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"The Last Days of the Socialist Editor, Julius A. Wayland" and "The Elections of 1912 and 2012: A Retrospective on Striking Similarities and Confounding Contrasts"

Sharon Neet

Mark Peterson

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Gene DeGruson Memorial Lecture Fifteenth Annual - October 10th-11th, 2012

"The Last Days of the Socialist Editor, Julius A. Wayland"

Sharon Neet, speaker

Stilwell Hotel Ballroom

Wednesday, October 10, 2012. 7:00 p.m.

and

"The Elections of 1912 and 2012: A Retrospective on Striking Similarities and Confounding Contrasts"

Mark Peterson, speaker

Special Collections, Axe Library

Thursday, October 11, 2012. 2:00 p.m.

The annual Gene DeGruson Memorial Lecture returns to the Stilwell Hotel this year for the first time since its inception in 1997. This year's lecture is actually a two-day event set for Oct. 10 and 11.

Sharon Neet, a research colleague of Gene DeGruson and a noted authority on socialist editor Julius A. Wayland and The Appeal to Reason newspaper, will deliver the keynote address at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 10, in the Stilwell Hotel Ballroom.

On Thursday, Oct. 11, Mark Peterson, an assistant professor in the Department of History, Philosophy and Social Sciences, will deliver a talk on "The Elections of 1912 and 2012: A Retrospective on Striking Similarities and Confounding Contrasts," at 2 p.m. in Axe Library.

Both lectures are free and open to the public and a reception will follow each.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the death of J. A. Wayland who took his own life just after the presidential election of 1912. In her talk, Neet will review J. A. Wayland's last days in Girard, Kan. She will note the enduring social and political legacy of the Socialist Party in America and discuss the 1912 presidential campaign, which featured four prominent and viable candidates: Democrat and eventual winner, Woodrow Wilson; the incumbent Republican president, William Howard Taft; former president and Bull-Moose Republican, Theodore Roosevelt; and perennial Socialist Party candidate, Eugene Victor Debs.

Much of the support for the Socialist Debs, who received almost 900,000 votes in the general election, was generated by the Appeal to Reason, the most powerful political newspaper of the early 1900s.

According to Randy Roberts, curator of Special Collections at PSU, America was stunned just after the 1912 election when the publisher of the Appeal, Julius Wayland, committed suicide at his home in Girard.

"As John Brown of Kansas territory chose martyrdom for the cause of abolition at Harper's Ferry, Va., in 1859, Julius Wayland was a self-selecting martyr for the wage slaves of his day, believing he was more valuable to the socialist cause as a martyr than an editor by 1912," Roberts said.

Roberts said significant additions to the papers of J. A. Wayland, the Wayland family, and The Appeal to Reason have been donated to the Special Collections department of the Leonard H. Axe Library at PSU by various members of the Wayland family. Numerous photographs, letters, and other family papers and artifacts have been received in recent months.

Members of the Wayland family will be in attendance and will be recognized during this year's event. A new exhibit documenting the life and work of J. A. Wayland will be on display at both lectures and will include some of the items recently received.

The Gene DeGruson Memorial Lecture was established in 1997 to honor Gene DeGruson who served as curator of Special Collections at PSU from 1968 until his death in 1997. DeGruson was one of the tireless supporters of the Stilwell Hotel who worked toward her restoration and preservation.

For more information about the Gene DeGruson Memorial Lecture or PSU Special Collections, contact Randy Roberts at 620-235-4883, or by e-mail at rroberts@pittstate.edu.