

## FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the Spring 2023 edition of the *New England Journal of History*. Our mission is to publish historical inquiries that inform readers from novice to scholar. This goal will be met with articles that encompass the world's events, and analyses that share reflections on pedagogical strategies. Our timely book reviews examine works that expand our knowledge base. First published in 1944 as the *New England Social Studies Bulletin*, this well-rounded journal will continue to provide historical analysis for educators who seek to bring history to life for future generations through thought-provoking interpretations and the best offerings of pedagogy.

While preparing this note, the Russian invasion of Ukraine continues, book banning in America is expanding, stifling of the teaching of intersectionality and AP African American studies, legal and safe abortion is increasingly unavailable to American families, and human rights are flouted for members of LGBTQ+ communities. New reports on high and persistent black maternal and infant mortality (despite socio-economic class) shatter our illusions of equality, opioid deaths of despair exceed deaths from car crashes and guns combined, while gun violence is often targeted towards people of color. These facts portray an America full of fear: fear of losing power over a piece of the economic pie, fear of engaging with diverse experiences and allowing all voices to have a say, fear of listening to those whose life's choices are impacted due to their skin tone, gender, or the happenstance of the intersection of race, gender, or class. Americans are torn as to the degree of involvement in Ukraine, just as our From the Archives piece discusses that we were torn prior to our full engagement into World War II. If historical insights permit us to navigate these newest schisms, we should know that squashing the rights of Americans eventually shatters our communities, while attempting to remain uneducated and disengaged in the world's affairs only leads to future regrets. Our responsibilities as historians are to remain steadfast in our engagement in history education to elucidate the past in totality and provide insight into the potentialities of the future.

This edition's From the Archives revisits October of 1950 article "American World Policy Today: An Appraisal" by George E.

McReynolds. McReynolds reviewed and critiqued America's experiences from the Great Depression until 1950 and observes problems we still face today. America's lack of knowledge of Japanese culture and language presented a serious problem at the beginning of World War II. He likens this lack of expertise to similar challenges regarding the Middle East and Southeast Asia in the 1950s. This similar lack of cultural proficiency created problems for us in Afghanistan as well. McReynolds observes America's lack of understanding regarding tensions in China after WWII as well as our naiveté about the true abilities of the new United Nations. Today America continues to struggle in our relations with China and how the United States fits or does not fit into the Pacific region as an economic competitor, an ally, or a potential enemy. America's foreign policy fluctuates inconsistently depending on the will of the America people and their elected representatives rather than an established long-term policy. McReynolds notes that initiating a clear and dependable foreign policy that exports the values of democracy and hope to the world would be the best strategy.

In the "Pulse," our Book Editor, Erin Redihan, reflects on the fundamental and political nature of Mikhail Gorbachev. Redihan uncovers the many ironies found in Gorbachev's life including the respect the west developed for him over the decades, Gorbachev's efforts at improving the quality of life of the Soviet people, his belief in the flexibility and persistence of the Soviet nation, and Putin's rejection of a public period of mourning for the death of a man who tried to hold the Soviet Union together. Redihan's article reminds us of the impact of the life and death of Mikhail Gorbachev on the political structure of the Soviet past and Russian present.

From the history program at Dean College, Scott Kirshy shares his work "Music and the Vietnam War: A Clash Between the Pro-War Past and the New Anti-War Rebellion." Asking if popular music during the Vietnam War reflected the morale and emotional stance of soldiers and the general public at various points, Kirshy explores the importance and diversity of popular music during the war years. Reviewing popular music during WWII provides a reference point to expose the dramatic shifts of preferred music by Americans and soldiers during the Vietnam War. Pro-war music early in the war reinforces the patriotism of WWII, yet as the Vietnam conflict continued to unfold, we see how the trajectory of American music changed.

Exploring a variety of topics in our articles, we begin with “What’s in a Name? Benjamin Franklin and the Birth of a New Town in Revolutionary America” by Vicki Buchanio Earls. Revealing how one New England town was named, Buchanio Earls describes how the rumors, vicissitudes and speed of information led to the naming of the town of Franklin, Massachusetts. Explaining the history of the postal system and the impact of the rumors of Franklin’s assassination in France, Buchanio Earls conveys the impact of that rumor on not only the naming of the town, but the life of one of America’s leading educators, Horace Mann. This story is a reminder of the unanticipated ripples we can all make as we move through and make decisions during life. The library of books donated by Benjamin Franklin left a legacy to not only the town, but to individuals such as Horace Mann.

Gregory Michna mines ministerial writings, sermons and colonial correspondence to investigate the hidden lives of children in his piece “Puritan Fatherhood and Childrearing in the Borderlands: The Early Life of Stephen Williams in Deerfield, Massachusetts, 1694-1704.” With a backdrop of colonial Deerfield, Michna elucidates the dangers and traumas inherent in living in an early settlement far from Boston while following the family of the young minister John Williams, focusing particularly on his son Stephen. A fascinating discussion of childbirth, postpartum care, weaning and general early childcare during the colonial era created a loving image of a family focused life. Incorporating the reflections of Cotton Mather and other ministers who lost their children during their early perilous years, reveals that puritan families were not stern or rigid. Contributing to scholarship of childhood education, tasks, literacy, gender roles, and traumas, Michna’s work constructs a comprehensive view of a young child’s life that is bonded to the lifeways, suffering and hazards of colonial Deerfield.

Peter Wallenstein questions the impact of historians defining an era in, “What “Era of Good Feelings”? An Exploration of the Phrase’s Lineage with a Reconsideration of Its Utility.” As a thoughtful reflection on how we are influenced by the voices we hear and do not hear in the past, Wallenstein traces the origination of the phrase “Era of Good Feelings” as it is passed from newspaper to newspaper beginning in 1817 and into our earliest history textbooks by the 1840s. Was everyone experiencing these “good feelings” given that Virginians were dominating the presidency, the Hartford Convention had exposed the

tensions in New England, political processes struggled with the conflicts inherent in a democracy and the opinions and voices of so many were deemed irrelevant or invisible. Despite rejection of the concept that the time of Monroe *was* an Era of Good Feeling, the historian George Dangerfield titled his book incorporating this phrase which furthered its use among later historians. Wallenstein's insightful examination of this phrase and its persistence in American history opens the way for us to consider the defined eras of American history and question their validity as new groups such as Native Peoples, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, women and so many others come to the foreground of historical interpretation.

Joining us again for another discerning book review, Bob Maloy discusses Martin Sherwin's *Gambling with Armageddon: Nuclear Roulette from Hiroshima to the Cuban Missile Crisis*. A time period with which I also have had a life-long fascination, Sherwin follows the shift in prominence of nuclear weapons from the Eisenhower Administration, the events of the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the reminder that everyone, including "minor figures" plays a role in the survival of the human species. Moving from a time of capitalism's impact on potential world destruction to the time of capitalism's devastation of human decency and culture, William Morgan reviews *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic* by Jennifer Morgan. Considered a "field-defining" work, Morgan deftly captures the connections among enslaved black women, the white male enslavers, and capitalism while encompassing black feminist research to identify the consciousness of enslaved women's knowledge of their economic power in their horrific situations.

"Now for something completely different," *Speaking with the Dead in Early America* by Erik R. Seeman ethereally moves us to the study of the relations between the living and the dead. Reviewer Ian S. Wilson suggests that this work adds significantly to the field in that Seeman brings forward Protestantism's continued connections to the dead since Reformation despite admonitions to avoid such behaviors and superstitions. Exploring capitalism from a different angle, Zhihui Zou reviews *Frontiers in the Gilded Age: Adventure, Capitalism & Dispossession from Southern Africa to the U.S.—Mexican Borderlands, 1880-1917* by Andrew Offenburger. Discussing an expanded version of American frontiers, Zou notes that Offenburger includes the overlooked frontier people such as the Yaqui and the impact forced by Americans

onto the southern African frontier peoples such as Shona and Ndebele during extortion of foreign resources. Zou believes that Offenburger creates a new foundation for considering U.S. expansionism and the reasoning behind territorial growth.

For details on submitting your articles and book reviews, please check out our manuscript submission policy found at [www.nejh.org/general-guidelines](http://www.nejh.org/general-guidelines). We welcome all historical topics, pedagogical articles on the teaching of history or social studies, and reviews of books and permanent museum exhibits. Also, please submit any comments you may have on our articles to [editors@nejh.org](mailto:editors@nejh.org). As we continue to study the past, let us remember the importance of historians. Their research and analysis of events and persons inform the policy and decision making of presidents and leaders around the world. Historians form think-tanks that influence public opinion, and they encourage us to engage in discussions of ethics, morals, and truth. Their indispensable contributions provide context for understanding current events and allow us to observe our common flaws, our universal strengths, and our shared humanity. Historians have also been activists, shaping movements and writing books that changed society. We hope our publication will inspire readers to engage in their communities and to follow the timeless words of Abraham Lincoln and “strive on to finish the work we are in.”

Linda Morse  
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