

SHGAPE PRESIDENT'S NOTE

An Embarrassment of Editorial Riches

Nancy C. Unger*

Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA, USA

*Corresponding author. Email: nunger@scu.edu

As President of the Society for Historians of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, I have marveled at the number of hard-working people it takes to make this society not just survive, but thrive. The end of Boyd Cothran's tenure as co-editor of our society's flagship enterprise, this journal, gives me the welcome opportunity to showcase one of these dedicated individuals. Beginning in 2017, this journal has reaped the benefits of Boyd's leadership and editorial expertise. Since its inception, the journal has been blessed with exceptional editors, each one taking the journal a giant leap forward. Boyd's leadership, however, has proven truly transformational. As Boyd leaves the editor's chair, it is with great pleasure and immense gratitude that I note what he has achieved over the last five years.

One of our challenges as scholars of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era (GAPE) is helping our colleagues who identify with other fields understand and appreciate that if their work is primarily set in "our" time period, they are GAPE scholars as well. In 2015 Boyd published in our journal "Enduring Legacy: U.S. Indigenous Violence and the Making of American Innocence in the Gilded Age." This article was part of a special forum he co-edited on Indigenous Histories. In that issue, Boyd noted that, although Indigenous History is central to the era, in the previous fifteen years the journal had published only five articles on any aspect of Indigenous history. As editor, he set out to fill that lacuna, and I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that his success has transformed not just the journal but GAPE history as well.

The number of articles shedding important new light on Indigenous History has more than tripled, making our journal a widely respected leader in this field. Such a transformation requires more than a few well-placed calls for papers. Boyd put in a tremendous amount of work: beating the bushes (including attending promising conference panels), spreading the word that JGAPE would give such pieces a warm welcome, recruiting individual authors (notably Indigenous scholars), and then working hard with those submissions to make them the best they could be and in print. The results of these efforts are: great scholarship, authors who thought of themselves exclusively as historians of Indigenous peoples now identifying as well as GAPE scholars, and a big increase in the profile of the journal.

Boyd also put in considerable effort to emphasize the value of our period, not only for its own sake, but as a powerful tool in understanding the present and working to improve the future. He promoted and solicited material that was explicitly engaged with the contemporary era. These efforts included commemorative special issues

such as the “WWI: 100 Years Later,” “The Red Scare of 1919-1920 at its Centennial,” “The Nineteenth Amendment at 100,” “The Second Gilded Age,” and a special issue on the history of lynching in honor of Fitz Brundage. Moreover, under his direction, the Notes from the Field section regularly featured works of public history scholarship relevant to the era. And while the journal continued to publish top notch reviews and explorations of more traditional materials, it also published articles on video games such as *Red Dead Redemption 2* and, in October of 2021, featured an article on Teaching the Gilded Age and Progressive Era in light of the Black Lives Matter movement in the wake of the murder of George Floyd.

It is a special challenge for print journals to respond quickly, but Boyd endeavored successfully to keep the journal timely and fresh, particularly through his pioneering Roundtables feature. These lively exchanges have brought a new and different energy to the journal, and their popularity is enhanced by Boyd’s heroic efforts to inspire over-worked historians to respond rapidly as they bring important historical perspective in as close to real time as possible. This was particularly fruitful in discussions regarding COVID (in the October 2020 issue with a follow-up in April 2022), as well as roundtables on Anti-Semitism, Indigenous Sovereignty, and, in honor of Elisabeth Israels Perry, the Long Progressive Era.

While Boyd deserves high praise for these innovations, he is also to be commended for his attention to the thankless, painstaking, day-to-day work of running a successful journal. Following the abrupt departure of his co-editor, Boyd ensured a smooth transition for his new co-editor, Rosanne Currarino. Together they shared the burdens of running the journal with tremendous grace and efficiency. This included the soliciting and editing of manuscripts, of course, but also a wide range of demanding administrative tasks, including renegotiating the journal’s complicated contract with Cambridge University Press. This was only one of many responsibilities made even more burdensome by the COVID epidemic. Not only did the journal continue to thrive, however, but in countless lengthy Zoom meetings Boyd was unfailingly calm and efficient, and his delightful sense of humor remained intact.

During Boyd’s five-year tenure as editor and co-editor, *JGAPE* published some fifty four articles, six roundtables, four special issues, and three forums. Our circulation and downloads are higher than ever, and our acceptance rate lower. Despite the pandemic, our submissions remain robust in numbers and quality. Over all our reputation is growing stronger as a mature journal. A special achievement is the fulfillment of Boyd’s goal to achieve gender parity among the journal’s contributors, no small feat in our field that tends to skew male.

In view of all that Boyd has done to increase this journal’s excellence, I am delighted to report that our good fortune continues. Boyd’s co-editor of the last two years, Rosanne Currarino, will continue at the helm. Rosanne brings her own marvelous blend of scholarly expertise, editorial savvy, and humor to this position that requires hefty doses of all three. She is mindful that the majority of the journal’s submissions, as well as its most downloaded articles, are in the more traditional fields of political, economic, intellectual, and social history. She plans to highlight new work in these fields and showcase the ways they continue to change and to cast new and important light on the making of modern America.

COVID will continue to wreak havoc on scholarly planning and productivity for the foreseeable future. Rosanne is nonetheless committed to maintaining the journal’s excellence, and is also eager to encourage a wider range of scholars to think of themselves as *JGAPE* scholars as well, and enrich our journal with their work. In

addition, she has a variety of special issues already in progress on cultural history, including GAPE literature, as well as sound during the period. She is also at work on a forthcoming roundtable on the centennial of the trial of Marcus Garvey. In short, she has been a worthy partner, and now successor, to the amazing Boyd Cothran—high praise indeed! The future looks bright for the Society for Historians of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era and its journal.