
North Dakota: People Living on the Land is a digital exhibit created by the State Historical Society of North Dakota that provides four units covering different periods in the state’s history: Paleozoic to 1200, 1201 to 1860, 1861 to 1920, and 1921 to the present. Each of the four units is broken down into four thematic lessons titled “Changing Landscapes,” “Making A Living,” “Building Communities,” and “Alliances And Conflict,” which are further divided into topics and sections. These lessons include a variety of topics on Native Americans, the environment, urban history, landscape change, and communities. With this tactic, North Dakota: People Living on the Land seeks to balance a chronological and thematic approach to the state’s history.

The project is designed to engage with classrooms—the project goes so far as to describe itself as a “course”—and includes course activities, outlines, primary source guides, and information on North Dakota and Common Core standards. Each of the project topics conclude with activities to download as PDF or Word files that ask questions about the content of historical documents and opportunities to analyze images and otherwise synthesize the topic narrative and historical material. As a project focused around teaching and specifically designed for eighth-grade students, K-12 instructors may find many useful resources for teaching state and local history.

In addition to text, the project includes interactive components, including explanatory notes, zoomable images from archival sources, maps, documents, paintings, images, and video. Many of these captioned sources are drawn from the State Historical Society of North Dakota’s own archives and provide useful complements to the narrative text. Several of the sections also include transcriptions of primary sources. These transcriptions and primary sources form a core component of the project. Coupled with the page on “Using Primary Sources to Understand History,” North Dakota: People Living on the Land seeks to help students understand
the complicated and contingent nature of sources and their use in understanding the past.

The design gets in the way of the content. While the project made efforts to allow a degree of modification for readers—a “Preferences” pane allows readers to adjust font sizes, paragraph spacing, and font style—the design choices for font sizes often overwhelm the content, even when viewing the project on a larger screen. Furthermore, the design repeats navigation cues for readers. Across the top of a section readers can see which unit, lesson, and topic they are viewing, but this same content is repeated in large header font just below this information. The section header fonts are much larger than any other font on the page and would benefit from appearing smaller while still providing readers with a sense of where they are in a text. The design, however, is built for responsiveness and works well across monitor sizes, tablet computers, and phones.

The prose of the project is sometimes uneven in its quality. While the project does a decent job of ensuring there is no erasure of people from North Dakota history—for example, the project does not fall into the trap of relegating Native history to the nineteenth century, but discusses twentieth-century issues around relocation and termination policies, the Indian Reorganization Act, and modern tribal governments—the prose sometimes is too simplistic in its explanations. The project also slightly misleads to suggest that it continues up to the “present,” since most of the history contained within ends during the Cold War. There is no discussion in the “Experience of War” topic, for example, of the Persian Gulf War,
American war in Afghanistan, or Iraq War. The history told here largely ends in the 1980s.

There are certain sections that could have received more careful thought or editing. One topic in particular stands out. A topic in unit 3 is called “Our European Cultural Heritage,” and while the content of the narrative discusses the impact of European immigration on the state’s culture, the language of our heritage is problematic. Whose heritage is the project referring to? Given the content of the section, it implies white Europeans who settled on the Northern Plains. But Native or Latino/a students, for example, who may use this project in their class may find this section exclusionary. Indeed, the very presence of European culture occasionally introduced great damage to nonwhite communities. The language matters here; as has been said in other contexts, heritage is not history.

Overall, the project effectively presents the state’s history through easily accessible prose and access to primary sources, but shortcomings in design and content detract from its effectiveness. For K-12 instructors looking for easy-to-use sources and a useful introduction to state history, North Dakota: People Living on the Land gives students a fairly thorough overview of the state’s history and may even serve as an alternative to a print textbook.

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A Liberian Journey: History, Memory, and the Making of a Nation. Center for National Documents and Records Agency, Monrovia, Liberia; the Center for History and New Media, George Washington University, Washington, DC; Indiana University Liberian Collections, Indiana University, Bloomington; and the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Verlon Stone, Director and Collections Team Lead; Philomena Bloh Sayeh and Gregg Mitman, Content Team Co-Leads; Fred Gibbs, Content Advisor; Emmanuel Urey, Content Specialist and Oral Historian; Sheila A. Brennan, Digital Team Lead; Ken Albers, Web Designer and Developer; Meredith Moon and Ardea Smith, Metadata Specialists. http://www.liberianhistory.org. Created March 21, 2016; Accessed October 1–30, 2016.

In 1926, the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company received its million-acre rubber concession from the Liberian Government. To investigate the health of the territory’s flora and future labor force, Firestone sponsored a team of Harvard scientists to undertake a four-month expedition. The Harvard Africa Expedition members took numerous photographs of Liberian people, places, plants, and animals. They also captured scenes on thirty-five-millimeter film and kept detailed diaries and accounts of their experiences and impressions. However, the expedition only succeeded due to the assistance and hospitality of Chief Suah Koko, unique for her status as a female leader in an otherwise patriarchal milieu.
A Liberian Journey is a digital exhibit and database dedicated to exploring and raising awareness of this pivotal moment just before the Firestone concession profoundly transformed Liberia’s landscape and the lives of its people. In addition to an exhibit detailing the life of Chief Suah Koko, her encounter with the Harvard expedition, and her legacy in Liberia, the site also provides access to over six hundred contemporary photos, over two hours of the expedition’s film footage, and the team’s document collection. The site also hosts video clips of interviews with Liberian historians, chiefs, and elders. These sources can be searched and accessed by collection, theme, and location. In addition to providing access to primary sources and oral histories, the creators of A Liberian Journey hope to contribute to knowledge about this place and time by encouraging site users to share stories, memories, and photos related to the exhibit. This forum for creating dialogue and constructing meaning about historical images and history is potentially one of the site’s most powerful features.

A Liberian Journey is highly accessible to the public at large and has the potential to be an influential and educational resource for Liberians to learn about the history of their country and to contribute to the content, form, and interpretation of historical narratives. The site is also a wonderful research and teaching tool. By making available a wealth and variety of primary sources, the site creates a valuable and rare opportunity for undergraduates to conduct original research in African history. The site does an excellent job of clearly analyzing issues of race and gender bias in the production of contemporary primary sources. The interviews and oral histories, particularly interviews with Dr. Guannu about Chief Suah Koko’s unique qualities and position, are extremely informative and provide Liberian perspectives on Liberian history. The ways in which A Liberian Journey combines contemporary documentation with oral histories and interpretation not only makes the process of doing history clear to nonprofessional and student audiences, it also invites them to participate in this process.

Although the site is easy to navigate, some aspects require clarification or improvement. The project’s title, A Liberian Journey: History, Memory, and the Making of a Nation, makes claims to a very wide scope; however, its exhibit specifically focusing on Chief Suah Koko and the Harvard expedition do not support this larger claim. It is unclear if additional exhibits and/or collections that would support the site’s title are planned. If so, a statement that the project is a work in progress and an indication of the direction of future features would help resolve the tension between the title and current scope. Additional contextualization and interpretation would also be useful in framing the site. For example, the “About” tab explains the site’s mission and scope, but this is the last of the five tabs used to navigate the site. Instead, the site opens with a very interesting and interactive map of the Harvard Africa Expedition’s journey throughout Liberia, linking each location on the map to the site’s available primary sources. However, there is no interpretation of the map and, without understanding any of the backstory about the Harvard expedition, this is simply confusing when first visiting.
it. This map, if moved later in the layout of the site, could be even more powerful as an informational and research tool if different overlays could be applied, such as ones that showed the boundaries of the Firestone concession or the location of Suah Koko’s chiefdom. The videos, especially the oral history interviews, are one of the most valuable resources of the exhibit, but they should be captioned and/or translated to increase accessibility. Some images appear as stills but are actually videos, and these should be flagged as such. Finally, clear dates for the expedition’s visit and Chief Suah Koko’s life or rule, and some explanation of how she came to power, would clarify the exhibit.

Overall, *A Liberian Journey* is an excellent and well-constructed resource for introducing, emphasizing, and making available Liberian history to the general public, teachers, and professional historians. It provides a detailed look into one example of the nuts and bolts of African colonization, the roles of Africans in this process, and the biases, assumptions, and ironies inherent in the Western imperialist project. The project’s wonderful collections of images, documents, and oral histories encourage individual investigation and research, making it an ideal means of sharing Liberian history with Liberians as well as a resource for college and high school instructors. Most importantly, *A Liberian Journey* shares the journey of historians with the public and actively seeks public participation in the interpretation and construction of historical knowledge and historical narratives.

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*Lives of the First World War*. Charlotte Czyzyk, Research Coordination; Mel Donnelly, Project Management and Genealogy Lead; Matt Fidler, Social Media; Luke Smith, Original Concept and Overall Project Lead; Jo Breeze, Member Communications, Digital Marketing, and Beta Coordination; Miranda Brennan, Blog, FAQs, and Onsite Copy; Matt Drewery, Functionality Co-Design and Process Architect; Alison Wallace, Genealogy and Functionality Co-Design. Sponsored by the Imperial War Museums in partnership with Findmypast. https://livesofthefirstworldwar.org. Created 2016; Accessed December 2016.

There is an ongoing debate about the causes of the boom in the memory of war over the past four decades. However, it seems clear that, whatever its origins, this phenomenon is sustained by a symbiotic relationship between governments and their agencies intent on promoting nationalistic narratives of the past and individuals seeking to position their personal and family histories within these wider narratives. *Lives of the First World War* is an exemplar of such interaction. Sponsored by the British Imperial War Museum (IWM), in collaboration with a genealogical website, Findmypast, this website aims to engage the public in researching the personal stories of nearly eight million men and women who “made a contribution to” the First World War.
As of December 2016, some 7,667,398 names had been uploaded as base information by the creators of the website. Members of the public are invited to populate these individual histories with information that they have researched by means of family or public records. Contributors are also encouraged to “Remember” (yes, capitalized) individuals listed on the site by adding them to their personal dashboard. They can even create virtual communities, grouping together life stories that they are interested in. The spirit of the site is captured in its subtitle, “Connect, Collaborate, Curate.”

This project is an ambitious exercise in mobilizing popular historical research. The site provides aspiring contributors with guidance on how to find reliable “facts” and evidence, how to check the copyright status of images, and how to understand the acronyms and ranks of the British military services. It also directs users to some 487 million online records (of which, alas, only 7.8 million are free of charge) and supplies potted histories of key battles of the war and historical material about the British services and the home front. Moreover, the site includes resources for teachers seeking to get students engaged in the project—a now standard feature of commemorative websites intent on socializing the younger generation into the official memory of war.

Large though its list of names is, this website’s claim to remember “every person involved in the war” is, of course, misleading. As it concedes, its scope is the former British Empire, and within that, Britain. Although there are links to Dominion websites (which, oddly, do not include the IWM’s near counterpart, the Australian War Memorial), the academic advisory group is comprised exclusively of scholars based in Britain.

It is hard to judge whether the vision inspiring this project—of cohorts of diligent amateur historians uploading photos, finding records, discovering and adding facts, and “building communities”—will be realized. At the time of writing this review, over 218,000 persons listed on the site had been “Remembered,” nearly 1.1 million “facts” had been added, and some 3,566 communities had been developed. The site claims to have 93,546 members. This number is impressive but it is a small percentage of a UK population of 64 million and raises the question that officials rarely entertain: how widespread is the active public engagement with the memory of war so assiduously promoted from above?

It is early days, the website having been created only in 2016. But public engagement may be limited by a lack of familiarity with social media among some of those who are presumably a primary audience of the site: the older generation of family historians. The site is not intuitively navigable, and this user found a number of broken links. Even becoming a member is not simple, an e-mail verification not necessarily following a request. The site will need significant institutional commitment if it is to function optimally and achieve its goal of becoming “a permanent digital record.”

Beyond this, there is the question of the website’s academic value. For all the useful advice it provides, public contributions will not always be accurate. Any
scholar wanting to use the site as a database will need to proceed with caution. Perhaps this does not matter. The website seems to have primarily a commemorative intent. “We believe that every person involved in the war deserves to be remembered.” But does everyone? Conscientious objectors and deserters may now have been rehabilitated, positioned within the trope of victimhood so central to the memory boom. But what of the many men who for a variety of reasons never saw action, who were discharged for venereal disease, who were guilty of war crimes, or who manifestly enjoyed killing? Do they merit inclusion because a memory project such as this, relying on a democratizing impulse for its success, needs to assume that everyone caught up in the cataclysm of the First World War was somehow invested with historical value?

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