's Academic Content Standards: K-12 Social Studies.

### **Background and Purpose of the Project**

Dayton is an excellent location for active learning about significant developments in American history. In 2003, Dayton celebrated both the invention of flight and Ohio's Bicentennial. The Dayton "signature event" is described in greater detail at Ohio Bicentennial - Signature Events, <http://www.ohio200.org/signature/>.

The Bicentennial year is an especially favorable time to examine, reflect upon, and reinvigorate the teaching of American history in the Dayton Public Schools. The city of Dayton thrived as a mercantile and industrial center at the turn of the last century; central city streets were paved, electric trolleys (which still run on overhead lines in Dayton) replaced horse drawn streetcars, and electric interurban lines connected Dayton with nearby towns. Tall buildings rose up around Dayton's Old Courthouse, a fine example of Greek revival public architecture.

Dayton was home to the Wright brothers whose invention of manned flight in 1903 fostered the globally interrelated world we know today. They attended high school with and printed early works by African American poet and essayist Paul Laurence Dunbar.

The purpose of the Teaching Nearby History Institute was to provide K-12 teachers of social studies the opportunity to explore the rich history of the Miami Valley while learning research skills and strategies. The summer institute provided model information and approaches that are standards based as specified in the *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (1994 and 2000) of the National Council for Social Studies and Ohio Department of Education's *Academic Content Standards K-*

*12 Social Studies.*

The Teaching Nearby History Institute was designed to invigorate the teaching of local, public history. Much national and state debate has focused on the dynamics of a social studies curriculum. In the 1960's some studies found that public school students had little or no interest in social studies (Herman, 435-436). Other studies called for improvement in the social studies method courses (Dewitt, 522). Other studies called for more social science content for elementary social studies teachers (Hahn, 2986-89). The Teaching Nearby History Institute addressed each of these issues. By pairing a historian and a methods professor, the Teaching Nearby History Institute provided solid content with solid teaching methodology.

Local history activities fostered significant skills across many disciplines: reading with understanding and fluency, writing to communicate for a variety of purposes, listening and speaking effectively in a variety of situations, and using language arts to acquire, assess, and communicate information. While at least 80% of the students were teachers, public historians and professionals enrolled in the institute learned to develop educational programs for archives, museums, and historical organizations, which will meet current curriculum goals and provide effective resources for students and teachers.

**Nearby History Institute Goals**

- 1) to offer a graduate level professional development experience not normally found in more traditional courses;
- 2) to introduce new inquiry based, interdisciplinary approaches to teaching;
- 3) to help teachers gain a greater understanding of the multicultural, economic, social, and political history of Dayton and the Miami Valley;
- 4) to integrate local history research and resources in line with the standards of the National Council for the Social Studies and the Ohio Department of Education;
- 5) to foster collaboration between area museums, archives, and school systems;
- 6) to promote effective educational programs in museums and archives;
- 7) to serve as a model for subsequent Teaching Nearby History Institutes on a variety of topics.

**Nearby History Institute: Course Content**

- 1) presentations on topics in local history by various specialists;
- 2) inquiry-based learning workshops to develop research skills for nearby history;
- 3) opportunities for discussion of teaching strategies;
- 4) tours of area historic sites and archives.

**Nearby History: Resource Presenters**

Dr. John Fleming, Vice President for Museums, Cincinnati Museum Center  
Brian Hackett, Executive Director, Montgomery County Historical Society  
Claudia Watson, Research Center Director, Montgomery County Historical Society  
Curt Dalton, Photograph Curator, Montgomery County Historical Society  
Glenn Harper, Historic Preservation Office, Ohio Historical Society  
Laverne Sci, Director, Dunbar House

Anne Honious, Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historic Park  
 Mary Ellen Mazey, Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Professor of Urban Affairs  
 Jack Dustin, Professor, Urban Affairs  
 Carol Baugh, Sinclair Community College  
 Dawne Dewey, Head of Archives and Special Collections, Paul Laurence Dunbar Library, Wright State University.

Nearby History Institute: Topics and Locations (June 24 —June 28, 2002)

Monday: Wright State University

Living and Working in the Miami Valley, 1890-1945

Using and Evaluating Internet Resources: workshop

(The American Memory Project, the Ohio Memory Project, U.S. Census, and the Digital Media Collections)

Tuesday: Wright State University

Migrations and Immigration

Dayton Neighborhood Histories 1913 Flood, flood control, Dayton politics, and urban planning

Evening Dinner and Dessert Reception

Guest Lecture: "The Struggle of African Americans to Acquire an Education Following the Civil War," Dr. John Fleming, Vice President for Museums, Cincinnati Museum Center

Wednesday: Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historic Park

African American history in the Miami Valley tour:

Bus tour beginning with the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historic Park, followed by a stop at the Paul Lawrence Dunbar House and concluding at the National Afro-American Museum.

Thursday: Montgomery County Historical Society Research Center

Skills for nearby history reading artifacts and photographs

Invention and Industry in the Miami Valley

Dayton Goes to War: the Miami Valley in the World Wars

Friday: Wright State University and Patterson Homestead

Appalachian Migration and Miami Valley History

Women's Lives in the Miami Valley

The Nearby History Institute: Future Collaboration

Through a partnership with Wright State University and local historical organizations, Dayton's Teaching American History project provides for sustained, ongoing interactions among teachers, academic historians, and public historians. The organizations that have agreed to participate in Dayton's Teaching American History project include the U.S. Air Force Museum, the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historic Park, the Montgomery County Historical Society, the National Afro-American Museum, the Ohio Historical Society's Paul Laurence Dunbar Historic Site, Wright State University Special Collections and Archives, the Dayton and Montgomery County Public Library, the Boonshoft Museum of Natural History, the Dayton Art Institutes, and Carillon Historic Park. The Dayton initiative will revitalize history teaching and learning in the Dayton Public Schools while aligning

historical content with state and national standards for the social studies.

#### Conclusion

The Nearby History Institute received outstanding reviews and student evaluations. Twenty-two Dayton area teachers benefited from the content and methodology of the Nearby History Institute. Participants were offered either a two graduate credit hour option with the completion of a resource unit or a four graduate credit hour option with the completion of a resource unit and a research project.

The success of the Nearby History Institute and the collaborative efforts between the history department, the education department, and the Dayton Public schools encouraged the authors to apply for a federal grant, Teaching American History. The authors and Patricia Allen Day, Dayton Public Schools were the co-authors of a \$915,000.00 U.S. Department of Education, Teaching American History Grant, for the years 2002-2005.

#### The Nearby History Institute World Wide Web Resources

##### Ronald Helms Web site

This site provides a wealth of content and materials for the social studies teacher.

<http://www.ed.wright.edu/~rhelms/home.html>

##### Marjorie McLellan Web Site

This site serves as a guide for a public history program. The site focuses on content and materials for teaching public history.

<http://www.wright.edu/~marjorie.mclellan/>

American Memory Project; Historical collections for National Digital Library.

<http://memory.loc.gov/>

##### Ohio Memory Project

An online scrapbook of Ohio history.

<http://ohiomemory.org/>

##### Wright State University Special Collection and Archives

Many historical resources for the social studies teacher.

<http://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/>

##### Montgomery County Historical Society

Resources of local community over 100 years.

<http://www.daytonhistory.org>

##### Dayton VA Virtual Museum

National military home, Dayton, Ohio.

<http://www.dayton.med.va.gov/museum/intro.html>

##### How Much? Economic History

EH.Net operates the Economic History Services file server and several electronic discussion lists to provide resources and promote communication among scholars in economic history and related fields.

<http://eh.net/ehresources/howmuch/dollarq.php>

Ohio Digital Media Collection (Access from WSU or a library)

e-Journals, e-Books and e-Media.

<http://www.libraries.wright.edu/libnet/ewss/multimedia.html>

### Dunbar House

The Ohio Historical Society is a nonprofit organization incorporated in 1885 "...to promote a knowledge of archaeology and history, especially in Ohio." The society exists to interpret, preserve, collect, and make available evidence of the past, and to provide leadership on furthering knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the prehistory and history of Ohio and of the broader cultural and natural environments of which Ohio is a part.

<http://www.ohiohistory.org/places/dunbar/>

### National Afro American Museum and Cultural Center

The mission of the Center is to educate the public about African American history and culture from the African origins to the present by collecting, preserving, and interpreting material evidence of the Black experience.

<http://www.ohiohistory.org/places/afroam>

### Dayton Aviation Heritage National Park

Dayton Aviation Heritage commemorates three exceptional men - Wilbur Wright, Orville Wright, and Paul Laurence Dunbar - and their work in the Miami Valley.

<http://www.nps.gov/daav/>

### Dayton and Montgomery Public Library Local History Collections

Twenty-one locations and outreach service offer a rich collection of printed and electronic materials, including audio and video recordings. They offer a continuing schedule of programs, ranging from pre-school story hours to programs of interest to senior citizens.

<http://www.daytonmetrolibrary.org/>

### Preservation Dayton

Preservation Dayton, Inc., a grassroots historic preservation alliance of historic neighborhoods and individuals, continually invents new ways to look at our city and world.

<http://www.preservationdayton.com/>

### Cincinnati Memory Project

The online database of 5,884 images. Next phase will add additional content.

Continuing with the theme of pre-1940 photos, postcards, and slides of area landmarks and events, the Project has been expanded to include images of Cincinnati area people.

<http://memory.gclc-lib.org>

### Cincinnati Museum Center

Where learning and fun come together.

<http://cincymuseum.org/>

### National Underground Railroad Freedom Center

A \$110-million facility, the Freedom Center will feature three pavilions, celebrating courage, cooperation and perseverance. The story of freedom is woven through the heroic legacy of the Underground Railroad and the American struggle to abolish human enslavement and secure freedom for all people.

<http://www.undergroundrailroad.org/>

### Ohio Historical Society Teacher Resources

A Catalog of Educational Programs, Services, and Resources for the 2001-2002

School Year.

<http://www.ohiohistory.org/resource/teachers/>

Ohio Humanities Council

The mission of the Ohio Humanities Council is to encourage all Ohioans to become explorers of the human story, to use history, philosophy, and the other humanities as the means to arrive at new insights.

<http://www.ohiohumanities.org/>

Martha Holden Jennings Foundation

Educational opportunities for students and teachers in the state of Ohio.

<http://www.mhjf.org/>

Center For History and New Media

Designed for high school and college teachers of U.S. History courses. This site serves as a gateway to Web resources and offers useful materials for teaching U.S. history.

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/>

Evaluating Internet Research Sources

The highly recommended reading for teachers whose students use the Internet for research.

[http://64.226.212.131/03\\_educators/teach99/web/evaluate.htm](http://64.226.212.131/03_educators/teach99/web/evaluate.htm)

National Endowment for the Humanities EdSitement

The best of humanities on the web.

<http://edsitement.neh.gov/>

Oral History Association

Oral History Association, Dickinson College, Carlisle, PA.

<http://omega.dickinson.edu/organizations/oha/>

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