


Editor's Note

Brian M. Ingrassia 

West Texas A&M University, Canyon, TX, USA
Email: bingrassia@wtamu.edu

Historian Robert H. Wiebe once famously characterized turn-of-the-century America as a society pursuing a “search for order.” This was a place where, according to David Herbert Donald’s foreword to Wiebe’s volume, *The Search for Order, 1877–1920* (1967), middle-class men and women “developed the new values of ‘continuity and regularity, functionality and rationality, administration and management’ in order to cope with twentieth-century problems” (viii). The articles in this issue show us that perhaps the late 1800s and early 1900s United States was a place focused less on orderly solutions than on messy contests over control – especially control of land, labor, elections, and morals.

In the SHGAPE Graduate Student Essay Prize winner, “Autonomy Through Allotment: Political Strategies of the Ottawa Tribe in Indian Territory, 1870–1892,” David Dry shows how the Ottawa Tribe supported allotment and U.S. citizenship as ways to control their land. Although the Ottawa may have appeared to embrace assimilation, they were not “accomplices” to those who sought to eliminate them; rather, they used federal policies to create a more secure homeland in Indian Territory. Meanwhile, in “Great Conspiracies, Stealing Seats, and Anarchy: Senatorial Elections in Disputed States, 1892–1893,” Peter Argersinger illustrates how the Republican Party tried to control elections in an era of agrarian revolt. The Grand Old Party (as it was already known by the 1870s) was particularly concerned about maintaining control of the Senate at a time when farmers and miners embraced the People’s (Populist) Party. Republican leaders in several western states engaged – not always successfully – in various forms of procedural legerdemain in order to win seats in Congress. More than two decades later, writes Matthew O’Neal in “The Long Red Summer on the Railroads: Labor, Race, and Exclusion in Appalachia,” white workers sought to control space in railroad towns where African American families had settled during the Great Migration. Although federal policies provided some opportunities for Black workers during the World War I era, such policies also inspired backlash. White workers first tried to exclude African Americans through labor action but, ultimately, turned to violence. This article is part of an emerging historiography demonstrating how all-white “sundown towns” were created not by accident, but by cruel and intentional design.

In a special forum on the history and legacy of Anthony Comstock, an all-star lineup of historians and legal scholars analyzes how a Civil War veteran and New York-based anti-vice reformer worked to control American morality and sexuality for nearly half a century. While most historians of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era are familiar with Comstock and the 1873 federal law named for him, few of us know the extent of

Comstockery's influence at the state and local levels, or how long it persisted beyond his death in 1915. This forum places Anthony Comstock in historical context, showing how his movement emerged from Reconstruction-era politics, and it reminds us that even though Comstock himself may have sought primarily to stop extramarital sex and pornography, his namesake laws had long-term impacts on access to abortion and birth control. The forum includes a pedagogy section with valuable tips on how to teach students about the origins and legacy of various Comstock laws.

These are all timely pieces. In the aftermath of Supreme Court cases like *McGirt v. Oklahoma* (2020) and *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* (2022) – not to mention recent cries of voter fraud, or protests regarding racialized space and memory – early-twenty-first-century Americans are constantly reminded how much we still contest control of land, elections, residential space, and sexuality. This issue of the *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* should help us understand not just the past, but also how we got to the present.

This issue marks multiple transitions. As Wendy Gamber writes in her president's note, with this issue we say farewell to co-editor Rosanne Currarino, who has tirelessly worked on behalf of *JGAPPE* since 2020, ensuring this publication survived the COVID-19 era, while also placing her indelible stamp on the journal. I have learned so much from Rosanne and her remarkable example, and I will seek to maintain the level of excellence and energy she has instilled. Thank you, Rosanne! In addition, we welcome aboard new book review editor Daniel Platt, who takes over from Joseph Locke, who has also provided the journal with several years of fine service since 2020. Thank you, Joe! Daniel is already starting to place his enthusiastic stamp on the book reviews section, and we look forward to robust collections of reviews in the issues of volume 24. All of us at *JGAPPE* thank you, the readers, as well as the Society for Historians of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, for your continued engagement and support, especially as we have dealt with unfortunate yet unavoidable production delays throughout the past few months.