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Editorial

With a melody reminiscent of a college fight song or the US Marines Hymn, the lyrics of "America Always First" paint a grim picture of a nation under attack. "This once proud and happy nation," the second verse begins, "is a wreck beyond compare"; government waste, misguided internationalism, and divided loyalties are singled out as particular problems. Only one candidate could rescue the country from this "awful plight" and "set the nation right." Included in Philadelphia printer Weldon Company's *America First Songbook*, "America Always First" was written not in 2016 but in 1920, not for a current presidential candidate but for the Warren G. Harding/Calvin Coolidge campaign.[1] In the wake of World War I, fearful Americans laid many of their problems at the feet of immigrants, who seemed to threaten the nation's stability and even safety. The following decade included a resurgence of biological racism, a spate of deportations, and new immigration restrictions.

This issue of the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* is dedicated to the history of immigration and ethnicity. When former editor Tamara Gaskell and the *PMHB* editorial board selected this topic several years ago, they could not have imagined that the issue would come out just days before Americans would vote in an election in which immigration has been a central theme. Yet, one could not call this confluence a coincidence.

[1] T. J. Honaker, "America Always First," in *America First: Republican Campaign Song Book* (Philadelphia, 1920), 5.

The selection of immigration and ethnicity speaks to the long, contested nature of these issues in the history of the commonwealth and the nation.

Despite a reputation for pluralism—not unearned, as the articles in this issue show—Pennsylvania has also played a large role in fomenting nativist discontent. One of its US senators, David A. Reed, was a key sponsor of the Immigration Act of 1924 (also known as the Johnson-Reed Act), which established immigration restriction unprecedented in scope. Noting an increase of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, Reed argued that these nations "want us to have all their convicts who come from prison. They want us to have all the people who are liable to be public charges. In other words, they want to make us the trash basket of all creation by sending us the very worst they have."[2] Under the new law, which aimed to limit the numbers of immigrants from these regions, each nation received an annual quota equal to 2 percent of its representation in the 1890 US census. With some changes, the quotas remained in place until 1965. The law also reiterated longstanding bans on Asian immigrants. Although the western hemisphere was exempt from this legislation, the very fact of numerical limitation—along with stricter border control measures—led to a growing concern with immigrants' legal status, which until the 1920s was not a large part of American political discourse. These measures particularly affected perceptions of Hispanic and Latino migrants both with and without papers, and they continue to do so today.[3]

Growing up in southern Chester County, I grew accustomed to the smell of mushrooms filling the air on chilly mornings, yet the people who processed this crop remained invisible to me. Aided by the expert guidance of guest editors Kathryn E. Wilson and Rosalind Beiler, we have compiled this issue to illuminate such untold stories. In a review essay, "From Peopling to Postethnic: Pennsylvania Pluralism Reconsidered," Wilson and Beiler discuss changing approaches to Pennsylvania immigration and ethnic history, providing context for the truly groundbreaking articles that follow. From in-depth explorations of lesser-known communities to new takes on such familiar groups as Pennsylvania Germans, readers will find much here to help them understand how we got to where we are today.

Christina Larocco
Editor

[2] 65 Cong. Rec. 5,464 (1924) (statement of Sen. Reed).

[3] See Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ, 2004).