

THE INSTITUTE FOR HISTORICAL STUDY

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NEWSLETTER

A Few Brief Comments on the Humanities, Particularly History, and Their Current State in the US.

By Peter Stansky

There is no question that the humanities have never been under such threat as they are at this moment in the United States. They appear to be high on the list of the aspects of our life that Trump seems determined to undermine. Financially he has probably done more harm through attacking scientific and medical research where the funds involved have been far greater than those devoted nationally to the humanities. Yet there is no question that the situation is very serious. I will write here about what I know best: my own field of history.

There is hope. I don't mean to be overly positive but there are many indications that the humanities are flourishing despite Trump's actions. For instance, my writing this short piece was triggered by the Institute's annual meeting in February. The reports given there demonstrated how much was going on. In addition to the monthly public meetings, we heard about the Women's History Study Group, the Jewish History Study Group, the European History Study Group, the Writers' Group, and the revival of the California and the West Study Group.

As I say, the Institute is just one instance of how much is happening locally and I suspect there may well be similar organizations elsewhere. But let's go beyond the Institute. With the vast expansion of email, one is bombarded by innumerable notices about events and talks. Of course they cover all kinds of fields but many of them concern the humanities. If one had the time and inclination one could spend most of every day going to these talks and events in person or by Zoom. Locally, one could attend events all over the world, time zones willing or if there are recordings available. And then there are our local universities and colleges, as well as organizations such as the splendid Book Club of California. The Book Club has exhibitions and numerous lectures every month (both Zoom and onsite) open to the public, and they frequently deal with California history. I receive innumerable emails from my own university, Stanford, listing the numerous talks (and exhibitions at its art museums) in a wide variety of areas but many in the humanities. I could attend many of them either in person or via Zoom. Some of them are associated with the Stanford Humanities Center, a flourishing organization that gives quite a few fellowships on varied topics to Stanford faculty, graduate students and undergraduates as well as academics from elsewhere.

And what about university presses? Admittedly, their sales have shrunk and there has been some pressure from university administrations to cut back. A few years ago Stanford's misguided provost, Persis Drell, attempted to downsize the Stanford University Press. But there was a successful faculty revolt leading to restoration of the previous level of support. The University does not give the Press the funds it could or raise for it an endowment parallel to those held by the university presses of Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. The Press, although distinguished, does not operate at the same level as the university. That said, the university is to be commended for maintaining the strength of its humanities departments. Nationally,

Continued on outside back cover . . .

A Note from the Editor...

What crazy times we live in. But as crazy as things are, we can't say that we aren't living through an historic era. How, we can wonder, will future historians parse these years? As far as our Institute is concerned, we continue to parse years and eras gone by, and although our numbers are currently small, our interests and activities are many! As our president notes on the next page, our special interest groups are thriving, plus the California and the West group will be scheduling some excursions in the coming months. If you've been more of a bystander rather than an active participant to all things IHS in the past few years, I encourage you to take the plunge and get more actively involved: try to attend our monthly Zoom lectures and meetings whenever you can, contribute your news and articles to the newsletter, offer suggestions to the Board of Directors, and keep an eye out for potential new members. Your Institute has a lot to offer; make sure you're taking advantage of it all!

Upcoming Monthly Programs, Saturdays at 10 AM

5/16/26 – Katya Miller, “The Lady on the Dome: America’s Most Visible, Yet Invisible Monument”

6/20/26 – Jim Gasperini, “What Is Fire?”

7/18/26 – Peter D.L. Stansky, “George Orwell Today”

8/15/26 – Elizabeth Schott, “Dorothy Liebes and the Red Cross: Healing WWII Veterans with Art”

9/19/26 – Karen Offen, “Adventures in Translation”

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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

On February 28, 2026, the IHS Annual Membership Meeting took place at the Burlingame Public Library, where 17 members and two of their guests attended in person. Nine members attended on Zoom. To set up the most technologically successful hybrid Annual Meeting thus far, our webmaster, Jim Gasperini, worked with library staffers in the Lane Community Room, where the meeting was held, which already included a projector, screen, podium, laptop, and microphones.

Reports by Treasurer Tim Welsh, Writers’ Group facilitator Rob Robbins, Program Coordinator Dan Kohanski, Newsletter Editor Rose Marie Cleese, Webmaster Jim Gasperini, and me demonstrated that the Institute is going strong in terms of finances, the Writers’ Group, monthly programs, the newsletter, the website, and mini-grants. The Jewish History Study Group and the Women’s History Study Group, both founded in 2025, are successful, and two new groups—the revived California and the West Group, co-facilitated by Ann Harlow and David Mostardi, and the European History Study Group, co-facilitated by David Goldberg and Bert Gordon—are off to a strong start this year.

In my address, I emphasized the public stands the Institute took in 2025: endorsing statements by the American Historical Association and the American Association of Colleges & Universities and producing the Institute’s own statement on “the Trump Administration’s Assaults on History.”

New Board of Directors members Stephen Barton, Leslie Friedman, and Elizabeth Schott were elected unanimously as were Nominating Committee members Rose Marie Cleese, Peter Meyerhof, and Rob Robbins.

Following lunch, the program portion of the meeting featured a moving tribute to distinguished historian and nonagenarian Peter Stansky, an original member of the Institute, by Peter Crane and Leslie Friedman, his former students at Harvard and Stanford respectively, and fellow longtime member Bert Gordon. Peter Crane noted that Stansky “shaped [his students’] sensibilities forever.” Leslie discussed two of Stansky’s books: *Redesigning the World: William Morris, the 1880s, and the Arts and Crafts* and *Twenty Years On: Views and Reviews of Modern Britain*. Bertram focused on Stansky’s impressive curriculum vitae. Peter Stansky reflected on his career, expressed gratitude for the tribute, and noted that the Institute, with its study groups, annual meetings, and other activities, demonstrates that history can survive well.

New members Ted Atlas and David Mostardi introduced themselves, discussed their interest in history and in the Institute, and answered questions. Ted highlighted his work as an independent historian, sharing his research about the history of Candlestick Park, the Willows-Glenn County Airport, and the development of Silicon Valley. His book, *Candlestick Park*, was published by Arcadia in 2010. David presented on two topics: the history of the Berkeley Hillside Club and the life of Paul Elder, a San Francisco bookseller-publisher. David, current historian of the Berkeley Hillside Club, co-wrote a book about the Club’s history for its 125th anniversary. He highlighted notable books that Elder published. David’s book, *Paul Elder & Company*, will be released by the Book Club of California in May.

Members can contribute to further strengthening the Institute by writing articles and reports for the newsletter and, especially following the passing of esteemed members John Barnard, David Chadwick, and Bonda Lewis, recruiting and inviting fellow historians to join.

—Elizabeth Thacker-Estrada

MONTHLY PROGRAMS

**“Getting NPS Approval for the
Willows-Glenn County Airport”
Presented by Ted Atlas
January 17, 2026**

Ted Atlas delivered a thorough presentation on the history of the Willows-Glenn County Airport and his successful fight to have it declared a National Historic Site based on its role in aviation history. (Willows is the county seat of Glenn County, 80 miles north of Sacramento and 10 miles west of the Sacramento River.) Using PowerPoint slides, he highlighted the historical importance of the airport in early airmail routes, the Doolittle Raid on Japan in World War II, aerial firefighting developments, and agricultural and commercial passenger air travel. He emphasized the role two men—Floyd Nolte and Joseph Ely—played in the history of the airport.

Prior to 1925, airmail was flown by government pilots. In 1925, Congress gave the postmaster general power to contract to private companies for air mail. The US Department of Aeronautics Bureau built airports approximately 200 miles apart. The Contract Air Mail (CAM) 8 route was established between San Diego and Seattle, and in October 1928, the Department of Commerce selected a site one mile west of Willows as an intermediate landing field (ILF). ILFs were built every 40 miles as emergency landing sites. Following local fund raisers, the County of Glenn purchased the Willows-Glenn Airport from the Department of Commerce in 1928. Lighted beacons, including a beacon erected in 1928/1929 at Willows, allowed planes to fly at night, making passenger air travel safer.

The CAM 8 route was awarded to Vern Gorst of Pacific Air Transport, who bought a Ryan M1 aircraft to hold two passengers, who sat among

the mail—the beginning of passenger service. The same type of plane was converted into the *Spirit of St. Louis*, which Charles Lindbergh flew from New York to Paris in 1927. Gorst upgraded to Boeing Model 40, which held four passengers and later to the far more luxurious Boeing Model 80, which had an enclosed cockpit, leather seats, reading lamps, and hot and cold running water. Pacific Air Transport became part of United Airlines in 1931.

In 1928/1929, pilot Floyd “Speed” Nolte (1900–1974) developed a method of dropping rice seed from airplanes, which made rice-growing more efficient and economical, marking a transition from wheat to rice farming, with 25% of rice grown in the United States grown in this area.

He successfully managed the Willows-Glenn County Airport through the 1930s, featuring some of the biggest air shows in Northern California. Floyd operated the Willows flying service with his brothers Dale and Vance. In 1934, the Civil Works Administration gave them funds to build a hanger. A gravel runway was installed in 1940, and in 1941, the military added a second runway.

During World War II, when Floyd rejoined the Army Air Forces, Paul Mantz, the commanding officer of the First Motion Picture Unit that produced instructional and propaganda films, recruited Floyd as a pilot and operations officer.

In 1942 after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt sought a way to strike back. The military developed a plan to fly army bombers off an aircraft carrier. Hap Arnold, head of Army Air Forces, organized the mission with Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy Doolittle. They chose the North American B25 Mitchell. The 17th Bomber

Group was selected for the secret mission. In late March, Doolittle and four other pilots conducted final practices of short takeoffs needed to operate off an aircraft carrier. Willows was the only private airport where the Doolittle Raiders trained. They flew from the Willows Airport to the Alameda Naval Air Station, where the planes were placed aboard the *USS Hornet* (CV-8). The *Hornet* sailed out of San Francisco Bay on April 2nd and on April 18th bombed Japan. The 16 bombers led by Jimmy Doolittle had to launch the raid 10 hours earlier and 200 hundred miles farther away than planned because Japanese patrol boats had spotted the *Hornet*. The pilots ran out of fuel just as they arrived in China; one landed in water, one in the Soviet Union, and 14 bailed out. One of the raiders, Ted Lawson, wrote a book, *30 Seconds Over Tokyo*, that was made into a movie in 1944.

In the 1950s, Floyd, his wife Jesse, and his son Jimmy bought a house in Willows, which Ted Atlas' brother and wife purchased in the 1980s. This is how Ted first became aware of the Floyd Nolta story. It was also how he became aware of the Joe Ely story and his contributions to aerial firefighting, which had its start in Willows.

Joseph Bolles Ely (1911–2006) of the National Forest Service became the control officer in the Mendocino Forest in 1948. The Mendocino National Forest, which lies between the Sacramento Valley and the Mendocino Coast, was the site of the Rattlesnake Fire in 1953 in which 15 firefighters lost their lives, the worst loss of fire fighters in US Forest Service history until the Yarnell Hill Fire in Arizona in 2013. The tragedy spurred attempts to find ways to drop water on fires from planes. Employing agricultural pilots in Willows, Joe Ely became the first to establish an effective way to drop the water. Ely contacted crop duster pilot Floyd Nolta, who, within a week, devised a way to drop water from a plane. The water drops assisted ground crews to hold the fire line by

making a section on the ground safe for firefighters to work, a valuable addition to fire fighting. Ely conducted tests at Willows Airport to measure the efficiency of dropping water at various speeds and altitudes and published a report in October 1955. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CALFIRE), Los Angeles County, and other government agencies conducted tests at the Willows Airport. What started in Willows is now a standard and very vital firefighting tool.

Ted then discussed the national historic application process. The National Historic Preservation Act, overseen by the National Park Service, maintains a list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and other areas worthy of preservation. The Act established a state historic preservation officer in each state; the California Office of Historic Preservation operates under the State Parks Department. The Historic Commission of seven commissioners includes architects, historians, and archeologists who meet quarterly to decide which sites are referred to the NPS for inclusion. Everything at the airport contributing to the historic period—from 1928 when the tower, which is still in use, was put up to 1982 when the Forest Service moved its operations to Chico—had to have its significance explained in an extensive history.

The state notifies the property owner that the application has been made. The County of Glenn, which owns the airport, wrote a letter against adding it to the list as they were under the impression it would prevent any changes made to the airport. Still, since the airport is publicly owned, the application was submitted nonetheless to the state. In April 2023, the Willows-Glenn County Airport was on the Historic Commission meeting agenda. Although the commission usually meets in Sacramento, this time it met at Fort Mason in San Francisco. Ted stressed that the very first airmail flight on September 10, 1920, flew from the Marina

aviation landing field in San Francisco to New York. Ted was able to take the commissioners back to April 2, 1942, when, had they then been sitting in that Fort Mason office and looking out at the Bay, they would have seen the *USS Hornet* sailing out the Golden Gate with 16 B25s slashed to the deck, headed to Japan. The keeper of the list approved it in October, and the Willows-Glenn County Airport is now on the National Register, on which only 29 airports are listed. The National Register of Historic Places can be found on the National Park Service website ([nps.gov](https://www.nps.gov)). More information can also be found on Ted's website, tedtalkshistory.com.

—Elizabeth Thacker-Estrada

“What Triggered World War I— and Are We in a Similar Moment”

Presented by Dan Kohanski

February 21, 2026

The February program was an attempt to explain one of the most complex questions of history in just over an hour: why did World War I start when it did? The presentation focused on two factors: the personalities of the leaders and the rise of ethno-nationalism. The impact of these factors was explored in three specific events.

The first event was the conversion of the Austrian Empire into the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1867. This was the result of pressure by the Magyars, the main ethnic group in Hungary, which wanted an equal say in the running of the empire. But whereas the Germans who ruled the Austrian part allowed their minorities considerable autonomy, the Magyars embarked on a program of “Magyarization,” a campaign to make everyone in their part of the domain speak Hungarian and follow Catholicism as the Magyars did.

This ethnic prejudice was significant in the resolution of the second event presented: the

1908–1909 crisis over the empire’s annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The empire had occupied these provinces of the Ottoman Empire since 1878 but now decided to formally make them part of the Empire. The Magyars could not stop the annexation but were determined that the Empire should not absorb any more Slavs after this. The new kingdom of Serbia was even more upset, and radical Serbs formed an underground organization known informally as the Black Hand, whose goal was to so disrupt the Empire that it would break apart, enabling Serbia to bring under its rule all those parts of the Empire where Serbs and other Slavs lived.

It was a protégé of the Black Hand who triggered the third event, the July Crisis of 1914, by assassinating the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne. The inept handling of this assassination by most of the political and diplomatic leaders of the European powers is what allowed World War I to begin. The presentation went into some detail on this point, including citations of some of the cables sent between the foreign ministries and their ambassadors to the Great Powers of Austria-Hungary, Germany, France, Russia, and Great Britain. The imperious and mercurial personality of the German Kaiser, the reluctance of the British cabinet to deal with the crisis, the anger of those who favored the Teutonic race or the Slavic peoples, and deceptions, machinations, and willful misunderstandings were all on full display.

In the discussion that followed, we explored the similarities between the lead-up to World War I and the current world situation, where again we have conflicts driven by ethnic tensions and with leaders of uncertain competence and ability to recognize the realities of the complex world of multiple nations with different agendas.

—Dan Kohanski

**“A Western Publisher:
Paul Elder & Company, 1898–1968”
Presented by David Mostardi
March 21, 2026**

In March David Mostardi gave us a preview of his forthcoming book, *A Western Publisher: Paul Elder & Company 1898–1968*, which by the time this newsletter appears will be close to being published by the Book Club of California. It tells the story of Paul Elder, the leading San Francisco bookseller and publisher in the first half of the 20th century.

Booksellers that doubled as publishers were common in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The store of William Doxey, strategically located on Market Street in the fashionable Palace Hotel, was the hub of literary San Francisco at the turn of the previous century. The store featured innovative marketing displays, including single-subject display windows. Born in 1872, Paul Elder began his career in the book world working for Doxey in the 1890s. He learned both the opportunities and dangers inherent in the business, observing Doxey’s struggles with finances.

In 1897 Elder married Emma Moore and went out on his own, in partnership with Morgan Shepard. Shepard, a bon vivant and adventurer, contributed his artistic skills and designed the store’s layout, while Elder brought his book expertise. Their elegant store at 238 Post Street featured not only books but also art, pottery, and curios. David described how different the experience of buying a book was back then. There was nary a cash register or a checkout sales desk. Customers would hand a selection to a clerk, who would disappear into a back room behind a curtain, then return later with their carefully wrapped purchase.

The store burned to the ground in April of 1906. The only photograph of the store’s exterior was taken from a nearby roof shortly after the

earthquake hit but just before it and the surrounding area succumbed to fire.

Elder and Shepard soon reopened at a new location on Van Ness Avenue. The new building, designed by Bernard Maybeck, featured a Gothic cathedral-style book room, wooden shingles, massive beams, medieval chandeliers, and big sturdy oak bookcases. The store later moved several times more, and David pointed out in photographs how the chandeliers, bookcases, and certain architectural flourishes reappeared in different parts of each store.

The partnership ended after five years. The two men were very different; Elder was more the buttoned-down businessman, while Shepard’s wilder life, David pointed out, could easily be the subject of another entertaining biography. While Shepard’s tastes ran to Art Nouveau, Elder favored the Arts and Crafts aesthetic: straight lines, earth tones, natural materials, connections to the outdoors.

Elder rebranded the store as Paul Elder & Company. Each successive store, though varying in size and design, continued to provide an artistic ambience for its customers, displaying beautiful books along with pottery, metalwork, paintings, prints, and jewelry. For some years Elder had another collaborator, master printer John Henry Nash. Elder purchased a printing company that had been doing a lot of work for him, made it a subsidiary, and renamed it Tomoye Press. In addition to books they also published *Impressions*, their in-house magazine, broadsides, calendars, and lots of greeting cards.

David showed examples of beautiful books, starting with *Yosemite Legends* by Bertha Smith with artwork by Florence Lundborg. This is one of the Elder books he first came across back in the late 1990s. It made him think “Wow, I wonder if there are any more of these,” inspiring his collection and deep research into all things Elder. One of the most influential books that

Elder published was Charles Kellor's *The Simple Home*. Kellor was once president of the Hillside Club in Berkeley, where David is now the historian. The club was founded in 1898 primarily to prevent the Berkeley Hills from being blemished by "ugly houses," by which they meant Victorians. They favored Arts and Crafts houses instead, and Kellor's book served as their manifesto.

Elder briefly had a satellite store in Santa Barbara. His most ambitious move came when he, Nash, and their families moved to New York, leaving an employee to run the San Francisco store on Van Ness. Though a move to the center of the American publishing world made a certain sense for an ambitious publisher, they ran into serious logistical difficulties. Everything turned out to be much more expensive in New York, there were production delays, and during his second year there they missed the Christmas season, just as big a deal then as it is now. Though they managed to publish some beautiful work while there, after a few years they moved back home, where they built a third store on Grant Street, again architected by Maybeck.

Nash soon tired of struggling to produce exquisite work with very small budgets. He and Elder split, acrimoniously. Nash went on to have a distinguished career in the fine printing world.

During the Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915, Elder had an elegant booth in the Palace of Liberal Arts. It had an open layout and a Gothic arch to remind visitors of his main store. He published at least 13 titles related to the Exposition, which was essentially a giant party San Francisco threw for itself to celebrate its recovery from the earthquake. Sales of books were very high, but so was shoplifting, to the point where the booth operated at a loss.

Though Elder considered himself a publisher first and foremost during this period, a few years later he gave up publishing, for the most part,

and for the rest of his career concentrated on the bookstore. The economics of publishing were too onerous, and he long had serious debts incurred during the New York episode.

In 1931 Elder moved his main store once again, to a spot on Post directly across from where his first, pre-quake store once stood. At the top was a large gallery where art exhibitions, book readings, and musical performances often took place. Among these were concerts by his three musically inclined children. The youngest, Paul Elder Jr., took over the business when his father retired in the early 1940s. Elder Sr. died in 1948. Soon afterward Elder Jr. moved the store again, replacing the Arts and Crafts décor with a mid-century modern aesthetic. Elder Jr. kept up the business until 1968, when he in turn retired and sold the store to Brentano's.

For 70 years there had been a Paul Elder bookstore in San Francisco, as famous for its artistic ambiance as for the books themselves. Elder published about 410 titles, many of which are still eagerly collected today. Much more about Elder can be found on David's website, pauelder.org, and in his book. It seems fitting that the Book Club of California, known for its expensive, high-quality publications, is publishing his book about Elder.

Discussion afterward touched on where Elder lived in Berkeley, Shepard's adventures killing a man in a fight in South America and getting trapped by a red-hot safe after the 1906 earthquake, San Francisco's post-earthquake ruins, and the later career of John Henry Nash, who was one of the founders of the California Book Club. Though David has been collecting since he first fell under the Elder spell 30 years ago, he still has only about 80% of the books. If anyone comes across an Elder book in some obscure place, check with him to see if it might be one of the ones he's missing.

—Jim Gasperini

SPECIAL GROUP REPORTS

European History Study Group Report

The Institute's European History Study Group met on Zoom at 11 AM Friday, April 10th, for its inaugural meeting, with an agenda that consisted largely of discussion and plans for future meetings. An informal consensus had already been reached to the effect that the group would work as a book club, meaning that we would select specific books for discussion at our meetings. The result of the conversation was a rich selection of books that included Priscilla Robertson's *Revolutions of 1848: A Social History*; T. G. Otte's *July Crisis: The World's Descent into War, Summer 1914*; Norman Rich's *Great Power Diplomacy: 1814–1914*; Alexander William Kinglake's *The Invasion of the Crimea: Its Origin and an Account of Its Progress Down to the Death of Lord Raglan*; and E.P.

Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*, as well as Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *The Charge of the Heavy Brigade*, not nearly as well-known as his *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, which, addressing the Crimean War, immortalized one of Britain's most spectacular military disasters.

Suggestions made by the group also included Jane Dunn's *Elizabeth and Mary: Cousins, Rivals, Queens*, which focuses on the struggles among royalty in 16th-century England, as well as Ted Morgan's *An Uncertain Hour: The French, the Germans, the Jews, the Klaus Barbie Trial, and the City of Lyon, 1940–1945*. Mention of Morgan's book resonated with me as I was doing research in Lyon during Barbie's trial and thought I might one day attend the proceedings, which were open each day to limited numbers of the public. After waiting in line on my chosen day for some two hours to be allowed into the courtroom to watch the trial, I was told I could not enter with my briefcase, which contained some unrelated research notes.

With no safe place to leave it, I left the courthouse and spent the day as a flâneur ("idle man-about-town") in Lyon.

Books discussed at the meeting also included works by Diane Arbus, the famous mid-20th-century American photographer, and the ensuing conversation about photography led to a consideration of films as historical sources. This led to a discussion of Marcel Ophüls' 1969 film *Le chagrin et la pitié* [*The Sorrow and the Pity*] about life in Clermont-Ferrand under German occupation of France during the Second World War; the Soviet film "Commissar," produced in 1967 and based on a short story by Vasily Grossman, whose works were suppressed in the mid-20th-century Soviet Union; and the 2027 film *Dunkirk*, produced, written, and directed by Christopher Nolan and set during the Allied retreat from western Europe as the German armies advanced in 1940. In passing, the conversation at the meeting also touched briefly upon the "Radetzky March," composed in Austria by Johann Strauss Sr. and first performed following the victory of the Austrian army over Italian revolutionaries in 1848.

All in all, the meeting was rich in content, and it was clear that members combined deep interests in European history together with a sense of community organized around the richness of Europe's history. We will meet next on Friday, July 10th, at 11:00AM, via Zoom and will focus on one book for discussion. Suggestions are welcome and all IHS members are welcome to join us.

—Bert Gordon

Jewish History Study Group Report

The group warmed up to the new year at the January 11th meeting with a tour of early Jewish communities on the Caribbean Sea, courtesy of Dan Kohanski. The first Jewish settlers arrived on the island of Curaçao in 1651, 17 years after Dutch colonizers replaced the Spanish. The settlers shifted among houses of worship until 1732, when a synagogue was completed in the Punda area of Willemstad, the island's walled capital. With its sand floor, this Mikvé Israel-Emanuel Synagogue is the oldest Jewish temple in continuous operation in the Western Hemisphere. Jews became traders and ship owners and were heavily involved in insurance. By 1800, half of the white population of Curaçao was Jewish.

Preceding the Jewish community of the island was the one in Suriname, a small country on the northern side of South America. It was the oldest such community in the Americas, started in 1639. Built by Ashkenazi Jews in 1719 in the capital, Paramaribo, the Neveh Shalom Synagogue sat next to a mosque. Sephardic Jews built Zedek ve Shalom Synagogue, also in the capital.

At the February 8th meeting, Oliver Pollak kicked off the discussion with observations on "Gold, Oil and War: Demographic Change and the Jewish Communities of Contra Costa County (1850, 1900, 1940)." As Contra Costa County's population more than quintupled over the 20th century's first three decades, Bernard Schapiro (1865–1930) became wealthy and influential converting thousands of acres of Richmond and Martinez farmland into working-class houses.

Born in Warsaw, Poland, Schapiro apprenticed in retail and then emigrated to America in 1886. He peddled cigar tobacco in Pennsylvania and learned the optician's trade in Chicago. He arrived in San Francisco in 1892 and married Birdie Stern, a jeweler's daughter, in 1895. They

had three children. In 1901, Schapiro turned to building and selling moderately priced homes. Over time, his wealth and influence grew as he converted renters into homeowners. He marketed assiduously: overseeing a web of salesmen through offices in Martinez, Oakland, and San Francisco, as well as Richmond; forging business connections with community officials and fellow members of civic organizations; and advertising widely in the region's newspapers. "Don't Worry About the 'Down Payment'" notices reassured prospects.

The booster's undying optimism kept shining even through the 1929 stock market crash. Ford Motor Company's Richmond assembly plant, built the next year, augured prosperity for workers, merchants, and homeowners, Schapiro proclaimed shortly before his death. He's now essentially forgotten outside data in genealogy and newspaper databases: biographies in Contra Costa histories reflecting obituaries and editorials that glowed with praise of his contribution to affordable housing and community building; and his scrapbook of 1920s newspaper ads, held at the Richmond Museum of History and Culture. But Schapiro's legacy has lived on in Richmond streets named for him, his wife and children: Birdie Court and Bernhard, Esmond, Zara, and the former Dorothea avenues.

Rosalie Stemer spoke at the March 8th meeting about Yizkor memorial books, created by Holocaust survivors created to commemorate their hometowns and the friends and family members who once lived there. "Yizkor" is the Hebrew word for "remember." The tradition of these books goes back to the pogroms of 1918 in the Ukraine. Since World War II, 900 to 1,200 of the books have documented pre-Holocaust communities that were destroyed in Poland, Ukraine, Germany, Belarus, Czechoslovakia, Russia, Hungary, and Salonika. Many Yizkor

books were written in Yiddish or Hebrew, but some have been translated into English.

They reconstruct an era that no longer exists. Often, the books include maps of the city and surrounding area plus descriptions of business districts, poorer and richer neighborhoods, schools, social clubs, political movements, town humor, vacation spots, and lists of survivors accompanied by photos. One book would have an author or two; another would have been written by 20 survivors of a town. Rosalie showed the translated version of a Yizkor book for the town of Krasnystaw, Poland, including pictures of the town from the 1920s and '30s.

The New York Public Library and the Yale Library have about 900 Yizkor books each. Other institutions with collections include Stanford, Harvard, the Library of Congress, Hebrew Union College, the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, the US Holocaust Museum, and Yad Vashem. Several of these make the books' content available online. The website Jewish Gen lists some towns that have Yizkor books and points out those books that have translations. Scholars have begun teaching and writing about Yizkor books and have published them as part of larger research projects.

—Ted Atlas, Oliver Pollak, and Louis Trager

Women's History Study Group Report

At the January 26th meeting, the group discussed a portion of the introduction to Susan Nuernberg's book about Charmian London's diaries, which Charmian wrote between 1890 and 1940. Apparently, Charmian destroyed several of the early diaries. The surviving diaries were donated to the Huntington Library in 1974, and access was restricted for 30 years.

Susan sought feedback concerning a peer reviewer's question as to why she had not included fragments of diaries written before

1904, and if it was because they did not concern Charmian's relationship with Jack London. She was encouraged to make clear that she is not hiding anything by briefly describing the contents of the fragments and by explaining where they can be seen.

Susan's work will be published by the University of Nebraska Press in two volumes of approximately 560 pages each. The group thought Susan's book would attract readers due to Jack London's fame and his marriage to an interesting and intelligent woman. Charmian was bohemian and progressive, and her ideas about sex and marriage were radical at the time.

The group then discussed plans for the rest of the year, including potential programs, such as members' works-in-progress and reading a book or a play to discuss. As to the frequency of holding WHSG meetings, members supported continuing to meet monthly on Zoom.

On February 23rd, the group discussed the preface of Katya Miller's book on the *Statue of Freedom*, standing atop the U.S. Capitol dome since 1863. Several attendees thought the preface was very well done and gave them insight into Katya's intense involvement with the statue.

Katya first became aware of the statue in 1992. Her journey from that moment to writing her book included dreaming about the statue, reading a newspaper article about its cleaning, meeting Native Americans who encouraged her research into its Indigenous aspects, creating a miniature statue for her jewelry line, making a documentary about the statue, obtaining a US Capitol Historical Society's fellowship, and writing two articles in *The Capitol Dome* magazine in 2007 and 2009.

When Katya sought the Indigenous sources that sculptor Thomas Crawford likely used, she happened to visit the Grace Hudson Museum in Ukiah, and there saw an exhibit of portraits of

Native Americans by Thomas L. McKenney begun in 1822 during the Manifest Destiny period. One of a Pawnee chief had elements contained in the *Statue of Freedom* design that Crawford would have likely seen.

For many years, the public was unaware of the statue's Native American appearance, partly because she is so high up from the ground. However, when the statue was taken down for cleaning and repair in the 1990s, more people became aware of her and the symbols that make her unique. Plus, placement in the Capitol Visitor Center's Emancipation Hall of the restored full-scale plaster model used in the statue's casting gives people the opportunity to view the statue's exquisite details up close.

Rose Marie Cleese spoke about her work over the last few years as Katya's editor and said the book was close to publication-ready, with the goal of publishing it in conjunction with the nation's 250th anniversary this year.

On March 23rd, Laure Latham presented, via Zoom from London, a report of her ongoing study "Behind Closed Doors," a history of women gaining entry to private clubs in London. Laure is not only a member of one, the Serpentine Swimming Club, she is its first female president in its 160-year history. To write the report, she contacted 40 clubs, 12 of which responded, and she interviewed someone from each of those clubs she heard from.

Laure began with a history of private English clubs in general. The first club was opened by Francis White in 1693. Billed as a "sports club," it was more for gambling. However, the idea rapidly spread because men wanted clubs organized around such sports as hunting, boating, racing, and cricket. Clubs were for men exclusively because they controlled the family money; the laws of the time (as in the US) gave men ownership of their wives' possessions at marriage. With little access to education, women

lacked professional reasons for joining. By mid-century, women did gain access to educational pursuits and they started copying the French idea of "salons," inviting each other for evenings of lectures or discussions of politics, literature, arts, and history with notable people. But until 1882, women still had no legal access to inherited wealth or to their husbands' fortunes.

Meanwhile English men had so many private clubs in huge mansion-like structures that one street in London had side-by-side clubs for one mile, known as "Club Row."

World War I (1914–1918) had a huge effect on club life as 11,000 of the 16,000 male members of clubs enlisted. Some clubs closed and a number of them were bombed in German air attacks. There was a new mingling of the social classes, and women were allowed to practice jobs previously considered "male."

In 1919 women got the vote in England, and there was renewed pressure to allow women in clubs. Certain clubs formed a women's section or auxiliary, with some access to rooms in the clubs.

Tired of begging for access, some women founded their own clubs. "Alpine" or hiking clubs were popular; women hiked in skirts. "Liberal" clubs included journalists. Sketch clubs were for making and viewing art. The Ocean Racing Club was formed in 1925.

The Depression of the 1930s caused many resignations from men's clubs, and several had to close. World War II (1939–1945) further liberalized clubs. In 1975 gender discrimination in clubs was outlawed.

Now there are 130 private clubs, some mostly male or female. Laure's club, the Serpentine Swimming Club, has achieved gender parity in numbers.

—Jody Offer and Elizabeth Thacker-Estrada

Writers' Group Report

The Writers Group entered the new year on an elevated note. In January Steve Barton gave us an erudite survey of the intellectual background of the City's Wealth movement. He began with a detailed discussion of the ideas of Henry George and continued through the New Deal to the post-World War II era. The group was impressed by Steve's command of his material and by his clear writing style. Some readers found his exposition of George's ideas in need of greater clarity for the benefit of non-specialists, but the general view was that this chapter was a useful introduction to his larger subject.

In February Liz Schott gave us an excellent chapter of her biography of Dorothy Liebes covering her subject's activity with the Red Cross during World War II. Liebes was part of the mobilization of the arts in support of the national struggle against the axis powers and the global threat of fascism. Liebes brought her special knowledge of weaving and her enormous organizational skills to bear on an important effort to employ the arts in helping wounded warriors recover and adjust to their new condition of disability, whether permanent or temporary. The chapter also alludes to, but does not discuss in detail, Liebes' romantic adventures during wartime. Group members were enthusiastic about Schott's well-written and engaging effort. Some suggested that she might expand the focus a bit to place Liebes' activities in the broader context of the New Deal's mobilization of the arts and to explore the ways the heated atmosphere created by the global struggle threw people into new and unexpected situations, romantic and otherwise.

Ann Harlow was our March presenter, giving the group another look at her double biography of Anne Bremer and Albert Bender. The chapter follows Anne's return from Europe and her growing importance in the Western art scene. Harlow gives us an account of Bremer's various

showings and exhibitions with ample quotations from the reviews. Although Anne remains the primary focus of this chapter, we get for the first time a more detailed account of Albert's activities as a patron of the arts and culture in San Francisco. Bender is instrumental in the founding of the Book Club of California and a prime mover in developing its series of limited-edition examples of fine printing and book design. In 1913 Albert's publication committee undertook to publish Robert Cowan's *Bibliography of the History of California and the American West*, an ambitious project both in terms of its subject and the artistic quality of its printing. Harlow also traces Albert's growing friendships with prominent California writers, including George Sterling and Ambrose Bierce. The group was favorably impressed with this segment. Some readers suggested that Harlow might curtail her extensive quotations from the newspaper reviews of Anne's exhibits and present their assessments in her own words.

—Rob Robbins

California and the West Study Group Report

A meeting to begin reviving the California and the West Study Group took place on Zoom on March 14th. Elizabeth Thacker-Estrada, Peter Meyerhof, Rose Marie Cleese, Michael Several, Steve Sodokoff, and I attended. We felt that presentations can be done as part of the regular third-Saturday series and that our forte would again be to organize trips to Bay Area points of historic interest. I will try to set one up in Berkeley, including the Bancroft Library, and Rose Marie will plan one in San Francisco, probably including Mission Dolores during its 250th anniversary. Another idea was a program about the major archives for Western history and how to access their resources. Maybe that could take place on Zoom.

—Ann Harlow

MEMBER NEWS

Members on the presentation circuit. . .

Bert Gordon and **Suzanne Perkins** celebrated Valentine's Day on February 14th with Bert giving a presentation "Valentines and Chocolate: Their Connections through History" at the Contra Costa County Library in Orinda. The talk covered the history of Valentine's Day, whose origins appear to date back to pre-Roman pastoral festivals; the history of chocolate from Mayan times to the present; and, lastly, the marriage of the two in the mid-19th century. The Ghirardelli & Girard Confectionery Company began in San Francisco in 1852. Richard Cadbury is said to have produced the earliest heart-shaped box with Cupids and rosebuds for Valentine's Day in 1861. The modern chocolate era has been said to have begun with the development of milk chocolate by Daniel Peter in 1875 in Switzerland. Through the 20th and into the 21st centuries, chocolate was given as a Valentine's gift from men to women, though increasing numbers of women in recent years are gifting chocolate for the holiday. The talk was followed by a chocolate tasting at the library.

Peter G. Meyerhof gave a presentation titled "Mapping the Northern End of the Camino Real" on April 18th at the Annual Conference of the California Missions Foundation, held in conjunction with the 250th anniversary of the founding of Mission Dolores. The path of the Camino Real connecting the 21 missions in California has long been a topic of interest. The portion of the trail north of San Francisco that linked Mission San Rafael and Mission San Francisco Solano in Sonoma has been less studied. Some of the trail can be inferred from diaries, diseños (maps), and even from LIDAR. The last portion of the trail as it crossed the ridge of the Sonoma Mountains into the Sonoma Valley can now be predicted from an 1847

survey and testimony in a land claim deposition that sheds light on the route.

Elizabeth Schott continues to get the word out regarding the subject of her forthcoming book, Dorothy Liebes. She gave two talks in April: "Dorothy Liebes and the Healing Power of Weaving" to the Redwood Guild of Fiber Arts and "Useful and Beautiful: Modernism, Dorothy Liebes and the Decorative Arts at the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition."

—Rose Marie Cleese

IN MEMORIAM

David Chadwick

A funeral service was held for long-time IHS member David Chadwick at Green Gulch Farm on April 12th. He died at the age of 81 on February 21st at his home in Bali, Indonesia. An ordained Buddhist priest, writer, publisher, musician, and oral historian, David studied at the San Francisco Zen Center in the 1960s and was one of the founders of Green Gulch Farm and Tassajara. He was also the first maître d' at the Zen Center's Greens restaurant at Fort Mason in San Francisco. The best-known of his several Zen-related books are the magisterial biography *Crooked Cucumber: The Life and Zen Teaching of Shunryu Suzuki* and *Tassajara Stories*. Several articles about him can be found at www.cuke.com//dchad/dc-memorial.htm. Maria Sakovich fondly recalls corresponding with him over the years about the logistics of handling donations to his Cuke Archives project. "It was amazing how David's kindness and openness shone through these mundane details. Dear readers, you *must* take some time to learn more about this wonderful soul, scholar, archivist, and friend to many!"

IN MEMORIAM (continued)

Bonda Lewis

Longtime IHS member Bonda Lewis passed away on December 1, 2025, at the age of 84. She was recently residing in Bremerton, Washington. In addition to earning BA and MA degrees in Theatre at San Jose State University, she also enrolled in the professional program at the prestigious American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco. Over the course of her career, she performed and directed both her work and that of others in theaters, schools, hospitals, libraries, universities, military installations, and clubs throughout the US and Northern Europe. She taught theatre and wrote shows, plays, short stories, and poetry. She also cofounded an improvisational group, Penny Plain Theatre.

Through her company, Performances Off the Shelf, Bonda portrayed several women of history in one-woman shows including authors Jane Austen and Louisa May Alcott, explorer Isabella Bird, women's rights advocate Amelia Jenks Bloomer, and suffragist Sara Bard Field.

An active member of the Biography Writers Group (now the Writers Group), Bonda shared her writings on a historical fiction series for young readers that takes place during both the Orphan Train Movement and the women's suffrage movement. From 1854 to 1929, orphan trains transported thousands of orphaned, abandoned, and poor children from crowded Eastern US cities to foster homes in the rural Midwest and other states.

An expressive and talented actor, excellent and passionate teacher, supportive Institute member, and wonderful and loving friend, Bonda will be greatly missed.

Note: A longer tribute to Bonda will appear in the next edition of the Institute newsletter.

—Elizabeth Thacker-Estrada

John Barnard

John Hyde Barnard died on January 11th in Sausalito at the age of 75. Having discovered the magic of music as a youth, John spent his entire life in pursuit of that magic. He and his wife, Merrily Weeber, performed throughout the US and in the Bay Area. John was a musical director, producer, arranger, and songwriter for his company, Propensity Music BMI.

John was also a writer, historian, and retired Los Angeles City librarian. Joining the Institute in 2022, he recently served on the Institute's Board of Directors and was a very involved participant of the 2024/2025 Annual Meeting Committee, arranging for the meeting—the first to be held in the North Bay—to take place at his church, the Miller Avenue Baptist Church in Mill Valley.

In 2024, John published his first book, *The Creole Incident: The Beginning of the End of Slavery* (Coldwell & Hyde Publishing), in which he acknowledges the Institute. The book was a runner-up in the 2021 San Francisco Writers Conference's Adult Non-Fiction Category. He gave a lecture on his book at the Institute's October 2024 Monthly Program, which can be viewed on the IHS YouTube Channel. His article "The Use of Petition" appeared in the Summer 2025 issue of the newsletter. He was also the author of the prize-winning short story, *The Lot*.

Rose Marie Cleese reflects that, although he was an IHS member for just a few short years, he made quite an impact. He and his wife never missed a Taco Tuesday. Merrily sent this note to members: "John got a blood disease and was sick for a long time. He cared for you all very much. Thank you for being so kind. Much love to you all." Donations in his memory can be made at <http://Mamaskitchen.org>.

—Elizabeth Thacker-Estrada

. . . continued from outside front cover

for quite a few years now, the humanities have had a dramatic decline of majors. Yet at Stanford the number of History Department faculty has grown. The Department is one of the strongest in the country.

Speaking of university presses, those of our members who went to the annual conference of the American Historical Association in San Francisco in 2024 must have been impressed by the number of books being published, including ones on important subjects not necessarily thought to be of wide interest. Similarly, in sessions at academic conferences, including those at the Historical Association conference, there is a wonderful variety and richness of papers being presented. Speaking of my own field, British history, there is an extraordinary vitality, and quite rightly previously neglected areas are receiving more and more attention. Next fall, the North American Conference of British Studies will pair up with its Pacific Coast regional conference in Pasadena (November 12–15) if any of our members would like to attend.

Admittedly, the academic job market is not that robust, but that can't be blamed on Trump as it has been true for many years. Rather I would hold university and college administrations partially to blame in their misguided attempt to run their organizations as businesses. Nevertheless, some young people still want to go to graduate school, and in the Bay Area there are many history graduate students doing fine work.

I do not want to minimize the considerable threat to academia presented by Trump and his supporters as well as that posed by some university and college trustees. If he had his way, the humanities would be considerably curtailed, and to some degree he has been successful. He must be resisted. But if you look at the situation locally and nationally there is so much splendid activity in the humanities. I have tried to give some indication of how that is true in the field of history. Long may the humanities thrive. If it is not too self-regarding to say, I believe they represent and enrich our most important values.

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