

## Students net reams of history

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SOUTHWICK - Some of this town's history is now available on the Internet, thanks to a research project completed by middle school fifth-graders and their teachers during the past school year.

The former rail system through Southwick, which soon will become a rail trail, tobacco farming, grist mills, the remains of Congamond Lakes ice houses, the Putnam Farm and the Amasa Holcomb Homestead and the old cemetery are just a few of historical notes compiled by pupils and posted on the town Web pages at [www.strsd.southwick.ma.us](http://www.strsd.southwick.ma.us)

The project serves several purposes, a training tool for other history teachers throughout the region, an academic grade both in language arts and social studies for pupils and for public review, according to teachers Susan F. Pac, Susan J. Barnett and Kimberly Christenson.

Pac and Barnett, with assistance from Lorie Tencati, the school district's technology specialist, were at Powder Mill Middle School last week putting the finishing touches on the pupils' research and posting it on the Web page.

Pac and Barnett said the project was funded through a Teaching American History Grant from the U.S. Department of Education that, for the past two years, has funded history education programs for teachers throughout the country.

Locally, some \$600 was provided by the Southwick Dickinson Trust, specifically for research field trips to several locations in town during the final weeks of the school year.

"Our objective was to create a model that can be used to connect teachers with what history is all about while at the same time help our students learn what happened in U.S. history by looking at what happened locally during the same time period," said Pac.

Barnett said "research for some kids became personal when we visited the town's old cemetery. There were names they recognized, and some of the names were their own. For those kids, it became family history."

Pac and Barnett will share the research project with area history teachers through the Hampshire Education Collaborative later this summer.

They also intend to add to the research each year with new fifth-graders and to use the material as a source of information for other grades.