

# THE INSTITUTE FOR HISTORICAL STUDY

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# NEWSLETTER

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MAILING ADDRESS:  
P. O. Box 5743  
Berkeley, CA 94705

[www.instituteforhistoricalstudy.org](http://www.instituteforhistoricalstudy.org)

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The NEWSLETTER is sent to all Institute members and other interested scholars. The Institute appreciates all tax-deductible contributions made by nonmembers who wish to remain on its mailing list.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By the time you are reading this newsletter, we will have had a lovely social time at our December 15 holiday party. Since we decided not to have our traditional Annual Dinner, it seemed appropriate to have a less formal event for members to gather.

Members have received a letter asking for donations for the Institute. Thanks to the generosity of members in past years, we've been able to maintain our dues at a modest level. Donations also support our mini-grants, which have always played a critical role in supporting the research of our members.

Save the date of February 15, 2014, for our Annual Meeting. It will be held at the Rockridge branch of the Oakland Public Library. At the afternoon presentation some of our new members talking about their work. Details will be sent out closer to the date.

The California and the West group has met and begun planning for a series of events in the new year. I hope for a wide attendance of members and friends—one doesn't need to be working in California or western history to find these events worthwhile.

— *Ellen Huppert*

## WORKS IN PROGRESS

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### **A Woman of Unbearable Opinions: Fanny Trollope's Irreverent Book on Early America and its Relevance Today**

**Celeste MacLeod** wants to introduce American readers to a woman of unbearable opinions. She wants us to meet a 19th-century English woman who ridiculed contemporary Americans for their braggadocio and criticized them for being so thin-skinned as to be skinless.

On Sunday, October 20, Celeste introduced a work-in-progress gathering to Frances "Fanny" Trollope, who ventured to America and lived among its braggarts from 1828 to 1831 and who was 53 years old when she published, in 1832, her first tome, the controversial sellout, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*.

Throughout the newly formed United States, Americans eagerly purchased this book to partake in the national explosion of outrage and to participate in commenting on it. In both England and America, the book went to four editions in the first year. In England the public regarded Americans as grossly materialistic and relished "seeing its breakaway colonies skewered."

Trollope traveled with an artist who was not her husband. After her book's publication, critics used this information to smear her as immoral. In addition, Trollope's razor-sharp satire caused critics to dismiss her as unladylike, crude, and vulgar. This lambasting by critics, however, helped market her book, which both intrigued and rankled readers.

Trollope spent time in several locations in America. For a year-and-a-half, she lived in Cincinnati, a place she found devoid of amusement and fun. She theorized that religious devotion squelched all enjoyment of life. Much to the embarrassment of "insecure" Americans, Trollope mentioned the maltreatment of Indians,

that is, laws which forcibly removed Indians from their traditional homelands so Americans could take over their verdant lands. Likewise, Trollope found slavery abominable and said of Americans: "You will see them with one hand raising the cap of liberty and with the other flogging their slaves."

Some other European observers who came over during the same period made similar comments, Celeste pointed out. Charles Dickens echoed her sentiments, while Alexis de Tocqueville said what she said in several places; but his critical comments about the country are rarely quoted, and little known. Half a century later Mark Twain became a big fan of her book.

MacLeod's book ties Trollope's post-colonial observations to the current social-political milieu: that is, it focuses on showing how some national characteristics she found widespread in 1830—such as bragging about the nation's uniqueness and greatness—persist to this day among a vocal segment of Americans.

Although MacLeod's book is not a biography, it will have a section about Fanny Trollope's later life and writings in England: how she wrote 40 books in 25 years, supported her family, and was a popular, well-read novelist in her day. Her son Anthony Trollope followed her lead and became an acclaimed and prolific novelist of the Victorian era.

– *Elizabeth Nakahara*

### **"Dr. Robert Semple: California Pioneer and Nationalist"**

On November 17, at the home of Georgia Wright, **Peter Meyerhof** presented a synopsis of his book-to-be on Dr. Robert Semple, a dentist, like Peter, as well as a lawyer, printer, steamboat pilot, and developer. A contemporary described him as "a character of such varied accomplishments." In California he proved to be

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a man of several distinctions, though overlooked by the history books. Peter aims to change this. Born in 1806, growing to an astounding 6' 8", Semple apprenticed as a printer and studied medicine and law before setting out to practice.

Dentist Semple moved from one town to another (in Alabama, Cuba, and Florida) as yellow fever and arson propelled him. He even found time at one point to work as a journeyman printer. By early 1843 he fetched up near St. Louis, where he became a steamboat pilot and attended rallies promoting the settlement and acquisition of the Pacific Coast by the U.S. In 1845 he joined a small group of men headed to California.

There, Semple got involved with a group of American settlers who wanted to take action against the Californio authorities who were threatening to expel Americans living in California without passports. Semple joined a party of 30 men who descended on Sonoma to force General Mariano Vallejo to capitulate. Lawyer Semple drew up the capitulation document for Vallejo to sign and advocated for the establishment of a provisional government until California could be united to the "country of our early home." He urged the "necessity of respecting private property and the respectful treatment of the prisoners, their families, and the people of the country."

There was much to-ing and fro-ing between Sonoma, Sutter's Fort, Yerba Buena, and Monterey during this time of the Bear Flag Revolt. In an effort to secure the Bay of Yerba Buena, Semple and his band spiked the cannons guarding Yerba Buena and the Golden Gate, but ten days later the spikes were removed. (You can still see these unmarked cannons at the Presidio.) While in Monterey Printer Semple, along with Walter Colton, alcalde of Monterey, started a newspaper, the first in California,

called the *Californian*, printed in both English and Spanish. Here he serialized the story of the revolt.

Later that year Developer Semple teamed up with General Vallejo, who gave him half ownership of a five mile square area north of the Carquinez Straits. Semple began a town on a site that afforded many more natural advantages than that of the village of Yerba Buena. In the process of registering the deed for his City of Francisca (named after Vallejo's wife) he inadvertently inspired the renaming of Yerba Buena: hence Francisca became Benicia City and Yerba Buena, San Francisco.

In Benicia Steamboat Pilot Semple established a ferry service crossing the Carquinez Straits. Lawyer Semple, realizing that California had no civil laws governing it and fearing anarchy from the onslaught of Gold Rush thousands, called together a legislative assembly for the Sonoma district (which included Benicia). This assembly was co-opted by the new military governor who called for delegates to convene to write a state constitution. Semple was elected president, and his efforts bore fruit. The U.S. government approved the constitution. Semple's further career in politics included runs for the U.S. Senate, California governorship, and for district attorney of Colusa County; only in the last was he successful.

Financial problems led to Semple's decision in late 1852 to leave his holdings in Benicia, a few months before his dream of Benicia as the new state's capital came to realization. He moved to Colusa County where he homesteaded a ranch, growing vegetables and grains and practicing dentistry "as needed." In October 1854, Semple was killed when he fell off his horse. We will all want to read the book about this remarkable man.

– Georgia Wright

**Treasures in the Archives: Research Possibilities for Students, Teachers and Scholars**

On Thursday, October 10 at the San Francisco Main Library, archivists from four collections, gathered together by Institute member **Kathleen O'Connor**, presented overviews of their holdings. For members of the audience the accompanying images provided a vivid peek into some of the riches available to scholars and other researchers in our own backyard. Even if one were not interested in a particular topic, it was fascinating to learn what has been collected. Two of the speakers presented mini histories —of the San Francisco Symphony and of the role of Catholic nuns in the development of children's education in the city.

Susan Goldstein (San Francisco History Center at the Public Library) reviewed the most recent acquisitions to the collection, among which are records of the Redevelopment Agency, including 43 boxes of photos; various items from the SFPD—mugshot books, wanted notices, photos from the 1870s and 1880s; medical examiner records; columnist Herb Caen's scrapbooks.

Though the development of the San Francisco Symphony archives is recent (2007) and primarily for "in-house" use, a request to view something in the holdings would be honored by archivist Joe Evans. Photos and posters, recordings, press clippings and programs; marketing and finance records, as well as other collections document the 102-year history of this cultural institution. Early opera and ballet in San Francisco are also represented.

Mary Silva from the California Historical Society highlighted a tiny fraction of its holdings: certificates for Chinese residents in San Jose; Edward Curtis photos from the Cecil B. DeMille film *The Ten Commandments*, and

letter sheets from the Kemble collection. She noted that the Society has joined the Commons on Flickr recently, sharing photos without known copyright restrictions on the internet.

The Sisters of the Presentation have been in San Francisco since 1854, working in education and later in other ministries as well. Because of the 1906 earthquake and fire, when the sisters lost both their convents, much early historical material was destroyed. However first-person accounts of the 1906 earthquake and fire and the sisters' relief work afterward are part of the archives. Archivist Chris Doan presented a thumbnail sketch of some of the holdings of interest to genealogists, historians, and researchers interested in social justice, spirituality, and religious life.

Despite the digitalization of many collections, not everything is on line. In fact, only approximately about half of what makes up the California Historical Society is even listed on its website. For all collections "patrons are encouraged to ask a librarian if they have questions about holdings."

– *Maria Sakovich*

**Juana Briones y su California ~ Pionera, Fundadora, Curandera**

Specially organized for Institute members and friends: a pre-opening tour of the exhibition on Juana Briones at the California Historical Society on January 25, 2014 at 2:00 p.m. Institute members **Jeanne McDonnell**, author of *Juana Briones of 19th-Century California* and member of the CHS advisory committee for the exhibit, and **Peter Meyerhof**, historian of early California and organizer of the tour, contributed the following descriptions of Briones and the exhibit.

Juana Briones de Miranda (1802-1889) is best remembered as one of California's earliest businesswomen, landowners, and healers during

both the Mexican and early American periods. She raised seven children plus an orphaned Indian girl and later gained a clerical separation from her husband. After establishing a farm near the Presidio of San Francisco, she became a pioneer settler in the area of San Francisco known today as North Beach. On early maps this area was designated as *Playa de Juana Briones* (Juana Briones Beach) and Washington Square was at that time under her cultivation. A natural entrepreneur, she marketed her milk and produce to sailors from whaling ships and to those who arrived in port for the hide and tallow trade. Her pioneer status is commemorated by an historical plaque on the square. In 1844 she purchased the Rancho La Purisima Concepcion (4400 acres in the foothills of Los Altos and Palo Alto).

Juana Briones was also a *curandera*, a healer. One of the featured items in the exhibit will be a copy of the exceedingly rare first medical text published in California, *Botica General de los Remedios Esperimentados*. Borrowed from the Huntington Library, there is no other copy on public display. It was printed in Sonoma in 1838 as a reprint of a much earlier Spanish edition.

In her last years, Briones moved to Mayfield (incorporated into Palo Alto in 1926), where she lived with daughters, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. A part of one wall of her adobe house in Mayfield will also be on exhibit, along with videotape footage of the transportation and conservation of the wall. [Jeanne was among the activists working for years to preserve the Briones home; it was recently torn down.] Another artifact will be a box of testimonies. Juana Briones was among 62 individuals who were interviewed for the application for sainthood for Father Magin de Catala. Across the top of her testimony, the interviewer wrote that hers was perhaps the best of all.

### Writers Group

Our September meeting was held at the home of Joanne Lafler where **Cathy Robbins** presented the proposal she drafted to send to potential publishers of her manuscript, “Nobody Travels South of Rome.” We were impressed with her multi-faceted account of the southern Italian province of Calabria. She is weaving together a personal account of her family history with the writings of others, along with the area’s history and current situation.

Located at the extreme southern tip of the Italian peninsula, the region has long been a crossroads of civilizations. Cathy’s own ancestors arrived there from Greece in the early eleventh century. The family took up sericulture, and Cathy’s description of the steps needed to produce silk was especially successful. Over the centuries Calabria was ruled by Greeks, Romans, Byzantine emperors, Normans, German emperors, Arab invaders, and Spanish kings, each leaving some legacy. Cathy finds a unifying theme of invasion and resistance throughout Calabria’s long history.

Cathy’s proposal includes material on her own background, the potential for finding an audience to buy the book, but most of it is focused on the book itself: an overview, chapter summaries, a draft introduction and first chapter. The group, lacking experience with successful proposal writing, had little to say about the format of the proposal. But many comments directed Cathy in strengthening the body of her sample chapter.

On October 13, at the home of Rob and Cathy, **Rob Robbins** presented a new chapter—“Mission to Baku”—in his biography of Vladimir Dzhunkovskii. The group found it a very successful weaving together of history and biography. The story unfolds against the troubled times of 1913-14, a period of labor

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unrest throughout Russia. In July 1914 there was not only the threat of war, following the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, but a new threat of a strike by oil workers in Baku (now the capital of the Republic of Azerbaijan). The chapter shows Dzhunkovskii, initially reluctant to take on the assignment of preventing the strike, approaching his task with humanity and great skill. We were especially impressed with colorful detail that placed us on the dusty streets of Baku (in Azerbaijani, “Baku” means “city pounded by winds”); at the site of the horrifically substandard workers’ housing; and in meetings with the oil men, who needed to be dealt with cleverly and firmly. We found a few places that needed clarification but felt that this was an essentially finished piece of work.

At the request of **Louis Trager**, we followed the discussion of Rob’s chapter with comments and suggestions about obtaining material from archives that one cannot visit personally—how one goes about hiring an on-site researcher, having materials scanned, etc.

At our November meeting, held at the home of Ann Harlow, we discussed **Liz Thacker-Estrada’s** draft of an essay, “Antebellum First Ladies,” which will be included in a volume of the Wiley Companion to First Ladies, in which the focus is on historiography. (The editor of that book, Katie Sibley, has recently joined the Institute and attended our meeting.) Liz’s essay includes Margaret Taylor, Abigail Fillmore, and Jane Pierce. We took on several of the issues that Liz had raised. One is the length—we suggested that Liz could reduce the narrative of the three women’s lives, interesting as they are. A conventional historiographical essay would point out changing interpretations over time as well as new evidence to be taken into account. Neither is the case with these three women. Rob Robbins commented that “there is no historiography” for these women. Very little has

been written and original sources are scarce. Nonetheless, Liz has done sound work in citing the works that do exist on these little-known American First Ladies.

– *Joanne Lafler and Ellen Huppert*

### Play Readers

This fall we read William Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, based on the conspiracy against Julius Caesar and the war which followed his death in the first century BCE. It is believed that *Julius Caesar* was the first play performed at the Globe Theatre in London. Shakespeare wrote the play, his shortest, around 1599. His main source was Plutarch’s biography of Julius Caesar, written in Greek in the first century CE, translated into English in 1579. The first text of the play did not appear until the 1623 First Folio edition.

The action of the play takes place in 44 BCE. A succession of men had aspired to become the absolute ruler of Rome, but only Julius Caesar seemed likely to achieve this. Marcus Brutus, Caesar’s friend and a Roman praetor, was cajoled into joining a group of conspiring senators. Influenced by Caius Cassius, they contended that Caesar intended to turn republican Rome into a monarchy. Caesar’s assassination, one of the most famous scenes in the play, preceded by a soothsayer’s warning to Caesar to “beware the Ides of March” and culminating in its famous line, “Et tu Brute,” is well known to most of us from our high school years. The conspirators, including Brutus, declare that they have committed this act for Rome. Mark Antony, in an eloquent speech over Caesar’s corpse, again familiar to most of us—“Friends, Romans and countrymen, lend me your ears,” turns public opinion against the assassins, recalling what Caesar had done for Rome and his refusal, previously, to accept the crown.

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However, despite his quarrels with Cassius, Brutus and Cassius prepare for war with Mark Antony and Caesar's adopted son, Octavian. After several battles, Brutus is defeated and commits suicide by running on his own sword. The play ends with a tribute to Brutus by Antony, the line familiar to all, describing Brutus as "the noblest Roman of them all," the only con-spirator who had acted for the good of Rome.

We then moved from the Roman Empire to the reign of Henry VIII in England. The group read the intriguing play *Anne Boleyn* by Howard Brenton, which premiered at the Globe Theatre in the summer of 2010. The action in the play moves from the time of Henry's divorce from Mary and marriage to Anne in the 1530s to 1603, the beginning of the reign of James I/VI of England/Scotland. Anne is presented as a devotee of the exiled Protestant thinker and writer, William Tyndale. Brenton even has them meet (which never occurred). He explores many facets of Anne's downfall, not just her inability to bear a male heir for Henry.

The drama begins with Anne's ghost, carrying her severed head in a blood stained bag along with a copy of Tyndale's Bible, addressing the audience. It then switches to James who has discovered Anne's coronation dress in a chest, where he also finds copies of Tyndale's Bible and his work, *The Obedience of a Christian Man*. James is haunted by Anne, trying to fathom the reasons for her fall. The audience is made aware of the workings and rivalries of the Tudor Court, especially between the followers of Thomas Cromwell and Cardinal Wolsey. Cromwell is portrayed as central in Anne's fall and death, as he fears she will inform Henry regarding his theft of money, for himself and his family, from the dissolution of the monasteries. The play ends in 1603 in a scene in which Anne's ghost talks with James about her last

days and the new Bible which, as all know, will bear his name.

– *Edith Piness*

### California and the West

The planning committee for California and the West has now set programs for the coming year. The committee decided to continue the recent quarterly format and brainstormed a plethora of excursion ideas. We selected four destinations for 2014, the first two including special temporary exhibitions. Arrangements will be made for special tour guides and optional lunch or dinner arrangements. We are hoping that members of the Institute will find at least one event appealing.

On January 25th we will tour an exhibition on Juana Briones at the California Historical Society, 678 Mission Street, San Francisco. (See details on pages 4-5.)

On March 27th, we will visit an exhibition at the Los Gatos History Museum, "American Bohemia: The Cats Estate in Los Gatos." This exhibition centers on the lives of poet and suffragist Sara Bard Field and lawyer and writer C.E.S. Wood in California. (Many Institute members have heard about the two from member Bonda Lewis.) We are investigating whether a tour for our group of the actual estate might be possible on the same day. An optional evening event in conjunction with the exhibit is a panel discussion on Field and Wood, offered as "a salon-style evening of conversation, food, and drink with scholars," from 7-9 pm. Ann Harlow will be organizing this trip along with new member Katie Sibley, a Los Gatos resident.

The summer excursion will be to the *Red Oak Victory*, the only Victory ship now in existence, at Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historic Park in Richmond. The fall outing will be to Sonoma, for a tour of historic

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sites around the Plaza, including Mission San Francisco Solano and Sonoma Barracks, led by Peter Meyerhof. Details of both trips to be announced.

The ad hoc California and the West planning committee will meet again to plan 2015. All options will be open: more or less frequent meetings, lectures (in house or elsewhere), discussions, or any other plan of interest. Institute members who would like to influence group choices are invited to participate.

– *Judith Offer*

### Medieval Studies

In August, **Lorrie O'Dell** presented a book by Richard Wunderli, *Peasant Fires: The Drummer of Niklashausen* (1993). The events in this story took place in the late 15th century in Franconia, a region in southern Germany. Niklashausen was then a small town in the diocese of Würzburg where Hans Böhm, a young shepherd, lived. Hans would come into Niklashausen whenever there was a festival to sing and play his drum. However, in 1476, during the annual Burning of the Vanities at the beginning of Lent, Hans threw his drum on the fire, and not long after he began to preach in the town. He said he was ordered to do so by the Virgin Mary who had visited him, and she said she would tell him what to say. Quickly, people came from all over Southern Germany to hear him. Supposedly he preached to anywhere between 10,000 to 30,000 people, from the beginning of May to his arrest. None of these pilgrims received permission to go; many just dropped their work implements and took off.

Hans preached that he, not the Pope, had the power of salvation; that all lands, rivers, and streams should be held in common; that the priests were evil and their power should be

taken away. Wunderli refers to the lives of these people as a “culture of poverty.” Their daily existence was constantly threatened by recurring plagues, famine, and increasing demands by both the church and landlords for more taxes and labor duties. When knowledge of Hans’ preaching came to the attention of the authorities, the Bishop of Würzburg was unsure about what to do. Since it was possible that the Virgin had appeared to Hans, “spies” were sent to find out what he was preaching. On July 7th, Hans told the pilgrims that next week they were to bring whatever weapons they had—scythes, rakes, knives—with them. On the following Saturday, Hans was arrested and sent to Würzburg, where he was tried for heresy, tortured, and finally burnt at the stake on July 19.

Rumor had it that Hans was being coached by a Dominican brother, who would stand behind him when he preached; however, there is no real evidence for this. Yet many believe that this uneducated shepherd was being manipulated by someone familiar with the Scriptures and with preaching. Hans and his followers were not participating in a revolt or a rebellion. There were many of these to come over the next decades. The peasants knew who their oppressors were, but they had very few ways of overcoming their “culture of poverty.”

At September’s meeting, **Nancy Zinn** introduced the book by Andrew McCall *The Medieval Underground* as the basis for her talk describing those groups, which for one reason or another, were found on the fringes of medieval society.

The book is a popularized compilation of information gleaned primarily from secondary sources, including a number of illustrations from contemporary manuscripts. To provide context, the author begins by discussing the nature of the medieval world: its organization, its culture, and the development of the legal systems, both secular and clerical, the two interrelated by



Christian doctrine which provided the underpinnings to all of medieval society.

Outlying groups, those “either unwilling or unable to comply with the laws of medieval society,” fall into seven major categories: bandits, freebooters, and outlaws—chiefly men released from army duty unable to find a livelihood again or mercenaries whose campaigns have ended; prostitutes, who followed the army pilgrims and merchant trains, whose livelihood moved from individual endeavor to organized brothels as cities and towns grew and prospered; thieves, quacks, and others who fool the public; homosexuals, whose lives were condemned by church and state alike; heretics, whose very existence threatened the church, still working to establish its hegemony; sorcerers and witches, those persons preying on a gullible community; and Jews, also attacked by church and state. The line between many of these groups was blurred, and punishments for contravention were similar, often savage. Documentation can give us the text of what the secular and religious laws required, but there is a paucity of information on how they were carried out, how frequently (if at all), and by whom. Much sounds familiar today—*plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*.

In October, **Ellen Huppert** reported on the Benedictine abbey of Farfa, one of the great monasteries of central Italy in the Middle Ages. It was founded in the 7th century under the Lombards and thrived under the Carolingians and Holy Roman Empire until the Concordat of Worms in 1122. Located northeast of Rome, very close to the imperial city, Farfa remains an active abbey, but its medieval structures are mostly buried under later buildings, which may account for its obscurity today.

Historians, however, have paid much attention to the old abbey. Its earliest records were compiled by Gregory of Catino about 1100. He

established patents for abbey lands and added a narrative account, which is still used by historians today. The modern monumental history of the abbey is *L'imperiale abbazie de Farfa* by Ildefonso Schuster (1921). Farfa was an imperial abbey because under the Carolingians it was granted immunity from local and papal control in return for support for its emperors. In this way, the emperors created a bulwark for their authority at a great distance from their Germanic strongholds. In return, the abbey became rich in lands in its own region of the Sabina and in Rome as well.

In preparing this presentation, Ellen used three recent works: Marios Costambeys, *Power and Patronage in Early Medieval Italy: Local Society, Italian Politics and the Abbey of Farfa, ca. 700-900* (2007); Mary Stroll, *The Medieval Abbey of Farfa: Target of Papal and Imperial Ambitions* (1997); Susan Boynton, *Shaping a Monastic Identity: Liturgy and History at the Imperial Abbey of Farfa, 1000-1125* (2006). Each focused on a different aspect of the abbey's history, but all relied on Gregory's records, proving the continuing value of his 12th-century work.

– *Lorrie O'Dell*

#### **In Memoriam: Anne Richardson**

Institute members were greatly saddened to learn of the death of Anne Richardson, a devoted member for three decades, on October 2. Many of us still remember the talk she gave on the sixteenth-century religious reformer, William Tyndale, at our Annual Meeting in 2012, and the wit and warmth with which she made his character come alive. She spoke of encountering Tyndale for the first time in his 1528 work, *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, and recognizing that she was “reading not a religious writer, but a street-wise, iconoclastic citizen who exuded common sense about the

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rights of man.” It is fitting that Anne, herself not a mincer of words, found so much to appreciate in the outspoken reformer.

The scholarly work that she shared with Institute members over the years was only a small portion of the material that she published. She became a nationally and internationally recognized scholar of Tyndale and his contemporaries, Thomas More and Erasmus. At the time of her death she was working on a full-length study of Tyndale’s work and had joined the writers group.

Anne was also active in the Institute’s play reading group for many years, lending her scholarly insight to our discussions of sixteenth-century English history plays and just plain enjoying herself when we wandered into other centuries and places. At the time of her death we were looking forward to reading a play about Anne Boleyn as a follower of William Tyndale. She knew that the play included two scenes in which Boleyn and Tyndale meet in person in England, but she was not troubled by such a-historicity. It is our particular loss that she never had a chance to read those scenes with us.

From Anne’s sister, I learned that she was a thoroughly Berkeley person, born there in December of 1942. A graduate of Berkeley High School, she earned her undergraduate degree in English literature at UC Berkeley and then went on to a doctorate in English Literature at Yale University. After teaching at Albertus Magnus College in New Haven and George Washington University in Washington, DC, she returned to Berkeley and studied for an MLS degree at the UCB School of Library Science. She loved music and devoted herself to the cello from childhood, playing for many years in the Berkeley Community Orchestra. She was also deeply concerned with issues of social and economic justice, most recently the campaign

for single-payer health insurance. We were lucky to be part of her life.

– *Joanne Lafler*

### New Members

Welcome to new members **Patricia Bracewell** and **Katie Sibley**. Patricia earned an MA in English Literature and a Secondary Teaching Credential from UC Santa Barbara. She taught high school English for a number of years, but eventually turned her hand to writing fiction. A lifelong fascination with British history and a chance, on-line reference to an unfamiliar English queen led to years of research, a summer course in Anglo-Saxon history at Cambridge University, and the penning of her debut novel, *Shadow on the Crown*, published by Viking in 2013. Set in 11th-century England, it is the first book of a trilogy about Emma of Normandy.

Katie Sibley is professor of history at Saint Joseph’s University. She also did her graduate work at UCSB (Ph.D.1991). She is the author of *First Lady Florence Kling Harding: Behind the Tragedy and Controversy* (2009); *Red Spies in America: Stolen Secrets and the Dawn of the Cold War* (2004); *The Cold War* (1998); and the prize-winning *Loans and Legitimacy: The Evolution of Soviet-American Relations, 1919-1933* (1996). Recently she appeared on C-SPAN’s *First Ladies: Influence and Image* series, and in 2011 she played the role of Florence Harding in a play she wrote. She is editor of two forthcoming Wiley Companions and serves on the Historical Advisory Committee to the U.S. State Department.

### Minigrant Reports

Thanks to an Institute grant the Alan Chadwick Legacy Project is upgrading its website ([www.talkingchadwick.org](http://www.talkingchadwick.org)). I was encouraged by California Humanities Council staff to

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enhance the project's web presence before reapplying for a Community Stories grant. With the ever-growing emphasis on digital communications, our new website, scheduled to go online in February, will feature audio clips of oral histories completed in 2012-13. The grant also enabled me to get a match in funds from Frey Vineyards, America's first organic winery, founded by Chadwick apprentices in 1980.

– *Dot Brovarney*

With the grant provided earlier this year by the Institute, I've been able to complete transcription of some 84 unpublished letters from the extensive John Pierre Serres/Shirley Roberts Collection, which I've been indexing for the past 3 years. Written by members of the prominent George and Martha Watriss family, the letters provide a fascinating first hand account of daily life in San Francisco between 1851 and 1857. They have been gathered into a book (titled *Letters from San Francisco—Correspondence within an Inchoate & Upstart Society*) and are introduced with commentary from contemporary sources for context. Thank you very much for your kind support of this work.

– *Jim Shere*

On November 12 at the home of the Spanish consul-general in San Francisco, **Dick Herr** was one of five people who received medals granted by King Juan Carlos of Spain. His honor was an Encomienda de Numero in the Order of Civil Merit (Orden de Mérito Civil), an order established by King Alfonso XIII in 1926 to reward service to the Spanish nation. "The medals were presented by Ambassador Ramón Gil-Casares," Dick reported, "mine an elaborate medal, very Old World."

At its annual Congress in Charleston, South Carolina in October, the Naval Order of the United States selected **Tom Snyder** as their Commander General-elect for 2014-2015, and in

2016-2017, he will become the Commander General of the Order. Founded in 1890 for the preservation of naval historical artifacts and the writing and promotion of the history of the nation's maritime services, the Order is the oldest Naval society in the country. Tom has also been lecturing on the history of the Mare Island Naval Hospital and leading walking tours of the hospital grounds.

**Maria Sakovich** participated in the Angel Island Immigration Station Family History Day this fall by presenting an overview of the Jewish experience at the station. She has also been invited to join a "panel of experts" to advise on the development of exhibits for the Immigration Station Hospital Museum (to be housed in the restored hospital building) in 2014.

In November, **Neil Dukas** participated in a four-person panel presentation on "Hawaii and the American Civil War" presented by The King Kamehameha V Judiciary History Center in Honolulu. Neil also reported that an extract titled "Notable Wars and Battles of Early Hawaii" (from his first book, *A Military History of Sovereign Hawaii*) has just been (re) published in a book by Daniel Harrington titled: *Timeline Hawaii—An Illustrated Chronological History of the Islands*.

In February, the University of Oklahoma Press will release **Bob Chandler's** *San Francisco Lithographer: African American Artist Grafton Tyler Brown*. The press describes the volume (number 14 of their Charles M. Russell Center Series on Art and Photography of the American West) as "a lavishly illustrated biography of an often overlooked artist and his work." Brown "passed" as white and worked in San Francisco (1860-1882) and then became a landscape oil painter in the Pacific Northwest (1882-1891).

**Patricia Bracewell** has been selected as one of four writers to participate in the 2014 Festival of

Women Authors, a fundraiser for the Berkeley YWCA, on February 1. In October-November, she will be taking part in the Gladstone's Library Writer-In-Residence Scheme, researching and writing book #3. The Library in Hawarden, Flintshire, Wales, was built in 1902 to house the collection of Prime Minister William Gladstone and is the UK's only residential library.

**Jim Shere** reports that Glen Ellen Historical Society (which he directs) received a grant from the Sonoma County Landmarks Commission to help develop a historic display at Jack London Village, featuring a self-guided tour that uses "QR codes" to access audio-visual narratives on smart phones, "which we anticipate expanding throughout the Valley of the Moon."

**Dot Brovarney** continues work on the Alan Chadwick Legacy Project recording oral histories. She attended a recent reunion in Covelo where apprentices—some of whom had not met in more than 35 years—gathered to share Chadwick stories. The event, attended by 60 people in remote Northeastern Mendocino County, underscores both the renewed interest in Alan Chadwick and his message about growing organic foods using French intensive and Biodynamic methods and the value of preserving Chadwick's legacy.

***How the World Worked: From the Pharaohs to Christopher Columbus*, by Sue Bessmer (Pacifica: Old Tree Books, 2013)**

This is a terrific book. The author, **Sue Bessmer**, wears her extensive learning lightly, writing elegant prose with wit and wisdom. She makes an innovative contribution to historiography. Bessmer approaches major periods in the development of Western civilization by looking at historical persons and events through lenses ground in the social sciences.

The result is an original and refreshing point of view. While the work rests on academic expertise, it is also aimed at an intelligent, inquiring, general reader. For someone such as myself who specializes in modern history but has been fascinated by the ancient world ever since learning Latin and reading Greek myths as a child, *How The World Worked* fulfills a desire for more information, reflection on causes, and ways of thinking about broad historical issues in particular places and times.

The author's biography helps explain her well-rounded vision of the workings of human societies. She received her Ph.D. in political science at Stanford. She began in American politics/international relations, but work as a teaching assistant for "Women and the Law" led her to a different field. Her dissertation, *The Laws of Rape*, was published by Praeger Publishers (1984).

Now retired from San Francisco State University where she taught interdisciplinary social science, hers is a very disciplined interdisciplinary approach. With guidance from an eminent classicist at Stanford, she read her way to another academic specialty and many years teaching subjects that laid the foundation for this book. Post-retirement, she has lectured to large groups on cruises. Requests from her following for a book led to the present work.

The eleven chapters of *How the World Worked* can be seen as steps in the development toward "Western Civilization" or as discrete explorations of historical issues. Among the chapters are "Four Empires and a Nation-State," "Church and State," and "Venice and the Birth of Modern Europe."

The social science influence is seen in chapter one, "Survival." The author uses Robert Heilbroner's theory that societies last a long time by using one or more "economic strategies:

tradition, command, and markets.” The chapter includes Egypt, Babylonia, and Persia. Since all predate capitalistic markets, the analysis here and through the book focuses on tradition and command.

The second chapter, “Hellas,” looks at Athenian leader Peisistratus’ political decisions to make economic changes at the level of the poorest Greek farmers. Their cash crops, olives and grapes, were made into oil and wine. When the oil and wine were sold abroad, growers made enough money to buy more food than they could produce. Bessmer sees improved economic security contribute directly to the development of Athenian democracy.

Another writer might allow a meeting of political science, economics, history to have systems, analysis, categories overtake the human drama. Bessmer never crosses that line. Instead, social science, geography, military science add depth to the narrative. This helps the reader make sense of history without excising the chaos.

If one is interested in a harvest from the most recent crop of journal articles, this is not the book to choose. The bibliography features classic works. Carl Stephenson’s *Mediaeval Feudalism* (1942) is an example. However, the author’s original insights such as reasons why the Athenians and Spartans were able to join forces against the Persians give an eye opening “aha!” moment as she replaces conventional narrative.

The powerful chapter “Slavery” compares slavery in the ancient world and the antebellum U.S. Bessmer introduces the concept of abstracted labor among other observations to delineate differences between these societies. The Greeks and Romans did not think of paying an individual to do a specific task for a specific time. Instead, a Roman would own a Greek slave to be his family doctor. Bessmer points out that apologists for slavery in the U.S. compared

it favorably to the terrible conditions of industrial workers.

Her reliance on specific sources can raise a question. Bessmer relies on Eugene Genovese’s *Roll, Jordan Roll* (1974), a great and somewhat controversial book, without acknowledging any controversy. An avowed Marxist/Socialist when he wrote it, Genovese considered Southern masters to be part of a pre-bourgeois, seigneurial society. He emphasized that paternalism and Southern Christianity were part of white social control. Rather than focus only on cruelty, Genovese finds slave resistance in their religion and culture. His admirable contribution has been debated because of its Marxist underpinnings. It need not detract from Genovese to cite the historiographical context of the debate.

The author’s reliance on Francis Russell’s *A Concise History of Germany* (1973) also raises a question. Russell was a distinguished American historian best known for his work on Warren G. Harding (1968) and Sacco and Vanzetti (1962). She quotes him that during the reign of Otto the Great, “Germans had become conscious of themselves as members of a nation rather than members of a tribe.” In 955-? there may be evidence contrary to his slightly Wagnerian claim. Her respect for Russell may have kept her from adding support for or questioning it.

Bessmer has expressed concern that the book’s title is misleading. There is nothing of sub-Saharan Africa or pre-Columbian Americas. China and Central Eurasia appear in “Horses and Humans,” but not elsewhere. This does not bother me. For a Babylonian or Roman their world was the whole world. The Chinese, elite or peasant, of the same eras would have felt the same way. The book sets out to synthesize how things work with what happened and succeeds brilliantly.

– Leslie Friedman

## CALENDAR

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January 11: Board meeting  
January 19: Work in Progress: Louis Trager  
January 25: California Historical Society tour of Juana Briones exhibit  
February 15: Annual Meeting  
March 27: Los Gatos History Museum exhibit tour

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](mailto: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@att.net](mailto:autumn_stanley@att.net). The deadline for the next NEWSLETTER is **February 28, 2014**.

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**The Institute for Historical Study**  
**P. O. Box 5743**  
**Berkeley, CA 94705**  
**[www.tihs.org](http://www.tihs.org)**