

History

Department of

Newsletter

A Resource for Majors, Minors, and Alumni.

Spring 2006

From the Editor

Welcome to the first installment of the History Department's Newsletter! We offer this publication as a means of communicating exciting news and opportunities with students and alumni. With your help, we expect that it will become much more.

Keep an eye open for features like *Things To Do With A History Major*, *The Uses And Abuses Of History*, and, premiering in this issue, *What I've Been Reading Lately . . .* We hope to tap the talent of former SHU History grads, to see what people are doing with our degrees. We'll solicit the wisdom of faculty members here and elsewhere on topics ranging from life in the historical profession to preparing for a career in law, politics, teaching, or any other number of worthwhile vocations. And don't be surprised if you see some current undergraduates here in print sharing some of their real-time experiences.

As a department, we're inspired by the conviction that succeeding as a History major not only makes good academic sense as one of the more challenging and rewarding degrees here at SHU, but that it also directly feeds into two other more important tasks that universities engage: (1) Your vocation: History majors transition easily into a staggeringly wide range of professions. And (2) your basic humanity: Understanding the world and ourselves historically is every bit as important to us *as a human society* as our memories are to us *as individual persons*. In forthcoming issues we'll ponder some of these practical and theoretical contributions that our humble discipline makes to our life and our world around us.

It is fitting that the publication of the History Newsletter coincides with the first year of the department's "new" independence from Political Science. (We

say "new" because, technically, the History Department preceded the formation of the now dissolved Department of History and Political Science.) We are thrilled to be growing as a department, with increasing numbers of majors, minors, and faculty members, and we are making changes to streamline for an even greater impact here at Sacred Heart. Hopefully the Newsletter will allow us to stay connected as we do.

—R. Bryan Bademan

Feature Essay

What I've Been Reading . . .
 "Of Icons and Iconoclasts"
 by Paul Siff

Sixty years ago Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., published *The Age of Jackson*, a broad-gauge and laudatory account of Jacksonian Democracy from its antecedents to its twilight in the 1850s. Written in the afterglow of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, it portrayed Old Hickory and his supporters as champions of the common man against the forces of entrenched privilege. Subsequently, both this sort of sweeping history and Schlesinger's thesis became unfashionable. Considerations of race, class and gender shouldered aside traditional political history; ethno-cultural studies of voter behavior replaced grand narratives. And the Old Hero took his lumps as a slaveowner, Indian-hater and economic ignoramus; some historians even portrayed the programs of his Whig opponents as more likely to benefit ordinary Americans. Now comes Sean Wilentz of Princeton University with a book, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W.Norton, 2005), nearly twice the length of Schlesinger's (his footnotes alone run over 150 pages), but similar in perspective. Jackson and his followers are

restored as men of wisdom and as paladins of democracy; the Whigs get short shrift and Henry Clay (Lincoln's political hero) comes off particularly badly. Wilentz's account of Clay's drunken rant in a Washington hotel as the 1840 presidential nomination slipped from his grasp is devastating.

Wilentz's knowledge of the period is formidable in its extent and depth, and in its grasp of complexities. The discussion of Lincoln, however, is somewhat vestigial and the tilt toward is Jackson open to challenge at various points. Nevertheless, this is an immensely rich and well written exploration of a time when democratic ferment gave rise not only to mainstream political organizations but animated a fascinating variety of economic and social movements as well.

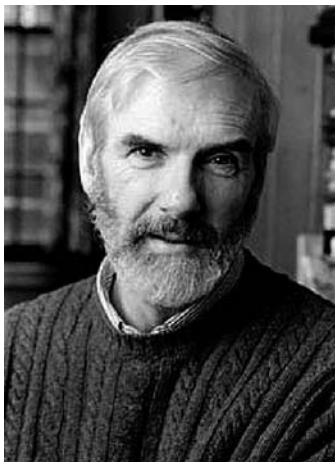
If Andrew Jackson was, in John William Ward's phrase, "symbol for an age," the Brooklyn Bridge is another. It ranks as one of America's most powerful visual icons and has been extensively photographed, painted, written about, and portrayed in film and popular music since its completion in 1883. The customary popular notions about the bridge as symbol have been positive: an exemplar of technology, of progress, of architectural grace, and even of democracy, in part through an alleged connection with Walt Whitman, the great democratic bard, who is assumed to have included it in his poetic celebrations of American life. Richard Haw, an English scholar now living and teaching in New York, will have none of this. In *The Brooklyn Bridge: A Cultural History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005) his intent is to undermine and complicate the usual feel-good Brooklyn Bridge associations; the Whitman connection is bogus (he never wrote a poem about the bridge and, in fact, seems to have paid it little if any heed); the structure's opening ceremonies were elitist,

not democratic (common folk and labor organizations were kept at arm's length or excluded entirely); visual and literary portrayals have been as apt to be dark as otherwise. Even the structure's supposed Americanness is dubious: John Roebing, its designer, was born and trained in Germany; an amateur philosopher, his outlook was Hegelian rather than Emersonian. And over time the bridge's symbolism became increasingly ambiguous. Ironically, the terrorist attacks of September 2001, the blackout of August, 2003 (and one might add, the recent transit strike) have cast the bridge as more a public space and thoroughfare than anything else. Readers who prefer their history as simple affirmation will find Haw's book distinctly discomfiting, but those interested in the way an adroit and industrious scholar can make us rethink the meaning of a familiar public icon, will find this a most rewarding book.

Society has always contained those who wish to destroy rather than venerate icons; Leon Czoglosz ranked among them. A young self-proclaimed anarchist, native-born but with an ominously "foreign" sounding name, he mortally wounded President William McKinley in September, 1901, sending the nation into shock, grief and a demand for revenge. This single act of violence had wide repercussions, the best known being Theodore Roosevelt's elevation to the presidency. However it also involved a fascinating cast of lesser-known characters, including Dr. Lloyd Vernon Briggs, a specialist in mental illness, who, following Czoglosz's swift trial and execution, embarked on a journey of investigation in an effort to understand the assassin and determine the conditions which might have led him to commit his crime. In *Murdering McKinley: The Making of Theodore Roosevelt's America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003) Eric Rauchway, who teaches at the University of California, Davis, delves into the manifold aspects and consequences of the crime and also uses it as the springboard for a meditation on the ethnic, racial, class, economic and political divisions of the United States at the outset of the twentieth century. His approach is not straight-line chronological but episodic and thematic, intertwining disparate historical strands. This should not dissuade potential readers; their engagement with *Murdering McKinley* will be well rewarded.

Announcements

Yale Historian to Deliver Annual Lecture in History: On April 6, 2006, Jonathan Spence will deliver Sacred Heart's annual Lecture in History. Dr. Spence is Sterling Professor of History at Yale University and was recently president of the American Historical Association. He is author of more than a dozen books, including *The Search for Modern China* (Norton, 1990), a textbook used here at Sacred Heart, and a biography of Mao Zedong in the Penguin Lives Series. The lecture, titled "China Today: Does the Past Matter?" will take place in University Commons at 3:30 p.m.



Jonathan Spence

Student News

Please congratulate the winners of our departmental awards. Lauren DellaVolpe was the winner of the 2005-2006 Eby Memorial Scholarship. Last year, Timothy McCranor won the Graduating Senior Medal of Excellence, and Brenna Kelleher won the Certificate of Excellence.

Congratulations to senior Johanna Capozzoli for winning a research internship at the Naval Historical Center in Washington, D.C. last summer. Johanna worked under the supervision of world-renowned submarine specialist Gary E. Weir as well as John Darrell Sherwood, an authority on Vietnam air operations.

Alumni News

Congratulations to Lisa Sheffield

('05) for having been accepted into the Masters program in American Studies at Fairfield University. Lisa wrote her senior thesis on the religious motivations for Christopher Columbus' voyages. Also, Gina Bellavia ('05) has received a scholarship to attend Roger Williams University School of Law.

Department News

New SHU History Club! Three of our majors (Michelle Baillergeon, Katelyn Botsford, and Meghan Strecker) have written a constitution and a set of bylaws and have submitted them to the Student Activities Office. Official recognition is pending, but it appears we will have our Club early next semester. If all goes as planned, the Club will meet once every two weeks. For details, contact Dr. Curran at currant@sacredheart.edu.

SHU Participates in Stratford High School's Teaching American History Grant: The School Districts of Stratford and New Haven have been awarded a grant of nearly \$1 million to strengthen the teaching of American history in their curricula. Working closely with the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at Yale University, Professors Bademan, McLaughlin, and Siff from the History Department will teach undergraduate and graduate courses over the next three years to high school teachers in conjunction with SHU's Department of Education.

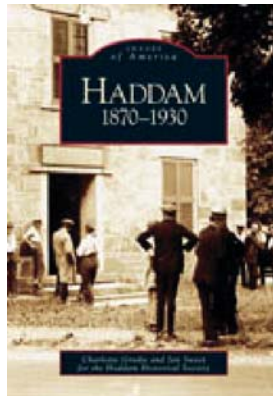
During Fall 2006, SHU will again offer a semester-long concentration in Medieval Studies. Various elective courses will be offered in history, English and Spanish literature, philosophy, and music (up to seven different courses). Students may elect to take only one course or several, and this collection of courses with a focus of the medieval world will enable an integration of many co-curricular activities. Plans have been made for a film series, several field trips to the "Cloisters" and the Museum of Art, as well as perhaps the large St. John's Cathedral, which is still under construction using designs from the Middle Ages. There are also plans for guest lectures and "medieval feast," always a popular event in the past. Be sure to check out all

the Medieval Studies electives this fall, and become involved in this exciting adventure!

Curriculum Development: A Re-Designed HI 201 and 398! This year the new Department of History has worked to redesign several aspects of both HI 201 Historical Methods and Criticism (taken during the Fall semester of the Junior year) and HI 398 Senior Seminar, better known as the Senior Thesis (taken during the Senior year). Our goal has been to work to integrate these courses in order to find a better timeline for the efficient completion of the Senior Thesis. Under the new guidelines, students will work to complete a preliminary Thesis Proposal in HI 201 so that they are well equipped to write their final Thesis Proposal for submission during the Spring semester of their Junior year. Thus, all thesis proposals will now be evaluated long before the Senior year. There are two rounds of thesis proposal submissions each Spring semester. For the first round, due February 10, students will submit one (1) proposal to just one chosen professor. We advise students to speak with their chosen professor beforehand to determine that professor's expectations. Each professor will then select the 2 best student proposals. (Please note that this is a competition, so students will want to make their proposals as strong as possible.) If a student's proposal is not chosen (or has not been submitted for the first round), then he or she *must* enter the second round of submissions, due March 15. For this round, students must submit five (5) proposals, one in each of the following five fields: Asian, Latin American, European, American before 1865, and American after 1865. The department will then choose the strongest proposals in each of the five fields and assign their authors to the appropriate faculty members. In the end, the department feels that an earlier timetable and a more thorough and professional approach to the Thesis Proposal will bring better all-around results. Also, in the Senior year students will follow earlier deadlines for the submission of a first and second draft, and they will be able to defend their final papers earlier.

Recent Faculty Publications

R. Bryan Bademan, "‘Monkeying with the Bible’: Edgar Goodspeed’s *American Translation*,” *Religion and American Culture* 16 (Winter 2006).
Thomas D. Curran, *Educational Reform in Republican China: The Failure of Educators to Create a Modern Nation* (Edwin Mellen Press, 2005). "This is an absolutely excellent piece of sustained historical research, which gives many new insights into problems of education and social development during the Nationalist period in China." —Ruth Hayhoe, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto
Charlotte Gradie and Jan Sweet, *Haddam, 1870-1930* (Arcadia Publishing, 2005).



Congratulate Prof. Charlotte Gradie for being awarded a Citation of Merit by the Haddam Historical Society for her ongoing work in helping to preserve Haddam, Connecticut history!

In September, Prof. Thomas Curran traveled to China to present "The Foreign Eight-legged Essay [*yang bagu wen*]: The Impact of China's Decision to Replace the Imperial Examination System with a Foreign Educational Model," at the International Conference on the Imperial Examination System and the Study of Imperial Examinations at Xiamen University.

Opportunities

The History Department is proud to be affiliated with Phi Alpha Theta, the prestigious national history honor society. Our chapter, Phi-Iota, was chartered in 1974 and over the years has been actively involved in a variety of history-related

activities. It invites and encourages all qualified students to become members. The membership criteria are an overall GPA of at least 3.2 and at least 12 credit hours (normally four courses) in history with an achieved GPA of at least 3.4. There is a one-time initiation fee of \$40.00 to the national organization, which insures a lifetime membership, and students may join at any time. Our chapter holds an annual initiation ceremony for new members each spring. Phi Alpha Theta publishes *The Historian*, a quarterly journal that features original scholarship by Society members. Additionally, Phi Alpha Theta hosts a conference each year in Connecticut, at which students may present their work. All interested students should contact Dr. Paul Siff, Phi-Iota's faculty advisor.

The Dr. Charles T. Eby Memorial Scholarship honors the memory of Charles T. (Chuck) Eby, a member of the history department from 1980 to his premature death in 1989 and a specialist in early modern European history and a superb teacher. The Memorial Scholarship fund was established by contributions from his family and from colleagues, alumni, and friends. The award, which fluctuates with interest rates, is normally around \$1500. It is given each spring to an outstanding student entering his/her senior year who intends to pursue a career in teaching and whose attributes mirror the passion for history and general love of learning that were characteristic of Chuck. Children of university employees (who receive free tuition) are not eligible. There is no application process.

The Graduating Senior Medal of Excellence is awarded to the graduating major with the highest overall GPA (with an emphasis on the history component should there be a tie). Students who have taken a significant number of courses at other institutions are generally not eligible. The Certificate of Excellence is awarded to the runner-up, with more emphasis placed on the history component of the GPA. There is no application process.

Each year, the Ed Donato Scholarship provides several awards of \$500 to select history students based on academic excellence and financial need.

The History News Network, based at George Mason University, is seeking unpaid interns. You can work from home. For details, see <http://hnn.us/articles/982.html#intern>.

The New England Historical Association holds its 76th conference at Bridgewater State College in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, on April 22, 2006. For details, see <http://users.wpi.edu/~jphanlan/NEHA/>.

The Massachusetts Historical Society is organizing a conference on the environmental history of Boston called "Remaking Boston: The City and Environmental Change over the

Centuries." The conference will take place at the Society, May 4-6, 2006. For details, see <http://www.masshist.org/>. The North American Conference on British Studies will hold its 2005 Annual Meeting in Boston from 11/17 – 11/19/06. Call for papers expires 1/27/06. For details, see <http://www.nacbs.org/>.

The Department of History is building a collaborative relationship with the Darien Historical Society. The Society maintains a collection of artifacts dating to the early 18th century, and it offers educational and research opportunities that may be of interest to SHU students. The department is currently working

with the Society to design academic internships and develop a program for History Club members. For details, see Ms. McLaughlin or Dr. Curran.

We'd like to make this Newsletter more useful to you! Please send your comments, suggestions, and announcements to Dr. Bryan Bademan at bademanr@sacredheart.edu. Put "History News" in the subject heading.

Future issues of the newsletter will be sent to you by e-mail. Please submit your email address to: alumni@sacredheart.edu or call the Alumni Office at (203) 365-7671.

Please support future newsletter mailings and other History Department activities.

Your tax-free contributions will be gratefully accepted.

**Send checks (payable to SHU) to SHU Department of History, Thomas D. Curran, Chair,
5151 Park Ave., Fairfield, CT 06825.**

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