

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

Happy New Year! It's the time of year when we are planning our annual membership meeting (Saturday, February 26th at the Rockridge branch of the Oakland Public Library), which features a program of readings presented by the California Roundtable, "The Latest Word from California: Letters from Visitors and Residents, 1848-1915."

We'll soon be collecting annual dues. Please respond to the mailing you will receive later this month with your dues payment; some of us have become rather lax about that, and board members end up having to chase after renewals.

Our annual dinner in November, held at the Sequoyah Country Club, was well attended. We are grateful to our guest speaker, Professor Richard "Richie" Abrams, to Dick Herr and Jules Becker for inviting and transporting him, and to new member Liz Nakahara for reporting on the event elsewhere in this newsletter.

Throughout 2010 we celebrated the Institute's many accomplishments over its thirty years of existence, including outstanding public programs and decades-long friendships. Let's focus this year on the future. We need to redouble our efforts to bring in new members to replace those we lose. Please think about people you know who are pursuing any kind of history research and writing, especially as independent scholars, and tell them about the Institute.

In addition to our lively interest groups and social events, historians can benefit from our mini-grants program, fiscal sponsorship of grants, and of course the work-in-progress sessions, where presenters receive knowledgeable feedback and listeners always learn something new.

If you can't think of anyone you know personally, perhaps you can help the board compile a list of appropriate people to invite to apply for membership in the Institute. Please e-mail me with suggestions of how you can help the Institute thrive in the coming years.

Ann Harlow

PROGRAM AT THE SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

Gifts of the Great Depression: The Legacy of the New Deal in the Bay Area

For the Institute's second thirtieth-anniversary public program, members **Gray Brechin**, **Joanne Lafler**, and **Georgia Wright** presented highlights of the legacy at the San Francisco Public Library on September 14. Faced with widespread unemployment and determined get the economy moving again, President Franklin D. Roosevelt set out immediately to put people back to work and lift the country out of the Depression. Among his programs were the Civilian Conservation Corps, Works Progress Administration, the Federal Writers' Project, a unit of the WPA.

Using an animated PowerPoint projection of photographs to illustrate "Another World Was Possible: The Expansion of Public Education (in All Its Dimensions) during the Last Depression, the Contraction in Ours," **Gray Brechin** detailed the educational legacy of the Works Progress and Public Works Administrations. "Building schools, colleges, libraries, and museums were favored over prisons." In a few brief years over eleven thousand schools were built in the nation and tens of thousands more improved. These were beautifully designed and well built. Sculpture, murals, and other art graced the walls. Inscriptions reflected the belief that education is the foundation of democracy. Over the entrance at the Lou Henry Hoover School in Whittier, California, for example: "What you would first have in the life of a nation, you must put into its schools." Seventy years later most of these buildings are still in use today.

In her presentation, "On a Bookshelf Near You: The Federal Writers' Project and Local History," **Joanne Lafler** described the California Guide Book and noted some of the other California publications. (For information

about the Federal Writers' Project see her Work-in-Progress in the Fall 2010 newsletter.) Published in May 1939, the guide includes a wealth of material—general essays on natural history, people, industries, history, and folkways, detailed descriptions of principal cities, and mile-by-mile automobile tours. Writers addressed the complexity and the sometimes negative aspects of their topics. The essay on Indians, which drew upon the work of anthropologist A.L. Kroeber, dealt with the disastrous impact of mission life and contact with American settlers. Labor strife and the condition of migrant workers in agriculture are among the topics in "Workingmen." And a discussion of political censorship made it into the essay on the motion picture industry. (So also did the addresses of movie stars' homes for those who wanted to "gawk from a respectful distance," in the touring section of the guide.)

Joanne provided two valuable two-page lists of other California FWP publications, including city guides, local histories, and the *Almanac for Thirty-Niners*, for visitors to the Golden Gate International Exposition in 1939. Mimeographed unpublished works of the California FWP can be read in the History Center of the San Francisco Public Library and in some other archives.

Georgia Wright, in "The Work of the Civilian Conservation Corps in the Bay Area," introduced the topic with legislative background. Made into law less than thirty days after FDR's inauguration, the CCC assembled 275,000 enrollees and their leaders, veterans of World War I, into 1,330 camps in all states (but Delaware) just three months later. Over the next few years they felled and planted trees, built roads and headquarter buildings in the national and regional parks, and built dams for irrigation. They fought fires and reduced the acreage burned in previous years.

CALIFORNIA ROUND TABLE

The CCC proved to be the most popular of Roosevelt's programs. Readings from Travis Lafferty's *Another Day, Another Dollar* (1963), a collection of memoirs of alumni of the Civilian Conservation Corps, brought the testimony of commanding officers and enrollees to life. (Lafferty himself had hoped to select and read some of these reminiscences, but illness prevented his participation.) The stories of the boys—"What's Idaho, Captain?" are touching, their voices as fresh as if they were speaking just after their experiences. (Georgia has a few photocopies of the book for any who would like. Just e-mail her.)

Postscript. Although some of the CCC camps were integrated in the early years, reflecting the initial law's prohibition of discrimination based upon race, this practice ceased in July 1935. Throughout the remaining years "complete segregation of colored and white enrollees" was maintained.

Maria Sakovich with help from the presenters and Anne Richardson

Pacific Nexus: Hawaii and California Connections

On October 23, **Bob Oaks** introduced California Round Table members to his current work (in fact, a return to a long-time interest). He projects a series of vignettes, carefully researched but written for general readers, on subjects that have received little attention. He shared three stories with us—"George Vancouver's Cattle," "Early San Diego Beachcombers," and "John Sutter."

None of us knew that explorer George Vancouver visited Hawaii (then known as the Sandwich Islands) on Cook's third voyage in 1779 and noted that there were no mammals

larger than pigs in the islands. Arriving in Spanish California in the 1790s, he conceived the notion of exporting cattle to Hawaii as a gift for King Kamehameha. These creatures, large and frightening in appearance, destructive of the landscape, and decidedly fecund (what's not to like about Hawaii?), proved a mixed blessing at first. But after the initial shock, Hawaiians saw that cattle-raising was good business, especially since Pacific voyagers stopped in Hawaii to re-provision.

Few readers of *Two Years Before the Mast* remember Richard Henry Dana's account of the Hawaiians he encountered in San Diego in 1835. Few readers of California history know that Hawaiians arrived in the San Diego area in the 1820s as crew on sailing ships and stayed on to work as curers of cattle hide. Their expertise in landing small boats in the tricky surf was also valued. "Early San Diego Beachcombers" draws upon Dana's sympathetic and acute observations of these early Hawaiian residents of California.

Grass shacks on a Mexican land grant? That John Sutter visited Hawaii before coming to California, and brought eight Hawaiian men and two women (one of whom was his mistress) to California with him in 1838—yes, they did build grass shacks here—was certainly news to those of us who know only of Sutter's later history. This fascinating vignette also notes that many of "Sutter's Hawaiians" later settled in other parts of California, which explains why "Kanaka" often appears as a place name.

Bob is uncertain about whether to publish these vignettes separately or in a single volume. The group was less uncertain. The subject, and the stories, deserve a book!

Joanne Lafler

30TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER TALK

The Baby Boom and the Rise of Right-wing America

Nearly fifty members and friends gathered for the annual dinner at the Sequoyah Club to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Institute. Richard Abrams, professor emeritus of history at U.C. Berkeley delivered the after-dinner talk, "The Baby Boom and the Rise of Right-wing America."

Post-war Baby Boomers grew up amidst prosperity, hit the job market as economic growth slowed, then coped with ongoing sluggishness by scrambling for scarce resources and abandoning long-term vision. As children of affluence, Boomers waved a "Do-Your-Own-Thing" banner and spearheaded "some of the most progressive social and economic developments in American history." But as opportunities waned, Boomers adopted a "Looking Out for Number One" attitude. Abetted by Republican fear-mongers, partisan media and laissez-faire businessmen, Americans decried government, taxes, regulations, and the poor. Eventually this harsh landscape produced Tea Party and right-wing candidates vocalizing outrageous concepts, such as President Obama is a secret Moslem, Obama-ism will make the country socialist, and a government medical plan will institute "death panels" withholding treatment from high-risk patients.

Boomers matured in response to political events and an economic slow-down that began in the early 1970s and continues today, according to Professor Abrams. And 1973 was a pivotal year because of a series of events. In January 1973 the US-North Vietnam cease-fire agreement confirmed "the brutal failure of American foreign policy in Indochina" and raised questions about other foreign interventions. "Paradoxically, it energized right-wing forces, unhappy with the stigma of defeat, to promote more vigorous uses of the military as a tool of

foreign policy." Conscription ended, thereby eliminating dissident draftees and filling the military with professionals, who "would become ready instruments of policy makers." Later, President George W. Bush would say the "invasion of Iraq in 2003 would have been politically impossible with a military made up of draftees."

Also in January 1973, "the Supreme Court (in *Roe v. Wade*) declared unconstitutional all laws that denied a woman's right to terminate a pregnancy within the first trimester and in some cases later," thereby drawing fire and diverting attention from economic policies.

In the spring of 1973, the "Watergate scandal broke wide open," forcing high-level resignations. In May, a federal judge dismissed charges against Daniel Ellsberg for illegally revealing classified documents that exposed "dishonesty at the highest government level in the conduct of the Vietnam War." And in October, Vice President Spiro Agnew resigned to avoid indictment for corruption. These events heightened Americans' distrust of government generally, thus "weakening support for new federal programs on behalf of liberal reform."

A week after the vice president's resignation, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) "cut off close to thirty percent of American's oil requirements and nearly quadrupled the price of gasoline." A prevailing distrust of government and frustration with scarcity gave credence to the oil industry's claim that regulation impeded exploration and stifled growth. "A deregulation campaign moved into high gear."

Also in 1973, "inflation was rising out of control" and "unemployment, especially in the manufacturing sector was soaring," approaching ten percent. As Americans became more economically insecure, they became less

GROUP REPORTS

inclined to have a “non-zero-sum mentality,” whereby one group’s gains would not subtract from another group’s fortune. In the affluent, non-zero-sum environment of the sixties, President Johnson’s Executive Order to create Affirmative Action appeared mostly benign. But in the stressful seventies, excluded ethnic groups began protesting “Affirmative Discrimination.”

Unabated stress has fueled not only a deregulation movement but also a “spreading tax revolt.” “Americans pay the lowest taxes of people in any of the major industrial nations, but they complain the most.” Pervasive dissatisfaction has also fueled the Republican Party’s right wing, which has politicized selection of federal judges and made “uncompromising confrontation...a political tool.” Cultural and political changes—mingled with cross-industry mergers, giant conglomerates and globalized business transactions—have refocused the economy from production to financial speculation. In this environment, “financial intermediaries found amazing profits, mostly by trading in...new and arcane financial paper.” The convergence of political, economic and cultural changes means Boomers now live with Tea Party clamor, new billionaires, a politicized judiciary and opinionated media.

Elizabeth Nakahara

Please welcome new member, **Elizabeth Nakahara**. With a B.A. in art history from the University of California, Berkeley, she also has done graduate work in journalism at the University of Kansas, and freelanced for the Washington Post. Her major interests are photojournalism and its history and the psychology of war. She has joined the Biography Group to work on her book-length study of photo-journalists, titled *Hungry Eyes*.

Biography Writers’ Group

We meet about every other month, most recently in October and December. We read and critique members’ work, sent in advance via e-mail. The topics are quite varied, from Rob Robbin’s biography of a Russian military and civil leader to Ethel Herr’s very contemporary and personal *Memoirs of an Unexpected Journey*.

Elizabeth Thacker-Estrada has turned to a second First Lady, Jane Means Appleton Pierce, after completing her biography of Abigail Powers Fillmore. Bonda Lewis is developing the fictional story of a young woman involved in the women’s suffrage movement in Nebraska.

Autumn Stanley has presented a manuscript of an illustrated children’s story, while Elizabeth Nakahara is adding chapters to her group biography—which is also a history of photo-journalists. Ellen Huppert continues to refine her work on the nineteenth century Taylor family of Michigan.

Two members of the group have local history topics featuring family connections: Joanne Lafler’s biography of Henry Anderson Lafler, her father-in-law and a prominent Bay Area writer and businessman, and Rose Marie Cleese’s biography of her grandfather, San Francisco mayor Angelo Rossi. Ann Harlow is writing a joint biography of two San Franciscans: Anne Bremer, a painter, and her cousin Albert Bender, affluent businessman and art patron.

The group’s definition of biography is inclusive, and members of the Institute are welcome to join the group regardless of their interests.

Ellen Huppert

GROUP REPORTS

History-Play Reading Group

In the previous issue of the Newsletter I reported that the Play Readers had read Camus' *The Just Assassins (Les Justes)*. For our next play we moved from the intensity of this drama to George Bernard Shaw's delightful, whimsical play *In Good King Charles's Golden Days*, subtitled "A True History that never happened!"

In the play, Shaw envisions a fictional gathering of some of the leading lights of the day—Sir Isaac Newton, portrait painter to the King Godfrey Kneller (to whom Shaw attributes a line later spoken by Hogarth), Quaker founder George Fox, as well as King Charles (on the throne from 1660 to 1685) and his brother James, the Duke of York. Several women are also included: Charles' mistress Barbara Villiers, the Duchess of Cleveland, mother of five of his children; Nell Gwynn, famous actress and comedienne, mother of two of his sons; Louise De Kerouaille, his French mistress; and his wife since 1662, Catherine of Braganza, who was childless.

All come to Newton's house looking for Charles. None of them is happy to find the others there. As Shaw imagined it, a fascinating discussion ensues about science, religion, art and love between and among the four men with caustic comments from the three mistresses and wife. Nature, power, leadership are all debated. The play was written in 1938-39 and gives us insight into Shaw's views on myriad subjects—temporal, spiritual, artistic, sexual.

This romp with Shaw was followed by a very sober play, Bertolt Brecht's *The Trial of Joan of Arc at Rouen, 1431*, written and produced in East Berlin in 1952. The play was based on records of her trial and a 1937 radio play. The record of the trial was translated into Latin by one of her judges and Manchon, the trial notary, from minutes taken daily during the trial. Five

copies were made—three survive today in Paris. Every morning during the trial Manchon recorded the questions and Joan's answers. The minutes in French constituted the record for the Latin translation and which was not, until fairly recently, available in English.

Joan was captured by the Burgundians and later turned over to the English for a great sum. She was not ransomed by the French King, Charles VII, for whom she had earlier won great victories. The memorable trial of Joan of Arc was held more than five hundred years ago in England's military headquarters in France. The young woman who was tried and condemned in Rouen has been a central figure in literature every since. Joan of Arc was burned at the stake on May 30, 1431. Her followers believed she was speaking for God, her opponents feared her successes. Much, much later she was canonized as a saint by the same church which had condemned her.

In his play Brecht takes us into the room with Joan and her judges and into the tower where she was in chains. She was imprisoned in the Castle of Rouen where no women could attend her. She was closely guarded and kept in irons. She was given no counsel to aid her. She has only her "Voices," which she protests are drowned out by the noises of the court and the prison. She stands up against political men, lawyers and ambassadors, many of whom had lost their authority because of her victories for Charles VII. Her judges were graduates and faculty of the University of Paris, who served the English King and the Duke of Bedford.

The Play Readers will meet again at the beginning of February. We welcome all of those who are interested. Please contact Lorrie O'Dell.

Edith L. Piness

IHS and the National Coalition for History

Vigilant readers of the Institute's budget will have noticed that IHS makes an annual donation to an organization called the National Coalition for History (NCH). Long-term members may be aware that the Institute has been an NCH supporter for over twenty years. However, the role of NCH does not appear to be widely known, despite this enduring relationship.

The National Coalition for History serves as an advocacy group with Congress and the federal government for scholars, archivists, public historians, preservationists, and anyone interested in advancing historical knowledge. Composed of over seventy-five member organizations, including the Institute, it carries out three important tasks: monitoring Congressional legislation and executive branch rules impacting the practice of history, testifying before Congressional committees on significant legislation, and serving as a reliable source of news and information about government action affecting scholars. In short, NCH serves as a lobbying group for history.

NCH also advocates for appropriations for federal programs and agencies involved with historical research. These include the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the National Historical Records and Publications Commission (NHPRC), both of which are important sources of support for research and archival projects. In addition, NCH serves as an advocate for a strong National Archives, with the funding and authority to carry out its responsibility for preserving the history of the federal government. NCH also advocates for appropriations large enough to allow other agencies with historical responsibilities to fulfill their missions, in particular the National Parks Service.

Independent scholars benefit from stronger federal programs in at least two ways. These programs can provide funding for projects which otherwise is difficult to find. Other federal programs, such as the NHPRC, help create resources which are widely available to the public and thus facilitate historical research and writing.

Virtually every occupation, business, and interest group in America has a lobbyist in Washington, D.C. advocating for them. NCH is a voice for those interested in history and helps insure that the concerns of historians, archivists, and other scholars are known and heard. For a relatively modest amount of money, it provides a valuable service.

More information about NCH is available at their website: <http://historycoalition.org/>.

Mike Griffith

Member News

Maria Sakovich reports participation as speaker and contributor of two entries to the booklet "Congregational Ministry & Advocacy: The Angel Island Immigration Station Era 1910-1940" for an interfaith pilgrimage to Angel Island—"Whispers of the Past to the Cries for Justice Today." She also contributed an article on the immigration station to *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Social History* (2012). And she presented a slightly different version of her June Institute talk about Russian refugee immigrant businesses at the Museum of Russian Culture in San Francisco to a group representing three post-World War II waves of immigrants from Russia. **Ann Harlow's** article "The Beginnings of San Francisco's Art Museums" is in the latest issue of the San Francisco Historical Society's *The Argonaut*.

CALENDAR

- January 23 Tour of Temple Sinai, Oakland, with Fred Isaac
February 5 California Round Table
February 26 Annual membership meetingb
March 5 Glenna Matthews on *The Golden State in the Civil War*

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 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 **March 1, 2011**.

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.