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# NEHA



The Newsletter of the New England Historical Association

Volume XII, No. 1

SPRING ISSUE

APRIL, 1985

## COMING

### SPRING MEETING

OCTOBER 26, 1985  
TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY MEETING  
UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT  
STORRS

APRIL 26 - 27, 1985  
BOWDOIN COLLEGE  
BRUNSWICK, MAINE

The program for the two-day Bowdoin Meeting appears on pages 2-3. All sessions will be held in Coles Tower. Highlights of the meeting include the presentation of the 1985 Media Award and the screening of the film "The Return of Martin Guerre." Program participants include Natalie Davis, Richard Ellison, Conor Cruise O'Brien, Stephen Nissenbaum, two former NEHA presidents (Helen F. Mulvey, Sidney Burrell) and many others.

Preregistration forms have been mailed out to the membership, including travel directions and motel listings. The complete conference package at \$35 includes registration, receptions, ticket to the film, Friday evening sit-down dinner and Saturday luncheon. Extra tickets to the film, dinner and luncheon are available on an itemized basis. Preregistration period extends to April 19. Bring your colleagues, students, spouses and friends.

#### Association Awards

The 1985 NEHA MEDIA AWARD will be presented at the Bowdoin Meeting to Natalie Zeman Davis for her work as consultant on the film "The Return of Martin Guerre."

The Executive Committee voted to commemorate the 20th Anniversary by establishing an annual BOOK AWARD FOR NEW ENGLAND AUTHORS. The award carries a cash prize of \$100 and a citation from the Association.

Books in any field of history published during the previous calendar year (January 1-December 31, 1984) are eligible. Only books written by authors who have been legal residents of New England during the two years prior to the nomination are eligible. The award will be made on the basis of the scholarship, readability and general significance of the works. Textbooks, pamphlets, anthologies and editions will not be considered. Books may be nominated only by presses. Announcement of the award and presentation will be made at the Anniversary Meeting in

THE NEW ENGLAND HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION SPRING MEETING

FRIDAY APRIL 26, 1985

- 2:00 Registration, Coles Tower
- 4:30 Plenary Session I: CLIO AND THE MUSES OF MEDIA: ROLES FOR HISTORIANS IN FILMS, DOCUMENTARIES AND DOCUDRAMA  
Chair: Kenneth F. Lewalski (Rhode Island College)  
"The Historical Film and the Renewal of the Past," Natalie Zeman Davis (Princeton University).  
"Making Documentaries," Richard Ellison (WGBH-TV).  
"Three Sovereigns for Sarah: A Historian Looks at Salem Witchcraft," Stephen Nissenbaum (Univ. Massachusetts, Amherst)  
Comment: The Audience  
6:00 Social Hour 6:45 Dinner

- 8:15 Plenary Session II Film: THE RETURN OF MARTIN GUERRE

SATURDAY APRIL 27, 1985

- 8:00 Registration, Coles Tower

- 9:00 Concurrent Sessions 1,2,3

1. TENSIONS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY IRISH NATIONALISM

Chair: Conor Cruise O'Brien (Montgomery Fellow, Dartmouth).  
"The Historians and Irish Political Violence," Maurice R. O'Connell (Fordham).  
"Young Ireland and Physical Force," Helen F. Mulvey (Connecticut College).  
"Moral and Physical Force in the Fenian Era," L. Perry Curtis (Brown University).  
Comment: Sidney Burrell (Boston University).

2. POLITICS AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN THE RIO DE LA PLATA

Chair: Joseph Crescenti (Boston College)  
"Explanations for the Rise of the Interventionist State in Uruguay," Milton Vanger (Brandeis)  
"Bibliography of Italian Immigrants in Argentina," Georgette Dorn (Library of Congress, Hispanic Division)

3. BLACK AMERICANS AND THE BRITISH IMPERIAL SYSTEM

Chair: Julie Winch (Rhode Island College)  
"The British and Abolition in the West Indies: Did it Work?," William Green (Holy Cross).  
"Races and Racism in the British Empire," Mary Wickwire (Univ of Massachusetts, Amherst)  
"Black Americans and British Planters," Julie Winch  
Comment: The Audience

10:30 COFFEE INTERMISSION

10:45 CONCURRENT SESSIONS 4,5,6

4. WOMEN IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Chair: Roger Howell (Bowdoin College)  
"Women's Lot in the 17th Century: Reflections Occasioned by Antonia Fraser's 'The Weaker Vessel'," Roger Howell  
"The Colonial Perspective," Sarah McMahon (Bowdoin)  
Comment: The Audience

5. RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES IN 19th and 20th CENTURY MAINE HISTORY

Chair: Richard Judd (University of Maine, Orono)  
"Maritime History: The Penobscot Bay Experience," John F. Battick (U Maine, Orono)  
"Maine Shipbuilding in the Twentieth Century," Lawrence C. Allin (U Maine, Orono)  
"Social History: Portland and St John as Case Studies," Robert H. Babcock (U Maine, Orono)  
"Ethnic History: Lewiston as a Case Study," Yves Frenette (Univ. Maine, Orono)  
"Forest History: Lumbering as a Frontier Experience," Richard Judd  
Comment: The Audience

6. ITALY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Chair: Alan J. Reinerman (Boston College)  
"The Modernization of Austrian Lombardy in the 18th Century," Alexander Grab (U Maine, Orono)  
"Pope Benedict XIV's Selection of Cardinals," John Guarino (Essex Community College)  
"City Politics in 18th Century Rome," Laurie Nussdorfer (Princeton University)  
Comment: R. Burr Litchfield (Brown University)

12:15 SHERRY RECEPTION

- 12:45 LUNCHEON and BUSINESS MEETING

- 2:00 Plenary Session III  
Presentation of the 1985 NEHA MEDIA AWARD to Natalie Zeman Davis  
Presidential Address: "The Uses of History in the 1980s"  
Ronald P. Formisano (Clark University)

- 2:30 Plenary Session IV  
"Environment and History: The New Synthesis"  
Donald Worster (Brandeis University)

# Spotlight

NEHA President Ronald P. Formisano (Clark University) was appointed by the American Historical Association to a four year term on the National Historical Publication and Records Commission. The federal agency, established in 1934, is composed of representatives from professional organizations, Library of Congress, State Department, Defense Department, and US Senate. The commission is charged with the preservation of the nation's documentary heritage at the state and local level.

Nancy L. Roelker (Boston University) delivered the 1984 William F. Church Memorial Lecture at Brown University entitled "The Turning Point of the Ancien Regime as illustrated by the career of Guillaume Du Vair, 1556-1621."



An Amsterdam engraving (1663)  
of the return of Martin Guerre

The Susan B. Anthony House in Adams, Massachusetts was placed on the National Register of Historic Homes on January 3, 1985. Alice Grellner (Rhode Island College) received national attention when she purchased the 1817 house and announced plans for renovating it as a center for seminars and conferences on women's history and issues. A 165th birthday party was held at the house on February 15, commemorated by the proclamation of Susan B. Anthony Day in Massachusetts.

Congratulations to two University of Rhode Island historians, Robert G. Weisbord and Richard Kazarian, Jr., on the publication of Israel in the Black American Perspective by The Greenwood Press in April.

# Association report

New officers for 1985-86 were elected last October at the Framingham State meeting: President, Ridgway F. Shinn, Jr.; Vice President, Catherine M. Prelinger; Treasurer, Robert J. Imholt. Douglas H. Sweet and Barbara L. Solow were elected to the Executive Committee and two new members to the Nominations Committee, Alice A. Guimond and John B. Hench. A complete list of current officers appears on page 14.

The Spring Executive Committee Meeting will be held on Friday, April 26 at 2:00pm in Coles Tower at Bowdoin. An agenda will be mailed out to the committee members.

Election of officers for 1986-87 will be held at the Fall Meeting in Storrs. Suggestions and nominations from the membership should be sent to the Executive Secretary or any member of the Nominations Committee.

The Association notes the death of Eugene T. Sweeney on November 6, 1984. Gene taught American history at the University of Hartford for 25 years and was a longtime member of NEHA.

First Call for Dues for the 1985 calendar year (\$5 regular; \$3 retirees and students). 250 new members have joined NEHA since 1982. Check with your colleagues and friends and urge them to join or renew their membership. Pass along the membership form on page 15 to them.

Former Secretary/Treasurer and one of the founders of NEHA, William F. Allen (University of Bridgeport), has kept abreast of NEHA activities and plans to attend the 20th anniversary Meeting. Bill will be retiring as Executive Assistant to the President for International Affairs at Bridgeport and is eager to get back to being a historian again.

President Ronald Formisano and Secretary Paul Fideler will serve on the 1985 Book Award Committee, along with appointed members Alan Reinerman (Boston College) and Theodore von Laue (Clark University).

## COMING SOON

### 20th Anniversary

## DON'T MISS IT!

WANTED: photographs or slides of former NEHA presidents for a slide show commemorating the 20th Anniversary. Also, slides of campus scenes from the various institutions that have hosted NEHA meetings. Send to Kenneth F. Lewalski, Executive Secretary.

## News & Notes

The 16th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF HISTORICAL SCIENCES will be held in Stuttgart, Germany from August 25 to September 1, 1985. Gordon A. Craig (Stanford) is First Vice President of the International Committee.

Studying History: An Introduction to Methods and Structure by Paul L. Ward has been added to the AHA Discussions on Teaching Series. Available (\$3.50 + \$1 postage) from AHA Publications Sales Department/400 A Street, N E/Washington, DC 20003.

The third WORLD CONGRESS FOR SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES will be held at the Sheraton Washington Hotel in Washington, DC from October 30 to November 4, 1985. Participants from 37 countries will be attending and a number of special events are scheduled.

The RHODE ISLAND PUBLICATIONS SOCIETY has prepared a new catalog of in print books relating to Rh. Isl. historical development. 67 titles are available. A free catalog can be obtained from Patrick T. Conley, The R.I. Publications Society, Old State House, 150 Benefit Street, Providence, RI 02903.

The NEW ENGLAND RENAISSANCE CONFERENCE, hosted by the Five Colleges [Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke, Smith and UMass], will be held on October 11 - 12, 1985. Send papers or abstracts to Daniel Martin, Dept of French and Italian, UMass, Amherst, MA 01003.

A SUMMER INSTITUTE OF LOCAL HISTORY will be held at Salem State College August 6 to 10, 1985. Further information can be obtained from John J. Fox, Depart. of History, Salem State College, Salem, MA 01970.

## News & Notes

The NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE PROMOTION OF HISTORY commended Robert Warner, Archivist of the United States, for his leadership and dedication and for his victory in ending the subordination of the National Archives to the GSA. Warner will become Dean of the School of Library Science at the University of Michigan in April.

On another front, NCC expressed unhappiness over the appointment of former Iowa Senator Roger Jepson as director of the Commission on the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution. In 1983, historians assisted in the efforts to secure legislation to establish a commission to organize and promote the anniversary. "We were disappointed in 1984 when the President failed to appoint the Commission" notes the NCC. "Now we are dismayed by the appointment of [a person] "who has no apparent qualification for the position." The full commission is yet to be appointed.

The New England Genealogical Society has received a \$500,000 grant from the NEH in January. This is the largest federal grant to a society of its kind in history. The society will have to raise \$1.5 million within three years to qualify for the entire grant. The funds will be used to buy and publish books and to educate teachers and other professionals in genealogical methods.

The American Antiquarian Society is sponsoring a Seminar in the History of the Book in American Culture in Worcester from June 23 to July 2, 1985. The theme for this year's seminar is "The Making of Literate America: Diffusion of Culture Based on Printing, 1759 to 1850." For details write John B. Hench, Amer. Antiquarian Society, 185 Salisbury Street, Worcester, MA 01609.

HISTORIC DEERFIELD offers summer fellowships to college undergraduates interested in careers in museum work and related studies in Early American History & Decorative Arts. June 17 - Aug 17. For applications and information write: Historic Deerfield, J. Ritchie Garrison, Summer Fellowship Program, Deerfield, Mass 01342.

The sixth annual LOWELL CONFERENCE ON INDUSTRIAL HISTORY will be held on November 1-3, 1985. The theme of the conference is "The Popular Perception of Industrial History." For information contact Robert Weible, Lowell Natl Historical Park, 169 Merrimack Street, Lowell, MA 01852.

# AT THE SESSIONS

OCTOBER 27, 1984

FRAMINGHAM

## CURRENT PROBLEMS AND NEW PROSPECTS FOR COMPUTER USE BY HISTORIANS

In a paper entitled "Exploratory Data Analysis, Simulation, and Hypothesis Testing: The Case of New England Witchcraft, 1639-1690 (Salem Cases Excluded)", Robert Schwartz [Mount Holyoke College] described exercises used to introduce quantitative methods. Data on the people accused of witchcraft in New England before the Salem outbreak was used to illustrate a typical two-stage analysis: 1) identifying interesting numerical patterns; 2) determining whether the patterns are real or merely the result of chance. The problem investigated was the hypothesis that there was a relationship between the gender of the accused and being convicted: women were more apt to be convicted than men. The patterns in a table cross-classifying gender (female, male) and convict (yes, no) suggested to students that the hypothesis was true. To test their initial belief, students then carried out a physical simulation of the chance process by randomly drawing jelly beans out of paper bags and noting the number of red and green beans (representing men convicted and women convicted, respectively) drawn out in each of ten trials. The results showed that a pattern as extreme or more extreme as that found in the historical data could have occurred by chance 4 out of 10 times, evidence that the hypothesis is incorrect. The simulation provided a good basis for introducing formal hypothesis testing using the Chi-Square test of significance. That formal test affirmed the results of the simulation: there was no significant association between the gender of the accused and being convicted for witchcraft. Once accused, women and men were more or less equally vulnerable to being convicted.

R. Burr Litchfield [Brown University] in "Comparative Cities: Teaching with the 19th Century Census" maintained that success in computer assisted research and teaching depends on use of an effectively organized data file. The Comparative Cities is a data file based on censuses for four cities in the 19th century: Pisa, Italy [1841]; Amiens, France [1851]; Stockport, England [1841 and 1851]; and Providence, Rhode Island [1850, 1865 and 1880]. This has been used with much success in research and teaching at Brown since 1972. The file is distributed by the Inter University Consortium for Social and Political Research at Ann Arbor, Michigan. Students learn about social history and quantitative techniques of analysis using the computer in one-term seminars by carrying out small individual research projects in areas of social, demographic and family history using prepared data. This has proved to be effective as an upper level offering in European and American history because it keeps historical problem solving rather than computer programming or technology clearly in the forefront.

Jeffrey Newton and David Thomas presented the results of their experience with computer-based instruction in the Western Civilization survey course at Rhode Island College. They reported on the development of a completely interactive tutorial program using DECAL and currently operating on a DEC PDP 11/70. The tutorial program is closely articulated to the basic text used in the course (McKay-Hill-Buckler, A History of Western Society). It has been continually updated and refined in the light of actual experience over the past two years. Positive student reaction, the authors believe, is indicative of its present usefulness and its potential in both supporting and changing the approaches to the teaching of history at the introductory level.

## EARLY AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CULTURE

"Expressions of Popular Religious Sensibility: Relations of Conversion from Eighteenth Century Westborough, Massachusetts" by Ross W. Beales, Jr. [College of the Holy Cross] examined the "relations" or narratives of religious experience which new communicants presented to the church of Westborough during the nearly sixty year ministry of Reverend Ebenezer Parkman (1703-1782). The paper analyzed (1) church membership patterns from 1724 to 1782; (2) the steps by which individuals became members and, within that process, when and under what conditions they wrote and presented their relations; and (3) the contents of the relations. Membership patterns appear typical of other New England churches: women outnumbered men by more than three to two; joined at younger ages; and were more likely to be single. Both men and women typically joined in their twenties, and nearly half of the church's first time communicants were married couples. Parkman strictly controlled admissions and the contents of the relations. He examined prospective communicants, encouraging some, asking additional efforts from others, and discouraging others. He checked and, when appropriate, corrected and "methodized" the relations before they were presented to the church, thereby guaranteeing that new communicants would place their experiences within the context of sound doctrine. The relations played two roles in the church's ritual: first, to repeat and affirm the community's religious values; second, to authenticate or validate individual experience. The result was a fairly common structure and repetition of key themes, along with a wide range of individual experiences which served to authenticate personal experience within the context of God's grand design.

In "Jonathan Edwards' Most Popular Work," Joseph A. Conforti [Rhode Island College] maintained that the Life of David Brainerd was repeatedly reprinted both in Great Britain and America. Thus the work became a major influence on nineteenth century American evangelicals. First, it became an immensely popular devotional-inspirational manual among the evangelical clergy and laity. As a result, the Life popularized and transmitted to the nineteenth century major aspects of Edwards' thought. More precisely, it played an important role in the devolution of Edwards' ethics into the ethics of nineteenth century evangelicalism. In particular, Brainerd personified and the Life described an understanding of true holiness as radical disinterested benevolence which became a key element in the theological rationale for religious reform. Consequently, the Life of Brainerd is a critical work for any assessment of Edwards' legacy for antebellum evangelical America.

## BLACKS LOOK AT THE STATE OF ISRAEL

Robert Weisbord [University of Rhode Island] in "Israel, Jews, and Black Americans" maintained that since 1967, at least insofar as Black leaders are concerned, the Arab-Israeli dispute has figured prominently in the Black American-Jewish American estrangement which has been one regrettable concomitant of the fragmentation of liberal opinion in the United States. The normalization of relations between Israel and the Republic of South Africa in recent years has tarnished Israel's image in Black America and has had a corrosive effect on Black-Jewish cooperation. Alleged Jewish responsibility for the resignation of Andrew Young as the United States representative at the U N also drove a wedge between Blacks and Jews.

Young resigned after he held an unauthorized meeting with the PLO observer. Missions to the Middle East led by Joseph Lowery and Walter Fauntroy of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and by Jesse Jackson were undertaken in the wake of the Young resignation. The missions in turn further exacerbated tensions at a time when Jews and Blacks were clashing over domestic questions, most notably affirmative action. These conflicts set the stage for the bitterness that enveloped the 1984 presidential bid by Jesse Jackson.

#### MYSTERY AS HISTORY: SAINTS, SINNERS AND SLEUTHS -- PERSPECTIVES ON "THE NAME OF THE ROSE"

C. Annette Ducey [Rhode Island College] opened the panel with an analysis of the book as mystery genre. Brother William of Baskerville, a Holmesian derivative, accompanied by his amanuensis' sidekick Adso, enters the closed society of a Benedictine abbey and is enlisted to solve an apparent murder. At first, Eco appears to adhere to the strictures governing a mystery novel as expressed by W.H. Auden in his 1941 essay "The Guilty Vicarage." As the novel progresses, however, the reader becomes aware that although Eco uses the characters, patterns, and techniques of the mystery genre, the story he tells is far more involved and complex than the traditional detective story. Through Brother William and Adso, Eco enlists the reader in the search for "the perverse mind [which] presides over the holy defense of the library," and in an extremely involved game which no one wins.

Michel-Andre Bossy [Brown University] discussed the book from the perspective of language and literary criticism. The Name of the Rose comes from an apprentice novelist, but one adept at literary pastiche and keen, by his own avowal, on treading the giant footsteps of Homer, Ariosto, Rabelais, and Cervantes. Numerous literary borrowings and imitations furnish the bricks and mortar of the novel's edifice. They range, for example, from Voltaire's Zadig and Hugo's Notre Dame de Paris back to the early medieval Coena Cypriani (itself a spoof of the Bible) and Aristotle's Poetics (Chapter 5, on comedy). In The Name of the Rose, the late classical and medieval literary game of the cento is continuously played, with polyglot effects meant to recall the Tower of Babel. Indeed, the most primitive of the monks, ironically named Salvatore, can only speak in a splendid babel of tongues. At the higher end of the cast of characters, stands the library's blind master schemer, Jorge of Burgos, whose name is an obvious anagram of Jorge Luis Borges. Eco's monastic library, as Walter Stephens points out, tacitly harks back to Borges's short story, "The Library of Babel." Eco shares Borges's fascination with infinite hypothetical permutations in the order of literature. What he rejects, however, is the almost Kantian closure of literary form cherished by Borges. Eco strives for the opposite. He seeks a freewheeling post-modernist mode of intertextuality, and wishes on his own text an endless succession of open-ended readings. He attempts to pry open the cloistered circumscriptions of Borges as well as the trim demonstrations of traditional whodunits and historical novels.

R. Dean Ware (University of Massachusetts, Amherst) had the final word. As a mystery story The Name of the Rose is disappointing; as history it is very good. The political, intellectual, and, particularly, religious milieux of the early fourteenth century are flawlessly depicted, the book is crowded with historical characters, past and present, prominent and obscure, and I can hardly over-praise the treatments of contemporary heresy, iconography, science, logic, theology, and so forth. Indeed, there is so much here for the medievalist to savor that I would have thought the fare too rich for the non-medievalist. I can only wonder what the ordinary reader makes of the discussion of universals, for example; I doubt that the allusion to Abelard merely as "the castrate" is appreciated; and I am certain that the discussion of Hisperica famina is incomprehensible. In short, the historical matter, while astonishingly authentic, is commonly so arcane that I find the book's commercial success inexplicable. I am convinced that rarely have so many bought a book that so few have finished reading, and that we have here a competitor for the title "leading partially read best-seller of all time" claimed for The Distant Mirror several years ago.

#### NEW USES OF OLD RECORDS: ARCHIVES OF THE COMMONWEALTH FOR SOCIAL HISTORY

Albert H. Whitaker, Jr. [Commonwealth Archivist] focused on the changing relationship between records available in the Massachusetts Archives and the demands of research constituencies. New research interest and methodologies have interacted constructively with archival collecting practices to bring forth new materials for research use. Collection building in the Massachusetts Archives has extended well beyond records of antiquarian and anecdotal interest to include a much wider selection of research material from a broader array of state agencies. Research resources more pertinent to contemporary social science questions are becoming increasingly available in the Massachusetts archives.





# HISTORIANS' OPINIONS

RICHARD C. RAACK DISPUTES VIETNAM AWARD

It came as a bit of a surprise to this historian to read that the New England Historical Association gave WGBH-Boston its Media Award for the television series VIETNAM: A TELEVISION HISTORY for "creating this thought provoking sensitive account of the complex Vietnam episode viewed by thousands of Americans on Public Television Network. The multi segmented series was acclaimed for its informative and illuminating content, profuse and imaginative documentation, and its historical responsibility", etc. [my italics]. The Association press release said that historians "agree on the standards and principles of historical methods." My opinion is that those who made the award strayed well beyond the evidence in their description of the program, which in few ways met agreed historical standards. With this award, those who gave it did a disservice to the historical profession.

Let me pick out just three issues among the many that I brought up about the series last winter in the OAH NEWSLETTER [February, 1984 pp. 25-28]. I made the point -- it remains so far uncontested -- that the makers of the series were by previous training incompetent to do history (none of them had previous advanced historical training, nor had they previously by earlier historical work distinguished themselves to such a degree as to establish that such training in their cases was unnecessary). Nor, perhaps more important, had they the language competence that would have made it possible for them to do a systematic historical film and other research in the Vietnamese archives -- even had they been allowed to do this, which, of course, they were not. Instead, they spent the briefest possible time, a week, I believe, reviewing films supplied by (North) Vietnamese authorities as film evidence. The film research in Vietnam was conducted under primitive conditions which in no way permitted oversight of all relevant sources as may often be accomplished in well-equipped archives.

The same Vietnamese authorities supplied them with the Vietnam-based interviewees who often appeared in the series. Even in the interviews, they had to move laboriously through interpreters.

In effect, then, the series was not founded on anything like adequate historical research. It could not have been. Nor were the sources themselves balanced. At least ninety percent of the film and video materials used came from Western, primarily American, collections. Much of the edited material was itself from sources critical of American involvement or actions in Vietnam. And much of it was primary source material. None of the (North) Vietnamese material was similarly critical of its government's behavior. All of it was edited, contrived, preselected in Vietnam.

This is my second point. Faced with this grotesque imbalance of major sources and vastly differing levels of information about the contestants, well-trained historians would have proceeded with the utmost caution, and would have cautioned their audience. (Of course, some academic historians have not so proceeded in the past, but established review and other mechanisms of historical consideration and criticism have tended to deny them unmerited awards.) But in this case, there was seemingly no awareness of the need on the part of the makers to proceed with caution, or to caution the viewer. Together, my two arguments say that incompletely trained and poorly prepared researchers ventured upon a task which had small prospect of a successful outcome, if that success is to be measured by the obvious standard of complete and thorough historic reporting -- which presumably is one of the principles that guides the New England Historical Association, among the rest of us.

Now, in fact, and this is the third point, the series only rarely used its major resource, the audio-visual materials, as sources. Rather, these filmmakers instead regularly used them as wallpaper for a preconceived story line. The notion of presenting history in media deriving from a script developed from other sources which is then outfitted with appropriate -- and, also, in this case, inappropriate -- film and video, and carefully selected and edited interviews, is already flawed. Using the "lecture with pictures" technique permitted the makers to keep the viewer preoccupied while the story line was unfolded, sometimes underscored by the seeming congruence of picture and story, sometimes commented upon ironically by the juxtaposition of film to text and music to film. The text was seemingly ratified by the cinematic "reality" -- a contrived, two-dimensional reality at best -- of the visuals and other sound; but the media evidence went unexamined and unexploited as historical sources. The makers of "Vietnam" chose a stale reportorial technique to tell a story they reported with a finality their research could hardly validate, and whose frailties their reportorial technique and the illusory "reality" of cinema patched over. Their final product reflected the initial weaknesses of research and design. Sensitive, imaginative, illuminating, historically responsible? Pishposh.

The media are magic and prestigious. With such technologies even shoddy workmanship produces apparent wonders. Journalists, technicians and "producers" pull in vast amounts of money to reproduce "history" in video and cinema form. The products bedazzle trained historians, who ought to know better, and whose very roles as historical reporters are thereby usurped by the untrained.

By rewarding Producer Richard Ellison, "Chief Correspondent" Stanley Karnow, and Professor (of Communication Arts) Lawrence Lichty with their honors, the New England Historical Association has only indulged in professional self-deprecation. Those they rewarded may go on to press for and receive funds for new half-baked projects on the basis of historians' raves. Meanwhile, historians without access to television's production sanctums will be confined to classrooms where no performance can offset the persuasive power of the audio-visual "history" outside.

Historians can themselves report on film and video. Many of us have done it. This is what the New England Historical Association should be demanding and rewarding; this is what more of its members should be doing.

FOOTNOTE: The members of the Association should be aware that Accuracy in Media [AIM], a "think tank" of conservative bent, last summer in Washington held a conference of experts, scholars and others with considerable expertise on Vietnam. They undertook to demolish the factual underpinning of the series. To what extent they were successful, the reader may learn when and if a two-part series TELEVISION'S VIETNAM appears on PBS. As of this writing, however, PBS' commitment to take the programs is not firm. If the AIM programs do appear, it will be an event: seeing a network actually show programs tending to debunk its own productions. Note, however, that PBS originated the Vietnam series out of its Boston station and that AIM originated the new programs without the support of PBS or any of its stations. If PBS declines to show the programs, that decision will speak for itself, and will likewise be an event.

Richard C. Raack  
California State University  
Hayward

# ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

1985-86

President: Ridgway F. Shinn, Jr., Rhode Island College  
Vice President: Catherine M. Prelinger, Franklin Papers  
Executive Secretary: Kenneth F. Lewalski, Rhode Island College  
Secretary: Paul Fideler, Lesley College  
Treasurer: Robert J. Imholt, Albertus Magnus College

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Ronald P. Formisano, Clark University [1987]  
Emiliana P. Noether, University of Connecticut [1986]  
Alice McGinty, U.S. Air Force Geophysics Laboratory [1986]  
Richard D. Brown, University of Connecticut [1986]  
Barbara L. Solow, Boston University [1987]  
Douglas H. Sweet, US Govt Equal Opportunities Office [1987]

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Gary T. Lord, Norwich University [1986]  
Mary Morgan, New England Genealogical Society [1986]  
James Leamon, Bates College [1987]  
Mary Miller, Salem State College [1987]  
John B. Hench, American Antiquarian Society [1988]  
Alice A. Guimond, Holyoke Community College [1988]

## EXECUTIVE OFFICE AND NEHA NEWS

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# AN INVITATION FOR YOU TO JOIN

The New England Historical Association is a comprehensive organization of and for all historians. Its membership is drawn from professional, academic and free-lance historians in all areas and periods of history. It is not restricted to American or New England studies. Membership is open to all persons or organizations interested in the study, teaching or writing of history. Members receive two issues of the Newsletter and notifications of the Spring and Fall meetings. Annual dues for regular members is \$5.00 and \$3.00 for retirees or students. Life Membership for individuals and institutions during the Twentieth Anniversary period [through 1985] is \$150. All dues and contributions to NEHA are tax deductible.

JOIN NOW OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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 New Membership  
 Renewal or Reinstatement

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Business Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$150 Life Membership  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$5.00 Regular membership  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$3.00 Retiree  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$3.00 Student

Make all checks payable to NEHA or The New England Historical Association  
Mail to Kenneth F. Lewalski /Executive Secretary /Rhode Island College  
Providence, R I 02908



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Contributions and suggestions  
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Manuscripts should be typed  
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