

# THE INSTITUTE FOR HISTORICAL STUDY

VOLUME 31, NO. 1, SUMMER 2011

# NEWSLETTER

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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

Madame President is at a loss for words this time.

Computer crashes, travel, and sundry other obligations have prevented the columnist's muse from visiting me in time to write anything substantive. So I will simply direct you to the rest of the newsletter, where you will find many interesting reports of what Institute members and groups have been doing, as well as notice of a few upcoming events. Look for details in forthcoming announcements. May you have a pleasant summer with whatever balance of work and relaxation is just right for you.

*Ann Harlow*

## WORKS IN PROGRESS

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### California during the Civil War

On March 5, former Institute member Glenna Mathews spoke on her forthcoming book, "California during the Civil War," to a group of about a dozen members and visitors at Lyn Reese's home in the scenic Berkeley hills.

Glenna prefaced her remarks by explaining that she had originally intended to write a book about Thomas Starr King (a prominent Unitarian minister in San Francisco, originally from Boston), but that potential publishers described King as "too obscure" for general interest. After one publisher advised her that there was a market for a book about California's involvement with the Civil War, she decided to revamp and embarked on further research. Because King was the focal point of the pro-Union Californian agitation—he is often spoken of in Unitarian Circles as having "saved California for the Union"—he remained a key character of her broader book. Cambridge University Press accepted the book, now being edited, a process Glenna described as harrowing.

Glenna spoke with almost lyrical intensity of her enjoyment of her continuing research, a feeling that received many nods of recognition from the assembled listeners. Among the libraries where she found material were the Huntington, Society of Pioneers, Boston Public, and Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley.

Glenna stated that since California entered the United States as a "free state" in 1850, today's Californians do not realize that California was dominated in the economic upper level of society of the time by Southern slaveholders and ex-slaveholders. For example, she mentioned William McKinley Gwynn, the state's Representative to the U.S. Congress, who also owned two hundred slaves in Mississippi, providing,

it was said, "Mississippi with an extra Congressman."

In September, 1859, the Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court, David Terry, a Southerner, killed California's U.S. Senator David Broderick, the leading "free soil" advocate, in a duel. When Thomas Starr King arrived in California to take up his post as minister of the Unitarian Church in April 1860, San Francisco was in turmoil over the death and over the 1857 Dred Scott decision as well. King launched immediately into promoting the Union and abolition, calling Dred Scott "legalized tyranny."

Although pro-Confederacy people dominated the upper class, the majority of Californians were pro-Union. California sent over 17,000 volunteers to the Union Army, more per capita than any other state. In September 1862, Starr King was able to raise \$200,000 to send to the Union "Sanitary Commission," a group in New York City, run by his friend Henry Bellows, which organized hospital and recovery services for the wounded.

Glenna mentioned other matters detailed in her book, including the influence of the telegraph on the War, Alcatraz as a military prison, and the Battle of Glorietta Pass (in New Mexico) as the Western-most battle of the War, and one which influenced California.

Those attending the talk included Patty King Page, a great granddaughter of Thomas Starr King. When Glenna concluded, Page spoke briefly about her family's understanding of the huge role her ancestor had played. She also showed a ring she was wearing that she had inherited from Thomas Starr King's wife.

The group assembled at Lyn's house will be eager to read Glenna's book.

**Judith Offer**

### The Military Force of the Hawaiian Kingdom

Neil Dukas provided a fascinating look into the history of the kingdom of Hawai'i on Sunday, May 1, at Georgia Wright's home. He highlighted the military history of the last king, David Kalākaua (1874-1891). Neil's thesis is that the king did almost everything right to create a strong military within the limits of the small island kingdom. In doing so, he used western models, especially the Prussian and U.S. armies.

Neil has published two books on Hawaiian history: *A Military History of the Sovereign Hawai'i*, and *A Pocket Guide to the Battle of Nu'uamu, 1795*. The latter is a guide to the battle which resulted in the unification of all the Hawaiian Islands into one kingdom. It has just won an honorable mention in the Ka Palapala Po'okela Award for Excellence in Hawaiian Culture. Neil has also published *The Spanish Gatekeeper - Empire of the Ulfair*, a science fiction fantasy.

The images Neil showed during his presentation underscored the way King Kalākaua emulated his western models. Belt buckles, helmets complete with elaborate feather crests, and other emblems were directly drawn from specific examples and, in some cases, actually manufactured by the same factories in the United States. Officers' tunics were especially interesting in following western patterns. The photographs came from his own search of Hawaiian museums and archives.

David Kalākaua was born in 1836. As a young man he was provided with a sound military education. He lived through several assaults against Hawaiian sovereignty and other disruptions caused by outsiders. These included attempted takeovers by French and British forces and a riot in Honolulu by American sailors.

Kalākaua served under King Lunalilo, who in 1873 disbanded all regular troops following a barracks mutiny, leaving the kingdom vulnerable to foreign adventurers and to domestic upheavals. At Lunalilo's death in 1874, Kalākaua was elected king, but he was challenged by Dowager Queen Emma's supporters. Lacking any significant forces, the Hawaiian government was forced to call in help from British and U.S. troops to maintain order.

For obvious reasons Kalākaua moved to reform and strengthen his army. After making a number of changes and stabilizing his position in the kingdom, he made a nine-month world tour in 1881. He spoke with world leaders and studied military forces. He acquired Austrian field artillery, the best in the world at the time.

By 1885, the full military display at Queen Emma's funeral attested to the success of the king's policies in building a modern military. The regular, or permanent force, and the volunteer guards, or militia, made up the two parts of the new force. King Kalākaua changed what had been the household troops into the Royal or King's Guard and added the Hawaiian Marine. For the volunteer forces, he first created five companies in 1874: The Prince's Own, the Hawaiian Guards, the King's Own, the Leleiohoku Guards, and the Mamalahoa Guards. These changes were followed in 1884 by the creation of the Honolulu Rifles, the Queen's Own and, later, the First Regiment of Hawaiian Volunteers.

The navy consisted of one ship, the *H.M.S. Ka'imiloa*. While it was not capable of holding off any of the major navies of the time, it was indicative of the king's determination to defend the independence of the kingdom. Unfortunately, when Samoa asserted its own independence from Germany, Hawai'i sent its sole ship on a fruitless mission to support its Polynesian neighbor.

## WORKS IN PROGRESS

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Following a military coup d'état in 1887, the *Ka'imiloa* was scrapped

After the coup d'état, King Kalākaua lost power over his kingdom. He died in 1891, succeeded by his sister Queen Lili'uokalani. The queen was deposed in 1893 by non-Native residents in conjunction with the landing of American naval forces and a republic established. (The Republic of Hawai'i was in turn annexed by the U.S. in 1898.)

Neil has been invited to make a poster presentation at the 2012 conference of the American Historical Association and he may develop this topic into an article.

For those of us who had little knowledge of Hawaiian history, Neil's presentation was most enlightening. And for anyone with previous knowledge, the images he showed and the detailed account of Hawaiian military history were remarkable.

**Ellen Huppert**

### **The New England Eliots Out West**

One of our newest members, **Sharan Newman**, gave a work-in-progress talk on March 27, 2011 at the home of Monica Clyde. It was a good opportunity to get a little better acquainted with Sharan, who has been friends with one of our founding members, Georgia Wright, for years, but lives in Oregon.

With graduate work in medieval studies, Sharan has managed to make a living for years as an independent scholar and author. She has published a series of ten murder mysteries set in twelfth-century France featuring a character named Catherine LeVendeur. She had done enough painstaking research in Paris to be shocked by some of the errors in the blockbuster novel *The Da Vinci Code* when it came out, and

she proceeded to write *The Real History Behind the Da Vinci Code*. This was followed by *The Real History Behind the Templars* and, most recently, *The Real History of the End of the World: Apocalyptic Predictions from Revelation and Nostradamus to Y2K and 2012*.

Her work in progress on the Eliot family also relates to religion, but in a very different time and place than medieval France. In the process of doing research for *The Shanghai Tunnel*, a novel set in 1860s Portland, Sharan became intrigued by Thomas and Henrietta Eliot, real people she included as characters in the novel. Thomas Eliot was the son of William Greanleaf Eliot, a pioneering Unitarian minister who became an important civic leader in St. Louis and co-founder of Washington University and the Western Sanitary Commission. Three of William Greanleaf Eliot's four sons became Unitarian ministers, including Thomas, who carried Unitarianism all the way to Portland in 1867. Like his father, he played an active role in social service and higher education. (The fourth brother, Henry Ware Eliot, went into business but also performed public service. One of Henry's sons, T. S. Eliot, took a rather different path.)

Having read many of the Eliot family papers at Reed College, Sharan developed a fondness for this close-knit, idealistic family, and she hopes to write a book about them. She was surprised to discover a recently published book on the Eliot women, Cynthia Grant Tucker's *No Silent Witness*, which characterizes them as generally oppressed by their minister husbands. Sharan's book will present a somewhat different view. We helped her brainstorm about possible titles and subtitles, coming up with *Practical Romantics: the New England Eliots Out West*. She will be developing a book proposal and submitting it to publishers.

**Ann Harlow**

## SPECIAL REPORT

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At the invitation of **Joanne Lafler**, a large group gathered at her house on March 20, for what turned out to be a spirited discussion of Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (NY: Basic Books, 2010). By choosing a longer time frame and a geographical focus for the atrocities of both Hitler and Stalin, the book is a reconceptualization of the deliberate killings of civilians in mid-twentieth-century Europe. Snyder's focus on Eastern Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic republics, and western edge of Russia makes for a narrative that weaves together the early 1930s Stalinist collectivization policies that led to the starving deaths of millions of people of Ukraine, followed by Nazi exploitation and atrocities in the same region. Snyder argues that the people of these "bloodlands" suffered not one, but two, and even three waves of terror, as they were occupied first by the Nazis or Soviets, then overrun by the Wehrmacht or Red Army, and ultimately reconquered by the Red Army at the end of World War II. Snyder also makes it clear that Hitler's extermination of European Jewry could not have occurred without the war that allowed German occupation of these lands where most of the Jews of Europe resided.

There is not too much that is new in Snyder's book for historians of the subject, yet it presents an important corrective to our understanding of the period. Though Snyder himself rejects a comparison of numbers—he acknowledges that numbers count however—his work fills in the less well-known facts of Stalinist terror which can now be documented with the opening of Soviet archives after 1991. Nazi atrocities were better known due to the Nazi's own propaganda and documentation and also because of Western bias against Soviet Russia during the Cold War. Not only were Soviet archives closed, there was no interest in making the Soviet Union look less bad in comparison with Nazi atrocities that were well documented and known.

Both regimes used utopian goals to inform, inspire, and justify their actions. Both regimes used the dehumanization of minorities and elites—ethnic and racial in the Nazi case, economic and social, but also ethnic and racial, in the Soviet case. Both regimes saw themselves as victims—Nazis felt threatened by the Jews, and Russia feared encirclement by Poland and Japan. Russian fear of Poland was not just a fantasy: Poland was a more enlightened country and had extensive intelligence on the Soviets. And both regimes justified their actions and policies in terms of each other's previous actions. Stalin's early decimation of entire populations in Ukraine set an example that Hitler emulated in Western Poland which, in turn, lent sanction to Soviet murders of Poles in the East. When the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union, their policies and practices of murder served as justification for similar policies and practices by the Soviets.

Snyder's conclusions result in a reassessment of the numbers of people killed in the Russian gulags, where before the war nine out of ten returned from their exile, and in an understanding that the Nazis killed far greater numbers of Jews by shootings and gassings in vans than in the notorious camps. All in all, it appears now that the Stalinist terror had fewer and the Nazi terror more victims than once thought. Though not so well written, *Bloodlands* is a compelling text.

Our discussion ranged over many topics, including the purpose of retelling the story at this time, the intended audience, motivations for and differences of the utopian goals of the Soviet and Nazi regimes, the role of war, comparisons of numbers and methods, and more. Our discussion also touched on the post-war German expellees from areas of the "bloodlands." One of the questions left unresolved was the justification for Snyder's inclusion of a chapter on Stalinist anti-

## GROUP REPORTS

Semitism. Joanne and others felt that it did not belong as it did not result in mass killings. Its inclusion might have been a reply to Daniel Goldhagens *Hitler's Willing Executioners* and his *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity*, in which the author describes anti-Semitism as an "eliminationist" impulse "across cultures and subcultures," ignoring historical and geographic context. Is control of the story of the holocaust still contested territory in the scholarly world? I would add that perhaps Stalin's paranoia regarding Soviet Jews after the war stemmed from his fear of their wanting to perpetuate the memory of the holocaust and, with it, the memory of all mass murders of the time, Stalin's included.

Our heavy and heavy-hearted discussion was relieved by a number of well-placed and appropriate jokes told well by **Bogna Lorence-Kot**, and we ended the session with reference to additional literature, much supplied by **Rob Robbins**, who also pointed out that the ultimate cause of all bloodletting was World War I. See Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia*; Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War*; Barbara Epstein, *Minsk Ghetto 1941-1943: Jewish Resistance and Soviet Internationalism*; Stephen Cohen, *The Victims Return*; Vasili Grossman, *Life and Fate: Everything Flows* and *The Hell of Treblinka*; Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*; Norman Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides*; and Paul Gregory, *Terror by Quota*.

**Cornelia Levine**

### Biography Writers Group

At our March and April meetings we moved from our usual agenda into new territory. We did comment on members' pages, but in addition we devoted time to more general issues. We addressed technical issues such as the use of

long quotations, which traditionally would be presented single-spaced within a double-spaced manuscript. We encouraged each other to try to avoid lengthy quotations—readers often skip such passages. In some cases, however, the quoted words are the point, so such long passages are necessary.

We turned to the issue of audience: who is expected to read this book? How can the writer draw such readers in and keep their attention? How can a writer of nonfiction keep readers engaged without inventing dialogue or continuity when the documents do not provide anything of the kind? We also discussed several issues about publishing, such as when an agent is needed and how to find one. Is self-publishing a possibility?

Another discussion focused on reviews: how can an author get publications to review a work? And if a review misquotes or misstates what the author has written, can or should anything be done? One approach is to ignore negative comments. But Autumn Stanley did manage to correct errors in the review of her life of Charlotte Smith which was published in *Choice*.

We compared notes about being blocked in our writing and what remedies we turn to. We consoled each other about poring through archival materials in search of that one tiny nugget that might make a difference to our work. And Ann Harlow reported that she had discovered BIO, the Biographers' International Organization, which she promptly joined. The organization offers a monthly e-mail newsletter, annual conferences, and assistance in creating a personal website. Annual membership is calibrated to personal income and starts at \$45.

So far, we seem to have aroused more questions than answers, but we will continue with both.

**Ellen Huppert**

## GROUP REPORTS

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### California Roundtable

**Kathleen O'Connor** hosted the California History Roundtable at the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, California Province Archives in Belmont, located on the campus of Notre Dame de Namur University. Catholic women's religious provincial/congregational archives are an extraordinary but under-utilized resource for local and regional history.

Kathleen presented a short overview of the history of the California Province from 1844 in Oregon Territory to the present. The sisters arrived in Oregon at the invitation of Father De Smet, a Jesuit missionary to the Native Americans. When they came down to San Francisco in 1851 to pick up another set of sisters to take back to Oregon, they were invited to stay and work in San Jose. They accepted because most of their students' fathers had left for the gold fields.

In San Jose they established the Academy of Notre Dame, becoming the College of Notre Dame in 1868, the first chartered college for women in California. By the time they moved up to Belmont, taking over the Ralston Estate in 1923, these sisters were teaching in their own and parish schools up and down California. Kathleen described the sisters' superiors as the first women CEO's breaking the glass ceiling, long before these terms were used. From California the sisters branched out to Washington and Hawaii and then to overseas missions. After Vatican II, they developed other ministries, such as social work and police chaplaincy.

Kathleen gave a tour of the public places of the Province Center, showing off many original stained glass windows from the original mother-house in San Jose and from one in Saratoga, built in 1937, which were incorporated into this new Province Center in 2004. Kathleen pulled

out various records and scrapbooks detailing the type of education that the sisters gave to their students over the years.

Refreshments and a lively discussions followed the presentation.

**Kathleen O'Connor**

### Medieval Study Group

With this report I am catching up with nearly a year's worth of meetings. Last July 24, Nancy Zinn hosted us at her home for a presentation on *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: People in Britain, 850-1520*, by Christopher Dyer. Lyn Reese talked to us about medieval Barcelona at her home on October 10. Having just toured the city and its remaining medieval areas, Lyn used Robert Hughes' *Barcelona* as her source. On December 5, in discussing the battle of Agincourt at the home of Ellen Huppert, John Rusk used as sources: John Keegan, *The Face of Battle*; Juliet Barker, *Agincourt: Henry V and the Battle that Made England*; Anne Curry, *Agincourt: A New History*.

The first meeting in 2011 was held on February 20 at the home of Lyn Reese, where Bob O'Dell presented the work of Alfred W. Crosby, *The Measure of Reality: Quantification and Western Society, 1250-1600*. On April 22, Ellen Huppert introduced the group to *Ermengard of Narbonne and the World of the Troubadours*, written by Fredric L. Cheyette. (Lyn Reese again hosted this meeting.) The May 22 meeting was held at the home of Nancy Zinn, where Lyn Reese discussed the Getty Museum's exhibition of fashion in the Middle Ages as seen in illuminated manuscripts. She advised the group to view the exhibit on the website beforehand.

We have been pleased to welcome new Institute member Jennifer Bator to our group.

**Lorrie O'Dell**

## MEMBER NEWS

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Institute members **Peter Stansky** and **Karen Offen** participated in an April colloquium, "A Company of Authors," at the Stanford Humanities Center. Peter chaired a panel on heroes and Karen offered "Globalizing Feminisms" to the panel "Conversations around the World."

**Jody Offer's** newest production, *Compared to What?* opens for a run at the MIRA Theatre, 51 Daniels Avenue, in Vallejo, on July 8. It plays through July 23 on Fridays, Saturdays, and two Sundays. The play is set in 1926, when A. Phillip Randolph started organizing the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Tickets are \$15/12: (707) 552-0400 or [www.miratheatreguild.org](http://www.miratheatreguild.org).

**Leslie Friedman** presented her paper, "Creating Community, Defining Oneself: The Importance of Mary Lamb's Salon," April 9, 2011, at the Western Association of Women Historians conference at the Huntington Library.

**Anne Richardson's** article "Thomas Arundel, 'Hammer of Heresy,' and his Impact on the English Fifteenth Century," will be coming out in *The William Tyndale Society Journal*, No. 40 (Summer 2011).

**Steven Levi** reports that his scholarly/commercial book *Clara Nevada: Gold, Greed, Murder, and Alaska's Inside Passage* was officially out on June 1 and that he has "already received a snappy review on Amazon.com. Part of the research on this book came from minigrants!!"

Two new books from **Jackie Pels'** Hardscratch Press have been honored with three awards: *Vasco's Livermore, 1910: Portraits from the Hub Saloon*, by **Anne Marshall Homan** and Richard Flynn, was named "Best Local History, 2011" by the Bay Area Independent Publishers Association (BAIPA) and received a

"Recognition of Merit" award from Bookbuilders West; BAIPA chose *Homesteaders in the Headlights: One family's journey from a Depression era New Jersey farm to a new life in Wasilla, Alaska*, by George Harbeson Jr., as "Best Migration Memoir, 2011." Now in production at Hardscratch Press is a narrative drawn from exhaustive genealogical research on three African American families, by Henry Ramsey Jr., whose autobiography was named "Best Cultural History" in last year's BAIPA judging.

Welcome to new member **Charles Ortloff**, who combines a background in applied mathematics, physics, and fluid dynamics with anthropology and archeology. For twenty-five years he was active as an archeologist in South and Meso America, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. His eighty publications include *Water Engineering* (Oxford University Press). He is looking forward to meeting "with fellow scholars in many diverse areas of interest."

Long-time Institute member **Bill McPeak**, an independent scholar from Southern California, died on April 23, 2011. Bill had a BA in meteorology and received a MA in history from Pepperdine with an emphasis on sixteenth-century science. He was a prolific scholar, contributing articles to various periodicals and science encyclopedias. Articles on militaria appeared in the following periodicals: *Muzzleloader*, *Muzzleblast*, *Guns*, *Command*, and *Military History*, and he was a regular contributor to *Military Heritage*. Bill received an Institute minigrant of \$600 in 2002 to enable him to get one of his articles published. According to his wife, he really loved history! (Contributed by Lorrie O'Dell)

## BOOK REVIEW

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*Child of the Northern Spring*, Persia Woolley,  
(Sourcebooks, 2010, 537 pp.)

This is Persia's first book in her Guinevere of King Arthur's Court trilogy, previously published by Poseidon Press and this year re-released by Sourcebooks. A map, list of characters, helpful author's notes, and reading group discussion questions enhance this engaging tale set in King Arthur's Britain.

Persia's interest is in exploring the origins of legends which may be based on fact. Legends are always subject to reinvention, and in the retelling of the King Arthur tales Guinevere most often appears as the "adulterous" destroyer of Camelot and the Cause. Much of this Guinevere-bashing can be traced to Chrétien de Troyes who, in the twelfth century, invented the whole Lancelot-Guinevere adultery story.

In an effort to redress this grievance, Persia places Guinevere where she rightly belongs, in fifth-century Celtic Britain. Her Guinevere comes off as an actively engaged woman whose life is aligned more closely with those of other high born women of her period. In this first book Guinevere is bright, questioning, and somewhat feisty young woman, more happy racing around the countryside on her beloved horses than sitting contentedly at home learning the vital female skills necessary for the time when she will administer landed estates of her own. She is also eager to receive the relatively high level of education which was accorded to noblewomen like herself, particularly one destined to be a queen.

Persia employs rich descriptions of the terrain, political events, and major ideas of King Arthur's time with the aim of depicting the hero and his companions as more real than mythic. Culture clash, when the Old Ways meet the ways of the "Roman" Christian church, is a constant theme,

even when the continuing power of the magic of the Archdruids and priestesses and the age-old peasant celebrations following pagan rites seem unlikely to fade away soon. The lives of the barons, moving from one locale to another, consolidating their followers, and conducting raids in good warlord fashion, are nicely told. And, through Guinevere's eyes, the tasks of daily life, in particular the work required of women, are seen in great detail.

The issue of the reliability of stories, mostly told though oral history, is also touched on. "What do we know of the Old Days, except for rumors and the stories bad memories embroider to make them more lively?" asks a Medicine Woman, one of Guinevere's childhood sources of wisdom. Persia also notes the fine line in deciding how far one can take poetic license in recreating the past. For example, in the Author Introduction she explains why she used words and expressions which weren't used for centuries to come. Even so, she has set herself a hard task by turning the usual warrior image of fifth-century Britain into a cosmopolitan world where trade and ideas flourished and by creating Arthur and Gwen (as she names Guinevere) as equal partners seeking to create a tolerant, peaceful, and united Britain. When her characters describe events and opinions in their own voices, as they usually do, they sometimes present themselves in ways more suited to our modern lives than to the world of Britain in the "dark ages." And, while the wealth of well-researched period detail is welcome to us historians, at times these descriptions overwhelm the pace and action of the book's narrative.

Persia continues her quest to uncover the historical origins of iconic tales. Currently her research focuses on the Trojan War, and we can hope that lively original stories will result from this endeavor as well.

Lyn Reese

## CALENDAR

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June 19      Work-in-Progress – Ellen Huppert  
August 27    California Round Table  
September 10 Potluck  
September 18 Work-in-Progress – Richard Raack

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@lmi.net](mailto:msakovich@lmi.net) 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 **August 31, 2011**.

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