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Letter from the Editor

Courtney Carpinello

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

On behalf of all our editors, I am proud to present the Spring 2018 edition of the *Penn History Review*. For more than twenty-five years, the *Penn History Review* has been dedicated to promoting historical research conducted by undergraduates at the University of Pennsylvania and schools across the nation. The works in this issue cover a diverse range of topics from American government initiatives to establish federal mental institutions in the nineteenth century to feminist initiatives that were undertaken at Penn itself in the 1970s. Each one of these pieces exemplifies the values that the *Penn History Review* strives to embody: originality, thorough research, and quality writing. We hope that this edition of the *PHR* will be both intellectually engaging and enjoyable to read.

In our first piece, “*Only in America!*” *The Jewish Lord Mayor of Dublin Robert Briscoe in the United States, 1956-1958*, Rebecca Heilweil provides a nuanced analysis of the characteristics that constituted the identity of the first Jewish Lord Mayor of Dublin, Robert Briscoe. The article analyzes the manner in which Briscoe utilized his unique status as an Irish-Jewish leader to forward the notion that a person could simultaneously be both a patriotic Irish Republican and a Zionist. After touring the U.S. in the 1950s, the American media became infatuated with Briscoe who used the publicity to raise funds for Jewish refugees who wanted to immigrate to Israel. Briscoe consistently drew parallels between Irish and Jewish history, arguing that both groups had been historically persecuted. He proposed that the Jewish and Irish peoples needed to support each other because the Irish fight for independence from England and Jewish Zionism were inherently justified by the same principles; however, despite Briscoe’s achievements, his refusal to acknowledge the rampant anti-Semitism in Ireland prevented him from promoting a

genuine Jewish-Irish identity.

The next article, *The Impact of Feminist Action at the University of Pennsylvania Between 1970 and 1975: A Story of Consciousness Raising, Public Action, and Lasting Change*, was written by Kristen Ierardi. The piece analyzes the development of a collective consciousness among women at the University of Pennsylvania in the 1970s by focusing on key landmark events. Ierardi contextualizes these instances within the larger, national feminist movement of the decade, which she argues helped spark the creation of a feminist identity at Penn. Penn's economic situation was also a factor as the University felt that its budget deficit could not be overcome until gender tensions were soothed among the students and faculty. In this atmosphere, the status of women at Penn in the early 1970s was marked by three major events which the author focuses her analysis on: a 1971 report on the condition of women at Penn, a discrimination case launched by a female professor against the University, and a 1973 anti-rape sit-in. Through these three cases, the work illustrates the manner in which women at Penn adopted the strategies of the national feminist movement that was occurring contemporaneously to improve their status at the University.

The third paper is Cornell Overfield's *All Quiet on the West German Front? Changes in East German Political Agitation in Western Germany 1945-1955*. Analyzing a wide variety of primary source documents, he traces East Germany's use of agitational rhetoric to wage an ideological battle against West Germany after World War II. With an awareness that national reunification was attractive to Germans, the East German organizations strategically spread messages to West Germany, which suggested that national solidarity was possible only the East German political system. These messages also played on the fears that without unification, German culture would not be preserved. While the rhetoric emphasized solidarity, the question of whether a united Germany would adopt a socialist government was pointedly avoided. In this way, East German officials were

able to infiltrate West Germany with idealist images of a unified Germany; however, ultimately these efforts proved unsuccessful. After 1955, these messages began to lose their allure, and the East German ability to act within West Germany was decreasing. Despite East German efforts, West Germany continued to engage in treaties with other countries and Germany remained divided for over thirty more years.

Our final piece, *The Establishment and Early Years of the Government Hospital for the Insane*, was authored by Brown University student Sarah Novicoff. She outlines the societal factors which allowed for a bill to establish the Government Hospital for the Insane to pass a deeply polarized Congress in 1852. Notably, despite the rising sectionalism in the years before the Civil War, both parties voted to establish this asylum even though it represented an increase in federal spending. Novicoff explains this surprising occurrence with a description of the way in which the American understanding of mental illness was changing in the nineteenth century. In the country's earliest years, the mentally ill were often homeless or living in prison, but by the mid-nineteenth century, there was a growing understanding that mental illness could be treated. Moreover, Americans began to recognize that psychological treatment was a distinct category of care that veterans might need to receive. After the Civil War, the large influx of veterans in American society solidified this Government Hospital's status as a truly national institution.

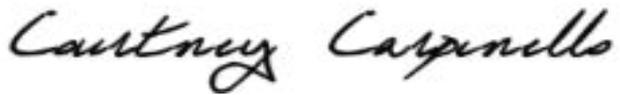
The editorial board would also like to thank a number of people without whom this edition of the PHR would not have been possible. The Penn History Department continues to generously provide funding and institutional support for our publication. In particular, we are extremely grateful to Dr. Siyen Fei, the Undergraduate Chair of the department, and Dr. Yvonne Fabella, the Associate Director of Undergraduate Studies. Both of them have provided helpful guidance and encouragement throughout the editing and publishing process. We would also like to thank the faculty members at Penn and other universities

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who promoted our publication, as well as all of the students who submitted their work for consideration. Thank you as well to our contributing authors, who worked patiently and diligently to refine their articles for publication.

Finally, I would like to thank our editors for their exceptionally hard work on this issue of the *Penn History Review*. The entire board will greatly miss our graduating seniors, Helen Berhanu, Isabel Gendler, Emma Hetrick, Michael Torcello, and Alexandra Weissfisch. Their enthusiasm for this publication and their commitment to historical scholarship have had a significant impact on the *PHR* in the last few years. It has been a truly enjoyable experience to work with each of them during my time with the *PHR*. In particular, I would like to thank Michael Torcello, our Editor-in-Chief *emeritus*, for his invaluable advice and assistance throughout this semester. Without his commitment to the *PHR*, this edition would not have been possible. At the same time, we are fortunate to have added four new editors, Justin Estreicher, Maria Fagliano, Sarah Marron, and Alia Schechter, who have already made a positive impact on our journal.

Congratulations again to all of the authors and editors who participated in this publication of the *Penn History Review*!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Courtney Carpinello". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly legible.

Courtney Carpinello
Editor-in-Chief