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# Interview with Erica Uszak: Scholarship Recipient for 2018 CWI Summer Conference

## **Abstract**

Recently, the CWI reached out to Erica Uszak '22 to reflect on her experience at the 2018 CWI Summer Conference. Uszak, currently a freshman at Gettysburg College studying History and the Civil War, was one of ten high school students to receive a scholarship to attend the conference. Any high school student with an interest in history is eligible to apply for the High School Scholarship. [*excerpt*]

## **Keywords**

CWI Summer Conference, Erica Uszak, Scholarship

## **Disciplines**

History | Military History | Public History | United States History

## **Comments**

This blog post originally appeared in [The Gettysburg Compiler](#) and was created by students at Gettysburg College.

# THE GETTYSBURG COMPILER

## ON THE FRONT LINES OF HISTORY

### Interview with Erica Uszak: Scholarship Recipient for 2018 CWI Summer Conference

*Recently, the CWI reached out to Erica Uszak '22 to reflect on her experience at the 2018 [CWI Summer Conference](#). Uszak, currently a freshman at Gettysburg College studying History and the Civil War, was one of ten high school students to receive a scholarship to attend the conference. Any high school student with an interest in history is eligible to apply for the [High School Scholarship](#). **Deadline for 2019 application is Feb. 15.***



2018 high school scholarship recipients

#### **How did you find out about the CWI Conference scholarship and why did you choose to apply?**

I found out about the CWI conference from an email from Gettysburg College about their summer programs. I really wanted to attend the conference because I had been to Gettysburg five years earlier a week after the 150th commemoration and wanted to experience the battlefield again to develop a better understanding of the battle and the war overall. I remembered the feeling of awe I felt when I first came to the battlefield, walking the same ground as the soldiers who fought and died there. I also was excited for the opportunity to visit another Civil War site nearby, Harpers Ferry, as well as listen to historians speak on important historical figures and the soldiers' experiences in the war.

### **What was your most memorable experience from the Conference?**

There were several very memorable experiences, but one of the most memorable tours was the one where we examined the monuments on the battlefield and why some were controversial. It was interesting to hear what people at the time thought when those monuments were erected and how those views contrasted with the debate today on how to address the issue of Confederate monuments. Another memorable experience was the field trip to Spangler's Spring area and Culp's Hill. I already knew about the more famous parts of the battle, like Little Round Top and Pickett's Charge, but I was poorly informed about the more underappreciated parts of the battlefield like Spangler's Spring and Culp's Hill, where soldiers made the ultimate sacrifice. Professor Carmichael, the director of the CWI, showed us a former Confederate burial trench on Culp's Hill and read a letter from a Confederate soldier who wrote about his longing to go home. That simple but powerful letter made me think of how homesick the soldiers were and how their morale was slipping as the war dragged on. I also formed good friendships with the other scholarship recipient students and still talk to them. We had so much fun at the conference, from going together to the lectures and the battlefield, to playing cards every night in the common room of the dorm.

### **What lessons did you take away from the Conference?**

I expanded my understanding of what life was like for soldiers in the Civil War and about the reasons they fought. It wasn't so simple to put a single reason as to why soldiers on either side fought, and even if the soldiers were not very political at the start of the war, they still showed resentment at times with the administrations of both the United States and Confederates. I also realized that even though the Civil War has been written about many times and almost every subject has been analyzed, people are always debating what happened so that our historical interpretation and understanding of the war, as well as our interpretation of the soldiers, generals, and leaders, continues to change. The conference reaffirmed my plan to study the Civil War further at Gettysburg and build on my experience and knowledge gained from the conference by taking more classes on the war and the battle of Gettysburg.