

Note from the Editor

This is the last of forty-three issues that I have edited, the vast majority with book review editor Nancy Unger, who also leaves as of this issue. During the last year, we have written enough about our editors' transition. We hope that people have appreciated the journal over the last eleven years and trust that they will admire it under the new co-editors, Benjamin H. Johnson and Robert D. Johnston; and the new book review editor, Elaine Frantz Parsons, the product of whose efforts will begin to appear with the January 2015 issue.

Historians are supposed to disdain envy of the past, but at one time or other, most scholars of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era have longed to recapture the Victorian ability to convey an experience or emotion powerfully by not stating it outright. This mode of expression led, as one knows, to a half-century of impatient caricature of pre-World War I mores. At times, Victorian repression was real, as we have come to understand. At other times this public stance enabled creation of a closed curtain behind which could thrive a landscape of imagination and feeling that became explicit here and there.

What prompted this reflection was rereading the article by Wendy Rouse and Beth Slutsky on the women's self-defense movement that began in the late 1800s. As I worked on the final editing of the manuscript, the deranged acts of that lost soul in Santa Barbara set off a public ritual very much of the present day: the Twitter campaign labeled #YesAllWomen. On the surface, Twitter comes across as yet another manifestation of the present-day impulse to overshare, hence the longing for depth of expression through Victorian implicitness. But really, Twitter, Facebook, and the like are so stylized in structure and circular in content that they create their own smokescreens, and one wonders at the people and experiences behind the repetitive postings. "Empowerment" can come across as a cliché term of the present, and Rouse and Slutsky struggled with when and how much to use this term in their essay. The newspaper and magazine accounts and guidebooks on which Rouse and Slutsky draw contain a world of half-statement and allusion, which through accumulation convey intensely what women sought when seeking the strength and physical confidence that self-defense training develops.

In the July 2014 issue, the Pennsylvania Railroad clashed with Baltimore over air pollution. This month, the mighty Pennsylvania loses a quarrel on its home turf over central-city routes and service. Historians familiar with commercial-civic documents from the Progressive Era will initially react with skepticism toward the *Philadelphia North American's* campaign against the Pennsy's plans to consolidate service outside the central city. After all, in Washington, Chicago, and many other cities, strong movements had emerged to divert railroads from downtowns and remove tracks and stations from streets and parks. So weren't all of the *North American's* competitor newspapers correct in treating the railroad's "sidetracking" as an inevitable service improvement? As Mark Aldrich explains, Philadelphia merchants and manufacturers were expressing a reasonable worry that the railroad's corporate and engineering logic would undermine the city as a lively center for production and trade.

In his profile of Berkeley mayor J. Stitt Wilson, meanwhile, Steven Barton underscores the variety of influences that came together in American municipal socialism. These range from the Henry George program for a better urban life through property reform, explained by Lawrence Lipin in our July issue, as well as feminism and, crucially in Wilson's case, Christian socialism. By the early twenty-first century, Berkeley progressivism seemed to have moved far in philosophy and practice from Stitt Wilson's Social Gospel mindset. Inspired by his decades as a planner and housing official in Berkeley, Barton looks back to the roots of the West Coast's urban reformism to the social solidarity and civic consciousness that Wilson espoused in word and deed.

Fittingly, the last article in the last issue I will edit concerns a historian's relationship with his own time. Publications such as this enable professional historians to converse with and respond to contemporaries. We thrive on such interactions. Even so, without a measure of detachment from the present day, with its agendas, assumptions, and blindnesses, we can become trapped intellectually and morally. John David Smith recalls why Ulrich B. Phillips epitomizes the historian who is disturbing because he was great and acclaimed in the day that produced him. In the final stages of preparing *American Negro Slavery*, Phillips responded to the black soldiers with whom he worked at Camp Gordon, Georgia, with incomprehension, in ways that reinforced his intellectual and moral complacency. Phillip's intelligence reports on Central Europe at the end of World War I managed to be sophisticated and well informed and blind and hollow. One cherishes the appreciation and

support of friends and colleagues. Still, maybe we all need to train ourselves to perceive some part of our hearts and minds as breaking away every time we say or do something that too exactly suits the present atmosphere.

Alan Lessoff