

Robert Fulton:
From Weapons of Destruction
to
Inventions for Humanity

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Website

Process Paper

For the 2013 National History Day, themed “Turning Points in History: People, Ideas and Events”, I selected *Robert Fulton: From Weapons of Destruction to Inventions for Humanity*. I learned about Fulton’s inventions from my scuba instructor who was talking about Fulton’s submarine. After reading about Fulton, I decided he would be an excellent choice for this year’s theme since he was connected to several turning points in history. In Fulton’s effort to improve humanity by eliminating war, he designed weapons of destruction that changed naval warfare. He also made practical inventions that changed transportation and the American lifestyle.

My research started informally, by speaking to my history teacher about the general topic. I visited the Lancaster Historical Society, several libraries, and museums where I viewed primary documents, books, pictures, and letters from Robert Fulton. I read the first biography of Robert Fulton, written in 1817, by his friend, Cadwallader Colden. I read several later biographies of Fulton also. I used the internet to research websites, looked at videos, and pictures. I found several good research papers that I liked so much that I contacted the authors. I interviewed Lieutenant Commander Thomas Cutler, a U.S Navy officer who is an expert on naval ships. I also interviewed Professor Stephen Cutcliffe, chair of the History department at Lehigh University.

I chose a website for my project because I am interested in computers. Building this website allowed me to use my knowledge of computers and gain new skills. I designed my

website using Weebly. I learned to use HTML code to insert music and a sound effect. I liked that I could show pictures, documents, historical facts and my thoughts in an entertaining and informative way.

My project, "*Robert Fulton: From Weapons of Destruction to Inventions for Humanity*" fits and relates to the National History Day theme well. Robert Fulton was involved in several turning points in history. His torpedo, submarine and steam warship changed naval warfare. Fulton proved these were practical weapons of destruction that would be used in all later wars. Ships used to rely on sails, after Fulton they relied on steam. Fulton's steamboat was a significant turning point because it changed transportation and American development. Fulton's contributions to the Erie Canal helped make this turning point occur. Fulton was very important to the design of the Erie Canal and was one of its strongest supporters. The Erie Canal is a turning point for many of the same reasons as the steamboat. Robert Fulton changed life forever.