



December 2013

Letter from the Editor

Elya Taichman
University of Pennsylvania, elyat@sas.upenn.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.upenn.edu/phr>

Recommended Citation

Taichman, Elya (2013) "Letter from the Editor," *Penn History Review*. Vol. 20 : Iss. 1 , Article 1.
Available at: <https://repository.upenn.edu/phr/vol20/iss1/1>

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. <https://repository.upenn.edu/phr/vol20/iss1/1>
For more information, please contact repository@pobox.upenn.edu.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR:

We are pleased to present the first issue of the twentieth volume of the Penn History Review, the Ivy League's oldest undergraduate history journal. The Review continues to publish outstanding papers written by University of Pennsylvania undergraduate students based on original primary research. The four articles selected cover a remarkable array of topics, demonstrating the diversity of Penn's History Department. In addition to these exemplary articles, the Penn History Review also has the privilege of publishing senior honors theses' abstracts. The abstracts are not only fascinating, but provide a glimpse into the research history students undertake as part of the Department's honors program.

Our first article, *Missions and the Mediation of Modernity in Colonial Kenya*, by Christopher Allen, considers the influence of British missionaries in Kenya during the Colonial era. Allen focuses his research on the intermediary role of missionaries between colonial authorities, settlers, and African interests in the region. Primary sources, including letters and documents from all sides, are integrated into the analysis and make for a fascinating read. The essay serves as an interesting piece of historiography because Allen discusses a side of the missionary story not often told.

The second piece, *Herbal Abortifacients and their Classical Heritage in Tudor England*, by Alex Gradwohl, explores the extent to which herbal abortifacients were known and used in the Tudor period. The article proposes that despite a silence from the medical and herbal instructive texts, and a socio-religious taboo on abortions, classical knowledge of herbal abortifacients was preserved and made available to Tudor women. The paper traces the roots of the ancient knowledge of these drugs to Greco-Roman times and explains the measures the Catholic Church took to prohibit their use. Gradwohl also details the types of abortifacients with special emphasis on texts of the Tudor period. The essay closes with a discussion on the social significance of women controlling their own fertility in Tudor England.

Max Levy authored the next essay, *From Torah im Derekh Eretz to Torah U-Madda: the Legacy of Samson Raphael Hirsch*. Levy seeks to answer why Rabbi Hirsch, a giant in Torah study in nineteenth century Germany, has faded from the scholarship of Modern Orthodox learning. Indeed, Hirsch built his work on the foundation of ancient and medieval Jewish texts but formulated a unique perspective from which to consider Torah study and Jewish life. Levy looks at the ideological similarities between Hirsch and Modern Orthodox thought, identifies the gap that emerged between the two, and offers several explanations for why this might be the case.

The fourth and final piece, *Mobile Credit: The Effect of Credit Cards on Consumer Spending in the United States in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century*, by Gabriel Fineberg, analyzes the revolutionary changes that credit cards have had on consumerism. The article details the development of the credit card industry and how such an immense business became possible. Fineberg then proves that credit cards transformed consumer spending because they combined effective payment mechanisms with unique borrowing features enabling consumers to spend great quantities with greater ease. The essay presents compelling quantitative and qualitative data in addition to psychological analysis on how credit cards affect consumer behavior.

The Review would like to thank the many members of the history faculty who encouraged their students to submit their work for publication, as well as Dr. Thomas Max Safley, the undergraduate chair of the History Department, for his support, Dr. Yvonne Fabella, without whom there would be no publication, and, of course, the History Department and the University of Pennsylvania for their ever generous financial support and their continuing efforts to promote undergraduate research and the study of history. Lastly, I would like to thank the Editorial Board, without whose editing and hard work none of this would have been possible.

Elya A. Taichman
Editor-in-Chief