

From the Editors

It is with great pleasure that we present the first edition of *Ezra's Archives* to the Cornell community. This journal represents the hard work and dedication of a small group of undergraduates here at Cornell, who have put in tremendous time and effort to publish not only this periodical, but at the same time establish the Cornell Historical Society, Ezra's Archives parent organization. With the help of two amazing faculty advisors, we have successfully completed our first venture into publishing undergraduate work in the field of history. For this first issue, the Editorial Board thought it fitting to provide a brief introduction to the journal itself—why we feel that this publication is an important addition to campus and what we hope it will accomplish.

The first questions that come to mind when contemplating a publication like the one you hold in your hand are perhaps the most fundamental. Why study history? Why write history and why read history? These questions are especially pertinent for *Ezra's Archives*, an undergraduate publication intended not for professional historians, but for a community of students with diverse interests and areas of expertise. Irrespective of any given individual's major or interests, their history undeniably and unavoidably informs their present. In this way, history is a critical aspect of our existence—consciously or unconsciously, our present thoughts and actions are always influenced by our past. Writing history is a crucial task as it puts this past in readable form and allows us to see how we contextualize and imagine ourselves. Out of a confusing jumble of images, events, places, and people, historians must piece together and construct a continuous story. This process is not trivial. It is not the raw past, but rather history, that helps place us in the world, a subtle yet important difference. When we understand ourselves through the context of the past, we can only do so through the stories that our historians tell and the lenses they provide.

Of course, these stories take many different forms and deal with many different topics. The Editorial Board's selections for the spring 2011 issue of *Ezra's Archives* display this diversity in both geographical and methodological focus. Most importantly however, these papers also showcase excellent research and writing from undergraduate students.

While the papers included in this collection originated through a variety of routes, all stand out as exemplary historical scholarship. We are sure that you will enjoy reading each one.

Ultimately, what we hope to accomplish with this journal—why we felt it was so important to establish on campus and to establish precisely now, when students are increasingly steering away from liberal arts courses and majors—is to bring history and dialogue about history to the student body. When we began this project more than a year ago, our original intent was to merely provide an outlet for undergraduates to present meaningful research outside of the traditional classroom.

However over the past few months, that original intent has developed into something much greater—what was a desire to simply publish a journal has turned into a desire to engage undergraduates in a discussion on the multi-faceted nature of the field of history. *Ezra's Archives* is and always will be an undergraduate publication, designed not only for those students who will go on to pursue further studies in the field of history, but also to engage students for whom history is a secondary or new interest. We feel that thinking critically about the past is not only an academic skill, but rather a way of looking at the world that is just as important, if not more, outside the lecture hall than in the classroom.

Now that this first issue has been published, the question becomes, where do we go from here? First, we plan to become a biannual publication, producing issues in both the fall and spring semesters. We also hope to reach out to History departments at other American universities in the coming years in order to solicit submissions from a wider sample of undergraduates. While we remain dedicated to providing opportunities to students here at Cornell, we also wish to make *Ezra's Archives* a part of the larger discussion on history throughout the country.

We appreciate all the support we have received along the way, from the many students who submitted papers, to our editors, to our advisors in the history department and to the department itself, and we hope that you will enjoy this journal we have worked so hard to produce.

Sincerely,

Maya Koretzky and Andrew White
Ezra's Archives Co-Editors in Chief and Co-Founders