

THE INSTITUTE FOR HISTORICAL STUDY

NEWSLETTER

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Mailing Address:
P. O. Box 5743
Berkeley, CA 94705

www.tihs.org

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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 non-members who wish to remain on its mailing list.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Remember Spiro Agnew? When he stood before the bar of justice for various crimes he entered the plea: "*Nolo contendere*." The phrase caught on, and soon thereafter several defendants in New Mexico courts tried to enter a similar plea: "*Nolo comprehendo*." As a former New Mexican, an Institute member since 2009, just installed as your president, I feel like entering that plea. It's not that I don't comprehend what IHS is all about, but I do feel a bit uncertain about where we want to go.

Thanks to the hard work of the board and members Ellen Huppert and Joanne Lafler, we had a wonderful annual meeting on February 25, marked by good food, fellowship, and lively discussion. The efforts of Georgia Wright produced a program of stimulating presentations from three members (see page 2). The success of our meeting shows that we have good reason to be pleased with ourselves and what we are doing.

Yet as I listened to the discussion, I sensed that in some quarters, at least, there was a current of underlying dissatisfaction, and the desire for something "mo' different," if not "mo' better." But how strong that current is or where it wants to flow, I cannot tell at the moment.

At thirty-three, we're relatively old and well-established, as organizations of this type go. An institution this age has its own "culture" that should not be changed for light and transient causes. But one area where we might change is in our membership. Let's face it, we are a "mature" group. Do we need new, perhaps younger, members? If so, how can we get them? At the meeting there was a bit of back-and-forth about the brochure which was just rewritten by Cathy Robbins (no relation, just my wife). Some discussion focused on the word "scholar" in our organizational definition and its implications—was the term too narrow, even intimidating, to potential members? Do we need somehow to pitch ourselves more widely?

We have created a new membership committee composed of Cathy Robbins, Ann Harlow, Bonda Lewis, and myself to formulate a plan for membership development. Please send your ideas; the committee will consider them and pass their proposals on to the board.

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ANNUAL MEETING

About twenty-five members attended the annual meeting on February 25 at the Rockridge branch of the Oakland Public Library. Besides tending to business, they heard lively talks from three members.

In his presentation, "1861-1865: A Political Revolution: Black Rights and Squelched Secessionists," **Robert Chandler**, a new member, described the political revolution in California between 1861 and 1865 as the state went from Southern Democrat to Republican/Union. Though distant from the scene of the hostilities, California was very much a part of the conflict. The voting population numbered 130,000, with 50,000 from free states, 50,000 citizens who had come from Europe (mostly Ireland and Germany), and 30,000 from slave states. In 1859, all of California's state officers were Democrats, and the party supported "equal rights to all sections," which translated as states' rights, protection of southern slavery and white supremacy, the Confederate position. The Republicans supported "equal rights to all men," which was the Unionist position. As the sectional crises heated up, political dominance shifted to the Republicans with the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 and Leland Stanford as governor in 1861. Southerners left California for the Confederate Army, and the Union legislature proscribed political enemies. California became the first state to require loyalty oaths from teachers and lawyers and in 1866 established the first registry law. At the same time Unionists squelched traitors, they granted equality under the law to African Americans. Blacks could now testify against whites in civil and criminal cases, sue to ride the San Francisco street cars, attend public supported schools, and march in the July 4 parades. In the four war years, California experienced a political revolution.

Anne Richardson spoke of "William Tyndale's Artistry of Vexation." Although Tyndale is best known for his heroic efforts to translate the Bible

into English, from the Greek and Hebrew, Anne first encountered him in his 1528 work, "The Obedience of a Christian Man." As Anne put it, "I was reading, not a 'religious' writer, but a street-wise, iconoclastic citizen who exuded common sense about the rights of man." As a citizen of the world he grounded his plea for shining light on the scriptures and the operations of the late medieval church on the rights of man—the right for information. For Tyndale "the word 'religion' had a strongly negative connotation: "'our most holy religion,' he said, 'is the English papal church, a men's club of hypocrites and cronies who maintain their power by fooling, frightening and robbing the English people.'" "Tyndale attacked two obscurantist practices of the church: one was the habit of allegorical reading, the other the outlawing of vernacular translation." He insisted that the words of the apostles' stories should be read as they are and not "interpreted." He also believed that the literal sense of a passage could be found in the meanings of words in their original languages. Tyndale suffered harassment from establishment clerics—he described himself as "turmoiled"—and worked mostly in secret. Tyndale's impact on the use of English, and further Bible translations, was significant.

Celeste MacLeod updated the group on her book "Eagle Eye with Notebook," subtitled "Fanny Trollope's Irreverent Critique of Early America and its Resonance Today." Mrs. Trollope's book *Domestic Manners of the Americans* was published initially in England in 1832. Her prime criticism centered on what Celeste calls "braggadocio." Americans continually bragged about the greatness of their country, expected constant praise, and could not tolerate a word of criticism. A second main subject was religion. Arriving in the midst of an evangelical revival movement, now called the Second Great Awakening, Mrs. Trollope went to every revival meeting she could get into and

described them in graphic, unflattering detail. She also wrote about the position of women, who she said were “guarded by a sevenfold shield of habitual insignificance.” While Celeste devotes her first seven chapters to “Domestic Manners” and the reactions to it, her last two chapters relate her book to the U.S. today, centering on “American exceptionalism.” Mrs. Trollope concluded that if Americans were indeed “devoted patriots . . . they would surely not thus encrust themselves in the hard, dry, stubborn persuasion, that they are the first and best of the human race, that nothing is to be learnt but what they are able to teach, and that nothing is worth having that they do not possess.”

Celeste’s book also covers Fanny Trollope’s life in some detail. She came to this country hoping that her stay would better the family’s financial picture: she had five children—one was Anthony, the future novelist—and a husband who couldn’t support them. After her lively book became a best-seller in both England and America, she launched a literary career at age fifty-three. Over the next twenty-five years she wrote forty more books—including social protest novels—and supported the family.

Cathy Robbins

Medieval Studies

In October, **Lorrie O’Dell** presented an overview of *The Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession* by James A. Brundage. Forty years in the making, Brundage’s study surveys the changes in the application of law from Roman Law during the Empire to Canon Law as the Christian Church becomes the main civil authority. The church rejected the use of Roman Law but as universities were formed (especially in Bologna and Padua), the need of the trading

community for a civil law that was apart from Canon Law became necessary. Civil legal studies were separated from the study of Canon Law and became a separate part of the curriculum. Eventually, standards for legal practice were established that helped the growth of the legal profession. The book is long with many, many footnotes, not a lot of dates, and sometimes hard to follow; but Lorrie said, “I learned a lot.”

In December, **Bob O’Dell’s** review of *The Man of Numbers: Fibonacci’s Arithmetic Revolution* by Keith Devlin engendered a lively group discussion with comments from everyone. Fibonacci introduced modern arithmetic to the Western world, offering a simpler method of calculation than either finger calculation or Roman numerals. As a teenager, he had joined his father on business trips to North Africa where he had learned the Hindu-Arabic number system. In 1202, he published *Liber Abaci* (The Book of Calculations), one of the most influential books of all time. When one uses pencil and paper to multiply numbers like 24 times 36, you are using his method today. It spawned generations of popular math texts in accessible language with many examples that allowed people to buy and sell goods, convert currencies, and keep accurate records far more easily than ever before. Yet despite the long-lasting impact of his work, Leonardo of Pisa (of the Bonacci family)—known today as Fibonacci—has largely slipped from the pages of history.

In January, **John Rusk** introduced *Life in a Late Medieval City: Chester, 1275-1520* by Jane Langton. Chester, because of its location on the Welsh frontier, had been an important military post and castle town since Roman times. To this day, the outlines of a Roman military camp are visible in the streets and walls of the inner city. Once an important port, the city became landlocked in the late Middle Ages (global cooling?). The most fascinating things about the

GROUP REPORTS

city are the existence of a type of structure rarely found in any other city. Houses are raised a bit above cellars and are connected to one another by an enclosed walkway with stores and shops on what Americans would call the second floor. Chester had abbeys and nunneries of many orders in the Middle Ages, sometimes filled with disorderly residents. On the secular side, over 170 occupations make their way into the records during the period of the study. Public office, as one might expect, involved a progression from minor jobs to important positions like mayor. Enough people were literate so that almost everyone knew a person who could read. Overall, an interesting but minor work.

In February, **Lyn Reese** introduced the group to *Melisende of Jerusalem: The World of a Forgotten Crusader Queen* by Margaret Tranovich. Although technically not a "crusader" (she was born and lived her whole life in the region), Melisende ruled for thirty years. Her father was King Baldwin II; her mother was Morphia, an Armenian. Her task was not only to defend the recently-created Kingdom of Jerusalem, but to embellish it and to make it a place of welcome for Christian pilgrims and traders alike. Since there are no writings or comments attributed to Melisende, the author focuses on the feudal structures established in the kingdom, the people who were living there, and the enmities between the Byzantine and European Christians. She also discusses the region's artistic production and the fusion of the three cultural traditions: European, Byzantine, and Islamic. Melisende was known for her gifts to the kingdom's building activities, in particular the rebuilding of Jerusalem's most important pilgrimage site, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Queen Melisende and her court provided a model for East/West integration.

Lorrie O'Dell

Biography Writers

The group met on January 15 at the home of **Bonda Lewis**, where we discussed pages sent around by those who are actively writing. Autumn Stanley's chapter of her memoirs was enjoyed by all, but the group suggested that she eliminate the many first person pronouns and "to be" forms. Members recommended Mary McCarthy's *Memoirs of a Catholic Girlhood* as a good model of the genre and Margaret Atwood's *Moral Disorder*, where the author fictionalized her stories and thereby created another level of reality.

Liz Thacker-Estrada's revised chapter of the biography of Abigail Fillmore was much improved over previous versions, providing a real sense of the times she lived in. The continuing story of Jenny, **Bonda Lewis's** central character, was fascinating. In both Liz's and Bonda's pages, however, readers missed their main characters and made suggestions about how to keep them as the main focus.

Rob Robbins submitted a revised section of his biography of Dzhunkovskii, which improved the balance between the needed historical background and the details of Dzhunkovskii's career as governor of Moscow. Rob dealt skillfully with the complicated issues of his multiple duties and his position within the tsarist state.

Liz Nakahara circulated a chapter devoted to the potential end of photo agencies, which have traditionally supported the work of photojournalists. She contrasted the collapse of the international agency Sygma with the plans of Bill Gates to use the archive of images which he now owns. Without the valuable services which traditional photo agencies offered, both the accessibility of the images and the rights of the photographers themselves are being ignored.

Ethel Herr reported that she has redirected the work, based on her experiences as a cancer patient, which began as a memoir. A publisher has expressed interest in a book of devotions for such patients, and Ethel's version of her journal will form the basis for such a work.

For the remainder of the meeting we discussed issues of self-publishing and electronic publication. While these are attractive possibilities for many in the group, the drawbacks are great. For example, libraries do not buy self-published books, and e-books are not reviewed in traditional publications, leaving authors without that means of publicity.

Ellen Huppert

Play Readers

The play readers completed a reading of *Days of the Turbins* by Mikhail Bulgakov. Written in 1926, the play is based on the author's autobiographical novel, *The White Guard*, set in Kiev in 1918-1919. It dramatizes the chaotic conditions of civil war and the effects on members of the Turbin family, who were monarchists, anti-nationalist, and anti-Bolshevik. Considerable background information was necessary to help us sort out the historical characters and situations.

The tsar's abdication early in 1917 was followed by the Bolshevik revolution later in the year. In the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, much Russian territory, including Ukraine, was ceded to the Central Powers. Germany installed a puppet governor, a Cossack hetman (supreme leader), in Kiev in 1918. Bulgakov, who was born and educated in Kiev, returned to his native city in 1918 and witnessed the events of the play, in which competing forces vie for power—Germans, Ukrainian nationalists, Red Army (Bolsheviks), White Guard (anti-Bolsheviks). After the civil war, Bulgakov moved to Moscow. In 1926 *Days of the Turbins* was produced at the

Moscow Art Theatre. When it premiered, some in the audience were enraptured when the Whites were not portrayed as oppressors. In 1929, all of Bulgakov's work was banned, but *Days of the Turbins*, produced a few years later with some revisions, remained in the repertoire. It was reputed to be one of Stalin's favorite plays. The conjecture is that Stalin's love of this play was what probably saved Bulgakov during the Soviet purges of the 1930s.

The hero, Alexei Vasilyevich Turbin (Bulgakov's alter ego), is an artillery colonel in the White Guard, serving the Ukrainian hetman in Kiev. The cast includes a younger brother and a sister and her husband—a White Guard officer whom she ultimately leaves for a former aide to the hetman, a singer of some repute. The play portrays a family of intelligent, rather idealistic people who live through a civil war on the wrong—i.e. losing—side. Bulgakov's message is universal: he decries dehumanizing forces, not necessarily of a particular political entity, which destroy the equanimity of society. Our next reading will be a recently-produced play about Bulgakov and his relationship with Stalin. If you wish to participate and receive announcements of our meetings, contact Joanne Lafler.

Edith Piness and Joanne Lafler

Member News

Kathleen Casey contributed "Crime and Punishment: Anglo-Saxon Law Codes" to *The Middle Ages in Texts and Texture: Reflections on Medieval Sources* (Jason Glenn, ed., University of Toronto Press, 2011). This volume of twenty-six essays by former students of the late Professor Robert Brentano of U.C. Berkeley embodies the diverse influences on their own teaching careers of his illuminating approach to the ambiguous records of an all but unreachable epoch. His wife, **Carroll Brentano**, has long been a supportive member of the Institute.

MEMBER NEWS

In February **Anne Homan** was sworn in as the official Livermore City Historian for a two-year term of office. She has multiple duties, including giving speeches at city historical events, researching houses/buildings, working with the city's Historic Preservation Committee, answering queries from the public, and writing a 900-word column each week for the local newspaper.

Kathleen O'Connor participated in a committee of four local archivists who have worked for one year putting together a California local-story component for a traveling exhibit. "Women and Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America" opened on January 24 at its final stop at the California Museum, ground floor of the California State Archives building in Sacramento. She notes: "It's truly an awesome experience giving Catholic Sisters their place in American history as women of innovation and courage. If you are in Sacramento for any reason before June 3, be sure to visit; it is a great exhibit utilizing the underused archive collections of these religious women."

Charles Ortloff reports several publications: his paper entitled "Recovery of Lost Hydraulics Knowledge in Ancient South America by Computational Fluid Dynamics Methods," given at the Ancient Water Systems Conference in Vienna in November 2011, will appear in the Conference Proceedings; another paper, "2600-1800 BCE Caral: Environmental Change at Late Archaic Period Society in North Central Peru" will appear in the *Journal of the Institute of Andean Studies* (Nawpa Pacha) in 2012; and a review article on the archaeology of canals and aqueducts found in the ancient world (South America, the Middle East, South-East Asia and the Native American societies of the Southwest) was accepted for publication in the *Springer Encyclopedia of Geophysical Archaeology* to appear late in 2012.

Fire Ruin Renewal, **Margaretta Mitchell's** recently completed film, has been accepted into

the Oakland International Film Festival, showing in the afternoon of April 7 (with several other short films) from 2-4:15 in the theater at the Oakland Museum of California.

Georgia Wright notes that the work of one Institute member has achieved general recognition. The category on a recent "Jeopardy" program ("America's favorite quiz show" watched by millions of viewers) was Arthurian literature. "Guinevere" was the answer, given quickly and correctly, to the question "**Sharan Newman's** *The Chessboard Queen* refers to her." (*The Chessboard Queen: A Story of Guinevere* was published by Macmillan in 1997.)

Anne Richardson's presentation at the Institute's annual meeting will be published in the *Tyndale Society Journal*.

Welcome to new members **Dot Brovarney** and **Carol Sicherman**, who will be properly introduced in the next newsletter!

President's message cont'd. from page 1

Now let me end where I should have begun, thanking Ann Harlow who has served splendidly as president the past two years and to the members of the board who have stepped down: John Rusk our secretary, Nancy Zinn who handled membership and grants, and Michael Griffith who headed our nominating committee. (He will continue as archivist and web master.) Their service is much appreciated and their wisdom will be missed. Welcome to the new board members: Ellen Huppert, Jeanne McDonnell, Gretta Mitchell, Kathleen O'Connor, and Judith Offer. Finally, I want to thank our donors whose financial support makes so much of our work possible. We anticipate a great year!

Richard (Rob) Robbins

BOOK REVIEW

Vasco's Livermore. 1910: Portraits from the Hub Saloon Anne Marshall Homan and Richard W. Finn, Walnut Creek: Hardscratch Press, 2010

This book brings to life a moment in time, and the work supports my belief that images speak strongly in a language of their own. Livermore and the period come alive, but the life of the artist himself rounds out the overall effect of the book. Vasco Urbano Loureiro came on a side trip to Livermore. As the name Vasco is Basque in Spanish, the authors assume with good reason that the artist went there to find compatriots.

Every reader will find a personal connection. One for me is the Horse Show president, Hans Mortensen Christensen. Various members of his family came from Denmark to Livermore, so he was not a loner as was the caricaturist, who traveled the world, earning his way by selling his drawings. The Horse Show spoke to me about a time when I fancied horses. Categories of horses featured in the horse show have an exotic feeling: draft, roadster, trotter, runner, carriage, and fancy breeds—Percheron, Clydesdale, Belgian, and Shirr. Such a range sets this show off as more than a country gathering. Two months after the last show in 1914, Christensen bought a new Overland auto.

That intrigued me. In 1995 the Women's Heritage Museum (with which I was connected) wanted to feature Sara Bard Field's 1915 auto trip to Washington D.C. taking the petitions supporting women's voting rights with the thousands of signatures that had been collected. The car was an Overland. I managed to locate one in the East Bay. Could it have been the one originally owned by Christensen? I will never know. The owner brought his Overland to the Marina in San Francisco, where the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition took place and where Bonda Lewis impersonated Field. After her speech, Lewis stepped into the

Overland and took off, as if leaving from the 1915 Exposition in San Francisco.

All of the caricatures portray men. Women were not welcome in saloons. One bartender asked the age of any woman who entered. Whatever she said, he would respond that they only served women older than that. The men portrayed, however, represent a cross section: laborer, judge, farmer, merchant, young and old, native son and immigrant, rich and poor. My son, Peter, who is a caricaturist, said he thought that the artist's chatting with the men as he drew them helped bring out personality. Nearly all of the forty-three drawings are in profile, so one can imagine the subject standing at a bar, or sitting at a table with others.

Among the four men's organizations in Livermore, the California National Guard raised money to maintain their unit with dances, basketball games, dramas. Reading about the cows and the sheep and the farm life makes one think of loneliness. Reading about the entertainments makes one think it wasn't so lonely after all.

The authors of this unique book—Anne Homan, whose skill at researching the community is most evident, and Dick Finn, who provided good copies of these century-old drawings and investigated the subjects' lives—were a team that succeeded in turning the raw materials into a veritable work of art of its own.

Anyone who reads this book and studies the caricatures will find personal connections. People who live in Livermore will enjoy this book the most. Others will be intrigued at how profoundly the eye, mouth, hat, posture, clothes, raise curiosity about the subjects. When I go to Livermore, I will be looking at the people there, wondering if I can find a trace of an ancestor from the drawings I remember.

Jeanne Farr McDonnell

CALENDAR

March 18	Work-in-Progress
April (tba)	Board meeting
April 14	California Round Table-sponsored visit to Golden Gate Bridge exhibit at CHS
June 2	Publishing Workshop with Beth Wright

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 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. The deadline for the next NEWSLETTER is **June 30, 2012**.

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