

# The CCWH Newsletter

The Newsletter for the Coordinating Council for Women in History

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## MESSAGE FROM CO-PRESIDENT: BARBARA RAMUSACK

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Member News	2
Opportunities	2
New Executive Director	3
Prelinger & Graduate Prize Winners	4
Medieval Women at the AHA	5
CCWH Affiliate Members	6

When I recently became an emerita professor of history, several people asked about my path to women's history. It quickly became apparent that many found it difficult to understand how in the 1970s unanticipated factors led earlier generations of traditionally trained historians to teach & research women's history. Although my trajectory is only one and certainly not necessarily a model one, it illustrates that professional activism, curricula changes and apparent obstacles transformed into opportunities led to my teaching and then research in women's history. It also taught me to be flexible yet persistent, to listen carefully to advice from differing perspectives, and to be creative in thinking about primary sources.

In September 1960, the University of Michigan was one of about six American institutions that offered a Ph.D. in the history of India. Although its history department had a sizeable cohort of women studying for the M.A. degrees, few women were in the doctoral program. Initially my male peers deemed me exotic and possibly a bit weird-both because I sought a doctorate and because I focused on a world area that some claimed had little history until the British arrived. Doing well in my courses for two fields in European history gained more respect for me than high grades in courses on Indian and Chinese history. Doctoral research on India was either political or social history. Because of a desire to work in an underexplored area for my dissertation, I decided to research the changing func-

tions of the princes of India as the balance of power shifted from their British patrons to Indian nationalists. My hypothesis was that a subset of politically astute princes tried to carve out new roles to ensure their future existence as British power weakened.

By 1975 the revision of my dissertation for publication was almost completed, so I sought grants for my new project on the impact of a Sikh temple reform movement on religious practices of individual Sikhs. In mid-1976, I was advised that the Government of India was denying its required approval for this project. Without approval I could not receive a promised research grant or gain entrance to any archives in India. I was devastated. Fortunately, the granting agency asked me if I had another possible topic to research and I hesitantly said yes.

In 1973 a group of faculty women and women activists from the community presented six "demands" to the administration at the University of Cincinnati. One demand was for a women's studies program. A year later a sympathetic provost agreed to appoint a half-time director of women's studies. Now we needed some women's studies courses. Elizabeth Sato, my colleague in Japanese history, and I agreed to develop a two-quarter course on women in Asia. She would teach on Japan while South Asia was my responsibility. We would share the teaching on China since we both had a secondary doctoral field in Chinese history. Because we found so many memoirs by western

*(Continued on page 3)*

## CCWH NEWS

### Newsletter by Email

Members now have the option of requesting an email copy of their newsletter rather than a paper copy. If you would like to request to receive an email copy of the newsletter, just email [newsletter@theccwh.org](mailto:newsletter@theccwh.org). If you have signed up for an email newsletter, please add [newsletter@theccwh.org](mailto:newsletter@theccwh.org) to your email address book so you won't miss an issue.

**The Coordinating Council for Women in History now advertises job announcements (\$25.00 per ad) on its website.**

**Please send ad copy to [newsletter@theccwh.org](mailto:newsletter@theccwh.org)**

### CCWH Webmaster Needed!

If you are familiar with Adobe Contribute, contact [execdir@theccwh.org](mailto:execdir@theccwh.org)

## CCWH MEMBER NEWS

**Catherine Allgor** (University of California) has been awarded a Presidential Chair by the University of California. She is using the time the award affords her to work on a new book entitled *Covered Up: The Women the Founders Left Behind*.

**Sandi Cooper** (CUNY at Staten Island) was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Peace Historical Society (formerly the Conference on Peace Research in History), an affiliate of the AHA, at a meeting held last fall at Winthrop University in Rock Hill, SC. Cooper is a former co-president of the CCWHP.

**Sharon Worley** (University of Houston, Downtown and Houston Community College) has just published *Women's Literary Salons and Political Propaganda during the Napoleonic Era* (Edwin Mellon Press). This study surveys women's literary salons that fostered subversive republican ideologies during the Empire period.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### 2011 OAH LERNER-SCOTT DISSERTATION PRIZE

The Lerner-Scott Dissertation Prize was given for the first time in 1992 for the best doctoral dissertation in U.S. women's history. A dissertation must be completed during the period July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010 to be eligible for the 2011 Lerner-Scott Dissertation Prize. Each application must contain a letter of support from a faculty member at the degree-granting institution, along with an abstract, table of contents and sample chapter from the dissertation. Please also include email addresses for both the applicant and the adviser, if available. One complete copy of each entry must be received by each member of the prize committee by **October 1, 2010**. Finalists will be asked to submit a complete copy of the dissertation at a later date. The winner receives \$500. The prize will be presented at the 2011 Annual Meeting of the OAH in Houston, Texas, March 17-20. For more information, visit: <http://www.oah.org/activities/awards/lernerscott/index.html>

**Nominations for the 2010 CCWH/Berkshire Conference on Women Historians Award, the CCWH/Ida B. Wells Graduate Student Award and the Nupur Chaudhuri First Article Prize are due SEPTEMBER 15, 2010.**

**For information and forms, visit: <http://www.theccwh.org/awards.htm>**

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

I would like to introduce myself to you as the new Executive Director of the CCWH. I was honored to be asked to take the position in March 2010 as the former Executive Director, Kathleen Kennedy stepped down for health reasons. I am new to the position and ask your forbearance as I learn "the ropes."

I am currently teaching as adjunct faculty in the Departments of History and Women's Studies at Northern Illinois University. I received a BA in History with honors from the University of California at Santa Barbara in 1998. After a break, I returned to UCSB and earned an MA in Modern European History in 2003 and a PhD. in History in 2007 under the direction of Erika Rappaport. After teaching at UCSB for eighteen months, I moved with my family to Sycamore, Illinois.

My book, *Holiday Camps in Twentieth Century Britain: Packaging Pleasure*, published by Manchester University Press as part of their Popular Culture Series, will appear on the bookshelves in February. I have also published articles on popular tourism, the campaign for paid holidays and women workers in WWII. My new research focuses on the immigration of health professionals from India and the Caribbean to Britain after 1948 facilitating the establishment of women's health services within the National Health Service. The interest in this new project stems from my own experience as a midwife in Britain and as a labor and delivery nurse in the United States.

University education is a second career for me but one that I believe in passionately. As a woman historian I am constantly aware of the need for viable organizations such as the CCWH to support and encourage women in the profession. This spring, I taught a class in U.S. women's history and literature. Throughout the semester I was reminded that legislative gains such as *Roe v. Wade* and Title IX remain controversial and contested. As I discussed this with my students, I realized that the continued presence of women in the profession of history is not guaranteed. Academic jobs are scarce, budgets are tight and the idea and rights of tenure are under intense scrutiny as Universities seek to increase class size and reduce the variety of courses taught. The need for national organizations to support and encourage women's place in history and in the profession is great. This is why I am so excited to be part of the CCWH. Together, we can continue to make a difference.



(Continued on page 7)

### CO-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

by western women who had lived in Asia, we had a unit on that topic. It also seemed relevant after the 1975 International Women's Year Conference revealed sharp difference between women from the so-called first and third worlds about what were valid feminist goals.

I had a vague idea that in the distant future it would be interesting to analyze how western women activists who were not memsahibs (wives of British officials or merchants) or missionaries interacted with Indian women activists during the colonial period. It was ironic that I even considered doing research that involved British women in India since I declined to take a doctoral field in British imperial history in order to establish my credentials as a historian of modern South Asian and not of British India. With generous guidance from Professor Geraldine Forbes who was then editing the memoirs of a Bengali woman activist, I hurriedly crafted a new research proposal which was approved.

In India I confronted a wide range of responses. Some Indian women historians and social scientists who worked for women's rights in contemporary India vehemently disdained the label of feminist and research on elite women. They advised me to work on the situation of either women factory workers or peasants. Others were supportive, most notably the late Professor Neera Desai who had recently established the first women's studies program at SNDT Women's University in Mumbai (then Bombay). Several questioned the availability of primary sources. Because Indian women activists frequently were peripatetic, few of their private papers survived. Historians at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in New Delhi collected the oral histories of some prominent women. However, their questions tended to focus on the women's political activities in relation to Jawaharlal Nehru, the nationalist who became India's first prime minister. I conducted my own oral interviews with a few

(Continued on page 7)

## 2009 PRELINGER PRIZE WINNER

Congratulations to **Grey Osterud**, the winner of the 2009 Prelinger Prize award. Osterud is an independent scholar who is currently working on her second book tentatively titled *Putting the Barn Before the House: The Lives of Rural Women in Twentieth Century New York*. The title of her first book is *The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York* was published by Cornell University Press in 1991. As a graduate student in American Civilization at Brown University, she went to the United Kingdom on a Fulbright grant to study working-class women during the process of capitalist industrialization in Leicester, England. At that time she participated in the founding of the journal, *Gender and History*.

She worked in public history while teaching in Oregon and California. When *Gender and History* needed an American co-editor, Osterud resigned from her tenured position and worked half-time for the journal. After her term as co-editor expired, she became a freelance developmental editor working with authors on books in American women's and gender history, African American history and social history. This award would give her the time to finish her book.

## 2009 CCWH/BERSHIRE CONFERENCE ON WOMEN AWARD WINNER

The CCWH Graduate Awards Committee is pleased to announce that **Deirdre Clemente** of Carnegie Mellon University is the 2009 recipient of the CCWH/Berkshire Conference on Women Award.

Her dissertation is entitled "The Collegiate Style: Campus Life and the Transformation of the American Wardrobe, 1900-1960." It explores how in the first half of the twentieth century, the American wardrobe got a makeover. Previously steadfast sartorial standards were relaxed, as the clothing men, women and children wore to work and to play was radically redefined across the boundaries of race, class and gender. Leading the way were the country's college students, a demographic that grew exponentially in the period studied. From the strict dress codes of Spelman College where women's footwear was regulated down to the number of eyelets on their black oxfords to the open collars and tweed jackets worn at the Ivy League, Clemente's dissertation explains how collegians' casual dress was shaped by—and came to shape—the country's changing notions of race, class and gender.

## 2009 CCWH/IDA B. WELLS GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD WINNER

**Katy Simpson Smith** of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is this year's winner of the CCWH/Ida B. Wells Graduate Student Award.

She is writing a dissertation entitled "We Have Raised All of You: A Cross-Cultural Study of Southern Motherhood, 1750-1820." She is analyzing how motherhood in the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century South was a composite of multiple roles that white, black, and Indian women constructed, interpreted, and defended. Maternal identities emerged from these roles, as mothers saw themselves as nurses, teachers, providers, and even farmers. An examination of how women's maternal experiences reveals that the dictates of Revolutionary-Era prescriptive literature regarding "Republican Motherhood" had little concrete effect on the ways women performed their duties as mothers. On the contrary, motherhood as an institution driven by women exhibited continuities that spanned the Revolution and encompassed roles and responsibilities that were dependent on a woman's race, class, and region. The diversity of women in the South created a broad spectrum of maternal practices, and while black, white, and Indian women shaped their own distinct understandings of motherhood, Southern mothers often defined their positions in relation to their neighbors in this cross-cultural landscape. A study of motherhood that examines practices rather than prescriptions reveals the ways in which a diverse group of women struggled to create empowering maternal identities in the American South.

## MEDIEVAL WOMEN'S LIVES PANEL AT AHA 2010

This year, the CCWH in conjunction with the Medieval Academy of America and the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship, sponsored three panels devoted to exploring the complex and multi-dimensional lives of women in the Middle Ages. The first panel, entitled *Threads of Power, Violence, and Reputation: The Experiences of Women in the Crown of Aragon*, provided audience members with an opportunity to reflect upon three related issues: the efforts by others to manipulate and exploit a woman's public reputation for their own personal benefit, women's own attempts to control others' perceptions of themselves, and single women's great vulnerability to physical and verbal attacks by men whose public reputations they threatened. Núria Silleras Fernández explored how accusations of adultery and sexual improprieties could be levied by sons and other household members to separate a woman from economic and political power in late medieval Iberia. Dana Wessell Lightfoot used a "he said, she said" dispute in the late medieval Valencian civil court to demonstrate how both husbands and wives were quick to manipulate cultural, legal, and social norms for their own individual gain. Michelle Armstrong-Partida ended the session with a discussion of several cases where abandoned wives and single mothers suffered brutal beatings and rape after they had rebuffed the unwanted advances of clerics in their parish or had criticized them for their lewd behavior.

In the panel, *Political Constructions of Gender and Female Lords in the Middle Ages*, Meghan McLaughlin started by describing the ways in which clerics analogically extended women's maternal authority to the Church and she pointed out that the letters written by medieval clerics describing the Church as mother, often provide us with a better description of the small-scale acts that constituted actual maternal authority than real world descriptions of mothers exercising authority over their children. RáGena C. DeAragon provided proof, once again, that metaphors are "good for thinking" in her comparison of the complex political and social negotiations made by female lords in order to claim & control their domains to a sword dance wherein a dancer must move adroitly between the whirring blades of crown, church, and family. Justine Marie Firnhaber-Baker left the audience thinking about unique medieval marriage patterns with her analysis of dual marriages arranged by widows in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Languedoc for themselves and their daughters. The much heavier reliance upon Roman law in southern France, as opposed to customary law, explains, in part, why these scheming mothers and silent daughters remained central to succession politics at the level of local lordship.

In *Telling Medieval Women's Stories*, six panelists presented a rich variety of methodologies for reconstructing medieval women's life histories to the fullest possible extent given the frequent paucity of medieval sources regarding them. Using a combination of textual, archaeological, and material cultural sources, Valerie L. Garver told the story of Girlanda and Alpais, two textile fabricators in the Carolingian Empire. Amy Livingstone pieced together evidentiary fragments, most notably frescoes in the church of St. Genest and stained glass windows at Chartres Cathedral, to tell the story of twelfth-century noblewomen in the house of Lavardin. Jonathan Reed Lyon, in his textual-based study of sibling relationships in Satufen Germany, reminded everyone that medieval historians have all too often overlooked the importance of brother-sister relationships in understanding medieval actors' intentions. Scholars have focused on the role women as mothers, wives, and daughter, but rarely sisters which is really rather extraordinary given that as age contemporaries a sister potentially exerts influence over her brother for a far longer period of time than do his parents or children. A bountiful collection of letters enabled Theresa M. Earenfight to unravel tangled dynastic rivalries in medieval Spain and and implications for the marriage politics of Catalina of Lancaster, Leonor of Albuquerque, and Maria of Castile. Charlotte Newman Goldy made a strong case for using

*(Continued on page 7)*

## NEXT AHA MEETING: JAN. 6-11, 2011, BOSTON, MA

Be sure to check out the CCWH annual reception, luncheon and business session with keynote speaker Ann Waltner, who will present "Les Noces Chinoises: An Eighteenth century French Representation of a Chinese Wedding Procession."

The CCWH is also sponsoring several AHA sessions including a roundtable entitled "South Asia and the Future of Feminist Historiography: A Workshop on the Politics of Comparison," with Mrinalini Sinha, Philippa Levine, Nancy Cott, Afsaneh Najmabad and Wang Zheng. This session is co-sponsored by the Committee for the Advancement of the History of South Asia. Another CCWH sponsored session will investigate "Women in the Archives," and another will examine the use of "Technology in the Classroom." More information to follow in the next CCWH newsletter.

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**CO-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3**

women activists from the colonial period who still survived. I also launched a treasure hunt for the scattered records of women's associations.

In the following decades I published articles and a synthetic overview of women in South and Southeast Asia. These publications then drew women students from India to come study with me for their doctorates. They have become treasured professional colleagues and close personal friends. When I was asked to write a volume on the princes of India for the *New Cambridge History of India*, my teaching and research on women in India stimulated me to ask new questions about women's political influence as wives and mothers of ruling princes within their states as well as between princes and their British suzerain. My current research attempts to demonstrate the benefits of interweaving women's issues with political history in a comparative study of maternal and infant health initiatives in the British presidency capital of Madras and the neighboring princely state of Mysore. This project includes an analysis of maternity hospitals and the "scientific training" of institutions. Once again I am integrating women's issues into a parallel analysis of the ways in which Indian politicians confronted the financial and political dilemmas of caring for women and infants as the prospective citizens of an independent India.

My goals are first that more of our members will reflect on and record the paths that led them to women's history and their careers as historians both outside and inside the academy. Second I want to emphasize the multiple ways in which teaching may and should influence not just our research interests but how we conduct research and train our students to do research. Regardless of our paths to women's history, I urge my colleagues to retain the sense of adventure that I experienced in 1976 at the beginning of my research on British and Indian women activists and that I continue to enjoy to the present.

~ Barbara Ramusack

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3**

The organization exists because of and for its members. For this reason, I would like to challenge each of you to persuade a friend, colleague, or student to join the CCWH. If we each recruit one new addition, we can double our membership roll before the AHA in January 2011. Let's encourage women historians throughout the nation to look to the CCWH for information, mentoring, and professional development. I look forward to working with and for you. Please plan to attend the CCWH luncheon in Boston at the AHA and introduce yourselves to me!

~ Sandra Trudgen Dawson

**MEDIEVAL WOMEN'S LIVES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5**

one's "critical imagination" to talk about the mundane lives of thirteenth-century women like Muriel, wife of David, Jew of Oxford. Goldy encouraged everyone to use all lines of evidence, including prosopographical and archaeological, to flesh out the "biographical moments" of everyday women who typically appear in the written record for a few fleeting moments and rarely more. Katherine L. French closed the session with an excellent example of how donor's lists in churchwarden's accounts can offer a counter viewpoint to the medieval notion that groups of women were a source of anxiety. Rather than being a bunch of gossips up to no good, the women of the parish worked cooperatively in groups to raise funds for the parish, to clean and maintain the parish church and its subsidiary structures, and to make regular donations to their church (e.g. altar cloths). As in the other two panels, audience members responded enthusiastically to the papers with thought-provoking questions and a number of intriguing observations.

~ Whitney A.M. Leeson

Submit your members news for the next issue. Do you have a new book, article, conference presentation, graduation, recent promotion, service, teaching award, or other professional news to share with the CCWH membership? Send it to [newsletter@theccwh.org](mailto:newsletter@theccwh.org) or [art5sv@virginia.edu](mailto:art5sv@virginia.edu) for publication in the next newsletter.

**FALL DEADLINE: OCTOBER 1, 2010**

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