

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).

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

At year's end, we traditionally reflect on the past and resolve to do some things differently in the future. For the Institute, this also is an appropriate time to both look back and to think about the future. Thirty years ago this year, the first meetings were held to organize the Institute and the very first issue of the newsletter was published. Thirty years ago next year, the Institute was formally incorporated and began operation as a non-profit organization dedicated to the pursuit and sharing of historical knowledge. Over those thirty years, the Institute has much to celebrate. We have offered hundreds of works in progress, put on many, many rewarding public programs and, of course, have hosted numerous potlucks and dinners. We have thrived and now must surely be one of the oldest independent scholar organizations in the country.

Much of this is due to the continued dedication of our founding directors, almost all of whom are still members of the Institute. These founding directors are **Jules Becker, Ellen Huppert, Joanne Lafler, Peter Mellini, Francesca Miller, and Lorrie O'Dell**. We owe a special thanks to all of them!

During the next year, the Institute will have several events marking our thirtieth anniversary. Also next year will be an appropriate time to think about what future course we want the Institute to take. Technological changes obviously offer new ways to communicate scholarly work. Are we taking as full advantage of these as we should? Are there different sorts of programs and activities that we should be sponsoring? What assistance should we be offering new generations of independent historians as they pursue their researches? In my view, the next year is an excellent time for all Institute members to reflect on these questions and others and to help plan for the next thirty years of the Institute.

Michael Griffith

WORK-IN-PROGRESS – Lyn Reese

Women's Ways of Crossing Cultural Boundaries: a Presentation for the California World History Association Conference, October 2009.

On Sunday October 11, about 12 friendly historians met at **Georgia Wright's** home for a work in progress. **Lyn Reese** brought a panel presentation on which she needed quick feedback. She was to present it on the following Saturday to the California World History Association in Riverside. The title of her presentation was "Women's Ways of Crossing Cultural Boundaries."

Lyn had given a workshop on the same topic earlier, "Women's Ways to Connect Across Cultural Borders Past and Present," at the EUROCLIO Conference in Nicosia, Cypress. That workshop lasted 90 minutes and included activities and audience interaction. Her upcoming talk for the Riverside conference needed to be edited down to 25 minutes. She also had paired her new version with a PowerPoint presentation.

During the era of European imperialism and colonization from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century, women had more opportunities than previously to travel. Letters, diaries, and journals written by these intrepid women travelers reveal their concerns. Unlike men, they had unique access to women and children. They rarely saw the foreign women as equals, but rather from a position of power—a missionary perspective. Lady Mary Wortley-Montagu's husband was appointed as ambassador to Turkey, and Lady Wortley-Montagu traveled with him in 1717. In her letters from the Turkish Embassy, she mentioned the veiling of women, saying that the women she met believed that this practice gave them a freedom because of their anonymity. A century later, Flora Tristan wrote a travel diary, *Peregrinations of a Pariah*, about her journeys in Peru.

Lyn's PowerPoint presentation showed a painting of a series of women from many different cultures,

representing various races and ethnic groups. The painter's purpose was to show the "collective soul of women." Many of the women are obviously of mixed races. Lyn pointed out that one way for women to cross cultural boundaries is to celebrate diversity and promote a culture of inclusion in the classroom, a place where many women have authority.

There is a long history of women throughout the world organizing to promote change. The first International Congress on Women's Rights met in Paris in 1878. The participants espoused "equality between the sexes." The International Women's Suffrage Association first convened in Berlin in 1904. International Woman's Day was inaugurated on March 8, 1910 as a day when women would press their demands.

Women have long been in the forefront of anti-war movements. Lyn showed some of German artist Käthe Kollwitz's powerful black and white woodcuts. Kollwitz lost her son in World War I and her grandson in World War II and was a strong advocate for peace and an end to poverty and hunger. The women of Liberia came together across religious lines and forced Charles Taylor, the warlord who had become president of Liberia, into exile in 2003. In a free election, the country chose a woman as their next president. The women called themselves "The Mothers of the Land."

The group suggested that Lyn remove some of her examples, interesting as they were, in order to save time to meet the time limit. It was also suggested that she display fewer words on the Power Point screen. This will emphasize the images and maintain drama in her presentation.

Anne Homan

MEMBERSHIP EVENTS

On Saturday evening, November 21, the Institute held its **Annual Membership Dinner** at the Sequoyah Country Club in Oakland. (Founded in 1913, the Mission Style Club has a long history in Oakland.). The evening started with a no-host bar with John Lafler doing the honors, allowing the thirty guests to mingle and visit. Dinner was then served and the socializing continued. The guest speaker for the evening was Samuel Haber, Professor Emeritus of History at The University of California, Berkeley. His talk was entitled, "The Promise of the Enlightenment: Robert King Merton and the Sociology of Science."

Haber introduced his talk with a discussion of the Enlightenment belief in the promise of science for the improvement of humanity as opposed to reliance on Judeo-Christian theology. He illustrated this with the eighteenth-century fascination with orreries, models of the planetary system that functioned with clockworks, many of which can now be found in university collections.

Robert King Merton grew up in Philadelphia, the Jewish son of immigrant parents named Schkolnick. Because American universities were limiting the number of Jewish students they would accept, he changed his name to Robert King Merton and was admitted to Harvard. Merton told no one about his Jewish origins, not even his wife, until his daughter learned about it accidentally. Haber discussed the possible psychological effect of maintaining this silence. After receiving his PhD, Merton joined the faculty of Columbia University and became the country's leading sociologist of science. Secular in outlook and an admirer of the Enlightenment, his message was that science provided the best guide for modern society. As time went on, this message was challenged by the belief that the progress of science was bringing danger to humanity rather than betterment. In his last years he lost his role as prophet of a better world. At the same time, a difficult period in his life, he accepted publicly his Jewish identity.

Richard Herr and Lorrie O'Dell

On Saturday, October 18, Institute President **Mike Griffith** hosted an intrepid band of some 13 or 14 Institute members on tours of the Santa Clara **County Archives** (for which he is the archivist), and the **San Jose History Park**.

The Santa Clara County Archives were established in 2006, and Mike is the first archivist. Housed in a large industrial building in a former business park, the Archives space has been divided into administrative offices, reading room and reference stacks, an adjacent processing room, a large stack area next to that, and finally, a loading dock for receipt of materials. While the permanent staff is small (two people), a large number of volunteers have been trained and put to work processing. In the short time that the Archives has been open significant amounts of early records relating to the county have been received and processed, and are available to the public. These include property records starting in 1850 and some Mexican records from the 1840s.

After a break for lunch, the tour continued under overcast skies accompanied by cool winds. A History Park docent led the group around the houses which have been moved to the site and restored. We saw a Chinese temple, a printing shop, a Portuguese museum highlighting the activities and contributions of the Portuguese community, several nineteenth century homes with authentic furnishings, a museum devoted to the fishing industry, and a fruit processing shed. A number of farm worker cabins wait to be restored. All of these structures are relevant to the history of Santa Clara County and its economy. Towering over all is the scale replica of the Light Tower built in downtown San Jose in 1881 to provide electrical illumination. In the center of the park is a playground and a picnic grove, a replica of a Bank of America branch, an ice cream parlor and a gift shop. Mike made it a splendid day with interesting and informative tours — all Institute members can enjoy and benefit from visits to both locations.

Nancy Zinn

GROUP REPORTS

California Round Table

The revitalized California Round Table met on October 10 at the Marin home of **Jules Becker** to read and enjoy **Jody Offer**'s newest play, "Scenes from the Life of Julia Morgan." Round Tablers from the Peninsula, San Francisco, the East Bay, and Marin took turns playing the characters in five scenes from the life of the West's most famous woman architect, whose credits include William Randolph Hearst's famed San Simeon.

Growing up in Oakland in a family of means, Julia, a protégé of Bernard Maybeck, was an engineering school graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, which in the late 1890s did not have a School of Architecture. But she became one of the first women students in the Paris Beaux Arts Academy program, thanks to, among others, Maybeck and Phoebe Apperson Hearst, then a UC regent. Julia started her career in architecture in San Francisco, and Jody's play indicates how supportive Mrs. Hearst was; one of the scenes presents a meeting between son Hearst and mother Hearst, in which "Willie" is urged to consider the young architect for his planned castle south of San Francisco.

The play ends with senior citizen Morgan reminiscing about her life and her work with a member of her "team," and the afternoon ended with the usual refreshments and conversation about works planned or in progress about California and the West.

The next meeting of the California Round Table will be at the San Francisco home of Ellen Huppert on Saturday, January 16, with Anne Homan discussing her new book on Livermore and local history. All Institute members whose work or whose interest covers California and/or the West should mark his or her calendar NOW, but, of course, notices will go out in advance for those who as yet do not have a 2010 calendar.

Jules Becker

History Play Readers

As reported in the Summer/Fall issue of the *Newsletter*, The History Play Readers were reading *Boris Gudunov* by Alexander Pushkin which dealt with the Russian succession in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The group then travelled even further back in history, reading Jean Racine's *Athaliah*, who reigned in Israel sometime in the vicinity of 842-837 BCE. From here the group moved up to the fifteenth century, reading *Agnes Bernauer* by Christian Friedrich Hebbel. Hebbel was a nineteenth century German poet and dramatist who wrote his first tragedy, *Judith*, in 1841 and *Agnes Bernauer* in 1855. His dramatic productions glow with passion.

Agnes was the daughter of a barber surgeon in Augsburg. In 1432 she was secretly married to Prince Albrecht, the Bavarian heir apparent, who was captivated by her beauty. However, his father, Duke Ernest, had made plans for him to marry the daughter of the Duke of Brunswick. Upon learning of the union, the Duke ordered that Agnes be killed, charging her with witchcraft. In 1435 she was drowned in the Danube at Straubing. Although she was able to swim to the bank, her head was held under water until she was dead. Albrecht ultimately reconciled with his father, who died in 1438. In 1440, the whole of Bavaria-Munich came under the rule of Albrecht III. Over time, Agnes's story became famous in literature and song. Every four years in Straubing, the Agnes Bernauer Festival takes place at which her tragic story is recounted.

The Play Readers will finish reading *Agnes Bernauer* in December, and begin reading Terence Rattigan's *Ross*, a play about Lawrence of Arabia.

Edith Piness

Biography Writers

At the September meeting, **Joanne Lafler** talked briefly about some new material she acquired, which complicates the story of Harry Lafler's relationship with Nora May French before her death and will necessitate some rewriting. In November she was busy preparing a talk about the book that she would be presenting at the California Studies dinner in Berkeley.

Ethel Herr is continuing with her memoirs of her journey with cancer. She's been traveling some and missing at several meetings of late, but the work goes on. She has no special plans for its publication, but the group's response is very helpful.

Elizabeth Thacker-Estrada is working on editing her manuscript on the life of Abigail Fillmore, trying to follow **Joanne Lafler's** prescription of only including "what the reader needs to know." Meanwhile, **Autumn Stanley** is reading the manuscript.

Ellen Huppert brought the draft of her introduction to *In Their Own Words*, on which the group commented very constructively.

Ann Harlow's work on Anne Bremer has brought Anne back to San Francisco from Paris. Her exhibits in San Francisco and Los Angeles brought her new attention.

Autumn Stanley is concentrating on "The Orchard Wizard," based on the farm of her grandfather in Ohio.

Bonda Lewis is letting her characters work out their own next moves, feeling assured that they will tell her when they are ready for her to continue writing their stories.

The group will next meet on January 10, when we will be joined by **Rob Robbins**, a new member of the Institute.

Ellen Huppert

Medieval History Study Group

A fundamental feature of today's world linking us all is 'public time.' Without a standard calendar and a standard clock the kind of planning and coordination necessary to commercial, intellectual and personal life would be severely compromised. Public time is a legacy of what we call the Late Middle Ages, a legacy made possible by the invention of the mechanical clock around 1300. Gerhard Dohrn-van Rossum, a history professor at the Technical University of Chemnitz in Germany, wrote a highly regarded book on the invention and spread of the mechanical clock, *The History of the Hour* (University of Chicago Press, 1996). It is an exemplary product of enormous research of town, village, and church records. The book explains how and why a tower with a 'public clock' became the most basic symbol of town life in Europe, and an important mark of urban prestige.

On October 24 I gave a report on *The History of the Hour* to the Medieval Study Group at the home of Nancy Zinn. No one can say just who gets the credit for the invention of the mechanical clock. It is widely agreed that the essential mechanism was one which at regular intervals retarded and released (think 'tick-tock') the rotation of a spindle which moved gears and at the end of which an hour hand could be attached. Dohrn-van Rossum agrees that the invention probably came out of the monasteries, which had long been struggling with various timing methods to help them to start their required prayers. Towns and villages had used bells to signal a growing list of civil functions, including the opening and closing of gates, the time to extinguish home fires, and calling meetings of town councilors. Some, including workers, had long complained of real or imagined interference with the ringing of the bells. The very first mechanical clocks had no hands; but ringing bells at predictable intervals without human assistance, and rotating automatically a mechanical display of colorful moving figures, was simply a sensation. The invention did not merely spawn a single industry; it encouraged industrial precision and improved the quality of metals and metalwork.

Bob O'Dell

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

The Institute awarded mini-grants to the following members: \$500 to **Steven C. Levi** to assist with travel expenses incurred in his research into the sinking of SS Princess Sophia off Juneau in 1918; \$500 to **Anne Homan** to assist with publication costs of a work detailing caricatures drawn in 1910 by Vasco Loureiro, of a wide selection of Livermore, California society; \$500 to **Margaretta K. Mitchell** to assist with scanning and printing costs for a multi-media presentation on the restoration of 280 Hillcrest Road, Berkeley, California, after heavy damage suffered in the 1991 firestorm. The house, Margaretta's residence, is an architecturally significant building designed by Raymond Yellen and constructed in 1925.

Karen Offen announces a new book that she edited, *Globalizing Feminisms Before 1945* (Routledge, 2009). She also has a new on-line exhibit on the International Museum of Women website: *Economica: Women and the Global Economy*.

In November, **Autumn Stanley** spoke at the Excelsior Branch of the San Francisco Public Library on her new biography of the feisty nineteenth century reformer Charlotte Smith, *Raising More Hell and Fewer Dahlias* (Lehigh U Press, 2009). A profile of Charlotte Smith is now available on Wikipedia.

Rob Robbins recently attended the national convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS) where he participated in a roundtable entitled "Marc Raeff's Contribution to Our Understanding of Imperial Russia." (Marc Raeff was the preeminent historian of Imperial Russia in the United States: Ron was privileged to have been his student). He also was a commentator at a panel entitled "Institutions and Individuals in the Russian Autocracy."

Jeanne McDonnell has started a group of Briones Informals, each member working in ways they consider helpful, in an effort to preserve Juana Briones 1844 house in Palo Alto. The group works to inform as many people as possible about the

situation. The legal case will go back to court for the third time, but the date is uncertain.

On November 18, **Joanne Lafler** gave a talk about her biography of Henry Anderson Lafler at the monthly California Studies dinner, sponsored by the UC Berkeley Geography Department. Attendees were particularly interested in Lafler's business and civic career in Oakland and Los Angeles and how it intersected with his literary and bohemian life. Joanne is now working on proposals for prospective publishers.

Tom Snyder's paper "Navy Support to Civilian Authorities in the 1918 Influenza Epidemic—History's Lessons and Recommendations for Future Work" appears in the November number of *Military Medicine*, the journal of the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States. In early October, he gave a 45 slide PowerPoint presentation on the history of the Naval Hospital at Mare Island at the annual Pioneer Day celebration of the Solano County Historical Society. He gave a guided tour of the Naval Hospital complex for visitors from the same Society in early November.

Charles Fracchia announced the publication of his book, *When the Water Came Up to Montgomery Street: San Francisco During the Gold Rush* (Donn Company Publishers, 2009), sponsored by the San Francisco Museum & Historical Society. A book signing was held at the old Mint on November 19, to which all Institute members were invited.

Eleanor Alexander, a longtime member of the Institute, died at the age of 95 on September 12, at the home of her daughter in Peterborough, New Hampshire. She wrote about her family in pre-World War II Germany, as well as her life as a governess in Brazil after leaving Europe. She hosted meetings of the history-play reading group, which she enjoyed. She kept up her Institute membership for many years after leaving the Bay Area, and was always happy to have news of the activities of the group.

BOOK RECOMMENDATION

What happens when two distinguished women scholars of early American history decide to write a novel together? One result is the delightful book *Blindspot, by a Lady in Disguise & and a Gentleman in Exile* (Spiegel & Grau, 2008). The authors, Jane Kamensky and Jill Lepore, are friends and neighbors in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Kamensky is chair of the department of history at Brandeis University; Lepore is chair is the program in History and Literature at Harvard University. Each has an impressive list of publications and honors.

I am a fan of good historical novels, but they are few and far between. Too often they are ordinary plots in fancy dress, bodice-ripping romances, or poorly imagined historical scenery. These two authors have used their intimate acquaintance with Boston in the years leading to the American Revolution to create a *mise-en-scene* that is entirely convincing. I was able to relax into their capable hands, trusting that their depiction of landscape, living arrangements, and the historical events in the background were accurate. When departure from historical fact was appropriate, their imaginative re-creation was convincing.

The novel is two narratives, one in letters from the lady in disguise to a childhood friend, and the other a narrative by the gentleman in exile. Between the episodes provided by these two stories, which often describe the same events from two different perspectives, are official proclamations, advertisements, and political commentary, all based on actual documents.

As for the plot, it is as far-fetched as the eighteenth century novels it is modeled on, while the characters are deeply interesting. A young woman of good family has been ruined by an early infatuation with her painting instructor, leaving her cast out onto the streets of Boston. Disguised as a boy, she becomes apprentice to a newly arrived portrait painter, himself on the run from enemies and debts incurred in his native Edinburgh. The third major character is a black man, raised and educated as an upper class Englishman, also on the run from the threat of being thrust into slavery.

Ultimately, the trio unmask a murderer, while discovering themselves and each other as they pass through a variety of hazards. They each have their passions, some painterly, some social (the black man is a bitter and adamant opponent of slavery, of course), and some very physical. For me, an additional pleasure in reading this novel was in imagining the two authors working out their collaboration in what must have been spare moments in their busy professional and family lives.

Kamensky and Lepore have become novelists, but historians they remain. Instead of endnotes, they have provided webnotes. The website, which one should only study after reading the novel, provides ample material about many aspects of the novel. It leads the reader to information about the historic houses they used as models for buildings, inside and out and it provides references to works of literature used both as models and as sources of language.

I highly recommend this novel to anyone who enjoys historical rigor combined with imaginative reconstruction of the past.

Ellen Huppert

CALENDAR

January 16	California Round Table Meeting
January 17	Work-in-Progress – Richard Robbins
February 27	Annual Membership Meeting
March 21	Work-in Progress – Georgia 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 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_stanley@sbcglobal.net. The deadline for the next NEWSLETTER is **February 28, 2010**.

The NEWSLETTER is the official publication of the Institute for Historical Study, a scholarly organization designed to promote the research, writing, and public discussion of history. Membership in the Institute is open to independent and academically affiliated scholars who are in agreement with its aims and who have a commitment to historical study. Membership inquiries should be sent to the Institute address.

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