





# Letter from the Chair •••

We are delighted to share our latest newsletter, which is chockful of uplifting stories and accomplishments. Since spring, KU History faculty and students have traveled to conduct and present research, published exciting new works, garnered awards, and taken on new challenges.

Reading this issue, I'm particularly struck by its testimony to transformational teaching in KU History classrooms. One graduate recalls the professors whose instruction and encouragement prepared him for a career in law. Another's stimulating experience during pandemic-era remote learning inspired his family's gift of a new professorship. Memories of a beloved colleague, Jeff Moran, include his attention to good writing and razor-sharp wit in lectures. Pictures of our recent graduates communicate a sense of accomplishment and hope as well as joy. They take forward from KU classrooms skills greatly needed in our present moment, from critical interpretation and bias recognition to intellectual curiosity and intercultural competency.

You will find lots of other things in this newsletter, including new books, exciting awards, and a bit of aviation sleuthing. As you read, I hope you will consider making a gift to support the KU History community. The donations of friends and alumni support such things as colloquia, lectures, community gatherings, and research travel by students and faculty alike.

Thank you for reading, and we look forward to hearing from you soon!

Laura J. Miela



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(L-R) KU alumni Maddie Dolan, bachelor's degree in exercise science, 2021; John P. Black, bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in history, 2022; Paul J. Black, medical degree, 2023; and Julie Cheslik and Paul M. Black.

### Black-Cheslik family provides \$1 million gift to support Department of History Professorship • • •

Written by Michelle Keller and Anne Tangeman, KU Endowment

Members of the **Black-Cheslik** family of Kansas City, Missouri, are avid University of Kansas basketball fans and equally passionate about the power of a liberal arts education.

Julie Cheslik and her husband, Paul M. Black, provided a \$1 million gift through KU Endowment to establish the John P. Black Professorship in History. It was named for their son John Black, of Fairway, who graduated in 2022 with a bachelor's degree in psychology and a minor in history. The professorship honors the faculty who inspired John Black and provides the opportunity for more students to be taught by top scholars in the field.

During the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, John Black moved home with his parents, which provided a unique window for them to witness his growing enthusiasm for his KU classes. He was particularly engaged with those taught by Roy A. Roberts Distinguished Professor David Farber and others in the KU Department of History, which is known for its award-winning faculty.

"I was just floored by the great education he was getting, particularly in his history classes," Cheslik said. She even joined her son in watching films during his HIST 356 class, titled At the Movies: US History on the Silver Screen, and delved into assigned readings for another course, HIST 374: The History of Modern American Conservatism, both of which ignited lively family discussions.

"For us, as parent and adult child — having that experience with him was really valuable to me," Cheslik said. The family has previously made gifts to support Kansas Athletics and the University of Kansas Medical Center, as well as numerous programs with other organizations.

Laura Mielke, KU professor and current interim chair of the Department of History, said the gift is transformational. "Julie Cheslik and Paul M. Black have recognized our department as a home to scholar-teachers who, like Professor David Farber, bring their research and wisdom into the classroom to create spaces of transformative exchange," Mielke said.

"This gift will allow us to add and retain world-class scholarteachers to our faculty. We also see the John P. Black 🔴 🔴 🧲



Professorship as a unique opportunity to celebrate the students like John who bring a passion for learning to KU."

The couple's eldest son, Paul J. Black, is a doctor who also began his path in liberal arts, earning his undergraduate degree at the University of Notre Dame before attending KU Medical Center, where he graduated in 2023. He lives in Omaha, Nebraska, where he is completing his residency in urology at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

"I was always pushing the kids to be liberal arts majors, and I think it served them both well," Cheslik said. "We're happy to be able to provide this professorship so other kids from Kansas or who come to Kansas to get this great education can learn from the best."

Cheslik is a professor of law at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and serves on the law foundation board of trustees. She received her bachelor's degree and juris doctor from the University of Iowa, both with highest distinction.

Paul M. Black is a health care consultant who was previously COO of Cerner and CEO of Allscripts. He earned his bachelor's degree at Iowa State University and holds a master's in business administration from the University of Iowa. He serves on the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library board of directors and The University of Kansas Health System Advancement Board.

"I think it's really important for everyone to have somewhat of a liberal arts background to know a little bit about authors. historians and events that have taken place that have shaped where we are today," said John Black, who works in sales at Community CareLink, a health software company that serves nonprofits, community health organizations and government agencies.

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#### "I WAS JUST FLOORED BY THE GREAT EDUCATION HE WAS GETTING, PARTICULARLY IN HIS HISTORY CLASSES," CHESLIK SAID.



He discovered his minor and some of his favorite professors through a simple internet search. "I looked up 'best teachers at the University of Kansas," because I was trying to find some electives to take," John Black said. "Dr. Farber's name was one that came up, and that's really what started all of this." Farber has written and edited numerous books on modern issues from World War II to the war on drugs and is regularly tapped by news organizations to provide expert commentary.

"I think the humanities provide a massively important background and understanding for our democratic citizenry," Farber said. "It's wonderful to see the Black family offer support for what we in the humanities do and what we in the history department, in particular, do. I'm grateful, and I think it demonstrates the importance of the kinds of things historians teach."



# University Scholarly Achievement Award • • •

Written by Joseph F. Monaco, KU Office of Public Affairs

Andrew Denning received a University Scholarly Achievement Award last April. Only four recipients are selected each year to be honored for their outstanding scholarship or research contributions to the University. Denning's work has been described as "path-breaking" and "a landmark in the field of global history."

Andrew Denning is a professor of history whose research is focused on technology, environmental history, and cultural history in modern European states and their overseas empires in the twentieth century, with particular expertise in France, Germany, and Italy.









His two books — *Skiing into Modernity* and *Automotive Empire: How Cars and Roads Fueled Colonialism in Africa* — are significant research achievements, and peers have praised his work with phrases such as "excellent, highly original and remarkably wide-ranging" ... "a stunning accomplishment" ... and "unlikely to be surpassed for a very long time".





His research has required working in multiple locations and languages, diving into archives, and harnessing unique material. His interdisciplinary research works across environmental studies and science and technology studies to trace transnational relationships, requiring him to work in multiple languages and write across national borders and historiographies.

# **Erik R.** Scott •••

# John P. Black Professor of History

The University of Kansas Department of History is proud to announce Professor **Erik Rattazzi Scott** has been named as the inaugural John P. Black Professor of History.

A KU faculty member since 2012, Scott is a leading scholar of modern Russia, the Soviet Union, and the global Cold War whose expertise has led to appearances on MSNBC, NPR, and CSPAN. He serves as the editor of *The Russian Review* and is the author of *Familiar Strangers: The Georgian Diaspora and the Evolution of Soviet Empire* (2016) and *Defectors: How the Illicit Flight of Soviet Citizens Built the Borders of the Cold War World* (2023). In 2023, Scott was recognized with a University Scholarly Achievement Award.

His book, *Defectors*, was awarded the Robert H. Ferrell Book Prize from the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, the Tonous & Warda Johns Family Book Award from the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association, and an honorable mention for the Theodore Saloutos Book Award by the Immigration and Ethnic History Society.

In addition to producing award winning scholarship, Professor Scott is an esteemed teacher of graduate and undergraduate courses in Russian, Soviet, and global history. He also serves as the primary researcher and co-researcher on multi-million-dollar grants and is the director of KU's Center for Russian, East European & Eurasian Studies. Through the center, Scott created the digital humanities project, *Cold War in the Heartland*. "It is truly an honor to serve as the inaugural John P. Black Professor of History at KU," said Scott. "The generous and timely gift of the Black-Cheslik family will enable me to pursue my research on the global legacies of the Cold War and offer classes that give students the historical skills and context needed to understand the world around them. As an author and teacher, I am a firm believer in the importance of history for making sense of complex issues such as migration, decolonization, and international law."

The Black Professorship was endowed through a generous gift by the Black-Cheslik family of Kansas City, Missouri. Julie Cheslik and Paul M. Black established the professorship in honor of the teaching excellence their son John P. Black, of Fairway, experienced while earning a bachelor's degree in psychology and a minor in history in 2022. The professorship provides the opportunity for more students to be taught by inspiring historians and affirms the vital role of Humanities courses and research at the University of Kansas.

"The History Department is lucky to have Erik as a teacher, researcher and campus leader," said Laura L. Mielke, KU English professor and current interim chair of the Department of History. "We are delighted to draw on the generosity of the Black-Cheslik family to recognize an excellent scholar who gives so much to the KU community and beyond."

Executive Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Arash Mafi, said, "I deeply thank the Black-Cheslik family for their generous support of educational causes in Kansas and beyond. We are truly appreciative of their commitment. I also want to praise Professor Scott for his exceptional scholarly work, which greatly enriches our academic community. The History Department excels in fostering positive educational experiences, shaping the next generation of citizens and leaders. Their dedication is truly commendable."

# Department Congratulations



#### ROBERT C. SCHWALLER





# Awards • • •

**Beth Bailey's** An Army Afire: How the US Army Confronted Its Racial Crisis in the Vietnam Era (2023) received the Society of Military History Distinguished Book Award in American History for the best book on military history published in English over the past three calendar years.

The Society for the Study of Multiethnic Literature in the United States (MELUS) presented **David Roediger** its Lifetime Achievement Award for Distinguished Contribution to Ethnic Studies.

**Erik Scott's** *Defectors: How the Illicit Flight of Society Citizens Built the Borders of the Cold War World* (2023) received the Robert H. Ferrell Book Prize from the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, the Tonous & Warda Johns Family Book Award from the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association, and an honorable mention for the Theodore Saloutos Book Award by the Immigration and Ethnic History Society.

#### Sheyda Jahanbani's The Poverty of the World:

Rediscovering the Poor at Home and Abroad, 1941-1968 (2023) received The Distinguished Book of 2024 from the Center for Presidential History, the Merle Curti Intellectual History Award for Best Book in Intellectual History from the Organization of American Historians, and the Stuart L. Bernath Book Prize from the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations.



**Marie Brown** received a KU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences CARES Program Award. College CARES Awards are given to professors who have provided exceptional service to their department and provide time to advance their record of scholarship and research for promotion.

**Tiffany González** landed a New Faculty Research Development Award and summer residency at National Humanities Center in Research Triangle Park, NC.

PhD Candidate, **Alicia Houser**, has received the prestigious Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Award from the U.S. Department of Education. She will spend a year conducting research in Tanzania, Africa.

PhD Candidate, **Abi Scott**, has been awarded the Peter Gilles Springer Fellowship and has received fellowships and grants from the Briscoe Center for American History, Center for French Colonial Studies, and Helmerich Center for American Research. Scott has also been selected as the recipient of the 2024 Carl J. Ekberg Research Grant from the Center for French Colonial Studies for Research in St. Louis at the Society of the Sacred Heart Archives and the Missouri Historical Society, the Midwest Jesuit Archives, as well as at the Ste. Genevieve Community Library. Abi will soon head to France to be a Chateaubriand Fellow in the Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Toulouse /FRAMESPA institute.

**Titus Firmin** was awarded a 2024-2025 Richard and Jeannette Sias Graduate Fellowship in the Humanities from the Hall Center for the Humanities for the spring 2025 semester.





THE ENLIGHTENMENT AN IDEA AND ITS HISTORY

J. C. D. CLARK

# History Bookshelf

J. C. D. Clark *The Enlightenment: An Idea and Its History* Oxford University Press

Dana Velasco Murillo and Robert C. Schwaller, editors Overlooked Places and Peoples: Indigenous and African Resistance in Colonial Spanish America, 1500-1800 Routeledge





Andrew Denning Automotive Empire: How Cars and Roads Fueled European Colonialism in Africa Cornell University Press

# History Graduates Move Ever Onward 2023-2024 Degrees



WALTER



JAKE

ORGMANN





CLAIRE COX









Successfully defended his dissertation, Conquering Beasts: *How Animals Shaped the De Soto and Coronado Entradas, 1539-1543* 

### Spring 2024

Successfully defended his dissertation, *Learning to Cook: The Pedagogical and Ideological Nature of Meiji Domestic Cookbooks* 





Successfully defended his dissertation, One War, Two Fronts: The Spanish Civil War as a Continuation of the Russian Civil War



••• Historians Making Moves •••

My name is **Carson Taylor**. After growing up in West Michigan, I moved to Lawrence in 2016 to start my degrees in History and Political Science. After a dropped semester caused by a drunk driver crashing into my car, I was luckily able to graduate on time in 2020. Thereafter, I worked in a group home, providing direct support to individuals with disabilities. I then was accepted into the 2024 class at Temple University James E. Beasley School of Law. There, I worked multiple clerk positions, including one with the U.S. Army JAG Corps in Fort Leavenworth, KS. I now work as an associate attorney in the healthcare litigation practice at Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani, LLP.

#### During your time at KU, what classes or professors played a major role in preparing your life after college? Do you have any specific examples?

Professor Marie Grace Brown's History of the Modern Middle East and Professor Nathan Wood's Everyday Communism in Eastern Europe.



Both of these professors prepared their classes in a way that nearly disregarded the "great man theory" of history. Rather than focusing on the major players who have left a large impact on areas throughout the world, these professors challenged me and my fellow classmates to think of the impact that every individual person has on the space around them. Without this shift in mindset, I would likely miss so many facts that are necessary to do in-court litigation.

#### What is your favorite memory from your time at KU?

In my Junior year at KU, I was working on my thesis paper under the guidance of Professor Brown. I wrote my thesis on the political ramifications of the South African nuclear program and how South Africa became a regional superpower nation in part because it chose to denuclearize. Professor Brown helped me apply to do my first presentation on this thesis. I thereafter was a panelist at the Kansas Historical Society's annual conference. Although I had never done any large-scale public speaking, this opportunity has prepared me for my litigation career and helped me get rid of any stage fright that I had prior to my panel presentation.

### What is a professional highlight of your career, either where you work currently or in the past?

Throughout law school, in large part because of my research interests I developed while at KU, I participated in multiple research writing courses. In that time, I have been granted multiple opportunities to discuss my findings in public events. Through my Temple Law & Public Policy Program, I wrote a paper on a suggested modification to the American nuclear policy.





paper on a suggested modification to the American nuclear policy. This paper was not only a continuation of my history thesis I wrote with the support of Professor Brown, but it was also suggested to the Law and Society Association. I was thereafter chosen to present as a panelist in the Law and Society Association's annual conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico, while still in law school.

# After graduating from the University of Kansas, what are a few professional or personal accomplishments you are you the most proud of?

In my final year of Law School, I worked as a law clerk for a small employment law firm and for the City of Philadelphia's Law Department, all while acting as an editor for the Temple International and Comparative Law Journal. In my free time, I conducted research on the niche but important international problem of unregulated bilateral labor migration agreements. This project was the most difficult I have undertaken as there are little to no legal publications on the ethics of these agreements. However, after I completed this paper, I was selected to receive a graduation prize for excellence in research. I have since submitted this paper for publication. "Bilateral Labor Agreements: Economic Gains or Humanitarian Losses?" will be soon published by the *Connecticut Journal of International Law*.



#### What's your best tip to achieve focus?

Make sure you make time for yourself. The more you force yourself to focus the less focused you will be. For me, I joined KU Crew my sophomore year, and have been rowing ever since. Find something where you can get moving and be social. When I stay in one place too long, I lose my focus, but if I get moving or talking with others, I always work better.

#### What career advice do you have for history majors?

Find a job that you enjoy. I went to KU with the plan of graduating with a degree in history so that I would be prepared for law school. Not everyone has a plan that is equally set in stone. However, despite always wanting to be a lawyer, at least one person at every firm I have worked with has told me that I shouldn't go into law. There have been a few exceptions who have said something similar. The exceptions told me that law is hard, you will work long nights, so only do it if you care about what you do. That is the same for all professions. Care about what you do, and you will do great things.

#### Could you tell us about your most recent published articles?

While in law school at Temple, I have gotten three extremely different articles published. First was a law blog article explaining the legal ramifications of the findings, or lack thereof, of the 2022 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. Although there were no formal findings, this is primarily because of political tensions after the start of the Russo-Ukrainian war. Many other important nations have been working together behind the scenes to promote peaceful disarmament globally, even without United Nations intervention. Soon after this publication, I had an article published in the law journal focused on child welfare law, the *Guardian*.



This article discussed a federal grant which is meant to help local communities establish an alternative sentencing program so that parents who are convicted of non-violent crimes may stay at home to continue to provide support to their children. This article focused on the percentage of children who are in foster care exclusively because of parental imprisonment. I noted the benefits of these programs, highlighting successes of existing programs, and developed a guide for governments to apply for this grant. Most recently, I have had my paper on bilateral labor agreements accepted for publication in the upcoming volume of the Connecticut Journal of International Law. This article notes the dangers of agreements between countries which export their migratory laborers and those who import the laborers. Left as is, which is unregulated, the workers often face inhumane circumstances, comparable to slave labor. However, if regulated by an international organization or if the importing state chooses to enforce the workers' rights while in a foreign nation, the country will not lose any potential economic benefit which it could gain from the underpaid and nearly-tortured workers.





# ••• Share Your Alumni Story. We want to hear from you! •••

Our alumni are doing incredible work all over the world, and we are eager to hear about your experiences beyond KU. Please consider sharing your most recent update. We'll feature your updates in our alumni newsletter and on our social media channels.

Please reach out to our Communications Coordinator, Allayne Thornton (allaynethornton@ku.edu), with your stories.



In March of 2023, **Sean Seyer**, Associate Professor of History, opened his email to find an automated message sent by the National Air and Space Museum's application program notifying him he had been accepted as a Verville Fellow. Named after Alfred V. Verville, an innovative designer in the aerospace industry, the fellowship is an extremely competitive residency for experts in the field of aviation history. Fellows have access to the National Air and Space Museum's remarkable archival and library staff and facilities. Dr. Seyer worked closely with staff members of the Aeronautics Department over the course of 12 months to conduct research for his next book.

Sean spoke with Allayne Thornton, our Communications Coordinator, about his experience.





# What's the most exciting thing about your time in Washington, D.C. and being the Verville Fellow in residence?

This is going to sound really corny, but I got to walk out of the front door, go down the street, look to my left and see Washington Memorial or the Capitol with all the history – good and not-so-good history – that has happened around the Capitol. It never got old. What I also loved was the ability to do follow-up research at the drop of a dime. For instance, if I thought "What is this document? Oh, this makes me think about something in another collection," then I could say "Let's go do that tomorrow" instead of having to set up funding, arrange time off, and all the coordination it takes to come out here to do that. When you're in D.C. for just a week or two, you're focused on grabbing what you can, but being able to just go where I wanted to go was so helpful.

#### Who are your unsung heroes behind the scenes?

The curators were wonderful, and the staff were awesome; it was really good to cultivate those relationships. The curators and staff knew me from 2014 to 2015, but then I was only there during the summers, and it wasn't sustained. During the fellowship, there was a curators' meeting every week that I was invited to, so I joined them for that so I could hear about what's going on at the museum and have a quick round robin about what people were doing with a little update. They seemed to like to hear what fellows were doing!







#### Can you walk me through what a day as a Verville fellow looks like? How many hours did you spend writing every day?

I tend to work better in the morning, and I like longer blocks of time to get some good progress on writing down and really grapple with some ideas. The writing days were about five to six hours long and then of course there was revision. With my writing process, I can never just write the thing perfectly the first time. I'm one of those folks who goes through multiple drafts, and I enjoy the editing process guite a bit. [While I was a fellow I could say,] "Here's the time I need to spend on the project. What makes the most sense today in terms of the project?" Is it, take the metro two blocks down and go the national archives and be there from 9:00 am until it closes at 4:30 pm and just go through all the primary sources and the documents that I can? Does it make more sense to go back and revise? Does it make more sense to spend today diving into some secondary sources? For me - and this goes back to grad school - it's hammered into your head to get the dissertation in. Write, write, write! Now I had these block of hours, eight to nine hours to be productive towards this project and net productivity can manifest itself in a lot of different ways; not just how many pages have you done today? On the other hand, you don't want to dive down too many rabbit holes [of research]. I have so much archival material, because I've done quite a few research trips thanks to this fellowship. I do some pretty extensive document notes, where I'm notating on the documents themselves. Then I'll draw on those notes when I'm writing, instead of going directly to the sources because I use the digital note-taking application One Note.





### What advice would you pass along to the next Verville Fellow?

Go to the aeronautical curator meetings once a week. Cultivate those connections and personal relationships. I would also push for folks here at KU to apply for opportunities through the Smithsonian, which has grad student fellowships and pre-dissertation post docs. The Smithsonian is the nexus of historians, of scholars, and the best thing is the location.

In my research, I have spent some time studying the K-III "Kitten." an aircraft central to James V. Martin's claims that there was an "air trust" working against him. Martin donated the K-III to the Smithsonian in 1924 as a way to say, "look, it's at the National Museum, I'm right. They have it." I wrote a blog post on this for the Smithsonian, and based on my research, the Smithsonian has changed the way they talk about the "Kitten." Rather than saying that "We have this aircraft because it was the first aircraft that flew with retractable landing gear," they can now say that this thing is a physical embodiment of a much more important story. Because of that, the plan is for the 'Kitten' to go into the National Air and Space Museum Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, which is currently undergoing a transformation. Half the location is open, and the other half should be open in 2026. It's really interesting to see your research having a direct impact on the story that is told about an artifact that Smithsonian has had since 1924. I left with that. It was a great feeling.

Sean has written a blog for the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum on the J.V. Martin K-III "Kitten" that went live this summer. To read the full blog post, please scan the QR Code.







We are deeply saddened to share the passing of our longtime colleague and friend, Professor Jeffrey "Jeff" Moran, on April 17. Jeff was an accomplished historian, a generous and kind colleague, and a dedicated teacher and mentor. He was 57.

Moran joined KU's Department of History in 1998 as an Assistant Professor. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 2003 and to Full Professor in 2013. He served two terms as Chair of the department: 2004-2006 and 2013-2015.

At KU, he explored the origins, power and limits of secular modernity 20th-century America. His research interests circled around modern U.S. history, cultural and intellectual history, history of education, public health, religion evolution and sexuality. His first book, *Teaching Sex*, came out in 2000 and examined the history of sex education. He later pivoted to studying the history of evolution and in particular the Scopes Trial, publishing *The Scopes Trial: A Brief History with Documents in 2002* and *American Genesis: The Evolution Controversies from Scopes to Creation Science in 2012*. The second edition of *The Scopes Trial* appeared in 2021.

As an instructor, most recently Moran regularly taught an undergraduate seminar on the 1960s and graduate research seminars. He advised more than 15 senior honors theses and numerous doctoral dissertations on subjects ranging from the cultural impact of old age to Midwestern segregation to studentled sexual education. He received a University Scholarly Achievement Award in 2012.

Moran is remembered by colleagues as an accomplished historian, a generous and kind colleague, and a dedicated teacher and mentor.

"He had strong opinions about history — and he didn't hold back in sharing them — but he never let them distract him from making the all-important human connections that make our lives meaningful," said Sheyda Jahanbani, Associate Professor of History.

Paul Kelton, a former chair of the History Department and now a Stony Brook University Professor, said Moran was a "rock star scholar" who found time for others, even as he battled cancer. "He stepped in to chair the department twice and put up with us ornery faculty with good humor and humility," Kelton said.

Luis Corteguera, Professor of History, said that among Moran's contributions, he hopes that Moran's kindness will not be overlooked. "Among Jeff Moran's many achievements and virtues, to me, his kindness stands out, whether as undergraduate director, graduate adviser, departmental Chair, colleague or friend," Corteguera said.

## MAKE HISTORY BY DONATING TODAY

**The KU Department of History** would like to thank our friends for their continued support. Donor funds provide research opportunities for our undergraduate and graduate students, sponsor lectures from visiting faculty and alumni, and support events within the broader Lawrence community. Ensure that Jayhawks continue making history by donating today.

You may donate using the QR code here or make out a check for your tax-deductible donation to "KUEA" (KU Endowment

Association) and mail it directly to:

KU Endowment Association West Campus - University of Kansas 1891 Constant Avenue Box 928 Lawrence, KS 66044-0928



In the memo line, note the "Department of History"



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