

See **MEMORIAM** / 19

## **John A. Munroe**

John Andrew Munroe died on September 6, 2006, at the age of ninety-two. Munroe was born in Wilmington, Delaware and received his B.A. at the University of Delaware and his Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania. In 1942 he accepted a position in the Department of History at the University of Delaware where he taught until his retirement in 1982.

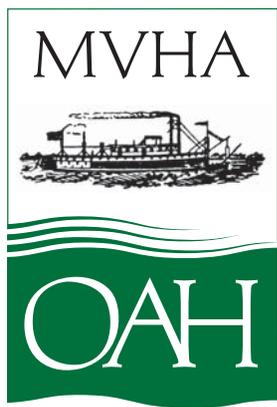
A prolific writer and popular speaker, John Munroe published more than eighty professional articles and many shorter pieces. He spoke frequently to fellow scholars and community groups and also developed two sets of televised lectures on Delaware history. For many years, he taught most of the students at the University of Delaware, where students were required to take a course on the history of the state. Munroe published numerous books including *Federalist Delaware, 1775-1815* (1954), *Louis McLane: Federalist and Jacksonian* (1973), *Colonial Delaware: A History* (1978), and *The University of Delaware: A History* (1986). At the age of ninety he published his last book, *The Philadelphawareans and Other Essays Relating to Delaware* (2004).

Munroe's first book, *Federalist Delaware*, challenged Charles A. Beard's then regnant thesis that clear and sharp economic interests separated mercantile-minded Federalists from Republican agrarians. The opposite was true in Delaware, where Republicans were dominant in the bustling city of Wilmington while Federalists held sway in rural Kent and Sussex counties. Writing in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Manning Dauer praised the book as "well-rounded, ably written, and balanced."

Munroe's greatest contribution to scholarship may have been his biography of the nineteenth-century politician and businessman Louis McLane. McLane was a congressman, senator, secretary of the treasury, ambassador to England, and president of two of the nation's largest business enterprises, the Morris Canal and Banking Company and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. In 1951-1952, Munroe discovered caches of family correspondence that were still in the hands of McLane's descendants in Colorado. Writing in the *American Historical Review*, Charles M. Wiltse described the resulting biography as "an immensely readable book" that "add[ed] measurably to our understanding of the Jackson period."

John Munroe is survived by his wife, Dorothy, three children, and seven grandchildren. In the words of University of Delaware President David P. Roselle, "John A. Munroe was the perfect embodiment of the gentleman scholar. He was revered as an accomplished historian, a learned professor, a caring mentor, and a delightful friend. He helped shape the history department here at the university, a department now housed in a building that appropriately bears his name."

—*Raymond Wolters*  
University of Delaware



CENTENNIAL  
1907 — 2007

Inside:

Balancing Scholarship  
and Activism / 7

2007 Convention  
Supplement / A1

# Newsletter

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## Profession Mourns Passing of OAH Presidents Levine, Leopold



Levine

Larry was born February 27, 1933, in the depth of the Great Depression and less than a week before the inauguration of Franklin D. Roosevelt—two subjects that would later attract his interest as a historian. His father, an immigrant from Lithuania, ran a fruit and vegetable store in New York's Washington Heights, where Larry often

worked. A self-described "lousy student" in high school, Larry entered City College of New York's afternoon and evening session, which offered open admissions. There, he found himself intellectually and graduated in 1955 with honors. He then received his M.A. (1957) and Ph.D. (1962) at Columbia University, where he worked with Richard Hofstadter.

Although Larry greatly admired Hofstadter, he marked out a very different intellectual path in his dissertation, which later became his first book, *Defender of the Faith: William Jennings Bryan, the Last Decade* (1965). Whereas Hofstadter mocked "the pathetic postwar career of Bryan" as the "perfect epitome of . . . the shabbiness of the evangelical mind," Larry depicted an optimistic defender of an enduring democratic faith. Four decades later, the student's judgment has endured while the mentor's has faded. Michael Kazin, Bryan's most recent biographer (2006), describes the Great Commoner as "a great Christian liberal" and Levine's work as the "the smartest study of W.J.B. ever written."

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Leopold

Richard W. Leopold, a prominent diplomatic historian whose teaching and scholarship guided students and colleagues during an illustrious career, died of natural causes Thursday, November 23, 2006, in Evanston, Illinois. He was ninety-four.

Among the hundreds of former students identifying Leopold as a mentor who profoundly affected their lives are former Sen. George McGovern (D-SD), former Rep. Richard Gephardt (D-MO), Rep. Jim Kolbe (R-AZ), former assistant secretary of state Phyllis Elliot Oakley, historian John Morton Blum (Sterling Professor of History Emeritus at Yale University), journalist Georgie Anne Geyer, and television and motion picture producer/writer/director Garry Marshall. Kolbe wrote, "I used to say with great pride that I learned American diplomatic history at the feet of one of the greatest scholars in the United States—Dick Leopold. I knew that statement would not be challenged in or out of academic circles. . . [He] believed that being a teacher and a mentor was a lifetime commitment, and for those who responded, it became a lifetime of friendship." McGovern noted, "I believe that every thoughtful student who studied under Professor Leopold's direction would agree that this country has produced no more dedicated and competent professor. He has not only mastered his field but he has had a lifetime passion to convey his knowledge and insight to his students." Marshall recalled his difficulty answering long essay questions in final exam blue books and how Leopold "allowed me to answer with dialogue scenes rather than prose writing and graded me on content rather than style. It helped me tremendously and I think my early Bismarck dialogue aided me in writing sitcoms and movies for a living."

The second son of Harry Leopold Sr. and Ethel Kimmelstiel, Richard Leopold was born on January 6, 1912 on the upper west side of Manhattan. He attended the Franklin School before enrolling in 1926 at Phillips Exeter Academy where he graduated cum laude in 1929. He then went on to Princeton University, graduating with highest honors and Phi Beta Kappa in 1933.

See **LEVINE** / 16 ▶



A golden chariot sits atop the Minnesota state capital in St. Paul. (Photo courtesy of "Explore Minnesota Tourism.")

The first annual meeting of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association (MVHA) took place a century ago at Lake Minnetonka, outside Minneapolis. This year, OAH returns to Minneapolis to celebrate the growth of OAH into the largest learned and professional society of American historians and pay tribute to the OAH members who directed that growth. With more than 150 sessions and 700 presenters, this year's meeting will present the latest research in American history. For details about what's in store for us at the meeting and to learn more about Minneapolis, turn to the convention supplement inside.

See **SUPPLEMENT** / A1 ▶

See **LEOPOLD** / 12 ▶

## At Deadline . . .

We became aware of the passing of Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and J. Merton England at press time. Look for complete obituaries in the May 2007 issue.

## Thomas B. Alexander

Thomas B. Alexander died in Columbia, Missouri, on July 3, 2005 at age eighty-six and was buried at his home town of Nashville, Tennessee. Alexander took all three of his degrees at Vanderbilt University, earning his B.A. in 1939, his M.A. in 1940, and his Ph.D. in 1947, and he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. He served as a supply officer in the U.S. Navy from 1943 to 1946 in England, in France on the heels of the Normandy Invasion, and after active duty in the Navy Reserves as lieutenant commander.

In the course of his career, Alexander taught at Clemson College (from 1946 to 1949), as professor and chairman of the division of social sciences at Georgia Southern College (from 1949 to 1957), at the University of Alabama (from 1957 to 1969), and from 1969 until his retirement in 1988 at the University of Missouri, where he was named the Middlebush Professor in History from 1979 to 1982 and received the Tyler Distinguished Professor Award in 1985.

A student of Frank Owsley, Alexander took his mentor's empirical approaches and ran with them. He was one of the pioneers of quantitative political history and a leader in the founding of the Social Science History Association, which elected him as its president in 1986. He successfully bridged various approaches to history, as is attested by his election to the presidency of the Southern Historical Association in 1979. Along with some twenty-five scholarly articles and book chapters, he published three single-authored books, *Political Reconstruction in Tennessee* (1950; 1968); *Thomas A.R. Nelson of East Tennessee* (1956); and *Sectional Stress and Party Strength: A Study of Roll-Call Patterns in the United States House of Representatives, 1836-1860* (1967).

Alexander's character and generosity were exemplified when he and a recently minted Ph.D., Richard Berringer, discovered that they were at work on essentially the same project, a legislative analysis of the Confederate Congress. As Berringer relates their first contact: "He replied that he had heard of my dissertation . . . and very graciously asked if I would like to join him in a coauthored book. You can imagine my surprise and gratitude when an established member of the profession asked a newcomer like me to join him in a book. But that was the kind of man Tom was." The result was *The Anatomy of the Confederate Congress* (1972), which won both the Jefferson Davis Award of the Confederate Memorial Literary Society and the Charles S. Sydnor Award of the Southern Historical Association.

Tom's generosity extended to graduate students as well. Those in his seminars could always count on an invitation to the Alexander home for a delicious steak dinner, complemented by Jack Daniels and Budweiser, to round out the semester. Tom advised an even dozen Ph.D.s at Alabama and at least a half-dozen, officially and unofficially, in the leaner job market of the 1970s at Missouri. It was a point of pride with him that of all his advisees who had passed their comprehensives, all but two successfully competed their dissertations. His support often went far beyond the call of duty, as I can attest, having defended my

dissertation with one foot on the plane to a job in Germany, half a chapter still in Tom's rough typescript, and the bibliography still to be extracted from the footnotes by him and the typist. My bad conscience was only assuaged from having assisted him while he shepherded several Alabama stragglers across the finish line.

Tom was survived by his wife of sixty-four years, Elise Alexander, a classmate and fellow math tutor at Vanderbilt; three daughters, Wynne Guy, Elaine Gates, and Carol Gajek; and three grandchildren. □

—Walter D. Kamphoefner  
Texas A&M University

## Sylvia Freeman Wallace McGrath

Sylvia Freeman Wallace McGrath, Regents Professor in the Department of History at Stephen F. Austin State University, died September 1, 2006. She was born in Montpelier, Vermont, on February 27, 1937, but was raised in East Lansing, Michigan. Her parents, George and Martha Wallace, both taught at Michigan State University where George became a world renowned ornithologist.

She received her M.A. from Radcliffe College in 1960 and her Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin in 1966, the year in which she married William Thomas McGrath. Their two children, Sandra Jean, born in 1968, and Charles George, born in 1971, were the center of the McGrath family life personally and professionally. They moved to Nacogdoches, Texas, in 1966 when William accepted a position in the Department of Forestry.

Two years later, after teaching parttime, McGrath joined the Department of History as an assistant professor where she taught for the next thirty-eight years. The university named her a Regents Professor in 1994. During the last six years of her life, she served as chair of the department. In 2004-2005, she was elected Chair of the University Chairs Forum.

Sylvia's two major fields of interest were the history of women and the history of science which, in her decades of research and writing, she was often able to combine in innovative teaching and scholarship. The University of Wisconsin Press published her dissertation, *Charles Kenneth Leith, Scientific Advisor*, in 1971. She provided a chapter, "Scientific Foundations, Societies, and Museums," for *100 Years of Science and Technology in Texas* published by Rice University Press in 1986. "Unusually Close Companions: Frieda Cobb Blanchard and Frank Nelson Blanchard" appeared in *Creative Couples in the Sciences*, in 1996. She also contributed articles to the *Encyclopedia USA* and to *The Biographical Dictionary of Women in Science: Pioneering Lives from Ancient Times to the Mid-Twentieth Century* and published numerous book and media reviews. She continued preliminary research for a biography of Frieda Cobb Blanchard, the well known plant geneticist and zoologist, at the time of her death.

Throughout her life, Sylvia McGrath exemplified the best standards of sound scholarship and professional teaching. Her integrity, insistence on ethical values, and faith in others provided a caliber of service to her department, students, university and community that was truly exceptional and profoundly influential upon all who worked with her. She lived her life with a grace, dignity, and innate kindness that commanded great affection from those who loved her and enormous respect from all who knew her. □

—Elizabeth Deane Malpass  
Stephen F. Austin State University

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—Raymond Wolters  
University of Delaware

## David L. Smiley

Historian of the South, extraordinary teacher, memorable personality, David L. Smiley died on December 27, 2004, at the age of eighty-three. Born on St. Patrick's Day in 1921, in Clarksdale, Mississippi, David attended Mississippi College before serving in World War II. After the war he earned his A.B. and M.A. at Baylor University before completing his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin in 1953.