

## **SEA Minutes and Correspondence 1993**

Minutes of the Business Meeting  
Society of Early Americanists  
Friday, May 28, 1993

All officers present. Fourteen persons in attendance.

Called to order, 12:13 p.m. Closed, 1:00 p.m.

1. Carla Mulford opened the meeting, announced the structure of the Society, introduced the officers to the audience, and talked about future operations of the Society, including the first set of elections.
2. The minutes of the previous business meeting, dated May 31, 1992, were approved.
3. Carla Mulford announced that the membership would be asked to ratify the Constitution and By-Laws of the Society via a mail ballot to be distributed this fall. She asked that those with comments about these documents should write to her before that time.
4. Sharon Harris reported on the Society's membership and finances. It currently has 166 members and \$1,142.95 in the Treasury. The Society also acquired non-profit status on May 13, 1993. Carla Mulford thanked Sharon Harris for her work on all these details associated with setting up the Society membership rolls, its finances, and its non-profit status.
5. Bill Scheick asked members to forward to him offprints of articles on early American subjects for purposes of discussion in the newsletter, especially if these articles appear in small journals or those not usually or only peripherally associated with early American literature. He also requested that he be placed on authors' lists of review copy recipients. Carla Mulford also asked for names of dissertations in progress to be given to Bill Scheick for his newsletter.
6. Ray Craig distributed information about the Electronic Bulletin Board. He announced that about 65 people have been using it, only half of them Sea members, and that it averages 2-3 messages a month. He encouraged members to sign on, announcing that they can access it through Compuserve and Progeny, as well as the usual university sources.
7. Rosemary Guruswamy announced that members would be receiving a letter in the spring about their interest in conferences other than those under the aegis of ALA. She also announced that a future newsletter would contain a calendar of important commemorative dates in early American literature and history, via the suggestion of Leo Lemay, as possible themes for future conferences.
8. The floor was then opened up for other business. People present introduced themselves and discussed their works in progress. Charles Mignon suggested that the Society facilitate an exchange of syllabuses, book orders, and handouts. Ray Craig suggested that the Electronic Bulletin Board could facilitate this easily. This topic was discussed at some length, culminating in a general request that the Society sponsor a possibly two-session long discussion on the classroom teaching of early American literature subjects at the next ALA meeting. Members should be asked to come prepared with one or two exercises to distribute to others. Topics of special interest included how to integrate all the new materials that are emerging in the field and how to teach graduate seminars when the students have very little, if any, early American literature background. In response to another question, Carla Mulford announced that a Directory of members will be put together during the next academic year.

9. The meeting concluded at its time limit, with many more persons wishing to speak about the state of the profession of early American studies.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemary Fithian Guruswamy  
Vice-President, SEA

Minutes of the Council of Officers  
Society of Early Americanists  
Friday, May 28, 1993.

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

Meeting Called to Order: 10:04; Meeting Closed: 11:30.

1. The Chair talked to Bill Scheick about announcements concerning the recruitment of future members and the compilation of a Directory of members, as well as a call for papers for the 1994 ALA conference sessions, which should be put in the next newsletter. Raymond Craig agreed also to post the announcements on the Electronic Bulletin Board.
2. The Council looked at the agenda for the business meeting of the whole Society to follow, as well as the current membership list which had been compiled by Sharon Harris.
3. The Minutes of the last meeting, dated May 30, 1992, were approved by consensus.
4. The ratification of the Constitution and By-Laws of the Society was discussed. It was decided to seek the ratification via a mass mailing to be done around October 30, which will also include requests for membership renewal, an information sheet for the proposed Directory, and a call for papers for both conferences upcoming in 1994. Bill Scheick suggested putting a terminus date on the requests for Directory information, which we agreed to make November 30.
5. Carla Mulford congratulated Sharon Harris on her efficient, immense amount of work in getting the Society started and organizing its non-profit status. She was thanked unanimously by the Council.
6. Sharon Harris reported on the Society's non-profit status, its overall membership, and its financial status. She began by saying that she has received the letter from the IRS confirming the Society's non-profit status and will soon have mailing status which will give the Society reduced mailing rates. The status is also Society-centered so mail can come from any institution. She also reported that the Society currently has 166 members and that persons are still seeking membership. The Institute for Early American History and Culture, Early American Literature, and American Literature have all announced the formation of the Society, thus helping us expand our membership list. The Society currently has \$1,142.95 in the Treasury. Sharon Harris and Bill Scheick also agreed that the Society and the newsletter accounts were aligned well at this time.
7. Bill Scheick announced that the newsletter costs between \$75-100 per issue to produce and distribute, making it very cost effective, especially because of the arrangements with the University of Texas at Austin due to Bill's faculty status there.

8. Raymond Craig announced that the bulletin board has not had many technical problems, except for a mailing loop at Penn State which was quickly resolved. He said, however, that it has been too quiet with only 65 people on line, of which half are SEA members, and averaging 2-3 messages a month. Ray agreed to post queries for dissertations in progress that Carla Mulford suggested might be added to the newsletter in the future. Bill Scheick requested that such information be solicited for him, rather than asking him to search for it. He and Ray agreed to work on the solicitation of such information together. Carla Mulford agreed to write an announcement about the solicitation of the names of dissertations in progress for the next newsletter and the Electronic Bulletin Board. It was agreed that the whole newsletter should not be published on the Electronic Bulletin Board, however, because of issues of privacy and free access to privileged information.
9. Carla Mulford announced that she has mentioned to Ronald Hoffman, Director of the Institute of Early American History and Culture, the possibility of co-sponsoring a conference at some future time. A cooperative relationship with the American Studies Association was also discussed. Leo Lemay suggested that the Society draw up a decade-long schedule of logical early American dates for conferences and run it in a future newsletter. Carla Mulford stressed that conferences growing out of these dates should be open to the whole membership. Bill Scheick suggested we poll membership sentiment as to the feasibility and value of conferences separate from the ALA ones. Carla Mulford said she would conduct such a poll via a separate letter to the members in February 1994, which would ask about member interest, what seem to be the best possible dates, and who might be willing to offer his/her institution as possible co-sponsors of such a conference.
10. The Council then discussed the possibility of having Society sessions and meetings at the 1994 ALA conference all on the same day. The general feeling was that the schedule works better if the sessions are spread out over two or three days. The Council agreed that the call for papers for that conference should remain open, although Carla Mulford proposed that a loose focus on new texts and voices in early American literature might be good, considering the nature of the papers received for this year's conference. Leo Lemay suggested that one panel be composed of more established scholars in the field who should be invited rather than expected to respond to an open call. He suggested Robert Arner as the person to set up such a panel. Carla suggested that one slot in this panel remain open for a respondent to the call. Other names suggested included Mason Lowance, Sidney Krause, Harrison Meserole, Owen Aldridge, Everett Emerson, Thomas M. Davis, Larzer Ziff, Norman Grabo, Mitchell Brietwieser, Karen Rowe, and Donald Stanford. Carla will forward this list of names to Arner as suggestions for people to consider.
11. The Council went over the agenda for the Business Meeting and discussed the upcoming meeting.
12. Carla Mulford announced that arranging a time and place for a party at this conference was too difficult, given the fact that the ALA was in a hotel that was "new" to participants.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemary Fithian Guruswamy

### **GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE FOR 1993**

October 30, 1993

Dear Member of the Society of Early Americanists:

Our first year as an official "society" has passed! This year brought us many advances as a growing organization created for friends to the field of early American studies.

Membership has more than doubled since this time last year! We continue to have an increased number of sessions at the American Literature Association meetings, and these sessions are both well-attended and well-received. We have very successfully run our first ever session at the American Literature Association's Symposium on Women Writers, held this month in San Antonio. Thanks to Bill Scheick's editorial acumen, we have an enviable newsletter, which continues to print the most updated information--preceding any other hard-copy publication by at least a year--about publications in the field, along with professional news and notes. Ray Craig has established an electronic network for early Americanists, which will tie our organization in with early Americanists both national and international. And we have, through the untiring efforts of Executive Coordinator Sharon Harris, achieved IRS status as a non-profit group. This will assist our functioning and cost-efficiency now and in the future.

As members could see by the last newsletter, we have developed a Dissertations in Progress section in the newsletter. We are also aiming to publish by next spring a preliminary Directory of Members of the Society of Early Americanists. Our aim from the outset has been to increase interpersonal and interprofessional relations among scholars of early American studies. We are hoping that the Dissertations in Progress information and the forthcoming Directory will assist our getting to know better one another, our interests, and our work.

We hope you'll remain with us as we enter our second year as an official organization affiliated with the American Literature Association. While we are developing a directory of members, we are attempting as well to plan for future conferences to be held in addition to our sessions at the annual American Literature Association. We will solicit members' advice on this matter next February. We are also planning to co-host annual gatherings at future MLA conventions--beginning in 1994, when I will be Chair of the MLA Division of American Literature to 1800--and to host, on an annual basis, our own gatherings for members at the annual American Literature Association conventions. Within the next two to three years we will be running our first election for the position of Executive Coordinator.

This packet encloses a number of items for your attention:

**TWO CALLS FOR PAPERS.** You'll find a Call for Papers for the Society's sessions at next May's American Literature Association, along with a Call for Papers for the 1994 MLA Division of American Literature to 1800 sessions. Please follow the directions on the separate calls, and please note their deadlines.

**RATIFICATION REQUEST.** You'll find copies of the Society's Bylaws and Constitution, designed to secure affiliation with the American Literature Association and to gain IRS non-profit status but designed as well to allow us to organize our own activities and programs. Please return, by December 15, 1993, your vote on ratification of these documents to Sharon Harris.

**REQUEST FOR DIRECTORY INFORMATION.** When you renew your membership, you'll be eligible to be included--optionally--in the Directory of Members of the Society of Early Americanists. The directory listing will include your preferred mailing address, your electronic address (if you like), and a listing of up to five areas and/or authors you are studying. The listing will be indexed by topic and author for ease of use. We are hoping to have it compiled and mailed to members by the spring of 1994. To be included in the Directory, you'll need to return this information, along with your membership renewal, by December 15, 1993, to Sharon Harris. If your directory information sheet is not returned when your membership renewal is received, we'll assume that you do not wish to have your name in the directory.

**MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM.** In an effort to streamline the membership renewals process, the officers are implementing a request to have membership renewals every fall, in October- November. The renewal form in this packet will identify any credit you might have on your account. (We have been scrupulous in our accounting, but if you think there is an error, please let Sharon Harris know.) If no credit is named, this means that to renew for the year, you'll pay the amount relevant to your membership category: Regular Membership, \$10; Independent Scholars, Students, \$5; Foreign Scholars, \$12; Institutions, \$3. The paperwork for the Society

is cumbersome for us all. You can help us a good deal by sending in your renewal right away. Please renew your membership by December 15, so your records with us are accurate. Send the renewal, with your check made out to the Society of Early Americanists, to Sharon Harris.

We hope you have enjoyed the newsletter and found your membership in the Society a fruitful one. As always, the officers of the Society of Early Americanists wish to remain responsive to concerns of the membership. In case you'd like to reach one of us, our addresses are provided (the last side of the Bylaws and Constitution information) for your convenience.

All best wishes,

Carla Mulford  
Founding President, Society of Early Americanists

I wish to thank the Department of English at Penn State for granting me duplicating and mailing privileges and staff assistance so that this mailing could go out to all members.

Names and Institutional Addresses of Council of Officers of the Society of Early Americanists, 1992--

#### EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

President: Carla Mulford  
Department of English  
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117 Burrowes Building  
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Vice-President: Rosemary Fithian Guruswamy  
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Executive Coordinator: Sharon M. Harris  
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Electronic Address: [. . .]

#### ADVISORY OFFICERS

Newsletter Editor: William J. Scheick  
Department of English  
Parlin Hall  
University of Texas Austin, TX 78712

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Electronic Bulletin Board Editor: Raymond Craig  
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Kent State University  
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Electronic Addresses: [. . .]  
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Honorary Past President: J.A. Leo Lemay  
Department of English

University of Delaware  
Newark, DE 19716-2537

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Honorary At-Large Representative: Jeffrey Hammond  
Division of Arts and Letters  
Montgomery Hall  
St. Mary's College of Maryland  
St. Mary's City, MD 20686

The new Society of Early Americanists owes a great deal to the collective efforts of several key individuals. Representing the interests of early Americanists, J. A. Leo Lemay and William J. Scheick worked with Alfred Bendixen from the beginning, when the American Literature Association was being established. All three helped secure early Americanists a standing presence at the ALA meetings.

Our particular thanks are due, however, to Bill, who founded ACASN within the year, to insure the affiliation of early Americanists with the ALA. ACASN, first published in the summer of 1989, has continued in an informative and very timely fashion to network our otherwise rather isolated population of scholars, providing comprehensive and useful bibliographic information, various columns, and wonderful graphics. This is an amazing and generous gift of time and energy that deserves our continued thanks.

I would also personally like to thank the other members of the 1990 Executive Committee of the MLA Division of American Literature to 1800 who fully supported my attempt to create a census, along with permission to request from the MLA the Division's mailing list. Those at the Executive Committee meeting, where I launched the proposal to send an initial letter of inquiry, include Philip Gura, Sydney Krause, and Mason Lowance. I wish to thank them for their continued interest in and support of the project to create a census of early Americanists. The other members of the Executive Committee who, unable to attend that meeting, have since lent their support include Cathy Davidson and Karen Rowe. The initial inquiry about a census and a society was sent to nearly 1500 persons whose names came from the MLA Division to 1800 list, Bill Scheick's ACASN list, and Philip Gura's Early American Literature list. I especially wish to thank Bill and Philip for printing special notices about the effort to form a society in their respective publications. I would also like to thank the Penn State English Dept. and especially the Head, Robert Secor, for finding the funding for my series of mailings during the academic year 1991- 92.

From the start, the group has received an immense amount of support from far too many people to name here. One person deserves special mention, though. Jeffrey Hammond continually offered cordial and useful advice--and moral support--at crucial moments as the society was developing. Most importantly, I'd like to thank the 135 scholars who wrote to me about the society, with suggestions (many of which they will see implemented in the constitution and bylaws currently being developed) and with information about their work. Their efforts in response to the first letter were critical to the formation of the Society of Early Americanists (SEA).

The organizational structure of the SEA is as streamlined as possible for efficient and effective operations. The SEA has a two-part Council of Officers. The Executive Officers include the President, Vice President, and Executive Coordinator. After this initial period of development, the Executive Officers will be the elected officers of the organization. The Advisory Officers are appointed by the Executive Officers. They include the Editor of the Society Newsletter (the requisite and only official forum of the Society); the Coordinator of the Early Americanists' Electronic Bulletin Board (who will collect information from the Bulletin Board for the Editor); the Past President of the Society; and, as the President wishes, an At-Large Representative of the membership.

The official group with which we will affiliate is the ALA, but it is possible that the officers will in the future consider affiliating with other scholarly groups as well.

Several of those who wrote to me offered general assistance and cordial support. Some offered institutional resources as well as their own labor. Dozens of people were consulted on organizational questions, until I finally realized it would be best, to get the Society going, to name officers. I am happy that Rosemary Fithian Guruswamy has agreed to stand as Vice President of the organization and that Sharon M. Harris will stand as Executive Coordinator. During this initial interim, I will serve as President. The Advisory Officers have all been informative and supportive of our efforts. I am extremely grateful to Bill Scheick, who has agreed to stay on as Editor of the newsletter. Raymond Craig generously offered to set up and serve as Coordinator of the Electronic Bulletin Board. Leo Lemay has kindly agreed to serve as Past President of the Society, and Jeffrey Hammond has generously agreed to serve as the At-Large Representative.

After an initial period of 2 or 3 years, the Society membership will elect a new Executive Coordinator. The existing Executive Coordinator (Sharon Harris, in this instance) will automatically become the Vice President, and the Vice President (Rosemary Guruswamy) will automatically become President. As Past President, I will become an Advisory Officer (in Leo Lemay's place).

Membership dues for the SEA will cover the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter, and they will assist as well in covering the initial application fee for the SEA's non-profit status and in supporting costs of receptions or other gatherings of the general membership at conventions. The dues schedule is printed on p. 2 of this newsletter. Sharon Harris will credit advance subscriptions to the newsletter toward memberships in the SEA. Advance subscriptions to ACASN by people who do not join the SEA will be honored until their subscriptions expire. Sharon will post her letter regarding individuals' accounts sometime during the early fall, 1992.

It is our wish to remain responsive to the interests and requests of the membership. I hope we'll hear from you during the course of the next year as to the role the Society might play in assisting your work and your networking with other early Americanists.