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Military History

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE AASLH MILITARY HISTORY AFFINITY GROUP

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AASLH Military History Affinity Group

Working with Private Collectors and Researchers

*By Gordon Blaker, Chair, AASLH Military History Affinity Group
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Many years ago when I was first working on entering the museum profession, I talked to the director of a major military museum. This director sent about fifteen minutes telling me that private collectors were absolutely the lowest life form. Later I talked to a curator who believed all historical artifacts, regardless of how many existed should be stored in a museum; basically no private ownership of anything old should be permitted. It was not long before I learned just how valuable and helpful private collectors and researchers can be to museums. Sadly, there are still museum professionals that view these valuable resources with suspicion and dread.

I chaired a session at the 2011 AASLH Annual Meeting in Richmond on this topic and present this brief article to help you work with private collectors and researchers.

What are some reasons museums should work with private collectors and researchers?

1. Networking with collectors and researchers can help you with many aspects of your museum from artifact identification and cataloging to exhibits and publishing. Private collectors and researchers spend lots of time and money pursuing their hobby so they know others with the same interests.
2. Wealth of knowledge and talent is out there in the private world, no matter how obscure or unusual the subject there is a group of people who collect it and/or research it.
3. Sharing and dissemination of historical knowledge. Next to the preservation of artifacts this is one of our primary missions. Most private individuals are happy to share their information with others.
4. The vast majority of research and publishing in all areas of material culture is being done by private collectors and

Articles for this e-newsletter are supplied by members of the AASLH Military History Affinity Group Advisory Committee. Please feel free to forward this e-mail to colleagues.

For more Military History resources, [click here](#).

To sign up to receive future issues of *Military History Affinity Group News*, join the AASLH [Military History Affinity Group](#). **The Affinity Group is not a membership organization and there is no fee to join.**

However, you will need to create a username and password and share your basic contact information. [Click here](#) and then click on "Join the Military History Affinity Group" link at the top of the page and then on "Don't have a Login? Click here."

For more information about all of AASLH's programs

researchers, not by museum professionals or academics. Helping the private collector and researcher often ends up helping the whole profession.

So how do you know if the person who appears at the museum knows their subject and can be useful to your museum? The key question is—are they interested in discovering and sharing historical knowledge? Other questions include have you published anything, if yes, what in what publications? What organizations do you belong to? What other museums have you worked with? Some things to observe—do they have and use respected published sources and are they able to say “I don’t know”?

How do you find private collectors or researchers? Often they find you as they seek artifacts and information to further their research. Word of mouth, organizations, magazines, shows, books, other museums are all ways to them. No matter what it is, there is sure to be a group, publication, website, or show where the collectors of dolls, quilts, farm tools, helmets, tricycles, or whatever connect with others with the same interests.

Over the years my work with private collectors and researchers has resulted in four books, numerous articles and many exhibitions. Collectors can help you turn a small museum collection of artifacts into a significant exhibit or publication. Private collectors and researchers can be an invaluable resource for your museum in many areas with a little effort.

New Book on War of 1812 Uniforms and Equipment

With the 200th Anniversary of the beginning of the War of 1812 next year, there are two new books available on American and British uniforms and equipment.

The first book, published in 2011 is *A Most Warlike Appearance: Uniforms, Flags and Equipment of the United States in the War of 1812*. The second book just released is *A Scarlet Coat: Uniforms, Flags and Equipment of the British Forces in the War of 1812*. Both books are by Rene Cartrand and are available from [Service Publications](http://ServicePublications.com), PO Box 33071, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K2C 3Y9.

Here are some additional resources on the War of 1812 from a Military History Resources bibliography available on the [Military History Affinity Group webpage](http://MilitaryHistoryAffinityGroup.com).

The American War 1812-1814 Men-At-Arms Series. Philip Katcher, Osprey Publishing, London, 1990.

Uniforms and Equipment of the United States Forces in the War of 1812. Rene Chartrand, Old Fort Niagara Assoc., 1992.

Military History Institutions and Projects Win 2011 AASLH Award of Merit

Congratulations to the following institutions and individuals for winning the 2011 AASLH Leadership in History Awards Award of Merit for their outstanding work.

366th Civil Engineer Squadron Mountain Home Air Force Base, MHAFB, ID, for the publication [Mountain Home AFB Modern: The Capehart-Wherry Housing Project of MHAFB ID](http://MountainHomeAFBModern.com) (available as a free PDF download)

and services, visit <http://aaslh.org/>

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Barry L. Brown and Gordon R. Elwell of Athens, GA, for the publication *Crossroads of Conflict: A Guide to Civil War Sites in Georgia*

Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, GA, for the *Civil War 150 Historical Marker Project*

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Richard C. Saylor, Michael J. O'Malley III, Kimberly L. Stone, Ted R. Walke, Christy Gauthier, and Don Giles, Harrisburg, PA, for the publication *Soldiers to Governors: Pennsylvania's Civil War Veterans Who Became State Leaders*

Texas Historical Commission, William McWhorter, Lara Newcomer, Bob Brinkman, Dr. Stephen Sloan, Lois Myers, and Elinor Maže, Austin, TX, for the *Texas in World War II* Initiative

Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA, for the exhibit *An American Turning Point: The Civil War in Virginia*

Nominations are currently being accepted for the 2012 awards. The Military History Affinity Group Committee encourages you to submit a nomination. [Click here for a nomination form](#). We would love to see more military history-related winners in 2012. The nomination deadline is March 1, so get started today on your nomination.

Feel free to contact [Bethany Hawkins](#) if you have any questions about the AASLH Leadership in History awards.

Collections Camp: Military Artifacts Registration Now Open

[Collections Camp: Military History](#)

June 27-29, 2012

Atlanta, Georgia

Host: Atlanta History Center

This three-day workshop will focus on the care, conservation, and exhibition of military artifacts in museum collections, specifically from the 19th-century. Spend time working with conservators and curators to learn how to be better stewards of your military history collection.

As a result of this workshop, participants should:

- Have a general knowledge of the basic types of 19th-century military artifacts common in American museum collections;
- Have a general knowledge of the particular needs of military collections including proper identification, handling, and basic conservation;
- Be familiar with some of the current issues and trends in the preservation of military artifact collections;
- Be able to ensure the safety of visitors, staff, and artifacts when exhibiting or storing military items;
- Explore the variety of issues related to exhibiting and storing military history collections;
- Be familiar with simple conservation procedures that are safe to perform on their military history collections;
- Be aware of when they should call a professional conservator for problems with their military history collections;
- Recognize the importance of nineteenth century military collections in American museums.

Who Should Attend:

This workshop is intended for museum staff and volunteers who work in any type of museum that has collections of a military nature.

Register by May 23 and receive a discount. [Click here to register.](#)



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