



**WESTERN ILLINOIS
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NOTA BENE

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
2025 NEWSLETTER**

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Greetings friends,

A US Army colonel and former professor of rhetoric, Joshua Chamberlain, is famous for commanding the 20th Maine Regiment in defense of the left flank of the Union line at the Battle of Gettysburg on July 2, 1863. Earning a respite after that hard day, the 20th Maine was moved away from the focus of the Confederate assaults on the left...to the center of the Union line, which bore the brunt of "Pickett's Charge" on July 3. Chamberlain's hard luck to find harm's way has recently felt familiar to the history department amid fiscal and enrollment challenges that Western faces (like other higher education institutions). Encouragingly, Joshua Chamberlain persisted in doing his duty, the Union was saved, and he was decorated (though also later wounded at the Battle of Petersburg, but that's another story).

Western's historians are doing their duty in trying conditions (though of course not being shot at). Our teaching critical thinking about the past's connections to the present remain central to Western's mission. Perhaps our graduates will find moments to defend the American republic as well as teach about it. "Knowledge of history is a dangerous thing," as a sign outside my door reads, and as a student wrote on her graduation mortar board this spring.



**Dr. Tim Roberts speaking
on 2024 Constitution Day**

So, honor Col. Chamberlain's efforts and savor your ties to Western as you peruse the 2025 department newsletter's update on the department's faculty, staff, and students. While our bedrock remains preparing students to become excellent teachers, all students, increasingly from non-traditional backgrounds, have a blast studying history within and outside the classroom, produce their own scholarship, and launch productive careers. And, as always, feel free to get in touch or pay us a visit.

Nota Bene, Tim



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RECENT DEPARTMENT SCHOLARSHIP & CURRICULUM ENHANCEMENTS

Lee L. Brice and Tim Roberts, editors, *Boundaries of War: Local and Global Perspectives in Military History* (Marine Corps University Press, 2024), [free electronic publication](#)

Peter Cole, editor, *Presente: A Dockworker Story*, by Herb Mills (Hard Ball Press, 2024)

Peter Cole, “How American Dockworkers Fought Apartheid in South Africa,” November 11, 2024, online at [Jacobin](#)

Febe Pamonag, “Women and Social Movements in the Philippines during the American Empire, 1900-1940,” in *Indigenous Women’s Voices in North America, American Empire, and the Global South, 1820-2020: A Syllabus with Documents* (Alexander Street Press, 2024), online [here](#)

Tim Roberts, *After Barbary: Algeria’s Roles in the French and American Empires* (Cornell University Press, 2025)

Western Illinois Historical Review, vol. XIII, Spring 2025, online [here](#):

- Emmanuel Ennin**, “Exploring Government Actions and Their Impact on the Twenty-First Century Nkonya and Alavanyo Conflict in Ghana”
- Natalie Gibson**, “Proskynesis and Other Adopted Cultural Practices”
- Aaron Kennelly**, “Southern Illinois Coal Wars: Southern Black Workers as Outsiders”
- Peyton Ward**, “Echoes of a Sleeping Industrial Giant: The Impact of Northwestern Steel & Wire on Sterling and Rock Falls, Illinois”

We now offer a fully online Bachelor of Arts degree!
Beginning in fall 2025 students in our MA program
may complete a minor field in Museum Studies,
complementing our other traditional minor fields in
American, European, and Asian history!

INTERNSHIPS

The history department has seen a growth in student interest in public history careers, which they can start as students via internships. Below are snapshots of five student interns this past year.

Dorothy Agyapong served at Macomb's Western Illinois Museum on a project tracing the experiences of early female educators at the Western Illinois State Normal School (the early name of WIU), whose materials are now available as teaching materials for K-12 educators. Surprisingly, she found parallels between these women and female teachers today in her native country, Ghana, in terms of institutions' insistence that women be moral paragons -- in the words of a university president in 1922, they "do nothing to coarsen themselves or to make themselves lose that bloom of girlhood." Dorothy heard similar directives in her own training. She wondered "if this social expectation of female teachers knows no cultural and geographical boundaries or time period. Like their Ghanaian counterparts, women at WISNS were to be exemplars of morality and hard work in the school and the community. As much as history and time zones change, my internship has shown me that some things stay the same."



Henry Dickinson served at the Milwaukee County Historical Society creating a finding aid for a vast collection of materials the MCHS had received 1929-2006 from Wisconsin state 4-H clubs, including arcane VHS tapes, Kodak slides, photographs, newspaper clippings, and leadership manuals. Henry nailed the unique value of the museum archivist -- creating meaning for valuable social and community history artifacts -- when he wrote that "Small artifacts like these linger in my mind due to just how mundane and well-used they would have been in their time, while their outdated format makes them rather alien to [the public] today."



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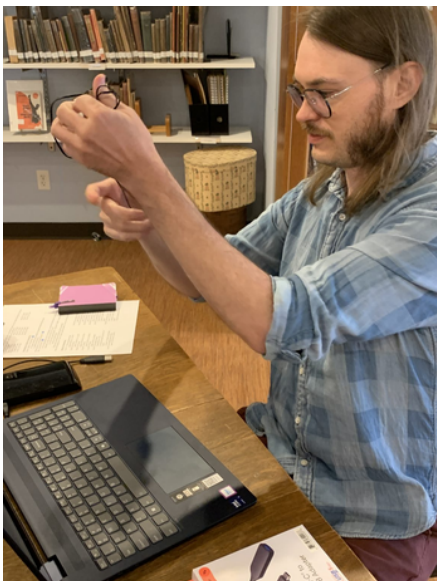
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INTERNSHIPS

Katelyn Smith (*below left*) – served as a curator at the Missouri Department of Conservation in Jefferson City. Her major project was an exhibition she produced, “Missouri's Mushrooms,” which now hangs in a public hallway in MDC’s Jefferson City headquarters. This exhibit features ten paintings of mushrooms found in Missouri painted by the artist Donna Pasley in the early 1980s. The paintings had been lost in MDC vaults until Katelyn discovered them and, working with a state mycologist, realized their significance.



Aaron Surdez (*above right*) – served as a historical interpreter at the Boy Scouts of America's Philmont Ranch in Cimarron, New Mexico. Aaron represented a homesteader on the New Mexican Abreu homestead. He lived in the reconstructed cabin as a 1910 ranch farmhand, demonstrating animal care – for burros and chickens, and against the occasional intruding black bear -- wood-burning stove usage, adobe brick making, and wool spinning, and giving talks to visitors on the Abreu ranch and *hacienda* system and on the history of New Mexico’s settlement.



Jesse Godbey (*left*) volunteered at Macomb's Western Illinois Museum, where he transcribed and digitized a collection of 90 World War I letters and postcards written by Illinois resident and veteran Dale Anthony Crandall to his parents in Galesburg, Illinois. Jesse said he became adept at “reading old, long-form handwriting with a magnifying glass.” Reading Crandall's letters as he shipped off to Europe, Jesse also came to appreciate "personal history" in allowing us to connect with someone in the past. Ironically, Crandall's ignorance about the hardships of trench warfare he was about to face made his writing more resonant with Jesse, who remembers his own mild apprehensiveness about moving away from home when he was an 18-year-old like Crandall.



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HISTORY DEPARTMENT SCENES



Bulletin board outside Dr. Ute Chamberlin's office, showing an array of recent department events



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HISTORY DEPARTMENT SCENES

“That Made the Difference”: C. T. Vivian’s Challenges and Opportunities at Western Illinois University

Though C. T. Vivian’s national civil rights leadership is well known, little attention has been given to his youth. Originally from Missouri, Cordy Tindell Vivian spent his formative years in Macomb. In 1942, he enrolled at Western Illinois State Teachers College (WISTC), where he served on the student council and was sports editor for the Western Courier. Though Vivian did not graduate from WIU, his time here shaped his lifelong career of activism.

Vivian enrolled at WISTC at the same time that the United States entered World War II. The war presented the contradiction of the United States fighting for democracy abroad while maintaining segregation at home. Black soldiers fought in segregated units, with limited leadership opportunities and discriminatory treatment. This contradiction, which showed its effects in Macomb and at Western, shaped Vivian into the civil rights leader he would become.

C. T. Vivian’s story is a reminder of the possibilities for Western students. He faced racial adversity on campus and in the community, but channeled these experiences in his youth into his activism. Vivian made the most of the opportunities available at Western, and went on to become a champion for civil rights.

Acknowledgements: This exhibit is a project of students in Dr. Timothy Roberts’ public history capstone course in Spring 2025. Henry Dickinson, Natalie Gibson, Austin Lagesse, Lily Martinek, Evan Ott, Brittney Shaffer, Julia Slesinski, Katelyn Smith, Reese Smith, and Emma Styx conducted research and wrote the exhibit text. Special thanks to Senior Library Specialists Kathy Nichols and Bill Cook in the Western Illinois University Archives, president and founder of the Reverend C.T. Vivian Project Byron Oden-Shabazz, and Denise Vivian Morse who aided research and provided artifacts for this exhibit.

For their capstone experience, senior students created an exhibition on C. T. Vivian using the WIU libraries’ archives to curate artifacts telling the untold story of Vivian’s life growing up in Macomb and attending WIU during World War II. The exhibition emphasizes that Vivian’s experiences in Macomb shaped his career in American civil rights history. The exhibition is on the first floor of Morgan Hall. Visitors welcome!



History students pictured next to the C. T. Vivian exhibition: Henry Dickinson, Natalie Gibson, Emma Styx, Reese Smith, Austin Lagesse, Lily Martinek, Katelyn Smith, and Julia Slesinski. Not pictured: Brittney Shaffer and Evan Ott.



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HISTORY DEPARTMENT SCENES



Top left: Aaron Kennelly presenting at WIU on the 2022-23 Case-New Holland Strike in Burlington, IA. Aaron walked the picket line, and is now a labor historian!

Bottom left: The ASH history club Clash Event - The first ever ASH Olympics included jousting between Peyton Ward and Rishabh Arya

Top right - Christian Fumey & Prof. Tim Roberts at the Midwestern History Conference in Des Moines, IA, where they presented on the Midwest's lynching history



Bottom right - Winter Hurst-Leadicker advocating at the Illinois capitol for more funding for higher education

WIU student wins Simon Democracy Prize, proposes ranked-choice voting referendum



Winter Hurst-Leadicker at the Tri States Public Radio studio. "I believe that this type of voting (ranked choice) would create a much more equitable and democratic system," Hurst-Leadicker.

Winter Hurst-Leadicker was awarded the 2025 Paul Simon Democracy Prize of the Southern Illinois University Carbondale's Paul Simon Public Policy Institute for his project to place a referendum on the ballot that asks voters in Macomb, Illinois to approve a ranked-choice voting system for the city's municipal elections



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HISTORY DEPARTMENT SCENES

Our Omicron Omicron chapter of the Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society welcomed thirteen new members in its spring ceremony! Pictured at right are Jesse Godbey, Viktor Wallace, Winter Hurst-Leadicker, Frank Wauer, Dorothy Agyapong, Emma Styx, Melissa Freddy, Natalie Gibson, Taylor Adams, Christian Fumey, Aaron Kennelly, and Peyton Ward. Not pictured is Anna Lucken.



Working with alumnus Adam Bednar (commander of the “5. Kompanie Großdeutschland” reenacting group) and the Macomb Park District, the history department hosted its second World War II Living History Days event at Macomb's Veterans Park and on campus. 400 K-12 students participated. Media coverage [here](#).

Last year the history department led several WIU LIFE continuing ed classes! Tim Roberts discussed Abraham Lincoln's visit to Macomb and -- with history major Ron Pettigrew -- lynchings in Illinois; Professor Emerita Ginny Boynton explored America's female founders and Illinois women in World War II; Ute Chamberlin shared about her recent visit to Israel; and Kim McDaniel (MA, 2006), taught on Steampunk and “technology and the Titanic.”



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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

The history department attracts students from all kinds of backgrounds, both within and our classes and in our extracurricular activities. This Student Spotlight is about Rishabh Arya, who is majoring in Computer Science and Foreign Languages (French emphasis). However, he expresses his passion for history as an officer with the Associated Students of History (ASH) club.

Where is your family from? I was raised in Faridabad, Haryana, a part of the Delhi-NCR region, about 18 miles from New Delhi. My parents, however, are from Eastern states. My dad is from Bihar, and my mom is from Jharkhand.

Where did you go to high school? I did nearly all of my schooling, i.e., from kindergarten to high school, at Manav Rachna International School in Faridabad.

What sparked your interest in WIU? Ever since I was in middle school, I have wanted to study abroad. So, when the time came for college applications and exams, I decided to put all my focus on applying to the US. I applied to Western because a friend from my high school was here. It's the place that saw my merit and potential the most and gave me a great scholarship, which allowed me to come here.

How did you get interested in History at WIU? I have always been very interested in history. It was my favorite subject in school, and I made some friends who were History majors at Western. They invited me to check out ASH, and I really enjoyed it. It re-sparked my interest in history and allowed me to meet some great people with great vibes.

What do you like about ASH? I like how ASH gives us a place to talk about ourselves so many times. It's really fun to see how history and culture mean different things to different people. It has given me a platform to talk and share the histories of my culture and passions. And of course, I love the people in ASH.





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2025 GRADUATES

The history department salutes our great history students who graduated this year. Spring graduates at the top are Corey Knobbe, Leo Boddicker (Cum Laude), Emma Styx, Lily Martinek (History Department Scholar, Magna Cum Laude, Centennial Honors Scholar), Katelyn Smith (Magna Cum Laude, Centennial Honors Scholar), Brittney Shaffer, Evan Ott, and Henry Dickinson.

Pictured next and below are our fall history graduates Logan Lommel (MA, 2024; BA, 2022) and BA students Carlos Colin, Dylan Flaig (Cum Laude), John Barner, Eli Asplund (Department Scholar), and Cora Lee (Cum Laude). Carlos, Dylan, John, Eli, and Cora are all set for careers in teaching history and social studies. Logan is coaching track and field, and aspires to run in the 2028 Olympics -- stay tuned. Graduates not pictured are A. J. Bauser, Maeva Viyegbe, Jaiden Speer, Austin Lagesse, Julia Slesinski, and Dorothy Agyapong.

At the bottom is Emma Styx holding her mortar board and embracing the history department's new mantra.

Congratulations to all new Leatherneck historians!





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ALUMNI NEWS

- The history department was pleased to hear from a couple of alumni as part of Western's 125th anniversary series. **Adam Bednar** (BA, 2009) shared his memory in December, and **Bob Kett** (MA, 2018) shared his memory in January. Adam is a senior project manager at the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, Bob an archivist at the Barack Obama Presidential Library.
- The department hosted a WIU history alumni panel wherein three graduates discussed their career experiences as public historians. Micca Metz (BS 2010), Blake Bell (MA, 2009), and Lottie Phillips Fiddes (MA, 2013) shared their stories, particularly the skills they learned at Western that have helped them through the years (and different jobs), and their suggestions for professional development steps that current students should take. Who else can claim that they stopped a road construction project over discovery of artifacts, spoke on C-SPAN about America's first immigration law -- spoiler: it encouraged immigration -- or curated a state bicentennial museum exhibition? We have a recording of the panel for anyone interested.



*Micca Metz (BS, 2010),
currently an
Archaeological
Consultant
at Associate
Environmental
Science in Seattle, WA*



*Blake Bell
(MA, 2009),
former US National
Park Service historian,
currently an Instructor of
History at Arkansas State
University-Beebe*



*Lottie Phillips Fiddes
(MA, 2013)
former National Park
Service intern and
Curator of History at the
Peoria Riverfront Museum,
currently a history teacher
at Peoria High School*



Do you have news to share with the history department and Leatherneck history alumni? We would welcome it with open arms! Feel free to email the department chair, Tim Roberts, at tm-roberts@wiu.edu, call us at (309) 298-1053, or share a public post or private message on our [Facebook](#) page.



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HOW TO SUPPORT & STAY IN TOUCH!

The Show Must Go On!

The Department of History appreciates your generosity. Through your giving we annually award scholarships and prizes to nearly one-third of all students majoring in history and history education. Your donations fund student research, departmental resources for teaching, and history events.

Please give and help maintain our standard of excellence. Click [here](#) to make your gift to the department, or type in a scholarship you wish to support. If you wish to write a check, make it payable to the WIU Foundation, designated History Department, and mail to WIU Foundation, Sherman Hall 309, 1 University Circle, Macomb, IL 61455-1390.



Elephants in a circus parade in the Macomb, IL town square, 1934, courtesy of the WIU Archives

Follow Leatherneck History!

Take opportunities to visit Macomb and stop by the History Department

Follow us on Facebook & Instagram and stay tuned for the next alumni panel!

Thanks to our department office manager Cindy Arnett for production of this newsletter and graduate student Paolo Romero for his proofreading