

Turning Points in History

Participation Triples at the Oregon History Contest

Participation in Oregon History Day, the statewide affiliate of the National History Day program, tripled this year over 2023, with 292 students from 12 schools competing in this annual competition. Administered by the Oregon Historical Society (OHS), the goal for the 2024 program was to increase participation statewide, specifically among students in rural communities. Students from 22 cities and towns across Oregon took part, representing Mt. Angel, Independence, Hood River, Creswell, Bend, Beaverton, Medford, and Portland.

The contest took place on Saturday, April 13, at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon, and featured students who worked individually or in small groups to produce fascinating projects in the forms of documentary films, websites, performances, exhibits, and papers. Creating projects inspired by the annual theme, "Turning Points in History," these young historians



Nearly 300 students presented historical research projects at Willamette University in Salem on the annual theme, "Turning Points in History."

in grades 6–12 chose topics to explore and proceeded to conduct historical research and practice critical thinking skills as they analyzed primary and secondary sources and considered diverse viewpoints and bias present in these materials. The student-selected topics ranged from the Berlin Wall to the Partition of 1947 to Disney animation to *The Simpsons*.

Oregon History Day cannot exist without volunteer judges, who gathered with

the participants to evaluate projects, provide feedback to students, and reach consensus on project rankings. Due to the huge influx of students, judges stepped up to evaluate one of the largest groups of projects ever at Oregon History Day. Judges provide substantive feedback about the students' work, based on a rubric carefully designed by National History Day. And, with the top two projects in each category able to qualify for the National Contest, judge

feedback is crucial for students' revising and improving their work before they are compared against projects from across the nation. Of the 153 projects considered, 31 qualified to advance to the National Contest, which will take place at the University of Maryland, College Park, near Washington, D.C., from June 9–13.

"The energy from participating students who showcased their work at the 2024 Oregon History Day event was incredible," said Chief Program Officer Eliza Canty-Jones. "It was a powerful example of the intelligence and care that young people bring to their studies of history and of the generosity of adult volunteers and educators in making the whole event possible."

This year, OHS awarded prizes to outstanding entries that best demonstrated superior research and scholarship related to the contributions, accomplishments, and experiences of specific groups of people in Oregon history. OHS awarded prizes to projects focused on Black history in Oregon and women's history in Oregon as well as maritime history from anywhere in the world (sponsored by the Naval Order of the United States) with each winner receiving a \$100 prize.

Educators who are interested in bringing Oregon History Day to their classroom can contact OHS Education and Programs Manager Katie Pearson at Katie.Pearson@ohs.org for more information.



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