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DEPARTMENT HISTORIAN



A NEWSLETTER OF PEOPLE AND EVENTS
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

May 2015

Greetings from the Chair



With this issue, the second, of our new electronic newsletter I am optimistic that this new tradition has been securely established. We were gratified that many recipients of the newsletter found it a timely and engaging way to be brought up to date about the History department. Please share any thoughts and recommendations you may have about the newsletter with me.

At a time when hand wringing about the future of higher education and public universities is contagious, it is a useful tonic to periodically celebrate the talented and hardworking students, staff, faculty, and alumni who are members of our literal and metaphorical community. Among the stories in this issue, for example, is recognition of Sarah Bufkin, a History major who has been awarded a Rhodes scholarship. We get a glimpse at Jason Kauffman, a graduate student, who is using the digital humanities to create interactive scholarship that will have uses far beyond college campuses. We also take a moment to linger on John Kasson's diverse and distinguished contributions to the study of American history and to this university at the close of his four-decade tenure at

UNC. And we celebrate Joel Williamson, a beloved emeritus scholar whose recently published biography of Elvis Presley is the capstone to his career. This issue, in short, reminds us that learning, teaching, and researching are the life blood of this department and our community.

W. Fitzhugh Brundage
Chair, Department of History

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GIVE TO UNC HISTORY

Department News

Undergraduate Research Earns Prizes and Publication

Our History majors have earned prizes, funding, and publication for their original research on topics ranging from ancient Roman geography to U.S. foreign policy in the 1970s.

Read more [here](#).

Phi Alpha Theta Hosts High School Quiz Bowl

UNC's chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, the national history honors society, hosted its second annual high school history quiz bowl tournament in Hamilton Hall on April 11. The event was a great success and will surely encourage students' interest in history.

Read more [here](#).

Student Graduates from Research to Rescue and Recovery at Sea

Majoring in history at Carolina was "one of the best decisions of my life," Lauren Crawford Shudark says. The 2014 UNC graduate combined her passion for history with her longstanding interest in the U.S. Coast Guard to write an honors thesis examining the Coast Guard's participation in cleaning up the Exxon Valdez spill in 1989. Last spring the department awarded her the Frank Ryan Prize, given annually to the best senior honors thesis.

Read more [here](#).

Recent Honors History Student Pursues the Moral Arc of History

He was raised by transplanted Yankees in New Orleans, and the tensions in his family background interested him in history and the broader paradoxes of American society. Tom Wolf, a 2014 UNC graduate with honors in History, makes use of the perspectives and skills he gained at Carolina in his position as Communications Coordinator for the North Carolina NAACP.

Read more [here](#).

UNC Graduate Receives Rhodes Scholarship to Continue Study of Racism

Her dedication to understanding injustice has already opened many doors for her. Now Sarah Bufkin, 2013 UNC graduate, will use the Rhodes Scholarship she won in fall 2014 to pursue a D.Phil. in Politics at Oxford University.

Read more [here](#).

History Department Boasts Twenty-two 2014–2015 Phi Beta Kappa Initiates

Congratulations to the outstanding history majors who became members of Phi Beta Kappa in Fall 2014 and Spring 2015!

Read their names [here](#).

Faculty News

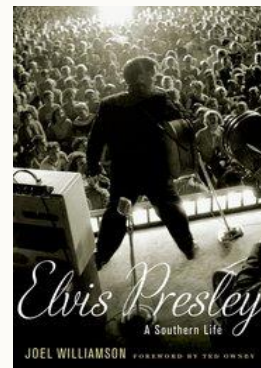
John Kasson Retires after 44 Years at UNC

He's shared his passion for American cultural history with generations of students and readers alike. Now John Kasson, Professor in History and American Studies, is retiring from UNC after forty-four years.

Read more [here](#).

Joel Williamson Tells Elvis's Southern Story

After two decades of research and writing, emeritus professor Joel Williamson has published *Elvis Presley: A Southern Life*. The book interprets Elvis's life, music, and celebrity in the context of the postwar South. Professor Williamson was so devoted to his subject that he moved to Memphis for a time to immerse himself in Elvis' city, he told the *Daily Tar Heel*. His commitment paid off in a vivid narrative biography, and reviewers are raving. The *New York Review of Books* called the book "a remarkable mixture of careful, empirically based historical work and free-wheeling cultural commentary." "Joel's work has always been both audacious and ambitious,"



said Fitzugh Brundage, department chairman. He noted that the biography analyzes Elvis “as a man of a very particular place and time. The South out of which Elvis emerged had not existed previously nor does it exist now. Williamson reminds us of how dynamic the New Deal and postwar South was. Whites and blacks were in motion, moving toward opportunity and with an optimism that was new to a region more familiar with poverty and defeat. Williamson's portrait of Elvis does not render the King any less singular; rather it renders his origins in northeastern Mississippi and the arc of his career comprehensible.”

Joseph T. Glatthaar Receives 2015 Samuel Eliot Morison Award



Joe Glatthaar, the Stephenson Distinguished Professor of History, has received the 2015 Samuel Eliot Morison Award from the Council of the Society for Military History. The award is reserved for scholars whose distinguished body of work represents a significant contribution to the field of military history.

Molly Worthen Appointed Contributing Writer for the New York Times

Assistant professor Molly Worthen has joined the *New York Times* as one of several new contributing writers for the Opinion section. Professor Worthen’s journalism, like her research and teaching, focuses on North American religion and politics.



Graduate Student News

Talented New Cohort of PhD Students Heads to UNC

The History Department is pleased to welcome the addition of 17 incoming students to the Graduate Program this fall. Our incoming class includes young scholars from the United Kingdom, Japan, China, and points across the United States. Their proposed topics also span the globe and include medieval conceptions of spirituality, imperial borderlands in Spanish America, Soviet nationalities policy, and Jewish life in the antebellum South. Together, they speak to the department's commitment to excellence, and we look forward to welcoming them to Chapel Hill.

--Chad Bryant, Director of Graduate Studies

Internship Award Helps Grad Student Bridge the Gap Between Academic and Public History

He says he's "only scratched the surface" when it comes to the possibilities of the digital humanities. Last summer graduate student Jason Kauffman received a Graduate Summer Internship Award funded by UNC History alumnus Mark Clein '81. The award introduced him to this exciting field and gave him tools for a career as a public historian. Read more [here](#).

Summer Internship Provides Path to Federal History Job

She got her foot in the door, and they asked her to come back. Sarah Barksdale used her Graduate Summer Internship Award to support her work in the Office of the Secretary of Defense Historical Office, which led to a paid yearlong internship and a job offer. Read more [here](#).

GIFTS TO THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT

The History Department is a lively center for historical education and research. Although we are deeply committed to our mission as a public institution, our "margin of excellence" depends on generous private donations. At the present time, the department is particularly eager to improve the funding and fellowships for graduate students.

Your donations are used to send graduate students to professional conferences, support innovative student research, bring visiting speakers to campus, and expand other activities that enhance the department's intellectual community.

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The Department also receives tax-deductible donations through the Arts and Sciences Foundation at UNC-Chapel Hill. **Please note in the "memo" section of your check that your gift is intended for the History Department.**

Donations should be sent to the following address:

UNC-Arts & Sciences Foundation
134 East Franklin Street
CB# 6115
Chapel Hill, NC 27514-6115
Attention: Ronda Manuel

For more information about creating scholarships, fellowships, and professorships in the Department through a gift, pledge, or planned gift please contact Ronda Manuel, Associate Director of Development at the Arts and Sciences Foundation: ronda.manuel@unc.edu or (919) 962-7266.



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