

I would like to invite you to participate in the Gardiner Foundation Semiquincentennial Summer Fellowship Program. We are soliciting applications from government-appointed historians and local historical societies across New York State. This exciting program will place a college student fellow in your office in the summer of 2024 to work with you on public-facing projects commemorating the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of American Independence, broadly construed. We would love to be of assistance!

Funded by the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation, this program will offer fellowships to fifty students from seven colleges and universities (Canisius College, Cornell University, Brooklyn College (CUNY), SUNY Geneseo, the University at Albany, SUNY Potsdam, and Stony Brook University). If you are selected, we will pay you \$500 dollars for your work with a Gardiner Foundation Semiquincentennial Summer Fellow. The Geneseo Center for Local and Municipal History at SUNY Geneseo will pay the student fellows. Faculty mentors from the participant colleges and universities and the program director will visit each student fellow during the summer to provide advice and support. Each student will be available to work approximately 150 hours over the course of the summer of 2024.

Last year's program was a smashing success. Students worked with historians from the eastern tip of Long Island to the southwestern corner of the state, and from Saratoga County to Buffalo. We will attempt to match the 25 best students who apply with historians in or near their hometown. The historians who worked with us could not say enough about the Gardiner Foundation Fellows. As one director said, "the students bring new life and new ideas to any organization they go to."

The Geneseo Center for Local and Municipal History shares with local historians a simple but important goal: to present history to as large an audience as possible. The program will benefit local historians by providing them with the energy, commitment and expertise of the program's faculty mentors and their talented student fellows. I hope we can all work together to contemplate the layered meanings of the revolution and American independence in myth, memory, and history as we approach its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

In addition to presenting information about New York's revolutionary history at the local level to as wide an audience as possible, you might as well consider a range of other questions:

- How have New Yorkers defined "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" over the 250 years since American Independence?
- What have New Yorkers meant when they asserted their belief that "all men are created equal" and how have those meanings changed over time?
- How have New Yorkers remembered the American Revolution, and its conflicting legacies, since 1776?

More broadly, we feel reflection on the meaning of independence will encourage salutary community conversations about these broader questions:

- How did we get here? What historical forces have made our community the way it is?
- What are the historical sources of the challenges we face as members of communities?
- How can we confront those challenges effectively, and what have we tried before?

- What obligations do we have as members of our communities to those who came before us?
- How well have we lived up to the highest ideals of the American Revolution?

If your town did not yet exist in 1776, we still want you to be involved. We are especially eager to support creative and innovative approaches to the past. We believe a community-wide reflection on the meaning of independence will help increase civic engagement, produce a more historically informed public, and help contribute to a deeper understanding of the American Revolution and its ambivalent legacy as the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence approaches. We are excited to work with you and have our student fellows assist you.

If you are interested in applying, I hope you will fill out the enclosed application and mail it to the following address:

Michael Oberg  
Center for Local and Municipal History  
Department of History  
SUNY Geneseo  
Geneseo, NY, 14454

Or to send it to me via email at [Oberg@Geneseo.edu](mailto:Oberg@Geneseo.edu). We would like to have all applications in by **February 1, 2024**.

Even if you are not interested in participating, I hope that you will consider filling out the application that pertains to historical materials in your collections. We would like to assemble in advance of the Semiquincentennial a directory of local history sources so that teachers, researchers, and students know what is available across the length and breadth of New York State.

If you have any questions or concerns, you can reach me at (585)245-5730 or by email to [oberg@geneseo.edu](mailto:oberg@geneseo.edu).

I am,

Sincerely Yours,



Michael Leroy Oberg  
Geneseo Center for Local and Municipal History