

Notes from the Underground

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The Historical Underground

Voices from the Past

Toussaint Louverture

Toussaint Louverture is one of the most powerful revolutionaries to ever have lived, yet he is surprisingly unknown. Most people you come across have never heard of this man, yet he was an intellectual giant at the forefront of the most successful slave revolt in history. This rebellion shook the very foundation of the Atlantic world when it turned into a revolution that created the first Black republic in the Western World: Haiti. Emerging from chattel slavery to gain considerable wealth and power as a free person of color in the French Caribbean, he joined the violent assault against slavery that broke out in the French colony Saint Domingue in 1791. This revolt could not have come at a worse time for France, because they were experiencing revolutionary turmoil at home and needed the

massive amount of cash being brought in from the plantation colonies; but Toussaint was determined to fight back. Before being arrested by Napoleon and



"You try to make us believe that Liberty is a benefit that we will enjoy if we submit ourselves to order..."

dying in prison, he organized a military of mostly slaves and free people of color who defeated the French, British, and Spanish forces all sent to put down the movement he controlled. The context of these quotes come from the early days of the revolt when the French sent an envoy to Saint Domingue in hopes of convincing the slaves to go back to work. The French Revolution produced more talk about liberty and the inalienable rights of man than any other before it, and Toussaint held them accountable for their words.

"...But as long as God gives us the force and the means, we will acquire another Liberty, different from that which you tyrants pretend to impose of us."

<i>Inside this issue:</i>	
Voices of the Past	1
This Month in History	1
Sports History	2
Random Rants	2
The Ever-Present Past	3
Conversations with History	3

This Month in History

The Mystery of the Mistletoe

The legends surrounding mistletoe are as old and varied as the plant itself. One legend is that a wreath of mistletoe, because of its parasitic nature, could protect against witches and curses. Another legend is that mistletoe is a powerful symbol of fertility. The Celtic Druids held a ceremony at both the solstices where they would cut down mistletoe with golden sickles and offer prayers of prosperity for the next season. Ancient legend claims that Balder, the god of summer sun and keeper of life, was killed when Loki used mistletoe to make an arrow tip. Loki chose mistletoe because it was the

only plant that Balder's mother, Frigga, overlooked when she beseeched the elements to protect her son. After weeping over Balder's dead body, Frigga was able to revive him with her tears. In her gratitude, she bestowed kisses on all who crossed her path. Thus emerged the legend that all who stood under mistletoe would be protected from harm and receive a kiss as a token that love was born.

As Christmas became commonly celebrated throughout Europe, mistletoe became a symbol of the season of life. According to legend,

if a woman refused a kiss under the mistletoe, she would remain unwed, whereas a woman who received a kiss could expect to marry within a year. Whether people today believe the ancient legends, mistletoe is still very much a part of holiday decorations and often aids in making *Merry Christmas* memories.



Sports History

“Their struggles with discrimination mirrored those of all Native Americans at the turn of the last century.”



Louis F. Sockalexis

Baseball: American Pastime

Despite the fact that all types of Americans have embraced the game in their own way, professional baseball did not always include non-white Americans. Few today are aware that as early as the 1890s Native American groups were fielding barnstorming teams and traveling around the country playing “pick-up” games with other amateur teams in open fields.

One reason for this is that baseball as a sport appealed to most ethnic groups across America. The rules were simple and flexible, and equipment was minimal: a ball, something that functioned as a bat, and open space. Native American groups across the nation adopted the game for both its entertainment

value and as a way to assimilate into American culture. In fact, many Native Americans learned to play baseball while attending Federal Indian Boarding Schools. Louis Sockalexis, the first Native American to play Major League baseball, is a prime example. He was signed by the Cleveland Spiders in 1897 and paved the way for future Hall of Fame member Charles “Chief” Bender to be signed by the Philadelphia Athletics in 1903. Both Sockalexis (from the Penobscot tribe) and Bender (from the Ojibwe tribe) felt the weight of representing their people in an all-white sport. Although they faced massive discrimination when traveling and were given

derogatory nicknames like “Injun,” their success helped create a middle ground between whites and Native Americans at a time when race relations were soured.

Sockalexis and Bender were truly pioneers in the baseball world as well as in Native American culture. Their struggles with discrimination mirrored those of all Native Americans at the turn of the last century. While their stories are not part of baseball legend and lore, their experiences opened the door for 50 other Native Americans to play Major League Baseball. This includes active players Joba Chamberlain of the Winnebago tribe and Jacoby Ellsbury, a Navajo.

Random Rants

“The Wisdom of Ignorant Men”

Nathan Bedford Forrest created one of the most disturbing organizations of brotherhood that the world has ever seen. However, the good that eventually came out of his and his friends’ horrid organization is that it later served to unify many people against the type of unwarranted hate that the Ku Klux Klan later came to embody. There is no doubt that this dark movement eventually gave way to some great men in the future who tried to find peace through equality

Adolf Hitler was what most people would call a monster. However, the good that came out of his monstrous deeds in the 1930s and 1940s made the

world a better place. Examples of this are the importation of some very brilliant minds into other countries around the world, Jews having a homeland in the form of Israel, and N.A.T.O being formed as an engine to protect the Atlantic world from possible aggression elsewhere. Without his actions, the world would most likely be a very different place.

John Wilkes Booth’s murderous act of violence set in order an event that helped to shape the known world. First, it immortalized Abe Lincoln in the minds of Americans; then it allowed a more radical Con-

gress to set in motion the necessary initiatives to give black Americans their rightful place in the South. However, the most good it did was to forge America on a new path to help us become great. By this I mean the formation—once and for all—of an unbreakable American national identity.

Each of these men were ignorant in their own right, but maybe their ignorance was needed to bring foundational change. If so, then it is fair to say that wisdom comes in mysterious ways.



The Ever-Present Past The Bonus Army

In 1932, nearly 43,000 protestors, among them 17,000 WWI veterans, arrived in Washington, D.C., beleaguered by the hard times of the Great Depression. Many of them had lost their homes, jobs, and savings, and the veterans hoped to obtain financial relief through early payment of war bonuses promised to them by law. Known as Bonus Army Camps, the sites they occupied were well organized under a leadership structure similar to the military. However, despite the support they received from the general population and the House of Representatives, the Senate refused their demands. As the veterans continued to protest, the police were called in to dismantle their movement, eventually

opening fire and killing two veterans in the process. Shortly afterward, President Herbert Hoover ordered the Army under Gen. Douglas MacArthur to clear them out. The Bonus Army initially believed the soldiers were there to support them, but MacArthur's forces attacked, driving the protestors back and shutting down the camps.

The conflict wasn't over, though, for in 1933 another march was held. This time, however, the president was Franklin Roosevelt, and he sought a more peaceful solution to the protestors' problems. The negotiations allowed for the enrollment of 25,000 veterans into the Civilian Conservation Corps, which was a government

public works program that sought to provide jobs for many veterans. In a somewhat happy ending, Congress finally passed a law in 1936 that approved early payment of the bonuses. This example demonstrates that active protest can make a difference.



Conversations with History

Mike Downs

What courses do you teach at TCC?

I teach both of the U.S. History survey courses (1301 and 1302). I also teach both Western Civilization courses (2311 and 2312) and World Civilization Courses (2321 and 2322).

How and why did you decide to become a historian?

Ultimately, I asked myself what subjects I enjoyed doing the work for, and history was unquestionably my favorite. I always tell my students who are contemplating a career as a historian to follow their passions and interests in life, and the rest will take care of itself.

What is your academic interest and field of expertise?

Early Modern European history. I specialized in religious history and religious conflicts (Catholic and Protestant) but also earlier comparative religious conflicts such as Christianity vs. Pagan worship. I am working on my Ph.D. in 16th-century Elizabethan England and the discovery and exploration of the Americas. I also study the military revolutions of the 16th and 17th centuries and

have a passion for ancient history, particularly Mesopotamia and the Sumerians.

What do you think students can gain from studying history?

History is a form of intellectual self-defense. Too often politicians invoked it to manipulate people by using history to defend their current views and opinions without actually having an accurate understanding of the past. Without a solid grasp of past historical events, it is easy to just go along and be misled. If you know your history, it is much easier to challenge or at least question those who attempt to manipulate you.

What do you like about TCC?

TCC has been and continues to be a wonderful place to work. There is tremendous support and encouragement for faculty to pursue their research and teaching interests.

What is your general philosophy of history?

To quote from the film "Jerry Maguire" — "Show me the money!" At the heart of every revolution or major social trans-

formation throughout history was a financial crisis of some kind. Once the revolution began, ideologies like liberty and equality, for example, were tacked on to try to mask the real origins. We like to think that values, ethics, morality, and even ideas tend to propel society along, but history demonstrates time and again that economics is what makes the world go 'round.

If you could have a conversation with anyone in history, who would it be and why?

Dr. John Dee was Queen Elizabeth's royal astrologer. He was a mathematician and magician. He lived in a world where the line between faith and reason was indistinguishable. He coined the phrase "British Empire," wrote sophisticated treatises on navigation, had the largest library in England at the time and yet conjured and communed with spirits and angels, creating an entirely new system of "magick." He is the subject of my dissertation, so having a conversation with him would no doubt allow me to finally finish my degree!

"Without a solid grasp of past historical events, it is easy to just go along and be misled."



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“HISTORY IS OUR WEAPON OF CHOICE”



Join Us: Tuesdays/5:30pm/ESEE 2131

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Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

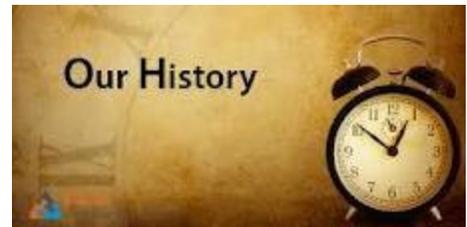
This is the second issue of our newsletter, and we want to start off by thanking the history department for providing our organization with the necessary funds to publish 100 copies a month for an entire year! We are so grateful to work in an environment which allows interested parties—both faculty and students—to pursue their academic interests.

The reader of this edition will find a number of changes from the previous one. To start, we are excited to announce that two of the articles in this month's publication were written by students. Such collaboration between

faculty and students is what we are about, and we hope to include more student involvement as time goes on. Also, new to this edition are articles on sports history and the ever-present past.

As far as The Historical Underground student organization is concerned, our big event this semester was to go as a group to see the movie “J. Edgar.” Big thanks go to the Student Activity Center for providing funding for us to see this film. One of our students is writing an article for the historical movie review section that will be out in January, so be sure to keep up with each issue to get the lowdown on this controversial film.

Overall, Fall 2011 has been an exceptionally productive year for the organization, so get involved if you want in on a piece of the exciting new journey we are paving for history at the Southeast Campus. Best of luck for finals week, and enjoy the holiday season.



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