July 2010 saw the department enter a new phase with Associate Professor Dr. Mary Scheer assuming interim chair duties.

Dr. Scheer received both her B.S. and M.A. in history from Southwest Texas State University in 1970 and 1975, respectively. In 2000, she earned her Ph.D. in history from Texas Christian University.

Scheer’s research and teaching interest focus on Texas history, women’s history, American social and reform movements, the Gilded Age, and the Progressive Era. She has published widely in these fields.


Dr. Scheer admits the learning curve since becoming interim chair has been steep, but she is eager to serve the department and will undoubtedly serve it well.
New scholarships in history announced

The Department of History is pleased to announce three new scholarships given in honor of Dr. Samuel Evans, Dr. Howell H. Gwin, Jr. and Mr. Peter B. Wells.

Dr. Samuel Evans was a member of the Department of History from 1959 until his death in 1964. A native of Deport, Texas, he received his bachelors' degree from Texas A&M and his Ph.D. from the University of Texas. His specialties were agricultural history and Texas history. This scholarship is currently held by undergraduate student Andrew J. Skinner.

Dr. Howell H. Gwin, Jr. has been a member of the Department since 1962. He grew up in Mississippi and received his Ph.D. from Mississippi State University in 1962. His research interests include Classical and Medieval history. In 2009, he was named Distinguished Professor Emeritus. The scholarship, with preference for graduate students, will be presented for the first time in Fall, 2010.

Mr. Peter B. Wells was a founding member of the Lamar University Foundation and served as a trustee until his death. He was a practicing attorney whose interests included Texas history, especially Lorenzo de Zavala, on whom he wrote a monograph. A native of Austin, he received his undergraduate degree from the University of Texas, and his Doctor of Laws degree from Harvard University. The scholarship is currently held by graduate student James Burnes.

Online Courses a hit

Over the last year, history instructors Ken Poston and Alan Autrey have worked tirelessly to integrate the Lamar U.S. History courses and survey Texas History course into the State U. or online component of the course offerings from Lamar University. The courses offered have consistently enrolled more students than offerings from other disciplines and feedback from students and Academic Partnerships, the administering and creative partner for Lamar, has been positive.

Alan and Ken have served as course creators and faculty administrators and continue to do so. Currently they offer History 1301 and 1302 and Texas History 2301 to students.

Cajun Fiddler topic of new biography

History Instructor Tim Knight is under contract with Hardy Publishing of Houston, TX, for his newest study titled, Poor Hobo: The Tragic Life of Harry Choates.

Harry Choates (1922-1951) was a Cajun fiddler who made a name for himself with his hit record "Jole Blon." Recorded in Houston by Gold Star Records at Bill Quinn Studios, "Jole Blon" reached number four on the top ten charts in 1946, the first Cajun record to ever accomplish this feat. Port Arthur radio personality Gordon Baxter called the record Port Arthur's national anthem.

Despite his musical genius, Choates suffered from alcoholism. In 1951 he was arrested in Austin, Texas, for failure to pay child support to his wife and two small children. He died in the Travis County Jail suffering from delirium tremens. A collection was taken to pay funeral expenses and he was buried in Cavalry Cemetery in Port Arthur.

At press time, no publication date had been set.
Forret Produces High-Caliber Scholarship

Dr. Jeff Forret, Associate Professor and Graduate Director in the department, recently completed his book manuscript for the American slavery volume in the Issues and Controversies in American History series, which Facts on File will publish in fall 2011.

Forret has kept busy with conference presentations as well. He presented “Slaves, Sex, & Sin: Adultery, Forced Separation, and Baptist Church Discipline in Middle Georgia” at the Charting New Courses in the History of Slavery and Emancipation Conference (March 2010).

Forret has also contributed to enhancing the international reputation of Lamar University and the department by presenting “He Was No Man Atall?: Slave Men, Honor, Violence, and Masculinity in the Antebellum South” at the University of Warwick in England. The paper will appear as the lead chapter in an edited anthology stemming from the conference.

Two encyclopedia entries round out Forret’s scholarly output. An article on slavery in the early republic and antebellum era appeared in the Oxford Handbook of Slavery, while another article on slave violence will appear in The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture.

National History Day Returns to Lamar University

Spring semester 2011 will find dozens of eager young historians on campus competing in National History Day. They will be among the nearly 500,000 students who will compete in National History Day this year across the country. Following a successful competition last spring, this year’s competition hopes to be even better.

Middle school and high school students from Beaumont and surrounding areas will submit original papers, websites, exhibits, performances, and documentaries based on research in primary and secondary sources focused on the theme: Debate and Diplomacy in History: Success, Failures, Consequences. Professional historians and educators serve as judges at the local, state, and national levels.

Carol Atmar and Ken Poston, instructors for the department, serve as this year’s coordinators for the Beaumont area. They are already busy making sure this year’s competition is a success. Don’t miss an opportunity to serve as a judge.

More information about this year’s competition will be available soon.

Linsley Wears Many Hats

Judy Linsley, instructor for the department and Curator of Interpretation and Education at the McFaddin-Ward House in Beaumont, currently serves on the advisory board of the Visionaries in Preservation (VIP) project. The Texas Historical Commission created the VIP program to provide training and technical assistance to Texas communities developing efforts to preserve their historic structures and neighborhoods. Beaumont should benefit tremendously from this initiative.

She also served as Texas Oral History Association president for 2008-2009 and currently is a member of the board.

The board of the Tyrrell Historical Library Association in Beaumont also benefits from Linsley’s dedication and tireless efforts.

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Faculty Development Leave Offers Opportunities for Dr. Bryan

Dr. Jimmy L. Bryan Jr., Assistant Professor, was awarded a faculty development leave for fall semester 2010. The leave allows faculty a semester free of teaching responsibilities to devote to research, writing, and other scholarly pursuits. Bryan will use his opportunity to work on several projects, including his book manuscript, The American Elsewhere: Adventurism and Manliness in the Age of Expansion, 1815-1850.

He plans to conduct research at the Newberry Library in Chicago, the Bancroft Library at U.C. Berkeley, the Library of Virginia in Richmond, and other archives. He is also at work on a proposed anthology entitled Essays in the Cultural History of American Warfare, and has contributed essays to the Encyclopedia of Military Science.

Robertson Promotes Texas History and the Adams Family

The department takes great pride in its adjunct instructors. They are a crucial component of the department and contribute greatly to our scholarly understanding of local, state, and national history.

Robert Robertson, besides teaching American history surveys for the department, has produced a number of conference papers and publications. He represented the department at the most recent East Texas Historical Association meeting in Nacogdoches, discussing his research on Congressman Jack Brooks and Civil Rights. In March 2010 at the annual meeting of the Texas State Historical Association in Dallas, Robertson presented his interpretation of John E. Gray, banker and civic leader.

Robertson was published locally in the Tyrell Historical Library Association Journal, with his “St. Anne - Faith and Philanthropy, Art and Architecture.” The prestigious Massachusetts Historical Review published his work on “Louisa Catherine Adams Kuhn, Florentine Adventures, 1859-1860” in their fall 2009 issue. The Massachusetts Historical Society also invited Robertson in April 2010 to present a “Brown Bag” lecture titled, “Louisa Adams and her brother Henry in Italy – A Brief Glimpse.”

Webb Society Keeps Busy

The Lamar University chapter of The Walter Prescott Webb Historical Society has a full calendar of conferences, meetings, volunteering, and academic pursuits this semester.

Volunteers from the society helped make the McFaddin-Ward House Harvest Hoedown event a success. Student members provide their volunteer services to the French and Chambers houses here in Beaumont as well.

The local Webb Society chapter in mid-November will send representatives to the fall meeting in Jacksonville, Texas, where they will enjoy several museums and state historical sites, as well as networking with other chapters of the society across Texas.

Members will also begin organizing and archiving the extensive Ralph A. Wooster papers. Wooster, professor emeritus of history, served Lamar University in various capacities for nearly fifty years.

Professors work really hard…

(http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanovel/timeline/warren.html)
**History Department Co-Sponsors Oral History Workshop**


Co-sponsored by the History Department and the University Archives & Special Collections Department of the John Gray Library, the workshop aimed to familiarize attendees with various aspects of Texas’ role in World War II.

Audience members also learned tips on how to conduct, record, and organize oral histories relating to World War II, with emphasis on ethical and legal issues surrounding oral history interviewing, interviewing techniques, and the best technology to use when recording, storing, and transcribing oral histories. McWhorter and Newcomer also requested assistance in tracking down more information on local military and home front sites.

The workshop was one of a series held throughout the state by the Texas Historical Commission.

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**Phi Alpha Theta News by Cassandra Durisco, Chapter President**

Our Mu Chi chapter of Phi Alpha Theta has reached an active point once again. In the past year we have increased awareness and the number of inductees. In the spring banquet, we inducted eleven new members and this fall we have five new initiates.

For this fall Phi Alpha Theta has several activities planned. In November, the organization will visit the Holocaust Museum of Houston for a day of reflection on this historic event.

November will also mark the beginning of work on the service project for the chapter. This project will be an oral history focusing on the veterans of Vietnam. We are hoping that this will eventually be something that can supplement the extensive World War II oral history archive here at the university.

In the spring Phi Alpha Theta will have its annual banquet and we are proud to announce that we have secured Dr. Wooster for our speaker next year. We are looking forward to hearing some of his experiences as a historian in the military.

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**Thompson Knows TR**


Since then, Professor Thompson has spoken about his study to the 1302 American survey classes of Ms. Carol Atmar and Mr. Tom Caraway, who are using the book. In September, Thompson also gave a paper at the Western Conference on British Studies Conference in Austin.


Next summer will find Professor Thompson in the UK as a Visiting Fellow at Wolfson College, Cambridge University, where he will conduct research for his next project.

Dr. Thompson will also represent the department in a teaching video clip to be shown to the Lamar Board of Regents later this month.

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Dr. Thompson’s book, published in April of this year. (http://us.macmillan.com/theodorerooseveltabroad)
Patty Renfro received her Secretary of Science degree from Lamar University. After graduating, she entered the corporate world, processing data for Jasper-Newton Electric Company in Kirbyville. The human resources department of Entergy was fortunate to benefit from Patty’s numerous talents for twenty years.

Since 1997, Patty has served the Department of History faithfully as administrative associate. She is a wealth of knowledge about navigating the Lamar bureaucracy. If she does not know the answer to your question, which is rare, she knows exactly who to call to find the answer.

Needless to say, the department cannot function smoothly without Patty’s tireless efforts. We thank you, Patty, for your dedication!

Compiled, edited, and written by Mark Mengerink. Special thanks to everyone who sent me their information. Your participation in this newsletter was crucial to its success. Thanks also to graduate students Jessica Patrizi and Cassandre Durso for their assistance.

If you would like to be included in future editions of the newsletter, please forward your information to Mark Mengerink.

As Promised...The Pet Corner

This issue’s pets come to us from the home of Mark Mengerink, assistant professor. Mengerink and his wife, Michelle, collect cats in their spare time.

Phoebe Belle is the grey, long-haired Princess of the house. Very uptight, very whiney, and very demanding, she is very sweet & very loveable as well.

Sophia Jane is a black, long-haired sweetheart. Sophie is a caring little girl who loves to be the center of attention. She is very lively & likes to know what is going on at all times. She also loves to “hunt” and “stalk” her favorite strawberry toy.

Spencer Clayton is the striped King of the house. Spencer is a character. He is VERY full of life and he is VERY much his own cat. While he is the youngest, he is the dominant kid in the house. He can be sweet, loveable, and gentle. He can be rowdy, frisky, and playful as well. His many moods keep the house on its toes!

Alfred Sykes is a grey, clumsy, loveable Bloke. Alfie is also silly, sweet, awkward, adorable, and gentle. He is ALWAYS up for a neck rub, a chin scratch, or just hanging out on your lap.