

HOUSE DIVIDED  
SITE TO LAUNCH

KEEPING TROOPS  
SAFE FROM FRAUD

TENSE CIVIL RIGHTS  
TIME REMEMBERED

VOLUME 88 • NUMBER 4

SPRING 2011



# DICKINSON

## Parsing the Past

Alumni archivists  
mine mesmerizing  
moments in time





## History with a Twist

ACCLAIMED HOUSE DIVIDED WEB SITE USES NEW TECHNOLOGY AND A DICKINSON LENS TO TEACH CIVIL WAR HISTORY

By Lauren Davidson

Showing off the smart-phone application developed for the Civil War tours during the launch weekend are (from left): Matt Pinsker, Brian C. Pohanka '77 Chair in American Civil War History; Don Sailer '09, assistant director; Ryan Burke, Web programmer in instructional & media services and House Divided technical director; and John Osborne, co-director and associate professor emeritus of history.

TRACKING DOWN RUNAWAYS. Breaking and enter-ing. A town in turmoil. A professor caught in the middle. It sounds like an episode of *Law & Order*, but it's one of many Civil War-era stories set in Carlisle and starring Dickinson characters. Many Dickinsonians have heard of the McClintock Riot, during which Professor John McClintock attempted to prevent several fugitive slaves from being illegally captured, but because of House Divided, a massive Web project and classroom tool, hundreds of students and educators around the world know the story too.

Co-directors Matt Pinsker, Brian C. Pohanka '77 Chair in American Civil War History, and John Osborne, associate professor emeritus of history, started House Divided in 2008 as a resource for K-12 teachers that brings the turbulent Civil War era to life.

The site has grown rapidly in content, contributors and coverage since its inception.

The content is a vast collection of stories, images, timelines, maps and multimedia. It has been researched, written and maintained by Pinsker, Osborne, Assistant Director Don Sailer '09 and more than 40 student interns throughout the years. Archivist Jim Gerencser '93 and Christine Bombaro '93, associate director for library collections, also were pivotal in the project development. But Dickinsonians are not the only contributors.

"We call it class-sourcing rather than outsourcing," Pinsker explains. "This is the future of the Web. There are contributors at both ends." Teachers and students from high schools near and far submit information and class projects that were designed using the site.

"We're leading the way in both teacher resources and digital offerings," Pinsker says.

That leadership has been recognized in many media outlets. *Civil War Times* and *America's Civil War* praised the site's sophistication and compelling information, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History published an essay by Pinsker in the December issue of *History Now*, and Pinsker was featured in an episode of "American History TV" on C-SPAN.

The blogosphere also is buzzing with posts from history teachers, Civil War buffs and college professors. In A History Teacher's Blog, Josh Strecker from Seattle wrote in 2009, "The Ultimate Civil War Resource: Dickinson College's House Divided Web site endeavors to be the most complete digital archive of the U.S. Civil War. They've got it all. Entering the site will automatically give you data for the events of exactly 150 years ago—events, documents, letters, even birthdays of prominent (and not-so-prominent) people, most with informative biographies and great images. The 150th anniversary of the war is coming up, so ... this tool will be invaluable in U.S. history classrooms."

The buzz has been building toward the launch of the public version of the site this month, planned in conjunction with the 150th anniversary of the start of the Civil War. While the site has been live, it is the Draft Edition and will be re-coined the Anniversary Edition post-launch.

The launch weekend of April 15-16 will be filled with free educational and entertaining events in Carlisle, including a documentary-film festival in the

Carlisle Theatre, a teacher workshop for more than 100 educators, Civil War tours of significant locations around Carlisle and a lecture by Yale University historian David Blight.

"We're excited about mixing up students and community members and showing that Dickinson's stories are as dramatic as any other Civil War stories," Pinsker says.

During the tours, he's also eager to highlight the Old Courthouse, which is "one of the most important antebellum-era courthouses. It was the site of many fugitive slave trials, but it's never really used for tourism," he says. The courthouse still bears scars from the July 1863 shelling of Carlisle by Confederate soldiers.

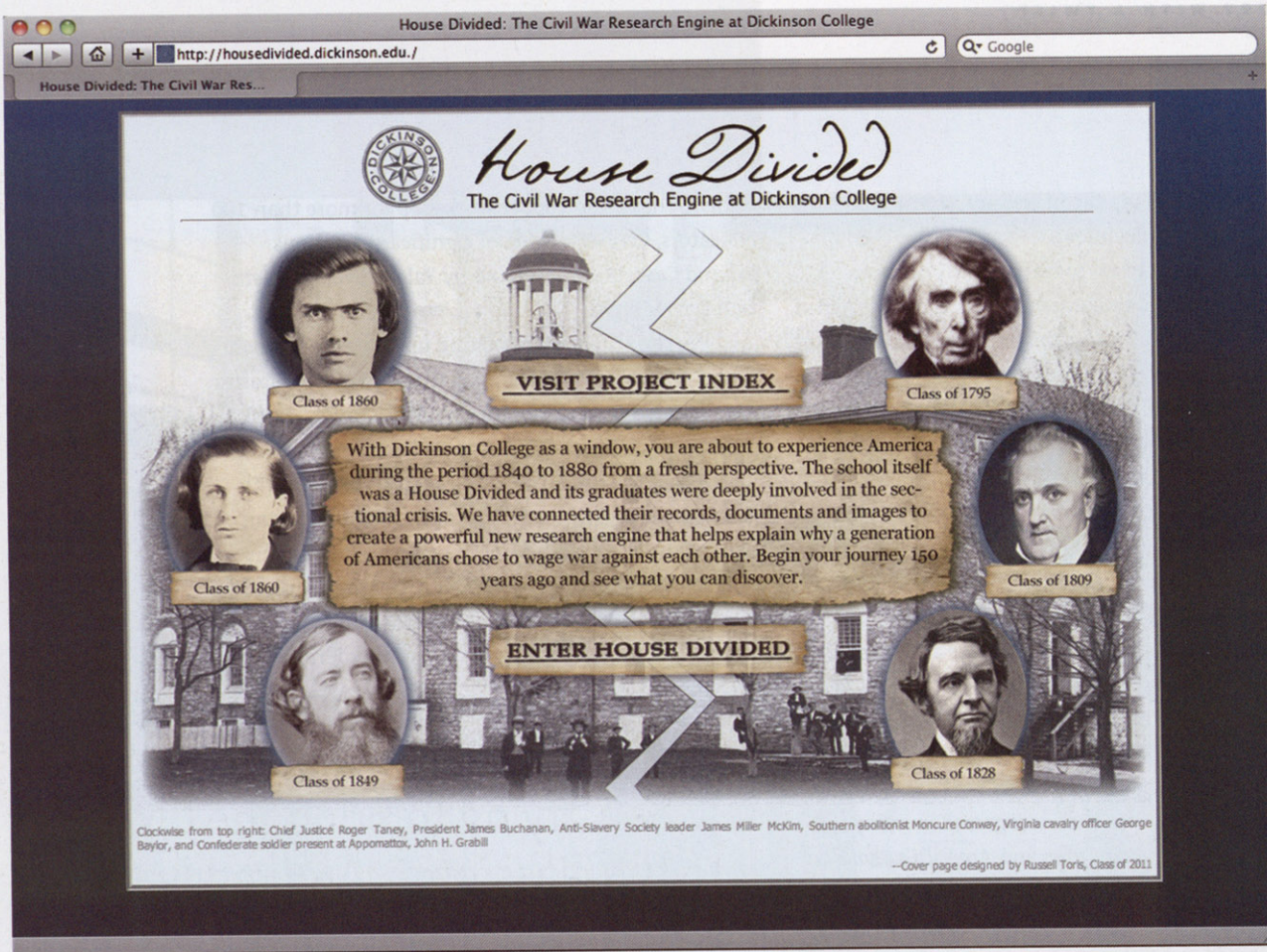
"It's already become a useful site for teachers trying to bring the Civil War into the classroom. And many teachers have told me that it changes the way they teach. We hope to create momentum with the launch that will allow us to do even more."

—Matt Pinsker

The tours include a multimedia component with a smart-phone application created by Ryan Burke, Web programmer in instructional & media services and technical director for the House Divided project. Participants can point their phones toward designated locations and view related images and historical information. The application will be available for free after the launch—another way the project extends its reach.

Pinsker also will unveil a list of 150 Most Notable Dickinsonians in the House Divided Era (1840-1880). It's an impressive array of alumni and faculty members, Union and Confederate soldiers, abolitionists and politicians.

"It really emphasizes the college's role in history," Pinsker says. "We use Dickinson as a window out into this larger project."




House Divided has been lauded as one of the most comprehensive online Civil War resources for educators, and the new Anniversary Edition will be launched in conjunction with the 150th anniversary of the start of the Civil War, April 15-16.

Some, like U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger Brooke Taney, class of 1795, and President James Buchanan, class of 1809, are infamous for their involvement. Others underscore the vast reach of the Dickinson community: James Miller McKim, class of 1828, a Presbyterian minister and influential abolitionist who delivered Carlisle's first anti-slavery speech and started the Carlisle Anti-Slavery Society; Horatio Collins King, class of 1858, a Union soldier, Medal of Honor recipient, lawyer and author of the college's alma mater; George Purnell Fisher, class of 1838, a life-long politician who became a confidant and advisor to President Abraham Lincoln and presided at the trial of John H. Surratt, who was accused of aiding in Lincoln's assassination.

Many of the former House Divided interns who researched these historically important characters will be on campus for the launch, and several Dickinson history classes, plus the History Club at Carlisle High School, are working on related projects. Demonstrating the interdisciplinarity of the project, Professor of

Theatre Todd Wronski has become the project's voice of President Lincoln for audio tracks and documentary films, and Dickinson's music department is recording period songs for free public use. Geologist Peter Sak and campus GIS-mapping specialist Jim Ciarrocca helped design some of the project's interactive maps. Pinsker sees the launch as a new starting point for the project and anticipates continued work, new partnerships and a wider audience.

"It's already become a useful site for teachers trying to bring the Civil War into the classroom," he says. "And many teachers have told me that it changes the way they teach. We hope to create momentum with the launch that will allow us to do even more." 

Visit House Divided at <http://housedivided.dickinson.edu>.



View the entire list of 150 Most Notable Dickinsonians in the House Divided Era (1840-1880) at [www.dickinson.edu/magazine](http://www.dickinson.edu/magazine).

