

Florida Humanities Council – Civil War Seminar - 2009

In Florida -- a state whose modern identity is often in question – the local Confederate past is often forgotten. In a state where some suggest the North is the South and the South is the North, many Floridians are surprised to find that their state was third to secede from the Union and rocked by battles, a massive naval campaign, and social turmoil. Our state's relationship to the Civil War is complex and still unfolding.

In June, 2009, the Florida Humanities Council hosted a five-day seminar for Florida K-12 teachers, funded by a grant from the HTR Foundation, to explore the Civil War experience in Florida. The seminar, which ran from June 15 – 19, provided participants with an interdisciplinary exploration of the cause, effects, and impact of the Civil War and Florida's experience in the Civil War. Teachers grappled with compelling questions about equality, race, freedom, and democracy.

The all-expenses paid seminar, hosted at Chinsegut Hill in Brooksville, Florida, included an overnight trip to North Florida. While staying at Chinsegut Hill participants heard from some of the state's most distinguished historians, including Dr. Raymond Arsenault, Dr. John Belolahvek, and Dr. Robert Taylor. During the overnight trip to North Florida participants:

- visited the Mandarin Museum to hear from Dr. Keith Holland, the discoverer of the Civil War battleship "the Maple Leaf" which was sunk in Jacksonville's St. John's River during the war,
- explored Fernandina Beach's Civil War era Fort Clinch,
- toured Olustee Battlefield Historic Site with re-enactors and Civil War experts Thomas Fasulo, Eric Hague, and Sue Bonifay,
- visited the Tallahassee Museum to hear from historian Dr. Tracy Revels on the role of Florida women during the Civil War,
- toured the site of the battle of Natural Bridge, south of Tallahassee

30 teachers participated in the week-long seminar. Teachers were chosen from a pool of over 150 applicants, and came from across the state of Florida. The teachers taught in a variety of grades and subjects, and post-seminar evaluations showed that they learned a tremendous amount to take back to their students.

With appropriate funding, FHC hopes to host the seminar again in the summer of 2010.

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