

# SEAN

## The Society of Early Americanists Newsletter



THE SOCIETY OF EARLY  
AMERICANISTS

### From the SEA President

In his famous “Oration delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society, at Cambridge, August 31, 1837” (later published as the essay “The American Scholar”), Ralph Waldo Emerson greeted the “Gentlemen” assembled and suggested that “the re-commencement of our literary year” was “one of hope, and perhaps, not enough of labor. [. . .] Thus far, our holiday has been simply a friendly sign of the survival of the love of letters amongst a people too busy to give to letters any more. [. . .] Perhaps the time is already come, when it ought to be, and will be, something else[.]” As I greet you right before the commencement of the 12<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of the Society of Early Americanists, I can assure you (and Mr. Emerson) that celebrating this anniversary—in the midst of a still raging pandemic—is one of *both* hope *and* (very much so) of labor. “Survival,” in these precarious times, is indeed no small feat. Yet I would like to take this opportunity to explain why our *Virtual* 2021 SEA Conference is also much more than that—it is a promise and sign that our scholarly society, our field, and our individual work can and should play a transformative role in education, research, culture, and, perhaps, even our public arena.

I started planning the 2021 conference in the summer of 2019 to take place in Atlanta, scoping out traditional locations such as hotels and conference centers. Atlanta offered itself as an incredibly tempting location, both as a travel hub and as a focal point of a stunning variety of movements for equality and justice in American history and culture. With the gracious support of Ben Reiss (chair of Emory English) and Michael Elliott (dean of the Emory College), I worked out promising plans for hosting the conference at Emory University. I thank them for their kind support and trust that this conference would enrich the Emory campus community as well as the SEA. In the spring of 2020, conferences started falling like dominos to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in the early summer it became clear that continuing to plan an in-person conference would be reckless. In moving to an all-virtual conference, we quickly found a partner in the folks at ExOrdo in Ireland, who were with super speed adjusting to the new realities and developed a new all-virtual conference capability.

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Original in the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University

Two Galleons with Small Covered Boat

It is easy, at this point, to think of everything—including our conference and our organization—as vastly diminished. Indeed, it is not my first choice to meet only virtually, though I encourage the future leadership of the SEA and other organization to assess how in future (post-pandemic) meetings we can combine the best of both in-person and virtual conferencing. However, I would like to offer some reasons why this moment and this conference can move us forward, enrich us, and make us better: the online format, to begin, offers the advantage of affordability and accessibility for many scholars and students who, for reasons of cost and geography, would not otherwise be able to join our conference. The SEA buttressed access and inclusion by offering membership grants to underrepresented groups and free conference registration to any first-time participants, students, and contingent faculty and independent scholars.

Moreover, our first Common Reading Initiative vastly expands the scope of our activities to undergraduate students who studied, with circa 30 of our colleagues, Honorée Fanonne Jeffers's *The Age of Phillis*, a brilliant poetic exploration of Phillis Wheatley Peters—especially of the many lacunae and distortions in our understanding of her life and work. Students who studied Jeffers and Wheatley Peters will exhibit their work—both scholarly and poetic—on our conference platform; they will meet in live book club discussions, and they will converse on a colloquy panel with Jeffers after her plenary keynote reading from *The Age of Phillis*. We have even expanded our understanding of who our students are and where they learn by including—through the facilitation of our colleague Elizabeth Ferszt—students from MDOC (Michigan Department of Corrections), who have studied Wheatley Peters and Jeffers while incarcerated. For launching and developing the Common Read, I particularly thank our colleagues Cassie Smith, Brigitte Fielder, and Tara Bynum, as well as Michelle Robinson Bachelor at Spelman College, who established our collaboration with the Atlanta University Center's HBCUs. Our focus on early African American studies, moreover, will flourish at the conference in a dedicated panel stream as well as a keynote address by Joycelyn Moody on African American women's autobiography.

Our conference will further highlight Native American and Indigenous Studies as well as LatinX Studies—both fields with immense significance, promise, and growth in early American scholarship. With great panache and endless work, Betty Donohue and Kelly Wisecup have put together a dedicated panel series on NAIS as well as a plenary keynote roundtable, “Centering the Native South: A Roundtable on Native Pasts and Futures” with Brooke Bauer (Catawba), Malinda Maynor Lowery (Lumbree), and Julie L. Reed (Cherokee), who will harness our original conference location to discuss the history of Indigenous women in the early Southeast.

Generously sponsored by Georgia Humanities and the Omohundro Institute, this roundtable will be free and open to the public via a Zoom Webinar, thus sharing with a larger public the importance of vibrant humanities scholarship. In Latinx Studies, Rodrigo Lazo and Kirsten Silva Gruesz organized a dedicated panel, and Rodrigo will give a LatinX Studies keynote entitled “Yesterplace” to round out what I believe will be a stellar line-up of plenary keynote experiences.

We will begin our conference on the afternoon of Wednesday, March 3, with two plenary archival workshops: archivists of the Stuart Rose Special Collections and Manuscript Library will focus on their marquis early African American collection, especially a little-known Phillis Wheatley manuscript notebook and W.E.B. Du Bois's personally annotated copy of David Walker's *Appeal*. Then, we will receive an introduction to the Newberry Library collection by Lia Markey, director of the Center for Renaissance Studies. We hope that workshops and keynotes—along with a myriad of intriguing panels and roundtables across four days—will provide shared experiences and intellectual stimulation for everyone at the conference in spite of the dreaded “Zoom fatigue” and uncertainty of our historical moment. Please join together from March 3-7 to show that early American studies are not just surviving but thriving!

A few final words of business before the conference: 1) please remember that some things will go wrong during this first ever virtual SEA conference; please be kind to each other in general, and let me know if, through your expertise, you know how to fix something! 2) Please check out the virtual conference platform at <https://event.sea2021.exordo.com/>! Remember that participating in the virtual conference requires both SEA membership (except for undergrads participating in the Common Read) and conference registration. 3) Please make sure to download Webex Events ([Download Link](#)) so that you can participate in all live events.

“See” you at SEA 2021!

### Works Cited

Ralph Waldo Emerson, “An Oration delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society, at Cambridge, August 31, 1837.” *Emerson Central*, [emersoncentral.com/texts/nature-addresses-lectures/the-american-scholar/](http://emersoncentral.com/texts/nature-addresses-lectures/the-american-scholar/). February 17, 2021.

Patrick Erben  
University of West Georgia



## *From the SEA Vice-President*

“A New Covenant Formed . . .” almost thirty years ago.

While working on the recently ratified revisions of the SEA’s Constitution and Bylaws last year, it occurred to me that, with the thirty-year anniversary of our founding coming up, this might be an opportune time to begin a conversation about our history and how to better curate its archive going forward. In a recent phone conversation about this, for example, one of the past presidents of the SEA suggested appointing an organizational historian to be put in charge of keeping the SEA’s records.

A related task at hand will be the publication of an accessible on-line edition of a complete run of our SEAN Newsletter (SEAN), properly cataloged and preferably indexed. Currently, only a small number of issues are accessible via our webpage; and our archive of back issues has some holes. (If anyone has any back-issues of the SEAN from the print days, please let me know). While this column is not the place to attempt a history of the SEA, I would like to offer some reflections on a few milestones that may stimulate further conversation about the upcoming anniversary.

As some readers old enough to remember will know, the SEAN actually began as the “American Colonial Authors Society Newsletter” (ACASN), founded and published biannually under that title by William Scheick (J.R. Millikan Centennial Professor Emeritus, University of Texas) from 1989 to 1992 in order to “facilitate . . . the association of scholars in New World studies” (ACASN 4.1, p.1). It was thirty years ago, in the Spring issue of ACASN 3, that the ACASN announced the formation of a “Society for Eighteenth-Century American Studies” (SECAS) as an affiliate of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (ASECS) during the previous year, in 1990, by Dan Williams (now at TCU, then at U Mississippi), John Samson (Texas Tech U), and Dennis Moore (then UNC, now Florida SU), who drafted the new society’s constitution. Throughout its existence up to its merger with the SEA in 1999, SECAS held sessions at the annual ASECS conference, beginning at the 1991 Pittsburgh meeting with sessions organized by Williams, who served as the first president of SECAS.

Meanwhile, the SEA proper was founded as an independent organization in the following year, in the Spring of 1992, during the annual convention of the American Literature Association (ALA) in San Diego. Thus, in the Fall of 1992, the Newsletter, Volume 4 Number 2, appeared for the first time under its new title, the “Society of Early Americanists Newsletter,” with a column entitled “A New Covenant Formed . . .,” written by founding SEA president Carla Mulford (Penn State), who has since then also published an [account](#) of the earliest history of the

SEA on our website. Mulford was joined by Rosemary Guruswamy (Radford College) as vice-president, and Sharon Harris (then University of Nebraska, Lincoln, now U Connecticut) as Executive Coordinator on the first Executive Committee and in drafting the Society’s original constitution (ratified in 1994), which (with minor revisions) still governs the SEA today.(i)

Meanwhile, Leo Lemay (U Delaware) and Scheick joined Jeffrey Hammond (St. Mary’s College) and Raymond Craig (then Kent SU, now Bowling Green SU) on the first Advisory Board. Craig, as the moderator of the SEA’s electronic bulletin board, which became the Early Americanists E-Discussion List EARAM-L in 1992, would become the SEA’s longest continuously serving officer. He remains on the Advisory Board today and still moderates the EARAM listserv, which grew from ca. 80 subscribers in 1994 (SEAN 5.2: 1) to over 1000 subscribers.(ii) Scheick continued to serve as SEAN editor until 2006, when he was succeeded by Richard Frohock (Oklahoma SU) and, in 2011, by our current editor, Mary Balkun (Seton Hall U).

In the early 1990s, SEA membership grew rapidly under Mulford’s five-year long leadership, reaching 170 members by 1994, the year that also saw the publication of the first membership directory. Nevertheless, during the years immediately following its founding, the SEA did not hold its own conferences but instead scheduled its business meetings at the annual ALA meetings and continued to sponsor early Americanist panels there, expanding from two to three formal sessions, in addition to one special workshop devoted to teaching, in 1994. That was also the year Michael P. Clark (U of California, Irvine) created the SEA website, now managed by our ninth president, Susan Imbarrato (Minnesota SU Moorhead).

Although the SEAN announced a plan for the SEA to hold its own meetings, separate from those of the ALA, as early as 1993, it was not until March of 1999 that the SEA held, under the leadership of its fourth president, David Shields, the first iteration in Charleston, SC, of what would become its biennial conference. Subsequent biennials took place in Norfolk, VA, Providence, RI, Old Town Alexandria, VA, Colonial Williamsburg, VA, Hamilton, Bermuda, Philadelphia, PA, Savannah, GA, Chicago, ILL, Tulsa, OK, and Eugene, OR. Our upcoming, 2021 biennial was originally planned to take place in Atlanta, GA, but will instead be held, for the first time, entirely virtually, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following the first SEA conference in Charleston, Shields proclaimed what he called (in Shieldsian fashion) “The Treaty of Charleston”—the merger of the two organizations of early Americanists that had been founded in the early 1990s—SECAS and SEA.(iii)

This 1999 “Treaty of Charleston” brought to fruition a conversation that had already been initiated during the previous year, at the annual ASECS meeting at Notre Dame, by then SECAS president, the late Frank Shuffelton (U Rochester). The plan to merge had been announced at the Charleston meeting in March and was given final approval by the SEA Executive Committee in May. As Shields noted in a [memorandum](#) dated June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2000, the SEA, as a result of the merger with SECAS, became the ASECS’s early Americanist affiliate organization, sponsoring regular panels at ASECS’s annual conferences. Thus, although the two societies had largely overlapping memberships, the merger brought together one society that had formed within an interdisciplinary organization chronologically focused on the eighteenth century (ASECS) with a society that had grown out of American literary scholarship (ALA) but whose chronological scope was more open-ended.

In order to facilitate the merger, Shields appointed a three-member “committee of correspondence” chaired by Dennis Moore, who would later become the seventh president of the SEA and who is currently working on a more detailed history of SECAS, to the publication of which we look forward. (iv) Moore was joined on the committee by Tom Krise (then Air Force Academy, now U of Guam), who would become the eighth SEA president, and Julia Stern (Northwestern U). Meanwhile, the SEA has also remained an affiliate of the ALA and has acquired several additional organizational affiliations, including those with the Society for the Study of American Women Writers, the Early Caribbean Society, and the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment.

It was also during that meeting in Charleston that Shields first proposed the idea of sponsoring an “Early Ibero-/Anglo- Americanist Summit, which came to fruition three years later, in 2002, in Tucson, AZ, with subsequent iterations of ‘off-year’ SEA co-sponsored events to follow in 2004, 2010, and 2016. These ‘off-year’ special-topics conferences and workshops have since solidified into a strong tradition of co-sponsoring events that cover a wide array of topics in early American studies and established the SEA as a multi-disciplinary professional organization that welcomes scholars from a number of related disciplines, including Latin American, Native American, and African American Studies, as well as Cartography, and the histories of religion and of science. With our continued vitality thus ensured, our membership had grown to over 500 by 2019.

#### **Endnotes**

- i.* See Mulford’s [account](#) of these events.
- ii.* Thanks to Ray Craig for providing this information via email.

*iii.* Thanks to David Shields for making his archive of SEA-related correspondences available to me and to Dennis Moore for providing some of this information via email.

*iv.* Thanks to Dennis Moore and Laura Stevens for taking time for phone conversations about the history of the SEA and to Dan Williams for providing information and clarifications by email. Thanks also to Dennis and to Sandra Gustafson for offering comments on a draft of this column.

Ralph Bauer  
University of Maryland

#### ***From the SEA Executive Coordinator***

The Society of Early Americanists recently concluded its biennial election for the seventeenth Executive Coordinator, with a simple majority of the 106 voting members choosing Professor Kelly Wisecup of Northwestern University to join the Executive Committee. Professor Wisecup will begin her term on July 1, 2021. The Executive Coordinator serves a two-year term, before serving for two years as Vice President and then two years as President. These three officers constitute the Society's Executive Committee.

Candidates are nominated (or self-nominated) by the SEA membership. Of the thirteen people nominated during this election cycle, four of the nominees are presently assistant professors, four are associate professors, and five are full professors. The nominees included eight women and five men; seven of the nominees, spanning all ranks, are BIPOC scholars. The election opened on Friday, January 22 and closed on Friday, February 19, with results announced on February 22.

Special thanks to all three SEA members who agreed to stand for election.

Sandra Gustafson  
University of Notre Dame

#### **Kelly Wisecup Candidacy Statement**

From my time as a graduate student through my early career as a junior scholar and beyond, the SEA and its members have been a vital intellectual community. The bi-annual conferences have been engaging spaces that have broadened my scholarly horizons and allowed me to learn from established and emerging scholars. I would be honored to serve as Executive Coordinator and to build on and extend the work of previous society officers. I am an associate professor of English at Northwestern University, where I am also affiliated with the Center for Native American and Indigenous

Research. Before coming to Northwestern in 2015, I was an assistant professor at the University of North Texas for six years. My scholarship brings together early American literary studies with Native American and Indigenous Studies and histories of science.

I am the author of *Medical Encounters: Knowledge and Identity in Early American Literatures* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2013) and the editor of *Good News from New England* by Edward Winslow: A Scholarly Edition (University of Massachusetts Press, 2014). My monograph *Assembled for Use: Indigenous Compilation and the Archives of Early Native American Literature* is forthcoming from Yale University Press in 2021, as is the volume I co-edited with Lisa Brooks for the Library of America, *Plymouth Colony: Narratives of English Settlement and Native Resistance from the Mayflower to King Philip's War*. I am the co-editor with Alyssa Mt. Pleasant and Caroline Wigginton of a special issue on the relations between Native American and Indigenous Studies and early American studies, published in *Early American Literature and the William and Mary Quarterly* in 2018. I am the board of *American Literature* (2020-2023) and am an associate editor for *The Broadview Anthology of American Literature*.

In recent years, I've engaged in several collaborative projects, with an eye to considering how early American studies might be a foundation for conversations with other fields and historical periods and with communities outside the university. With faculty and graduate students from the Mellon-funded Humanities Without Walls consortium, I am part of a three-year, collaborative project on "Indigenous Art and Activism in Changing Climates: The Mississippi River Valley, Colonialism, and Environmental Change." With support from an NEH grant, I collaborated with the American Indian Center of Chicago to build the AIC Community Archives. And with my undergraduate students, I am building *Indigenous Chicago*, a website where students research and write about Chicago's past and present Indigenous artists. At Northwestern, I served as co-director of the Center for Native American and Indigenous Research in its second and third years of operation, helping to launch the Center's initiatives and hire staff while also managing budgets and planning programs.

I would draw on this administrative experience to manage the Society's finances and plan meetings, and I would bring to all of my responsibilities my experience facilitating and participating in collaborative research projects. I have already served SEA as the chair of the essay contest committee (2013-2015), and I recently ended a term on the executive committee of the Early Caribbean Society. I helped to organize the Native American and Indigenous Studies panel streams for SEA conferences in

St. Louis (2018), Eugene (2019), and Atlanta (now virtual, 2021). If elected to serve as Executive Coordinator, I would seek to build on this prior experience and my predecessors' work by ensuring that the Society's conferences and publications advance studies of early American literature and culture that reflect the period's full range of modalities, languages, experiences, and identities and that account for the contexts and afterlives of colonialism and slavery in which early American literatures were written and circulated.

Relatedly, I would seek to ensure that conference panels and Society committees reflect and engage diverse participants and communities. As we face a future in which our lives, students, research, and campuses are shaped by the pandemic, political upheaval, white supremacy and anti-blackness, I hope the Society can expansively and creatively support its members while cultivating relationships with diverse communities and laying pathways for the future of our field.



Kelly Wisecup



### Section Editor Sought

*The Year's Work in English Studies* seeks a new Section Editor for American Literature to 1900.

*The Year's Work in English Studies* is the qualitative narrative bibliographical review of scholarly work on English language and literatures written in English. It is the largest and most comprehensive work of its kind and the oldest evaluative work of literary criticism. *The Year's Work in English Studies* provides expert, critical commentary supplied for every book covered. Each volume includes a detailed overview from Old English to contemporary critical works for a given year, and contains critical notices for some 1100 books; extensive coverage of English Language, American Literature, New Literatures in English and English Literature; and coverage of specialist periodicals.

Anyone interested in the position should contact *YWES* General Editor William Baker: [wbaker@niu.edu](mailto:wbaker@niu.edu)

## Announcements

### Fellowship Awards from the Omohundro Institute

On February 22, 2021, the Omohundro Institute announced the recipients of the following fellowships.

#### Digital Collections Fellowships

**James Ambuske** (George Washington's Mount Vernon), **Randell Flaherty** (University of Virginia Law Library), and **Loren S. Moulds** (University of Virginia Law Library) with The Centre for Research Collections at the University of Edinburgh were awarded a fellowship for "The Scottish Court of Session Digital Archive Project," an ongoing effort to construct a digital archive and research platform centered on Session Papers, the printed documents produced during litigation before Scotland's supreme civil court in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

**Molly Kerr** (History Revealed, Inc.) and the New York Public Library were awarded a fellowship for "Digitizing the Alexandria, Virginia account books," the second phase of the *Shopping Stories* project. The project uses store ledgers to uncover consumer interests, lives, and the larger community of people who resided in eighteenth century. The first phase of the project involved a crowd-sourced effort to transcribe eleven ledgers from the two John Glassford & Company stores from 1758-1769. Phase two will focus on Colchester and Alexandria, Virginia.

#### OI-Mount Vernon Digital Collections fellowships

**Kaitlin Tonti** (Indiana University of Pennsylvania) was awarded an OI-Mount Vernon Digital Collections Fellowship to work with the New York Public Library to digitize the poetry of Hannah Lawrence Schieffelin, including the poem "George Washington."

#### Lapidus Initiative-OI Predoctoral fellowships

*While these fellowships are traditionally awarded for travel related to the completion of the applicant's dissertation, the use of the award has been expanded during the pandemic to accommodate other costs associated with the completion of the applicant's dissertation such as purchasing books, professional society memberships, and more.*

- **Chip Badley** (University of California, Santa Barbara) — "The Practiced Eye: Painting and Queer Personhood in Nineteenth-Century American Literature"
- **Elyse Bell** (Queen's University) — "Home and Belonging in the British Atlantic World, c. 1750-1830"
- **Heesoo Cho** (Washington University in St. Louis) — "The Pacific Ocean in Print: The Transatlantic Making of Pacific Knowledge in the Early Republic, 1783-1820"
- **Emily Clark** (Johns Hopkins University) — "Laboring Bodies: Dispossessed Women and Reproduction in Colonial New England"
- **Devin Leigh** (University of California, Davis) — "The Origins of an Archive: Enslavers and the Geopolitics of Knowledge Production in an Age of Abolition"
- **Alexandra MacDonald** (William & Mary) — "The Social Life of Time"
- **Adam McNeil** (Rutgers University) — "I Would Not Go With Him': Black Loyalist Women's Revolutionary Fight for Freedom during the American Revolution"
- **Teanu Reid** (Yale University) — "Hidden Economies and Finances in the Early Anglo-Atlantic World"

#### Free OI Student Associate sponsorships for 2021

Thanks to a generous donor, the OI is able to offer up to forty OI Student Associate sponsored memberships for 2021. If you are a current graduate student and would like to take advantage of this opportunity to be a member of the OI's community, please contact [Sue DiPette](#) by March 1.



**OMOHUNDRO  
INSTITUTE**

## Updated SEA By-laws and Constitution Approved

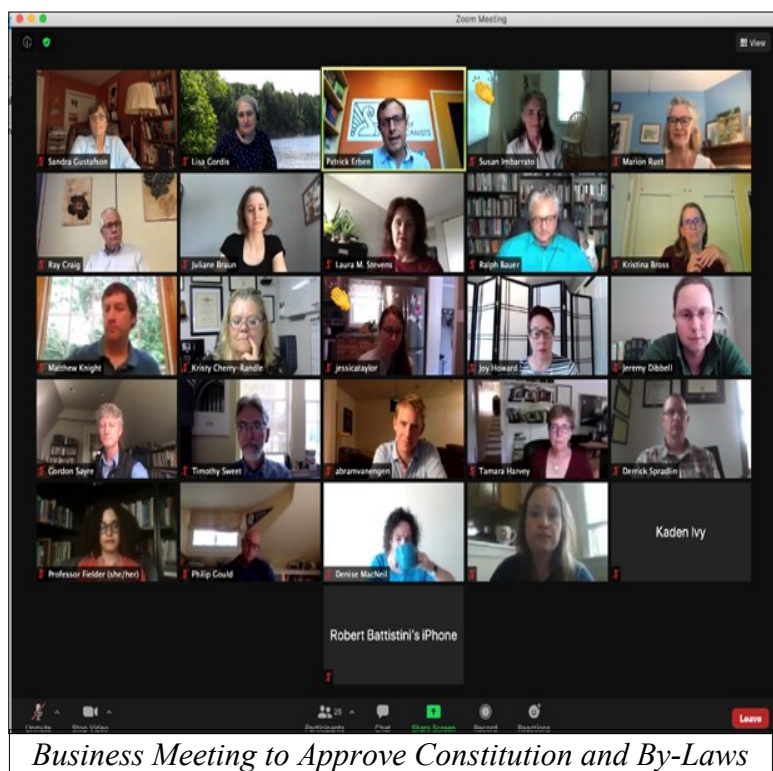
The SEA conducted a review of its Constitution and By-Laws through a comprehensive assessment by the advisory committee in fall 2018, as well as a review and set of recommendations provided by an attorney specializing in non-profit law in early 2019.

The initial outcome of the review was presented at the SEA business meeting at the 2019 conference in Eugene and the advisory committee then worked to further polish the documents. The final version was circulated one month before the last SEA business meeting on September 11, 2020, where they were presented to the membership.

A vote on the proposed amendments to the Society of Early Americanists' Constitution and By-Laws was conducted in November/December 2020. 93 members voted Yes, 2 members voted No, and no members abstained. Thus, the proposals passed.

Revised B-Laws: <https://www.societyofearlyamericanists.org/about-us/bylaws>

Revised Constitution: <https://www.societyofearlyamericanists.org/about-us/constitution>



*Business Meeting to Approve Constitution and By-Laws*

## Modern Language Association Forum on Early American Literature 2019 Richard Beale Davis Prize

The prize committee is pleased to name Reed Gochberg's "Circulating Objects: Crèvecoeur's 'Curious Book' and the American Philosophical Society Cabinet" and Ana Schwartz's "'Mercy as Well as Extremity': Forts, Fences, and Fellow Feeling in New England Settlement" as co-winners of the 2019 Richard Beale Davis prize for the best essay published in *Early American Literature*. While the committee considered many worthy contributions to the journal, these essays were distinguished by their virtuoso interpretations of key texts as well as their ambitious reimagining of the field.

Gochberg's "Circulating Objects" makes an innovative contribution to the study of archives and collections as the foundation of early American literature. Much scholarship in recent decades has portrayed the creation of museums and libraries as a key basis of colonial power and national identity. Yet this work has tended to assume that colonial archives were centralized and rationally organized depositories, the source of the colonial state's own projection of power. Gochberg's essay unsettles this paradigm by examining how early American archivists ruminated on the loss, dispersal, and destruction of their collections. "Circulating Objects" takes as its starting point J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's donation of a "curious book" of unusual plant-based papers to the American Philosophical Society in 1789.

Gochberg reads Crèvecoeur's gift as a signal instance of how literary and philosophical societies saw the donation and circulation of natural, textual, and mechanical objects as a central part of creating and organizing knowledge. Yet this very circulation of texts and objects—so crucial to knowledge creation—also threatened to undo the work of collecting and cataloguing that lay at the heart of the archival enterprise, as texts and objects were discarded or lost. Pursuing the entanglement of texts and plants embodied by Crèvecoeur's "curious book," Gochberg's essay traces Crèvecoeur's contemplations on natural and textual mediums and their inevitable decay as they pass in—and out—of archives.

Schwartz's "'Mercy as Well as Extremity'" takes up the notion of writing's power to cultivate feelings within a body politic, which has shaped the field of American literary studies across periods. Recent scholarship has brought back into view the importance of sympathy in the rhetoric of early English settlers. Balancing this

rhetoric against the material fact of the Plymouth colony’s anxious building of walls, fences, and forts, Schwartz challenges the figure of the sensitive Pilgrim.

In Schwartz’s account sympathy, as an imaginative identification of oneself with another, is not only a bond connecting the English settlers across their internal fault-lines of belief and motive but also a means of placing their indigent neighbors on the literal and figurative outside. She argues that Edward Winslow’s *Good News from New England* and William Bradford’s *Of Plymouth Plantation* describe acts of mercy and temperance as evidence of their “capacity to produce vulnerability and fear” in the Wampanoags, Massachusetts, and Patuxet whose sovereignty they threaten, concluding provocatively that “sympathy actively complemented the naturalization of settler violence in America.” At once an intricate critique of Christian social order and an unsparing examination of such violence, “‘Mercy as Well as Extremity’” transforms our understanding of some of early America’s most familiar texts.



Reed Gochberg



Ana Schwartz



### Early American Literature Book Prize for 2020

Lindsay DiCuirci, Associate Professor of English at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), has been selected to receive the 2020 *Early American Literature* Book Prize, which is awarded in even calendar years to a first monograph published in the prior two years, and in odd years to a second or subsequent book. DiCuirci’s *Colonial Revivals: The Nineteenth-Century Lives of Early American Books* was published by the University of Pennsylvania Press in 2019.

The prize selection committee consisted of *Early American Literature*’s Co-Editor for Reviews, Katy Chiles; Advisory Editor, Sandra Gustafson; incoming Chair of the Modern Language Association’s Early American Forum,

Jordan Stein; and prior President of the Society of Early Americanists, Gordon Sayre, with *EAL* Editor Marion Rust as an *ex officio* member. We thank our publisher, the University of North Carolina Press, for continuing to support the award, which carries a \$2,000 cash prize. It should be noted that there were more prize submissions this year than ever, due in large part to the stupendous work of *EAL* Assistant Editor Chinwe Morah.

“Elegantly conceptualized” and “beautifully written,” in the words of one committee member, *Colonial Revivals* examines how the 19<sup>th</sup> century’s relation to the past shapes contemporary understandings of early American texts in unacknowledged ways. “Many of the major texts that early American literature scholars study,” elaborates a second, “were little known to Americans of the early Republic.” “Above all,” concludes a third, “Di Cuirci illuminates the paths by which literary-historical works were lost and found, embraced and disavowed, recovered and reinvented in the period when a national imaginary was constructed, contested, and nearly destroyed.”

The five chapters of *Colonial Revivals* exhibit impressive range. Beginning with a revisionary reading of Hawthorne’s “The Custom-House,” the study turns to 19<sup>th</sup>-century reinventions of paradigmatic Puritan New Englanders John Winthrop and Cotton Mather. It then shows how antebellum Virginian reprintings of colonial and Revolutionary histories supported a southern exceptionalism that “sought in the prehistory of the union the roots of its impossibility,” even as African American historians of the period crafted a distinct progressive narrative (DiCuirci 23). Chapter 4 scrutinizes activist politicizations of William Penn during the Native American removal debates, as well as Quaker sectarian schisms of the same period. The last chapter reads Washington Irving’s *Columbus* in conjunction with the work of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish antiquarian Martín Fernández de Navarrete to reflect upon the Spanish imperial archive’s relationship to ongoing U.S. expansionist efforts.

As DiCuirci puts it in her epilogue, referring in part to the labors of digitization, “the reasons and means by which we have copies of books so often relies on the ideological needs of their reproducers” (179). As such, her study poses what a fourth committee member terms a “lasting question for the field of early American studies – how should we approach our texts differently” given the circumstances of their creation?

To take this question one step further, *Colonial Revivals* encourages readers to question the transparency of any text, including those of their own making. It is a privilege to honor DiCuirci's inspiring work by granting her the *EAL* Book Prize for 2020.

Next year's prize will be awarded to an author's second or subsequent book; monographs published in 2019 and 2020 are eligible. The deadline for submission is March 1, 2021. Please consult the journal's website at <https://eal.uky.edu/> for additional information.



### **Interview with Lindsay DiCuirci on *Colonial Revivals: The Nineteenth Century Lives of Early American Books***

*What was your inspiration for Colonial Revivals: The Nineteenth-Century Lives of Early American Books? How did the project begin?*

The research began in a graduate seminar on bibliography and book history at Ohio State. I was assigned a descriptive bibliography project in special collections and I chose Cotton Mather's 1702 folio *Magnalia Christi Americana*. In the course of spotting chainlines and identifying font sizes, I noticed some marginalia and then, happily, a detailed handwritten index on the book's endpapers.

I was able to trace that marginalia to a nineteenth-century woman reader, and so the larger journey of my book began with the question: Why would this nineteenth-century reader be reading this massive, old church history in its first edition? Was that a common practice? The dynamics of this relationship between 19th-century readers and colonial books led me to a world of collectors, antiquarians, historians, printers, and publishers who were issuing new editions of books that were long out of print. The realization that some of the books I had considered foundational to early American studies were little-known and infrequently read until the nineteenth century changed my view of early American print and periodization in our field.

*What were some of the challenges you faced while doing the research for the book?*

I could see how easily one could become like the figures one investigates, as James Savage did with John Winthrop and his journal--too close, too obsessed, too intent on recuperation. I would get bogged down in minutia and struggle to keep "the plot," as it were, fixed on the goals of the book and not every fascinating paper trail. The problem of archival dearth/hoard that I talk about in the book certainly extended to my own methods as well. As many scholars

have described, archives can give both nothing and too much; my question in this book was, in part, "how did it get this way?" Similarly, I struggled at times to spot the lie and the exaggeration and to disentangle material fact from rhetorical flourish. An early reader of a chapter once asked me, "Was this book actually 'rare' or was that just how this collector framed it?" and this challenged me to remain a critical reader of the metadata and evaluative categories that antiquarians used in the long nineteenth century. Truthfully, though, trying to write the book through the births of my children and an unexpected illness posed the biggest challenges, so I'm thankful for a generous community of people who read drafts, cooked food, sent cards, and showed up when I was in the weeds.



Lindsay DiCuirci

*What was the most rewarding aspect of this project?*

The most rewarding aspect is the places it took me, literally and intellectually. I loved working in the collections of the Library Company of Philadelphia, Massachusetts Historical Society, Virginia Historical Society, and American Antiquarian Society, especially in their institutional archives and the papers of their founding members. As a lover of archives, I could relate to some of these curious diggers and collectors while also being irked by their choices and critical of their politics. I also learned so much from the librarians and curators at these intuitions and other researchers there.

Storytelling is my favorite part of researching and writing in this field, and this book allowed me to tell book stories and to meet in their diaries and letters obscure figures who made monumental choices about preservation and access--choices driven by everything from their religious conviction to provincialism, from their racism to their bibliomania--that we live with today.

*What do you hope will be the primary take-away for readers?*

That the materials we have to work with have histories that we can't ignore. That we've inherited a certain narrative about influential and important texts--and with them key moments, historical tipping and turning points--without fully considering whether they were in print or known or read by anyone at all. Accounting for these stories might challenge how we think about the categories of "influential and important" and certainly the timeline on which we plot the life of texts in our field. I also think being able to say, "We only have this book because someone saw fit to save and reproduce it" invites all kinds of fruitful questions around the politics of preservation and the timeliness of books coming in and out circulation. Why this book? Why *not* this other one? Why then? Why now? I also hope readers take away a more nuanced understanding of the many hands that built archival collections and the combination of intent and happenstance that gave shape to them at critical junctures in history.

*How do you think the book reflects emerging patterns/trends in the study of early America?*

*Colonial Revivals* is heavily influenced by work in book history and bibliography but also in the field's foci on temporality studies; uncovering settler and anti-colonial epistemologies; new understandings of geopolitical scale (from vast early America to microhistories); and innovations in digital preservation and access.

My book joins conversations that are asking how we have (and read, teach, publish on, reprint) the books we have and who decides. These conversations are led by librarians, curators, cataloguers and scholars in African American, Native American and Indigenous Studies, and Latin American studies as well as those working in queer theory, disability studies, and gender and women's studies among others. Part of why my epilogue looks to the present time of digital antiquarianism is because our own moment of mass preservation and replication resembles that of the early national period; we're faced with a unique opportunity to re envision preservation and access, not just reproduce monoliths, and to do it in inclusive, sustainable ways.

I'm inspired by scholars and practitioners scrutinizing the binary language that we've used to talk about archives, such as lost and found, and who are encouraging us to move "beyond recovery," as Lauren Coats and Steffi Dippord recently described in *EAL*.

*What are you currently working on/what is your next project?*

I continue to think about intrusions of the material past into the present. I recently finished a piece related to the trope of the found or inherited manuscript in early American historical fiction. That has me interested in the genre of posthumous works (and parodies of the genre) as well as the inheritance of family papers; this naturally dovetails with genealogy and fictions of descent.

In other words, I find myself still fixated on figures of return: revenants, ghosts, avengers, found objects, as well as feelings/states of return: nostalgia, surprise, regret, serendipity, and survival. Along these lines, I'm reading about the history and print culture of spiritualism and its progenitors in the U.S., especially its intersections with abolition and the Society of Friends. I also recently received a grant from my university to develop an undergraduate course focused on digitizing, curating, and making public a collection of graphic satire held at UMBC, so I'm looking forward to applying my own questions about preservation and access to a student-led digital humanities project.



**American Literature Society  
1921 Award for Best Essay(s) in American Literature  
published in 2020**

**Full-time Faculty Category**

Sari Altschuler, Associate Professor of English at Northeastern University - "Touching the Scarlet Letter: What Disability History Can Teach Us About Literature." *American Literature* 92.1 (2020): 91-122.

Sarah E. Chinn, Chair of the English Department at Hunter College (CUNY) - "Enslavement and the Temporality of Childhood." *American Literature* 92.1 (2020): 33-59.

**Untenured/Contingent Faculty Category:**

Ajay Kumar Batra, Department of English graduate student, University of Pennsylvania—"Reading with Conviction: Abraham Johnstone and the Poetics of the Dead End." *Early American Literature* 55.2 (2020): 331-47.

## *Tribute to Sarah Schuetze*

Beloved early Americanist and assistant professor Sarah Schuetze passed away unexpectedly in January 2021. As her dissertation advisor and dear friend, I am grateful to have been invited to write about her for the Society of Early Americanists, her home organization and one she loved with characteristic vitality. Professor Schuetze was outstanding in all regards: a brilliant scholar, inspiring teacher, admired colleague and intellectual omnivore known for her almost superhuman productivity. She was also one of the kindest people I have ever met.

Sarah and I corresponded regularly long after she had received her doctorate in English from the University of Kentucky and moved into a tenure-track position at the University of Wisconsin Green Bay. She mainly used to send me two kinds of texts. Every few months, I'd find myself staring down at her sneakers in a grainy video, as adolescent raccoons tentatively nosed around her, looked up at the iPhone in front of her face, and then took a few steps towards the woods, before running back to start the whole cycle over again. Eventually, the woods always won out, and to the soundtrack of Sarah sniffing back tears, these fostered creatures would climb a tree or disappear into the brush that was now their proper home.

The other kind of text Sarah sent me reminded me of the phone calls I used to make to my mom. When something really good happened in Sarah's career – a new fellowship, a glowing tenure review, an article accepted for publication – her pride and gratitude radiated through a few lines studded with exclamation marks. Since she was writing her former advisor, she didn't have to hold back. And indeed, I was as proud of her as any parent, even as her academic accomplishments accrued at a pace that made clear that she was now an esteemed colleague, a peer among peers.

I loved both these kinds of texts and I think they encompassed something of the span of our relationship, as well as her friendships with many other colleagues. A few people knew Sarah even better: her husband, Erik Kowalski, first and foremost, and a small circle of her closest friends who spoke with her weekly or even daily. These individuals are in my heart as I attempt to honor her here.

Sarah died far too early in a precocious and promising academic career that encompassed literary history, medical humanities, gender studies, and more. Her wonderfully titled and uncannily prescient book manuscript, "Calamity Howl" – a study of how early American epidemics such as cholera, tuberculosis and smallpox made their way into, onto, and through print culture artifacts ranging from private letters and novels to trauma

narratives and medical treatises – remains under review at Oxford University Press.

Sarah had already published extensively, and we are lucky to have such works available as "Insidious Taint: Race and Consumption in the Nineteenth-Century Domestic Novel" (*Arizona Quarterly*), "Carrying Home the Enemy: Smallpox and Revolution in American Love and Letters, 1775–76" (*Early American Literature*), "Mapping a 'Demon Malady': Cholera Maps and Affect in 1832" (*Common-Place*), and "The Fever and the Fetters: An Epidemiology of Captivity and Empire" (*Women of the Early Americas and the Formation of Empire*). Sarah's special edition of *Early American Literature*, co-edited with Katherine Grandjean and titled "Reframing 1620," was about to go to print at the time of her death. By the time this note appears, it may well have been released, a bittersweet memento of her collaborative spirit and deep scholarly curiosity.



And then there were the fellowships, which introduced Sarah not only to the wealth of materials that informed her work but to a large interdisciplinary coterie of similarly dedicated researchers, including librarians and support staff, who remember her with delight. Among many other commendations, Sarah won a year-long Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship for study at the McNeil Center for Early American Studies, a Lillian Gary Taylor Fellowship from the University of Virginia, a Jay T. Last Fellowship from the American Antiquarian Society and a long-term National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship, again at the AAS.

Sarah's tenure review at UWGB was a foregone conclusion at the time of her passing. Given her publication, fellowship and presentation record, that comes as no surprise. Sarah also played a galvanizing role at her institution by creating transformative spaces for students both inside and outside the classroom. Perhaps most significantly, she sponsored the university's first LGBTQ book group and was the first to teach LGBTQ literature classes, which more than one student commented changed their lives. Sarah's department and college are attempting to have her granted tenure posthumously, subject to university regulations.

Sarah's personality was so grand, and our pain is so keen, that it can be easy to shy away from the simple fact that she had already contributed enormously to our professional and personal worlds. And yet she was poised to do much more.

Working with Sarah remains one of the highlights of my life as a professor. This doesn't mean it was always easy. It will surprise no one that her intellectual reach was expansive and inclusive. Her work was crowded with – indeed built of – original materials that others had overlooked or undervalued. The massive amount of critical reading she did often had to be relegated to an inordinate number of footnotes – necessary to accommodate an extraordinary appetite for critical scholarship that informed, but never waylaid, her unique approach.



Dissertation chapter drafts were rarely linear; they were always lengthy; and they vibrated with intensity. Upon receiving one, I would join her at our favorite café and we would spend several hours deep in conversation, as the bible study groups and undergraduate confabs came and went at neighboring tables, to get to the “key” of what we had before us. Then she would restring the argument like pearls on a strand. Sarah, as many of you know, never lacked conviction; and by the time she was done with something, readers were invariably convinced.

Knowing Sarah as I did, I saw some of what went on behind the accolades and accomplishments. Sarah took things hard, there is no doubt, and she was often knocked off her perch temporarily by setbacks some of us may have learned, sometimes, to balance against the gifts life has to offer. Her sense of justice, and with it of injustice –including the perceived personal injustice that is inevitable in the inadequately resourced and highly ego-driven academic trade – was acute. We often speak, especially recently, of Sarah's generosity and ebullience. It is important to realize, however, that she was a real person – not just sweetness and light, but snarky humor, a real reluctance to suffer fools gladly, and a fragile heart that sometimes seemed out of sync in its vulnerability with what outsiders saw as her enviable success.

In the days since Sarah passed, the same thing keeps happening. I observe something simple, something the pandemic has not yet robbed us of. It could be branches over my head or the taste of butterscotch pudding. I then think almost matter-of-factly, “Sarah can't experience this.” Then my mind stops. While we all grieve differently, I take some solace in knowing that others are grappling with similar psychic disconnects as we try to make sense of the unthinkable.

Over the coming months, I hope that all of us who loved her will be able to settle into the reality of her loss and also of her vibrant ever-presence. Sarah, more than any other single person I can name, shaped those she knew with her gorgeous spirit, and through us she will continue to shape our world.

Marion Rust  
University of Kentucky  
Editor, *Early American Literature*



***SEA Scholars and Junior  
Scholars of the Month***

***SEA Scholar of the Month, August 2020:  
Matthew Peters***

Dr. Matthew Peters is an Assistant Professor in American Intellectual and Cultural History at the University of Nottingham. He is currently working on a special issue of *Early American Literature* titled "Fictionality" and a piece on early American encyclopedias for an essay collection.



***SEA Scholar of the Month, November 2020:  
Laura Stevens***

Dr. Laura Stevens is Chapman Professor of English at the University of Tulsa. She is currently working on revisions to her new book, *Friday's Tribe: Eighteenth-Century English Missionary Writings*. She is inspired by her indigenous students at the University of Tulsa and appreciates how women often take on leading roles in the SEA.



***SEA Jr. Scholar of the Month, October 2020:  
Tabitha Lowrey***

Dr. Tabitha Lowrey is an Assistant Professor of African American Literature at Coastal Carolina University. She is currently working on a project that considers how black authors were received in magazines and newspapers for child readers. She is currently enjoying reading Honorée Jeffers' *The Age of Phillis*. She also enjoys studying early Black newspapers.



***SEA Jr. Scholar of the Month, January 2021:  
Ajay Batra***

Ajay Batra is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Pennsylvania. He is currently working on his dissertation titled "Radiant Ephemera: Abolition in the Archives of Atlantic Slavery, 1785-1865." He is currently reading C.L.R. James's *Notes on Dialectics* and his favorite early American text is James Redpath's *The Roving Editor*.



**Early American Historical Sites**  
**“Kept for Market:’ Slaving and Empire through European Forts on the Gold Coast”**

Cape Coast Castle is a well-known eighteenth-century fort on the Ghanaian coast. Martin Luther King Jr. was photographed there in 1957. Barack Obama visited with his entire family in 2009. However, it is just one example of dozens of such forts that Europeans built and maintained during the era of trans-Atlantic chattel slavery. The forts held captives until ships could take them to enslavement in the Americas. The forts also planted European Atlantic empires on African soil.

People who are familiar with the castles may recognize picturesque representations of Cape Coast and Elmina. They are commonly photographed from the vantage point of the ocean. This visual trope of the ocean view appears to originate in published woodcuts from the seventeenth century, such as Jean Barbot’s descriptions and woodcuts. In 1682, Barbot visited Fort Amsterdam (a.k.a. Fort Kormantin). Barbot wrote that it was “high on a rocky hill” and enjoyed a “delightful view” of land and sea. It had been, he wrote, recently “beautify’d” and improved by the Dutch with “conveniences” and “very fine” guns and walls (Barbot, 157-159). His woodcut depicts the fort in a visually similar style (Fig., top right). The installation dominates the town of Kormantin. A 2016 photograph of the ruin of Fort Amsterdam atop the “rocky hill” Barbot described confirms how it looms over ocean and land.

The country around Kormantin features in Aphra Behn’s 1688 novel *Oroonoko* as the birthplace of the titular protagonist, but she does not mention a fort at all. Literary mentions of the forts by the people enslaved through them are rare. Venture Smith’s recollection of the fort on the Fante coast through which he passed is unique. Smith and his fellow captives were confined in the fort at Anomabo, which was halfway between Fort Amsterdam and Cape Coast Castle. He reported arriving by land and—not surprisingly—offered no admiring description of the place. After marching hundreds of miles, he and fellow captives came to a “district which was contiguous to the sea, called in Africa, Anamaboo” and “were then put into the castle, and kept for market.” Then, some time later, he “and other prisoners were put on board a canoe... and rowed away to a vessel” that took them to North America (Smith, 12-13).

Of the 12 million people trafficked out of Africa, 1.2 million passed through the Gold Coast. About 56,000 of those who embarked from the Gold Coast eventually disembarked in North America. Therefore, it is likely that tens of thousands of Africans in America shared some part of the enslavement experience of Venture Smith.

Like Venture Smith, many had been captured hundreds of miles inland in bloody raids. The captive men, women, and children often died en route to the ocean. The fortifications on the coast were not passive receivers of trafficked people: officials, protected by the forts, demanded this supply. The Portuguese built Elmina in 1482, a decade before Columbus’s voyage, to protect Portugal’s claim to gold trading in the area. Only later did Elmina’s governors begin demanding more slaves than gold. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, Europeans built (or rebuilt) their forts with dungeons for holding slave-commodities as a central design element. Venture’s own story poetically represents the commodification process when his abduction ends in his receiving a new name (Venture) as a marker of his new master’s capital investment.

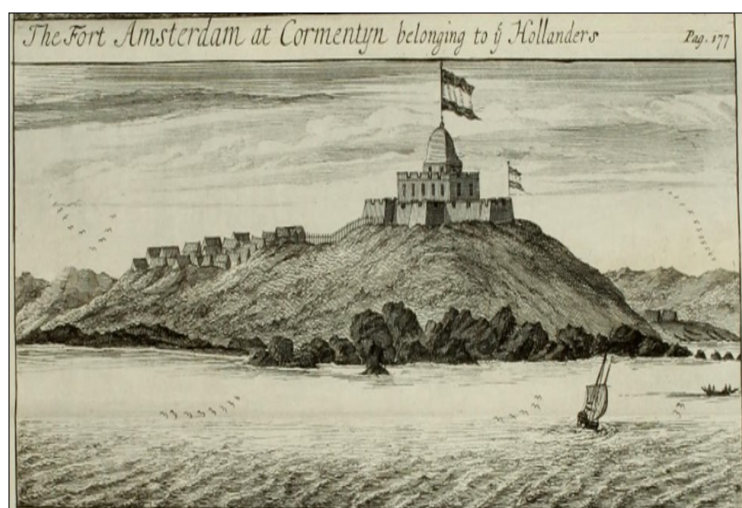


Fig. Fort Amsterdam ca. 1680 (top) and 2016 (bottom). Sources: Barbot (top) and Spady (bottom).

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The fortifications entangled imperial dynamics with slave trafficking but did not grant Europeans complete control. Early modern African states were roughly equal to European states technologically and politically. Local leaders forced the forts' governors and commanders to negotiate and compromise. On the Kormantin coast, the forts' garrisons sometimes had to fight with African authorities and European competitors to retain their installations. Africans could cut off supplies, or bypass the forts and canoe out to waiting slave ships directly.

Nonetheless, the high towers and guns projected power. The forts' walls enclosed indigenous African land and made it at least partly subject to foreign authority. Over time, European demand for slaves changed African trading institutions and practices to allow greater slave trafficking. It divided classes of slaving profiteers from other Africans. Europeans deliberately fed rivalries between African states, such as between the coastal Fante and the Asante.

What Fort Amsterdam and other sites made possible was what one historian has called *war capitalism*: Europeans fortified trading outposts at strategic points around the world and linked them to each other through global shipping networks. They applied force directly or by proxy in order to enhance their power and profit. Commodified African people were a central part of this strategy, adding significantly to the accumulation of capital in Europe and America that would help launch the industrial revolution.

On the Kormantin coast, the economic benefits were more limited. By 1750, Anomabo probably had a population of roughly 20,000 (Sparks, 8). Such a substantial population was equal to Philadelphia at the time, North America's largest colonial city.

However, the towns probably contracted after trans-Atlantic slaving ended, and the loss of millions of people in their prime significantly weakened African development prospects.

Today, the ruins of these forts are often a subject of debate in Ghana. The Ghanaian development authorities promote tourism to the sites. The diaspora prefers preservation of the sites as sacred memorials of a genocidal traffic in people. One African American permanent resident of Ghana told me and my students in 2016 that he would rather see the forts torn down than turned into places of edutainment. Local tour guides told us in interviews that they hope the forts will serve as a warning to the world not to commit such atrocities again. Neo-colonial aesthetic potentials within any project promoting tourism of imperial forts and slaving dungeons seems likely to continue to generate debate in Ghana in the years ahead.

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Soka University of America



**Digital Early America**  
**“Digital Texts in Early American Studies”**

About 15 years ago, finding myself in charge of a new institutional repository and needing content to post, I began with a few of my old papers from my graduate student days in the 1980s—mostly biographical dictionary entries for early American writers (Daniel Denton, Joshua Scottow). Unsurprisingly, these gathered few downloads, and I realized that the works for which they were known were largely unavailable except to academic libraries with subscriptions to EEBO or ECCO, and then only as rather messy page images. So I began to transcribe and edit digital editions of *Old Mens Tears for Their Own Declensions*, *A Brief Description of New-York: Formerly Called New-Netherlands*, *A Narrative of the Planting of the Massachusetts Colony*, etc.

One challenge was making the texts look right. Modern typefaces just did not convey the flavor—or the majesty—of 17th century typography. “Jesus Christ” with just an ordinary sloped italic “J” and quiet little “s” seemed weak and pale beside the bolder crossed-J and elegant long s of the original publications. At last I discover the Fell Types, digitized and distributed by Igino Marini, based on the types acquired and used by John Fell, 17th-century bishop and founder of the press at Oxford. Marini’s revival and digital versions of these types more faithfully approximated the look and feel of the English and colonial publications I was producing.

Having spent many years as a production manager for The Library of America and Yale University Press (among others), and equipped with a PC and Adobe Creative Suite, I began to produce what I called “digital facsimiles” of works from America’s past—mostly from pre-Revolutionary years, but up to and including hard to find (digitally, at least) works of later authors (e.g., Melville’s *John Marr and Other Sailors* and *Timoleon*).

I made a conscious effort to select works from outside the canon or that related to Native or Black or alternative experiences, such as Cotton Mather’s *The Negro Christianized*, David Cusack’s *Sketches of Ancient History of the Six Nations*, and Samuel Danforth’s *The Cry of Sodom Enquired Into*. It was important that the works be free, easily found and accessed, textually responsible, and presented with a minimum of apparatus—only the briefest introduction, notes necessary for comprehension of obscure passages, and a history of the text and any emendations.

I had a decided preference for works of short or medium length, since they all required careful transcription, collation, and proofing.

I also preferred works that had actually appeared to the contemporaneous public, thus avoiding texts such as Edward Taylor’s poetry, Samuel Sewell’s diary, Winthrop’s Modell of Christian Charity, or Bradford’s History of Plymouth Plantation. Professor Reiner Smolinski generously donated a number of essential texts, including the Edwards sermon that remains the entire repository’s most popular document.

The series now contains 108 works, which have been downloaded 1.7 million times, with an additional 700,000 page hits. The URL is <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/etas/>. The works are all in the public domain, of course, and any editorial apparatus is freely licensed for re-use, making these open educational resources easy to incorporate into syllabi or course assignments.

Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God. A Sermon Preached at Enfield, July 8th, 1741.	755,401
The Constitutions of the Free-Masons (1734)	146,240
The Confessions of Nat Turner (1831)	84,536
A Description of New England (1616)	69,181
The Wonders of the Invisible World. Observations as Well Historical as Theological, upon the Nature, the Number, and the Operations of the Devils (1693)	58,442
A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia (1588)	51,895
The Journal of Major George Washington (1754)	32,773
A Divine and Supernatural Light, Immediately imparted to the Soul by the Spirit of God, Shown to be both a Scriptural, and Rational Doctrine	20,980
Milk for Babes. Drawn Out of the Breasts of Both Testaments (1646)	19,558
Gods Promise to His Plantation (1630)	19,426

David Cusick's Sketches of Ancient History of the Six Nations (1828)	17,679
The Negro Christianized (1706)	16,600
A Brief History of the Pequot War (1736)	15,710
The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucke (1784)	15,369
A Brief History of the Warr with the Indians in New-England (1676)	15,123
An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America	13,622
A Brief Recognition of New-Englands Errand into the Wilderness	12,468
De Bestiis Marinis, or, The Beasts of the Sea (1751)	12,323
The Selling of Joseph: A Memorial (1700)	11,291
A Discourse concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to the Higher Powers (1750).	11,077
An Address to the Negroes in the State of New-York (1787)	10,909
[The Case of Ann Hibbins, Executed for Witchcraft at Boston in 1656]	10,015
A Relation of the Indian War, by Mr. Easton, of Rhode Island, 1675	10,012

The series has been accessed from 226 countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, Ghana, Singapore, and Iceland.

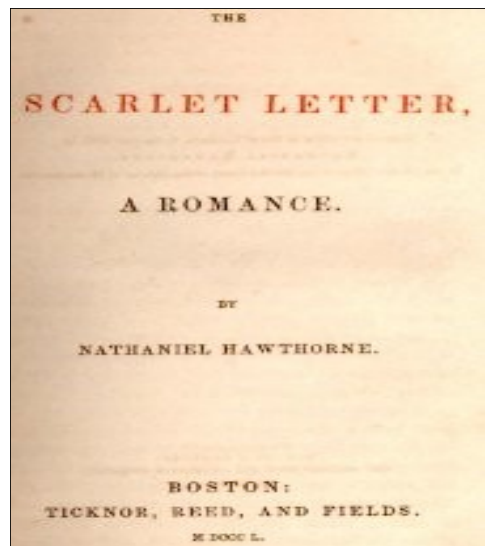
Paul Royster  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries

**Teaching Early America**  
**“Teaching *In the Blood*, Suzan-Lori Parks’ Counterfact on *The Scarlet Letter*”**

Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Suzan-Lori Parks describes her two experimental “red letter plays”—*In the Blood* (1999) and *Fucking A* (2000)—as *riffs* or *counterfacts* on Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* (1850). As jazz musician Corey Mwamba explains, a *counterfact* results from “the recasting of older musical structures with contemporary musical ideas, idiom, and language.” He clarifies: “The best known counterfacts in jazz are the many versions of the blues. The blues has no true ‘original’ melody: it is an eternally unfinished song.”

When I introduce Parks’ plays to my American literature class at an historically black college, I mention her jazz metaphor for her composition process because it helps raise critical questions, most obviously, why is she using *The Scarlet Letter* as a familiar harmonic structure? Because Parks has created another version of his canonical novel, is she implying that *The Scarlet Letter* is no longer—or never was—“the true ‘original’ melody,” to use Mwamba’s words? If we employ the language of literary history rather than jazz, our question might be: is she unsettling critical theories that *The Scarlet Letter* is a myth of North America’s origins? How and why is she re-mapping literary history and the American literary canon?

Interestingly, she names Scene 9, (the last scene of *In the Blood*), “The Prison Door,” Hawthorne’s title for Chapter 1 of *The Scarlet Letter*. Carol Schafer suggests that by imaginatively placing *The Scarlet Letter* after *In the Blood*, Parks offers her audience “the promised renewal, [embodied in Hester Prynne’s return], that the sacrifice of the scapegoat, [Parks’ Hester], in tragedy generates” (194).



Clearly, Parks perceives theater as a site “where history and literary history can be revisited and rewritten” (Schafer 182). Parks’ purpose for *riffing* on the *The Scarlet Letter* is both literary and political. Because of space constraints, I will focus here on *In the Blood*, foregoing detailed summary, and how I teach it in a two-semester American literature class for English majors at an historically black college.

Parks’ variations on Hawthorne’s theme of stigmatized single motherhood explore such societal problems as the feminization of poverty, especially single mothers’, sexual exploitation, and such questionable solutions as forced sterilization and the promotion of marriage and compulsory heterosexuality. In fact, Parks extends in *In the Blood* her critique of hegemonic forms of neoliberalism and transnational market relations, begun in her 1995 play *Venus*, a dramatization of the life of Saartjie Baartman, the so-called “Venus Hottentot.” The ideology of neoliberalism has roots in the notion of North American individualism prominent in the nineteenth century and embodied in the character of Hester Prynne. Since a class discussion comparing and contrasting the two works often just scratches the surface, I narrow down our focus after the first introductory day to two fundamental questions: Why does Parks’ protagonist, Hester, La Negrita, fail but Hester Prynne prevails? Why does Prynne seem to possess personal agency, but La Negrita does not? Hester Prynne transforms her suffering into sympathy for the sick and the troubled in her community, thereby changing the meaning of the scarlet “A” from *adultery* to *able* to *angel*.

In contrast, Hester, La Negrita, whose foreign name marks her color, race, and otherness (Schafer 183), is an illiterate, homeless mother of five children by five different men. In the last scene, “The Prison Door,” Hester, La Negrita is in jail for hitting and murdering her oldest child, Jabber, because he mindlessly repeated the word “slut,” which he overheard his mother’s ex-lover, Reverend D, yelling at her. Forcibly sterilized by the government, Hester internalizes society’s judgments, regretting her “five mistakes” (106), whom she once celebrated as her “treasures” (7). While Hester Prynne becomes an admirable individualist, if not a martyr, Hester, La Negrita—assuming the play is naturalistic, not tragic—is a victim. Prynne becomes, according to customary interpretations, a representative of an Emersonian self-reliant American identity; Hester, La Negrita becomes its nullification, an anti-heroine.

Considering the question of why La Negrita fails and Prynne prevails brings into view the economic and social issues explored by Parks, especially her critique of economic liberalism, defined by some thinkers in nineteenth-century North America as synonymous with individualism. To connect the theme of neoliberalism to not only

*In the Blood* but also *The Scarlet Letter*, I introduce Brook Thomas’ key insights into Hester Prynne’s characterization in “Civic Hester: *The Scarlet Letter* as Civic Myth.” As a link between the two works, Thomas’ theory reveals a surprising common vision for North American society: that of a civil order based on interpersonal relationships and sympathy. Contrary to earlier critical theories, Thomas contends that *The Scarlet Letter* challenges “the standard version of the Puritan origins of US citizenship” (183). He argues that Hester Prynne “is defined much more by her commitment to interpersonal relations than by her individualism”; for Hawthorne, Thomas believes, Hester’s independence is not the result of a “naturally self-sufficient self” but “bred and cultivated in the associational activities [her counseling and nursing] of an independent civil society” (199). Thomas concludes that such activities

extend the parameters of good citizenship to an interpersonal realm concerned with the affairs of the heart that no affairs of the state seem capable of .... Thus, though Hester has no place within the civic sphere, she ... helps to bring about a possible structural realignment of Puritan society by having it include what we can call the nascent formation of an independent civil society, [which precedes and generates a democratic state].” (197)

Thus, Hawthorne’s novel provides a “powerful and enabling civic myth for many, like those whom Hester counsels, whose failed efforts at sympathy make them feel marginalized by the existing—and not so—civil order” (Thomas 203). A qualification that Thomas makes in his argument is relevant to Parks’ Hester, La Negrita. He cautions that in contrast to Hester Prynne’s agency, “the possibility of achieving the status of model citizen through individual effort was denied African Americans, [as the Dred Scott decision, made not long after *The Scarlet Letter*’s publication, exemplifies], because their



Scene from *In the Blood*

race meant that as a group, they inherited a badge of slavery whose stigma persisted”—according to Justice Taney (207). The persistence of this stigma manifests itself in *In the Blood*, primarily in the insults that the chorus, identified as “All,” hurls at her in the opening Prologue of the play and throughout it: “She oughta be married .... A Burden to Society .... Hussy. Slut. Pah! .... Bad News in her Blood” (6-7). Certainly, the title *In the Blood* suggests inherited traits and foreshadows the play’s naturalism. Sadly, in *In the Blood*, the civility that Prynne exerts and the possibility of an independent civil society do not exist. One reason for this void—as Parks’ play suggests—is the effects of neoliberalism. Because it trusts that the free market “ensures that everyone gets what they deserve,” neoliberalism believes that “efforts to create a more equal society are both counterproductive and morally corrosive” (Monbiot).

Many of Parks’ characters—the exploitive social worker named Welfare; the opportunistic white friend, Amiga Gringa; and the hypocritical prosperity gospel preacher, Reverend D—taunt Hester, La Negrita with neoliberal views. Compared to Hester Prynne’s victory, Hester, La Negrita’s downward spiral seems to suggest she has no personal agency. However, if the play is read as a tragedy, similar to Seneca’s *Medea*, the potential for agency in Parks’s Hester becomes detectable. Carol Schafer argues that Hester is not a victim, but a tragic hero; her tragic flaw is “the desire to love and be loved,” and it invites “an ambivalent audience,” [tempted to identify with the judgmental chorus], to empathize with her” (192). It is true, for example, that Hester, La Negrita, apparently out of hope for love, refuses to divulge the names of her children’s fathers to Welfare, though she desperately needs funds from their garnished wages. By showing Hester, La Negrita’s weaknesses, Parks prevents *In the Blood* and its critique of neoliberalism from declining into propaganda. However, Parks never swerves from inviting her audience to hold social institutions accountable for failing, even exploiting vulnerable women like Hester, La Negrita. A comparison of the two Hesters compels students to think about the civil orders imagined by Parks and Hawthorne and to consider the possible effects of the enshrinement of American individualism in American literary criticism and culture.

Mary C. Carruth  
Southern University and A. & M. College



### ***Interested in Writing a Column for SEAN?***

We are always looking for SEA members to contribute to our regular columns:

- Early American Historical Sites
- Digital Early America
- Teaching Early America

If you or someone you know is interested, please send a brief inquiry including your name, institution, and topic idea—for these columns or another submission—to the SEA newsletter editor, Mary Balkun at [mary.balkun@shu.edu](mailto:mary.balkun@shu.edu).

### ***Upcoming Conferences***

#### **Northeast Modern Language Association Conference**

52nd Annual Convention: Virtual  
March 10-14, 2021

NeMLA’s 2021 theme is “Tradition and Innovation: Changing World’s through the Humanities.” Pulitzer Prize winning author Jennifer Egan is Friday evening’s keynote speaker.

#### **American Society of Eighteenth Century Studies**

Annual Meeting: Virtual  
April 7-11, 2021

Since ASECS will be virtual this year, use the hashtag #ASECS2021 to promote the conference and stay engaged with other conference goers.

#### **American Literature Association**

32nd Annual Conference  
Westin Copley Place  
Boston, MA.  
July 7-11, 2021

Digital options will be available for this year’s ALA conference participants who submit full panel sessions.

#### **Society for the Study of American Women Writers Triennial Conference**

“American Women Writers: Ecologies, Survival, Change”  
Royal Sonesta Harbor Court Hotel,  
Baltimore, Maryland  
November 4-7, 2021

**Society of Early Americanists: Twelfth Biennial Conference**  
**March 3-7, 2021**  
**The Many Pasts, Presents, and Futures of Early America**

Despite Covid-19, the Twelfth SEA Biennial Conference will go on—virtually! Things might look a little different this year, but SEA President Patrick Erben and the SEA Committee Members have worked tirelessly to provide a great experience for all participants. The draft program can be found here:

<https://www.societyofearlyamericanists.org/conferences/sea-2021-biennial/program>

**Special Events**

*“Centering the Native South: A Roundtable on Native Pasts and Futures”*

*Sponsored by Georgia Humanities and the Omohundro Institute*

*Panelists:*

Dr. Brooke Bauer, Catawba, University of South Carolina, Lancaster

Dr. Malinda Maynor Lowery, Lumbee, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Dr. Julie L. Reed, Cherokee, Pennsylvania State University



*Brooke Bauer*

*Malinda Maynor Lowery*

*Dr. Julie Reed*

*African American Studies Keynote:*

Dr. Jocelyn Moody, Distinguished Chair in American Literature, University of Texas at San Antonio

*Latinx Studies Keynote: “Yesterplace”*

Dr. Rodrigo Lazo, University of California, Irvine



*Jocelyn Moody*



*Rodrigo Lazo*

*Keynote Plenary Reading and Colloquy:*  
*The Age of Phillis:*  
 An SEA Common Reading Initiative  
 Honorée Fannone Jeffers, University of Oklahoma



*Honorée Fannone Jeffers*

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## *Calls for Papers*

### **Special Issue of *Early American Literature*: “Dear Sister: Phillis Wheatley (Peters) Studies Now”**

The recognition that Phillis Wheatley (Peters) is a significant figure in early American literature has fueled much scholarship in the last three decades centered on her life and literary contributions, culminating most recently in Honorée Fanonne Jeffers’s book of poetry *The Age of Phillis*, which is currently the featured text for the Society of Early Americanists’s first ever common reading initiative. As scholarship about Wheatley continues to grow, this special issue of *Early American Literature*, “Dear Sister: Phillis Wheatley (Peters) Studies Now,” invites essays that together consider Phillis Wheatley as a field of study. We seek essays that speak to the depth and vastness of Wheatley studies. We welcome submissions exploring a wide range of approaches to Wheatley, from the methodological to the pedagogical. We especially welcome essays focused on the teaching of Wheatley. We invite full-length essays (8,000 words) for consideration. The deadline to submit your essay is April 30, 2021. Please send essays and/or inquiries to special issue editors with the subject line: Wheatley Special Issue question/submission: Tara Bynum, [tara-bynum@uiowa.edu](mailto:tara-bynum@uiowa.edu) Brigitte Fielder, [brigitte.fielder@wisc.edu](mailto:brigitte.fielder@wisc.edu) Cassander L. Smith, [clsmith17@ua.edu](mailto:clsmith17@ua.edu)  
**Essays are due by April 30, 2021**

### **Special Section of *Scholarly Editing*, Issue 39-- “Uncovering and Sustaining the Cultural Record”**

In issuing this invitation, we look forward to publishing a set of short essays in the upcoming issue of *Scholarly Editing* that will demonstrate diversities of practice, perspective, and emphasis. Our goal is to explore capaciously the contexts of knowledge production as theorized by Roopika Risam in *New Digital Worlds: Post-colonial Digital Humanities in Theory, Praxis, and Pedagogy* (2019). Central questions include “how projects are designed, how material in them is framed, how data in them is managed, and what forms of labor are being used to create them.”

**Contributions are due by April 30, 2021.**

Please email questions and queries to Robert Riter ([rbriter@ua.edu](mailto:rbriter@ua.edu)) or Ross K. Tangedal ([ross.tangedal@uwsp.edu](mailto:ross.tangedal@uwsp.edu)).

## *Fellowships*

### **Rare Book School, 2021**

This year’s Rare Book School will be held virtually. All programs will be held online.

Applications are open now.

### **Deadline: March 3rd, 2021**

This year, RBS-awarded scholarships and fellowships may be used to pay for **online courses**. A scholarship may be redeemed for one 22-hour course, two 6-hour courses, or one 10-hour course and one 6-hour course. For more information, please contact [rbsscholarships@virginia.edu](mailto:rbsscholarships@virginia.edu) or your RBS-awarded scholarship or fellowship [administrator](#) directly



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**Website:** <http://www.societyofearlyamericanists.org>



**The Society of Early Americanists  
Junior Scholars' Caucus**

**MLA 2022**

Washington DC

Jan. 6 - 9, 2022

ASECS/allied organization panel

"Sylvia Wynter's 18th Century"

This panel invites considerations of philosopher Sylvia Wynter's theories of humanness in reimagining eighteenth-century studies, particularly how race, location, and time together inform what it means to be human. Please send 200-word proposals to Tita Chico, University of Maryland ([tchico@umd.edu](mailto:tchico@umd.edu)) by **March 15, 2021**.

**New Online Publication**

*Insurrect!* is an online publication devoted to anti-colonial frameworks and critiques of racial capitalism in Early American Studies, and publishes writing related to the historical and cultural legacies of colonialism in the Americas and Atlantic World. *Insurrect!*'s group of core editors are contingent scholars and graduate students in history and literary studies who met at [the McNeil Center for Early American Studies](#). We came together out of an eagerness to support the writing and critical inquiry of junior scholars in a crumbling academic landscape that privileges the writing of tenured and senior faculty—but also through our own shared investments in collective organizing (our editorial board includes several former or current union organizers). *Insurrect!* aims to confront nationalist myths and white supremacy in historical writing about the Americas, as well as the austerity measures and colonial hagiographies of the academy more broadly. To that end, we ran a fundraising campaign this year so that we can pay our authors and editors [fair rates](#) (you can [find us on Patreon](#)). In five months since launching our online magazine, we have published writing by historians, art historians, librarians, high school teachers, literary scholars, and public historians. Our audience is multi-disciplinary and extends outside of academia, as we've been inspired by other online publications like [Lady Science](#) and [Contingent Magazine](#). *Insurrect!* is seeking submissions from graduate students and contingent faculty of 750-1000 word pieces such as: cultural criticism, short narratives on archival sources and primary materials, pedagogy reflections, exhibition reviews, and digital project reviews. We accept full pieces for consideration at: [insurrect.history@gmail.com](mailto:insurrect.history@gmail.com)

**SEA Junior Scholars' Caucus Mentoring Program**

The Junior Scholars' Caucus invites scholars of all levels to contribute to our mentoring program. Mentoring relationships enhance junior scholars' access to professional opportunities, integrate junior scholars into the SEA community of researchers, and facilitate excellent intellectual work. We pair mentors and mentees based on a discrete task, like providing advice on a specific career stage, reading the work in progress of a mentee, writing recommendation letters upon familiarity with a mentee's work, or providing feedback on teaching and syllabi. We will also provide opportunities for mentors and mentees to network at conferences.

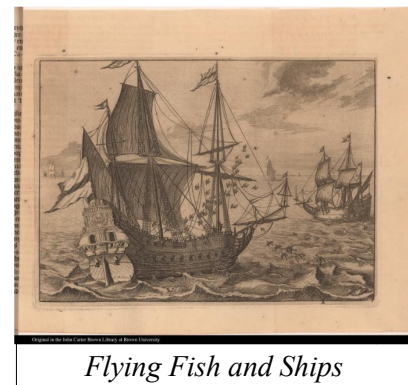
The JSC envisions that mentoring a junior scholar will not engage more than a business day (8 hours) of a scholar's time over the course of a single semester. However, the parameters of the mentoring arrangement are ultimately up to the participants to decide. In recognition of the importance of diverse perspectives and influences on intellectual life, the JSC encourages junior scholars to seek multiple mentors, advisors, and sponsors throughout their early careers.

To get involved, contact JSC presidents Kaitlin Tonti at [KTonti2@gmail.com](mailto:KTonti2@gmail.com). Or, you can email the SEA Jr. Caucus gmail page directly at [seajurcaucus@gmail.com](mailto:seajurcaucus@gmail.com)



**Recent Publications on Early American Topics**

The Society of Early Americanists Recent Publications on Early American Topics page contains a list of books and journals relevant to the field of Early American Studies to approximately 1830. Visit the page to find both recent and forthcoming titles, as well as the Books Archive: <http://web.mnstate.edu/seabooks/index.html>



### To Our Members

The SEA thanks its new and renewing members for their invaluable support of our Society. Your contributions make early American studies thrive. Please remember to keep your membership current and direct any membership inquiries to the Executive Coordinator, Sandra Gustafson ([seacoord@gmail.com](mailto:seacoord@gmail.com)).

You can also help build our membership by referring colleagues in the field to the Society's homepage: <https://www.societyofearlyamericanists.org/>

### Society Information/Membership

The Society of Early Americanists provides a forum for scholarly and pedagogical exchange and professional support among scholars of various disciplines who study the literature and culture of America to approximately 1830. Our membership of over 350 individuals enjoys a bi-yearly newsletter detailing activities in our field, a website that links to many documents of interest to early American scholars and teachers, and a listserv. We also offer opportunities for networking and dissemination of professional work.

If you are interested in joining the Society, please see the membership information here: <https://www.societyofearlyamericanists.org/membership.html>

### Opportunities for Giving

In addition to keeping your SEA membership active, you can contribute to the Fund to Honor Excellence in Teaching: [https://www.societyofearlyamericanists.org/honored\\_teachers.html](https://www.societyofearlyamericanists.org/honored_teachers.html)

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