

Farbs, Stickjocks, and Costume Nazis:
A Study of the Living History Subculture in Modern America

by
Krista Ann Wagner

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Arts
in the
American Studies
Program

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

May, 2007

Farbs, Stickjocks, and Costume Nazis: A Study of the Living History Subculture in
Modern America

Krista Ann Wagner

I hereby release this thesis to the public. I understand that this thesis will be made available from the OhioLINK ETD Center and the Maag Library Circulation Desk for public access. I also authorize the University or other individuals to make copies of this thesis as needed for scholarly research.

Signature:

Krista Ann Wagner, Student Date

Approvals:

Dr. Stephanie Tingley, Thesis Advisor Date

Dr. Donna DeBlasio, Committee Member Date

Dr. Paul Gordiejew, Committee Member Date

Peter J. Kasvinsky, Dean of School of Graduate Studies & Research Date

ABSTRACT

The focus of this thesis is to allow the reader to better understand the subculture of living historians. Oral history interviews were conducted over a two-month period with ten living historians from local reenacting groups and living history museums in the Ohio/Pennsylvania/West Virginia area. The interviews wielded information which allows the reader to better understand how the structure of the living history community works, especially the private lives of historical reenactors.

Chapter 1 of this thesis discusses the history of the two main subcultures of living history; living history museums and historical reenacting. Chapter 2 describes the interviewees and the structure of living history organizations. Chapter 3 contains many sections, such as For Love of the Game, Edutainment, and Physical and Mental Hardships. This chapter allows the reader to better understand the mindset of living historians, the subculture in which they participate, and the value of living history as a form of interpretation. Chapter 4 discusses the struggles living historians are faced with, including criticism from academics, the public, and even each other and the changing generations of reenactors. Chapter 5 concludes the thesis by discussing the future of living history museums as well as historical reenacting.

With support from historical museums, reenactors, and academics, living history does not have to be a dying art in America. Living history allows for an interactive education which intrigues the minds of the audience both young and old. The professional field which struggles financial to support such an intensive program and reenactments, with numbers constantly dwindling, can work together to support one another for the success of living history.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who gave me the opportunity to present this thesis to you. I want to thank my three committee advisors, Dr. Stephanie Tingley, Dr. Donna DeBlasio, and Dr. Paul Gordiejew. With their encouragement and guidance, we were able to bring three distinct departments of Youngstown State University together: American Studies, History, and Anthropology-- all in cooperation for my wild and ambitious plans of promoting living history in America.

I would also like to thank all of my interviewees, Mr. Chris Borman, Ms. Debra Conner, Mr. Carl Emerson, Mr. Dirk Hermance, Mr. Ron Johnson, Mr. Mike Kovacevich, Ms. Karen Lohman, Mr. David Shriver, Mr. Jim Sturgill, and Ms. Brittany Wylie. They so willingly gave up time in their busy schedules to help me better understand the lives of living historians. Without them, this project could never have happened.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my parents, Jim and Becky Wagner, for their years of support, both mentally and financially, while I pursued my dreams of history. They always gave me the encouragement to pursue a career that was meaningful and fulfilling in my life. Thank you, Mom and Dad.

Table of Contents

<u>Introduction</u>	1
<u>Terminology</u>	3
<u>Chapter 1: The History</u>	6
The History of Living History Museums	6
The History of Historical Reenactment	12
<u>Chapter 2: The Interviews and The Organizations</u>	18
Interviewees	18
How the Organization of Living History Works	21
<u>Chapter 3: Understanding the World of Living Historians</u>	28
Lingo of Living Historians	28
For Love of the Game	32
Edutainment	35
A Male Sport: Women and Reenacting	37
Physical and Mental Hardships	40
Government and Politics: Criticisms Faced	44
<i>Problems in Living History Museums</i>	44
<i>Problems for Historical Reenactors</i>	46
An American Pastime	49
<u>Chapter 4: Change and Progress: The Bleak Future</u>	53
Young v. Old: The Changing Generations	53
Sad Reality: The Downside of Living History	55
<i>Living Historian v. Academia</i>	55
<i>Living Historian v. The Public</i>	57
<i>Living Historian v. Living Historian</i>	59
<u>Chapter 5: Conclusion</u>	62
The Future of Living History in the Professional World	62
The Future of Reenacting	64
Conclusion	66
<u>Appendix A</u>	67
<u>Primary Sources</u>	72
<u>Secondary Sources</u>	73

Introduction

Farbs, Stickjocks, and Costume Nazis: A Study of the Living History Subculture in Modern America is a project that came about through my own love of historical re-creation, alternative education and anthropology. As a six-year member of the Society for Creative Anachronism, my love of history and theater drew me into this unique field which allows those involved to experience the life of historic cultures.

To truly understand the world of living historians from an anthropological viewpoint, one must immerse oneself in the culture with an objective viewpoint. This project does not work that way. Instead, I hope to allow the reader to better understand a subculture without ever having to meet those involved. Interviews with various living historians will allow the reader to meet those within the field and hear their voices-- their experiences, emotions, and triumphs in the field of living history. I am a member of the Society for Creative Anachronism, a medieval reenactment group. I have also participated in a number of living history events focused around the Civil War-era. While I am not a complete outside observer, my previous involvement in this field allows me to better understand the emotions of my interviewees so I can express them here for you.

Stacy Roth said in *Past into Present: Effective Techniques for First person Historical Interpretation*, "History is not 'the past.' It is an interpretation of the past, ever shifting because our uses for its change. We would have to abandon the entire practice of history if we allowed guilt over our inability to uncover the absolute truth to dismay us."¹ Living history, like all history, is subjective. History is constantly

¹ Roth, Stacy F. *Past into Present: Effective Techniques for First person Historical Interpretation*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998: 23.

changing due to new discoveries, some which disprove previous assumptions. I hope to show the reader in this thesis that living history is not a weak version of traditional historical interpretation. It is an avenue which can be explored to improve interpretation and provide a means of interactive learning for museums, classrooms, and as an educational hobby.

The thesis is organized into five chapters. Before Chapter 1, a section on terminology is included to give the audience an understanding of what living history is and who is involved. Chapter 1 discusses the history of living history, both in the professional museum field and in reenactment societies. Chapter 2 gives an overview of the interviews which were conducted with ten living historians over a two-month period during the research of this project. A section in this chapter also discusses the various organizations which make up living history in America. Chapter 3 is the main body of the thesis. Based on the questions asked of the interviewees sections like *For Love of the Game* and *A Male Sport: Women and Reenacting* address the mindset of living historians and the purpose their interpretation holds. *An American Pastime* details how living history has flourished in America and why Americans find reenacting and interpretation a worthy field of educational entertainment. Chapter 4 speaks of the hardships living historians have to face when dealing with academics, the public and even fellow living historians. *Young v. Old* discusses how younger generations are not participating in living history as a hobby as much as they were just a few years ago. Chapter 5 is the conclusion. The future of living history in the professional world and the future of reenacting have to come together in the attempts to keep both fields active.

This thesis was designed with the idea of promoting social acceptance of the private world of living historians. Due to the complex social structure organizations like reenacting entail, those within the field often do not have the opportunity to share their experiences with the general public. This project was designed to give a voice to living historians, especially reenactors, so professionals within the field of history can better understand the mindset of living historians.

Please keep in mind while reading that my research was done with a very select number of individuals in a very select area of the Midwest. I may have made generalizations that would not apply to reenactors or historical interpreters in other areas of the United States. However, I hope this research achieves its goal by helping the reader to better understand why living historians do what they do and how living history can be an asset to traditional museum and classroom teaching of history.

Terminology

Living history in and of itself is a hard word to define. There is constant debate in the field as to what this phrase means and even more debate about who is a living historian. Separate living history museums do not agree on one definition either. However, all definitions have one thing in common: re-creation. To Stacy Roth, living history is anything that evokes a link with the past.² Living history can also be defined as an attempt by people to simulate life in a past time.³ At Colonial Williamsburg, for example, living history is the term used specifically in reference to first person character

² Roth, 9.

³ Anderson, Jay. *A Living History Reader: Volume 1, Museums*. Nashville: The American Association for State and Local History, 1991: 3.

interpreters.⁴ For the sake of consistency, when using the term living history, I will define it as simply meaning people attempting to simulate life in a past time. In my opinion, living history can be done by both professional historical interpreters as well as hobby reenactors.

The term “interpreter” also needs defining. An interpreter is, as Freeman Tilden explains, a translator of material culture and human or natural phenomena to the public in a meaningful, provocative, and interesting way⁵. The word interpreter is recognized more in the professional field of living history rather than among reenactors. Most historical museums use either first person or third person interpreters. First person interpreters address themselves in the form of “I,” “we,” or “us.” They refer to themselves as if they currently exist in the historic time period they are portraying. They also speak in the present as if the past is happening currently. Third person, on the other hand, is the most common form of historical interpretation in museums. A third person interpreter would use the words “he,” “she,” or “they” in the sense that they are speaking about people who existed in the past.

Throughout this thesis, I will refer to two types of living historians, historic interpreters and reenactors. While all living historians do interpretation, for the sake of simplicity, I will refer to those employed through a living history farm or museum as an interpreter. They receive pay for the interpretation performed and are professionally trained. An interpreter’s main audience is the public. On the other hand, reenactors, or hobby reenactors, are people who choose historic interpretation as a hobby. Most reenactors are members of larger organizations, for which dues or membership fees are

⁴ Handler, Richard and Eric Gable. *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1997: 74.

⁵ Roth, 10.

common. Reenactors do not receive pay for their interpretation. On the rare occasion when they would be paid, usually if they work in correlation with a professional organization, such as a museum or library, the money is usually donated to a historic cause or the organization which supports them. A reenactor's main audience is themselves and their fellow reenactors; however, the public can also play a large part.

Chapter 1: The History

To fully understand the subculture of living historians, one must understand where the concept of living history originated. This chapter is divided into two sections; The History of Living History Museums and The History of Historical Reenactment. While both fields developed separate of each other, they often collide throughout history, allowing each subculture to grow and change independently of each other while still influencing one another. The history of living history will show the reader just how quickly this concept of interpretation progressed, especially in America.

The History of Living History Museums

The concept of living history is fairly new. Living history was only devised about one-hundred and sixteen years ago and it has not had a lot of time to develop and perfect itself. However, the various disciplines that make up living history, such as theater, public speaking, storytelling, folkways, and history, have been around for much longer. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, philosophers admired the democratic ideas, visual balance and reason of ancients as a model for society.⁶ As new technology developed, making people's lives easier and giving them more free time, studies of the ancient world grew. Industrializing cultures learned to respect the lives their ancestors led. With new studies and appreciation of past cultures came a sudden realization: cultural traditions were changing at extremely fast rates and this trend alarmed some historians and scholars.

Arthur Hazelius, a Swedish teacher and folklorist, studied the ancient traditions of the Swedes and realized, like many other scholars of the day, that there would soon be no

⁶ Roth, 2.

more tradition left in what was growing into an industrialized world. On October 11, 1881, Hazelius opened Skansen, a part natural history park, part historical museum, and part zoo, in Stockholm, Sweden.⁷ On this day, the living history museum was born. Hazelius found the empty historic buildings that dotted his homeland could easily become “dry shell[s] of the past” without activity.⁸ His new Skansen would give life to these buildings by adding costumed interpreters who could interact with the public and their natural environment in the way their ancestors did hundreds of year ago. However, though Hazelius’ Skansen was a success, his prototype never truly caught on in Europe. It wasn’t until the idea of living history traveled across the ocean to America that living history museums take off.

During the late nineteenth and much of the twentieth century, America’s pride in its heritage influenced many people and greatly promoted the idea of preserving history. Stacy Roth states, “Our worship of colonial and frontier forefathers was highly celebratory, nostalgic and self-affirming of Anglo-American values.”⁹ America was proud of its history, just not all of its history. People began confusing history with heritage, the ideal of the “simpler days” before technology loomed in American minds. Heritage often glorifies history and forgets the less desirable side of America, such as slavery, disease, and war. Early living history museums focuses much more on heritage than history and Americans, with their disposable income and need for amusement, found museums to educate and entertain.

⁷ Anderson, Jay. *Time Machines: The World of Living History*. Nashville: The American Association for State and Local History, 1984: 19.

⁸ Anderson, Jay. *The Living History Sourcebook*. Nashville: The American Association for State and Local History, 1985: 4.

⁹ Roth, 2.

America was first introduced to living history at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, even before Hazelius opened his Skansen in Stockholm. A New England farmer's house opened with live, costumed interpreters.¹⁰ Like many of the fairs that were popular during the nineteenth century, the exhibits displayed were dismantled after the fair closed. The "show" was not thought of as an educational museum because it was not in the traditional museum setting. One man, George Francis Dow, was inspired by what he saw at the fairs traveling the country. Much like Hazelius, he wanted to take the idea of the fair's exhibit and put it in a permanent setting. Dow created the first American living history museum in 1909.¹¹ He restored the 1685 John Ward house in Salem, Massachusetts that featured custodians dressed in homespun costumes of the time when the house was built.¹² Sadly, however, Dow is not given the credit he deserves. Another man by the name of Henry Ford is given the credit of opening the first living history museum in America.

Henry Ford opened Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan in 1929.¹³ He came up with the idea while visiting Hazelius' Skansen during a tour of Europe. Ford decided to make a mock-village by saving a number of buildings from his childhood that was going to be destroyed. Though Greenfield Village was established ten years after Dow's creation, Ford's success and name made his living history museum more popular with the general public. Not too long after Ford's Greenfield Village opened, the Reverend William Goodwin, founder of Colonial Williamsburg, offered his ideas to Ford in the hopes he would fund a total reconstruction and revitalization of historic

¹⁰ Irwin, Susan K. *Popular History: Living History Sites, Historical Interpretation, and the Public*. Master's thesis, Bowling Green State University, 1993: 16.

¹¹ Irwin, 17.

¹² Anderson, *Time Machines*, 27.

¹³ *Ibid*, 28.

Williamsburg. Goodwin believed Ford's new automobiles were responsible for the destruction of Williamsburg, Virginia and wanted to give him the opportunity to "atone for his sins."¹⁴ Ford declined due to his workload in Michigan, but that did not stop Goodwin.

In 1932, Colonial Williamsburg opened after an extensive reconstruction and refurbishing of the original colonial capital.¹⁵ With the financial support of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and modeled after Skansen, Colonial Williamsburg set the stage for what a living history museum would be in America. Unlike Ford's Greenfield Village, Colonial Williamsburg exists in the correct time and place where the original capital was located, while Greenfield Village has many different time periods in one setting. This distinction gave rise to the three new forms of outdoor museums in America. The first type consists of original buildings on original sites operated for educational purposes, such as Colonial Williamsburg. Williamsburg was able to do this to an extent but also drew from another form of outdoor museum, the reconstruction. The Governor's Palace at Colonial Williamsburg, for example, was completely destroyed by fire in 1781.¹⁶ Based on archaeological evidence and written documentation, the building was reconstructed and exists today as it did almost two-hundred and fifty years ago. In the third type of outdoor museum buildings are moved to a new site for educational and preservation purposes. Greenfield Village, as well as the famous Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts, is this third type of outdoor museum.¹⁷

¹⁴ Irwin, 20-21.

¹⁵ Anderson, *Time Machines*, 30.

¹⁶ The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, "Governor's Palace", (2007), <http://www.history.org/Almanack/places/hb/hbpal.cfm> (accessed April 8, 2007).

¹⁷ Irwin, 8.

While these early living history museums prospered, many scholars felt a new step needed to be taken to give the public a better understanding of life throughout various historic time periods. Third person interpretation was the only type of interpretation being done at outdoor museums during the early years.¹⁸ In 1957, Freeman Tilden, an author who worked with the National Park Service, wrote *Interpreting Our Heritage*. This book is still a prominent resource to museums today. Tilden challenged park rangers and historical interpreters to “people” their sites.¹⁹ He wanted to see more than people just running around in historical costumes. His book moved beyond casual museum interpretation and took it one step further. Tilden wanted a museum that allowed the visitors to be fully immersed in a different time period.

Other “social historians” like Cary Carson and James Deetz continued with the ideals established by Tilden.²⁰ The 1960s was a time of social and cultural change. Scholars were becoming interested in the “ordinary” people of history and how they lived, worked, and survived. The focus on gender, race and age issues, for example, gave museums the incentive to show how important household and farm chores were for men, women, and children.²¹

Other aspects of interpretation became important to museums, especially theater and entertainment. Museums began feeling the pressures of other forms of entertainment that distracted the public. The first “museum theater” production, *The Pangs of Liberty*, took place at Old Sturbridge Village in 1961.²² Now, living history museums often perform historical dramas and hold special themed events in the attempt to increase their

¹⁸ Roth, 31.

¹⁹ Anderson, *Time Machines*, 36.

²⁰ Roth, 30.

²¹ Bridal, Tessa. *Exploring Museum Theater*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004: 13.

²² Ibid, 15.

attendance rates. With the development of museum theater came first person interpretation. In 1969, James Deetz, then Assistant Director at Plimoth Plantation, decided to completely revamp and update how Plimoth was doing its interpretation. He had all the antiques removed and replaced with replicas from the various houses at Plimoth, which had also been restored to make them more historically accurate.²³ By 1978, first person interpretation was used at Plimoth Plantation and by 1984, it was perfected.²⁴ Plimoth is still the number one museum in America for first person interpretation.

In September of 1970, the Association for Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums (ALHFAM) was formed.²⁵ Since then, living history museums have proliferated. As of 1991, the number of living history farms in American numbered about 140. There are also approximately 650 institutions that do some type of living history.²⁶ William Kashatus, professional historian and author of *Past, Present & Personal: Teaching Writing in U.S. History*, states, “Living history has, over the last decade, become one of the most popular educational and entertaining movements in our country.”²⁷ Living history museums exist all over the world, but no other country can compare to the success they have had in the United States. Susan Irwin said, “Open-air museums and living history sites bring history into the lives of many people who would never think about reading a scholar’s thesis or doing research on a particular topic in

²³ Snow, Stephen Eddy. *Performing the Pilgrims: A Study of Ethnohistorical Role-Playing at Plimoth Plantation*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993: xviv.

²⁴ *Ibid*, xx.

²⁵ Anderson, *Time Machines*, 38-39.

²⁶ Anderson, *A Living History Reader*, 6.

²⁷ Kashatus, William C. *Past, Present & Personal: Teaching Writing in U.S. History*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002: 92.

history.”²⁸ Living history became popular because of its ability to reach a wide audience. Despite all of the popularity of living history, museums in America are hurting financially. Will living history museums be able to stay alive and keep attendance rates up?

The History of Historical Reenactment

Even before living history outdoor museums like Colonial Williamsburg and Greenfield Village were beginning to take off, the idea of historical reenacting as a hobby began to form. In fact, the first Civil War reenactments were staged by Civil War veterans themselves, namely members of the Grand Army of the Republic.²⁹ In 1922, “two veterans watching a National Guard reenactment of Pickett’s Charge rushed to the wall, grabbed the rifles of two ‘fallen’ guardsmen and opened fire into the oncoming ‘Confederate’ lines with cheers of onlookers.”³⁰ Within a few years of this event, Civil War veterans were disappearing quickly. The reenactments of Civil War battles could have easily ended then, but did not.

On February 22, 1933, The National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association (NMLRA) was established in Portsmouth, Ohio.³¹ They began holding shooting matches, which soon drew in a huge number of people interested in historic guns. By 1939, NMLRA was big enough to begin publication of their first magazine, *Muzzle Blasts*.³² Soon enough, due to the large number of people involved, the group began to faction and members began

²⁸ Irwin, 6.

²⁹ Cullen, Jim. *The Civil War in Popular Culture: A Reusable Past*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995: 182.

³⁰ Weeks, Jim. *Gettysburg: Memory, Market and an American Shrine*. Princeton: Princeton University, 2003: 104.

³¹ Anderson, *Time Machines*, 136.

³² *Ibid*.

splitting themselves into three groups. The first group consisted of those interested in the guns only. The second group was made up of “primitive culturists” who formed primitive campsites (and later became known as the “buckskinners”) and the third group became Civil War reenactors.³³

Despite the factions that were beginning to form, many of these men still meet and interacted together. They began forming mini-groups based on geographic location. In 1949, gun matches were held for by the Berwyn Rod and Gun Club in Eastern Maryland. And in 1950, the Norfolk Long Rifles (who later became the 1st Virginia Volunteers) met the Washington Blue Rifles and Civil War reenacting officially became an American hobby.³⁴

In 1958, the North-South Skirmish Association (N-SSA) became the first organized group of living history members. There was no individual membership in this organization; one could only join as a group, or unit, of people.³⁵ Even more influential for recreational living history was the Civil War Centennial held from 1961 to 1965 and the American Revolution Bicentennial held from 1975 to 1983.³⁶ In fact, within twenty years of the early 1960s, tens of thousands of military living history buffs were created. The N-SSA was, at the time, the largest known Civil War reenactment society and the nation called upon them during the Centennial as the only group of individuals who could accurately re-create the period of the Civil War.³⁷ Even President John F. Kennedy

³³ Anderson, *Time Machines*, 137.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid, 138.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid, 139.

enjoyed watching what he called “sham battles” and encouraged the reenactors to continue after the Centennial was over.³⁸

While Civil War reenacting continued to be popular all over America, new types of living history arose. The Brigade of the American Revolution (BAR) formed in the 1970s and opened the doors for other types of War-reenactments, such as French and Indian War.³⁹ In October of 1981, participants reenacted the Battle of Yorktown after two years of planning for the American Revolution Bicentennial. The reenacting lasted one week and is considered “the movement’s finest moment in time.”⁴⁰ While all of these “American” war reenactors were able to literally walk on historic ground, two other very unique and different living history groups formed in the 1960s and 1970s. One is the Society for Creative Anachronism and the other is twentieth century war reenactors.

In Berkeley, California, Dave Thewlis and Ken deMaiffe founded the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA) in 1966.⁴¹ The SCA dedicates itself to, “recreating the Middle Ages not as it was but as it should have been, doing away with the strife and pestilence and emulating the beauty, grace, chivalry and brotherhood.”⁴² This society, essentially a mix of medieval martial arts and courtly pleasures, portrays a vast amount of European history, roughly the years 500 A.D. to 1500 A.D. (or from the Fall of Rome until the Renaissance).⁴³ This aspect alone puts the SCA into a whole different category than Civil War reenacting. Members of the SCA have one thousand years of history and any region in the world that had contact with Western Europe from which to choose.

³⁸ Anderson, *Time Machines*, 143.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 145.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 146.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 168.

⁴² *Ibid*, 167.

⁴³ *Ibid*.

The SCA is also unique because of its highly organized political and class structure. While other reenacting groups may have a national organization one can join, the SCA not only exists for membership purposes, but also attempts to organize what they call a “Known World”. The “Known World” is made up of shires, baronies, and kingdoms which are ruled by members who have either earned their position through medieval combat skills or service to the Crown.⁴⁴ However, it is not the politics that attract so many people to the SCA (with over 30,000 members); it is the “anachronism” of the society.⁴⁵ SCA members can make the society whatever they want it to be. One member may spend his or her time in scholarly research, another may choose to learn combat skills or a craft, and another member could think of it as nothing more than a costume party.⁴⁶ Because of this freedom, the SCA spread very quickly in the early years through colleges and universities with strong humanities departments.⁴⁷ Unlike other types of war reenacting in America, the SCA has very loose guidelines and rarely enforces anything dealing with the historical accuracy of the Middle Ages. The SCA is, in fact, an anachronism, and it is often debated by other living historians if what they do is really living history at all. However, living history is defined in this thesis as people attempting to simulate life in a past time and the SCA is doing that to a certain degree.

Much like the SCA, twentieth century war reenactors are a private group. While Civil and Revolutionary War reenactments almost always take place in front of the public and for educational purposes, twentieth century war reenactors have both a public and a private face to their organization. Twentieth century war reenacting is made of primarily

⁴⁴ Anderson, *Time Machines*, 168.

⁴⁵ SCA Webfolk. “The Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc.,” (November 29, 2006), <http://www.sca.org/> (accessed April 3, 2007).

⁴⁶ Anderson, *Time Machines*, 170.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 168.

World War I and World War II groups but also includes Korean and Vietnam War members. The first twentieth century war reenactment was in 1951 when the Confederate Air Force was founded to preserve World War II aircrafts.⁴⁸ The World War II Historical Reenactment Society (HRS) was founded in 1979 and by 1982, a number of battles were being fought all over America: the Russian Front (Tennessee), Yugoslavia (Ohio), Poland (Missouri), Germany (Kentucky), Ardennes Forest of Belgium (Oklahoma) and D-Day (Virginia Beach).⁴⁹

The first World War I reenactment was thought to have taken place in September of 1978 at Mount St. Mary's College in Emmetsburg, Maryland.⁵⁰ For their reenactors, the Great War Association (GWA) is an organization that conducts private reenactments in the Pennsylvania area.⁵¹ In fact, in Newville, Pennsylvania there is a 153-acre site of sculpted land used for World War I reenactments called Ceaser Krauss Great War Memorial Site.⁵²

Though World War I and World War II reenactors dominate the playing field of twentieth century war reenactors, the Korean War and the Vietnam War are beginning to become popular as well. Vietnam War reenacting began on a private site in Connecticut in the 1980s.⁵³ Units exist currently in Kentucky, Texas, Virginia, and North Carolina, as well as Belgium, Poland, and France.⁵⁴ Korean War reenacting began in the early 1990's and the war's 50th anniversary gave rise to several tactical events.⁵⁵ As of 2004, there

⁴⁸ Thompson, Jenny. *War Games: Inside the World of Twentieth century war Reenactors*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2004: 44.

⁴⁹ Anderson, *Time Machines*, 153.

⁵⁰ Thompson, 40.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, xix.

⁵² *Ibid*, 43.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 46.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 48.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 46.

were roughly six thousand known twentieth century war reenactors.⁵⁶ Also as of 2004, there were no known Gulf War reenactors. However, that is just a matter of time.

There are thousands of living history reenactment events each year. They range from battle reenactments, militia musters, encampments, rendezvous, and patriotic celebrations to agricultural fairs, traditional rural calendar customs, military tattoos, and civilian frolics.⁵⁷ Jenny Thompson says, “At the heart of [the reenactment] hobby lies their belief that history is not the privileged sanction of the elite, the professional, or the intellectual.”⁵⁸ Historical reenacting has become one of the fastest-growing hobbies in America.⁵⁹ However, the question remains will these “hobby” reenactors and “professional” living historians ever be able to team up and work together in the attempt to educate the public on what is, essentially, everyone’s history? This thesis will present the issues involved and what the future holds for living history in America.

⁵⁶ Thompson, xiv.

⁵⁷ Anderson, *The Living History Reader*, 130.

⁵⁸ Thompson, xvii.

⁵⁹ Horwitz, Tony. *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatched from the Unfinished Civil War*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1998: 126.

Chapter 2: The Interviews and The Organizations

Chapter 2 is a brief overview of the interviews which took place from February to March 2007 to better understand the lives of living historians. Each interviewee, presented below, was asked a series of questions about their personal experiences as a reenactor or professional interpreter. These questions can be found in Appendix A at the end of this thesis. The best way to understand the subculture of living historians is to talk to members within the field.

Interviewees

Interviews were conducted with ten individuals who participate in the living history subculture. Most are from the northeast Ohio region who are either currently residing there or have previously resided there. The interviewees are individuals who expressed interest in participating in this study and agreed to share their experiences of living history with the author. Eight of the ten interviewees are currently historical reenactors. Two of the ten are professional interpreters and two of the reenactors have previously been employed as a historical interpreter for a living history museum. All interviewees were of Caucasian, Non-Hispanic decent. Three were under the age of forty. However, before I share insights, I need to tell a little about each interviewee. The following information about each interviewee is discussed in order the interviews took place.

Mr. David Shriver is a structural family therapist and ordained minister. He has been a member of the Society for Creative Anachronism for the past five years. In the

SCA, he portrays the fictional personas al-Sayyid Da'ud ibn Zahir, a 12th-century Muslim from Palermo, Sicily, as well as Ælfric Paraguf, an 11th-century Englishman.⁶⁰

Mr. Dirk Hermance is a bus driver for the Youngstown City School system as well as part-time history instructor for Youngstown State University. He has been a member of the Society for Creative Anachronism for 35 years. Hermance portrays the fictional persona the Honorable Lord Dirk Edward, a 13th-century Dutch Frisian.⁶¹

Mr. Jim Sturgill is a firefighter and EMT in the Mahoning Valley area. He is currently involved in French and Indian War reenacting, where he portrays a French soldat (the equivalent to an American private). Sturgill was also employed for a number of years as a first and third person historic interpreter at Mackinac State Historic Parks in Michigan.⁶²

Mr. Ron Johnson teaches history to junior high students in the Mahoning Valley area. He is a Confederate Civil War reenactor and member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, Capt. Thomas W. Patton Camp 2021 where he portrays General Nathan Bedford Forrest. He has been a reenactor over seventeen years.⁶³

Mr. Mike Kovacevich works as a Customer Service Representative at the Akron Zoological Park as well as the owner of the mail-order based company, Mr. "K" Products. Kovacevich is a Union Civil War reenactor with the 5th Ohio Volunteer

⁶⁰ David Shriver, interview by author, 2 February 2007, Hubbard, Ohio.

⁶¹ Dirk Hermance, interview by author, 5 February 2007, Youngstown, Ohio, tape recording, Youngstown State University Oral History Collections, Youngstown, Ohio.

⁶² Jim Sturgill, interview by author, 16 February 2007, Youngstown, Ohio, tape recording, Youngstown State University Oral History Collections, Youngstown, Ohio.

⁶³ Ron Johnson, interview by author, 19 February 2007, Youngstown, Ohio, tape recording, Youngstown State University Oral History Collections, Youngstown, Ohio.

Infantry in Akron, Ohio where he portrays a hospital assistant. He has also worked for Hale Farm and Village as a third person historical interpreter.⁶⁴

Mr. Carl Emerson is a self-employed pipe organ builder from Cleveland, Ohio. He is also a Union Civil War reenactor with the 5th Ohio Volunteer Infantry and portrays a “hard-beaten old soldier named Waldo.”⁶⁵

Ms. Karen Lohman is Master Interpreter for Hale Farm and Village in Bath, Ohio. Previously, she taught French and has a background in Education. She began working for Hale Farm and Village in 1997.⁶⁶

Ms. Debra Conner is a Chautauqua, or “In-Character” living history performer. She portrays five different characters; Emily Dickinson, Margaret Blennerhassett, Zelda Fitzgerald, Margaret Mitchell, and Rebecca Harding Davis. She is also Artist-in-Residence for the Ohio Arts Council and part-time English professor of poetry at a number of colleges in West Virginia and Ohio.⁶⁷

Mr. Chris Borman is co-President of Plan B Toys. He is a World War II reenactor and has been a member of the 101st US Airborne Division, 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment for four years.⁶⁸

Ms. Brittany Wylie is currently an Anthropology student at Youngstown State University. She is a Civil War reenactor and portrays female Union soldier Jennie

⁶⁴ Mike Kovacevich, interview by author, 2 March 2007, Akron, Ohio, tape recording, Youngstown State University Oral History Collections, Youngstown, Ohio.

⁶⁵ Carl Emerson, interview by author, 11 March 2007, Cleveland, Ohio, tape recording, Youngstown State University Oral History Collections, Youngstown, Ohio.

⁶⁶ Karen Lohman, interview by author, 13 March 2007, Bath, Ohio.

⁶⁷ Debra Conner, interview by author, 14 March 2007, Athens, Ohio, tape recording, Youngstown State University Oral History Collections, Youngstown, Ohio.

⁶⁸ Chris Borman, interview by author, 17 March 2007, Groveport, Ohio, tape recording, Youngstown State University Oral History Collections, Youngstown, Ohio.

Hodgers with the 61st Ohio Volunteer Infantry and Belle Boyd, Confederate female spy, with the Capt. Thomas W. Patton Camp 2021.⁶⁹

To summarize, the interviewees include two professional living historians, four Civil War reenactors, two members of the Society for Creative Anachronism, one French and Indian War reenactor, and one World War II reenactor. All interviews, except those with Mr. David Shriver and Ms. Karen Lohman, are recorded as oral histories and are located in the Youngstown State University Oral History Program.

How the Organization of Living History Works

Living history has many variations and while groups contain similarities, each works in a distinctive and different way. Four types of living history groups will be discussed in this section: war reenactors (Civil War, French and Indian War, etc.), twentieth century war reenactors, members of the Society for Creative Anachronism, and professional living history interpreters.

War reenactors, such as Civil War, Revolutionary War, and French and Indian War reenactors, focus much of what they do and display for the public. These reenactments carry two focuses: battlefield scenes and camp life. The public is constantly encouraged to ask questions and learn about the time period being portrayed.

Most war reenactors do not take on a persona of a fictional or historical character. They are addressed by their modern name and may portray a private, a nurse, or a child of a soldier. Some reenactors include information from a number of historical people to

⁶⁹ Brittany Wylie, interview by author, 29 March 2007, Youngstown, Ohio, tape recording, Youngstown State University Oral History Collections, Youngstown, Ohio.

create a composite character. They may model their attire after a picture or set up their camp as one soldier describes in a letter.

Battlefield scenes are the time when war reenactors have the ability to attempt first person interpretation. Dramatic deaths and mock hand-to-hand fighting allows reenactors to take the role of a soldier as far as they can without permanent harm to themselves or others. While in camp, most reenactors stay in third person and discuss their personal items to the public from a modern viewpoint. One reenactor whom was interviewed, Ron Johnson, has chosen to portray an actual historical figure, General Nathan Bedford Forrest. Due to Johnson's unique choice, he strives to constantly stay in first person anytime he is wearing the uniform.⁷⁰

Women in war reenacting do not compare to the number of men in the hobby. Most women portray their appropriate sex-role, such as the wife of a soldier, a nurse, or even a prostitute. Some women have ventured into other roles, like Brittany Wylie has done. She portrays historical characters Belle Boyd, Confederate spy, and Jennie Hodgers, Union soldier, in which she interacts in the battlefield scenes with male soldiers. Many female reenactors become involved with reenacting through a friend or relative who is involved and some groups, such as the 5th Ohio Volunteer Infantry in Akron, Ohio do not allow a woman to join on her own; she must join with a male, such as a father or significant other.

The freedom to join a war reenactment group and portray whomever one would like is controlled through the social pressures of the organization. New reenactors begin on the bottom of the military social scale, most often portraying a simple private. A person can only achieve the honor of becoming an officer when their fellow reenactors

⁷⁰ Johnson.

vote them into the position.⁷¹ These men will then dress according to their new position and will often be the ones who call orders and lead marches on the battlefield.

War reenacting, especially Civil War reenacting, is a very public living history organization. In contrast to the war reenacting groups, members of the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA), who address themselves as SCAdians, take a very different view of reenacting. As mentioned earlier, the SCA is not built on historical accuracy like other war reenactments. Instead, historical accuracy comes second to other activities, such as medieval fighting tournaments with mock weapons and various crafts of the period. Modern conveniences, shunned by war reenactors, are not only allowed but often encouraged by SCA members.

The SCA also has an interesting way of persona building unlike any other type of reenactment discussed. SCAdians take on a fictional first person persona, though most choose to only speak in the third person. My own SCA persona can serve as an example here. My persona is a 14th-century Englishwoman named Marion Bowyer who currently resides in Calais, France. My fellow SCAdians address me as “Marion,” not as my modern given name like war reenactors. However, when speaking about Marion and her life, I address her not as myself but as if she would be standing next to me. It works much the same way as actors would address a character they portray. SCAdians keep themselves separate from their persona, as if it is an entirely separate entity or personality.

SCA events are private events held for fellow SCAdians. Organized by a local group, they charge an admission fee and often include classes, arts and craft competitions, and fighting tournaments. A feast with dancing is held in the evening and

⁷¹ Sturgill

often concludes events. The only time the SCA has contact with the general public is if the members choose to hold a demonstration, or “demo.” Demonstrations are often held at public places with a lot of foot traffic, such as fairs, colleges, or parks. Fighting and craft demonstrations occur and anyone interested in joining is given information about the local group in the area.

The politics of the SCA is distinctive amongst reenacting groups. Since the organization’s creation in 1966, ranking has developed and must be earned by an individual through skill at weaponry or crafts or in service to the organization. One cannot even take the title of Lord or Lady without earning the award which allows one to do so. Those who reside as King and Queen of a kingdom do so for a one-year rotation, while title of Prince and Princess is held for six months, then King and Queen for six months. This title is achieved through a combat competition, where a male is most often the winner, and he chooses a woman to be his Queen. This allows the organization to run as a democracy instead of a historically accurate monarchy. Ranking is held by members of the group but their power is very limited. Though not historically accurate, the politics of the SCA allow for easier acceptance by American culture.

The SCA is much easier to be involved in than many war reenactments, simply because the guidelines are very loose and the organization allows for personal choice and freedoms. The downside to this is the SCA draws in (and accepts) people with all intentions; from those searching for complete historically accurate portrayals to those interested in fantasy-based Dungeons and Dragons-type of “history.” However, twentieth century war reenactors have taken the private life of the SCA and the historical accuracy of war reenactors and created an organization with the best of both worlds.

The most popular twentieth-century War reenactments are World War I, World War II, and Korean and Vietnam War. Their reenactments, called tacticals, are private events held only for fellow reenactors. The battles which take place at a tactical are often based on historical events; however, the outcome is not already known. Units are given simulated objectives which put them in conflict with opposing units. Similar to other war reenactments, blanks are used in guns and the soldier uses his own judgment in deciding if he “lives” or “dies” (called “taking a hit”).⁷² After battles, an outdoor camping event usually occurs and gives reenactors the chance to bond with their comrades and with members of the opposing unit. Twentieth century war reenactors also have a very public side to what they do. Many participate in events, fairs, and parades, often with World War II veterans at their side.

Twentieth century war reenactors work the same way as other war reenactors when it comes to character or persona development. While in battle, a first person approach is taken, especially with improvised scenes such as a prisoner hostage situation. As Borman noted in his experiences, World War II reenactors who portray Germans often attempt more first person both on and off the battlefield than Allied soldiers.⁷³ However, third person still dominates most conversation.

Professional living historians, on the other hand, follow an entirely different set of rules than reenactors do. The two professional interpreters interviewed, Karen Lohman and Debra Conner, work with their own set of rules as living historians. The bonding and socialization process does not occur so much between professional interpreters as it does between interpreter and audience.

⁷² Borman.

⁷³ Ibid.

Karen Lohman, Master Interpreter at Hale Farm and Village in Bath, Ohio, works primarily with first person portrayals, one of the biggest differences between professional interpreters and reenactors. Hale Farm uses what is called fictional composite characters for the first person interpreters at the village. These characters are based on primary sources, attitudes of the time period, and someone who fits well with the house or building being interpreted.⁷⁴ The characters are not real historic people who lived during a certain time period. Other living history museums, such as Colonial Williamsburg or Plimoth Plantation, have much more information on their previous residents than a small village like Hale Farm. These museums have the ability to research and portray a historic character if they so choose.

Debra Conner, a Chautauqua performer, also works primarily in first person. Her portrayals, which are more formal than traditional first person in a museum setting, are done in front of an attentive audience. Conner speaks about her historical character's life in monologue form, and then asks the audience if they have any questions, which she also answers in first person. At the conclusion of her performance, Conner will often remove a physical item from her person, like a wig, and introduce herself. She then takes questions in third person. This ending in third person allows for more specific and diverse questioning, with both the historical outlook of her character and modern social views looking back on the time period. Though Conner does not view herself as an actress, it can be argued that this type of living history has the most theater-based interpretation out of all kinds currently discussed.

While interpretation methods dominate the difference between professionals and reenactors, the similarities between the groups are what make living history such a

⁷⁴ Lohman.

diverse field. All living historians have a love of history, whether it is a hobby or a career. If professionals can learn to better understand the views of a reenactor, and vice versa, the living history world could change drastically. In this professional field the value of working with volunteer reenactors can not only strengthen but potentially save the programming of a museum with little funding. If reenactors would enlist the help of academics and interpreters, their ability to portray a historic character would strengthen through primary and secondary research. However, until the gap between these two groups is lifted, stereotypes and judgments will continue.

Chapter 3: Understanding the World of Living Historians

The subculture of living historians contains many occurrences not dealt with in the modern world. People with modern viewpoints attempting to recreate the lives of historical people can be a very difficult task. Historical views and modern views are constantly at odds with one another. Living historians have discovered ways around these issues, often times simply choosing the modern or historical view over the other. The following sections will help the reader better understand the world of living historians and why they choose to participate.

Lingo of Living Historians

The lingo of living historians is a unique aspect of their subculture. Like many subcultures, the terms used developed over many years in the attempt to explain situations or topics not common in modern society's language. To completely understand the world and mindset of living historians, one must understand the language used by those within the subculture.

Every living history group has their own lingo. For example, a group of Civil War reenactors may not necessarily understand the lingo of a group of Revolutionary War reenactors. A professional historical interpreter at a living history village may not understand either. During my interviews I concentrated on the lingo specific to the group in which the interviewee participates. While many were eager to share the names of their weapons or clothing pieces, I decided to focus on the words which were created by reenactors specifically. While both a historian and a reenactor may know what a Civil War-era kepi hat is, a historian would not understand the use of the word "farb."

The term “farb” is known almost universally to war reenactors. Farb simply means a historical incorrectness. A farb can be used as an adjective (farby), verb (don’t farb out), adverb (farbily) or as a school of thought (farbism).⁷⁵ While the term is quite simple, it was explained many different ways by my interviewees. All four of my Civil War reenactors interviewed had their own definition on the word “farb”. Wylie considered farb, or farby, to be anything not historically correct.⁷⁶ Emerson described it as wearing a modern raincoat over a uniform or pulling out a bagel to eat.⁷⁷ Kovacevich said it was someone who does not pay attention to modern intrusions.⁷⁸ Johnson explained farby as bringing modern things to a reenactment.⁷⁹ Sturgill, a French and Indian War reenactor, also used the word “farb” during his interview and explains it as someone who, “just doesn’t get it.”⁸⁰

It is not completely known where the word “farb” originated. It even seems to have drifted into twentieth century war reenacting, as Borman jokingly makes reference to it as well. Based on my interviews, the only groups who did not use the term “farb” were members of the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA) and professional interpreters. Due to the lack of stringency on historical accuracy in the SCA, the idea of someone being a “farb” is not considered (because everyone in the SCA is a farb, by definition). A “farb” in the professional world is simply unacceptable.

The exact opposite of a farb would be a “hardcore”. A hardcore, much like it sounds, is a person who is so completely obsessed with historical accuracy, they will go

⁷⁵ Horwitz, 10-11.

⁷⁶ Wylie.

⁷⁷ Emerson.

⁷⁸ Kovacevich.

⁷⁹ Johnson.

⁸⁰ Sturgill.

as far as putting their own lives or health in danger for the cause. Tony Horwitz in *Confederates in the Attic* brings up the topic of hardcores almost immediately. He talks about Confederate Civil War reenactors who starve themselves for the hallow-eyed look of real Confederate soldiers or sleep outside at night in the spooning fashion with each other in the attempts to keep warm.⁸¹ Hardcores are often praised and admired by fellow reenactors for their dedication. However, to those not part of the reenacting subculture, their behavior appears irrational, appalling, and just plain crazy.

Military terminology, which may or may not be historically accurate, often comes up in Civil War reenacting. Kovacevich mentioned the word “pard,” which is short for partner, a fellow reenactor.⁸² “Galvanizing” is a unit of men who portray both Union and Confederate soldiers. This is done because many Civil War events will not have an equal number of soldiers on both sides in attendance. If, for example, an event occurring in South Carolina had three times as many Confederate reenactors then Union reenactors, a couple of “galvanized” units would change from Rebel to Federal. This allows for a more believable battle scene display.

Language which deals specifically in clothing or clothing-related items is very popular in the reenacting world, as historically appropriate dress is the strongest enforced rule. Johnson jokingly referred to “fresh fish” as new reenactors who can often be spotted because their uniforms are clean and with shiny buckles.⁸³ Wylie referred to a piece of clothing or undergarment that is not historically accurate as being “French.”⁸⁴ Reenactors take pride in the clothing they wear and will often labor for days, months, or

⁸¹ Horwitz, 7.

⁸² Kovacevich.

⁸³ Johnson.

⁸⁴ Wylie.

even years on perfecting their dress. Many reenactors, male and female, may learn how to sew either on a sewing machine or by hand, which is more historically accurate. There is little to no shame directed to men in the reenacting world if they pick up sewing as a hobby, as making one's own clothing is much cheaper than purchasing.

For the SCA, the language used within the reenacting community differs significantly from war reenactors. One of the most common words found at an SCA event is "mundane". While this word is traditionally defined as common or ordinary, mundane in the SCA subculture refers to a person's modern, everyday life. Mundane also refers to a person who is not a SCAdian. While those not part of the SCA community may take offense to this term, it is not meant to be negative. SCAdians often view their lives in two dimensions: the modern world and the SCA world. To them, the SCA world is much more exciting than their everyday lives. It also helps to differentiate a person speaking in first person or third person, which is not easily recognizable in the SCA. For example, if one says, "I have to leave early to pick up my mundane children," the listener automatically knows that person is talking about their real, living children, not the fictional children of their persona.

Two words which also need defined are those of the thesis' title: stickjocks and costume nazis. Stickjocks is specific to the SCA. A major part of the subculture of SCAdians is the medieval combat, a very common activity for both males and females within the society. A "stickjock" would be person who joined the SCA only for the combat activity. Stickjocks can often be easily recognized because they make no attempt at historical accuracy and do not participate in any other SCA activity besides the combat arts. A stickjock could be compared to a farb; however, their lack of accuracy is not due

to ignorance, but instead due to lack of interest in history. A costume nazi, on the other hand, is often a “hardcore” and can be found in any reenactment society. Also known as stitch nazis or garb nazis, these individuals will critique others on their lack of historical accuracy down to a very minute detail such as fabric composition or thread count. Unlike a hardcore, costume nazis are often considered an annoyance to fellow reenactors due to their constant criticism of others.

The lingo of the reenacting world is very extensive. Like any subculture in America, the words and phrases are used within an organization without need for explanation. It allows one to easily explain to another a specific situation without constantly having to use modern language to explain historical situations. Many of the interviewees were unable to think of lingo they use because to them, the words and their meaning are so common place. They forget the “mundane” world does not understand them. This language barrier makes the subculture often difficult for newcomers to grasp quickly and for the outside world to understand at all. However, once the lingo of the subculture is obtained, new members soon begin to understand the appeal of living history and why so many revolve their lives around re-creating the past.

For Love of the Game

Living historians have many different reasons why they choose to take part in re-creating history. Education is most frequently mentioned by the interviewees when asked why they choose living history compared to another hobby. Having the chance to educate the public on a topic they enjoy is very appealing as well as the education they themselves obtain. Reenactors and living historians in general are constantly reading,

researching, and redeveloping how they portray their characters in the attempt to make them as historically accurate as possible. New documentation and archaeological digs provide the study with constant changing notions about material culture and first-hand experiences. Johnson said, “In school, I really didn’t learn much about history. I was bored with it because most of my teachers were coaches and so we read the chapter, answered the questions. I swore if I ever became a teacher, I would never have my kids do that.”⁸⁵ Johnson uses the same techniques reenactors use while educating the public when working with his junior high students. Living history allows for sensory education that cannot be found in a book.

Another popular reason living historians join the subculture is the escape it provides from the modern world. Re-creating past time periods allows one to forget about the bills at home or the piles of paper at work. Kovacevich said living history is, “an escape from the fast-pace life and tragic state of the world now.”⁸⁶ Time slows down and you have a chance to enjoy the simple pleasures in life, such as companionship of others and a simple living style.

A number of other reasons exist as to why living historians have a “love of the game.” Civil War reenactors, especially, have become interested in reenacting after genealogy research revealed ancestors who fought in a war. Many reenactors, like Johnson’s portrayal of a Confederate or Emerson’s portrayal of a Federal, are inspired by the fact they had ancestors who fought for the side they are now portray. They feel reenacting gives them the chance to honor their ancestors in a very specific and special way, by keep the soldiers’ memories alive in the public eye. However, for groups like

⁸⁵ Johnson.

⁸⁶ Kovacevich.

the SCA where few members are able to trace their ancestry back to medieval Europe, other hobbies often bring them into the field of reenacting.

Experience in theater and acting has also drawn in a specific group within the living history field. Sturgill said he has always been “a bit of a show-off. I like to stand out in a crowd.”⁸⁷ Johnson said, “Teachers are just frustrated actors.”⁸⁸ While it is debatable as to how much of living history is theatrical acting, many reenactors do see and recognize what they do as almost a type of performance. A living historian wears a costume and if in first person, takes on the mind frame and speech of another person, just like actors do on the stage. One big difference between theater and living history is when the “play” is over, living historians do not put their characters away. They are constantly working to improve their portrayal and are constantly researching to learn more. First person reenactors, like Johnson, do not look at what they do as character portrayals but instead feel a connection with their historic figure and carry that with them in all aspects of their life. The emotions invoked while re-creating a historic person are often hard to describe.

Dirk Hermance, SCA member, said, “The effect is largely personal [when asked how a typical reenactor feels about what they portray]. To really know exactly how someone responds to it, you have to ask that person and see how they respond to the situation.”⁸⁹ This quote shows that while the purpose of living history may have common themes amongst reenactors, it is all a very personal experience. Emerson said, “early in my reenacting, I could almost feel the bullet if it ‘hit’ me.”⁹⁰ The power of

⁸⁷ Sturgill.

⁸⁸ Johnson.

⁸⁹ Hermance.

⁹⁰ Emerson.

persuasion is what makes reenacting so powerful. It gives the reenactor the ability to trick one's point of view into believing they are really living, and dying, in another time period. Reenactors experience a huge variety of emotions while on the battlefield, encampment, or at an event. Like an addiction, the experience of historical re-creation works like a drug in their minds and they always come back year after year, to feed their need for history.

Edutainment

Edutainment (or education-entertainment) is a new word to the field of academics and museums. It is the combination of education and entertainment to make learning fun, interactive, and thought-provoking. By definition, living history is a form of edutainment and the word is linked to two separate individuals. Bob Heyman was thought to have coined the term while producing documentaries for the National Geographic Society. Peter Catalanotto is also linked to the word. He began using "edutainment" in the 1990's while traveling the country to speak to school children about his writing and illustrating career.⁹¹ No matter how the word originated, edutainment is a form of entertain that is not only meant to amuse, but to educate as well.⁹² It did not take long for living history to attach itself to this phrase. Stacy Roth describes living history as, "thought provoking, educational, multisensory, emotion invoking, appealing, entertaining, useful to academic inquiry and fun."⁹³ Edutainment is the future of education in this country.

⁹¹ "Edutainment," (2006), <http://www.reference.com/search?q=edutainment> (accessed April 18, 2007).

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Roth, 21.

Past criticism of living history has said if history is too entertaining, then something must be wrong.⁹⁴ It is sad to think some traditional historians believe history needs to be boring to be educational. Living historians would argue they do not compromise historical accuracy for entertainment and, in fact, use as much research as traditional historians to develop their characters and relay information to visitors.⁹⁵ First person interpretation allows for feeling of empathy, which makes it such a powerful and emotional experience for the audience. Edutainment also helps keep children entertained and learning at the same time. Conner notes, “Entertainment is a requirement in our society...I wish we didn’t demand that. Teachers have to be David Letterman in the classroom or else the students are snoring.”⁹⁶ The visual stimulation of movies, television and video games and the physical thrills of amusement parks are in constant competition with museums for the public’s attention. This is a problem the museum field did not always have to deal with. The thrill of seeing a musket fired or the hands-on experience of churning butter allows both children and adults the sensory pleasure found in their lives everyday. If the museum world does not attempt to appeal to the entertainment aspects of education, museums will not last in the over-stimulated culture of America.

Historical reenactors also use the same strategies when edutaining the public as does a professional museum staff. Sturgill told me, “What we do with living history is take historical documentation, [the] archaeological record, and just a little bit of flare, put that all together, and bring history to life.”⁹⁷ Johnson, a reenactor and teacher, use hands-

⁹⁴ Anderson, *The Living History Sourcebook*, 448.

⁹⁵ Kashatus, 93.

⁹⁶ Conner.

⁹⁷ Sturgill.

on training to teach children what it was like to be a soldier. He often takes his junior high students outside to go through a “Civil War boot camp”. When asked if they enjoy this activity, he answers, “they love it!”⁹⁸ The children become excited to meet reenactors who portray people they are studying in their textbooks. Johnson said, “When you can touch something, smell something, feel it, that history comes alive to you right now; you are part of that at that moment.”⁹⁹

Living historians thrive on public response. To see a child’s face light up when allowed to participate in an activity is the satisfaction that draws all living historians back time and time again, despite all of the hardships. Children who are taught young that history is enjoyable and important grow up to be our future historians. Even if that is not so, an adult who can recognize that history is important will continue to support the field through museum attendance and donations. The parent will bring their children to witness that same living history events that they so loved as a child.

A Male Sport: Women and Reenacting

Women are fairly new to the sport of reenacting. Original ideas of historical recreation focused around the lives of men, specifically soldiers. Despite this, it did not take long for women to join in on the hobby. In the beginning, women were expected to portray traditional female roles while in character, like nurses or wives. The eighteenth and nineteenth century ideas of chivalry did not allow women on the battlefield. However, reenacting women soon found a loophole and attempted to enter the male-only

⁹⁸ Johnson.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

setting of the battlefield. Interviewee Brittany Wylie is a perfect example of a female reenactor who has entered this male-dominated field.

Wylie portrays two separate characters while participating in Civil War reenacting. Union soldier, Jennie Rodgers, also known as Albert D.J. Cashier, was a woman who dressed and acted like a man to join the Union army. Wylie also portrays Belle Boyd, Confederate spy. She, along with a number of other women reenactors, were not happy playing the traditional female roles as a reenactor. They wanted the male experience of fighting on the battlefield. Hundreds of women during the Civil War are documented as dressing as men to fight in the battles. Many were caught after they were injured and sent back home to their families. Some did not reveal themselves until after the war. And some, to this day, may never be known. While, technically, what these women reenactors do is historically accurate, there is uproar in the field by “hardcore” reenactors if this should be allowed.¹⁰⁰

Almost all of the men interviewed had no problem with women portraying male soldiers during war reenactments. Borman believes many women are not involved in twentieth century war reenacting simply because they are not interested.¹⁰¹ Male reenactors acknowledge the fact that modern views give women just as much right to be out there as men. Reenacting is one of the few hobbies in America where historical accuracy comes before modern political views. Interestingly, women soldiers are one of the anachronisms in the living history field that is most often ignored.

Hank Lyle, a World War I reenactor interviewed by Jenny Thompson in *War Games*, says, “A woman has just as much right to pretend that she’s a German soldier as

¹⁰⁰ Wylie.

¹⁰¹ Borman.

the 600 pound guy has the right to pretend he's a German soldier." A hardcore reenactor would be just as offended to see a woman on the field as they would an overweight man. Reenactors realize and often comment on this anachronism that exists in their society. Almost every male I interviewed made some comment on their own weight, either mentioning they are trying to lose weight in the attempts to appear more historically accurate or that they are trim and quite proud of how accurate this makes them appear. Just like women soldiers, male reenactors recognize that limitations need to be drawn somewhere. Borman, for example, has no problem with women as soldiers as long as they are being as historically accurate as everyone else.¹⁰²

Johnson has no problem with women portraying spies but does have a problem with women soldiers. He says many of them try too hard to make sure everyone knows they are a woman and they are out on the field fighting because of modern women's rights. He also remarks there are many more women-portraying-men than are actually documented as being on the battlefield. If a unit being portrayed has evidence that there was a woman fighting as a man in their ranks, he sees no problem with allowing a modern reenactor to do so. He also gives props to women who are able to stay as a man and are not recognized as a woman until after the battle is over and they step out of character.¹⁰³

Many male reenactors also have other issues with women taking part in reenactments. After the battles are over and the public leaves, reenactors do not just pack up and go home. Camping is a large part of the reenacting subculture and gives reenactors a chance to bond. Borman believes some men might not like women around

¹⁰² Borman.

¹⁰³ Johnson.

during this time because they think of reenacting as their “guys weekend” away from the women of their household.¹⁰⁴ My various Civil War interviewees also mentioned that men cannot be men when a woman is around, because they feel they need to watch their language and behavior. The historical ideas of chivalry and respect still exist among reenactors in a way our modern society no longer recognizes. Many interviewees addressed the issue of treatment of women in a living history setting.

Sturgill said reenacting is, “...a shift back to more dignity, more respect for others. Some people question the women’s lib[eration] movement; that we lost a lot of the protections that we had with men towards women. It was societally accepted to treat women a certain way. But when you go to a reenactment, everybody turns those manners back on.” Reenactors, whether it be in the Society for Creative Anachronism that comes right out and says “we portray the Middle Ages like it *should* have been,” or Civil War reenactors, who say they portray the period to best of their modern ability, all have one thing in common—respect for the female sex. Historically, women were objectified and treated like property during the time periods many of my interviewees portray. However, reenactors do not choose to portray that part of history. Women would never become involved if they knew they would be treated in a historically correct manner. Women, instead, are shown the courtesy and respect the historical periods strive for, whether that be a tip of the hat in passing or the fighting for one’s honor on the battlefield.

Physical and Mental Hardships

The physical and mental hardships of reenacting are much greater in this hobby than most. Hermance sums it up well with, “you find your own strengths as a person in

¹⁰⁴ Borman.

adversity. If you don't understand that, it's not going to be possible for you to do historical reenactment well."¹⁰⁵ Hermance points out those reenactors are always in competition with themselves. The modern self tells the body to stop this ridiculous masochistic activity, when the mind tries to explain the need for hardship to better understand the historic past. This ideology in the reenactment world stretches into all types of reenacting and into many different forms.

How far are historical reenactors willing to go in the attempts to make what they do as historically accurate as possible? While no group has gone as far as using real bullets on the battlefield, they are able to take it to the extreme in other ways. For example, Borman did a static-line jump from an airplane to better understand what it would be like to be a member of the 101st Airborne during World War II. He expressed his disappointment when the flight school would not allow him to wear his historical gear.¹⁰⁶ Many reenactors wear as historically accurate of clothing they can acquire no matter how uncomfortable it may be. Marching miles in poorly fitted boots, walking in the summer heat in a corset with seven layers of dress and petticoats, and layers of itchy wool are all part of the historical experience of reenactors. Kovacevich explains his own sacrifice due to a medical condition, "Even when I'm standing for ten or fifteen minutes for inspection, my feet are really hurting. I'm suffering for my art."¹⁰⁷

Two hardships often mentioned by reenactors are loss of hunger and sleep. They joke about how little food and sleep they get while at reenactments and never seem to have an answer as to why this happens. They believe it is just part of the emotion of the event; they become too distracted to eat or sleep. The most difficult hardship for modern

¹⁰⁵ Hermance.

¹⁰⁶ Borman.

¹⁰⁷ Kovacevich.

reenactors is the weather. In our modern society, with air conditioning and leak-proof housing, spending a weekend outdoors can be a shock to the senses. Most reenacting events occur in the summer and heat can be very hard to handle with all of the physical activity and heavy fabric being worn. Emerson said, “The heat and humidity are authentic to the time,” and reenactors seem to accept the fact that since this was something their ancestors had to go through, they will endure it as well.

There are more hardships endured than just the physical ones for reenactors. Mental hardships also emerge during heightened battle sequences. Johnson told me during our interview he has witnessed some Civil War reenactors who took themselves too seriously. He has seen men on the battlefield portray the feelings of pure hatred for those of the opposing side. The ability to get caught up in the activity of historical recreation can have some negative consequences. Johnson said, “We can do [reenacting] only because we respect each other. If you can’t stand to look at [the opposing reenactor], you need to step back.” The emotions which run through the minds of reenactors are often unexplainable. Much like a drug to an addict, reenactors receive a “period-high” from exciting events such as battle reenactments.

How could anyone get so lost in the modern world to confuse a Civil War reenactment with the real thing? If reenactors have no modern intrusions to remind them this is actually the present, emotions take over and new, historic feelings emerge. This is what is known as the “period rush.” Jay Anderson mentions an experiment he and a colleague participated in while at Plimoth Plantation. They wanted to brew beer from a historical recipe, so they decide to live at Plimoth for a month while attempting the recipe. He says, “A total simulation of life, such as our experiment, could be so traumatic

that careful documentation was impossible.”¹⁰⁸ Reenacting, in fact, shocks the senses into feeling emotions never felt before and could never be felt in the industrialized, modern world. A majority of Americans would find this experience miserable. Those who find it enjoyable become reenactors.

The physical and mental hardships of historical reenacting also can affect the life of the person’s “mundane” world. Reenacting is arguably one of the most expensive hobbies available to the average American. It often takes thousands of dollars to accumulate the historically accurate equipment needed to be a reenactor. A large disposable income is needed, which may explain the large number of middle-aged members versus younger adults. Reenactors often joke they could be taking drugs instead; it would probably be cheaper. The constant peer pressure by fellow reenactors to achieve the best of the best material culture allows for a lot of recirculation of pieces within groups. For example, a Civil War reenactor may obtain a more historically accurate canteen. He would then sell his old canteen to another reenactor who has an even less historically accurate piece. Financially, reenacting never stops because there are always better pieces to acquire as businesses form to support the hobby.

The hardships reenactors face make this subculture unique in America. Few hobbies cause so much physical and emotional suffering on an individual. While living history certainly is not an easy hobby, living historians do not think of it as a burden. The “period rush” felt makes all the hot days in pounds of clothing with feet covered in blisters completely worth it. Living historians feel any suffering they endure allows them to become closer with the historic people they portray. However, this point of view is

¹⁰⁸ Anderson, *Time Machines*, 86.

often hard for those not in the subculture to understand. Living historians often face criticism by those who do not understand the subculture.

Government and Politics: Criticisms Faced

Living history has had its fair share of problems when dealing with the public and the politics of this nation. These separate sections will discuss the problems faced by living history museums and problems faced by reenactors.

Problems in Living History Museums

Living history museums run into a number of problems when it comes to historical accuracy. The original heritage focus that formed these museums became discredited in the 1960s and 1970s. Jay Anderson mentions Thomas Schlereth, in his 1978 article *It Wasn't That Simple* saying,

Historical museum villages are still, with a few exceptions, remarkably peaceable kingdoms, planned communities with over-manicured landscapes or idyllic small towns where the entire population lives in harmony. The visitor to such sites who usually does not see the artifacts of convict laborers, domestic servants, hired hands or slaves in the statistical proportion in which such material culture would have cluttered most communities, comes away from the museum village with a romanticized, even utopian perspective of the popularly acclaimed 'good old days'.¹⁰⁹

Because of this type of ridicule, living history museums began incorporating programs into their educational material that deal with the less-desirable topics of history. This new outlook on American history also led to a number of problems. David Lowenthal observed that visitors can be offended or appalled at portrayals that are "too authentic" such as bigoted comments or the sight of a recently butchered animal.¹¹⁰

Programs or portrayals that deal with slavery, alcoholism, domestic violence, sex, and

¹⁰⁹ Anderson, *Time Machines*, 73.

¹¹⁰ Roth, 23.

death were not seen until the late 1970s.¹¹¹ In July of 1999, Colonial Williamsburg began a new program called Enslaving Virginia, where African-American and white actors portray slaves and colonists of the time.¹¹² The emotions evoked at Enslaving Virginia's release were powerful. Dan Eggen's article, "In Williamsburg, the Painful Reality of Slavery" says, "the reenactments are so realistic that some audience members have attacked the white actors in the slave patrol, who have had to fight to keep their decorative muskets...one visitor even attempted to lead his own revolt against the slave handlers. 'There are only three of them and a hundred of us!' he yelled."¹¹³

The general public often has a hard time dealing with the emotions that living history ignites. Stacy Roth said, "An unromanticized view of history legitimizes rather than trivializes first person programs."¹¹⁴ However, many first person character portrayals, such as what interviewee Debra Conner does, leaves out all historical "touchy subjects" until the end of the talk, where the performer can switch from first person to third person. She believes it to be too distasteful to put prejudiced comments in the monologue portion of a talk. The question and answer section allows her to step out of character and address the topics without having to speak about them as if she really believes the historic ideology.¹¹⁵

Historical museums have struggled from their beginning in the attempt to make the museums more historically accurate. But the public, and the media, who first ridiculed museums for being too "harmonious," are now complaining about the emotions

¹¹¹ Roth, 36.

¹¹² Dan Eggen, "In Williamsburg, the Painful Reality of Slavery," *The Washington Post* (July 7, 1999), A1, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/local/daily/july99/williamsburg7.htm> (accessed April 10, 2007).

¹¹³ Eggen.

¹¹⁴ Roth, 36.

¹¹⁵ Conner.

and social problems that “touchy topics” bring. Living history may never be able to find a common ground between that is historically accurate and what is politically correct. I do believe without living history, the strong emotions experienced by audience members at programs like Enslaving Virginia will never be felt. These emotions not only encourage the audience to think about the issues they are presented, but the feelings may be so strong they will be encouraged to change their own modern lives after experiencing the injustices the American past holds. History will not repeat itself twice if the issues are presented and people are given the opportunity to learn from previous mistakes.

Problems for Historical Reenactors

Living history museums are not the only places that deal with public and media overreaction. Historical reenactors face an entirely separate set of problems. Some of the criticism reenactors have been subjected to is often focused on staged war battles. For example, Dwight F. Rettie, former National Park Service official, said, “Battle reenactments are by their nature an inaccurate portrayal of a dirty, deadly, bloody event. [They] trivialize the horror and reality of war, and, for young people and children in particular, they convey a false impression of war’s terrible effects.”¹¹⁶ Many critics say historical reenacting is a way for adults to go back to their younger days of playing soldier. Professor Robert Bloom of Gettysburg College is quoted as saying, “[Reenacting] manifests itself in obsession with military strategy and tactics, with collecting mementos and souvenirs and, for some in playing soldier, an impulse which for most of us passed in reaching puberty.” This negative outlook on reenacting by the academic and professional world has created factions and stereotyping within the field of historical reenacting.

¹¹⁶ Thompson, xvi.

Reenactments themselves have been mentioned as going “downhill” by a large number of the interviewees. Sturgill told me, “An event in West Lafayette, Indiana called Feast of the Hunter’s Moon became more commercial every year...the local historical society used it as a fundraiser...the reenactors went for one reason but the historical society was having it for another.”¹¹⁷ Reenactors complain about how events have become more political and financially geared. Safety and liability issues have frightened away museums and organizations from inviting reenacting groups from participating on their grounds, when in fact most units or groups that are involved with a national organization have liability insurance to cover any accidents. This has greatly hurt the relationship between living history museums and reenactors.

Reenactors face factions within their own organizations which injure the community as a whole. One of the first and most obvious factions is the competition between farbs and hardcores.¹¹⁸ Reenactors are constantly in competition with each other to obtain the best possible material culture. Members who are not as dedicated, or not as financially stable to afford the best, become the farbs and often face ridicule by fellow reenactors, which sometimes drives them out of the subculture altogether. A group of reenactors may also hold a bias against another group. The Society for Creative Anachronism is sometimes mocked by war reenactors for their lack of historical accuracy and then tendency to focus more on partying and less on re-creation. Civil War reenactors may feel hostility against the other side, whether that be Union or Confederate. These factions that exist in the reenacting culture make it very difficult for multiple units and groups to organize in the attempt to promote living history as a hobby.

¹¹⁷ Sturgill.

¹¹⁸ Thompson, 77.

Reenactors also face public criticism. Twentieth century war reenactors especially feel the public's harsh judgments because of their portrayal of very controversial subjects, such as Nazi or S.S. soldiers.¹¹⁹ While fellow reenactors understand the need to portray both sides, the public has trouble accepting why someone would want to portray "the bad guys." I asked Borman what his opinion on twentieth century war reenacting of the "other side" was. He said at many tacticals, it is common to see about thirty percent more German soldiers than people portraying Allied forces. When I asked him why he thought that was, he said, "I think people want to be Darth Vader. People just want to let loose and be the bad guy."¹²⁰ This attraction is voiced strongly in the reenacting community. Much like theater, reenacting allows a person to remove his or her modern skin and take on the life of a historical character. To do this all the way, some reenactors feel taking the persona of a Nazi, a Confederate, or a Viking allows them to play the "bad guy" without any real danger or repercussions.

Confederate Civil War reenactor Ron Johnson told me an interesting story during our interview on February 19, 2007. His unit, the Thomas W. Patton Camp 2021 based in Boardman, Ohio, volunteered to work as bell ringers for the Salvation Army during the holiday season of 2006. They were stationed in front of Wal-Mart in Boardman, Ohio and wore their Confederate Civil War uniforms. During their shift, they were asked a number of times by the on-duty manager of Wal-Mart to leave because he, and some shoppers, found their presence offensive. After the incident, Johnson asked for an apology from Wal-Mart for their discrimination against them as Confederate Civil War reenactors. They were not given one and are now fighting in court to be recognized as a

¹¹⁹ Thompson, xv.

¹²⁰ Borman.

unique ethnic group known as Southern Americans. This misunderstanding by the manager and shoppers, who associated Confederate reenactors with racism and slavery, made it difficult to educate a public who is unwilling to listen.¹²¹

Thought reenactors are often faced with the public making assumptions of the people they portray, the organizations which reenactors are involved understand the need for all sides to be presented. Hermance said, “[The SCA] is a really good organization for a non-conformist. You feel like you have a means of expressing yourself without any kind of judgment.”¹²² This ideology is what makes the subculture of reenactors very powerful. While factions may exist with the society, the bond between fellow reenactors is something the outside world can never truly understand. Reenacting is a very emotional and bonding experience and the subculture can often appear hostile to outsiders due to the negative judgments they have faced in the past. Due to American freedoms, reenactors are able to choose which side to portray, even if it is the Confederate South. This freedom makes reenacting an American pastime and has allowed it to flourish in this country like no other.

An American Pastime

America has the most successful living history museums in the world. Large-scale museums like Plimoth Plantation and Colonial Williamsburg draw in tourists from all over the world. Reenacting has boomed since it took off in the 1960s. Hundreds of thousands of Americans participate in reenacting organizations all over America. Living history has allowed not only the professional historian a different outlet for interpretation;

¹²¹ Johnson.

¹²² Hermance.

it has brought a love of history to many who never traditionally enjoyed history while growing up.

Civil War reenacting is especially known as an American pastime. Many reenactors become involved in living history after genealogy research. An ancestor that fought in the war is discovered, and the researcher feels the need to “walk in their footsteps.” In fact, Confederate and Union units exist not only in America, but all over the world. One of Britain’s first reenactment groups was dedicated to re-creating the American Civil War. Today, over one-thousand Englishmen re-create the Confederate and Union soldiers of the Civil War.¹²³ This shows the emotional power linked to the Civil War and how even non-Americans can feel a connection to the ideas that spurred one of the most famous wars in American history.

The Civil War is one of the most emotional wars of our history and, as Johnson is quoted as saying, “[The Civil War] is still going on today.”¹²⁴ Many Confederate units still face stereotyping from the public and even their fellow reenactors. The Confederate flag is associated with racism, slavery, and the Klu Klux Klan. Reenactors, and living history museums of this time period, try to teach the public that many Confederate soldiers did not have the issue of slavery on their minds, but instead the protection of their families and homes. Emerson, a Union reenactor, was asked how he felt about the battlefield scenarios. He said, “I enjoy the battle scenes but I’ve changed. Before, I was out to kill the Godless Rebel Horde and it didn’t bother me in the least to aim my musket directly at a man and shoot and fire. Now, I will not level my musket at anybody

¹²³ Philipp J.C. Elliot-Wright, *Brassey’s Master Class: Living History* (London: Brassey’s, 2000): 93.

¹²⁴ Johnson.

anymore. They are just guys like us.” This understanding and respect for fellow reenactors have given many a different outlook on this tragic war.

The same ideology applies for twentieth century war reenactors. By keeping the public constantly aware of the issues and lives of soldiers, the reenactors feel this is an honor to veterans—both those still alive and who have passed.¹²⁵ Reenactors have the opportunity through research to better understand different countries perspective on the war, which leads to better social acceptance of others. The two SCA members interviewed, Shriver and Hermance, also addressed the social acceptance that can be found in reenacting. Shriver and other SCAdians who portray a Muslim persona are often unsure how the public would react to their portrayals because of current political issues and constant fear of terrorists.¹²⁶ The SCA overlooks modern issues and allows one to portray a group of people who have been looked down upon in the past and show them in a different, less-stereotypical light.

Even professional interpreters address how living history may have flourished in America compared to other countries. Lohman believes Americans are more open and sociable, which allows for more one-on-one contact with interpreters.¹²⁷ Living history is unique in the emotional appeal it has over visitors. The personal contact by interpreters allows for a connection between historical figure and modern visitor that looking at a picture in an exhibit could never do.

Living history, both in the form of reenacting and in the museum field, has prospered in the United States for a relatively short amount of time. Families plan their vacations around living history museums and events. Reenactors plan their modern lives

¹²⁵ Borman.

¹²⁶ Shriver.

¹²⁷ Lohman.

around their hobby. The strength living history has is due to those involved who are truly dedicated and keep it alive by sharing it with the public and passing it down within their own families.

Chapter 4: Change and Progress: The Bleak Future

Living history greatly flourished in this country during the 1960s social movement. However, within the last five to ten years, living history both as a hobby and as a profession is beginning to diminish. Fewer members of younger generations are choosing reenacting as a hobby and museums do not have the funding to support first person interpretation. The future of living history in this country does not look promising. This section will discuss the changing generations of reenactors and the downside of living history from the point of view of academics, the general public, and living historians themselves.

Young v. Old: The Changing Generations

Reenacting has evolved ever since it began with Civil War veterans participating in mock battles. One noticeable difference is the constant striving to become more historically accurate. While the first living history museums were much more heritage than history, the social movements of the 1960s really changed how history was viewed. It was no longer about rich, white, dead males. History is everyone, from poor to rich, black to white, and male to female. Nontraditional sources like archaeology became the emphasis of judging what was historically accurate and what was not in the professional field. But all of this success has not changed the fact that living history in this country is a dying field. Are we in the last great days of living history or does interest in history work in a circular motion?

Reenactors especially feel the hardship of dwindling numbers. The members of the 5th Ohio Volunteer Infantry in Akron, Ohio, for example, have notice a gradual

decrease in their ranks. Emerson remembers when he first began reenacting, there were forty men in the local group. Now, they are lucky to have twenty at their monthly meetings.¹²⁸ Reenactors are constantly aging and the younger generations do not seem to be interested in joining the hobby. Many units of war reenactors are noticing a decline in membership. They say new generations are just not interested in participating. Wylie, who is 22 years old, has around six or seven other fellow reenactors her own age in the 61st Ohio Volunteers unit in the Mahoning Valley. She only has one other her age in the Sons of Confederate Veterans, Camp 2021, with a few members in their late twenties, early thirties.¹²⁹ In fact, looking at the ages of the people I interviewed, only three out of ten were under forty years old.

Reenactors are becoming older and because of this, the art of historical re-creation is beginning to change. Compared to when many of my interviewees began in the field of living history, the increase in the involvement of women and children, especially in Civil War reenacting, has made a more family-friendly atmosphere. Drinking, a common pastime at historical events has become less defined in war reenacting. I asked Wylie why, as the youngest reenactor interviewed, she believes the young adult generations are not involved in living history. She said, “People [my] age don’t have a respect for history, they are more interested in going out and partying.” She also goes on later to mention some of the issues she runs into with older reenactors. Her unit puts limitations on the younger members of their group. They limit the drinking in camp and are not allowed to leave camp without permission after curfew. “I love my unit, but I feel like

¹²⁸ Emerson.

¹²⁹ Wylie.

they treat me like I'm 12.”¹³⁰ Teenagers and young adults have many more freedoms now than they did even thirty years ago. Those interested in reenacting may feel threatened by the rules older reenactors set for them.

When asked how long the interviewees would keep participating in living history, many of them said until they physically could not handle it. Hermance said he would, “keep fighting until I'm too old to do it anymore.”¹³¹ Many Civil War reenactors interviewed said they would continue fighting in battles and marching until they become too old. Those who portray specific characters, such as Ron Johnson and Debra Conner, said they will continue until they outlive their characters. In that case, both expressed interest in choosing a new, older character to portray. Without the younger generations interest, living history will not survive many more years.

Sad Reality: The Downside of Living History

Living historians are constantly at battle with traditional historians, the general public, and even fellow reenactors. The sections that follows describes the downfalls of living history and how living historians, professional or not, are constantly at odds to defend themselves and what they do.

Living Historian v. Academia

Living historians have received a majority of their criticism from academia. Critics argue “...re-creation is quixotical, misleading, incomplete, inaccurate, lopsided, rude, embarrassing, nostalgic, phony, too entertaining, too theatrical, too shockingly

¹³⁰ Wylie.

¹³¹ Hermance.

unlike the present and/or too homogeneous with the present.”¹³² Living history can never be a perfect reproduction of the past, and some historians believe it is simply a waste of time and funding. First person interpreters are, “smart-alecky or rude characters who claim they don’t understand visitors’ questions.”¹³³ From a living historians point of view, it is not understood why academic do not appear to make an effort to include living history as an asset to traditional teaching methods.

Conner discussed an interesting topic during our interview that should be addressed. She said she did not understand why academics do not show up for her various Chautauqua living history performances. She guessed, “The academic community feels like they educate quite well, so [they feel] why do we need someone to come in from the outside and do it for us?” She also stated that some historians may consider living history to be “History Lite.”¹³⁴ Jenny Thompson in *War Games* says historians see any interpretation other than their own as heresy.¹³⁵ This viewpoint greatly damages the bonds which hold the professional world and reenactment organization together.

Reenactors are also constantly at odds with academia. While reenactors do not possess any formal educational training, they are capable of researching and collecting historically correct information just like a historian would. Sturgill said, “Academics give no credit at all to reenactors...the amount of work that these folks have to do to get it right, in my mind, qualifies most of them for Ph.D.’s.” This statement, coming from a

¹³² Roth, 21.

¹³³ Roth, 4-5.

¹³⁴ Conner.

¹³⁵ Thompson, xvii.

professionally trained historian, is very interesting. However, it is not only historians who look down upon reenactors. In fact, the criticism works both ways.

Many reenactors will have little to do with members of the academic community. Jay Anderson understands this problem within the history community. He says, "...more and more nonacademic historians within the [living history] movement recognize their need for quality control and realize that the academic has much to offer in historical theory, methodology, and knowledge of relevant primary sources." A historian's academic background allows them better access to rare resources, such as primary sources. If living historians could look past the bias the academic field has shown them in the past, professionals could be a wonderful asset to reenactors and interpreters alike.

Living Historian v. The Public

The general public is the largest audience living historians come in contact with. While professional interpreters and reenactors often find the most fulfilling experience of living history to be the education of the public, the relations with the public can also be a taxing ordeal for those who do not understand living history. Interpreters and reenactors alike often tire of redundant and ridiculous questions asked of them. Questions that reenactors hear while at a public event range from, 'Are you hot in those clothes?' and 'How do you know if you're dead?' to 'Do you sleep in that tent?' and 'Do you shoot paintballs at each other?' Wylie told me about an incident while attending a local fair as a reenactor. As a family was walking through the camp, a child saw a woman cooking a turkey over a fire. The mother of the child asks the reenactor, "Is that a real turkey?"¹³⁶ While a question like that is utterly ridiculous to a reenactor, the public

¹³⁶ Wylie.

does not seem to fully grasp what reenactment does and how it works. They confuse it with the closest equivalent in their minds, theater, in which the turkey would not be real.

The reenacting community is also always attempting to compete with stereotypes the public makes based on incorrect information. Confederate Civil War reenactors are constantly trying to explain that the South was not just fighting for slavery. Johnson said when asked, about nine out of ten visitors at events say the Civil War was fought over slavery.¹³⁷ He believes the typical Confederate soldier fought more for their homeland and loved ones than for the right of slavery.

Some groups, such as the SCA and twentieth century war reenactors, deliberately disassociate themselves from the public to avoid constant explanation. Reenactors who portray German Nazis receive a lot of grief, and maybe even a hate-crime charge, if they strolled around in public with their uniforms on. Borman points out, “Just because you’re interested in [portraying a Nazi] doesn’t mean that you agree with the politics of it.”¹³⁸

World War II reenactors also face criticism because real veterans are still living.

Reenactors wear with pride the honors and medals these still-living veterans earned for real. Borman said,

I don’t understand how the same people can praise Steven Spielberg for making a movie like *Saving Private Ryan*. They don’t have a problem with Tom Hanks being a Captain but they do have a problem with me portraying a similar thing...or Ray Fiennes got nominated for an Academy Award for being a Nazi bastard in *Schindler's List* and no one seemed to have a problem with that.¹³⁹

Twentieth century war reenactors are one of the most scrutinized groups of living historians. This may be due to the time period being reenacted is still very recent in

¹³⁷ Johnson.

¹³⁸ Borman.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

many American minds and the tragedy of the World Wars has not had years to wear down.

Other groups, like the SCA, make their events private because they do not believe they should be on display for the public to enjoy. SCAdians do not view what they do as entertainment and create a very large distinction between what is for show and what is not. They do not appreciate the public's constant stares and questions such as, 'Are you in a play?' However, because of this private life, the SCA does the least amount of educational programming for the public of all American reenacting groups. While they have an excellent system for educating themselves and fellow reenactors, they rarely make the attempt to educate the public as war reenactors do, for example.

Despite all of the uninformed questions and stereotypes the public fixes upon living historians, a majority of what is done in living history is done for public education. Borman said, "I think that as long as there are people asking those kinds of questions, we will continue to do the living history...to educate *them*." Sturgill said, "To me, lack of public knowledge is the biggest frustration but it's also a great motivator because it means I need to work more to help people understand." Living historians understand the importance of what they do, and, even though "dumb" questions will continue to be asked, answers will always be provided.

Living Historian v. Living Historian

The relationship between living historians is not always a positive one. Reenactors can dislike the goals of other period reenactors, historical interpreters may not enjoy interacting with "those weird reenactors," and reenactors may find historical interpreters to be incorrect with their straight-out-of-a-textbook answers. Sadly, these

strained relationships are causing the biggest faction in the living history field. Without the support of one another, living history may not survive in America.

During the interview process, I pressed both of my professional interpreters for their view of reenactors. Lohman, who works with Civil War reenactors quite often at Hale Farm and Village, noted some of the problems that have come up in previous programs. She finds personality differences between her staff and the reenactors cause problems. She feels some reenactors view themselves very highly, and walk around “as if they really are a Civil War General.”¹⁴⁰ Due to the lack of professional training reenactors have in first person interpretation, she believes some may not be as effective as a trained staff member. Whatever complications arise between interpreters and reenactors, Lohman realizes how important relationships are between the two living history groups. She spoke of a reenactor’s disposable income for costuming and collecting material culture, much more than living history museums have to work with. Reenacting events also draw in large audiences, which helps the museum and the reenactors through publicity and praise.

Conner, on the other hand, does not have first-hand experience working with reenactors. Her only connection with reenactors is what she has heard from fellow Chautauqua performers. She notes how reenactors may or may not possess the scholarship of Chautauqua performers. A person in her field simply could not make it if the information they provided was not well-researched. A reenactor, who does living history as a hobby, does not necessarily have as many social pressures to do interpretation as historically accurate as possible. Sadly, Conner has been exposed to a number of very negative stereotypes against reenactors. While she does not believe what

¹⁴⁰ Lohman.

she hears, it shows how easily influenced others can be from stereotypes that are drawn when one focuses only on the “farbs” or the “hardcores” and not the majority of reenactors who fall in between.¹⁴¹

Even the reenacting community can hold negative opinions about their peers. The fact that terms such as “farb” and “hardcore” exist show how within a subculture, people are constantly dividing themselves into smaller and specialized groups. Peer pressure, the most effective social stabilizer in reenacting groups, can go as far as to drive individuals out of the hobby completely. Dealing with a “person who just doesn’t get it” can be difficult and because all of this is a hobby, an individual cannot be blamed for not wanting to dedicate time to what might be a hopeless cause. It is easier to make the peer feel uncomfortable enough the person leaves on their own, creating a whole other group of people who had in interest in living history but found no support with fellow peers, and now hold a grudge against the society.

Without understanding and acceptance, living history will not survive in this country. Reenactors are aging everyday and few members of the younger generations are picking up the hobby. Living history museums are barely surviving off federal funding and constantly facing a decrease in visitor attendance. If reenactors and historical interpreters worked together, both sides could benefit from each others achievements.

¹⁴¹ Conner.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The Future of Living History in the Professional World

The future of living history in the professional museum world is uncertain. Every museum, from the small living history village in Ohio to Colonial Williamsburg, faces funding issues. The lack of funding leads to a number of different problems. Staff cuts lead to fewer people being forced to pick up the work of previous employees. Salary cuts may force qualified individuals to look for new employment and new employees may be hard to attract due to low paying positions. Historical interpreters, those who use both first and third person, are often the lowest paid individuals in a museum setting. This can lead to unqualified individuals filling the most important role in a museum—the people whose job is to educate the public.

After speaking with Lohman about the trials at Hale Farm and Village, it is quite frightening to think what the future holds for small living history villages. Lohman feels museums today are in constant competition with the entertainment industry. She said, “America has gone beyond just looking at historic houses and furniture.”¹⁴² The “reinsertion of humanity” that living history museums accomplish provides the edutainment that can attract families to spend their income, hence, supporting the organization. Lohman mentioned the idea of American people “cocooning.” With movies, television, video games, etc., people do not have to leave their residences to seek entertainment. This “cocoon” individuals and families in their own home, having never to leave to support other entertainment venues.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Lohman.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

Another issue faced by living history museums is the misinterpretation by the public. Lohman recognizes “living history isn’t the most effective way to teach history, but it engages all the senses.”¹⁴⁴ She believes it is the museum’s responsibility to make sure all visitors understand what a living history museum is and what they will witness before entering the grounds. First person interpretation can be especially frustrating to a visitor who does not understand how it works. Visitors need to be better informed on ways to interact with interpreters, the questions to ask, and how to ask the questions to get the responses they desire. Interpreters themselves become frustrated with an audience member who continuously asks questions outside of the historical context a first person can answer in. Many times, a question only needs to be rephrased to obtain the desired answer.

The future of all museums in America is uncertain. Government funding has been insufficient for years and major donors who in the past may have made major donations to museums and education are now focused on, in their opinion, more important and pressing matters to our future. Visitor attendance is slowly decreasing, due to travel costs such as high gas prices and competing forms of entertainment. Many museums are unwilling to evolve to meet these higher demands set on them by potential visitors. The new generation, raised with Internet, television, and action-filled video games, are the future of this country. Potential historians are being born everyday and it is this younger generation who will officially bring edutainment into the museum world. Museums will survive, but it may take a number of years until American can see results.

Stacy Roth said, “History is not ‘the past.’ It is an interpretation of the past, ever shifting because our uses for its change. We would have to abandon the entire practice of

¹⁴⁴ Lohman.

history if we allowed guilt over our inability to uncover the absolute truth to dismay us.”¹⁴⁵ This quote expresses the reasoning behind all that is living history. History itself, whether written in a scholarly journal or performed by interpreters, is a current interpretation of the past. It is constantly changing, and one day we may find out we had it all wrong. However, if living history interpreters discover someday their interpretation was incorrect, in all fairness, the research they did to acquire that knowledge is also incorrect.

The Future of Reenacting

The future of reenacting, much like the museum world, has an unsteady future. Older reenactors notice everyday that fewer younger people are choosing reenacting as a hobby. Just like museums, reenacting is competing with mass-media and technology for the attention of younger generations. However, reenacting has a couple of advantages over the traditional museum world which relies so much on funding and visitor acceptance. Reenacting is a hobby. Like every hobby, it is funded by the individuals own disposable income. Money is never an issue as long as Americans who participate continue to possess disposable income that they want to spend on their hobby.

Reenacting has also changed drastically within its short lifespan. What used to be a male-dominated event has now turned into a family affair for many groups of reenactors. Civil War reenactors, especially, have noticed men, who used to attend weekend events alone, are now setting up camp with their wife and children. These children, who become exposed to the hobby at a very young age, grown to understand the subculture. They may or may not choose to participate when they become adults, but

¹⁴⁵ Roth, 23.

they possess a huge advantage over a child not raised in that atmosphere. Their parent's love of history was instilled onto them at a very young age and as adults, they know and understand the importance of history, and so choose to support it by visiting museums, making donations, or becoming historians themselves. This education from parent-to-child could potentially continue for generations, creating children who grow up supporting history and are able to make a difference as adults.

I asked a number of the reenactors interviewed what they believed the future holds for reenacting in this country. Although they all have witnessed a decrease in numbers in the units they participate in, all had hope for the future. Hobbies in America often work in a circular motion, becoming very popular for a number of years, dying off for a number of years, and then coming back around full swing. This can be due to a number of issues, such as financial hardships or the abundance of free-time to devote to a hobby. Jay Anderson said, "The real 'big brother' ...is the clock. Modern life is considered a rat race where everything has to be delivered overnight by air express and time is measured in nanoseconds."¹⁴⁶ Reenacting is an outlet from the modern technological world we live in. Technology will probably never regress in America, and everyday new people are discovering life "back then" was much slower and simpler than it is today. Reenacting allows one to get back in touch with nature and a simpler life, without all the baggage the past comes with, like social inequality, disease, and death. Reenacting will continue to be an American hobby and a way of physically connecting with our ancestors.

¹⁴⁶ Anderson, *Time Machines*, 183.

Conclusion

Despite all the differences among museum professionals, academia, and hobby reenactors, all have one thing in common and that is a love of history. Preservation is number one in the minds of all those involved, just viewed in different ways by different parties. Museum professionals preserve the material culture of past generations. Academics use historical research to interpret new ideas about history. Interpreters and reenactors preserve the everyday lives of historic people. To teach history, all avenues of preservation need to be presented. Without the cooperation of these three groups, history will suffer, funding will dwindle, and, one day, our nation's museums may disappear.

This thesis is on the subculture of living history, but the focus remains historical reenactors. These “amateur” historians are not amateurs after all. Reenactors hold huge amounts of information and interpretation they are more than willing to share with the public if given the opportunity. Reenactors could provide a valuable asset to museum programming with little to no cost to the museum itself. Stereotypes and misunderstandings aside, reenactors are in the field for the same reason professionals are; their love of history. Instead of dividing, we could work together to keep the history of this country alive and preserve it for future generations to come. Jenny Thompson in *War Games* addresses the question, “Who has the right to claim authentic ownership of history?”¹⁴⁷ The answer to that question is everyone. My history as an American is the same as yours, and we all have a right to learn from it and express it in the ways we see fit. Only then will history become public domain, and not the possession of the elite.

¹⁴⁷ Thompson, xviii.

Appendix A

Professional Interpreters:

1. When and where were you born and raised?
2. What do you remember about your parents and siblings (if you have any)?
3. Where did you go to school (grade school, high school, college)?
4. How did you become involved in living history?
5. How long have you been a living historian?
6. Have you ever done living history as a reenactor (non-professional)?
7. Has living history changed since you were first involved?
8. Have the people involved changed over time?
9. Is there any terminology or jargon used that an outsider would not understand?
10. How does what you do compare to other living history groups?
11. Tell me about the person you portray.
12. Did you get to pick that person or was it assigned to you?
13. How did you go about doing researching on person/time period?
14. Do you do 1st-person or 3rd-person interpretation?
15. (If never done 1st-person) Would you do 1st-person if you had the chance?
16. How does the public seem to respond to living history?
17. What are some negatives to the job?
18. What do you think is needed to be a living historian?
19. What is the appeal? Or why do you do it?
20. Are there any limits to your ability as a living historian?
21. How far would you be willing to go as a living historian?

22. How do you feel about amateur reenactors?
23. Do you consider yourself an actor?

Chautauqua Performers:

1. When and where were you born and raised?
2. What do you remember about your parents and siblings (if you have any)?
3. Where did you go to school (grade school, high school, college)?
4. Do you have another professional besides a living historian?
5. How did you become involved in living history?
6. How long have you been a living historian?
7. Have you ever done living history as a reenactor (non-professional)?
8. Has living history changed since you were first involved?
9. Have the people involved changed over time?
10. Is there any terminology or jargon used that an outsider would not understand?
11. How does what you do compare to other living history groups?
12. Tell me about the person you portray.
13. What made you pick that person you portray?
14. How did you go about doing researching on the person/time period?
15. Do you do 1st-person or 3rd-person interpretation?
16. How does the public seem to respond to living history?
17. What are some negatives to the job?
18. What do you think is needed to be a living historian?
19. What is the appeal? Or why do you do it?

20. Are there any limits to your ability as a living historian?
21. How far would you be willing to go as a living historian?
22. How do you feel about amateur reenactors?
23. Do you consider yourself an actor?

SCA Members:

1. When and where were you born and raised?
2. What do you remember about your parents and siblings (if you have any)?
3. Where did you go to school (grade school, high school, college)?
4. What do you do for a living?
5. How did you become involved in living history?
6. How long have you been a reenactor?
7. Has the organization changed over time?
8. Have the people involved changed over time?
9. Is there any terminology or jargon used that an outsider would not understand?
10. How does the SCA compare to other living history groups?
11. Tell me about your persona.
12. Why did you pick the persona that you did?
13. Have you ever done 1st-person interpretation?
14. (If no) If you had the chance, would you?
15. Have you ever worked with the general public (like in a demo)?
16. How does the public seem to respond to living history?
17. What do you think is needed to be a historical reenactor?

18. What is the appeal? Or why do you do it?
19. Are there any limits to your ability as a living historian?
20. How far would you be willing to go as a reenactor?
21. How far do you think the typical SCAdian would be willing to go?
22. Do you consider the SCA to be living history?
23. How do you feel about professional reenactors? How do you think they feel about you?

War Reenactors:

1. When and where were you born and raised?
2. What do you remember about your parents and siblings (if you have any)?
3. Where did you go to school (grade school, high school, college)?
4. What do you do for a living?
5. How did you become involved in living history?
6. How long have you been a reenactor?
7. Has _____ War reenacting changed over time?
8. Have the people involved changed over time?
9. Is there any terminology or jargon used that an outsider would not understand?
10. How does _____ War reenacting compare to other living history groups?
11. Tell me about your persona(s).
12. Why did you pick the persona that you did?
13. Have you ever done 1st-person interpretation?
14. (If no) If you had the chance, would you?

15. Have you ever worked with the general public? Tell me about that.
16. How does the public seem to respond to living history?
17. What do you think is needed to be a historical reenactor?
18. What is the appeal? Or why do you do it?
19. Are there any limits to your ability as a living historian?
20. How far would you be willing to go as a reenactor?
21. How far do you think the typical reenactor would be willing to go?
22. Do you consider _____ War reenacting to be living history?
23. How do you feel about professional reenactors? How do you think they feel about you?

Primary Sources

- Borman, Chris, World War II reenactor. Interview by author, 17 March 2007, Groveport, Ohio. Tape recording, Youngstown State University Oral History Collection, Youngstown, Ohio.
- Conner, Debra, Chautauqua Living Historian. Interview by author, 14 March 2007, Athens, Ohio. Tape recording, Youngstown State University Oral History Collection, Youngstown, Ohio.
- Emerson, Carl, Civil War reenactor. Interview by author, 11 March 2007, Cleveland, Ohio. Tape recording, Youngstown State University Oral History Collection, Youngstown, Ohio.
- Hermance, Dirk, Society for Creative Anachronism member. Interview by author, 5 February 2007, Youngstown, Ohio. Tape recording, Youngstown State University Oral History Collection, Youngstown, Ohio.
- Johnson, Ron, Civil War reenactor and first person portrayal of Nathan Bedford Forrest. Interview by author, 19 February 2007, Youngstown, Ohio. Tape recording, Youngstown State University Oral History Collection, Youngstown, Ohio.
- Kovacevich, Mike, Civil War reenactor. Interview by author, 2 March 2007, Akron, Ohio. Tape recording, Youngstown State University Oral History Collection, Youngstown, Ohio.
- Lohman, Karen, Master Interpreter at Hale Farm and Village. Interview by author, 13 March 2007, Bath, Ohio.
- Shriver, David, Society for Creative Anachronism member. Interview by author, 2 February 2007, Hubbard, Ohio.
- Sturgill, Jim, French and Indian War reenactor and former interpreter for Mackinac State Historic Parks. Interview by author, 16 February 2007, Youngstown, Ohio. Tape recording, Youngstown State University Oral History Collection, Youngstown, Ohio.
- Wylie, Brittany, Civil War reenactor and first person portrayal of Belle Boyd and Jennie Rodgers. Interview by author, 29 March, 2007, Youngstown, Ohio. Tape recording, Youngstown State University Oral History Collection, Youngstown, Ohio.

Secondary Sources

- Alderson, William T. and Shirley Payne Low. *Interpretation of Historic Sites*. 2nd ed. Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press, 1996.
- Anderson, Jay. *A Living History Reader: Volume 1, Museums*. Nashville: The American Association for State and Local History, 1991.
- Anderson, Jay. "Living History: Simulating Everyday Life in Living Museums." *American Quarterly*, Vol. 34 (3), 1982, p. 290 – 306.
- Anderson, Jay. *The Living History Sourcebook*. Nashville: The American Association for State and Local History, 1985.
- Anderson, Jay. *Time Machines: The World of Living History*. Nashville: The American Association for State and Local History, 1984.
- Barnes, Lois J. "Living History in the Junior High School Classroom." *The History Teacher*, Vol. II (4), August 1978, p. 509 – 513.
- Bridal, Tessa. *Exploring Museum Theater*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004.
- Coles, John. *Experimental Archaeology*. London: Academic Press, 1979.
- Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, The. "Governor's Palace." *Colonial Williamsburg*, <http://www.history.org/Almanack/places/hb/hbpal.cfm>.
- Cullen, Jim. *The Civil War in Popular Culture: A Reusable Past*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995.
- Delger, Carl N. "Remaking American History." *Journal of American History*, Vol. 67 (1), June 1980, p. 7 – 25.
- Diaz, Gene and Martha Barry McKenna, ed. *Teaching for Aesthetic Experience: The Art of Learning*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2004.
- Diehl, Huston. "Living History: The New Historicism in the Classroom" In *Teaching Contemporary Theory to Undergraduates* by Dianne F. Sadoff and William E. Cain, p.195 – 204. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1994.
- "Edutainment." *Reference.com*. <http://www.reference.com/search?q=edutainment>.
-
- Eggen, Dan. "In Williamsburg, the Painful Reality of Slavery." *The Washington Post* (July 7, 1999): A1. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/local/daily/july99/williamsburg7.htm>.

- Elliot-Wright, Philipp J. C. *Brassey's Master Class: Living History*. London: Brassey's, 2000.
- Evans, Mary. *How to Make Historic American Costumes*. New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1976.
- Handler, Richard and Eric Gable. *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1997.
- Handler, Richard and William Saxton. "Dyssimulation: Reflexivity, Narrative, and the Quest for Authenticity in "Living History"." *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 3 (3), August 1988, p. 242 – 260.
- Herodotus, T. *The Establishment of the Establishment: Living History*. Oklahoma City: Lance Books, 1975.
- Horwitz, Tony. *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatched from the Unfinished Civil War*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1998.
- Hurt, R. Douglas. "Agricultural Museums: A New Frontier for the Social Sciences." *The History Teacher*, Vol. II (3), May 1978, p. 367 – 375.
- Irwin, Susan K. *Popular History: Living History Sites, Historical Interpretation, and the Public*. Master's thesis, Bowling Green State University, 1993.
- Kammen, Michael. *In the Past Lane: Historical Perspectives on American Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Kashatus, William C. *Past, Present & Personal: Teaching Writing in U.S. History*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002.
- Kemmer, Brenton C. and Karen L. *So, Ye Want To Be A Reenactor?: A Living History Handbook*. Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 2001.
- Loeb, Robert H. Jr. *Meet the Real Pilgrims: Everyday Life on Plimoth Plantation in 1627*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1979.
- Lynch, Kevin. *What Time Is This Place?* Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1982.
- Mateer, Megan. *Living History as Performance: An Analysis of the Manner in which Historical Narrative is Developed through Performance*. Ph.D. diss., Bowling Green State University, 2006.
- O'Donnell, Patrick. *The Knights Next Door: Everyday People Living Middle Ages Dreams*. New York: iUniverse, Inc., 2004.

- Peterson, Carol. *Jump Back in Time: A Living History Resource*. Portsmouth, NH: Teacher Ideas Press, 2004.
- Pitcaithley, Dwight T. "Historical Sites: What Can Be Learned From Them." *The History Teacher*, Vol. 20 (2), February 1987, p. 201 – 220.
- Rosenzweig, Roy and David Thelen. *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.
- Roth, Stacy F. *Past into Present: Effective Techniques for First person Historical Interpretation*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998.
- Samuel, Raphael. *Theatres of Memory, Volume 1: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*. London: Verso, 1994.
- SCA Webfolk. "The Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc." *The Society for Creative Anachronism*. <http://www.sca.org/>.
- Snow, Stephen Eddy. *Performing the Pilgrims: A Study of Ethnohistorical Role-Playing at Plimoth Plantation*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993.
- Thelen, David. "Memory and American History." *Journal of American History*, Vol. 75, March 1989, p. 1117 – 1129.
- Thompson, Jenny. *War Games: Inside the World of Twentieth-Century War Reenactors*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2004.
- Weeks, Jim. *Gettysburg: Memory, Market and an American Shrine*. Princeton: Princeton University, 2003