History at Furman

Department of History
Furman University

Fall 2000

Edited by Erik Ching

The year 2000 has been a busy and productive one for the history department. Our enrollments are holding steady, if not increasing. Indeed, during the first two months of the current academic year, the department picked up 40 new history majors. They are an intelligent and talented group. Our classes are filled to overflowing. In September, the department welcomed two new instructors. One is Nevan Fisher, a doctoral candidate from the University of Virginia, who is teaching Chinese history on a one-year appointment while we search for a permanent replacement. The other is a veteran, John Block, who has returned to us full time after serving as vice president for intercollegiate athletics. We are delighted to have these excellent teachers and scholars join us. We have benefited greatly from their enthusiasm and expertise.

In other news, the history department continues to be a major player in leading foreign study trips. Erik Ching accompanied Furman students to Africa during winter term; at the same time, Timothy Fehler participated in the Middle East/Greece/Italy trip. During the current fall term, John Barrington is in England, Spain, and Portugal. In the winter of 2001, Ronald Granieri will lead students in a tour through the Baltic and Bill Lavery will do the same in the Middle East in winter 2002. Bill also continues to head International Studies. This summer he organized a faculty study trip to Prague. With him on that trip were David Spear and Ronald Granieri. "Engaged learning," now a Furman "buzz-word," has been enriched by more than merely our study abroad program. Steve O’Neill reports that our Piedmont Center which studies Upstate history is alive and well and placing ever more students in internships in the Greenville area. Further, Tim Fehler has accompanied a number of history majors to state Phi Alpha Theta conferences. They returned with numerous prizes, including "Best Paper" honors for the third year in a row. Such honors say much about the quality of our program.

The history department was delighted at the spring commencement to learn that yet another of our members had won the Meritorious Teaching Award. This year’s prize went to Ronald Granieri, who won it after serving at Furman for only three years. We are very proud of Ron and of his accomplishment. This brings to eight the number of history faculty who have received the teaching award over the years. This is more than in any other department. Other honors have come to us with Erik Ching’s prize for an article on Latin American history which was awarded at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago. Tim Fehler’s book on poor relief in Emden, Germany, has been published to fine reviews. A year ago Tim won a major award in Emden for his research on a related topic. Diane Vecchio took a leave of absence during the spring term to do research in Italy for a forthcoming book. Others of us have published articles, presented papers at conferences and written book reviews for professional journals. We are in high demand as speakers, both at Furman and in the Greenville community. In short, the history department is a vital and exciting place. We trust that you will stop by and visit whenever you are in Greenville. We love seeing you! We look forward to hearing from you. Your visits, letters and e-mails brighten our days.

—Marian E. Strobel
FACULTY NOTES

John Barrington (Colonial America) is serving (fall 2000) as a co-leader for Furman's study abroad in England, Spain and Portugal. John is focusing his course on the Iberian Empires.

Lloyd Benson (U.S. South) is completing an undergraduate document reader on the summer coming incident for Harcourt. Last June he was one of the staff members of the faculty teaching and learning workshop sponsored by the Associated Colleges of the South. He was also asked to serve as a member of the advisory board for the e-LP (Electronic Lincoln Prize) which will soon give its first national award for the best Web site or CD-ROM related to either Abraham Lincoln, the ordinary soldier or the Civil War era in general.

John Block (Modern Germany) rejoins the history department after a four-year stint as the vice president for intercollegiate athletics. He had been in the department for 28 years (1968-1996), serving as chair for nine of those. He says that he is delighted to rejoin this excellent department which now includes so many bright young colleagues.

Erik Ching (Latin America) received the 1999 Conference on Latin American History prize for his article "Indians the Military and the Rebellion of 1932 in El Salvador," the Journal of Latin American Studies vol. 30 (1998). The prize was awarded at the American Historical Association annual conference held in January 2000 in Chicago.

Tim Fehler (Early Modern Germany) continues to serve as faculty advisor of Phi Alpha Theta, the national history honor society. His first book, Poor Relief and Protestantism: The Evolution of Social Welfare in Early Modern Emden, was published by Ashgate Press in July 1999. A paper of Tim's, translated "The Diconate and Poor Relief under Johannes a Lasco: Ideal Visions and Practical Realities," won Second Prize at the international symposium held in Emden, Germany, in fall 1999, honoring the 500th anniversary of the birth of the Polish reformer Johannes a Lasco.

Nevan Fisher (Modern China) continues to work on his dissertation at the University of Virginia. He is studying how Protestant Christianity became an indigenous Chinese religion, changing according to local customs and beliefs. He is applying for grants to conduct research in the city of Anqing in Anhui Province. Today a relatively minor city, it had strong ties to foreign missionaries prior to the Communist victory in 1949.

Ron Granieri (Modern Germany) attended four conferences during fall 2000, including a special invitation to the American Council on Germany's XXII Young Leaders Conference, held in Berkeley. Ron was one of 25 Americans under 40 selected to join 25 Germans for a week of discussions on German-American relations.

A.V. Huff (U.S. South/South Carolina) continues to teach the course on the history of the South while serving as vice president for academic affairs and dean. He was appointed this summer by Governor Hodges to serve on the Governor's Task Force on Historic Preservation and Heritage Tourism. He serves on the editorial board of the S.C. Historical Magazine and on the advisory board of the forthcoming South Carolina Encyclopedia.

Bill Lavery (Russia) continues to serve as director of International Education. In this position he has recruited a growing number of international students. This year's newcomers hail from Brazil, Senegal, India, Poland, Croatia, the Dominican Republic, South Africa and Canada. Bill is also responsible for enhancing our study abroad programs. In its newest program, Furman has 18 students studying in Australian universities. Furman is about to begin a study abroad plus internship option in Edinburgh.

Jim Leavell (Modern Japan) was elected to the board of directors of the ASIANetwork, a consortium of some 150 liberal arts colleges organized to promote Asian Studies. He resigned as chair of the Department of Asian Studies in May 2000. He continues to serve on the editorial board of the Southeast Review of Asian Studies and as Furman's representative on the board of the South Atlantic States Association for Asian and African Studies (SASAAAS).

Steve O'Neill (U.S. South) is working as the chief historian for Chadbourn and Associates of Boston, a museum consulting firm, on designing the new Greenville Regional History Museum that is being built near downtown Greenville. In addition to this, Steve is also working on a local oral history project in conjunction with Don Gordon in the political science department and the associated Riley Center for Governance. The project will last for four years and has the goal of interviewing political figures from each region of the state.

Marian Strobel (Recent U.S./Women) presented a paper on the history of Greenville Woman's College at the Associated Colleges of the South's Women's Studies Conference in Birmingham in October 1999. She commented on sessions on the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi at The Citadel Conference on the South held in Charleston in April 2000 and on Southern women and the Civil Rights Movement at the Southern Association of Women Historians conference at the University of Richmond in June 2000.

David Spear (Medieval Europe) continues to work on his book titled The Norman Cathedral Clergy during the Dauel Period, 911-1204, under contract with the Institute of Historical Research at the University of London. He spent several weeks during the summer of 2000 in the National Archives and the National Library in Paris.

Diane Vecchio (U.S./Immigration) has been appointed chief reader for the Advanced Placement Exam in United States History by the College Board and the Educational Testing Service. She has also written two chapters for forthcoming edited volumes: "Gender, Domestic Values and Italian Working Women in Milwaukee: The Immigrant Generation," and "Saving the Souls of Italians in the South: Southern Baptists and Missionary Work Among Italians."
MANY PROJECTS IN THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF PIEDMONT HISTORY

The history department’s Center for the Study of Piedmont History (CSPH) began its second year this September, and is off to a strong start thanks mainly to the enthusiasm with which Furman’s history majors have responded to combining academic projects with public history. The center was created to promote the local history of Greenville and the Piedmont region and to offer Furman undergraduates internships and research partnerships with local historical organizations and museums. I will highlight some of the most important things the CSPH has accomplished in its first year. The first and foremost initiative has been our affiliation with the forthcoming Greenville Regional History Museum. The museum is a $13 million project undertaken by the Historic Greenville Foundation. Ground will be broken on a 48,000-square-foot facility early next year on a site next to the old Coca-Cola Plant on Buncombe Street near the art museum and the downtown library. Furman students have done much of the research that will be reflected in the museum’s exhibits.

A second initiative by the CSPH has been the preservation of the Vardry McBee/Mildred Whitmire papers. McBee is rightly called the “Father of Greenville” because of his role in laying out major portions of the town and in donating so much land to public institutions including Furman University (the Old Campus) and the Greenville Female Academy, not to mention the four mainline Protestant churches downtown. Among the hundreds of primary documents in the collection are records of most of the important land transactions in Greenville between 1784 and the 1870s, including the original 1784 deed from the state for what would become downtown Greenville. There are also dozens of nineteenth century letters and two unpublished diaries. Mildred Whitmire was a descendant of McBee and an amateur local historian who compiled a mountain of research in her own right during the middle part of the 1900s. Three interns are currently doing the preliminary processing of the papers, working under the tutelage of Beverly Whitmire, Mildred’s daughter, and Furman librarian Steve Richardson.

A third project is an ongoing oral history of Furman University. The first phase was completed this summer and dealt with Furman’s split with the Baptists and its move to the current campus. Finally, I’ll mention the oral history project of the Civil Rights Movement in Greenville. A collaborative endeavor undertaken by 14 history students, this study will be the most complete oral history on this important episode in Greenville’s history.

—Steve O’Neill

PROFESSOR ANDREW PETTIGREE LECTURES ON THE REFORMATION

In November 1999, the history department hosted Andrew Pettigree as the 1999 Leverette Lecturer. Professor Pettigree is founding director of the St. Andrews Reformation Institute at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, and he spoke eloquently on “Luther’s Reformation: History, Providence and Martyrdom.” Pettigree described the manner in which Protestants took advantage of the printing revolution to define their message and to redefine sacred history. “Protestant theologians,” Pettigree claimed, “could almost be said to have invented the modern craft of history. The mediaeval chronicle as a simple narrative of events was replaced by something far more ambitious, an interpretation of the past to discern its inner purpose. In the Reformation we see the beginnings of the professionalization of history. The reformers also initiated a tradition of religious partisanship in the writing of history which has persisted even to the middle of our own century.” Pettigree went on to depict the religious enthusiasm of the early Protestant reformers by investigating the ways in which their sense of God’s providential intervention suffused their work.

HISTORY FACULTY IN INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

As director of International Education, Bill Lavery organized and led Furman’s second annual international faculty seminar. The site was Prague with a number of side journeys, including Vienna, the castled countryside of southern Bohemia, and Bratislava, capital of the Slovak Republic. Participants heard from a wide array of speakers, including U.S. Embassy personnel, Czech actors and journalists. Next summer’s seminar is slated for Jamaica and Cuba. Several members of the history department have already packed their bags.

Ron Granieri participated in the faculty seminar in Prague and offered the following comments: “The seminar was both practically useful for me as preparation for leading Furman’s Central and Eastern European study trip (the “Baltic Trip”) this winter term, and a personal thrill. I was very excited, for example, to visit Prague Castle, and to see Vienna for the first time, attend services at St. Stephen’s Cathedral, visit the Imperial Palace of the Hofburg, and see the works of art at Vienna’s world-famous Kunsthistorisches Museum.”

As part of his involvement in the seminar, David Spear offered the following: “Prague dazzled with its many magnificent baroque churches. But as a medieval historian I was especially taken with the nearby town of Kutna Hora. It’s not a famous town today, but in the Middle Ages Kutna Hora was second only to Prague in power and wealth, owing to its silver mines. Some of the town’s wealth financed the construction of the spectacular church of St. Barbara, with its stunning examples of flying buttresses and its huge clerestory windows. St. Barbara’s nave vaulting was the most complex, intricate and aesthetically satisfying I had ever seen.

“Our visit to the city museum included a tour of the mines. It was an amusing sight as we donned white overcoats, hard hats and flashlights, descended to a depth of 60 meters and then walked, wriggled and crawled 500 meters through the bowels of the earth. The mines solve part of a mystery: how was it that Bohemia had experienced a golden age in the mid-fourteenth century while Western Europe was reeling from the effects of the Black Death and the Hundred Years’ War? Obviously part of the answer was its subterranean metal. And it made sense that Kutna Hora housed Bohemia’s central mint from the fourteenth century right up until 1730. Kutna Hora will now figure into my medieval history classes. I hope that former students of mine who have the good fortune to visit Prague will see their way past the baroque glitter of the big city and make their way to this medieval town.”

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Erik Ching spent the month of July 2000 in El Salvador researching the peasant uprising of January 1932. Seeking out people who were eyewitnesses to the events, he traveled to three towns in the western countryside that saw significant rebel activity. He found around two dozen such people. All of them were non-partisans, which for research purposes was a bit disappointing as he hoped to find participants who could comment on organizational structures and motives. Nonetheless, the people he interviewed provided harrowing accounts of the arrival of the rebels and the military crackdown one week later. Many of them spoke of the loss of family members and friends. Six decades later the emotions attached to the rebellion remain close to the surface of peoples’ minds. Erik also participated in Furman’s first study abroad to Southern Africa in winter 2000.

Diane Vecchio spent spring 2000 in two Italian villages, San Cosma and Damiano, where her maternal grandfather was born. Located south of Rome in the hills of the Campania, the village is only a few kilometers from Castelforte, the birthplace of her father. Diane was researching the history of the villages and the migration of their people to the United States, Canada and Australia. She reports that in addition to the hard work she ate wonderful food (a different pasta every day), explored the villages with a woman in her eighties who taught her much about life in this mountainous region. Together they retraced the steps of Contadine who worked the fields picking olives and grapes, and they explored the caves where Italian women and their children hid during the German occupation.

Tim Fehler teamed up with David Rutledge of the religion department for the annual study abroad to the Mediterranean and the Middle East in winter 2000. During the three weeks in Israel and Greece the group’s activities revolved around the course “Archeology and Geography of the Biblical World.” In the final three weeks they focused on the Italian Renaissance with extended stays in Venice, Florence and Rome. As Tim puts it: “While it is difficult to surpass the beauty of Venice, the grandeur of Rome and the vitality of Florence, some of our best experiences occurred during our short day-trips into the countryside, particularly our visits to several smaller Tuscan towns.”

BOOK REVIEWS


“I have been to the past, and it works,” quipped a British journalist after visiting Chicago in the mid-1960s, still firmly in the grip of the Democratic political machine led by Richard J. Daley. Daley, most famous nationally for his role in the “police riot” against student demonstrators at the 1968 Democratic Convention, was a fixture in postwar Chicago politics, serving as mayor from 1955 to his death in 1976, shaping the city for good and ill. His determined efforts to protect Chicago against “white flight” helped the city maintain a much more diverse population and a more healthy urban core than other cities such as Detroit or Cleveland, for example, but also contributed to the city’s continued racial segregation, a problem that continues to bedevil his son, the current mayor of Chicago, Richard M. Daley.

Daley was a larger-than-life figure, the last of the urban ethnic political bosses that once dominated American politics, and his biography is also a history of American urban development. Cohen and Taylor, two journalists with Chicago connections, tell their story well, though their journalistic backgrounds sometimes lead them to build conclusions on less secure evidence than a historian would like. Nevertheless, it remains a must-read for anyone interested in modern American political history.

—Ronald J. Granieri

Nicholas Reeves, The Complete Tutankhamun: The King, the Tomb, the Royal Treasure (Thames and Hudson, 1995)

I have several books on Tutankhamun, but this one is my favorite. As the subtitle indicates, it seems to cover everything, yet with great economy. Reeves was formerly curator in the Department of Egyptian Antiquities at the British Museum, so the text is authoritative. But it is the numerous photos (many in color) that really make the book. The excavation team included photographer Henry Burton who took hundreds of photos on glass plates—the standard technique for excellent quality in those days—many of which are reproduced here. His photos capture a level of detail and clarity that make the observer feel as if he could walk right into the frame.

The general contours of the excavation are well known. British archaeologist Howard Carter, in league with Lord Carnarvon, discovered the entrance to Tut’s tomb in 1922. Carnarvon died in 1923—which gave rise to the myth of “the curse of Osiris.” Carter continued to excavate and catalogue for over a decade, exposing eventually the mummy of Tutankhamun himself, nested inside three coffins and four shrines. The Pharaoh’s stunning gold mask is required as a cover illustration for every book on the topic, including this one. The excavation was not an easy one, especially with numerous cross-cultural misunderstandings between the hard-headed Carter and the Egyptians. Moreover, the press added a false sense of deadline, as rival newspapers tried to scoop each other in presenting the latest finds to their readers.

As for Tut, he was just a young man, perhaps 20 years old at most, when he died in around 1323 BC. He was hardly a consequent figure in Egyptian history. Without resorting to hyperbole, Reeves suggests that Tut may have been murdered. X-rays show a small bone fragment at the back of his skull. It is interesting to note, too, that Tutankhamun was entombed with two stillborn children, presumably his own.

As a compelling narrative the book is somewhat of a failure. But as a competent account of all aspects of the excavation it is highly recommended. The text is broken up into one and two page sections. So The Complete Tutankhamun is not a pretentious tome for the coffee table, but rather an engaging book for the bedside.

—David Spear


Herman Melville's Moby Dick has long been a staple of high school and college English courses. What few students may realize is that the events described in the novel were roughly based on a true story of a whaleship “stove in” by a whale. The reality of that incident and its terrifying aftermath are fully described by Nathaniel Philbrick in his engagingly written
narrative. What the reader quickly comes to understand is that while the events of the Essex's sinking differed dramatically from those of Captain Ahab's Pequod, the fate of the crew was just as ghastly as that envisioned by Melville.

Before describing the tragedy which befall the Essex, Phillbrick details the development of Nantucket, Mass., as a center of the whaling industry. He pays special attention to the island's Quaker faith, its independent women and its discrimination against non-Nantucketers, including African-Americans from the mainland. Phillbrick then turns his attention to the Essex itself, a 20-year-old whaleship, when it set off on its last voyage in 1819. As Phillbrick makes clear, Captain George Pollard was a man far different from the legendary Ahab. Yet, he too made numerous mistakes in judgment which quickly jeopardized the safety of his ship and crew. Early on, due to a failure to shorten sails, the ship experienced a "knockdown" in a terrible squall in the Atlantic. The Essex nearly capsized, and in the process two of her whaleboats were crushed and never replaced. On another occasion, an insubordinate crewmember set ablaze Charles Island, a place where the ship had stopped to replenish supplies of food and water. Pollard was not prepared for further crisis. Fifteen months into the Essex's voyage, while 1,500 miles west of the Galapagos Islands and 40 miles south of the equator, the ship was rammed by an enraged sperm whale which was estimated to be 80-feet long and to weigh 80 tons. Curiously, the collision occurred while most of the Essex's sailors were off in the whaleboats chasing smaller prey. The ship quickly had to be abandoned to a watery grave and its crew divided among the three whaleboats which remained.

The rest of the story is harrowing. From November 22, 1820, until February 23, 1821, the whaleboats remained adrift in the Pacific Ocean as they attempted to steer for the South America coast. Dehydration and starvation soon developed. Due to poor judgment, the sailors did not head to the Society Islands which would have provided them with a safe refuge. Ironically, the sailors feared the rumored cannibalism of those islands; eventually they themselves had to resort to cannibalism when their food and water ran out. Most of those eaten (including the African-American crew) died of natural causes, but the 19-year-old nephew of Captain Pollard was executed so that the others on his boat might live. Miraculously, after 89 days, two of the three whaleboats were rescued by passing ships off the coast of Chile. Their remaining crews, hollow-eyed and desperate, were later returned to their homes and families on Nantucket.

Philbrick completes the saga of the Essex by detailing the fates of its five survivors. Most returned to the sea, including Captain Pollard whose next voyage ended in shipwreck in 1823. Two survivors lived to write about their experiences. One was First Mate Owen Chase who published a narrative on which Melville based Moby Dick. Thomas Nickerson, a cabin boy aboard the Essex, left a notebook describing his experiences which was not uncovered until 1980. Phillbrick has successfully combined information from these two memoirs, adding to them his own considerable knowledge of Nantucket and the whaling industry, nineteenth century race relations, and scientific data on the physiological and psychological effects of dehydration and starvation. Moby Dick is a work of fantasy; the tale of the Essex is equally engrossing. Truth really can be stranger than fiction.

—Marian E. Strobel

ALUMNI NEWS

Ben Barnhill '98 is in his third year of law school at the University of South Carolina and has just accepted a job after graduation with the Greenville office of Nelson, Mullins, Riley, & Scarborough, LLP.

Barbara Mensone '83 Beckford started a massage therapy practice in April 1999 on Greenville's eastside. Her youngest daughter, Piper Mensone, who was born during Barbara's Furman "career," is now a student at Furman.

Katie Clerkin '92 Benston is the manger of client relations for Blackband, a 12,000-plus client and 700-plus employee software company in Charleston, S.C., that provides software for non-profit organizations. She has been with the company since 1996 and reports that she really enjoys her job.

Jean Perrin '74 Derrick, a '77 graduate of the USC Law School, worked as an associate for several firms and in 1984 went into solo practice in Lexington, S.C., in the field of civil litigation.

Lane Hammond '94 is credit manager and buyer for Hammond-Brown-Jennings Furniture Co. in Spartanburg, S.C. His wife, Sara Jamieson '96 Hammond, works for South Carolina DHEC in Greenville.

Bobby Jackson '61 returned to public education (after being retired) for one year as an administrative assistant to the principal.

Lowe Kinman '80 is an assistant professor in the geography department at the University of Missouri and also serves as director of Graduate Studies within the department. He completed his Ph.D. in geography at the University of Minnesota in 1996.

Mary Beth Lawrence '82 has been an associate pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Marietta, Ga., for 14 years. She is studying for a certificate in Christian Spirituality at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Ga., and is using her history background from Furman to focus on Celtic Christianity.

Rob Maclay '88 is in school at Florida State University College of Law.

Al Newell '75 took the position in November 1999 as dean of enrollment at Washington and Jefferson College in Pennsylvania.

Kent Simmons '83 reports that Luke Simmons was born to him and his wife, Laura Brown '84 Simmons, in November 1999, and that he was selected as an Armett Scholar to study Modern Germany for two weeks in the summer of 1999.

Brad Sauls '94 married Lila Anna Hiers in December 1999 and works in historic preservation at the S.C. Department of Archives and History.

Jennifer Sharpe '80 Gary is working as product manager for Entergy Corporation in New Orleans.

Lon Thomas '88 is an attorney in Marietta, Ga., in the firms of Kane, Thomas and Brown, and is married to the former Kellie Lynn Milner. They have a daughter, Rochel Lindsay, who is now three years old.

Betty Wells '56 Bynum reports that she has moved into a new retirement home and has another great grandbaby—a girl.
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I want to add a note of thanks to those of you who have made contributions to the History Alumni Fund. Your gifts have been put to a multitude of good uses and we are most grateful. The Development Office is so impressed by your loyalty and generosity that it is using the History Alumni Fund as a model for other departments to follow. Many thanks!

— Marian E. Strobel

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