Thanksgiving is behind us, but I am still giving thanks for the special efforts by some of our members.

Jody Offer was the gracious hostess for our yearly potluck in September. All those in attendance contributed food and drink, but Jody’s hospitality in opening up her beautiful home made the event a tremendous success.

Special thanks to Jim Shere who arranged for Institute members to have a very enjoyable and informative visit to Jack London’s home in Glen Ellen on October 20. As someone who is not a historian of California, I confess that I had not expected to be as intrigued as I became with the ranch and the Jack London story, especially his commitment to conservation and scientific agriculture. It made me glad that in the days when I earned an honest (?) living as a college teacher, I had assigned my students in Western Civ. London’s The Iron Heel along with some other twentieth-century dystopian novels.

Praise be to Ann Harlow for organizing the splendid annual dinner on November 9 at Redwood Gardens in Berkeley. When the Sequoyah Country Club, the venue where we have held the gathering in recent years, priced itself out to the market, Ann took charge, booked the Redwood Gardens and arranged for the catering and the wonderful food that resulted. Many, many thanks, Ann! Thanks, also, to Judith Taylor, a new member, who jumped in and gave a fascinating talk at the dinner about the movement of garden plants around the world. History from the ground up.

Let me also thank new member Bonnie Portnoy who has agreed to head up our Website Task force. She is joined in this effort by Joanne Lafler and Liz Nakahara. There has long been the feeling that we need to make better use of the website which Mike Griffith generously reformatted and has managed the last few years. The Board has authorized a substantial sum to finance this undertaking and we thank Bonnie, Joanne, and Liz for taking on this challenging job. Members who have ideas for improving the website are encouraged to bring their ideas to the attention of the task force.

—continued on page 10
Plants migrate across the globe by hitching rides on exported building materials, riding as seeds in the entrails of animals, stowing away in the luggage of plant-loving travelers, or simply floating on wind that sweeps across continents. Author-neurologist Judith M. Taylor not only traced the migratory movements of numerous plants but also introduced botany’s earliest explorers, collectors, and researchers at the Institute’s 2012 annual dinner on November 9.

After noticing that geraniums, begonias, and petunias abound in gardens worldwide, Taylor wondered how that had happened. She decided to examine a standard horticulture encyclopedia with 15,000 entries. “I turned it into a database,” Taylor said, “listing the name of the plant and where it came from. Leaving aside hybrids, the encyclopedia contained about 6,000 species of plants.” The beauty of this approach was that it covered plants likely to be grown in ordinary people’s gardens.

The database showed that “a majority of plants grown in this country are of foreign or exotic extraction,” says Taylor. “It’s an application of statistics not widely used in horticulture.” About 29% of plants come from Asia; 18% from Europe; 17% from North America; 11% from Africa; 9% from South America; 5% from Mexico; and 4% from Australia. The crossover seemed to have been complete by the 1870s, according to Taylor’s maps and statistics. Many plants originated in unexpected locations: roses in China, for example, spreading to Turkey and Iran and eventually, to Italy, where three towns specialized in growing them. The wallflower is associated with England but originated in France. Taylor traced the wallflower to building materials exported from Normandy to Dover, where imported stones were used to build fortresses and castles.

“Everybody thinks the tulip is Dutch, but many originated in Russia and the Crimea,” says Taylor. “Greece, Turkey, and the Greek islands were primary sources.” Gradually, tulips spread westward and flourished in Holland because of the flat land, excellent soil, and climate.

Early plant collectors were explorers, adventurers, and couriers for governments and businesses. William Dampier (1651-1715) was a scholarly Englishman of high birth. He became a maritime explorer and started plundering ships on the high seas, eventually earning the sobriquet “the pirate with the exquisite mind.” In 1699, Dampier sailed down the west coast of Australia, where he was the first European to go ashore. He took the Dampiera, the Wildampia, and a gorgeous red Sturt’s pea back to England, where the actual specimens are still in existence, in the botanical museum at Oxford. He became so respected that his portrait hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in London.

For years, Francis Masson (1741-1805) collected bulbs in South Africa and sent them back to the Horticulture Society of London. Masson carefully packed the bulbs, but invariably some died during long months at sea. Throughout the late 1700s, seafaring was a hazardous undertaking, and most plants transported as cargo died en route.

London dentist and amateur botanist Nathaniel Ward (1791-1868) cultivated ferns. To protect his beloved plants from dirty city air, he built a glass-sided box, soon known as the “Wardian Case.” Built in large numbers, these cases solved the plant mortality problem. “After 1830, these plants survived in large numbers,” says Taylor. “The glass sides allowed sunlight to enter the case. Moisture enclosed at the outset, continued to condense and recirculate without evaporating.”
Scotsman Robert Fortune (1812-1880) collected plants in China while employed by the East India Company. He found plants in Shanghai nurseries and private gardens, but he preferred hunting them in the wild. In 1858, the U.S. government sent Fortune to China to collect tea plants. Fortune sent numerous tea plants to the patent office in Washington D.C., but the federal government never established tea as an American crop.

Because plants have traveled ever since the wind has blown, animals have trodden, and people have ridden, the English cottage garden is now a multiethnic melting pot. And because of Taylor's database, we also know the exotic ancestry of every plant in that melting pot.

—Elizabeth Nakahara

The Legacy of Shunryu Suzuki

At Monica Clyde's home on October 21, David Chadwick spoke about Shunryu Suzuki, who came from Japan to California in 1959 and founded the San Francisco Zen Center in 1962, which in turn engendered Green Gulch Farm and Tassajara. (Institute member Marian Kassovic's late husband, Stan, designed the zendo there.) At the San Francisco Zen Center Suzuki insisted that the attendees sit, "just sit," and that is what they learned to do. Meditation was up to them. If asked a question, Suzuki was likely to give a puzzling answer or command. The message seemed to be that you have to do it yourself, that sitting will eventually bring some enlightenment. After 1983 the Zen centers shifted to multiple abbots, both men and women, and more teachers.

David is engaged, as he has been for years, in archiving everything having to do with Shunryu Suzuki. The archive is on the website "cuke.com." (Crooked Cucumber was the unflattering name given Suzuki by his teacher.) The site is enormous and rather a crazy quilt, but there is a table of contents which one can search. David is spending all his time and energy on digitizing not only Suzuki's lectures and interviews but the memories of the many people he touched. This is a labor of devotion for which David does a bit of fundraising from individuals and from foundations. The Institute has served as fiscal agent for Chadwick's work.

In addition to the archive, David has written Suzuki's biography, Crooked Cucumber: The Life and Zen Teaching of Shunryu Suzuki (1999), which I recommend.

—Georgia Wright

Writers Group

In the past months, the group has added three new members, each with intriguing biographical subjects. Anne Richardson, long-time member of the Institute, is working on an intellectual biography of William Tyndale (1492-1536), religious reformer and translator of the Bible. Bonnie Portnoy, a new member of the Institute, has a completed typescript of a biography of her grandfather, Samuel Tilden Daken, an important painter in his time, the early 20th century, based in northern California. Bonnie's biography describes his intriguing life and includes many illustrations of his work. Tilden Daken knew Jack London and many other literary and artistic figures. Bonnie will be looking for help in finding a publisher. Peter Meyerhof, another new member, also has a completed biography and is searching for a publisher. His subject is Robert Semple, an important but forgotten leader in early California history. Like Peter, Semple was a dentist by profession and an historian by vocation, among his many roles. Semple was active in establishing the Bear Flag Republic in 1846 and in the development of the territory, and then state, of California.
GROUP REPORTS

Our meetings of September, October, and November followed the pattern of looking at parts of each member’s work and commenting. While that has been a fruitful approach, we decided that we needed to have a fuller view of each other’s writing, and that we would in future read an extended piece of one member’s work in order to see the larger picture. Our December meeting focused on one chapter of Rob Robbins’ biography of the Russian official Vladimir Dzhunkovskii. Any group member needing advice on a critical piece of work can forward it via e-mail and receive comments in the same way.

—Ellen Huppert

History-Play Readers

We completed reading one play, The Island, by Athol Fugard, John Kani, and Winston Ntshona and have read one act of the two-act play And the Sun Stood Still by Dava Sobel.

The Island uses the classics to highlight the evils of apartheid. The setting is a prison, clearly Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for decades. We are introduced to two cell mates, one of whom is serving a life sentence. They spend their days doing absurd, degrading physical labor, designed by their jailers to break their spirit, as well as being beaten by the guards. In the evenings they rehearse a version of Sophocles’ play Antigone. Winston, who is serving the life sentence, does not wish to play the part of Antigone, who has defied the laws of the state to bury her brother. He fears ridicule from the other inmates for being dressed as a woman with a mop for a wig and nails for a necklace. John plays her uncle Creon, the king, who sentences her to die. The play draws parallels with Antigone’s tragic situation and the black men imprisoned for political reasons. In the course of the action, we learn that John has been pardoned and will serve only three months longer. This proves a severe test for Winston who now faces a bleak future alone. At the conclusion of their performance, he rips off his wig and shouts “My Land! My Home! . . . I go now to my living death because I honored those things to which honor belongs.”

Fugard is a South African playwright, novelist, actor, and director known for his political plays opposing apartheid. The play is a passionate tribute to human courage and resiliency. The Island was a collaboration between Fugard and the actors John Kani and Winston Ntshona, who performed the characters of Winston and John.

The play readers are half way through Dava Sobel’s And the Sun Stood Still, the play which is at the center of her book A More Perfect Heaven. Sobel, a well known writer and former science reporter for the New York Times, is the author of several highly acclaimed books including Longitude and Galileo’s Daughter. And the Sun Stood Still is her account of how Nicolaus Copernicus was persuaded to publish his ideas on the solar system and Earth’s motion around the sun. His ideas were radical, with earth losing its place as the center of the universe. The situation was made all the more difficult as Copernicus was a canon of the Catholic Church in Poland. Copernicus receives a surprise visit from a young German mathematician, Rheticus, a Lutheran, who traveled hundreds of kilometers from Nuremberg to meet him in a place where the bishop had banished all Lutherans. We are now learning of the interaction of the two men and the monumental historic consequences of their coming together.

Anyone interested in attending our readings please contact Joanne Lafler.

—Edith Piness
In October the Institute’s California Roundtable sponsored a remarkable day organized by the Glen Ellen Historical Society. Because so many themes and impressions emerged from the tour of Jack London State Historic Park and the panel discussion presented by the Valley of the Moon Natural History Association afterward, I asked several participants to share some of their thoughts. Below are highlights from this rich excursion into the past and the challenges of today. —Editor

Prelude. I, like many Hoosier farmboys growing up in the 1940s and 50s, was enthralled by Jack London’s tales. The Call of the Wild and White Fang took us up to the Far North. And stories of oyster pirates and the Fish Patrol drew us toward the nearly-as-exotic San Francisco Bay. Romanticism, shmanticism, who cared if the world view was simplistic, or that the writing didn’t always make sense—the tales sucked us boys in. Even the educators realized that. The stories appeared in textbooks from grammar school through high school. I owe a lot of my wander-lust to the writer who died too young. He influences my thought in the middle of my eighth decade. I can’t consider the fate of the oyster farm on Drake’s Bay without harking back to exciting dark nights on San Francisco Bay as the Fish Patrol battled nefarious oyster pirates.

—John Rusk

At Jack London State Historic Park.

On October 20, a perfect autumn day, Institute members and some family members toured the park, which is located in the town of Glen Ellen. Jim Shere, a new Institute member, arranged the tour with help from members of the Glen Ellen Historical Society, of which Jim is executive director. Our guide at the park was Greg Hayes, for many years a ranger and now president of the Valley of the Moon Natural History Association. Hayes had deep historical knowledge to share.

After an overview, in which we learned of London’s acquisition of the eventual 1400-acre property—beginning with the purchase of a 130-acre parcel in 1905—we toured the cottage in which Jack and his second wife, Charmian Kittredge London, lived from 1911 to 1916. Since it had been the home of family members for many years after London’s death, it was necessary to restore most of the rooms to their appearance when the Londons lived there. One room left untouched was the large, low-ceilinged study, lined with bookshelves, in which London wrote his last books (including the semi-autobiographical novel, The Valley of the Moon) and worked on the management of the ranch. The stone dining room and kitchen, a separate building that was also restored and refurnished fairly recently, completed the Londons’ living quarters.

Little remains of London’s work as an experimental farmer. Stone outbuildings (from the winery that existed before London purchased the land) were rebuilt after the 1906 earthquake, but later fell victim to fire. The terraced hillside, where he grew wheat and alfalfa, is now planted in grapevines. But the “pig palace” remains, in most of its former glory. We were delighted by stone pigsties, with a separate “apartment” for each sow and her litter, arranged in a circle around a two-story stone tower that housed the feed. London’s experiment allowed a single farmhand to feed all of the pigs efficiently.

When my husband and I visited the park many decades ago there was little to be seen of London’s life. The main attraction was the ruins of Wolf House, the grand—one might say grandiose—four-story stone house that he had begun building in 1911, only to see it destroyed by fire in 1913, shortly before completion. One can still view the romantic ruins, the graves of Jack and Charmian London, and the House of Happy Walls, built by Charmian in 1919 to serve as a museum of London’s life and work, and later as her home.
After the tour, many of us stayed in Glen Ellen for lunch. Jim Shere brought us to a beautiful and historic site where Mariano Vallejo once operated a sawmill and which now houses shops and the office of the Glen Ellen Historical Society. After that we were guests at a meeting of the historical society, at which speakers discussed aspects of London’s pioneering work in sustainable farming and spoke about the new management of the State Historic Park. (See more below.) It was a pleasure to hear from Neil Shepard, great grandson of London’s stepsister, Eliza Shepard, whom Jack hired as both ranch supervisor and overseer of the Wolf House project. Neil grew up on the ranch and is still involved in farming operations there, including the vineyard, on acreage retained by the Shepard family.

—Joanne Lafler

Impressions
Our day in Glen Ellen recently was an emotional one for me.... My mother was born on O’Donnell Drive in Glen Ellen, within steps of the Mayflower Hall where the afternoon presentation was held. My grandfather, artist Tilden Daken, was a friend of Jack London’s. As an occasional guest at Beauty Ranch, Daken is known to have painted scenes there. Did anyone else sense the presence of ghosts in the cottage? I did: the Londons, my grandfather, and others.... I have visited Glen Ellen and the Jack London property numerous times in the past, but I can honestly say that this day was the most fulfilling. And I thoroughly enjoyed the company of the new friends I have met from the Institute.

—Bonnie Portnoy

Jack's zeal for farming was news to me. I appreciated that the new people running the park didn't try to play that down and emphasize the writing, which is what people tend to do when someone is famous for something. You could see London’s devotion best in his pig pens—the careful thought for ease of feeding, drainage, reuse of the manure. He also tried raising cactus for feed, which was pretty forward-thinking. You could almost feel him trying to get out of his tough-city-boy-brilliant-writer box and follow his fascination with how to make the earth provide things, which must have seemed ridiculous to a lot of people. He certainly seems more human to me now. I have always found his books kind of boring—"adventure stories" for boys....

—Judith Offer

As we walked uphill to Jack London’s fantastic piggery, I had a brief but interesting conversation with the person next to me. She turned out to be a docent in training for the park. She explained that in her training, docents were told to emphasize the positive about Jack London and not dwell on the negative elements in his life. Her comment made me wonder about heroes and humans, missed opportunities and life lessons, essentially, how we interpret and present history and the impact of our choices.

History is full of heroes. What defines a hero? Is a hero the same thing as a role model? What makes us human? How do we humans learn from heroes? From history? Don’t the shortcomings of heroes—their fears, faults and failings—hold as many lessons for us as do their triumphs—their daring, virtues and accomplishments?

Now that the State of California is shifting the operation of many of its historic parks, including Jack London, to nonprofit entities, it’s more important than ever for historians to advocate for history. The heroic Jack London is fascinating and inspiring; it is his human side, fraught with frailties, that allows us to connect with him and may bring us a few steps closer to realizing our own dreams.

—Dot Brovarney
The Fate of the Historic Park.
If the morning was stepping back in time, the afternoon was a confrontation with the future, specifically with the future of the Jack London State Historic Park, one of seventy scheduled for closure and one of twenty-one historic parks on the closure list. For five years at least, Jack London’s ranch will be open to the public. The Valley of the Moon Natural History Association, a nonprofit “cooperating association” (there are eighty-four in the state park system), which has provided educational services at Jack London SHP, recently signed an agreement to take over operation of the park. It is one of a very few nonprofit agencies to run a state park.

At the afternoon’s panel presentation we learned about the daunting challenges that a “community-operated state park” faces and the vision that guides the Association in its task. The newly appointed executive director (an experienced fundraiser), spoke of the need to generate $500,000 a year. She and others, including former ranger Greg Hayes, who is also president of the Association, spoke about focusing on Jack London’s dream to “rebuild the worn-out hillside lands that were worked out and destroyed by our wasteful pioneers.” Inspired by the terraced hillsides of China that had been farmed for eons that he had seen during a reporting trip to Asia, London recognized that “the soil is our one indestructible asset.” He wrote to a friend: “By green manures, nitrogen gathering crops, animal manures, rotation of crops, proper tillage and draining, I’m getting results which the Chinese have demonstrated for forty centuries.” Development of Jack London’s dream to rehabilitate the land with sustainable farming practices will inspire fundraising efforts and recruitment of volunteers.

—Maria Sakovich

In Memoriam: Bernard Wishy and Ethel Herr

We have learned of the death of Bernard Wishy, a recent member, but an old friend of mine. I knew his first wife as a classmate at Columbia University in Art History and his second as a student in Art History at U.C. Berkeley. Bernard received his PhD in history from Columbia in 1958. Some reminiscences are posted on a website of graduates from that period, one from the president of George Washington University, Stephen Trachtenberg, who said he was inspired by Bernard’s teaching (in the history section of the General Civilization course) and was disappointed when Bernard was not offered tenure. Others of that class echoed these sentiments.

Bernard next worked for IBM, a job he truly enjoyed. He also taught in North Carolina at a state college, and held an administrative appointment at U.C. Berkeley, which he did not much enjoy. Recently, in one of his retirement homes, Bernard held weekly discussion sessions (or lectures) on current events. During all this time he was publishing. Among many books are Child and the Republic: The Dawn of Modern American Child Nurture (1967); Goodbye Machiavelli: Government and American Life (1995), Despotism and Democracy: The Great Modern Contest (2002), and War, the American Way (2009).

—Georgia Wright

Ethel Herr described herself as “a historian by passion, more than by formal education.” On her website she told of how, after returning from a three-year sojourn in the Netherlands, where her husband was stationed in the military, she spent many years “reading everything I could find about 16th-century Netherlands. I found a wealth of old materials in a nearby university library and joined an organization of historians who took me in and taught me how to be one of
them. With their help and inspiration I wrote a trilogy of novels about a couple of imaginary young people I met in my journeys through the shelves and a research trip back to Europe in search of all the remnants of the 16th century."

She learned about the Institute from member Frank Brechka, a librarian at U.C. Berkeley who saw that, although she was not a college graduate, let alone the holder of an advanced degree, she had learned to read Dutch, had become a skillful researcher, and could profit from Institute membership. The profit was also the Institute's. From the beginning, Ethel was an active member, attending countless meetings and programs, contributing to the newsletter, and serving on the board. As membership chair, she was sometimes bemused by discussions about whether an applicant was sufficiently qualified. With a twinkle, she would remind us of her own background as a self-taught scholar.

Members of the biography writers group came to know Ethel especially well, beginning with her work on a historical biography set in 16th-century Netherlands: Dr. Oma: The Healing Wisdom of Countess Juliana von Stolberg. "Oma" is Dutch (as well as German) for "grandmother." Ethel tells the story of the mother of William of Orange, and the troubled history of those times, through Juliana's granddaughter, Maria of Orange. We were impressed by her gift for combining painstaking historical research with vivid writing.

Through a shared passion for history we came to know a remarkable woman. We mourn her loss, on October 30. Our condolences go to her husband Walt, who often accompanied her to Institute events, and to their children.

— Joanne Lafler

Leslie Friedman presented "Isadora" for the Browning Society of San Francisco, September 14, 2012 (the 85th anniversary of the dancer's tragic, early death). She spoke as Isadora Duncan, interspersing the talk with short excerpts of music and dance.

Ann Harlow gave a talk—"The Indefatigable, Irrepressible Albert 'Mickey' Bender"—at the centennial symposium of the Book Club of California on October 18.

Bill Issel's new book, Church and State in the City: Catholics and Politics in Twentieth-Century San Francisco was officially "launched" at a program at the San Francisco Main Library on December 18, 2012.

Jeanne McDonnell gave a talk about the Briones sisters, Juana and Guadalupe, at the Half Moon Bay Historical Society in November. Parts of her text will appear in the society's next newsletter.

Anne Richardson's short essay on William Tyndale, "The Artistry of Vexation," has been accepted for publication in the next number of the Tyndale Society Journal.

Reports from Minigrant Recipients

Steve Levi wrote: "I would like to thank the committee for my minigrant of last year. The money was used to extend my regular vacation in Southern California by a few days so I could rent a car and gather primary documents on Walton E. Cole. Cole deserves a book because he was the only one in America to get on the radio and stand up against Father Coughlin, the originator of what we now call "hate radio." Your funding gave me credibility with the Unitarian Archives in Boston and I was able to get copies of several hundred of Cole's sermons and other personal papers. When my book on
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Cole is completed I will credit the Institute for its assistance in gathering the documents for the work.”

From Ellen Huppert’s report: The trip included both archival research and first-hand viewing of Michigan sites important to figures in my book, In Their Own Words. The small grant from the Institute covered only a part of the expenses of the trip but was important in its support.

Accompanied by my husband and sister, our first research site was the twin cities of Hancock and Houghton, heart of the nineteenth-century copper country. The geography of the towns was impressive, with steep wooded hills on both sides of the waterway between the towns. The archives of Northern Michigan State University offered local newspapers, which yielded reports on Barton’s son-in-law Edward Wright, married to Barton’s daughter Ada. Wright was a leading figure in Hancock, and he and his family provided important support to Barton and Lizzie. We found and photographed the house where Hallie Taylor lived with his half-sister Ada when he lived in Hancock, 1902-04.

In Kalamazoo, we visited the archives of Western Michigan University where I found the only reference to the libel suit filed against Lizzie Gurney’s mother Clarissa. From sources in the Public Library we learned that Fanny Elder Taylor’s mother, Eliza Ensign Elder, was in the first class of graduates of Kalamazoo High School and that she taught in the city’s “school for colored people.”

In Centreville, Lizzie’s home town, we researched land records in the county courthouse to determine properties owned by Lizzie’s family. In our exploration of the town, we found the site of Lizzie’s family house plus numerous buildings dating from Lizzie’s time. My photographs of those buildings will complement the book. At one of the two museums of the St. Joseph County Historical Society we discovered the iron key and shackles which survived the fire in the Centreville jail in 1854, which Lizzie described at length in her journal.

In Ann Arbor, where we once again looked at the Taylor Family Papers in the Bentley Historical Library, I had little expectation of much new, but two key finds emerged. An 1847 issue of the Signal of Liberty, the newspaper of the Michigan Anti-Slavery Society, had published the address of the president of the society, Chester Gurney. This was the first I knew of his role in that society. To my great pleasure, I also found an early journal of Lizzie’s, a transcription of her very first journal, which I had always hoped to find.

Jackie Pels wrote: Popular histories of Fort Ross, the Russian-American Company’s outpost on the Sonoma coast, usually begin with the arrival of “25 Russians and 80 Alaskans.” Except when they begin with the arrival of “25 Russians and 40 Alaskans.” It seems that the Alaskans weren’t tallied, their fur-seal-hunting baidarkas were, and the 80-Alaskans’ figure proceeds from the assumption that these were two-man baidarkas. Asked to write the commemorative poem for a 200th-anniversary celebration of the beginnings of Fort Ross, I was determined to know these Alaskans as more than a choice of population figures.

Many miles and considerable research later—time and effort that I could not have expended without the grant from the Institute—I presented the poem to an audience at Bodega Bay that included officials from the Russian consulate in San Francisco, representatives of the local Miwok and Porno communities, and several historians from Russia. Specifically, the grant paid for attendance at a conference on “Russian Influences in California History.”
when I was just beginning to explore that history; for several all-day trips to Fort Ross, where I was kindly permitted to spend hours in the library on days when the park was officially closed; for numerous shifts in the Bancroft, Main, and Anthropology libraries at U.C. Berkeley, and many turns at the pay-per-page copy machine, plus transportation to and from Walnut Creek on those days. (And of course on each of those occasions I was not working at the freelance editing that is my livelihood and was especially glad for the grant.)

I was unable to attend the subsequent celebration at Fort Ross and read the poem as I’d been invited to do, but it was reprinted in the anniversary booklet (and, to my considerable bemusement, a signed copy was auctioned as a fundraiser at Bodega Bay). At the 2012 conference of the Alaska Historical Society in Sitka in October I spoke about the research process and read the poem, with accompanying images gathered along the way.

New Members

Welcome to Judith Robinson and Louis Trager. As a subscriber to our newsletter, Judy has long been familiar with Institute activities. She is the author of several books, including The Hearsts: An American Dynasty (The University of Delaware Press, 1991), You’re in Your Mother's Arms: The Life and Legacy of Congressman Phil Burton (1994), and most recently Alan Cranston: Senator from California (Telegraph Hill Press, 2012). Louis holds an M.A. from the University of Missouri and a J.D. from Yale. He has been a journalist for over thirty years, half at metro dailies (mostly the old S.F. Examiner), half at specialty internet publications in law and business. He has contributed freelance pieces to American Lawyer, Stanford Monthly and Nieman Reports at Harvard. He is currently “writing an article on route to possible book focusing on a sprawling, transnational state-private influence network, particularly 1949-1952.”

President’s message continued from page 1:

As the year draws to a close it is also time to remember the needy, and your thoughts may include the Institute for Historical Study. Big thanks to those who have already donated, including a gift in the memory of Ethel Herr (see page 7). A gift in the name of a deceased member is a lovely way of remembering a colleague and helping the Institute. It will soon be time to renew your membership; think about giving a bit more. While our dues stay low, we are able to fund minigrants and take on the work of website improvement thanks in large part to our members’ great generosity. Please contribute if you can.

Thanks to all, and best wishes for the Holiday Season and the New Year. I look forward to seeing many of you at the annual meeting in February.

—Richard Robbins

Note from the editor: Normally the newsletter is mailed before the end of December. Computer failure thwarted the schedule; it also forced me in a couple of instances to paraphrase others’ sentences from memory. Apologies if I put foreign words in your mouths!

Annual Meeting

Save the date: the annual membership meeting will take place on Saturday, February 23, 2012 at the Golden Gate Branch of the Oakland Public Library. After the morning business meeting and lunch, the program will include presentations of members’ research. Details forthcoming.
As a voluntary part of my job at Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, California Provincial Archives, I put together prayer services using archives. In addition to the Monday morning prayer services, I have prepared prayer services for anniversaries, Catholic Schools Week, Foundation Day, National Women’s History Month, and other occasions. I have used the themes for these celebrations to guide my selections for the mini exhibits. I use scriptural references tied to the themes and display documents and artifacts from the archives which complement the prayer programs.

The inspiration for these prayer services comes from a passage in “Living with Christ,” a booklet of daily reflection written by Fr. Donagh O’Shea, OP. He was reflecting on the “storeroom parable” in Matthew 13 when he wrote (my paraphrase) that records, artifacts, and manuscripts placed in the archives—even an organization’s relatively recently acquired items—begin to be considered by some as locked away as soon as they are placed there. But how can the users, he asks, the researchers and creators bring new perspectives to these archives? It must be that archives become new when they are used and brought out in the new lights of ever expanding interpretations. When the archives appear in a new light, they are constantly renewing themselves as they are seen from different angles. Bringing archives and records out of storage is not unlike hauling an object from the storeroom. It is a new discovery in the present.

An example is the prayer program I created for this year’s National Women’s History Month which featured the theme “Women’s Education, Women’s Empowerment,” a very appropriate theme for this women’s religious congregation. The order was created for the express purpose of teaching and educating girls and young women, first in early 19th-century France and Belgium, and later in faraway mission lands, including the United States.

The prayer program started off with a quote from the foundress, St. Julie Billiart: “Teach them what they need to know for life.” I then cited places in the gospels where Jesus empowered women in public and in private. For the display, I choose items from each of the schools that carried the title of “College of Notre Dame”: San Francisco, Marysville, and San Jose, whose school became the first chartered institution of higher learning for women in California. The display included graduating class pictures, a copy of a school newspaper, pins given for awards, a sample of an 1893 Columbian Exposition exercise book, and photographs of late 19th-century music and art activities. Usually during the services, I allow for quiet time, asking those present to share their stories or reflections. I find this sharing allows the sisters to open up about their lives in ministry and adds meaningful stories to the archives to document the work of the spirit in their lives.

My purpose for doing these prayer services is to open up the archives to a more conscious level in the sisters’ lives and to bring the stories of their lives out into the open. As a professional archivist and trained historian, I am trying to bring the archives to the forefront as both a resource for the sisters and a place of discovery of their history, which can be utilized for their present missions.

—Kathleen O’Connor

*Adaptation of a five-minute talk given as part of a panel for the Society of American Archivists, August, 2012.*
CALENDAR

January 12    Board meeting
January 20    Work in Progress: Sharan Newman
February 23   Annual Meeting

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 February 28, 2013.

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