

Living History Education Foundation

From: Sharlyn Wells
Sent: Saturday, October 11, 2014 6:27 PM
To: Living History Education Foundation
Subject: Re: Battle of Plattsburgh Re-enactment / Course

Dear Bill and Joe,

With deep sincerity, I apologize for not writing in a timely manner, especially since my experience with the Living History Education Foundation affected me quite remarkably. In regards to the Humanities Grant report, I hope this reply is not too late, and that it can, somehow, remain helpful.

I thoroughly enjoyed my weekend of reenactment with you! Both of you are exceedingly knowledgeable, engaging, and passionate about history as well as in your desire to incorporate living history experiences within the Common Core curriculum. Thank you for your passion (and patience) as you taught us not only history, but also helped us experience history while you taught us how to make cartridges, to load and fire a musket, to march, and drill, and be courageous!

History and historical fiction have been one of my favorite genres, and my imagination has been helpful as I try to place myself in the shoes of characters about whom I read. However, nothing I have ever read has allowed me to feel or understand so deeply components of a history than my experiences with you through the LHEF.

On Friday evening, September 12th, Colonel David G. Fitz-Enz provided a captivating presentation of events regarding the Battle of Plattsburgh. I helped make and fill the musket cartridges that I would use the following day. I had received my reenactment supplies. On my drive home, I had begun to fear that I had made an error in signing up for my role with the LHEF. Load and fire a musket? Reenact in battles? Suddenly, it was here and real, and I had begun to feel quite nervous.

However, on Saturday morning, your passion and reassurances kept peeked my curiosity for learning. During battle, I felt my throat dry and constrict as I experienced the enemy approach ~ aware of their movement, the loud volley of muskets, the shouts of men, the smell of gun powder and smoke wafting through the air into my senses. I imagined, more truly experienced, how a young man might have felt during those moments. Gratefully, I welcomed the need to concentrate on the procedure for loading and firing my musket and to listen for commands. Our leader's voice calmly telling us, "Steady...steady, boys!" motivated

the return of focus and courage. Much more deeply, I experienced how a soldier might have tried not to think about the fact that at any moment a musket ball might ricochet through his body, leave a hole the size of the palm of his hand as it exited, endure excruciating pain and, perhaps, never again see loved ones or the sky above his head. Never before have I truly considered the precious cost of lost or gained ground.

Returning to the encampment, before the street battle, hardtack and jerky helped fill my growling stomach. I observed youngsters, dressed in period clothing, living history as they visited the surgeon and made tea bags, moth bags, and candles. Already, thoughts were working on how to implement living history within my classroom. These are activities that I can incorporate within my program and through which my students can do more than learn history; they can experience history, perhaps becoming intrinsically motivated to learn more.

During my weekend with you, I did not merely learn history; I *experienced* history. What I learned cannot be taught simply from textual or video resources. Many teachers already feel overburdened with responsibilities regarding Common Core and APPR. I hope that the continued work of the LHEF can reassure and guide teachers in understanding how living history can be implemented into the curriculum while not being viewed as additional "work" on top of everything else they are being directed to accomplish.

My LHEF experience, working with both of you, as well as other teachers and re-enactors, has brought a richly meaningful chapter not only into my personal life, but also my life as an educator. My goal is to allow my students to not only learn history, but also experience aspects of history.

Again, I sincerely apologize for this quite overdue letter, and I apologize for its verbose length. Try as I might, I failed at confining my response to "a brief few sentences". Even now, a month later, when I share my LHEF experiences with others, I tend to sound a bit like an overexcited adolescent ;)

Sincerely, Thank you, and God Bless,
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