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Letter from the Editor

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

On behalf of the Editorial Board, I am proud and honored to present the newest edition of the *Penn History Review*. Since its inception, the *Penn History Review* has published select articles reflecting high-level scholarship, researched and written by undergraduates of the University of Pennsylvania. Additionally, this issue includes an article written by Sahand K. Rahbar, a junior at Princeton University. As one may expect, the *Penn History Review* is dedicated to publishing historical scholarship from all geographic and thematic areas; as a result, perhaps it is striking that this issue highlights one region in particular, North America. Furthermore, each paper revolves around topics pertinent to or in the same time period, the nineteenth century. While the decision to publish a selection of papers centered in the same region and century with overlapping themes was not purposeful, I nonetheless believe that these attributes strengthen and complement each piece. Indeed, the questions, concerns, and narratives addressed by each author emphasizes how the leading individuals discussed within each respective paper possessed a shared ethos and enthusiasm for making a difference upon our contemporary world.

The first article is entitled, “*Spies All Their Lives*”: *African American and Military Intelligence During the Civil War*, by Carly S. Mayer. This work highlights an otherwise poorly documented but vital strategy employed by the Union military during the American Civil War: the recruitment of African Americans as spies. In doing so, the Union infiltrated the South, gathered an immense amount of intelligence, and helped shift the balance of the war to save an otherwise splintering country. Specifically, the reader will understand the unique and natural skills African Americans provided, ultimately proving themselves to be one of

Letter from the Editor

the most indomitable and furtive weapons that helped cause the collapse of the short-lived Confederate States of America.

The War That Congress Waged, written by Varun K. Menon, is the second work featured in this publication. This paper is a chapter excerpt of a thesis, which describes the setting and impact of the role of the United States Congress in asserting itself in American foreign relations from 1811 to 1826. In this particular chapter, the author notes how Congress' decision was led by the determined Henry Clay, who not only transformed the role of Speaker of the House, but who also used his powers to induce war between the United States and Great Britain starting in 1812. In this piece, the reader will realize how under Clay's leadership, Congress adopted a new means of authority that would impact the future role and history of the United States.

The third article in this issue is *The Fallacy of the Ideological Press: How American National Newspapers Reacted to the French Revolution from 1789-1793*, by Aaron R. Senior. The author introduces his research by noting the significance of the inception of national newspapers in the United States in the 1790s, then analyzes how three specific newspapers confronted and responded to the early developments of the French Revolution unfolding across the Atlantic Ocean. Indeed, the author demonstrates how national newspapers embraced and espoused their respective political ideologies; however, the author then distinguishes his work with careful analysis to discover that this relationship was not as resolute as historians previously believed. Indeed, the reader learns how newspapers altered national politics in the United States by not conforming to their expected political ideologies.

The final work printed is Sahand K. Rahbar's "*The Evil of the Age*": *The Influence of The New York Times on Anti-Abortion Legislation in New York, 1865-1875*. In this essay, the author objectively reviews how the emergence of *The New York Times*, particularly through an article written by Augustus St. Clair, galvanized the New York Legislature to reevaluate and compose

Letter from the Editor

new laws pertaining to abortion. As the author points out, this decision by the state legislature is especially shocking when one considers that these amendments to the legal canon were codified quickly in an organized and efficient manner after a period of legislative dormancy regarding the issue. Ultimately, the reader grasps how *The New York Times* emerged as a leading newspaper and how it effected government in the American Postbellum Period.

Additionally, this issue presents abstracts submitted by seniors who undertook the challenging, yet rewarding, process of writing honors theses in history. In doing so, the *Penn History Review* promotes additional research and scholarship in the field of history, by offering its readership a preview of the eclectic and fascinating variety of topics. Congratulations to all of the senior honors students who have embarked upon this endeavor.

The Editorial Board also would like to extend a much deserved thank you to Dr. Siyen Fei, Undergraduate Chair of the History Department, and to Dr. Yvonne Fabella, the Undergraduate Advisor of the History Department. As a result of their advice, support, and advocacy, the *Penn History Review* demonstrates its commitment to publishing high-caliber original work written by undergraduate students. Moreover, the Editorial Board would like to thank both the faculty at the University of Pennsylvania and at other schools across the country who promoted this publication to their students and to those students who submitted their work for consideration. Finally, the Editorial Board wishes to express its gratitude to the Department of History and the University of Pennsylvania for providing us with the opportunity to expand and to enrich the field of history with unique and academic literature.

On a more personal note, I would like to thank all of the members of the Editorial Board for their efforts and dedication to making this issue of the *Penn History Review* a reality. Admittedly, it will be difficult to lose our graduating

Letter from the Editor

editors, Kate Campbell, Leila Ehsan, and Taylor Evensen; they have contributed so much over the years. I especially want to thank and congratulate Taylor, our Editor-in-Chief *Emeritus*, for everything she has done, including her guidance and patience with me during this transitional semester. Nevertheless, I remain excited about this publication's future; it is with tremendous pleasure that this semester, we welcome two new editors to our team, Michael Torcello and Alex Weissfisch. Lastly, I want to offer my appreciation to my friends and family, whose encouragement and support cannot be overstated.

Congratulations to all of the editors and authors who have contributed to this Spring 2016 issue of the *Penn History Review*!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aaron", with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Aaron C. Mandelbaum
Editor-in-Chief