

# 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), the American Historical Association (AHA), and the National Coalition for History (NCH).

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The NEWSLETTER is sent to all Institute members, as well as college and university libraries and other interested scholars. The Institute appreciates all tax-deductible contributions made by nonmembers who wish to remain on its mailing list.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Institute's new website is here with an entirely new look and ease in moving through the many streams of information available there. The official address is [www.instituteforhistoricalstudy.org](http://www.instituteforhistoricalstudy.org), but the old address [www.tihs.org](http://www.tihs.org) will also get you there. Please take advantage of this terrific new means of introducing our organization to the world and providing all of us with up-to-the-minute information about Institute doings.

We owe many thanks to the task force which saw this project through, headed by Bonnie Portnoy and including Ann Harlow, Joanne Lafler, and Elizabeth Nakahara. These four spent many hours selecting a web designer, looking at various options, developing and refining content and polling members for their preferences before launching what you see now.

Still to come are further improvements, including the possibility of putting the membership roster on the website with password protection. That would allow only members to gain access to that information. The Board will review this and let you know the result.

The Board will also be reviewing the ideas generated by members at our September potluck supper for the most effective use of the generous bequest given to the Institute by Frank Brechka. The Board will take this up at its October meeting.

– *Ellen Huppert*

# WORK IN PROGRESS

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## WRITERS GROUP

The Writers Group is nurturing a full greenhouse of projects, from First Lady Abigail Fillmore’s pre-Civil War life in the White House to San Francisco Mayor Angelo Rossi’s life in Depression-era politics. At the home of **Georgia Wright** on Sunday, July 21, nine members talked about conceptualizing and developing their biographical books.

**Joanne Lafler** recounted the group’s genesis, noting that work on a biography had drawn her to the Institute for Historical Study when it was in the process of forming in 1979, and that Institute members had been wonderfully helpful in the completion of her first book, *The Celebrated Mrs. Oldfield: The Life and Art of An Augustan Actress*. She is now producing a biography about her husband’s father, Henry Anderson Lafler, a poet, literary editor, and famous eyewitness of the 1906 earthquake.

Lafler was a founding member of the group, whose original members included **Autumn Stanley**, then working on a biography of journalist and social reformer Charlotte Smith; **Agnes Peterson**, a curator at the Hoover Institute at Stanford University; **Sondra Herman**, who was researching the life of social reformer Alva Myrdal; and **Ethel Herr**, then writing a biographical novel. As the group grew over the years, its procedures changed. Instead of reading new pages aloud at meetings, members share new work via e-mail, in order to allow more time for discussion. Recently, the Biography Group became the Writers Group, and it now devotes each meeting to a substantial body of work by one member.

**Rose Marie Cleese**, a marketing person, said she’s writing about her grandfather, Angelo Rossi, San Francisco’s first Italian mayor from 1930 to 1934. For the past 20 years, Cleese has

been interviewing locals about the pre-WWII environment and about Mayor Rossi’s peers.

**Elizabeth “Liz” Thacker-Estrada**, a librarian who joined in 2002, is writing a book about First Lady Abigail Powers Fillmore, who oversaw creation of the White House Library and who welcomed notable guests Jenny Lind, P. T. Barnum, Dorothea Dix, Washington Irving, and William Makepeace Thackeray.

**Bonda Lewis**, an actress who has portrayed various historical figures in one-woman shows, joined circa 2006. She recalled seeing a 19th-century picture of children standing in front of a train station. She learned these displaced kids—known as “The Train Children”—were being sent to the frontier to be adopted. She decided to “braid” together several kids’ stories to create a book.

**Ann Harlow** is writing a book about artist Ann Bremer and art patron Albert Bender, who were cousins and lovers. The two denizens of San Francisco’s art world lived in adjacent apartments but never married. Harlow said she has completed eight chapters but is currently stymied by overwhelming material and by confusing feedback.

**Ellen Huppert** is writing about her own family, the Taylors of Michigan. Her great grandmother, Lizzie, wrote in journals from age 13 in 1854 until age 45 in 1886, filling 12 volumes. Lizzie uses her journal as confidante to discuss a 19th-century woman’s dilemma—whether to marry for practicality or attraction. Lizzie marries for practicality but soon falls in love. Lizzie also writes about daily life in 1850s’ Michigan—about her family hiring hard-pressed farm girls to do housecleaning and about staying home from school to do laundry when cleaning girls couldn’t be found.

**Elizabeth “Liz” Nakahara**, a former journalist who joined in 2010, is writing a book about photojournalists specializing in international hard-news coverage. During a 1973 trip to Japan, she met photojournalist W. Eugene Smith, who spent 3 years producing a book on mercury poisoning caused by industrial pollution, known locally as Minamata Disease. This experience in Japan inspired Nakahara to go to journalism school, write a master’s thesis on photojournalists, walk into newspapers and follow staff photographers on assignments and to write a book about resourceful ways photographers gain access and execute assignments.

**Anne Richardson**, who joined the group recently, co-edited a book about William Tyndale, the 16th-century English reformer who translated the Bible from Greek and Hebrew into Early Modern English (1526-1535) at a time when vernacular translation of the scriptures was a capital crime. Tyndale was too big for England, according to Richardson, and going into voluntary exile in Germany was painful. Because of his Bible translation, Tyndale was burned at the stake in Belgium in 1536.

**Louis Trager**, a journalist for 32 years, joined the group this year. He has been researching American “liberal internationalists” of the middle third of the 20th century. For now, he’s focusing on the electoral activity of Arthur J. Goldsmith, a New York financier, philanthropist and foreign-policy insider little remembered in mainstream history and demonized on the far right as the mastermind of a capitalist/ Communist conspiracy.

*Elizabeth Nakahara*

### INSTITUTE EXCURSION – Green Gulch Farm

On a beautiful, sunny Thursday, August 15, a good number of Institute members and friends ventured to Marin County to the Green Gulch Farm Zen Center near Muir Beach. **David Chadwick**, a long-time member, whose work on a website on Shunryu Suzuki he had recently summarized in a work-in-progress presentation, arranged the day and served as one of the guides. Suzuki founded the San Francisco Zen Center and later the Tassajara Center, but he died in 1971, just before a large farm was deeded to the Zen Buddhists. The bequest came with the stipulation that no part of the land should be sold off. The acquisition of the lands around the farm by the Golden Gate National Recreation Area has protected Green Gulch from encroaching development.

We met first near the tea house and garden where we were welcomed by Arlene Lueck, dressed in her priest’s robe with a sack of golden material, a *rakusa*, hung from her neck. She led us to the *zendo*, a lovely building constructed from a barn and containing long benches with cushions for practicing meditation. David demonstrated the pose, sitting with legs crossed, back absolutely straight, face to the wall. We were curious about the three statues. The large one represents Manjusri, the mythical bodhisattva of wisdom. There were also a Jizo, a bodhisattva for travelers and children, and a little one in the style of Enku, a Japanese monk who made 100,000 Buddhas. The statues are more important to some people than others.

We walked about the orchard and two vast fields of lettuces, quizzing the young people at work. They come to learn organic gardening and Zen practice. Much of the produce and bread goes to farmers’ markets and Green’s restaurant, but our luncheon included a superb roasted vegetable soup, salad of many types of lettuce,

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and two kinds of wonderful bread. The Center is supported by produce sales, conferences and retreats, as well as by guests, student fees, store sales, and donations. Deficits are covered by the San Francisco Zen Center.

We want to thank David for arranging this tour, for leading us about, and for enlightening us a little. The history of Green Gulch can be found on David's website: <http://cuke.com/zc-stories/gg-history.htm> and you might want to read his *Crooked Cucumber: The Life and Zen Teaching of Shunryu Suzuki*.

*Georgia Wright*

### HISTORY PLAY READERS

**“Scenes from the Life of Julia Morgan,” a short reading play for students of California history by Judith Offer**

We enjoyed a special treat at our meeting on July 22 at **Joanne Lafler's** home. We read “Scenes from the Life of Julia Morgan,” a play by one of our Institute members, **Judith (Jody) Offer**. The five acts of the play cover several decades in the famous architect's life, starting in 1898, when she was attempting to study architecture in Paris, and concludes in 1946 when she is 74. The characters in the play include Julia and members of her family, the famous California architect Bernard Maybeck, William Randolph Hearst and his mother Phoebe Hearst of the famous newspaper family, as well as silent film star Marion Davies.

Julia Morgan was born in San Francisco in 1872. She grew up in Oakland and entered the University of California, Berkeley, in 1890. It was there that she determined to become an architect. She graduated in 1894 with a Bachelor's degree in civil engineering, the first woman to have done so. Immediately after graduation, she worked and studied with

Bernard Maybeck, who encouraged her to go to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris to complete her architectural education. To date, the school had not allowed women to enroll, but in 1897 permitted them to take the entrance exam for the first time. She prepared quickly for the exam, but failed to rank high enough for admission. This is where Jody Offer's play begins, recounting a visit by Maybeck with Julia Morgan's mother and brother. Maybeck is adamant that Julia needs to persevere in gaining admission to the Beaux-Arts. He also discusses the possibility of work for Julia with the Hearst family when she returns to California. Julia Morgan gained admission to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1898 and earned a diploma certificate, the first ever given to a woman. In 1902, she returned to Oakland.

The play moves on to 1906 where the Hearst family, mother and son, discuss Julia. Phoebe Hearst has become an ardent advocate for Julia. In the next scene, we jump ahead to 1919. By this time Julia has become well known and is in the planning stages for the building of the Hearst estate at San Simeon. Another decade passes, San Simeon, which Julia visits regularly on weekends, has become a reality. In Scene 4 we encounter Hearst and his mistress, Marion Davies, discussing his zoo on the grounds of the magnificent estate.

The final scene is quite touching. We meet an old friend of Julia's, a Japanese American woman who, resident in California, was destined for the Japanese internment camps during WWII. They had first met when the woman was a thirteen-year-old girl doing housework. Julia graciously offers her a letter of recommendation for the bank, as well as money towards her down payment on a house, a gentle side of Julia we have not encountered before. The play is delightful, introducing us to this highly talented woman who broke through traditional barriers both in her education and

career. It also gives the reader a sense of the times portrayed, the difficulties of a pioneering woman architect, a glimpse of the Hearst wealth and dynasty, as well as a sad reminder of the plight of Japanese Americans in California during the Second World War.

*Edith L. Piness*

### MEDIEVAL STUDIES

Several topics have been covered this year. In March, **Lorrie O'Dell** reported on the story of Peyre Marques, the central character of *The Fool and His Money: Life in a Partitioned Town in Fourteenth-Century France* (1995) by Ann Wroe. Marques lived in Rodez in Provence, a walled town with two walls that bisected the town into the "City" and the "Bourg." The City was governed by the Bishop and the Bourg was governed by the Count of Armagnac. Each interior wall had a gate, and to move from one part of the town to another meant that two gates had to be entered; if a citizen was too late, the person would be either locked in or locked out. The neutral zone between the two areas, the *passa sant stefi*, was where the common courthouse and hospital were situated. The notary sat in the courthouse, working as necessary for either side. However, criminal justice was separately administered.

Peyre was a cloth merchant who lived in the Bourg. He shared the wall of his shop with a shop next store. About 1370, a drain under Peyre's floor became blocked, and the water leaked into the neighbor's shop. When workmen came to unblock the drain, they found a pitcher full of gold coins. Peyre's son-in-law, Carac, took charge of the money, but Peyre said it was his because he often stashed money under his floor. According to law, however, the Count had a claim on any found treasure found in the Bourg for a year and a day, and it remained his

unless someone else could prove a claim to it. Eventually, Carac went to court to defend his claim to the money, as did Peyre. Fourteen of the 18 witnesses who testified said that Peyre was of "unsound mind" and "encumbered by debt," although others claimed that Peyre owned a fair amount of property in the town. The trial lasted over a year with Peyre having his entire ground floor dug up, claiming that he had hidden a lot of money over the years.

Unfortunately, we cannot know the outcome of the trial—the files regarding the verdict could not be found. Ann Wroe searched the archives in Rodez as well as the archives in Armagnac, but without result. All we can hope for is that the outcome was just.

In May, John Rush spoke about the end of the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453). It is difficult for anyone who is living in the present day to understand the Hundred Years' War. English and French royal families had intermarried so much that it took expert genealogists to sort out lineages. Henry V was convinced that he was by birth King of France. After the victory at Agincourt and further campaigns the French conceded that Henry become heir to the sometimes mad King Charles VI. As years passed, and the tides of war ebbed-and-flowed, it became apparent that the French were never going to accept English dominion. The charismatic Joan of Arc was one piece of evidence for that fact. It took years and many deaths but finally the English were pushed out of the continent.

In June, **Lyn Reese** reported on the ways pilgrimage, big or small, local or long, affected everything in the medieval lifestyle, from religious understanding to cultural change to economic values. She primarily drew upon accounts from Diana Webb's book, *Medieval European Pilgrimage, 700 -1500* (2002). Webb's impressive range of sources, from miraculous, devotional and compulsory

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pilgrimages, provide evidence of the extent of the practice. As the author states, “There is no class of medieval society that was entirely excluded from the practice of pilgrimage.” People did it, knew someone who did, or simply knew about it.

Lyn also presented information found in the article “The Medieval Pilgrimage Business” by Adrian Bell and Richard Dale in *Enterprise & Society* (May 2011). According to the authors, “The pilgrimage industry was arguably one of the most important activities in medieval Europe alongside other more well-researched businesses such as the wool trade.” The authors provided information about the reconstruction of churches, road maintenance, and buildings needed in pilgrimage sites to accommodate the visitors. Ancillary services also were needed, such as the provision of lodging, food and wine, transportation, banking, and hospitals. The making and selling of souvenirs also formed a significant part of pilgrimage business.

The varied views of those who disparaged pilgrimage were also discussed, ranging from those who saw it as a distraction from true interior devotion to complaints about the rowdy behavior of pilgrims. The need for control over just what qualified as an authentic sanctuary and the miracles associated with it were ongoing concerns. By the fifteenth century groups such as the Lollards increasingly identified pilgrimage with idolatry.

Since the subject of the Medieval pilgrimages turned out to be too big for one presentation, Lyn was encouraged by the group to present “Part Two,” in July. Here, Lyn enlarged her discussion of the ways that coming into direct contact with relics was crucial to the pilgrim experience. Seeing, touching, perhaps kissing or crawling to them was a necessary act to experience the intercessory power of the divine.

Lyn gave an example of the need to acquire relics found in the writings of Einhard, Charlemagne’s wealthy courtier. As an appointed lay abbot, Einhard sanctioned a theft of the bones of the martyrs Marcellinus and Peter from two “neglected” tombs near Rome. Having achieved this deed in secret, his men proceeded north in what is called a pilgrimage in reverse. Along the way, the “treasures more valuable than gold” were displayed openly to increasing crowds who brought their sick to be cured. These curing miracles assured that the relics wanted to be translated (removed) to find rest in their true home, the abbey at Michestadt.

Lyn also discussed Nancy Marie Brown’s *The Far Traveler: Voyages of a Viking Woman* (2007), which details what is known about the impressive 11th-century Icelander Gudrid and her many overseas travels. Her final journey was a two-year-long pilgrimage from Iceland to Rome, and back home again, made in her grandmother years. Lyn closed by noting that the field of medieval pilgrimage studies continues to grow, if only to placate the many contemporary travelers who each year journey by foot, car, bike, or book along Medieval pilgrim ways.

*Lorrie O’Dell*

## BOOKS

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Two books of interest this time: a two-volume biography by member **Judith Robinson** and an historical novel introduced by the author at an Institute-cosponsored event at the San Francisco Public Library.

**Judith Robinson, *Alan Cranston, Senator from California--Making a Dent in the World*, 2 volumes (San Francisco: Telegraph Hill Press, 2008).**

Alan MacGregor Cranston lived from the beginning of World War I to the eve of the 21st century—1914 - December 31, 2000. He was California's senator for only twenty-four of those years, but he did indeed make "a dent in the world," as he himself intended, and as Robinson's subtitle reflects.

Cranston's first political experience, at age 14, was newly-elected President Hoover's return to Palo Alto in 1928 (I:24). A large crowd waited at the yellow Victorian station as the President's train arrived. Hoover appeared on the steps of the last car. Guessing where it would stop, Cranston dashed to the floor of the steps, beaming at the President. A policeman grabbed him and tossed him aside. But Hoover was charmed, and Cranston's freckled face appeared on newsreels nationwide. It was, as his sister put it, early evidence of Cranston's managing to be "in the way of things happening."

Alan Cranston is worth reading about today, because his senatorial career was such a striking example of the cooperative and bipartisan spirit necessary for the smooth operation and productivity so sadly lacking in Congress today. One of his staffers listed "major pieces of legislation" for which Alan was "critical . . . in putting together the compromises."

Cranston, a liberal Democrat and believer in the Great Society, argued for better benefits for seniors and welfare recipients—but also for

Lockheed's B-1 bomber. He explored working with Republican George Murphy on water-control and conservation issues.

Early in his Senate career, Cranston decided to find something in common with every senator (imagine that happening today!) and told his sister that any biography of him she might write should mention how his working with Republicans from the outset, including conservative Senator Gordon Allott of Colorado against the draft and for better pay in the Army.

Cranston honored his pledge to support President Nixon on all matters where he didn't disagree. On Inauguration Day he praised Nixon's stated goals, especially his stress on peace and the need for Americans to work together for the common good. At the end of his first year in the Senate, Cranston had voted for Nixon's foreign policy positions 70 percent of the time!

Cranston co-introduced a resolution urging that the U.S. convene a conference to revise the U.N. charter. This pleased conservative senators, unhappy because the U.S. mainly supported the U.N., and also pleased liberals, who like Cranston, valued it, but wanted its procedures updated. Cranston got 72 cosponsors for his resolution.

Senator Byrd summed it up, complimenting Cranston for "developing trust and respect on both sides of the aisle . . . And I know of no other senator who has better represented his state than Alan Cranston." Voters evidently agreed, for he won his first reelection by the largest margin in any Senate race that year. When Russell Long congratulated him, Cranston smiled and said, "I probably owe it more to you than to anyone else in the country." When Long asked why, Cranston explained, "Remember that night after the Job Corps battle in 1969, when you said I was going to be a one-term senator? I

. . . decided to show you that I could be . . . a three- or four-term senator.” Long “roared with laughter” (II:143).

Alan Cranston used his famed vote-counting skill in his battle as majority whip to defeat President Reagan’s 1987 nominee for the Supreme Court, Robert Bork. To get an idea what Cranston and his colleagues saved us from, note that Bork once called the Bill of Rights “a hastily drafted document on which little thought had been expended” (II:312). And Senator Kennedy painted Robert Bork’s America as “a land in which women would be forced into back-alley abortions, . . . Blacks would sit at segregated lunch counters, . . . school children could not be taught about evolution, . . . [and] writers and artists could be censored at the whim of the Government” (II:310).

After meeting Gorbachev in 1987, “Cranston became a champion of the Soviet leader’s efforts to improve relations with the U.S. and change his own country.” Cranston thought Gorbachev’s 1988 speech to the U.N. “could herald ‘the end of the Cold War’ and arms race,” which could reduce our military spending and thus help reduce our large deficit.

On Cranston's retirement, Nixon wrote, “Your responsible views on the need [for] a bipartisan foreign policy will be missed on the Senate floor.” Prophetic words!

*Autumn Stanley*

**C. W. Gortner, *The Queen’s Vow: A Novel of Isabella of Castile* (Ballentine Books, 2012)**

On July 10, 2013, C. W. Gortner spoke about his novel at the San Francisco Public Library. His appearance was cosponsored by the Institute for Historical Study and the Northern California chapter of the Historical Novel Society.

Gortner was interested in Isabella as a powerful woman who controlled her own life, beginning with her insistence on choosing her own husband, Ferdinand of Aragon. She is best known for sponsoring the voyage of Christopher Columbus in 1492. As Gortner explained, that voyage was not intended to establish that the earth was round—that was common knowledge at the time. Rather, Columbus was searching for a direct route to the Far East to replace the trade route through the Mediterranean., which at the time was under the control of the Ottoman Empire following the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. The author’s summary of the historical background of Isabella’s life was masterful.

Gortner discussed some of the policies of the newly unified Spanish kingdom, such as the expulsion of the Moors and the Jews. While not condoning Isabella’s actions, he explained that they came from the sincere conviction of a Catholic queen that she had to create a Catholic kingdom.

Specializing in historical novels on the lives of Renaissance queens, Gortner has published novels focused on Isabella’s daughter Juana and Catherine de Medici. He also has two mystery-adventure books set during Tudor times in England.

*Ellen Huppert*

## MEMBER NEWS

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**Judith Strong Albert's** "Commentary on Megan Marshall's *Margaret Fuller – A New American Life*" has been accepted for publication in the November/December issue of the *Women's Studies Interdisciplinary Journal*. Judith comments that writing this extended review has been a pleasure for her. Marshall's grasp of Fuller's life and significance combines enormous research with a personal identification with her subject that expands our understanding of both the biographer and her subject in an ongoing unfolding of American women's history.

**Jeanne Farr McDonnell** noted the article in the San Francisco Chronicle titled "Juana Briones, San Francisco's Founding Mother" by Gary Kamiya. "It has a fine photo of the Lyon Street stairs and explains at some length about the nearby indentation in the otherwise straight border of the Presidio due to the property owned by Briones. He refers to that boundary as 'a tangible reminder of one of the most remarkable and inspiring figures in San Francisco history, Juana Briones.' I am mentioned as her biographer, and the article is quite good. All the information in it is from my book published in 2006 by the University of Arizona Press. Briones will be the subject of a talk by Stanford History Professor Al Camarillo at the Presidio this fall." (September 19, 7 p.m. at the Golden Gate Club, 135 Fisher Loop.)

New member **Sue Bessmer** recently completed a book, *How the World Worked: From the Pharaohs to Christopher Columbus*. Another Institute member, **Leslie Friedman**, has wonderful things to say about it (which appear on the back cover). To see her comments and learn more about the book, visit: [www.oldtreebooks.com](http://www.oldtreebooks.com).

### **Peter Huppert (1935-2013)**

In July we received the sad news of the unexpected death of **Peter Huppert**, husband of our president, Ellen Huppert. Member **Georgia Wright** wrote that "Peter, was really a member of the Institute, more engaged in its activities than many on our roster. He joined the play-reading group, readily attended the works-in-progress at their house, and accompanied Ellen to NCIS (National Coalition of Independent Scholars) conferences. Surely his help on Ellen's history of her ancestors, their travels all over the country, warrant his place on the honor rolls of researchers in history. He was a lovely man. We will sorely miss his humor, sociability, and his obvious devotion to Ellen and their children, Ann and Paul."

# CALENDAR

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- October 10: “Treasures in the Archives: Research Possibilities for Students, Teachers and Scholars”  
SF Public Library (Main)
- October 12: Board meeting
- October 20: Work in Progress: Celeste MacCleod (place: TBA)
- November 17: Work in Progress: Peter Meyerhof (place: TBA)

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 [msakovich@juno.com](mailto:msakovich@juno.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\\_stanley@sbcglobal.net](mailto:autumn_stanley@sbcglobal.net). The deadline for the next NEWSLETTER is **November 30, 2013**.

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