



May 2021

Letter from the Editor

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Recommended Citation

Vance, Eden (2021) "Letter from the Editor," *Penn History Review*: Vol. 28 : Iss. 1 , Article 2.
Available at: <https://repository.upenn.edu/phr/vol28/iss1/2>

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

On behalf of the entire editorial board, I am honored to present the newest issue of the Penn History Review. Since 1991, the Penn History Review has been dedicated to promoting the study of history amongst undergraduate students. Since its founding, PHR has published exceptional historical scholarship written by students at the University of Pennsylvania as well as schools across the United States. Our spring 2021 edition exemplifies the diversity of study within our field. It includes articles that explore dynamic topics such as municipal politics in Civil War America, nineteenth century American railroad accounting, Mexican foreign policy, and the Ptolemaic state. These pieces embody the core values of our publication: curiosity, critical thinking, a dedication to research, and most importantly, a passion for history. Our entire editorial team deeply enjoyed working with the authors and editing these papers. We hope that you will find them thought-provoking and enjoy reading them as much as we did!

Our first piece, “Loyalty and Disloyalty in Urban America: a Comparative Study of NYC and Philadelphia Politics” is authored by Justin Greenman. Excerpted from a longer piece, he analyzes the municipal politics of the two cities during the American Civil War, particularly with regard to the two mayors: Fernando Wood and Alexander Henry.

In the next article “American Railroad Accounting Practices in the Nineteenth Century,” William Zimmermann analyzes the emergence of modern accounting practices in nineteenth century railroads. The author claims that the industry’s changing standards can be viewed as a proxy for and bellwether for American business writ large.

In the third paper, “Mexico’s Cuban Connection: An Exception or Example of the United States’ Ardent Anti Communism,” Victoria Saeki-Serna of Rice University

analyzes US-Mexico relations during the Cold War. The author claims that Mexico took a significantly softer line towards Havana than the US would have liked, but the US overlooked it in the interest of Mexican domestic stability.

Our final piece, “Ptolemaic-Egyptian Collaboration and the Weak State Problem”, comes from Alan Clingan of the University of Maryland, College Park. The author, writing on a subject area rarely covered in this journal, discusses the relationship between the ruling, ethnically Greek, Ptolemaic dynasty and the native Egyptians in antiquity. The author argues that the early Ptolemaic state, in particular, revolved around a weak state that relied on native Egyptian collaborators.

Additionally, this issue includes a sample of abstracts submitted by seniors at Penn who undertook the challenge of writing honors theses for the History Department. In doing so, PHR hopes to promote additional research and scholarship in the field of history by offering its readership a preview of this fascinating variety of topics. Congratulations to all of the senior honors students who achieved this impressive accomplishment. We encourage other history students to also embark on this incredibly rewarding endeavour.

The editorial board would also like to thank a number of people without whom this edition of the PHR would not have been possible. Our publication only exists thanks to the generous support of the Penn History Department who continues to support and fund us each year. 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. They have both offered invaluable guidance and encouragement throughout the editing and publishing processes. The dedication they have for both their students and field of study is an inspiration. In addition, we would like to thank the faculty members at Penn and other universities who promoted our publication, as well as all of the students who submitted papers for consideration.

This edition would not exist without your support. 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. I would especially like to recognize the contributions of our three graduating seniors: Lorenza Colagrossi, Logan Nantais, and Spencer Swanson. Their passion for history and dedication over the years have continued to make the PHR a platform for remarkable scholarship. It has been a truly enjoyable experience to work with each of them throughout my time on the board. We will miss having them in our editorial family but are confident that they will go on to do great things.


In particular, I would like to thank Lorenza Colagrossi, our incredible Editor-in-Chief Emeritus. I am deeply indebted to her and have had the great privilege of learning from her and studying alongside her. She is brilliant, hard-working, and kind. Lorenza, thank you for the constant guidance, support, and dedication to everything you do. Now that you are moving on, I have no doubt that you will bring these attributes with you to your next great endeavor. It has truly been an honor to work with you. PHR will eternally be a stronger publication because it had you as a leader, particularly through these trying times. Last year, when campus closed down and we were forced online, you did not miss a beat and PHR continued to publish. At the same time, I would like to recognize three new editors we were especially fortunate to have added to the board this semester, Nicholas Williams, Hannah De Oliveira and Keyvan Farmanfarmanian. They have already made a positive impact on our journal.

This year marks PHR's 30th anniversary as a publication. I am honored to be the Editor-in-Chief during this milestone year and deeply grateful to all those who have kept PHR going into its fourth decade and who I am sure will keep it going for many more: the Penn

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History Department for providing funding and support, the countless authors and editors who have worked on past editions and, of course, my predecessors as Editor-in-Chief.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eden Vance". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "E" and a stylized "V".

Eden Vance
Editor-in-Chief