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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT

of

Western Kentucky University

by

J. Crawford Crowe

THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

① In 1924 when the institution was reorganized under the name of the Western Kentucky State Normal School and Teachers College twelve hours of social science from the fields of History, Government, Geography, Economics and Sociology were required for the B. A. degree. Most students took at least six hours (two courses) in history because six hours of American History were required for the elementary certificate. For the life certificate six hours of European History were also required. From its beginning in the first decade of the century the institution has enrolled more students in these survey courses each year than in all other history offerings. Although the titles as well as the terminal and beginning dates changed occasionally, these courses eventually evolved as (100) - The U.S. to 1865; (101) - The U.S., 1865 to the Present; (102) - Europe, 1500 to 1815, and (103) - Europe Since 1815. In 1963 with the addition of (104) - Western Civilization to 1500, the numbering of the European survey courses changed to (105) and (106).

The 1924-25 catalogue listed eighteen history courses or a total of forty-eight hours, although one of the courses was designated as American Government, a freshman course, which occasionally was listed as American History and Government until Government and Sociology received status as a separate department in 1963. In 1927 History (201) - American Diplomacy, 1776 to the Present, was designated as a government course.

From these forty-eight hours students were permitted to take a major or minor in History and Government. In addition to the requirements

of one survey course in American and one in European History, (204) - Methods in History for the Grades or (205) - Methods in History for High School, were required of all majors. In 1928 these two method courses were replaced by (204) - Technique of Teaching History. Inasmuch as the other social sciences were under the wings of the History Department and the school was primarily a teacher training institution, (302) - The Course of Study in History, was added in 1928. Later changed to a methods course in the social sciences this offering was taught by the History Department until transferred to the Education Department in the 1950's. In trend with the times, the Department in 1924 also offered courses in Geographic Influences in American History and in European History.

③ Like many of its sister institutions whose origins date from the nineteenth century, Western in its infancy offered Classical History on both the secondary and college levels. Although combined for a brief time as a single offering in Ancient History both (206) - Ancient Rome and (205) - Ancient Greece have suffered only an occasional numbering change and have remained a fundamental part of the upper division discipline, since 1924.

A firm belief in the necessity of a knowledge of the European background has likewise contributed to the strength of the department. In 1924 The Renaissance and Reformation (209) and the Middle Ages (207) were listed. Their numbers were soon changed to (305) and (207). Both courses were expertly handled by Dr. Arndt M. Stickles, Ph.D. (Indiana), who first headed the Department and taught fifty years after joining the faculty in 1907. ^{Courses in} The French Revolution, and the Napoleonic Period (207) appeared in the 1923 catalogue and was later changed until it emerged as (323). ^{and} The Victorian Period in England to the Present (210)

appeared in the 1924 catalogue. Although changed to England from 1800 to the Present in 1927, ^{The latter} this course was the beginning of strong English History offerings which have continued to the present, and were strengthened by Miss Ercell Jane Egbert, M.A. (U. of Penn.), who joined the Department in 1925. Finally emerging as England to 1715 (209) and England Since 1715 (210) two upper division courses have also served as a background for senior or graduate courses, English History Since 1914 (413) and Nineteenth Century Britain (415).

In 1931 Dr. James H. Poteet, Ph.D. (John Hopkins) joined the faculty and developed strong courses in Kentucky History (217), American Colonial History (315), and Latin America (215). Dr. Poteet was Department Head from 1955 until his retirement in 1966. During this period the number of history faculty members tripled, and in the academic year, 1965-66, more than 3000 students enrolled in history courses.

^{Due to} Students have expressed more than a general interest in the History of the South and in Civil War and Reconstruction. This has been especially true at Western where Miss Gabrielle Robertson, M.A. (Univ. of Chicago) developed courses for both upper division and graduate students. The Lower South and Reconstruction (202) was offered in 1922. In 1924 Reconstruction, 1863-1876 (203) appeared. In 1926 the number was changed to (301), and the History of the Lower South, 1840-1860 (309) was listed in the catalogue. ^{The dept. now offers courses in} These courses were the beginnings of three present offerings--The Civil War and Reconstruction (303), The Old South (301a) and The New South (301b).

Dr. Clarence P. Denman (U. of Mich.) first taught at Western in 1934. In addition to the methods course previously mentioned, he developed courses in American Diplomatic History. American Diplomacy (203) appeared as early as 1922 and was supplemented by various Government

courses such as International Relations. At the present time (313) Diplomatic History of the U.S. to 1900, and (314) Diplomatic History of the U.S. Since 1898 constitute the listings in this field.

Since the 1930's various courses on the Frontier and the West have been offered. They were taught for many years by Miss Frances Anderson, M.A. (U. of Wisc.). As early as 1930 The Old Northwest (220) obtained listing. In 1931, a graduate course (403) was added; in 1937 both The Old West (220) and The West, 1829-1890 (221) were offered. The Old Southwest (419), a graduate course, was provided in 1949. Since the retirement of Miss Anderson, The West has been taught by James Bennett, M.A. (Texas Christian) who has added extensive library holdings in this field.

Jan 1931
 With the origin of Western's Master of Arts program, *graduate* in 1931 *courses offered were* there appeared several graduate courses in history; they included Modern American History (401), England Under the Early Stuarts (402), French History: Reigns of Louis XIII and XIV (403), The Prussian Kingdom, 1701-1815 (407), and American Colonial History (400). *and* In 1933 the Monroe Doctrine (408) was added. The graduate program was discontinued from 1936-1941, but with its reappearance in 1941 graduate students majoring in Education occasionally took one-half of their work in history. *for history* For History Proper the M.A. program was renewed in 1964.

For many years the History Department consisted of Dr. A.M. Stickles, Dr. James H. Poteet, Miss Gabrielle Robertson, Miss Frances Anderson and Dr. Clarence P. Denman and the Department earned a reputation for its excellent teaching and scholarship. A strong part of this reputation was the belief and the practice in essay-type tests, supplemental reading assignments, oral reports, and term papers based in part on original sources. With this background one can readily appreciate the fact that the Department has graduated hundreds of majors who

became outstanding secondary teachers or lawyers. It is no surprise that the scores of Western history graduates who later earned an M.A. or a Ph.D. in their field point with pride to the discipline of their under-graduate department.

Increasing enrollments during the past decade resulted in additional numbers in both staff and offerings. Fourteen full-time and three part-time members are scheduled for the academic year, 1967-68. Those added since 1958 and still with the Department include: John D. Minton, Ph.D. (Vanderbilt), James D. Bennett, M.A. (Texas Christian), Carlton L. Jackson, Ph.D. (U. of Ga.), Jack W. Thacker, Ph.D. (U. of S.C.), Preston Malone, Ph.D. (U. of Ga.), Marion Lucas, Ph.D. (U. of S.C.), James E. Calloway, Ph.D. (Indiana), Paul Cook, M.A. (Western), Donald Neat, Ph.D. (U. of Ky.), Frederick I. Murphy, M.A. (U. of Fla.), John Bratcher, M.A. (U. of N. C.), John Cable, M.A. (Northwestern), Henry G. Ecton, M.A. (U. of Chicago), and J. Crawford Crowe, Ph.D. (Vanderbilt). With the retirement of Dr. Poteet, Dr. Crowe assumed duties as department head in 1966. Added this year for the 1967-68 academic year are Lowell H. Harrison, Ph.D. (N.Y. Univ.) and John H. DeBerry, Ph.D. (U. of Ky.)

Full time members who once taught in the Department include: Isabel Ferguson, M.A. (Chicago); Lowe G. Johnson; Myra Hopper Latimore, M.A. (Peabody); Nell Harris Roach; Virginia Reardon, M.A. (Vanderbilt); Merlin S. Berry, M.A. (U. of N.C.); Walter Nimocks, Ph.D. (Vanderbilt); Hadia Shakeel, M. A. (U. of Mich.); Jack Neale, M.A. (U. of Ky.); Thomas Sheppard, M.A. (U. of Neb.); and Claude C. Sturgill, Ph.D. (U. of Ky.). Dr. Raymond L. Cravens (U. of Ky.), Vice-President of Academic Affairs, W.K.U. and Dr. William M. Jenkins (U. of Ky.), Dean of the College of Commerce, W.K.U., formerly taught in the History Department.¹

Currently, the Department lists one one-hour course (250), Techniques in Historical Research and forty-two three-hour courses. Many

of these are indicative of a broadening interest in the field of history and some have appeared as a result of graduate needs. They include: Thesis Writing (450) and (451), Social and Intellectual History of the United States (425) and (426), The U.S., 1901-1945 (421), The United States and Latin America (417), Historiography and Historical Research (350), The Nineteenth Century Britain (415) and Social and Cultural Aspects of American Life (400).

To meet recent demands the following upper division courses have been added: Twentieth Century Europe (225), The Middle Period (302), Russia Prior to 1900 (219), Twentieth Century Russia (320), The Far East (421), Modern Germany (325), and the Middle East in Modern Times (326).

⑤ Although numbers alone do not necessarily measure strength, a few figures do reveal grounds for the Department's expansion. One hundred fifty-six history majors graduated during the decade 1924-34, and in the fall semester of 1966 approximately eighteen-hundred history class cards were processed.

The History Department played the leading role in securing the Kentucky Building which was begun in 1931 and dedicated in 1939. The building is occupied by the Kentucky Library and the Kentucky Museum and is well known among scholars for the rare books and source material. Much credit for the growing collection is attributed to Miss Gabrielle Robertson.

On January 28, 1922 a group of students and teachers organized the A. M. Stickles History Club so "that the name and work of Dr. Stickles might be cherished...and that those who wish to make history their major work might have opportunity for a broader field than can come from classroom recitation." Some of the early speakers who appeared before the club were Dr. Stickles, Otto Rothert of the Filson Club and M. M. Logan, later a judge and United States Senator. The Club has regular

monthly meetings and holds an annual banquet each May. Since 1960 the outstanding graduating History major has received an award at the banquet. This award was made possible by Dr. Poteet and many friends and graduates who contributed a fund for that purpose. Also, an annual A. M. Stickles award is made each spring to the outstanding senior, majoring in history. This was made possible through a donation by _____.

Although teaching has been the primary duty of the staff through the years--and the load has only been reduced in recent years--some time has been well spent in research and writing above and beyond that required for classroom instruction. Members of the staff have read papers before local, state and regional historical societies. Articles and reviews have appeared in state and regional publications and at least three books have been written. Dr. Stickles has written, The Critical Court Struggle in Kentucky, 1819-1829 and Simon Bolivar Buckner as well as textbooks on Kentucky History. More recently, in 1967 appeared Dr. Carlton Jackson's Presidential Vetoes, 1792-1945 published by the University of Georgia Press.

Western has had an active chapter of Phi Alpha Theta since 1960.

¹This list does not include the names of some professors who taught one year but whose names did not appear in the catalogue or class schedule bulletins.