

SEA Minutes and Correspondence 1992

Minutes of the Organizing and General Business Meeting,
Society of Early Americanists
Sunday, May 31, 1992

All officers present. Sixteen audience participants.
Called to order, 12:10 p.m.; closed, 1:15.

1. Carla Mulford opened the meeting by calling for audience members and officer-panelists to introduce themselves.
2. Mulford presented a statement about the history of the development of the Society of Early Americanists, and proceeded to describe the functions of the newsletter, the affiliation of the Society with the ALA, the use to which dues would be put, and the work of the officers.
3. William Scheick gave background and called for suggestions and potential assistance for the development of the Society newsletter. The excellence and usefulness of the newsletter was generally commended by those in the room. Members of the audience--Reiner Smolinski and Jeanne Holland most notably-- offered to assist in foreign contacts for information (RS) and in preparation of bibliographic citations (JH).
4. Raymond Craig explained the functioning and usefulness of the electronic bulletin board, EARAM, he has set up at Kent State. Raymond expressed his intention to offer information about the bulletin board to interested audience members and to all interested potential Society members.
5. Carla Mulford opened the meeting up to the floor. Comments from audience participants included statements about the usefulness of the newsletter, the reasonableness of the dues (with the suggestion that they might be raised), the usefulness of the electronic bulletin board, and the potential for developing additional conferences at appropriate historical sites.

Respectfully submitted,

Carla Mulford

Minutes of the Initial Breakfast Meeting,
Council of Officers of the Society of Early Americanists:
Saturday, May 30, 1992.

Present: Raymond Craig, Jeffrey Hammond, Sharon Harris, J.A. Leo Lemay, Carla Mulford (Chair), and William Scheick.

General Call to Order: 8:10; Meeting Closed: 9:15.

1. After making introductions all around, those present generally acknowledged their willingness to serve in the officers' posts that have been established as a preliminary to the formal development of the Society. Carla Mulford expressed her gratitude to all members for agreeing to serve as the first officers of the Society.
2. It was generally agreed that Sharon Harris would look into the means by which the new Society could apply for non-profit status.

3. The agenda for the working session/business meeting was approved for the following day.
4. Raymond Craig presented to the group information on the viability of having an Electronic Bulletin Board available to early Americanists. The group liked the project and encouraged Ray to continue working toward setting up the bulletin board at Kent State. It was suggested and agreed upon that Ray would compile and edit bulletin board entries and provide the edited information to Bill Scheick, for inclusion in the Society newsletter.
5. The dues schedule was discussed. It was agreed that dues for regular membership by employed scholars could be set at \$8; dues for graduate students, independent, or retired scholars could be \$5; and dues for foreign scholars could be \$10. (Note: the dues structure was amended at the general business meeting, with an increase by \$2 in the employed and foreign scholars categories.)
6. Bill Scheick pointed out that the newsletter was designed to serve early Americanists and asked for suggestions for improvement. It was generally agreed that Bill had done a superb editing job with the newsletter.
7. Bill Scheick noted that records of subscriptions for the newsletter were exactly kept thus far, and he said would send to Sharon Harris the information about each subscriber so that the newsletter subscription could be applied to membership dues.
8. Several goals for the Society were discussed.
 1. Carla Mulford began the discussion by speaking to the issue of networking of early Americanist scholars and the efforts the Society might make toward that goal. A social gathering early during the convention (before any panels might have taken place) was discussed. Jeffrey Hammond recommended that a breakfast-time gathering might be useful. Leo Lemay recommended a women's caucus breakfast. The group generally considered the viability of offering such special gathering possibilities but came to no resolution about the matter.
 2. Bill Scheick suggested that one appropriate topic for a future conference would be to have a forum of panelists speak to the issue of "identity": What ARE early Americanists' concerns; what is it that early Americanists think they do; etc. All agreed that this suggestion was a good one. Leo Lemay pointed out that a forum like this would not take up one of the slots normally appointed for the presentation of papers to the Society. It was agreed that the topic would be pursued for next year's program.
 3. Leo Lemay suggested that efforts increasingly be made to involve foreign scholars in the ongoing activities of the Society. It was agreed that foreign scholars could make a significant contribution to the Society.
 4. Additional Society-sponsored meetings were discussed. Leo Lemay recommended that one person, not on the Council of Officers, be selected to gather information about prospective conferences. Carla Mulford suggested that the Vice President, Rosemary Guruswamy, could serve as a clearing-house for suggestions for conferences from the membership at large. Most members of the group agreed that making a call to the membership for conference suggestions would produce the greatest amount of information.
9. Plans for the next year's conference were discussed.
 1. The Executive Officers (Mulford, Guruswamy, and Harris) will referee papers and paper proposals for the conference.
 2. It was generally agreed that the greatest number of sessions should be sought by the Executive Officers. If five sessions--a day's worth of sessions--could be attained, it was considered that this would be best for the ongoing activity of the Society. If three sessions were all that could be attained, then one of those sessions would be devoted to an author, and the two other sessions would be open-topic calls for papers.

3. Authors considered for author-focused sessions included Bradstreet, Taylor, Franklin, Edwards, and C.B. Brown. Other topical sessions such as a “women in early America” session were also recommended.
4. The group agreed that, in light of the great number of papers offered in previous sessions on Brown and Franklin, a session on Edward Taylor would be most useful. The other two sessions would be open-topic calls for papers. And an additional session--a forum--should be sought for early Americanists to discuss “identity” issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Carla Mulford

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE FOR 1992

November 1, 1992

Dear Early Americanist:

As announced in the autumn issue of the Society of Early Americanists Newsletter, we have formally organized a society for those who are interested in the literature and culture of early America. We shall have formal affiliation with the American Literature Association, and we hope, in future, to sponsor our own independent meetings.

Please consider joining us. In doing so, you'll join a growing number of early Americanists--many more than you'd guess--who are seeking broader professional support as well as convivial relations at professional meetings. For your membership, you'll receive the twice-yearly Society of Early Americanists Newsletter, which offers a comprehensive account of the most recent professional writings and professional meetings in the field. As a member, too, you'll be invited to attend the annual meetings of the Society of Early Americanists at the American Literature Association convention, where you'll have an opportunity to meet scholars whose interests are your own. You'll receive notices of special events related to the membership, too, such as opportunities for gatherings at other, related professional conferences. Most notably, by joining now, you'll assist in generating a growing visibility for this field and its scholars.

You'll find enclosed a copy of the first pages of the recent newsletter (describing the history of the formation of this Society), along with a membership sheet for you to complete, should you wish to join us. Those who join the organization this fall term will receive by December 1, 1992, a copy of the drafted Bylaws and Constitution of the organization. Please take a moment to read the enclosed materials. We hope you'll join us!

Carla Mulford, President, Penn State Univ.
Rosemary F. Guruswamy, Vice-President, Radford Univ.
Sharon Harris, Executive Coordinator, Univ. of Nebraska

December 8, 1992

Dear Member of the Society of Early Americanists:

On behalf of the Council of Officers of the Society of Early Americanists, I'm pleased to be sending you our draft of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Society of Early Americanists.

The Constitution is designed to accord with our affiliation with the American Literature Association, the “parent” organization with which we are currently affiliated. The Bylaws describe the operations of the Society. We

welcome your comments on these draft documents. Please send any comments you might have to our Vice President, Rosemary Fithian Guruswamy, by March 31, 1993:

Prof. Rosemary Fithian Guruswamy
Department of English
Radford University
Radford, VA 24142

Sharon Harris, the Executive Coordinator of the Society, continues to receive membership requests, I'm happy to say, and, thanks to Sharon's efforts, we have now completed our packet of materials for filing for non-profit status for the organization. We are, in other words, off to a good start, owing to the encouragement of our many members.

We wish to remain responsive to members' concerns. Concerns of a business nature (e.g., questions about your account with the Society) can be sent directly to Prof. Sharon Harris, Department of English, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68588-0333. News, offprints, and comments for the newsletter should be sent directly to our newsletter editor: Prof. William J. Scheick, Editor, Society of Early Americanists Newsletter, [...]. You are, of course, always welcome to write directly to me, too, at the address above.

Cordially,

Carla Mulford, President
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Carla Mulford, President
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