

Ideas for Topics  
Aspiring Historian Program of the Centre County Historical Society

Below appears a listing of potential topics that may be of interest for a local history project. Most have the possibility of research in primary materials, including newspapers. Teachers can further develop ideas with the help of consultants working with the Centre County Historical Society: Dr. William Blair, emeritus professor of US History; Dr. Ford Risley, distinguished professor emeritus Bellisario College of Communication; Jacqueline Esposito, emerita Penn State archivist; and Debrah Poveromo, former Social Studies Coordinator at State College Area High School.

These are meant to be suggestive and not mandatory. Students and teachers have wide latitude for developing projects on their own, as long as they base them on primary sources. Options for exploring Centre County History are virtually limitless.

Community

Centre County during the Depression, World War I, World War II

Volunteer fire departments

Community bands

Coal mining

Histories of churches, for example the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Bellefonte or the Presbyterian Church in State College

Women's Christian Temperance Union

Places

O.W. Houts

Woodward Inn

Valentine Iron Works

John Henry Frizell

Garman Opera House

Local war memorials

The Match Factory

Philatelic Society

African American

Slave Registry for Centre County (online)

<http://co.centre.pa.us/centreco/hrip/slave/default.asp>

Bellefonte High School Desegregation

Frederick Douglass Speech in Bellefonte

Owen Brown Goes through Centre County after Harpers Ferry Raid

Martin Luther King Speech in Rec Hall in 1960s

Black Soldiers in the Civil War (compiled service records available)

Black Woman's Petition for Pension from Civil War

First African American at Penn State (Calvin H. Waller, 1899)

Penn State

Henry Varnum Poor Murals in Old Main

Student life in the 1860s (first generation)

How Centre Furnace became the site for Penn State

Student activism in the 1960s-70s

Use Daily Collegian to research a student issue

Examine La Vie to see how yearbooks have changed

### People

W. A. Thomas of Bellefonte, Quaker abolitionist (transcribe his letters)

Harriet McElwain

Lucy Lederer

Grace Holderman

Sylvia Grucci

Rose Cologne

Lucretia Simmons

Governors from Bellefonte

William H. Mills, barber and grandfather of the Mills Brothers

Hugh N. McAllister of Bellefonte

James Addams Beaver

Evan Pugh, first president

Terry Boal (lots of material can be furnished by Dr. Blair)

General Potter

Centre County petitions from Revolutionary War Veterans (online)

<http://co.centre.pa.us/centreco/hrip/revwar/default.asp>

### Industrial Businesses

Ironmaking in Centre County

Cerro Metal Industry in Bellefonte

Railroad Development