

The Harriet Beecher Stowe Center's Teacher Institutes: *A Model for Historic Sites and Educators*

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Introduction

Since 2001 the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center has conducted four intensive, five-day, summer institutes for Connecticut middle and high school History and English teachers. Each of the institutes was based on a topic inspired by the Stowe Center's institutional mission and world-class collection. Focusing on a different topic each summer, from slavery to women's activism, the institutes have been designed to provide teachers with a professional development experience that adds significantly to their content knowledge and pedagogical skills, introduces them to prominent scholars of American history, literature, archaeology and American studies, and produces by the end of the institute week, a collection of lesson plans ready to implement in the classroom. This article will provide an overview of the Stowe Center's successful teacher institute model for use by other museums or historic sites.

History of the Institute: Why We Did It

The Harriet Beecher Stowe Center is a vibrant museum, research library, and program center in Hartford, Connecticut. In three historic buildings, the Stowe Center introduces visitors to the 19th century woman whose voice changed the world by addressing major social and political inequities. With house tours, exhibitions, public and school programs and period gardens on 2.5 acres, the Stowe Center includes the Harriet Beecher Stowe House, the home where the author of the influential anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* lived from 1873 until her death in 1896. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is an American classic that influenced the abolitionist movement before the Civil War and changed the way Americans viewed slavery. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was first introduced to the public as a weekly serial in the antislavery newspaper, *The National Era*, beginning in March of 1851, and was released in book form in the spring of 1852. To recognize the 150th anniversary of the book's publication, the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center developed an entire year of

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public programs. This anniversary, commencing in June of 2001, was an opportunity for the Stowe Center to remind the public about the life and impact of Stowe and her work, and to create a series of forums in which participants from diverse communities examined issues important to Stowe and which remain relevant today.



Figure 1. Harriet Beecher Stowe. Image provided by Harriet Beecher Stowe Center.

As part of the planning process, the Stowe Center identified segments of the public that would be important for an examination of Stowe's legacy. Teachers were clearly earmarked as an essential audience in this endeavor for a variety of reasons: (1) Each teacher involved in a Stowe Center program would potentially impact scores of students and colleagues; (2) Teachers and students together would add to the interpretation of Stowe's legacy; and (3) Teachers from around the State of Connecticut would serve as ambassadors of the programs and mission of the Stowe Center.

In order to create a significant forum for teachers and provide an in-depth learning experience, the Stowe Center developed a five-day summer Teacher Institute devoted to one topic each year. The topics drew on the strengths of the Stowe Center's mission and the depth of the Stowe Center's collections, whose archives contain one of the world's largest repositories of materials related to the work and life of Harriet Beecher Stowe and the extended Beecher family, as well as housing thousands of manuscripts and books related to 19th century African American history, women's history, abolition, decorative arts and architecture. With these collections in mind the Stowe Center organized the following institutes:

- 2001: “*This Question of Slavery*”: Perspectives From Primary Sources (slavery from the point of view of both abolitionists and pro-slavery advocates)
- 2002: ABOLITION, EDUCATION AND SUFFRAGE, The Impact of 19th Century Women Activists: Perspectives From Primary Sources (the impact of 19th century women activists on reform efforts in education, abolition and suffrage)
- 2003: Novels of Protest in Antebellum America
- 2004: Slavery in New England

Evaluations by participating teachers, visiting scholars and the Connecticut Humanities Council (the primary funding source) acknowledged the institutes as highly successful and as models of professional development programs.

Elements of the Model: What We Do

(1) A Topic Which Reflects the Stowe Center’s Mission and the Strength of Its Collections:

Harriet Beecher Stowe was dedicated to exposing major issues confronting 19th century America, including abolishing slavery and promoting women’s rights. A member of the activist Beecher family, Harriet Beecher Stowe published more than thirty books and numerous sketches and articles. She was one of the key residents of Nook Farm, Hartford’s remarkable neighborhood of writers and social reformers, from 1863 to 1896.

The Stowe Center’s mission is to preserve and interpret Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Hartford home and the Center’s historic collections, create a forum for discussion of her life and work, and inspire individuals to embrace and emulate her commitment to social justice by effecting positive change. From this mission, and from Stowe’s own work and interests, the Stowe Center chose teacher institute topics that would engage teachers in the questions, concerns and struggles faced by 19th century Americans. The four topics of the 2001 – 2004 institutes also resonate today as 21st century Americans confront contemporary issues including racism and social equality. Each of the topics enabled teachers to develop an understanding of the activist movements of the 19th century and, at the same time, create lessons that encouraged students to challenge concerns that they face in their own communities and schools.

An example of the way in which the institute topics effectively engages teachers and students in 19th century issues and translate them into 20th and 21st century strategies was evident in a recent follow-up program to the ‘04 Teacher Institute on Slavery in New England. Ten of the ‘04 Institute teachers and 350 or their students gathered in the Autorino Hall at Saint Joseph College, West Hartford, in November of 2004. They viewed *Traces of the Trade*, a film being produced by Katrina Browne documenting her Rhode Island family’s slave trading legacy. With Ms. Brown and Dr. Ron Bailey, Professor of African American Studies at Northeastern University, students discussed the film, then presented to their peers individual and group projects in which they publicized little-known facts about slavery in New England. Participating students ranged from 7th to 12th grade and represented urban,

suburban and rural districts throughout Connecticut. Students had studied materials related to slavery in New England based on what their teachers had previously learned during the summer institute and thus the students, regardless of grade level, participated actively in a discussion on the moral implications and contemporary legacy of the slave trade. Outcomes of the discussions were moving and stimulated many emotional responses: A student who had recently emigrated from Cuba commented on how surprised she was to see her former country portrayed implicitly in the ‘triangle trade. One of the teachers learned that a previously unknown member of her family may have been part of the DeWolf family of Bristol, Rhode Island and therefore a direct beneficiary of the slave trade.

Student projects demonstrated a thorough understanding of the topic and also of contemporary culture. One fine example of this was the cookie campaign developed by 7th graders at the Moreland School in Kensington, CT. Wanting to reach as many of their fellow students as possible with the new information they had learned about the significant presence of slavery in New England, the students created a cookie company called *James Mars Bars, Historically Accurate Cookies*, based on the name of a Connecticut slave, James Mars, who published a book in 1864 in which he discussed his experiences as a slave.¹ Students baked 350 cookies for distribution, attaching to each one a “fortune” message with a fact about slavery in New England. The project demonstrated that students had effectively synthesized the material, then adapted it to appeal to their contemporaries and as a result fostered a new understanding of the topic among fellow students.



Figure 2. The 7th grade students at Moreland School in Kensington, CT created the idea for and baked *James Mars, Historically Accurate Cookies*.

(2) *An Intensive Five-Day Program That Is Intellectually and Pedagogically Challenging:*

Because all the topics chosen for study involve complex moral questions, multiple points of view, and a wealth of rich resource material, the Stowe Center teacher institutes are designed to fill five full days with study and activities beginning at 8:30 a.m. and ending at 3:30 p.m. Mornings of the first three days are devoted to a series of four lectures by visiting scholars, which are then followed by in depth discussions among the teachers and lecturers. Daily afternoon programs focus on pedagogical strategies presented by two master teachers and the institute advisor who model practical and engaging ways of implementing the historical content in the classroom. As part of the pedagogical programming, participants also spend afternoon sessions in a computer lab exploring significant university and museum on-line archives relevant to the topic, visit the Stowe Center library and archives for an introduction to the collection and tour the Harriet Beecher Stowe House to experience how historical artifacts can be used to present history. Examples of the scholarly lecture program and pedagogical framework for the institutes are presented in detail in the following sections of this article.

(3) *Integrating Lectures by Prominent National Scholars:*

Each year, scholars who have written noted articles or books on the institute topic, or are engaged in innovative projects related to the topic and/or currently teaching aspects of the subject are invited to participate as lecturers at an institute. For example, the scholars for the 2004 institute, *Slavery in New England*, included: (1) Dr. Joanne Pope Melish, Associate Professor of History at the University of Kentucky, whose 1998 book, *Disowning Slavery: An Overview of Slavery in New England, 1780 – 1860*, presents groundbreaking research on the significant presence of slavery in New England; (2) Dr. Warren Perry, Associate Professor of Anthropology at Central Connecticut State University, who is currently conducting archaeological research in Salem, CT to document the remains of a 4,000 acre plantation worked by enslaved people; (3) Ms. Katrina Browne, the Producer/Director of the documentary film, *Traces of the Trade*, which uncovers her family's slavetrading legacy in Bristol, Rhode Island; and (4) Dr. Lynda Morgan, Associate Professor of History and Chair of the History Department at Mount Holyoke College, who addressed the way in which slavery in New England was described by its victims in literature and other published formats.

The scholars play a vital role each year in providing the core content for the institute, and offer real support to the participating teachers who strive to provide a rich and meaningful education for their students. In return for the scholars' efforts, they have expressed how much they receive from the teachers' participation. Dr. Lois Brown, Associate Professor of English at Mount Holyoke College (Institute scholar in '02 and '03) wrote, "The opportunity for me to work closely with committed and motivated teachers has been particularly enriching for me. The intensity of the sessions and the thoughtful discussions about history, literature and culture confirm the value of these institutes." Similarly, Dr. John Stauffer, (Institute scholar in '03) John L. Loeb Associate Professor of the Humanities at Harvard University, said, "I cannot emphasize enough how important it is for scholars to help educate middle and

high school teachers, and the Stowe Center's program on protest fiction was the best I have seen."



Figure 3. Dr. Lois Brown, Associate Professor of English at Mount Holyoke College, lecturing at teacher Institute, 2002

The response of the participating teachers to the scholars and their lectures has also been resoundingly positive. Teachers express how “rejuvenating” it is to be involved in serious study with scholars who are approachable, and how “enriching” it is to be taken seriously as colleagues themselves by these scholars. In many cases, teachers have changed the way they teach a subject based on what they have learned in the institutes. This was particularly true with the topic of *Slavery in New England*, which presented a great deal of new research that dispelled old myths about a New England free of slavery. One teacher wrote, “I came into the institute hoping to find information to use to create a unit on slavery. I thought I could use it in class this year. What I got from the Institute was amazing. This week really opened my eyes to

a facet of New England history that I was unaware of.” Another wrote, “I didn’t expect the topic of the week to affect my whole approach to U.S. History!”

(4) *Develop a Collegial Learning Environment:*

Teachers at Stowe Center institutes have come from urban, suburban and rural school districts throughout Connecticut. They typically teach U.S. history, English, American studies, government, sociology and social studies at the middle and high school levels. Their classes range from remedial to advanced placement and their teaching experience from first year teachers to department heads and veteran teachers. The social, geographic and economic backgrounds of teachers and students, and student academic achievement vary widely. Despite this diversity the learning environment at the Stowe Center teacher institutes is consistently collegial, supportive, academically serious, yet fun. The collegial learning environment is a result of:

- ❖ Meticulous planning that begins in August as soon as the previous institute has ended. The Institute topic is identified; faculty is researched and engaged; the daily program is developed; primary and secondary source materials are selected; and the pedagogical activities are finalized.
- ❖ A strong program staff: Stowe Center staff and consulting staff work closely together throughout the program year to ensure that the institute management is efficient and thorough. Stowe Center education, marketing and administrative staff members guide the program. Susan Hoffman Fishman, the Institute Advisor, has worked with the Stowe Center on a consulting basis since the program’s inception. Master teachers participate in program delivery during the week and advise on its development during the year.
- ❖ Sound budget and financial planning. The institute program has been consistently funded both by grants and by the Stowe Center’s operating budget.
- ❖ Clear definitions of what is expected from the teachers at the institute and during the school year and what they, in turn, can expect from the institute. These expectations are described in the promotional materials and reinforced at the institute itself. Clear expectations ensure that no teacher is surprised by the amount of work to be completed or the intensive nature of the program.
- ❖ Fostering a mentoring relationship between returning and first-time teachers. Approximately one quarter of the class is typically comprised of teachers who have attended prior institutes and can provide real examples of the changes they have made in the classroom and the benefits they have derived from attending the program. As mentors, they assist new teachers in developing lesson plans based on institute

activities and resources and set an example of thoughtfulness, seriousness and enthusiasm as soon as the institute begins on day one.

- ❖ The small size of the class fosters dynamic interactions among teachers, scholars and staff. The class was initially limited to twenty teachers by the space available at the Stowe Center, but since the intimate size of the teacher cohort worked so effectively, it has been maintained.

(5) Use an Intriguing Historical Incident as a Lens Through Which Participants Can Study and Respond to the Historical Topic and Content:

Because each of the institute topics is complex and could not be covered in its entirety during a one-week program, in planning the first institute in 2001 the Stowe Center decided to examine the institute topic by studying one historical incident in-depth. The incident is chosen each year with the following criteria: it involves local or state figures; it includes enough drama and intrigue to engage teachers and their students; and it presents an opportunity for examining all of the points of view that were present during the time period.

For the 2001 institute, a little-known incident that occurred in Washington, D.C. on April 15, 1848 served as the focus of study for the week: 76 enslaved people attempting to escape had hired the services of a sea captain named Daniel Drayton and a ship called the *Pearl*. They were fleeing the households of prominent Washingtonians and Virginians, including Senator Daniel Webster and former first lady Dolley Madison. Ultimately, the plot failed due to the treachery of an unknown informant. The enslaved people and the *Pearl's* crew were marched to jail through the streets of Washington surrounded by a virulent mob. The escapees were given over to slave traders and sold by their outraged owners, but Captain Daniel Drayton, and ship owner Captain Sayers stood trial for the theft of 76 slaves. The incident of the *Pearl* became a national sensation as members of Congress debated the validity of the charges against Drayton and Sayers, and as prominent members of the public added their voices to the outcry. Harriet Beecher Stowe was so affected by the story that she wrote about it in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

The story of the *Pearl* presented the perfect vehicle for teachers to examine the complex passions that motivated abolitionists, politicians and pro-slavery advocates in ante-bellum America. In addition to the vivid story itself, the *Pearl* incident also illustrated many of the most troubling aspects of slavery: (1) Categorizing people as property rather than as human beings with rights and privileges in a democratic society; (2) The inability of enslaved people to testify in court on their own behalf or on the behalf of others and, therefore, the absence of their point of view in the historical record of the incident; (3) The danger involved in defying the institution of slavery and the subsequent bravery of those who ultimately did defy the system; and (4) The heartbreak of those enslaved individuals who were separated forever from family members at the behest of their owners.

By participating in a series of activities using the story of the *Pearl*, the teachers in the 2001 institute studied the nature of slavery and the way in which history is recorded. Taking on the personas of characters living during the time period, teachers (and later their students) became involved in animated debates mirroring those that had occurred in the United States during the turbulent years preceding the Civil

War.²

Historical incidents that were used during other Stowe Center teacher institutes include the Pennsylvania Hall Fire of 1838, which illustrated the conflicts and issues confronting women's efforts as activists in the abolitionist and suffrage movements and in education reform (Institute 2002); and the Town Meeting that took place in Wethersfield, CT on Dec. 13, 1819, illustrating the significant involvement of the New England states in slavery and the slave trade.(Institute 2004)³



Figure 4. Teachers participate in a role-playing activity based on a historical incident, and debate one another by illustrating the conflicts and issues of the 19th century Americans.

(6) Carefully Selected Primary and Secondary Source Materials That Provide Teachers With a Collection of Resources For the Classroom:

The institute staff understood that for the institute to be useful and applicable once teachers returned to the classroom, teachers had to be able to walk away from the program with accessible resource materials and practical strategies for using these materials. Teachers simply do not have time during their hectic schedules to conduct research and locate relevant documents on their own. For this reason, each pedagogical activity includes a relevant primary source document or documents related to the topic, as well as every point of view expressed during the time period, as represented by primary and secondary source material. Teachers receive these documents in comprehensive booklets when they arrive at the institute on day one. In some years, depending on the nature of the pre-institute assignment, additional materials were sent to the teachers in advance of the institute. For example, at the 2001 institute, which focused on the *Pearl* incident, teachers received a booklet of seven primary and secondary source documents related to the story of the *Pearl*.

To date, the Stowe Center has compiled 6 primary and secondary source document collections for the four institute topics. Betsy Kowal, a U.S. history and civics teacher at Griswold High School in Griswold, CT expressed how important these materials have been for her teaching:

The teacher institute is ‘brain food’ for me. Studying the primary documents I don’t have time to find myself and learning how to connect them to historical events and make them relevant for my students is priceless. Seeing how other teachers use

these materials and sharing this experience is something I only have the opportunity to do here. The documents and subject matter covered in the institute are not found in textbooks – exploring them this week enables me to feel comfortable using them in the classroom.

Kate Sawyer O'Mara, a U.S. history and economics teacher at the Haddam-Killingworth High School in Higganum, CT, wrote the following note after attending the 2002 institute on the Impact of 19th Century Women Activists:

I just thought I'd drop you a note to tell you right now how helpful the books of primary sources and lesson ideas are. These last few days I've been pouring through them getting ready to start our unit on reform. There are so many helpful documents and ideas that I hardly know where to begin. I can see already that the Stowe Center summer seminar has improved our US history courses here and I look forward to seeing the students using the materials you've provided.

(7) Follow-Up Activities During the School Year that Enable Students From Diverse Backgrounds Throughout Connecticut to Participate Together in a Challenging Forum on the Institute Topic:

As an integral component of the institute, two follow-up activities are planned during the school year for teachers who attended the previous summer program: (1) A public forum held in a large university auditorium at which 300–400 students of institute teachers convene to engage in a discussion led by one of the institute scholars and to present projects completed in the classroom; (2) A lecture for and discussion with teachers conducted by one of the institute scholars, who provides additional content on the institute topic. After the formal lecture and discussion, teachers share student work and strategies they have used to implement the institute topic in their curricula. Both of these programs provide additional resources for teachers and valuable enrichment opportunities for students who are exposed to peers (many for the first time) from diverse racial, social, economic and academic backgrounds.

The successful teacher/student follow-up program held in November of 2004 was described earlier in this article. The 2003 student/teacher program was equally successful. Based around the 2003 topic, *Novels of Protest in Antebellum America*, the program focused on the character of Uncle Tom in Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and in two 20th century film versions of the novel: the 1903 Porter Edison silent film version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and an excerpt from the 1987 Showtime version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, starring Phylicia Rashad and Samuel L. Jackson. Prior to the program, book excerpts relating to the character of Tom were given to the teachers to analyze with their students. Students also received background information on Stowe and the film versions of the book, as well as a video viewing guide with key questions to address as they watched the film clips. Questions included:

- What does Tom look like in the film?
- How does Tom behave toward the people who considered him their property?
- How did those people behave toward Tom?
- Stereotypes occur when a characteristic of an individual in a group is

given to all of its members....What stereotypes have been applied in this film?

On the day of the program, Dr. Lois Brown, Associate Professor of English at Mount Holyoke College, led discussion among students identifying how Stowe had described the character of Tom. After viewing the films, the students compared the adaptations to Stowe's original character and conducted an animated discussion on how and why stereotypes are created. Daniel Jones, a *Hartford Courant* staff writer, who was present at the program, later wrote:

“in some of the scenes in the 1903 film, the slaves are dancing and appear happy before a slave auction – in keeping with apologists’ sentiments and the myth that slavery wasn’t really a bad way of life.”

“It really taught us a lot more about slavery, said 12-year old Casey Murphy, a student at McGee Middle School in Berlin, CT. She added: “The movies were very different in the way slavery was depicted.”

“Several of the students noted that the character (of Tom) in the 1903 film appears old and weak, nothing like the strong hero that Stowe describes in her novel.”⁴

Dr. Brown's response to the program was one of delight: “Approximately 300 middle and high school students traveled to St. Joseph College. . .The students’ provocative questions and their attentiveness testified to the effective preparation that they had received in their classes and to the ways in which the teachers involved had benefited from the pedagogical discussions of the summer Institute.”

(8) Publish Lesson Plans Developed During the Institute by Middle and Secondary Teachers Extend the Impact of the Institute Beyond the Participating Teachers:

By the end of the institute week teachers are expected to produce a minimum of one lesson plan (many produce a full unit) that is relevant to their school curricula and includes at least one primary source document. As they begin the institute week many teachers are doubtful that they will be able to absorb the information and resources in such a relatively short time and come up with an effective lesson. Yet by week-end an enormous variety of lessons are produced which fulfill district and state standards and also meet a range of student needs at varying grade levels and course disciplines. This is a testament to the creative work of the participating teachers and the excitement generated by the institute.

Two lessons developed for the 2004 Teacher Institute on *Slavery and Emancipation in New England* are examples of how teachers integrate the institute's content and pedagogical experiences to develop powerful lessons in which students work with primary and secondary source materials and then participate in thought provoking activities. The first lesson, “Denying Slavery in Connecticut. . .Why Our Textbooks are Incomplete,” was created for junior and senior American history students by James Sachs, History Department Chair at O.H. Platt High School in Meriden, CT. The instructional objectives of the three day unit are to (1) Introduce

the topic of slavery in Connecticut; (2) Have students investigate slavery in Connecticut by utilizing primary and secondary online documents; (3) Have students record the evidence of slavery presented in the *Hartford Courant's* special September 29, 2004 *Northeast* magazine "Complicity: How Connecticut Chained Itself to Slavery"; (4) Have students report to one another about the extent of slavery in Connecticut; (5) Have students write a textbook company proposing changing their next edition to include accurate information on the topic; (6) Have students reflect on how they felt as they investigated and learned of this little known and often hidden history; (7) Have students discuss the possible feelings of descendants who either benefited from or suffered from the slave industry. This lesson includes individual student research, writing assignments, class discussion, group presentations, and an element of activism that encourages students to do something constructive with their new knowledge.

Another example of a highly effective lesson plan is that developed by Robert A. Gibson, history teacher at the James Hillhouse High School in New Haven, CT. Designed for American history students and entitled, "Slave Ownership in New Haven, 1790: The Paradox of James Hillhouse," the four day unit guides students in the investigation of the life and legacy of United States Senator, James Hillhouse (for whom the students' school is named) and the impact of the Senator's slave ownership on his legacy. Students examine primary source materials related to Hillhouse's involvement in slavery and discuss the paradox of the nation's Founders engaging in the peculiar institution. Students then participate in a debate: "Shall the name of James Hillhouse High School be changed and shall the Hillhouse grave site be removed from the Connecticut Freedom Trail because James Hillhouse was a slave owner?" Students prepare their oral arguments based on class discussions, reading assignments, and their own conclusions on the subject. The final project for the unit requires students to determine the ultimate fate of the people James Hillhouse held as slaves. Students do so by utilizing research on the Internet, the New Haven Public Library, the Connecticut State Library, and the New Haven Hall of Records.⁵

Adaptations to the Model: What We Learned

The major components of the Stowe Center's teacher institute were designed and implemented at the first institute in 2001. Since that time a number of changes have been made, based on both teacher input and staff observations. These changes improved the program in important ways and included:

Adding a Second Master Teacher to Accommodate English Teachers and Curriculum Development:

Liz Devine, social studies teacher at William Hall High School in West Hartford, CT, has served as the institute's Master Teacher for four years. A 25 year veteran who was named West Hartford's Teacher of the Year in 2000-2001, Liz is a gifted educator who has, in addition to her creative teaching style and her contagious enthusiasm for teaching, a vast knowledge of American history. When it became clear from the 2001 program that institute topics appealed to teachers in disciplines other than history, a Master Teacher of English was involved for 2002 and 2003.

Carol Blejwas, an English teacher and colleague of Ms Devine's at Hall High School, provided a literary perspective to the historical context as teachers examined 19th century novels of protest and 19th century women reformers. For the 2004 institute, *Slavery in New England*, with Ms Blejwas on maternity leave, Connie Davidson was recruited. A longtime California social studies teacher, Ms Davidson was also a trainer for Teacher's Curriculum Institute, developers of the innovative *History Alive!* teaching strategies. She brought particular expertise in curriculum development, adding another valuable dimension to the institute program. One of the changes that she suggested was to divide the teachers into two distinct groups according to their levels of teaching (middle or high school) as they worked on their lesson plans so that they could collaborate more effectively with each other. As a result of this change, each lesson plan developed by teachers fits logically within one large unit covering the institute topic, rather than as an independent entity.

Rescheduling the Follow-up Activity to the Fall Rather Than the Spring:

After the 2001 institute, teachers reported that mid-fall was the time they would logically cover the institute topic in their classes, the follow-up activity with students was moved from the spring to the fall, beginning in 2002. ⁶ The change resulted in an immediate increase in teacher and student attendance and is an example of how a simple change in response to teacher feedback can radically improve program outcome.

The Response to the Institute: How We Know It Is Successful:

Numerous factors verify the enormous success of the Stowe Center's summer institute program:

- ❖ The institute has been funded each year by the Connecticut Humanities Council (CHC). Recognizing the program's worth, CHC has awarded grants at the maximum level from its Humanities in the Schools funding category.
- ❖ Significant numbers of participating teachers want to return for second and third years.
- ❖ The Institute is always full. The Stowe Center's Institute has built a reputation for excellence and, therefore, has had no problem filling 20 teacher slots.
- ❖ The quality of the teacher-produced lesson plans and student products is consistently high. Teachers respond to the program by putting forth their best and most creative efforts developing their lessons; the students' work reflects this high quality in their class-work and during the follow-up activities.
- ❖ Teachers willingly attend follow-up activities. Teachers show high levels of commitment by preparing their students for the follow-up

programs and attending additional professional development related to the institute during the school year.

- ❖ The teacher's formal evaluations following the institute are consistently exemplary. The evaluations indicate that the teachers are overwhelmingly positive about the content of the institute, the effectiveness of the scholars and staff in presenting materials and information on the topic, the resources provided, the overall management of the institute, the interaction among teachers and the general pacing of the program itself. The few suggestions for improvements generally refer to the need for larger space and more time.

- ❖ The teachers have built a collaborative web of relationships outside the institute. For example, as a result of meeting in the 2004 institute, a Hartford public middle school teacher and a Meriden middle school teacher arranged for their students to work together over the school year as a way for the students to learn with peers from different backgrounds and communities. A veteran English teacher and a new teacher completing her Master's Degree met at the 2003 institute and developed an on-going collegial relationship.

- ❖ Teacher's individual achievement has been enhanced by participation in the institute. Wendy Nelson Kaufman, a teacher at Bloomfield High School in Bloomfield, CT, was named Connecticut State Teacher of the Year in 2003, and in her acceptance speech she referenced how inspirational it was to her teaching career to learn about Lydia Maria Child at the 2002 institute.

- ❖ The scholars are as eager to participate as the teachers. They consistently express their delight in working with such highly motivated teachers and are impressed with the level of discussion at their lectures. No scholar has ever turned down a request to participate in the institute or to return for a second and third year.

- ❖ Teacher institutes have helped transform the Stowe Center. By building relationships with individual teachers as well as schools and districts and bringing student and teacher voices into program planning for the organization, the Center has changed how it delivers program content.

- ❖ Community interest in the Institutes' scholarly lectures has been strong. Interested educators, public historians, and past participants frequently request permission to attend. In order to maintain the direct access of the participating teachers to the institute scholars, the Stowe Center will sponsor public lectures by three of the scholars in the fall of 2005.

The 2005 Teacher Institute: What's Next?

The Stowe Center's July 2005 teacher institute, "Slavery and Emancipation in New England," is expanding from one to two weeks. Open to teachers from across the country, and based on an expansion of the 2004 topic, the institute is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and will be a residential program at Trinity College. Nine scholars of national stature will address six subtopics: (1) Native American Slavery in New England; (2) The New England Slave Trade; (3) African American Slavery in New England; (4) Abolitionism in New England; (5) Free People of Color; and (6) The New England Black Experience in the Civil War. In addition to participating in institute lectures/discussions and pedagogical activities, the 30 teachers accepted for the program will produce a Teachers Guide to Slavery and Emancipation in New England, the first such publication of its kind. The 2005 institute is a natural expansion of the statewide model and an effective way to expand the impact of the institute to teachers beyond Connecticut.

Conclusion

Over the past four years, the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center's teacher institutes have connected the finest scholars of American history and literature with scores of Connecticut middle and high school educators, bringing the latest research and resources into Connecticut classrooms. The institute staff has modeled innovative pedagogical strategies that enable students to confront challenging issues through active debate and thought-provoking classroom activities. As a result, participating Connecticut teachers from urban, rural and suburban districts have changed the way they teach; and their students have learned to connect important historical events and contemporary issues confronting 21st century America. As one 2004 institute teacher put it: "The subject matter is fascinating and locally significant – who could ask for more as far as engagement goes...I can (use it) for the rest of my career!"

¹ For more on James Mars, see David O. White, "The Real Life of James Mars," *Connecticut History* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 28-46.

² For a detailed description of the incident of the *Pearl* and the way in which it was studied in the 2001 Stowe Center Teacher Institute, please see "The Escape of the *Pearl*: Teaching About Slavery With Primary Source Documents," by Susan Hoffman Fishman in the September, 2003 issue of *Social Education*, the journal of the National Council for the Social Studies.

³ Because the 2003 institute topic was 19th Century Novels of Protest, teachers examined the novels and responses to the novels rather than an historical event.

⁴ "Students Explore 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' and Its Impact" by Daniel P. Jones, *The Hartford Courant*, Saturday, November 22, 2003, page B5.

⁵ Both lesson plans described here are part of the Stowe Center publication *Lesson Plans Developed During the Teacher Institute By Participating Teachers, Teacher Institute July 12- 16, 2004*. For information on this publication and on other annual compilations of lesson plans, please contact the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, 77 Forest Street, Hartford, CT 06105, 860-522-9258.

⁶ Since the Stowe Center's collection is strongest in 19th century materials, all of the institute topics have focused on issues relating to the 19th century. American history classes traditionally cover this material earlier in the school year.