

THE INSTITUTE FOR HISTORICAL STUDY

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NEWSLETTER

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THE INSTITUTE is affiliated with the National Coalition of Independent Scholars (NCIS) and with the American Historical Association (AHA)

The *Newsletter* is sent to all Institute members, as well as colleges and university libraries and other interested scholars. The Institute appreciates all tax-deductible contributions made by non-members who wish to remain on our mailing list.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Although the weather was rainy, those of us indoors at Ginn House in Oakland's Preservation Park enjoyed the evening of our annual dinner. We need to thank **Ellen Huppert and Marian Kassovic** for their excellent planning. **Gretta Mitchell's** presentation, *Living With Light: Making Photography and Books*, was very well done. She brought a number of her published books and selected folios for us to browse through during the social hour, and then showed a series of slides representative of her work. Her photogravures are striking, and I can only imagine the incredible patience demanded by the intricate process. I had a longer look at some of them at the show Gretta had at the Claremont Hotel in November; my daughter and I spent a day together, which included seeing Gretta's work. Since my daughter is interested in both photography and gardens, it was a perfect choice. Near the end of the slides at dinner, all of us looked with awe at Gretta's stunning photograph of the back of a baby's head, so evocative of the vulnerability of the very young.

I want to thank all members who continue to host our meetings – Work-in-Progress meetings, board meetings, study groups. We appreciate your gracious hospitality and the delicious munchies you feed us. Where would we be without you – perhaps on the library steps at the Bancroft? Or under the trees on the hill at UCSF? Or perhaps in some noisy, far from congenial library?

We will be holding elections for our board at the annual membership meeting in February; a nominating committee has been selected. Please consider serving on the Board. The meetings are only quarterly, and they are a wonderful way to meet and know other members as well as to have more say in the direction of the Institute. Talk to current board members and ask them about the meetings and the time involved.

Anne M. Homan

WORK-IN-PROGRESS – Alice Tobriner

Growing Old Four Hundred Years Ago: the English Experience

The Work-in-Progress held on Sunday, September 19, 2004, at the home of **Georgia Wright**, was a presentation by **Alice Tobriner**, who received her PhD in Education from Stanford. She opened her talk with a summary of her rationale for the subject, emphasizing the continuing need to present “history from below.” She compared her talk to a description of a wedding, where one sees the general picture of the festivities, but significant activities take place simultaneously in small groups which are also of interest. She noted that each of the chapters in her book can stand alone as discrete subjects.

Alice finds the Tudor-Stuart period, ca. 1530 to 1688, to be similar to our own times, with the introduction of printing (computers), social upheavals and wars, population explosions, the expansion of education to greater numbers, and exploration widening the boundaries of the known world (space). Her work opens with an account of the English population – 575,000 at the beginning of the period, 2 million at the end. They were counted primarily by religious attendance, but also using the land workers and those in military service. John Gaunt charged old women to explore the parishes, to gather information on inhabitants, their numbers and ages as well as their medical situations. It was discovered that 25% of the elderly lived with their immediate families, 44% lived alone and 10% with extended families.

The Tudors (particularly after Henry VIII’s dissolution of the Catholic church), concerned with the possibility of insurrection, brought about the introduction and expansion of the poor laws, especially those against vagabonds and “sturdy beggars.” People who took to the road needed a passport from their parish to validate their movement; without it they could be whipped out of the town, regardless of their age. Statutes enacted between 1540 and 1601 controlled what kind of charity was to be given the poor and who could receive it. The working populace was expected to work until the age of 60. Those who could not,

particularly the old and disabled, would be supported by their parish of origin in almshouses. Almshouses were frequently established by wealthy donors seeking religious benefits, as memorials, or as displays of wealth. There, inhabitants were provided with shelter and food. “Oulde” women could be put to work weaving, while men worked on the streets and highways. Alice read contemporary descriptions of various almshouses and the lives of their inhabitants.

Care of the elderly by family members could be an act of piety for adult children. Such were enjoined by sermons and many pious writings, though there were those who, as today, resisted taking on the responsibility in their homes. The general population had difficulty adjusting to the new position of religion as instituted by Henry VIII, which required church attendance, and many refused to accept the new religious observances. Old age was addressed by publications (for example those by Juan Luis Vives and Thomas More) of methods and means for prolonging life, though the level of literacy may have limited their broad dissemination. Old poor women of the village often provided the only available medical care. Frequently known as “white witches,” they were herbalists who used their skills for good, diagnosing and treating physical disorders as well as such failings as poor memory and falling hair.

Alice addressed “growing old with a song”, noting that woodblock-printed song sheets were easily and widely disseminated, easy to remember, and usually available in alehouses. Such songs described the physical appearance of old age, the importance of right living to attain a happy and comfortable old age, and the sad plight of those whose children had rejected them.

She concluded with remarks on her hopes to see her work appear in a publication for a general, non-academic audience. Her listeners agreed, suggesting that she needed a conclusion that would pull together a brief synthesis of her subject.

Nancy Whitten Zinn

WORK-IN-PROGRESS – Anne Homan

Livermore: A History from A to Z

In the course of a lifetime, one is continually reminded that the most simple topics (light bulbs, flag poles) expose layer upon layer of fascinating facts once we scratch the surface. This month's work in progress, held on Sunday, November 21, was just such a day, as **Anne Homan**, author of *The Morning Side of Mount Diablo*, shared these and other topics from her second book, *Livermore: A History from A to Z*. **Autumn Stanley** graciously hosted the meeting at her home in Portola Valley.

As she began her talk, Anne told how she first began to think of the project because of gentle prodding by the owner of the local bookstore. Uncomfortable with the idea of writing a standard narrative, she came across the story of Port Townsend, Washington, a book that sets historical topics as distinct entries in alphabetical order. This was the inspiration that pushed Anne to begin collecting her material.

She spoke of two ongoing problems. The first is the difficulty of saying when an entry is finished. That sounds easy enough, yet much of her material comes from interviews, and each new interviewee seems to have additional information to be woven into some other "completed" topic. Her second problem is finding the best way to display the information. Many entries need a title (the someone or something in the history of Livermore that is no longer visible), and a subtopic (the place in town where some lingering vestige still exists). How does one show that in print? Anne's current idea is to place on the left of the page the item that is no longer in existence, and on the right, the trace one could find in today's reality. An example is the early settler, Chester Stanley. His name would be the heading on the left, and on the right would be "Stanley Boulevard," the current road that bears his name. After setting the stage for us, Anne went on to share several of the stories she has collected, each one whetting our appetite for more. Three examples are included here.

Robert Livermore, for whom the town is named, began as a brick mason in England, became a sailor,

jumped ship in California, learned Spanish, and became a skilled *vaquero* (cowboy). He married and moved in 1839 to Rancho Las Positas in what is now the Livermore valley. Even though Indian raids temporarily drove him off his ranch, he once said that his life in Livermore gave him "nothing to complain about," and people who knew him called him a good, courageous, enterprising man. He died in 1859.

The Livermore rodeo had its start in the bi-annual cattle roundups, when ranchers gathered to celebrate after the work was done. That first rodeo in 1918, held for entertainment, was so successful that the town just kept doing it. Originally, the rodeo was held on the first of July, but the valley was found to be simply too hot, so it was moved to early June. Today the rodeo is known as one of the 100 fastest in the nation.

The oldest working light bulb in the world is found in Livermore. Manufactured by the Shelby Company in Livermore in 1901, it has lasted so long because it burns with only three candle power. It has had several homes over the years, but in 1976 it was moved to the East Avenue Fire Station, where now it even has its own guest book. The fame of the bulb spread beyond Livermore when it was included in the 1972 *Guinness Book of Records*.

Comments from those in attendance centered mainly on ways to make the information more accessible to readers. Suggestions included adding bits of information such as a person's age, rather than expecting readers to figure it out for themselves, and perhaps highlighting any word in one article that would be found explained in depth somewhere else in the book, a technique Anne had already used. Throughout the afternoon, Anne took great care to capture the imagination of her listeners, using photos and news clippings to enhance her lively presentation of rodeos and women, merchants and flag poles, giving us all a taste of the history of the town of Livermore.

Hildi Kang

GROUP REPORTS

BIOGRAPHY WRITERS

The Biography-Writing Group met in October at **Ethel Herr**'s home. Ethel and her co-author, Ellen Friedenberg Cohen, read a draft of a chapter of *Conversations from the Rim of the Box: Adventures in Theological Spelunking*. Ellen was visiting from the East Coast so they could work together instead of by email. In a summary paragraph, they wrote that the book speaks of what happens when a Bible-believing Christian and a cultural Jew become friends and share their spiritual worlds.

Ellen Huppert's great-grandfather traveled from Michigan to Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi and Alabama in 1851-52. Ellen has his wife's diary of the trip with records of towns where she sang at family concerts to make money, and a playbill they used. Amazingly, **Joanne Lafler** provided sheet music for two of the songs from an album bound in 1850 that belonged to her husband John's great-grandmother. **Ann Harlow** and **Joanne Lafler** continue to share tidbits about early 20th century San Francisco writers and artists, and were able to make good use of the driving time between Oakland and Ethel's home in Sunnyvale in addition to the meeting itself. Ann is writing about the artist, Anne Bremer, and Joanne about her husband's father, the writer, Harry Lafler.

The group gave me some tips for the beginning of my chapter about Yerba Buena, whose name was changed to San Francisco while Juana Briones lived there. I introduced my premise that Juana was the first resident instead of the third, as some historians have alleged, based on interpretations of confused accounts of geography, government, place names, and people living there in the 1830s. **Autumn Stanley**'s problem is finding the truth in the tangle. She called her presentation "She Said, He Said, Then He Died and She Said Some More." Three different versions of Charlotte Smith's marriage are documented: pension-claim testimony, divorce court records, and Charlotte's own recollections.

Jeanne McDonnell

MEDIEVAL STUDY GROUP

The group's October meeting was held at the home of **Lyn Reese**, with Lyn doing double-duty both as host and as presenter. Following up on an earlier group discussion of Eleanor of Aquitaine, Lyn used the recent book by Marilyn Yalom, *The Birth of the Chess Queen: A History* (HarperCollins, 2004), to describe how the historical changes to the chess pieces reflected their real-life changing power status, especially that of the queen. Having been invented in India, early chess pieces were simply unrepresentative forms. Although Muslim culture did not permit the depiction of human forms, it was assumed that the central piece represented the caliph and the piece to the right was the vizier. When the game moved into Western Europe, the pieces began to depict the king, the queen to his right, the bishops and the knights on either side, illustrating the feudal order of medieval society. Initially, the queen could only move one space forward, backward, or diagonally. However, over time her role changed, and the queen became the most powerful piece in the game, almost mirroring the position of Eleanor of Aquitaine

CALIFORNIA ROUND TABLE

What could have been a wake for the California Round Table instead developed into what promises to be an active and enthusiastic group. At a meeting on November 6th at the home of **Jules Becker**, a group of eight Institute members, three of whom were attending their first meeting of the CRT, decided that there were more reasons to continue meeting than to disband. In addition, several members of the Institute had indicated previously that they would be future CRT participants but couldn't, for one reason or another, be at the November meeting.

The meeting began with an unanimous vote to keep the CRT going. Then there was a spirited discussion about the future programs of the Round Table, and it was finally decided that there would be no set format, but, instead, members would let variety be

the spice of CRT life, with meetings on a quarterly basis. For the March meeting, Jules agreed to lead a discussion involving the new end chapter of his revised book on Chinese and Japanese Exclusion. Future meetings will consider "Masonic Symbols in Diego Rivera's Frescos" and "German Immigrants in California." It was agreed that this kind of potpourri would attract a wider variety of interested IHS members, authors, and researchers, and should keep the Round Table, now expanded into consideration of the West as well as California, thriving into the future.

The meeting ended, as it started, with lots of food, emphasizing the Institute motto of "First We Meet, Then We Eat, We Eat, We Eat, We Eat." The next meeting is scheduled for Saturday, March 5, at the home of **Masha Zakheim**. In addition to those involved in the history of California and/or the West, all other members of the Institute are invited.

HISTORY PLAY READERS

Continuing the series of plays set in 16th century Europe, the September and October meetings of the History Play Reading Group were spent reading *A Man for All Seasons*, by Robert Bolt. Based on the life of Sir Thomas More, the play chronicles his conflict with King Henry VIII over the King's break with the Papacy and the establishment of the Church of England. More, by declining to sign the Act of Succession removing the Princess Mary from all rights to the English throne, left himself open to a charge of treason, and he was eventually beheaded. Bolt's play presents More as relying on the ultimate authority of English law to save him; however, as the group agreed, the 16th century was a time when the law was in the hands of the king.

Our November meeting was a preliminary reading of the play to be presented to the membership on December 11th, *Fire on Pier 32*. The author, Jack Rasmus, joined us for this meeting.

Lorrie O'Dell

MINI-GRANT AWARDS

The Institute's Grants Committee, composed of **Judith Albert, Jules Becker, Monica Clyde and Edith Piness**, are pleased to announce that two mini-grants of \$500 each have been awarded for 2004. The recipients of this year's grants are **Ellen Huppert** and **Joanne Lafler**. Ellen Huppert's project is to document the lives of six members of a family, the Taylors, who lived in Michigan and Montana between the early nineteenth century and the 1930s. Her work is based on myriad papers including letters, journals, sermons and memoirs from these individuals. It is her hope and belief that this micro-history of six lives will contribute to the social history of the United States. Ellen sought grant support to help cover travel expenses to Ann Arbor, Michigan, and for photocopying relevant materials from the Taylor family papers. She plans to publish segments of her work as articles and later a full-length book. Joanne Lafler's project is a biography of Henry Anderson Lafler, a prominent figure in the literary and art world of San Francisco from 1905 until 1925. He came to San Francisco at the beginning of the twentieth century and was part of a circle that included Jack London. He wrote eyewitness accounts of the 1906 earthquake and edited several literary magazines. He built cottages on Telegraph Hill that he rented to artists and writers, earning him the nickname "King of Telegraph Hill." He was also the first "bohemian" settler in Big Sur, where he homesteaded land which bears his name. Joanne plans to use her mini-grant for a research trip to Southern California where she will examine materials in the Huntington Library as well as local historical archives, the latter relating to Lafler's work in real estate development in Los Angeles. Her project is composed of two parts: a full-length book, and a biographical sketch which appears in the current *Argonaut*, the magazine of the San Francisco Museum and Historical Society. Upon completion of their work, the two recipients will submit brief reports on their projects for the IHS *Newsletter*.

Edith L. Piness

MEMBERSHIP

NEW MEMBER

The Institute is pleased to welcome **Ruth Silnes** to its roster of members. Ruth is an author/illustrator and has written a nonfiction book, *Keeping Ahead of Winter*. She is now working on her memoirs. She is a member of the California Writer's Club, and she hopes that membership in the Institute will provide her with camaraderie and help with her memoirs. She was recommended for membership by Ruth Willard.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Georgia Wright gave a lecture for an art history class at the University of California, Berkeley on high medieval tomb slabs, commemorative tombs, the tomb of St. Louis, and the tomb of Boniface VIII. Her emphasis was on the importance of local tomb shops for the standard slabs, the eccentric, personal commission (as for some children), the institutional, political program of tombs, and the unusual prehumous (!) order for a tomb (Boniface). Georgia is pleased to report that "It was an eighty minute class and I ended on time!"

Dave Rosen reports that he is in his second year as Coast Guard Historian. He gave a paper on the "Coast Guard Contribution to the Wright Brothers" at the Nauticus Maritime History Conference in Norfolk, Virginia on October 28th. He is also working on varied projects in Alaska, Washington and Oregon pertaining to maritime history.

Joanne Lafler moderated a session at the recent National Coalition of Independent Scholars (NCIS) conference in New York City and also spent some "historical time" in New York, including a walking tour across the Brooklyn Bridge (led by a history graduate student) and an exhibit about Alexander Hamilton at the New-York Historical Society. (The hyphen in the name of the society is correct.)

An exhibit of **Margaretta Mitchell's** photographic prints was held at The Club at the Claremont in Berkeley during November. It featured prints of gardens and plants

On October 12th, **Francesca Miller** gave a lecture at the University of California, Davis as part of a lecture series on Election 2004. Her talk was titled: "Strange Bedfellows: First Ladies and Political Partners."

Judith Albert reports that her book review of Barbara Novak's *The Margaret Ghost* was published in the October/November 2004 issue of *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, published by Routledge Press.

Also, Judith and **Frances Keller** are preparing proposals for the 2005 Boston American Literature Association conference. The first would be an entry for the Margaret Fuller Society, and would consist of a three-person panel on the subject of how fiction and history affect real on-going change in American life. The panel will include Joan VonMehren, Barbara Novak and Judith, with Frances as commentator. The second proposed panel for the same conference will be sent to the Chestnut Society. Frances's biography of Charles Waddell Chestnut, a black crusader for American civil liberties at the turn of the 20th century, broke new ground. Judith will present a paper on Lydia Maria Francis Child, a member of Margaret Fuller's early Boston Conversations circle, whose crusade linked the black cause with the women's rights movement in the 19th century.

Jeanne McDonnell reports that she has had inquiries about Juana Briones in the past two months, making her hopeful that when her book comes out, Juana won't be an unknown. Questions came from the curator of the controversial State History Museum, the designer of a web page for the National Park Service at the San Francisco Presidio, an East Coast author working on a middle-school book about adventuresome women, and a photo-researcher for a McGraw-Hill third grade textbook. Also, E Clampus Vitus has a project to put a marker on Juana's unmarked grave.

Sports and History -- A Catchy Combo

An example of how eclectic is the Institute, I offer the combination of a sports writer on major metropolitan newspapers in Chicago and San Francisco and an historian with an enduring interest in immigration to the United States, particularly by Asians.

Actually, when one considers that combination, it's not strange after all, because sports are all about history. A fan tracks his (or her) favorite team or player not only by how they are doing today, but how that compares with their record last year and many years before.

Where am I going with this? Well. Lorrie O' Dell, our esteemed *Newsletter* editor, asked me to explain how a sports writer became a historian. And as you who have been Institute members for more than 60 minutes know, no one says "No" to Lorrie.

When I started to think about it, I realized I was into history when I started getting into sports. I didn't recognize it at the time, but the ability to quote batting averages and major league won-lost records, and recalling college and professional football and basketball team lineups and championships, was exactly the training I needed when I returned to academe 20 years after receiving an undergraduate degree. The result was an MJ, an MA, a Ph.D., and a book that sold at least 25 copies, counting those bought by friends and family.

As a newsman, I started on a metropolitan daily, figuring I could always work my way down. My first job was with the *Chicago Times*, a feisty tabloid and forerunner to the current *Sun-Times*, as a copy editor; three months later I moved to the Sports Department and, pardon the pun, began making history.

Almost 10 years later I was at the *Sun-Times*, the papers having merged in the interim while I had sidestepped for two years to Hearst's *Chicago American* for more money. At the *Sun-Times*, in addition to editing copy, I covered professional and

college football and basketball, hockey, boxing, and tennis, and almost every summer day watched the Cubs, using my press pass to enter Wrigley Field before starting work at 3PM.

Then one day I received a phone call from a college pal working in San Francisco, asking if I wanted a job on Hearst's *San Francisco Examiner* as assistant sports editor. Having barely survived another Chicago winter, my response was "What time tomorrow should I be there?" Of course it wasn't quite that easy, but we sold the house, I left after two weeks' notice, and my wife, two kids, and the dog followed a month or so later.

I didn't stay at the *Examiner* for very long, got a job in public relations, then opened my own business, and I haven't suffered a Chicago winter since. After some years, I decided to get a masters degree in journalism; while I was in that program, and teaching "Introduction to Journalism" at UC Berkeley, and running my business, I realized how much I enjoyed the academic environment.

So after receiving my MJ, I shifted to the History Department at Berkeley, and began the long trek to the doctorate. Along the way, somehow, I met Lorrie, Ellen Huppert, Frances Keller, Joanne Lafler, Peter Mellini, Francesca Miller, and similar bright, talented people, and became involved in the organization and development of the Institute.

During this journey, I realized the parallels between sports and history. Both had winners and losers, numbers and results, research to explain decisions. Both had scorekeepers; in one instance they were sports writers, in the other historians, and in my life I have been both. And I realize the standard for both should be, as a long-time friend titled one of his best-selling books, there is *No Cheering in the Press Box*.

CALENDAR

December 11	History Play Readers Program
January 16	Work-in-Progress – Autumn Stanley
February 25	Annual Membership Meeting
March 5	California Round Table Meeting

Members are encouraged to let us know all their news – a paper being given at a conference; a new job or position; the awarding of a grant or fellowship. Please send all material for the NEWSLETTER either by e-mail to lorrie@galleyslaves.com or to the Institute's postal address given below. Also, we welcome the opportunity to review members' newly published books. Contact **Autumn Stanley** at autumn_dave@compuserve.com. The deadline for the next NEWSLETTER is **FEBRUARY 28th**.

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