

Editorial

Of Foolish Consistency and Other Hobgoblins

On behalf of the Members and Officers of Psi Psi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta National History Honor Society, we are pleased to present the Spring 2008 edition of *The Psi Psi Historian*. In this edition, we return to many of the touchstones which have marked our previous efforts, but we hope to avoid the foolish consistency which is the hobgoblin of small minds. We continue to feature the work of scholars who delve ever deeper into the historical mysteries which they have chosen as the field of their inquiry. We also follow those scholars who have branched out, exploring the breadth of their subject with the same profound insight that has marked their previous research.

We lament a significant error that appeared, through our own mental lapse, in the 2008 edition of *Timelines*, the annual newsletter of the Department of History. The correct email address for submissions and correspondence to *The Psi Psi Historian* is psipsihistorian@aol.com which we hope will prove a popular e-address for future scholars.

Spring is the time when the flowers bloom and high school students parade their research for the delectation of the Missouri Region V competition in support of National History Day. In our quest to showcase up-and-coming talent in History, as well as to attempt to induce young scholars to choose the academic study of History as their career path, we feature some of the winners of Senior Division Paper prizes from the 2008 competition.

We would be remiss to pass up, before settling down to serious scholarly publication, the opportunity to brag on our fellow Members who have made the Spring Semester of 2008 arguably the most active in the Chapter's history. In January, President **Mike Beatty**, Vice President **Sean Seyer** and Member **Cynthia Tharp** attended the biennial convention of Phi

Alpha Theta in Albuquerque, NM. The fifteen-hour drive from St. Louis to Albuquerque passed quickly, as three drivers took turns behind the wheel to make the miles fly by. Two amusing incidents are worth recounting.

As we drove through Tulsa, we passed an ambulance on the highway. Cynthia claims that the ambulance was emblazoned with the word “EMURGENCY,” although we are unable to confirm that sighting, since Mike was driving (both hands on the wheel and all four eyes watching the road) and Sean was asleep. We offer no commentary on the significance of such a sighting in Oklahoma; we merely report observations, and allow the reader to draw conclusions.

Passing through Oklahoma City, we came up on a triple-trailer barreling down the highway. A triple-trailer is a semi with not merely one, nor even two, but *three* trailers in tow. Sean, by then awake in preparation for taking over the driving duty on the other side of Oklahoma City, took one look at the agglomeration of steel rolling down the highway, and instantly pronounced it “*ménage à trailer!*” Fortunately, Mike was able to avoid an accident despite the peals of laughter.

Safely arrived in Albuquerque, Mike and Cynthia presented their research: Cynthia discussed the evolution of the role of the World Court, and Mike field-tested his research into the intractable border dispute between the Creek Nation and the State of Georgia up to the Treaty of New York of 1790. Sean, who had never been to an academic conference before, took in the atmosphere, listening and learning, with results of which we will brag below.

In March, Sean and Mike represented Psi Psi Chapter and The University of Missouri – Saint Louis at the Midwest Regional Competition, held at Park University in Parkville, MO, a suburb of Kansas City. Sean’s presentation on the development of British Imperial air routes during the interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s won an (unranked) prize, in the form of a

certificate redeemable for a review copy of a book from *The Historian*, the quarterly scholarly journal of Phi Alpha Theta. The editorial board of *The Historian* reserves the right to pick the book, so there's no telling what Sean may actually have received.

The Chapter was well represented at the Fiftieth Missouri Conference on History, held in Columbia on 2-3 April 2008. Of four UM-St. Louis students who presented their research, three were members of the Chapter: President **Mike Beatty**, SGA Representative **Adam Michalski** and Member **Mark Neels**. No prizes awarded, alas, but all presentations found receptive audiences.

On Sunday, 13 April 2008, the Chapter initiated four new members: **Greer Lynn Dudley**, **Elizabeth Pratt Eakright**, **Timothy James (Timm) Neckermann**, and **James Authur Schurk**. New officers elected for the 2008-09 academic year are **James Authur Schurk**, *President*; **Charles Loren McLane**, *Vice President*; **Timothy James (Timm) Neckermann**, *Secretary*; and **Mark Alan Neels**, *Treasurer*.

To commemorate his retirement from the leadership of the Chapter, President *emeritus* **Mike Beatty** issued a list of "Retirement Honors" to the Members and Officers of the Chapter who have given so much time and effort toward making the Chapter such a success:

The President's Award of Merit, to **Christina Hanks**, **Adam Michalski** (two awards), **Cynthia Tharp**, **Sean Seyer** and **Mark Neels**;

The President's Medal in Bronze, to **Sean Seyer**;

The President's Medal in Silver, to **Sean Seyer**, **Charles Loren McLane** and **Randolph Geary**;

The President's Medal in Gold, to **Andrea Lowe**.

We are happy further to tip our hat to a number of outstanding UM-St. Louis History

scholars who received scholarships from the Department in recognition of their achievements. The faculty decided in late April to expand the qualifications for the prestigious Knapp Scholarship to include graduate students. May saw the awards of the following scholarships:

Thomas J. Knapp Memorial Scholarship (\$2,000): Graduate students **Valenda Curtis** and **Suzanna Love**; undergraduate students **Travis Hamilton** and **Janet Drake**. Suzanna and Travis are members of the Chapter.

Arthur H. Shaffer Memorial Scholarship (\$600): **Steven Menteer**.

R. Gene Burns Scholarship (\$1000): **Steven Menteer**.

George Rawick Award in History (\$500): **William Paasch**.

On behalf of the Chapter and the History faculty, we offer our hearty congratulations to these fine scholars. The bar has not been set at a level sufficiently high to challenge all of us to give an even better effort than heretofore!

The Chapter's new leadership team has hit the ground running, and has big plans for the coming academic year. The Spring Semester will see a symposium on Methods and Practices, as part of the Chapter's ongoing program of contributing to the professional scholarly development of History students at UM-St. Louis. The year 2009 also marks the bicentennial of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, and the Editorial Board of *The Psi Psi Historian* has plans underway for a special edition of Lincoln scholarship to observe the milestone. We will cast our net wider than ever for the Lincoln Bicentennial, sending our Call for Papers to every Phi Alpha Theta chapter in the States of Missouri, Illinois and Kentucky, as well as to every Chapter located at an Historically Black College or University.

All of that lies in the future. For the present, we continue to publish the fruits of our members' scholarship. In this issue:

Editor **Michael W. Beatty** shifts his focus from the Early American Republic to the

Eighth Century, with “*Defensors Ecclesiae: Relations Between the Secular and Ecclesiastical Hierarchies in the Carolingian Régime.*” Beatty served the Chapter as President in the 2007-08 academic year.

Mark A. Neels discusses “The Violent Frontier: The Evolution of Western Violence Through History, Film and Literature.” Neels, a graduate student in History at UM-St. Louis, will serve the Chapter as Treasurer for the 2008-09 academic year.

We offer the academic paper that was the basis for **Sean H. Seyer**’s award-winning presentation to the 2008 Midwest Regional Competition, “‘An Empire Policy Must Be Formed’: The Development of British Imperial Air Routes in the Interwar Period.” Seyer served the Chapter as Vice President during the 2007-08 academic year.

We continue to showcase the outstanding papers presented by high school students at the Missouri Region V competition in support of National History Day, held in the Millennium Student Center on 24 February 2008. **Laura Swofford**, a junior at Kirkwood High School, won First Place in the Senior Division with her research on “The Noble Doubter: Henry David Thoreau and the Gestation of ‘Civil Disobedience.’” Swofford demonstrated that Thoreau took a principled stand against what he viewed as the United States’ immoral war against Mexico by refusing to pay the poll tax, for which he famously spent a night in jail.

Helen Julitta Pesce Wiley, a freshman at Clayton High School, took Second Place in the Senior Division for her analysis of “Operation Wetback and the *Bracero* Program,” which offered insight into the current national debate over immigration policy in the example of how the United States and Mexico met the U.S. demand for cheap agricultural labor during World War II.

Readers may remark that we have declined to publish the winners of the Junior Division

competition. Foolish consistency demands; arguably, it presupposes the ability to know when to be inconsistent. The feedback that we received from the Junior Division papers that we published in our Spring 2007 edition indicated that, our best hopes to the contrary notwithstanding, we should not continue the practice of publication. We wish the Junior Division competitors of the future the best of luck in their competition, and look forward to seeing them, in the course of time, in the Senior Division.

This edition of *The Psi Psi Historian* is also the first that offers no book reviews. We regret the shortfall, but we are only able to write so much. We welcome responsible, well-reasoned, academically-rigorous and well-written reviews from all scholars.