

# Teachers from around U.S. learn about St. Mary's history



Staff photo by Dean Geiser  
Marylin Arrigan, education director for Satterley Plantation, explains the building's layout and structure. The tour of the plantation was part of a week-long program during which teachers from around the nation traveled to St. Mary's County to learn about and then tour historical sites.

BY MARK ABROMAITIS  
STAFF WRITER

More than 50 educators from around the nation came to St. Mary's in the last two weeks to study Maryland's contributions to early democracy.

But why bring teachers from as far away as California and Colorado to St. Mary's?

"Because St. Mary's County is the birthplace of the state and really, democracy," said Zach Messitte, director of the Center for the Study of Democracy at St. Mary's College of Maryland.

Two groups of teachers each spent a week in the program based at the college, during which they listened to lectures and toured Historic St. Mary's City, Satterley Plantation, Point Lookout State Park and a took a skipjack cruise along the St. Mary's River. It's St. Mary's in a box, Messitte said. "They get the whole experience this week."

The program was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Landmarks of American History Workshops provided the educators with the opportunity to study American history and

visit the historical sites tied to the events. "Maryland has this great history that gets crowded out by Virginia when you only have six weeks to teach the founding of democracy," Messitte said. The topics covered included history of the area plus minority rights, relations with indigenous peoples and Maryland's tensions as a border state during the Civil War.

After touring the grounds of Satterley Plantation and seeing the conditions that slaves lived under, Martha Alexander, a fifth- and sixth-grade teacher from Atlanta, said that the program was inspirational. "It's been just so well presented. They are really presenting the complexity of the events. It's not one point of view" on the subject, she said. "This has covered a lot of it, the Indian, the African, the settler... I don't think you normally get that. This is way more realistic."

That was what Marylin Arrigan, education director of Satterley Plantation, said was critical for the teachers and their students as she gave them a tour of Satterley. "People need to put history in the timeframe to make it real. They need to

know what was happening, she said. "I think the best way is in story form."

Frank Wright, from Colorado Springs, Colo., said he was blown away by Arrigan's presentation. "What is lost in text books," he said, and appeared at Satterley, "is that the loss of indentured servants was taken over by slavery." The teacher left the program with lesser plans, photos and new ideas to inspire them in the classroom.

Calvin Ross, a U.S. history teacher in Prince George's County, took pictures throughout the tour of the plantation. "I've enjoyed myself," he said. "There's a lot I can use in my lessons." Ross said he would use the pictures as a teaching aid for students and to remind him of the variety of topics in U.S. history.

"It ties history to modern times and issues," Messitte said. "And maybe when they go back and teach American history, they will use Maryland and think of St. Mary's... There are a lot of good by-products" from the program

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