



2013

Letter From the Editors

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(2013) "Letter From the Editors," *The Gettysburg Historical Journal*: Vol. 12 , Article 2.
Available at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/ghj/vol12/iss1/2>

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Letter From the Editors

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

2013 has been a year marked by the plethora of national celebrations of historical memory, whether it be the sesquicentennial anniversary of the American Civil War, the fiftieth anniversary of many major events in the modern Civil Rights movement, or the bicentennial celebration of the War of 1812. Memorial walks, lectures, concerts, films and celebrations have propelled a victorious, nationalistic historical narrative to the forefront of public attention. While this narrative is important, and fun, to celebrate, when the crowds recede and the fanfare fades, we must remember that history is more than a few great men, a smattering of important dates and a handful of inspirational quotes carved into the stone of monuments. History is what happened every day. History is full of grim, crossed purposes, and confused results. History is enigmatic; it defies clear definition and neat narratives.

Gettysburg College history students require no reminder as to the ubiquitous and abstract nature of history. Rather than shy away from the complexity of the past, Gettysburg College students embrace it. They probe primary sources and popularly held opinions to better understand the complexity. In the confusion, they seek the truth.

The work of the five students published in this, the eleventh volume of the *Gettysburg Historical Journal*, exemplify Gettysburg students' eager and thorough analysis of the past, never afraid to engage with and/or challenge popularly held arguments. In each work, the author seeks to nuance his or her audience's understanding of a historical event or phenomenon. Rebekah Oakes in "To Think of the Subject Unmans Me" examines the Victorian ideal of a good and noble death when applied to soldier deaths during the Civil War. Discussing American leisure practices in the 1930s in "Escaping in the 'Tender, Blue Haze of Evening,'" Josh Poorman complicates metanarratives of *Great Gatsby*-esque lavishness and 1930's *Grapes of Wrath*-esque deprivation. Andrew Ewing seeks to assess the idolization of Lewis and Clark in "Navigating Boundaries." In his paper "Europe's Little Tiger," David Wemer challenges the popularly held narrative of economic "shock therapy" through the example of Slovakia. Gabriella Hornbeck, in

her work, "La Bretagne aux Bretons?" contradicts popularly held opinions and stereotypes of French identity with the unique Breton culture.

Each of these works engages with popular historical narratives, and by delving further, endows the reader with a richer understanding of both subject matter, and the world it helps create. We, the editors of the *Gettysburg Historical Journal*, encourage you to bring this curiosity to all your historical endeavors, both formal and informal. Now, without further ado, it is with great pride that we present the eleventh volume of the *Gettysburg Historical Journal*.

-The Editors
Kate Reed
Amelia Grabowski