

FROM THE EDITORS

We are excited to unveil the fifth issue of the Virginia Tech Undergraduate Historical Review and invite you to delve into its pages rich in historical scholarship. The Review began in 2011 with a vision to create a platform for publishing exceptional undergraduate research at Virginia Tech. Last year, we expanded that opportunity to include undergraduate work from other four-year universities in Virginia. This year, we are happy to announce we have expanded further into universities in North Carolina as well. This year's Review includes a submission from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Our hope is that the Review will continue to grow and develop in the years to come.

One of the main objectives of the Review is to offer students the opportunity to gain experiences in the discipline of history outside of the classroom. When students submit to the Review, their papers are peer-reviewed by an editorial board of undergraduates. Our editorial staff takes this review process seriously, working diligently to return cogent and clear ideas for revisions. Undergraduate submitters profit as they work through editing suggestions and acquire knowledge of the peer-review process for publication. The quality of the submissions in this journal reflects the dedication to excellence of both authors and undergraduate editors.

This edition of the Review contains six outstanding articles, beginning with Tyler Abt's *On Sands Stained Red*. Abt takes a bottom-up approach to examining the successes and failures encountered by the American troops on Omaha beach during the Normandy invasion. In his paper, Abt argues that success was jeopardized due to poor planning from top military officials, and victory was only won through the poise and courage of low ranking troops. Next, Virginia Tech Alumnaus Nancy Fowlkes Mason takes us to China in her cross-cultural look at American home economists' work in the country between the 1920s and 1940s. Fowlkes Mason shows that the home economists she studied prioritized scientific ideas about home economics over the cultural practices of both Chinese and American societies. Ellen Boggs continues our look into history outside of the United States in her article on UNESCO's involvement in

efforts to save the Buddhas at Bamiyan from destruction by the Taliban. Boggs shows that the Taliban's religious agenda, determination to gain international recognition, and influence from Al-Qaeda blocked the international agency's efforts. Elyse Sulkey, from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill provides an historical/literary analysis of the transformation of thought in Benedictine monk Guibert of Nogent from anti-Judaic clerical sentiments in his early work to anti-Semitic rhetoric in his later work. Moving us back to American history, Courtney Howell's *Convict Leasing* reassesses the convict leasing system in place in the U.S. South in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, arguing that the primary function of the system was support and criticism for the system focused on economic, rather than racial, issues control. Last but not least, Rachel Snyder's *Bewitched* sheds light on an oft-forgotten murder network that spanned the East Coast in the early twentieth century. Snyder finds that this network, steeped in Italian traditions, used murder and insurance fraud as a strategy for economic survival during the Great Depression.

As graduate editors, we hope that you enjoy this issue of the Virginia Tech Undergraduate Review as much as we have enjoyed working both with the editorial board and authors in crafting it for publication. For their support and help in making this issue possible, we would like to thank Dr. Mark Barrow, chair of Virginia Tech's History Department, as well as our faculty editor for this year, Dr. Paul Quigley. Also, we would like to thank Dr. Robert Stephens, founder of the VTUHR, the undergraduate editorial board and all the students who made the brave decision to submit their work for publication. Our design editor, Courtney Howell, deserves our heartfelt thanks and appreciation for all the hours spent designing and formatting the Review. Lastly, we thank you. By picking up and reading this journal you not only expand your knowledge of history but also support undergraduate research. So, we hope you will sit back, relax and enjoy your journey back in time!

FAITH SKILES AND KEVIN CAPRICE

Managing Editors