

NEHA News

The Newsletter of the New England Historical Association

APRIL 1, 1982

VOL. IX, NO. 1

SPRING MEETING: APRIL 17, 1982
COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS
WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

The College of the Holy Cross will host the Spring Meeting on April 17 at the Hogan Campus Center. The program is printed on page three. Pre-registration and luncheon reservation forms have been mailed to the membership. Vice President John Voll has served as the program chairman. Professor Edward F. Wall is in charge of local arrangements. The Department of History at Holy Cross is sponsoring a Wine Reception at the Spring Meeting. The Executive and Nominating Committees will meet on Friday evening, April 16, at the Hogan Campus Center. Dinner is served at 6:30 p.m., followed by the meeting.

FUTURE NEHA MEETINGS

October 23, 1982
New England Center
University of New Hampshire

April 16, 1983
Fitchburg State College
Fitchburg, Massachusetts

DUES NOTICE

Members are reminded to pay dues for 1982. The annual dues for regular members is \$4.00; \$2.00 for retirees and students. Dues may be paid along with the pre-registration forms, at the Registration Desk during the Spring Meeting, or mailed in separately. Make checks payable to NEHA and mail to the Executive Office at Rhode Island College.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Proposals for papers and sessions in all areas of history for the Fall 1982 and Spring 1983 meetings should be sent to the Vice President and Program Chair: Professor Emiliana Noether/Department of History/University of Connecticut/Storrs, Connecticut 06268.

NOMINATIONS

Election of officers for 1983-1984 will take place at the Fall Meeting on October 23. Accordingly, the Nominations Committee invites suggestions from NEHA members for the following vacancies: Vice President; Treasurer; Executive Committee (3 members); and Nominating Committee (2 members). Names of prospective candidates, accompanied by a resume or brief professional summary, should be sent to the Executive Secretary or to Douglas Sweet, the committee chairman, at U.S. Government Equal Opportunities Office/ 150 Causeway Street/ Boston, Massachusetts.

DISTINGUISHED LECTURE FEATURE

This issue of NEHA NEWS contains a summary by David Underdown of Christopher Hill's lecture delivered at Brown University last October. The editor hopes to include reports of this type as a regular feature of the newsletter. Anyone wishing to submit a summary or commentary on a distinguished lecture delivered at any New England institution should communicate with the editor. Articles should approximate 500-600 words in length.

ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

OFFICERS FOR 1982-83

President: John Voll, University of New Hampshire
Vice President: Emiliana Noether, University of Connecticut
Executive Secretary: Kenneth F. Lewalski, Rhode Island College
Secretary: Paul Fideler, Lesley College (May 1984)
Treasurer: Joshua Stein, Roger Williams College (May 1983)

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Roger Howell, Jr., Bowdoin College (May 1983)
Charles A. Watson, Roger Williams College (May 1983)
Fred Cazel, University of Connecticut (May 1983)
Joseph Harrington, Framingham State College (May 1984)
Robert J. Imholt, Albertus Magnus College (May 1984)
Darrett Rutman, University of New Hampshire (May 1984)

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Helen Mulvey, Connecticut College (May 1983)
Deborah Clifford, Middlebury Vermont (May 1983)
Barbara Solow, Boston University (May 1984)
Douglas Sweet, U.S. Equal Opportunities Commission (May 1984),
Chairman
Gwendolyn Jensen, University of New Haven (May 1985)
Caroline Sloat, Sturbridge Village (May 1985)

APRIL 17, 1982

SPRING PROGRAM
COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS

WORCESTER, MASS.

MORNING SESSIONS

Session I. Anti-slavery and Institutions in the Civil War Era:

- The Church and the Political Party
1. "The Church Anti-Slavery Society and the Role of Religious Institutions in the Civil War-Time Emancipation Drive"
John R. McKivigan, Frederick Douglass Papers
 2. "Broadening the Basis of Republicanism, 1857-1860: The New York Example"
Robert J. Imholt, Albertus Magnus College
- Commentators: Jane Pease, University of Maine, Orono
Ronald Formisano, Clark University
Chairman: Robert Imholt, Albertus Magnus College

Session II. Near East Overviews: Critical Modern Issues

1. "The Mandates: Before and After"
Adele L. Younis, Salem State College
 2. "The Islamic Dilemma"
Joseph M. Piemonte, Salem State College
- Chairman and Commentator: James T. Doyle, Salem State College

Session III. Commercialism and the Frontier in the Upper South: 1635 - 1835

1. "Debt and Credit on the 17th Century Virginia Frontier"
Keven P. Kelly, Colonial Williamsburg
 2. "Town, County, and Colony: The Commercial Influence in 18th Century Virginia Politics"
Peter V. Bergstrom, Colonial Williamsburg
 3. "Land and Opportunity in the Late 18th Century Southern Backcountry"
James P. Whittenburg, College of William and Mary
- Chairman and Commentator: Richard Beeman, University of Pennsylvania

WINE RECEPTION AND LUNCHEON

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

"ENTHUSIASM REVISITED AND FOUND WANTING"

Darrett Rutman, University of New Hampshire
President, New England Historical Association

AFTERNOON SESSIONS

Session IV. From 'True Women' to 'New Women': New England Women's College Founders and Their Ideals of Womanhood

1. "Incipit Vita Nuova: The New Life Begins -- The Founding Ideals of Wellesley College"
Patricia Palmieri, Dartmouth College
 2. "Christian Servants of Society": Towards an Understanding of Mary Lyon and Mount Holyoke Seminary"
Tiziana Rota, University of Massachusetts
- Chairman and Commentator: Penina Glazer, Hampshire College

Session V. Italy from Liberalism to Fascism, 1890-1925

1. "Pareto and Liberal Italy"
Armand Patrucco, Rhode Island College
2. "Fascism and Labor Culture: The Experience of an Italian Town, 1918-1922"
Donald H. Bell, Harvard Center for European Studies
3. "Reformist Ideas in the Italian Left, from the Giolittian Era to the Fascist Dictatorship"
Spencer di Scala, University of Massachusetts, Boston

Chairman: Alan J. Reinerman, Boston College
Commentator: Richard Drake, Princeton University

VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MONTPELIER, VERMONT

CHRISTOPHER HILL

LECTURE: "THE POOR AND THE PEOPLE IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND"

Christopher Hill, the eminent British historian, delivered the second William F. Church Memorial Lecture at Brown University, on October 24, 1981. This annual lecture was established in 1980 to honor the memory of the late Professor Church, for many years until his death in 1977 a member of the Brown faculty, and a distinguished historian of early modern France. Its intention is to bring to Brown each year an authority on that period of European history, broadly defined, and no more appropriate choice of lecturer can be imagined than Christopher Hill.

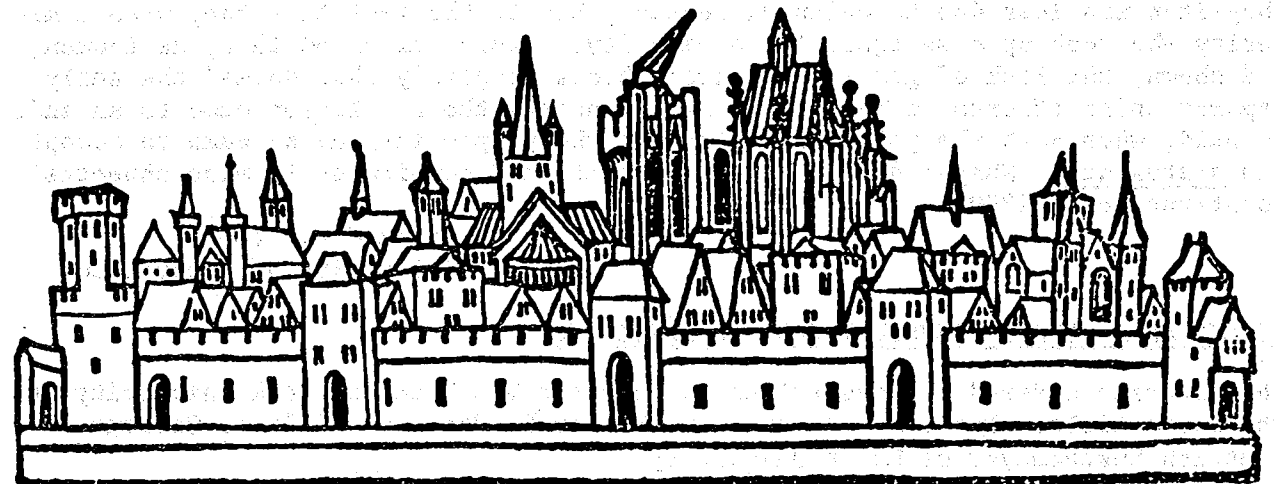
Dr. Hill's topic enabled him to carry further some lines of inquiry which he has pursued in his many outstanding books and articles. He provided a stimulating, richly-textured discussion of the paradoxes and problems inherent in the common usage of the term "the people" in seventeenth-century English political discourse. The architects of the revolution of the 1640s made frequent appeals to the sovereignty of the people - in justifying the execution of Charles I and the establishment of the Commonwealth, for example - but for them "the people" meant something very different from its modern meaning, the term being restricted rather than all-inclusive. Their automatic assumption was that "the people" were the propertied, economically-independent heads of households: women, servants, paupers, and all those who were in other ways economically dependent were by definition excluded. Even the more democratic Levellers who agitated for a broader franchise were ambiguous on this point, while official spokesmen for the Commonwealth like Marchamont Nedham had no hesitation about equating a thoroughly unrepresentative Parliament with "the people." By way of Harrington, Sidney, and Locke, the conception of a virtuous, sturdily independent yeoman class as the central element in "the people" passed virtually unquestioned into eighteenth-century Whig political currency.

This antithesis between "the people" and the rest of society (the much more numerous poor and dependent lower orders) was buttressed, Dr. Hill showed, by orthodox Puritan teaching. The elect, to whom church government was to be confined, could be generally equated with the propertied; only the Baptists and more radical sects allowed an equal voice to all church members, and even then rarely to women. But the distinction also arose inevitably out of the very nature of seventeenth-century society: out of a society in which the patriarchal household was assumed to be the natural, divinely-ordained foundation of ordered existence. In the century or so before the Civil War, economic and demographic changes had set in motion a process of social differentiation. A middling class of yeomen profiting from their ability to produce a surplus for the market during a time of rising prices now confronted a much larger, unstable population of "permanent poor". Puritanism provided the local village oligarchies (composed largely of the former element) with a convenient justification for seeing the poor as idle and wicked people, who had to be coerced into accepting labor discipline and moral respectability - and who could not, of course, be allowed to share in political rights or be regarded as part of "the people."

The newly established ruling groups in the localities, Dr. Hill observed, represented "an up-and-coming self-confident minority, from whom much of the support of the radical revolutionaries was soon to be drawn". But their limited conception of "the people" impaled them on some awkward dilemmas. In the first place, although Parliamentary rhetoric insistently proclaimed the rights and liberties of the people, those rights and liberties could not be extended to the poor without endangering the survival of the Puritan republic they had erected. So the Commonwealth's supporters were soon entangled in the same intellectual difficulties as the Jacobins and the Bolsheviks were to encounter in later revolutions, searching desperately for justifications for "forcing men to be free." In the second place, although the propertied minority had no scruples about appealing to "the people" in a broader sense when it suited them - about using the poor in the mob violence of 1641 or putting arms in their hands when the Civil War broke out - they also feared the demon they had unleashed. When the proliferation of radical sects like the Ranters and Quakers in the 1650s threatened the discipline they demanded, they turned back in the end to join the country's traditional rulers in recalling Charles II to preserve order.

Only one seventeenth-century writer, Dr. Hill argued - the "Digger", Gerard Winstanley - successfully broke through the dilemma, and did so by denying the entire distinction between "poor" and "people." Winstanley's proposals for the abolition of private property, for the equality of servants and masters, for the election of magistrates and officials, for the achievement of total democracy through education and social justice, represent a striking, unique alternative to the conventional linkage of political rights with property. Yet, as Dr. Hill conceded, Winstanley's alternative vision foundered because the established orthodoxy was deeply rooted in the realities of the social system - in the patriarchal household. The lecture thus brilliantly explored the paradox that this form of social organization could both produce a doctrine of popular sovereignty and at the same time justify the exclusion of a majority of the population from its benefits.

David Underdown
Brown University



SESSION SUMMARIES

FALL MEETING

OCTOBER 24, 1981

NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

HOW TO STOP A REVOLUTION: MASSACHUSETTS AFTER THE WAR FOR AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE

Robert Gilmore (University of New Hampshire) presented a historiographic review of comparative studies of revolution beginning with Robert R. Palmer's Age of the Democratic Revolution and Crane Brinton's Anatomy of Revolution, and going on to discuss the works of several sociologists such as Barrington Moore, Harry Eckstein, and Chalmers Johnson. He concluded by noting the comparative perspectives of historians such as Richard D. Brown and Kenneth A. Lockridge in the last decade. Overall, Gilmore revealed some of the connections among comparative studies, and the utility of the approach in light of the continuing phenomenon of "democratic" revolution.

Stephen E. Patterson (University of New Brunswick) offered a new perspective on the limitations of the Shaysite reform movement, arguing that because Shaysites were chiefly residents of small, quasi-communal hill towns, they were unable to organize effectively at the statewide level. In contrast to their opponents, Patterson said, Shaysites shared a localistic outlook that prevented them from organizing effectively beyond the level of town and county. Inhabitants of commercially-oriented towns, he said, were better equipped by outlook and experience to organize on a horizontal, state-wide basis.

James Leamon (Bates College) charted the rise and fall of the first separation movement in Massachusetts' eastern district, Maine. Beginning with an analysis of Maine's Revolutionary War experiences, which generated some hostility to Boston, Leamon went on to explain that the mid-1780s were brighter, and that the separationists were confined to a small group of elite politicians in the Portland-Gorham area who found some support among inland squatters. Separation sentiment was never widespread, and it became increasingly isolated in the late 1780s and early 1790s owing to the General Court's responsiveness to Maine's needs, and to the hopes for preferment harbored by many Maine leaders.

Richard D. Brown (University of Connecticut) expressed appreciation for Gilmore's historiographic review, and noted how arresting and stimulating Brinton's Anatomy remains. He went on to challenge the degree of emphasis that Patterson gave to cultural factors in explaining the weakness of the Shaysites. The same kinds of people had used the same forms of protest successfully in 1774-76, Brown argued. The key difference was that in the earlier period Massachusetts had been virtually united from the grassroots up through the General Court. The failure of the Shaysites was less due to cultural factors than to the fact that they were a minority who took up arms against the majority. Brown commented that, as Leamon had shown, the lack of grassroots strength was precisely what doomed the early separationist efforts in Maine. In Massachusetts the revolution came to an end, he said, when both the political elite and the people in general came to accept the status quo. Shays' defeat led to a reinforced commitment to Massachusetts' Constitution of 1780.

Richard D. Brown
University of Connecticut

HITLER AS A COUNTER REVOLUTIONARY EXPRESSIONIST

This session offered a presentation by Theodore Von Laue of Clark University on the above title. The commentators were Robert G. Waite of Williams College and Dietrich Ruschemeyer of Brown University.

Von Laue asserted that the proper historical framework for understanding the 20th century was the "world revolution of westernization." That revolution had provoked in turn a world-wide counter-revolution, into which belonged communism, fascism, and the various forms of "development." In all cases that counter-revolution represented a hybrid mix of western and non-western elements, unstable, experimental, and inconclusive. Hitler should be viewed in the contexts of that counter-revolution and his Germany as the western-most example of a cultural fracture zone caught between incompatible cultural impulses.

Expressionism was a typical product of cultural fracture zones. The dissonance between the external routines of life imposed by western modernity and the internal realms of feeling and value was relieved by the "expressionist shriek" in art as, through Hitler's speeches, in politics. The tensions in Hitler's "soul" were the product of his upbringing and his times. Barely one generation removed from peasant life he was confronted with advanced modernity and the huge vistas of world politics. His explosive disorientation was shared by other simple folk politicized by uncomprehended social change and the first world war; in releasing his own extreme inward tensions Hitler released similar tensions among his listeners. From the collective paroxysms of patriotism which his speeches evoked, Hitler, the expressionist political artist, hoped to forge a national mobilization for conquering the living space necessary to make Germany a world power forever. Hitler, however, could not escape the inherent flaws of joining incompatible cultures; his primitive and rigid improvisations allowed him no effective command of modern reality. His persistent self-doubt culminated in his suicide; as a western anti-western experiment national socialism was a failure.

In conclusion Von Laue suggested that the moral responsibility for Hitler's atrocities also lay with the West. It had set the scale of world power that inspired Hitler and furnished some of his seminal ideas. Transferred to a cultural fracture zone these inspirations took a monstrous form.

In his comment Waite said that he strongly disagreed with Von Laue. He would not accept the association of expressionist art with Hitler's brutalities. The artists' sensibilities and aims were diametrically opposed to Hitler's, who in turn despised them as degenerate. Waite also stressed that more attention should be paid to the psycho-pathology of Hitler's personality; the external factors in his life only told half the story. As a sociologist Ruschemeyer took a more positive view, saying that while Hitler and the expressionist artists differed in their political convictions, they shared a common need to express the tensions created by the impact of modern life upon unprepared souls. He could not agree, however, with the suggestion that the West shared a moral responsibility for Hitler. The connection was too abstract; no concrete causal relationship could be proved.

In response Von Laue asked how the boundaries between individual and collective psychopathology might be determined; perhaps Hitler's peculiarities were shared by many other Germans. As for moral responsibility, he urged that in the age of global interdependence moral sensibility be likewise stretched beyond traditional boundaries.

Theodore Von Laue
Clark University

PLENARY SESSION ADDRESS: "THE STUDY OF AMERICAN HISTORY IN CHINA"

By Dr. Chi Wang, Head, Chinese & Korean Section, Asian Division,
Library of Congress.

Dr. Chi Wang began his address by describing his current work on the subject of Chinese knowledge of the United States. He has had the opportunity recently, as a part of a project for the U.S. International Communication Agency (ICA) to visit the major institutes and universities in China with American studies programs. He has also surveyed Chinese publications dealing with the United States.

Chinese studies of American history go back to the early twentieth century. Chinese scholars who had studied in the United States were the backbone of the study of American history, but most of these scholars were purged or expelled after 1948-1949. In recent years there has been an active renewal of American studies in China but the resources are limited. Library collections are out of date and experienced scholars are few in number.

Despite these limitations, there are important Chinese publications on U.S. history that are appearing. Works of scholars like Dr. Huang Shaoxiang of the Chinese Academy of the Social Sciences, who studied at Columbia University, are important. Another scholar with experience in the United States is Professor Yang Shengmao, who studied at the University of California, Berkeley, and who has just completed a documentary history of the American Civil War. Some of the difficulties of doing research on the United States are shown in the experience of Professor Liu Zuochang of the Shandong Teachers College. He has never been to the United States and has limited library resources. He must rely on interlibrary loan from the distant Beijing library and it may take six months to get a book. However, he has written a long book on the American Civil War and is currently working on a book about the American Revolution.

In research and teaching scholars need to follow the guidance of the party in terms of interpretations. As party policy toward the United States has changed, so has the tone of Chinese writings about American history. In the early 1950s, the writings were strongly anti-American but since the normalization of relations in the 1970s, works are less propagandistic and more objective.

In this situation, Chinese scholars dealing with American history have limited resources but are making progress. Dr. Chi Wang stressed that this progress toward a better understanding of American history is greatly aided by scholarly exchanges and he urged American historians to provide whatever help they can.

John Voll
University of New Hampshire

ORGANIZING THE HISTORY PROFESSION AT THE STATE LEVEL

The first paper, "The National Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History as a Clearing House for the Work of State Committees," was presented by Page Putnam Miller, the NCC Project Director. She focused on five inter-related aspects of the basic question: Why are state committees important? Five key reasons for valuing and supporting the work of state committees are: 1) Historians need activistically oriented groups to deal with some of the problems facing the profession. 2) State Committees are one important means of overcoming the fragmentation within the profession. 3) Many concerns of the historical profession can best be dealt with on the state level. 4) State committees can build a network that has the potential for improving employment opportunities for historians.

5) The historical profession needs a national/state linked advocacy program to promote the concerns of historians in Washington.

Bruce Fraser, Associate Director of the Connecticut Humanities Council and Chair of the Connecticut Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History, discussed in the second paper the establishment and work of the Connecticut committee. Composed of twenty-two members representing the academic community, public and private foundations, archival collections, historical societies, museums, independent scholarship, and secondary education, the Connecticut Coordinating Committee acts primarily as a catalyst, identifying pressing problems and constructing programs to resolve them. Among its projects have been a "Historian in Residence" program in northeastern Connecticut to make the skills of a professional historian available to a consortium of local historical societies; the "Connecticut History Institute" at Yale University, a five week seminar program bringing outstanding secondary school teachers together with academic historians to examine major themes in Connecticut history and construct curriculum units on local and state history "History Day," an annual state-wide contest for secondary school students; and the "Center for Independent Historians," which offers a scholarly environment for historians who are not employed in academia.

In the final paper, "The New Hampshire Coordinating Committee: A New Committee Plans Ahead," Robert Mennel of the University of New Hampshire outlined the origins and early work of the New Hampshire Committee. He stressed the value of liaison between the various parts of the state historical profession as well as the importance of reviving ties between college and university history departments and secondary school social science programs. The first project of the coordinating committee has been to join the New Hampshire Historical Society and the Institute for New Hampshire in sponsoring a series of seminars on community history with an emphasis, in 1982, on oral history. Supported by a grant from the New Hampshire Humanities Council, this project has enabled the coordinating committee to secure the part-time services of a staff person at the Historical Society. A second project, to sponsor a series of public radio talks on "What is History" is currently in the planning stage. Although these projects emphasize local history, the New Hampshire committee aims to encourage interest in all areas and aspects of history.

Page Putnam Miller
National Coordinating Committee

NEW ENGLAND TOWNS AND CITIES IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

In the twenty years since Eric Lampard issued his now classic call for a coherent discipline of urban history much new ground has been broken. Although a wholly satisfactory urban theory is still wanting, the varied methods which now dominate the field--those of demography, statistics, sociology, and geography, for example--make of it a major branch of, broadly termed, the new social history.

The two papers in the session on "New England Towns and Cities in the Nineteenth Century," William L. Philie's "Clarity of Focus: James Hillhouse and the Urban Form--New Haven, 1783-1832" and Burton G. Brown's "The Boston Subway: A Late Nineteenth Century Attack on the Emerging Mass Transit Problem," did not in fact address either the issue of urban theory or of method. Nor did they, as commentator Paul Tedesco pointed out, have much in common "save for the internal concept of planning." Nonetheless, each in its own way demonstrated the possibilities of applying social history techniques the better to understand specific urban phenomena and general urban problems.

Addressing the question of urban design with a pointedness calling to mind such widely separated individuals as L'Enfant, Olmstead, and Moses, William Philie described the career of James Hillhouse, New Haven civic leader and entrepreneur at the opening of the nineteenth century. With what Tedesco saw as considerable economic motivation and entrepreneurial drive and Philie cast in the guise of an urban vision of the city productive and beautiful, Hillhouse bent his best efforts, public and private, to develop a rational and aesthetically pleasing city of parks, commons, street patterns, and general arteries for trade and travel, including the New Haven and Hartford Turnpike and the Farmington Canal. "By fostering public support and appreciation for environmental improvement," Philie concluded, Hillhouse "shaped a local tradition of private development of public space" for New Haven, the imprint of which is still visible.

In examining the creation of Boston's first subway, on the other hand, Burton Brown addressed no overarching problem of urban design and aesthetics but rather the immediately practical one of getting people from one place to another in a Boston too densely populated and too geographically constricted. The subway system which Boston built by the end of the 1890s was, as Brown points out, the consequence of compelling necessity, which forced the imaginative utilization of modern technologies and the creation of new political agencies, notably the Boston Transit Commission of 1894. Despite predictable battles over particular routes to be travelled, over untraditional uses for the historical Common, and over costs, the subway finally opened amid tumultuous gaiety. Not only, Brown concludes, did the new, though by no means unique, system relieve "the ever worsening burden of traffic" in downtown Boston, it also was part of a "long range solution to the overall problem of mass transit in an urban area."

Taking a long view of the issues thus examined, Tedesco then addressed one of the very pesky problems confronting modern social history: how to deal with enormous quantities of data and how to integrate data of widely different types without losing sight of the individuals who are, at last, instrumental in shaping events: New Haven's James Hillhouse, on the one hand; or Boston's mayor Nathan Matthews, the guiding spirit of the subway venture, on the other. Neither paper, in Tedesco's view, treated its leading character in sufficient detail. Furthermore, Tedesco opined that effective history can only be written if the context of the issue at hand is broadly explored and the issue carefully integrated with it. Nonetheless, he thought the session illustrated some of the possibilities of contemporary urban history. Finally, in a pointed plea for a greater recognition of regional and local studies, Tedesco concluded that Philie and Brown had clearly showed that the New England area is indeed "rich. . .for further research" and will well repay continued efforts to probe its past.

William H. Pease
University of Maine, Orono

ASSOCIATION MINUTES

BUSINESS MEETING: October 24, 1981. ALBERTUS MAGNUS COLLEGE, NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

Vice President John Voll convened the meeting after lunch in the absence of President Darrett Rutman. He thanked Robert Imholt for making the local arrangements and Albertus Magnus College for its hospitality. The minutes of the Spring 1981 meeting were read and approved.

Executive Secretary Kenneth Lewalski read his report on the state of the Association's treasury. He reported that NEHA is solvent and asked all members to send in their 1981 dues so that the organization will remain financially sound. Lewalski called on NEHA members to recruit new members and emphasized that the Association is for all historians in New England, not just those specializing in New England history. He invited suggestions for future programs, hosts for meetings, and names of potential officers. Alice McGinty reported for the Nominating Committee. She thanked the nominees for their willingness to serve. After the candidates were introduced, the election took place. Those elected were: Emiliana Noether, Vice-President; Paul Fideler, Secretary; Joseph Harrington and Robert Imholt, Executive Committee; Gwendolyn Jensen and Caroline Sloat, Nominating Committee.

Voll informed members of the Spring meeting on April 17 at The College of The Holy Cross and asked for suggestions for panels for this and future programs.

J. Leopold reminded NEHA members of National History Day and encouraged our participation and involvement.

The meeting adjourned at 2 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jonathan J. Liebowitz, Secretary

MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING OF DECEMBER 5, 1981.

President Darrett Rutman convened the meeting at 10 a.m. at Rhode Island College. Present were members and members-elect Paul Fideler, Joseph Harrington, Catherine Prelinger, Douglas Sweet, Fred Cazal, Roger Howell, John Voll, Emiliana Noether, Barbara Solow, Jonathan Liebowitz, Kenneth Lewalski, Armand Patrucco, Joshua Stein, Charles Watson, Caroline Sloat, and Alice McGinty. The newly elected officers of the Association were introduced.

PLANS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS. The spring meeting of the Association will be held at Holy Cross College on April 17, 1982. Voll requested suggestions for the meeting. Should there be an address before lunch as there was at the last meeting?

Prelinger favored any measure that would get people to stay for the afternoon session. Lewalski suggested strong sessions in the afternoon. Noether wanted to try participation "seminars" in the afternoon. Fideler proposed having all sessions before lunch.

Lewalski and Noether favored an inclusive fee including an afternoon social event as one way of encouraging people to stay all day. Harrington thought that undergraduate members would be likely to remain for the whole conference and asked for kits to be distributed at the Framingham State College history conference.

NEHA's fall meeting will be at the New England Conference Center at the University of New Hampshire, Durham, N.H. on October 23. Rutman pointed out that this meeting will be more costly and that to encourage student attendance a lower student fee would be necessary. Stein suggested giving a discount to students who join NEHA while Harrington proposed including a year's membership in the registration fee. Voll moved that the Executive Secretary be empowered to establish a special conference fee for students. After a discussion in which the importance of flexibility was emphasized, the motion passed.

Voll reported that he has had informal discussions with Professor Norton of Fitchburg State College about having the Spring meeting in 1983 there. Mystic, Connecticut has been suggested as the site for Fall 1983 or Spring 1984. Sloat warned about the possibility of scarce accommodations there. Stein proposed Roger Williams College as an alternate site.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY. Lewalski reported on a number of topics. He is trying to expand NEHA's mailing list. The Treasury is in good order. He will insert calls for papers in various publications.

Noether said it was possible to obtain a list of AHA members in New England. Prelinger will represent NEHA at the AHA Conference in December.



NOTICES



Lewalski asked whether the Association should provide free lunches for speakers at its meetings. Liebowitz replied that the Executive Committee had decided not to do so except in special cases. McGinty thought that the opportunity to give papers is advantage enough. Voll will remind participants to pay for lunch with their registration.

Lewalski will send out a dues collection letter in the spring. He would like a "President's Page" in the NEHA News to give the President more visibility. One function of the page could be to publish the presidential address. He would also like to publish summaries of all talks given at NEHA meetings. Rutman suggested including experiments in history teaching in the News.

Lewalski would like to see NEHA awards established. Money could be set aside for them now. Voll suggested they be for the best panel or paper at a meeting, provided the paper was available for circulation in advance. Noether proposed a committee to develop suggestions. Rutman wished to have previous Association presidents on such a committee. Voll moved that the President be empowered to appoint a committee to discuss a prize. The motion passed, and Rutman asked Cazal to chair a committee composed of past presidents.

REVIEW OF THE NOMINATION PROCESS. Lewalski thought that many good people have been lost to NEHA when they were nominated for office in the Association but lost in an election. He noted that suggestions have been made for the Executive Committee to nominate officers and that some proposed only nominating one person for each office.

A vigorous discussion of the topic ensued. Prelinger thought it was wasteful of serious candidates because they might lose interest in the organization. The present nomination process presents difficulties for the Nominating Committee. She also felt that there should be a review of the practice of voting at the Association meetings. Noether proposed a mail ballot. Voll argued that some candidates do not lose interest if they are defeated. He noted that most professional associations are moving away from single slate nominations because that tends to make any opposition an insurgency. Others thought that because of the size of NEHA, insurgencies would not be a problem. Sweet moved to direct the Nominating Committee to nominate a single slate for Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer and to hold contested elections for the Executive Committee and the Nominating Committee. The motion passed.

Rutman then raised the issue of a mail ballot. Cazal suggested that the Nominating Committee report at the Fall meeting, so that floor nominations could be made, and then mail out a ballot. Sweet thought that this procedure would require a change in the Association's Constitution. Patrucco moved that the Executive Committee direct the Executive Secretary to investigate the feasibility of a mail ballot and prepare a constitutional amendment to this effect if it is feasible. The motion passed. McGinty moved that in the future the Nominating Committee meet with the Executive Committee. This motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS. Rutman returned to the matter of student memberships. Harrington thought that junior and senior history majors would be eager to join the Association. He moved that undergraduates, by virtue of registering at a NEHA conference, become members of the Association for one year. Noether suggested trying it for a year to see how it would work. Rutman liked the idea but wanted the Executive Secretary to explore it further. Watson wanted to include all students. On a motion by Sweet, the Committee voted to table the motion of Harrington until the next meeting.

Rutman announced that the Committee's next meeting would take place on the evening before the Spring meeting of the Association (April 16).

Little interest was expressed in Liebowitz's idea of reimbursing Executive Committee members for the expense of attending meetings, so the matter was dropped. The meeting adjourned at 3 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jonathan J. Liebowitz, Secretary

The sixth annual conference of The New England Slavic Association will be held at Boston College on April 30 and May 1. The Society for Romanian Studies will hold its national meeting at Boston College the same weekend with a special celebration honoring the centennial of the noted composer Georges Enescu. For further information contact N.S. Racheotes, Framingham State College, Framingham, MA 01701.

"The Arts and Industrialism" has been selected as the theme of the third annual Lowell Conference on Industrial History at Lowell University on April 30-May 1. For additional information write Robert Weible, Lowell National Historical Park, 171 Merrimack Street, Lowell, MA 01852.

The Seneca Falls Women's History Conference will be held July 16-18 at Eisenhower College. The program will focus on interpreting the roles and contributions of women to New York State community history. For details write Seneca Falls Consortium, The National Women's Hall of Fame, Box 335, Seneca Falls, NY 13148.

The largest and most diverse German and West European labor movement collection has recently been opened to the public. The Institute for German and Foreign Labor in Dortmund, Westphalia houses 30,000 books, brochures and periodicals from 1830 to the present. The archive also contains 4,000 drawings, posters, manuscripts, audio tapes and recordings pertaining to working class history.

The University of Massachusetts/Boston graduate program in History and Archival Methods is beginning its fourth

year under the directorship of R. Nicholas Olsberg. The program requires students to gain practical experience in the arrangement, appraisal and survey of records while learning the principles of archival theory and history. Students are also required to serve as interns in local repositories.

The History Department and Labor Studies Program at Rhode Island College will sponsor an all-day labor conference on April 22. Morning workshops cover topics of general and specialized interest: Working Women; Labor Culture; Problems Facing Labor Organizations; Labor and the Media; The Issue of Plant Closings; and Worker Participation. Reese Hammond, Director of Education and Training of the International Union of Operating Engineers (Washington, D.C.) is the luncheon speaker. The Annual History Department Symposium will be held in the afternoon. The theme for the symposium is "Women and Men in Labor: Collective Action in History." Participants include Susan Porter Benson (Bristol Community College), Jolyon Howorth (Harvard University), David Montgomery (Yale University) and Sharon Strom (University of Rhode Island). Peter Piccillo will serve as moderator. For further information write Norman Pyle, Department of History, Rhode Island College, Providence, R.I. 02908.

The New England Archivists will hold its annual meeting at Mystic Seaport on May 15. Additional information can be obtained from Gerald Morris, G.W. Blunt White Library, Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, CT 06355.

NEHA NEWS is interested in publicizing information on experimental teaching methods and innovative courses. Submit information to the Editor.

The Connecticut Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History adopted a resolution on January 9, 1982 pertaining to recent decisions on the appointment of a new Unit Head in Archives, History and Genealogy and the reorganization of the Department of Archives and Records Administration. The text of the resolution printed below has been sent to organizations and publications in New England that may have similar concerns.

RESOLUTION: "Whereas, the preservation of the documentary record of the past is vital to a free society; and, Whereas, the State archival program administered by the Connecticut State Library has been weakened by long-term neglect and recent budget cuts; and, Whereas, the Unit Head of Archives, History and Genealogy, and the Public Records Administrator hold crucial positions of authority and leadership in the preservation of historical records in this state; and, Whereas, positions of such importance require the highest levels of expertise and experience; therefore, Be it resolved at its meeting of January 9, 1982 that the Connecticut Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History urge the State Librarian to (1) continue to maintain the Department of Archives and Records Administration as one, integral, and functioning unit as required by law (General Statutes, sec 11-8); (2) appoint a person qualified by archival training and experience, following an open and national search, to the position of Unit Head of Archives, History and Genealogy; and (3) conduct an open, public and national search in filling the permanent position of Public Records Administrator."

The Bridgeport Public Library announces the accessioning of 46 linear feet of Bridgeport Mayor's office files dating from 1954 through 1980. The files concern all aspects of municipal government in Connecticut's largest city. The acquisition of the files follows the controversial removal and return of office files in November by the city's outgoing mayor.

The library's Historical Collections has been serving as Bridgeport's unofficial city archives for about eight years. Bridgeport, like the rest of the state's municipalities, has no official city archives or archivist. The Historical Collections is a local history and genealogy department. It holds the records of some past mayors; the Common Council; some defunct city agencies such as the Bicentennial Committee and the Model Cities Agency; and the records of active departments such as Fire, Engineering, Tax Assessor, and Registrars of Voters. Under Connecticut statute, all city records are on deposit in the library through the approval of the mayor and the State's Public Records Administrator. The city records are part of the library's larger archives and manuscripts holdings which total 750 linear feet. The controversy over the mayor's files has made the public and the new mayor more aware of the importance of maintaining and preserving city records. The library hopes to be able to strengthen its program in city archives during the coming year as a result.

National History Day is a program that encourages young people to explore a historical subject related to a designated theme. TRADE AND INDUSTRY IN HISTORY is the theme selected for 1982. District winners attend a state-wide contest; winners from all participating states go to Washington, D.C. for the observance of National History Day from June 10-12, 1982. For information on National History Day in Connecticut contact John A. Leopold, Western Connecticut State College, Danbury, CT 06810. For information about the national program write: Dr. Lois Scharf, Executive Director, National History Day, 11201 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44106.

HISTORIANS' OPINIONS

ON HISTORIANS AND MYTHS

by

WILLIAM H. MCNEILL, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Most historians disdain myths, believing that their job is to dispel error by showing how shorthand, mythical interpretations of the past fail to explain all the facts. Yet myth is more subtle than such practitioners admit. Historians' assaults on myth are themselves based on a myth: the faith that facts speak for themselves, that infinite detail somehow organizes itself into meaningful patterns without the intervention of human intelligence, and that historical truth resides in faithful transcription of recorded words and deeds. Few if any historians really believe these doctrines today, yet the practice of the profession, mummified by Ph. D. training programs, routinely perpetuates the writing of research monographs whose only point is to show that no one has quite managed to find a formula that could fully take into account newly noticed details. The trouble with this approach to truth is that it makes the world unintelligible. If to study the forest one first must describe every leaf, the task becomes Gargantuan, self-defeating. Before it can be completed, the leaves will have fallen - long before the researcher is able to draw back far enough from detail even to glimpse a single tree, much less the forest or ecosystem of which each leaf was a part. Truth, in short, does not reside in exact recording of every detail. It never has. Instead, it resides in myth - generalizing myths that direct attention to what is common amid diversity by neglecting trivial differences of detail. Such myths make subsequent experience intelligible and can be acted on. When results conform to expectations, truth has been tested and the mythical formulation gains or retains plausibility. When experience contradicts expectation, it is time to mend the myth, if one can, to look for limiting conditions or overriding patterns that somehow distort its applicability. In this way, the "laws" of nature have been emended over the centuries most successfully. Human society is, however, more complicated than atoms and molecules, and efforts to make human conduct intelligible and predictable have never met with much success. Yet our social existence depends on shared values, symbols and meanings, proclaimed and acted upon, at least sometimes, by hundreds, thousands, and millions of persons. Historians seek to make sense of such behavior. So do others: economists, lawyers, moralists, psychologists, journalists. To say that it cannot be done is not a real option, for if learned professionals decline to engage in the high calling of formulating useful myths, others will. The simple fact is that communities live by myths, of necessity. For only by acting as if the world made sense can society persist and individuals survive. In the short run, habit and custom take care of the problem of how to act. Ideas and ideals, abstract principles, and historical vision are nonetheless essential. In ordinary times, they reinforce habit and custom by explaining why behavior should conform to established norms and what happens when norms are, and are not, observed. In times of breakdown, however, new myths surge forward, proclaiming new ideals and finding (or inventing) new examples from the historical record to justify and reinforce modified patterning of behavior. Whether conservative or revolutionary, this is heady stuff. High passions and extremes of heroism and villainy command more attention than routine behavior. Yet it is also true that recognition of patterns that locate human experience within one or another enduring system of which humanity is a part may set limits upon our hopes and expectations. This can temper abstract ideals and may even promote wisdom. Reading, writing, and teaching history contributes more than most other intellectual disciplines to the unending evolution of ideas and ideals whereby people seek to regulate their public conduct. Indeed, the principal reason for studying the past is that it promotes the formulation and reformulation of useful myths about the conduct of public affairs, creates and confirms public identities, and offers models of behavior for leaders and followers alike that help to guide us through present perplexities. Ever since World War I, when the United States became a world power, our historians have dodged their myth-making responsibilities. Preoccupation with detail has saved them from thinking seriously about the world in which we, as 20th century humans, find ourselves. The American (and world) public badly need new visions, new generalizations, new myths, global in scope, to help us navigate in our tightly interactive world. If historians fail to advance suitably bold hypotheses and interpretations, then politicians, journalists, and other public figures will continue as now, to use unexamined cliches to simplify the choices that must be made.

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THE NEW ENGLAND HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION is an organization of and for all historians in New England. 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. The purpose of The New England Historical Association is to promote historical studies and to provide historians with the opportunity to present on-going research and to exchange ideas and information about the study and teaching of history. Two conferences, one in the Fall and one in the Spring, are sponsored by the Association. The conferences are held at various host institutions in southern and northern New England. Membership is open to all persons in New England as well as other geographic areas. The annual dues for regular members is \$4.00 and \$2.00 for retirees and students. The Executive Office and Executive Secretary is located at Rhode Island College, Department of History, Providence, Rhode Island 02908.