Assignment Sheet 1: WHAT IS SOCIAL HISTORY?

NO CLASS MEETING ON MONDAY JANUARY 16 (Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday), BUT you are required to make an appointment to discuss with me your research for this class, if possible in person, sometime before our next class meeting on January 23.

REQUIRED READING (available on electronic reserve)
Alice Kessler-Harris, “Social History”
Darrett Rutman, “The New Social History in America”
Nicole Eustace, “When Fish Walk on Land: Social History in a Postmodern World”

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT
Write (handwritten - if legible handwriting) a short “handbook” of about three pages for a historian wanting to research (without access to oral history) and write about your own family and a community for which you and your relatives have been members. You may use any format you wish, consider any time period you wish, and may define the content and boundaries of your “family” and “community” however you wish. (You are not expected to reveal personal details that you wish to keep private.) Be sure to include basic introductory information that might help the researcher get started such as geographical location, ethnic and national backgrounds, religious and/or political affiliations (if any), economic activities and status, the nature and size of the community, etc. What questions would be most relevant to this research and what sources and methodologies (OTHER THAN ORAL HISTORY) might be most helpful? What information would it be particularly hard for an outsider to understand without first-hand information from an oral history of something written about it by a family member?

FIRST WEEKLY REPORT SHEET
1. Your reactions to the video about researching the life, family, and community of Martha Ballard, including any thoughts or questions you have about the methodology used by Laura Ulrich, her conclusions about what happened, and/or what thoughts it stimulated about your own research.
2. Any thoughts, suggestions, and/or questions inspired by the first class meeting.
3. For each required essay, summarize BRIEFLY in your own words the main points and thesis, as well as your evaluation of its strengths and/or weaknesses. For all of the reading combined, indicate any thoughts and/or questions you have, including any terms you want us to discuss and any ideas they inspired about how to do your own research and analysis for this class.
4. How would you define “social history?”
5. Any thoughts you have about what you want to research for your final paper and any reading or other work you did in connection to it.
6. Anything else you think I should know.