The Institute for Historical Study

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ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The Institute's second annual membership meeting was held on February 28, 1981, at the Sutro Library in San Francisco. About twenty-five members braved the stormy weather to attend the business meeting and lunch, and to hear the afternoon speaker, Jane Ciabattari, managing editor of California Living.

At the morning business meeting, Board officers and committee chairs reviewed the accomplishments of the Institute's first year and made suggestions for improvements. Among the latter were an expanded newsletter, greater member involvement, more expertise in developing and administering grants, and more Institute-sponsored projects. A number of suggestions and announcements were made in the discussion period that followed. Gary Kurutz accounced that the California State Library will be opening a grantsmanship library in March to serve the greater Sacramento area. The possibility of obtaining corporate financing for Institute-sponsored projects was raised, and there were questions about what is involved in the administration of grants.

The last piece of business was the election of six Board members to fill the four seats up for election and the two additional seats approved by the Board at its October 1980 meeting. The nominating committee presented its report and -- there being no additional nominations from the floor -- passed out ballots. Gayle Gullett Escobar, Ellen Huppert, Frances Richardson Keller, Peter Mellini, Francesca Miller, and Chet B. Snow were elected to two-year terms. They join Jules Becker, Paula Gillett, Joanne Lafler, Lorrie O'Dell and Roberta Wollons, whose seats will be up for election next year, to form the Institute's 1981 Board of Directors. [At the first meeting of the new Board, held on March 19th, the following officers were unanimously elected: President, Paul Gillett; Vice-President, Ellen Huppert; Secretary, Lorrie O'Dell; Recording Secretary, Gayle Escobar; Treasurer, Roberta Wollons; Assistant Treasurer, Jules Becker.]

Following lunch, guest speaker Jane Ciabattari addressed the practical subject of translating the historians' skills into articles for the Sunday Examiner-Chronicle magazine, California Living. She began with an overview of the kinds of material published by California Living -- chiefly regional literary history, architectural history, and "nostalgia pieces." While some subjects, such as the earthquake and fire of 1906, have been overdone, many events, institutions and personalities remain to be explored. Oral histories have provided the basis for a number of successful articles, as have pictorial archives. Some regular contributors have become specialists in the history of neighborhoods, social or literary history, particular historical eras, or famous local institutions. In additional to giving many examples of the kind of work that has been done and the kinds of subjects that would be welcome, Ms. Ciabattari answered questions about research approaches, format, procedure for submitting manuscripts, and the probability of having one's manuscript published. Prospective contributors should remember that the art of successful historical journalism is the art of "disguising" one's research: accuracy without pedantry.

Every member who attended the meeting received a copy of the current membership roster, which will be updated every few months. If you were unable to attend, you should have received a copy, along with other membership information, in the mail. Address inquiries to Lorrie O'Dell.

HISTORIANS MEET IN OLD SACRAMENTO

The meeting -- "History, Historians, and Historial Resources in the State Capital of California" -- sponsored by the Institute and held on March 14th, provided a welcome opportunity for historians in many state and local agencies to talk to each other, as well as to interested members and friends of the Institute, about their historical resources and activities. More than eighty people -- and a group of life-cast figures of early California railroad workers -- attended the afternoon program held in the recently-restored "Big Four" Building in Old Sacramento. Speakers from eight different agencies made presentations.

Steve Mikesell of the Office of Historic Preservation gave an overview of OHP archival holdings, which include materials relating to all California properties listed on the National register, as well as State Registered Landmarks. Also available is information about the allocation of contracts for work on preservation projects.

Diane Spencer-Hancock, historian with the legal unit of the California State Lands Commission, spoke of the chequered history of the Commission itself as well as of the different kinds of materials available for researchers -- from land ledger books and land files (the latter containing informaton on sales over a period of many generations) to early historic maps.

The varied holdings of the State Library -- including rare books, newspapers and journals, a collection of fine printing, 60,000 works on California history, a large graphics collection, and manuscripts relating to the Gold Rush and the early history of Sacramento and San Francisco -- were outlined by Gary Kurutz, Special Collections Librarian, who noted that the first donation to the State Library, in 1849, was an edition of The Natural History of New York.

A collection of more specific interest for the Sacramento area was described by James Henley, Director of the Sacramento Museum and History Division. Items in the collection range from personal correspondence files of city and county officials, and mugbooks from the city and county jails, to approximately 500,000 historical photographs and the entire news footage from television station KCRA since its inception.

The next speaker, William Pritchard, Supervisor of Interpretive Planning for the California Department of Parks and Recreation, prefaced his remarks by noting that he had us surrounded, pointing to one of the figures of railroad workers in the back of the room for which he had been the model. The new California State Railroad Museum, scheduled to open on this site on May 2nd, is only one of a number of state historical parks. Pritchard, an historical archeologist, explained that most of the resources in his department are artifacts rather than documents, and that they are usually located at the parks themselves. However, interpretive collections are available for viewing by appointment. Other material of interest to researchers, such as title searches and original drawings, is located at the Development Division, while the Resource Protection Division maintains an archeological laboratory.

Al Hurtado of the California Office of the Bureau of Land Management described the materials of historical interest maintained by the BLM: public land collections (with an historical index), surveyor's plats (of variable accuracy and value) and mining records of unpatented claims. Materials relating to transactions of the BLM -- with is concerned only with lands in the public domain -- are well-organized, easily accessible and open to all. (This is not always the case with resource materials in public agencies. Several of our speakers reported that their collections were scattered over many locations and were poorly, or incompletely, catalogued. As we now appreciate, this is not merely a bureaucratic headache.)

According to archivist Joseph Samora, the California State Archives contains 50,000 cubic feet of records including census reports, articles of incorporation, trade marks, governors' prison papers from 1850 to 1950, reports from county school superintendants, elections returns and campaign materials, and public works records. Of interest also are exhibits and works dealing with the restoration of documents.

The last speaker, Donald Kunitz of the UC Davis Library, spoke about the special collections in Shields Library on the Davis campus. They include 20,000 rare volumes (many dealing with agriculture and viticulture), the F.L. Higgins Agricultural History Collection, materials on American radicalism and political activism, a fine collection of avant-garde poetry (including the archives of Gary Snyder), World War I and II ephemera, and a growing collection of California theater material. The Davis campus is celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary this year, and among the specialized materials in the library's collection are complete weather records for the last seventy-five years.

The value of the meeting was clear to the many guests who lingered to ask questions and talk informally. While the existence of these historical resources is not exactly a secret, neither has it been well publicized. Francesca Miller, chair and organizer, expressed pleasure that the Institute has helped serve as a link between public historians and historical researchers. One immediate product of the meeting is a publication -- Guide to the Resources for Historical Investigation in the Sacramento Area -- which provides in outline form such information as the name, address amd telephone number of the participating agency, the site or sites where its collections are located, the names of the director and/or staff members to contact, access hours, special collections (if any), a summary of the holdings, and a selected list of publications. Each guest at the meeting received a copy of this brochure. Additional copies are available to Institute members and friends for a small charge. Address inquiries to Lorrie O'Dell. Through the newsletter, the Institute intends to keep its readers informed about additions to these collections and other acitvities of special interest.

WORK-IN-PROGRESS: A SUMMARY

Informal monthly meetings at which members discuss their current historical work have continued since the first very successful "work-in- progress" session in January. At the February meeting, Joanne Lafler and Roberta Wollons discussed the different problems they have faced as biographers. Joanne, who is documenting the life and work of an early eighteenth-century actress, has been frsutrated by lack of material, especially for Anne Oldfield's private life. Not only are there no extant letters or private papers which might provide insight into the actress's feelings about her work, family and friends, but there is virtually no documentation of her early life and family background. Joanne discussed her approach to the

problem of reconstructing that backgound and tested some of her hypotheses. Roberta Wollons, on the other hand, has encountered quite different problems in writing about a contemporary American, Sidonie Gruenberg, who was a tireless correspondent and a prolific writer. Abundant material can sometimes be a barrier to understanding, especially when it is difficult to see connections between such areas as private and public life, which Mrs. Gruenberg -- founder and director of the Child Study Association of America -- kept quite separate. In discussing her approach to this and other problems in her work as an historical biographer. Roberta referred to issues raised in the recently-published collection of essays, Telling Lives, and in the discussion that followed, many of those attending discussed problems in their own biographical writings which Roberta and Joanne found very helpful.

On March 22nd, Jean McMann showed and discussed slides that she has taken of neolithic rock carvings and monumental architecture in Western Europe. The abstract patterns of the carvings first attacted Jean's attention as a ceramicist turned photographer. But as she photographed sites in the British Isles, France and Malta she became fascinated with the recurring patterns of the carvings and began to examine some of the theories advanced by archeologists to explain the development from pictorial to symbolic art. From this study grew a book and a continuing interest in the subject. Jean sees photography as an effective tool for documenting and studying this important development in pre-history.

At the April meeting, Georgia Wright and Carroll Brentano, whose work as Medieval and Renaissance art historians, respectively, has recently focused on funereal art, gave separate but related presentations. After showing slides of late medieval tomb sculpture and discussing some typical purposes and subjects, Georgia showed the slides she has made of the decorative friezes on three tombs in the abbey church of Fécamp in Normandy, which are in some ways atypical. Especially unusual was the frieze depicting the history of the Abbey itself, since more common subjects are Biblical scenes or episodes from the lives of saints. She speculates that the controversial history of the Abbey was a popular subject for recital by monks in their capacity as tour guides, and that the tomb sculpture may have provided strong visual confirmation as well as serving as a mnemonic device for the guides. According to Carroll Brentano, tombs in Venetian Renaissance churches more often celebrated the piety and munificence of church patrons. Carroll is especially interested in an altar piece in the church of San Giuseppe with a self-portrait of the artist whose tomb stands beneath: Parrafio Michiel. Though in his lifetime he was one of the highest-paid and most popular Venetian artists, Michiel's reputation did not long outlive him. (Indeed, it was unkindly suggested that he achieved success through his famous hospitality.) His self-portrait, like self-composed epitaphs, suggests the way in which he wished to be remembered. It is interesting, then, that he placed his own figure in the position commonly occupied, iconographically, by mourners standing beside the figure of the recently-crucified Christ, amid symbols of salvation: portrait of the artist as a pious Christian.

Women's history has often been concerned with women's activities outside the home, said Francesca Miller at the May meeting, but she feels that more attention should be paid to the domestic activities of women which are constant from one culture to another. Accordingly, she decided to examine women's work in, and attitudes toward, the accumulation and preparation of food in three American countries: Brazil, Cuba, and the United States. After reviewing some of her sources, and explaining why she chose these particular countries and why she

decided to limit her study to a particular period (1930-1980) and socio-economic group (urban, low-income women), she heard comments from her listeners. She was pleased that her subject evoked so many responses, from practical suggestions to personal reminiscences. Clearly, the accumulation and preparation of food plays an important role in personal history, which will be a major source for Francesca's study.

The excellant response to these meetings has encouraged the program committee to continue them over the summer months as well as next year. Postcard announcements will be sent to all Institute members, and to interested friends in the greater Bay Area.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES PLANS

The program committee has been planning several different kinds of acitvities for the coming year. One is a continuation of the informal "work-in-progress" meetings (discussed above) which will be held in member's homes in different Bay Area locations. Program committee chair, Georgia Wright, would like to hear from members who wish to make a presentation and/or can offer their homes as meeting places. Larger, more formal meetings such as colloquia or weekend conferences, which serve a broader educational purpose or bring together historians working in traditional and non-traditional fields, are also under consideration. Surveying members' backgounds and interests, the committee has proposed the following general topics:

-- History Since 1945
-- Local History and Architectural Heritage
-- Biography
-- Labor History

Carole Hicke, who has taught Hawaiian history at San Francisco State University, has proposed an evening devoted to Hawaiian history and culture, offering to speak on the multi-ethnic hereitage of Hawaii. Would any other members be interested in contributing to the program, speaking on other areas of history or culture, such as political history, art, music, dance, food, etc.? A date in November is tentatively planned.

The committee would also like to hear from members who would be interested in helping to organize meetings around any of the suggested topics, or in participating as speakers. Funding may be available for individuals who wish to work as project directors for day-long or week-end conferences. Suggestions about other topics or kinds of activities are also warmly welcomes. Write to Georgia Wright in care of the Institute or telephone her: (415) 549-1922.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Rather than publish a profile of one member in this issue of the newsletter, we would like to welcome all those who have joined the Institute since the roster was compiled in February.

-- Stephen Jay Adams, who teaches at Lake Tahoe Community College, is interested in American history.

-- John Brunn, affiliated with Chabot College in Hayward, is interested in the history of science.
-- Bert Gordon, a professor of history at Mills College, is a European (especially Austrian and German) historian with a current interest in culinary history.
-- Grace M. Hawes cites interest in twentieth century Sino-American relations, Comintern activities in China, and women in communist countries.
-- Emily Leider is a literary historian affiliated with the San Francisco Review of Books, and a biographer.
-- Pamela McGuire, a new Sacramento member, is interested in historic interiors and rural vernacular architecture in California.
-- David S. Rosen is a European (especially German) historian interested in literature and politics.
-- J.W. Smurr lives in Turlock where he teaches at California State University, Stanislaus, and has been involved in the restoration of downtown Turlock as part of his interest in historical preservation.
-- Ilse Sternberger is a European historian interested especially in historical biography.
-- William F. Strobridge cites interests in California history, historic background to environmental problems, and Asian history (including Asian nationalism in California).
-- Elizabeth Strodach is a linguist with a current interest in linguistic change brought about by feminism in America.

All members, new and old, please note!

Every time you publish, give a paper, or attend a meeting, you should identify yourself in print and in person as a member of the Institute. This is one of the most important ways to keep the Institute's name current within the profession. It also underlines the new role that independent institutes such as ours play in the historical field. If you have another affiliation, listing both the IHS and your university, museum, firm, government agency, etc. is a particularly visible way of emphasizing that out Institute is a parallel to these more tracitional institutions.

Institute members attending professional meetings and conferences are encouraged to take IHS brochures with them to pass out. It is also helpful if members submit news about Institute activities to the newsletters of professional societies to which you belong.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

From Deborah Frangquist comes this announcement:

> The National Archives and the Organization of American Historians are again co-sponsoring the Charles Thomson prize in American History. This award, for an article on any aspect of American History, carries with it a cash award of $500 and publication in Prologue: The Journal of the National Archives. Essays should be based, in part, on research in the National Archives and/or Presidential Libraries, and should not exceed 7500 words in length. They should be submitted to the editor of Prologue on or before August 1, 1981. The OAH Thomson Prize Committee will judge all entries and the winner will be notified by the editor of Prologue. Publication of the winning essay will be in the spring of 1982 and the prize will be awarded at the annual OAH meeting.

Bill Strobridge forwards this job announcement to "Adventurous members":

> Instructors -- teach college credit academic courses aboard deployed Atlantic Fleet ships. All disciplines required, including Math, English, Business, Psychology, Humanities, History and the Sciences. Minimum assignment, 8 weeks. Resumes to Michael F. Durkin (CAPT, USN, ret.) Director Norfolk Office, Florida Junior College, 1600 E. Little Creek Road, Norfolk, Virginia 23518.

A REMINDER

If you joined the Institute early in 1980, your 1981 dues of $30.00 are now payable. Checks should be mailed to Lorrie O'Dell in care of the Institute address. You dues are our chief source of income at present. In the fiscal year of March 1980 through February 1981, Institute income was expended as follows:

--	Printing and copying (for meeting announcements, the newsletter, stationery, the roster, etc.)	$1,213.38
--	Postage	342.18
--	Operating/supplies	82.72
--	Refreshments	290.00

Each postcard mailing costs nearly one member's dues. Printing and mailing the newsletter costs more than two member's dues. In one year we feel that we have accomplished a great deal as an all-volunteer institution with a modest budget. We have done this with your support, and we hope that we have merited your continued support.

FOR BETTER COMMUNICATION

You may wish to get in touch with one or more of the following members for a specific purpose. They will be glad to hear from you in writing in care of the Institute address, or you may telephone them:

- Lorrie O'Dell, corresponding secretary. For any questions about mailings, for adding names to the mailing list, or for paying your dues. Work phone, (415) 622-9496; home phone (415) 451-8682.
- Deborah Frangquist, membership committee chair. For any questions about your membership or for submitting membership applications. Phone (415) 648-4026.
- Georgia Wright, program committee chair. For suggestions or information about Institute activities. Phone (415) 549-1922.
- Newsletter editors. For any submissions to the newsletter or suggestions for improvement. Joanne Lafler, phone (415) 547-1791; Steve Sikora, phone (415) 526-7412.