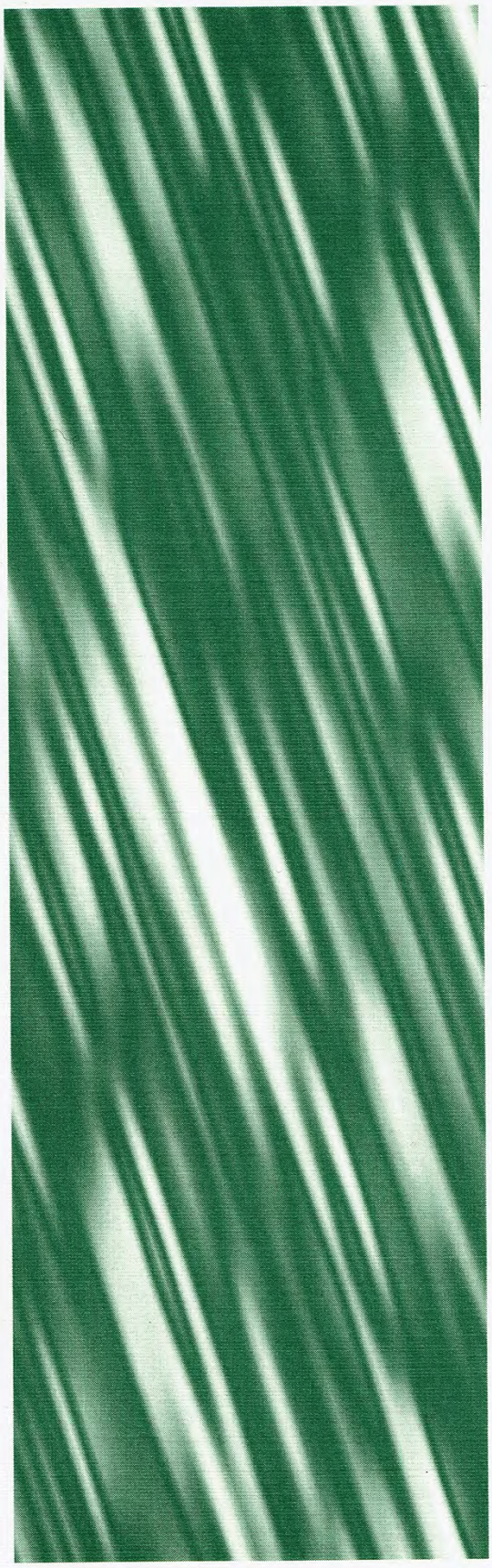

Histories of the Western Association of Women Historians 1969-1994

Marguerite Renner
Editor•Contributor

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PREFACE

What follows are narrative histories of the Western Association of Women Historians (WAWH). My intentions are to share these stories with the women who have joined the Western Association of Women Historians in recent years, to honor the numerous women who have created and nurtured our association, and to leave our accounts so that future historians know why WAWH was created and how it has functioned and grown. Hopefully such background information will help future leaders as they guide and direct WAWH.

In the first section are the remarks by Grace Larsen, who along with Linda Kerber founded the West Coast History Association in 1969, Ellen Huppert, who attended the first meeting, and Karen Offen who joined shortly thereafter. In those days they gathered in the gracious, bucolic setting of Asilomar and followed the informal style adopted from the early twentieth century Berkshire meeting.

The second set of remarks includes the work of some of our presidents in the 1970s and early 1980s, when the organization was known first as the Western Coast Association of Women Historians and then as the Western Association of Women Historians. Included here are the thoughts of S. Joan Moon, who served as president from 1973 to 1976, and who recalls the early informal years, and review the issues that women historians and the organization faced in the 1970s. These are followed by a speech given by Frances Richardson Keller at the WAWH Luncheon of the American Historical Association, Pacific Coast Branch in 1981. Frances served as president from 1981-1983 and moved the organization further along the professional path it has taken.

The third section includes my remarks, which attempt to spin still another account of association history over the last twenty-five years. I have relied heavily on our newsletter, title the *WEST COAST ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN HISTORIANS Newsletter* until 1982, when it was renamed *THE NETWORKER*, but have also used documents that Frances Keller shared with me and conversations I had with several past presidents.

The final section includes documents of our organization. Included here are the names by which WAWH has been knows, a list of past presidents, the sites where our meetings have been held, the winner of our several awards, a copy of the PROGRAM QUESTIONAIRE, which was used to create the first formal program, and a copy of the LOOKING AHEAD questionnaires, which has been used to reset out course. I owe special thanks to Karen Offen for compiling the list of prize winners when she was president. Thanks also to Joan Moon for answering my requests for the names of the organization as these have changed over time, the list of past presidents, and various other dates from the collection of documents that are housed at California State University, Sacramento.

I am deeply indebted to Jacqueline Barnhardt, who, as president for our twentieth anniversary, began this narrative history by asking several founding members and past presidents to put their memories to paper. Without her labor, this project could never have been completed. I also thank the founders and past presidents for permission to include their remarks. Without their permission, our history and this booklet would be incomplete. My appreciation also goes to Joan Moon for sharing materials from the WAWH archives which are located at California State University, Sacramento, and Karen Offen for copying early editions of *WCAWH Newsletter* for me. The collection of newsletters that Karen Offen, Betsy Perry, and I have saved over the years made my research possible. My thanks also go to Frances Keller for the various documents she

shared with me and to Penny Kanner for the time she has spent with me at the American Historical Association Convention in 1993 and on the telephone recalling our past.

I would also like to thank Robert M. Nelson for reading this document and offering suggestions to make it more readable, Sharon Denner for carefully editing the text, Ken Trupp for his expertise as an editor and wordsmith, and Penny Kanner and Betsy Perry for reading my account and judging the accuracy of the story I have tried to tell. Susan Cisco has done the job of typesetting this booklet and I am deeply indebted to her, not only for the care she has given it, but for her willingness to add to her long list of responsibilities in the Public Relations Office of Glendale College.

Writing a history is a daring task when one knows that the readers are also actors in the story. I know that I have not included all of the women who have played a role in the growth of development of WAWH. I ask that you record your thoughts and send them to me so that we can build our archive and leave an even more complete account for some future president to tell. Please accept my apologies for any errors I have inadvertently made and notify me of them so that corrections can be made in future histories of our organization.

I. W.A.W.H.: The Early Years – Beginnings

By **Grace Larsen** *and as presented to the Western Association of Women Historians in 1989, in celebration of the twentieth anniversary of its founding*.

Reconstructing from memory and available records the foundations of this organization has been a labor of love. I am deeply grateful to Jackie Barnhardt and the program committee for allowing me to indulge myself in the project. While my memories always seemed quite vivid to me, some proved to be clearly wrong when tested. As professional historians, this does not surprise you. Fortunately, in preparing my version of the origins and first years, I have received generous offerings from the memories of other early members, including Linda Kerber, fellow founder. I have also used documents in my possession and those loaned by friends. The documents are fragments that have survived mostly by accident, but as we all know, more complex histories than ours have been rendered under similar limitations.

I trust that we have an understanding among ourselves that whoever has superior evidence for the factual accuracy or fuller treatment of the early history will give the facts to Jackie. She will be honor-bound to make appropriate amendments. My intent for this account has been for it not to be tricks played on the living. To all who helped in this effort – family, friends, librarians – my heartfelt thanks.

To reveal the start of our organization which charter members and their cohort of later years developed into the Western Association of Women Historians requires a background look into its model, the Berkshire Historical Conference, now known as the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians. Linda Kerber and I had belonged to it, although at different periods of time, and remained enthusiastic about it.

Linda and I became acquainted in the San Francisco Bay area through another group, the Bay Area Colonists, which Robert Middlekauff of the University of California, Berkeley and Joseph Illick shepherded in pursuit of American colonial history. During the academic year of 1968-1969, Linda and I met at one of these meetings and agreed on how splendid it would be to have the equivalent of the Berkshire Conference on the West Coast. Why not? She offered to be acting secretary-treasurer, to look up names of women historians for an organizing meeting, if I agreed to be acting president.

From our initial meeting until our last with these extraordinary women we always felt so welcome. I recall my first Berkshire meeting when in a quick orientation during the opening dinner they informed me of their custom of electing the newest, and probably youngest, recruit as secretary-treasurer. The duties, they insisted, were light. This officer-maintained membership lists, informed members and potential members of the meetings, kept "only minutes of record to mark change," and collected dues. In their proceedings the group tried to preserve informality. They were governed, as far as I could tell, by a combination of executive directive and consensus of attending members. Only occasionally did someone refer to the existence of an early constitution and then usually to support one side of a disagreement.

…My inheritance of the office occurred in 1951 at my second meeting with the group. I held it until 1953 when my husband and I were arranging plans to return to California. With the position came my predecessors' records which consisted of odds and ends of correspondence, membership lists, and other documents bearing dates from 1936. While packing for California, I attempted to return them to Margaret Judson of the New Jersey College for Women, now Douglas College of Rutgers University. …She advised me that they were inconsequential and might be tossed. This seemed less shocking then than now. In any case, I should note that my impressions of the Berkshire Historical Conference, which I brought to Linda's and my interest in fostering a west coast clone, grew out of my experience at the four meetings I attended from 1950 to 1953 and from the Berkshire historical material in the folder with me yet.[1]

When and where the Berkshire Historical Conference started and who thought it up are questions not yet settled. My records credit Louise Fargo Brown… with founding it in 1930.[2]

… At the time of my becoming a Berkshirite, the members all engaged in college teaching, or had taught, in institutions in the region which stretched from Maine to Maryland. The geographical range and employment status of the members along with dates for the meetings and activities of the organization invariably came before the annual meeting as issues. Members felt differently about these matters almost from the start. This made for liveliness as these were strong-minded women of diverse scholarly fields, several with distinguished careers and most of the others with aspirations to develop them. Few were intimate friends. Whatever their differences, the Conference existed for the well-being of women historians. Many thought the organization justified its existence by providing a setting for women who taught history to become better acquainted and for discussing professional interests. It was not all business: the week end May Conference offered a chance to relax after an arduous academic year.

Courtesy guests were welcome at the May meeting and all women historians who attended the annual sessions of the American Historical Association were invited to the Berkshire group's December meeting, usually a breakfast coordinated with the American Historical Association.[3] As secretary-treasurer, my task included arranging for the breakfast in New York City when the A.H.A. met there in 1951. The challenge consisted of reserving a quiet space, somewhere in the official hotel or nearby, where breakfast would be served. … Executive Secretary of the A.H.A., Guy Stanton Ford, had as yet found no advantageous way to insert a breakfast meeting notice in the A.H.A. program, although he regularly printed in the *Review*, descriptions of the May Conference.

Luckily, a Schrafft's near the Hotel Pennsylvania … agreed to our reserving its mezzanine floor -with a served breakfast. …Thirty-seven women signed the attendance sheet—it

[1] The words, "Berkshire Historical," appear on the folder's cover. There are the records I will cite as the Berkshire Historical Records.

[2] Letter, Louise Frago Brown, Norfolk, Virginia, to Grace Larsen, Dec. 20, 1951; Viola Barnes, South Hadley, to G. Larsen, Dec. 18, 1951. Berkshire Historical Records.

[3] Viola Barnes, South Hadley to Beatrice Reynolds, Apr. 17, 1937; Barnes to Margaret Judson, South Hadley, Jan. 15, 1950. Berkshire Historical Records.

was a great list—and from their round-the-table remarks became acquainted with one another's work.

Restricting membership in the B.H.C. to women who taught in a college or university in the Berkshire area appealed to a member like Viola Barnes. "That way," she insisted, "we preserve the guild character of it and can talk freely among ourselves in an intimate way impossible when others come."[4] An incident during her presidency convinced her on the subject. Problems arose when a woman without credentials carried "here and there" from the Conference, "scraps of information picked up from our free discussions." The much-annoyed Miss Barnes declared that the woman could not have been a faculty member for she would have realized what harm would result if all present were given to gossip.[5]

Margaret Judson, with her secretary Joanne Neel, in contrast to Viola Barnes, found ways to enlarge the membership to "all possible people." The young lively secretary provoked the Barnes group by collecting the annual dues at the December breakfast where several guests, form various parts of the country, were present, and by consequently sending out notices of the May Conference to all who attended.[6]

W.A.W.H. officers can empathize with those of the Berkshire organization who learned from experience how much tact the setting of meeting dates demanded. No dates for any weekend in May could satisfy any large number. …Maintaining attendance and keeping count of it took ingenuity.

Necessarily, the Berkshire Historical Conference varied its program of activity with the shifting in attendance of its members and changing inclinations of its officers. From time to time some members urged the group to adopt causes; women of less enthusiasm for such action referred to them as crusaders. Action, they feared, might destroy the Conference.[7]

In 1931, a major segment (of the Conference) undertook the project of reforming the state requirements for the training of high school teachers.[8] In 1940, it urged for and obtained consistent recognition of women in the American Historical Association. In this instance, the

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[4] Viola Barnes, South Hadley, to Beatrice Reynolds, Apr. 17, 1937; Barnes to Margaret Judson, Jan. 15, 1950. Berkshire Historical Records.

[5] Viola Barnes, South Hadley, to Beatrice Reynolds, Oct. 9, 1937, Nov. 13, 1937, Dec. 20, 1937, and May 15, 1938. Berkshire Historical Records.

[6] Louise Fargo Brown, Ontario, Canada, to Margaret Judson, May 15, 1948 (See reverse side of the letter, Margaret Judson's notes): Joanne L. Neel, Secretary, form letter, May 22, 1949; Neel to Margaret Judson, May 24, 1949, and May 14, 1950; Margaret Judson, New Brunswick, N.J., to Neel, May 27, 1949; Viola Barnes, South Hadley, to Margaret Judson, Jan. 15, 1950, and May 14, 1950. Berkshire Historical Records.

[7] See notes which were written by Beatrice Reynolds on the reverse side of a letter, Viola Barnes, South Hadley, to Beatrice Reynolds, Apr. 13, 1937. Berkshire Historical Records.

[8] Elsie Van Dyck DeWitt, New London, to President Thomas Moore, Skidmore College, Feb. 1936; Kathryn McHale, General Director, American Association of University Women, Washington D.C., to Elsie Van Dyck DeWitt, Feb.6, 1936. Berkshire Historical Records.

objective amounted to having at least one woman elected to the Council as well as to the Nominating Committee and one woman designated a member of the Program Committee.[9] In 1947, members acted to improve the quality of the A.H.A. program.[10] Brace yourselves! They called it *Men and Centuries of European Civilization*.

Less controversial activities also reflected the style and career interests of members. One project provided for faculty exchange with Oxford and Cambridge.[11] Another type of service offered through the organization came from the use of the membership lists to notify members of events of interest. When Diane Lillian Margery Penson visited the United State, several universities arranged for her to lecture or receive an honorary degree. Berkshire members were alerted in case they might wish to invite to their campus this distinguished historian who was also the first woman to become a vice-chancellor of the University of London.[12]

When the spirit moved, B.H.C. also adopted resolutions to acknowledge fellow member's distinctive professional achievements and to send to the president of her college and to her family.[13] They drew the line at taking action when a member married, on the grounds that some had married after becoming members and nothing had been done for them.

…My personal mixed impressions of the Berkshire women at mid-twentieth century ranged from wonder at their greeting so quickly and warmly … a young stranger in their midst, to awe while sitting with them at dinner, or before the fire thereafter, and as we walked leisurely side by side during the day along the paths surrounding the inn. At the time, they were wonderful characters to me whose names I recognized form having seen them on the backs of books in the stacks of the Doe Library in Berkeley. These women ate, drank, and talked with enormous pleasure. Not once did I hear a word of gossip about another woman historian—about the English royal family or French aristocracy, yes!

…Saturday walks were quite special. Miss Cam of Harvard University or Caroline Robbins of Bryn Mawr… would reopen a discussion that usually began the previous night before a glowing fire. They interspersed talk of Francis Hutcheson, the birthplace, and numbers of

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[9] Emily G. Hickman, President, and Dorothy Fowler, Secretary, to members of the Berkshire Historical Conference, May 23, 1940; Dorothy Fowler, New York, to Professor Raymond P. Stearns, June 25, 1947. Berkshire Historical Records.

[10] Beatrice F. Hyslop, New York, to Margaret Judson, May 2, 1947; B. Hyslop, New York to Professor Raymond Stearns, June 25, 1947.

[11] Viola Barnes, South Hadley, to Beatrice Reynolds, June 11, 1936. Berkshire Historical Records.

[12] Viola Barnes, South Hadley, to Margaret Judson, Jan. 24, 1940 (sic); Robert Greaves, "Dame Lillian Margery Penson (1896-1963)." *Dictionary of National Biography, 1961-1970*, ed. By E.T. Williams and C.S. Nicholls (Oxford University Press, 1981).

[13] Resolution in tribute to Emily Hickman, charter member as well as president of B.H.C. and prominent in her work on behalf of the American Association for the United Nations. Beatrice Hyslop, New York, to Margaret Judson, June 1947; Louise Fargo Brown and Mary Latimer Gambrell, Resolution from Emily Hickman, Margaret Judson to President Clothier, Sept. 29, 1848; Amy E. Kimball, Hunter President's Secretary, New York, to Elise Van Dyck DeWitt, Feb. 29, 19367. Berkshire Historical Records.

immigrants to the American colonies, strategies of the president of Mount Holyoke, how to gain access to French family documents, or safety measures for one's research notes and manuscript in progress, with bending to notice a native plant and to agree on its common or botanical (Latin) name. A small, more athletically inclined, contingent went off to scale the peak of what was called a mountain in the Berkshires.

In 1988, I would have no better way to summarize indebtedness for memories of my Berkshire days than to quote the words of a far younger historian. In her book, *Beyond Her Sphere, Women and the Professions in American History*, Barbara J. Harris wrote a dedication to Mildred Campbell and Evelyn A. Clark of Vassar College that is appropriate to extend to the many others of the B.H.C. Her message was "…with deepest appreciation for their inspiration, support and friendship."[14]

Emiliana P. Noether, president of the Berks in 1969 responded to the news of Linda's letters of outreach to women in the California colleges and universities by saying that she was both amused and pleased to learn that the Berkshire Conference was "having a baby on the west coast."[15] The "baby" had worth ancestry and a superb environment in which to flourish, but what the mysteries of its life would be within four, let alone twenty years, were as impenetrable then as were those of the biological life Linda was bearing simultaneously.

Pregnant and unemployed in Palo Alto where her husband was pursuing his medical work, Linda proclaimed it was a pleasure to have a professionally related, if self-imposed task. [16]She went to work! She compiled a potential membership list, reserved a place for an organizational meeting, typed on a ditto stencil the form letter she composed to let the recipients know about our plans, and sent out the information. Neither of us remembers if she received reimbursement for expenses. Postage in 1969 … was six cents for each ounce or fraction thereof. Logic suggests that we discussed annual dues at the first meeting and paid our monetary debt to her.

Linda's virtue rewarded with a learning experience on a grand scale. She well remembers the process of gathering the names of women who were teaching in west coast colleges and universities. At the Stanford University Library of the School of Education, she found row upon row of catalogues. She looked through appropriate ones from California, Oregon, Washington, and on to those of Nevada and Arizona. She scanned department after department of history for the names of women faculty. The length of the lists of history faculty in the large universities took her by surprise. Sometimes the names of 60 or 70 historians were listed as teaching at a single institution. While this amazed her, she stated that she was overwhelmed by the clear message of a gender imbalance of staggering proportions. Frequently the ratio was 100 men to 0

[14] The event covered by the reporter was a Berkshire Conference on the History of Women. "Women's History Meeting Analyses Trends," *New York Times*, Sunday, June 21, 1981, p. 19.

[15] The letter, missing or misplaced, was used by me in 1982. I relied on the three-page paper written in 1982 for the quotation.

[16] Linda generously talked at length about her recollections of the early era of W.A.W.H. at her home in Iowa City, Iowa, July 25, 1988. My husband, Charles, was present and enjoyed the evening very much also, including her fine dinner.

women or 99 men to 1 woman. What had started as a gesture to be helpful became an act of consciousness raising. The profession has become more receptive to women than it was in 1970 when I entered graduate school.

The same fact that Linda revealed to herself, as she searched for future members of our organization that spring, was doing much the same mischief in publications of two eminent members of Columbia University's history faculty, one of the most distinguished in the country. Women suffered stunning neglect in a book of Jacques Barzun, published in 1968: *The American University, How It Runs, Where It is Going.*[17] Earlier in the decade, Richard Hofstadter published with co-editor Wilson Smith a two-volume work under the title *American Higher Education: A Documentary History*. In an exceptional instance of the presence of women in these documents, one document referred to the Morrill Act of 1862 which provided for co-education in the institutions founded under this act.

…With diligence, Linda pieced together a list of about 80 to 100 names. While unsure now about how many letters she mailed, she does recall the rewarding correspondence that followed. Many who replied said that [they] were interested but unable to attend the meeting.

Of particular personal satisfaction to Linda, the correspondence became the means … of starting an acquaintance with Joan Hoff-Wilson who was teaching at California State University, Sacramento. Linda had interviewed for a job, which she did not get, at College of San Mateo. Its well-known historian, Rudolph Lapp, said she should meet Joan who formerly taught at the college. For both the exchange of letters served a purpose. Joan took an active role in bringing a relatively large number of women from the faculty of the University to our first meeting at Asilomar in Pacific Grove.

Although Linda reserved through the State Division of Beaches and Parks space for our meeting on June 6, 7, and 8, 1969, we do not know the person to credit for suggesting such an appropriate place. We had a meager knowledge of the site, limited to awareness of it as a Monterey County Conference center which fronted the ocean. The Mills College faculty had a retreat there in 1968 and found it satisfactory.

Of the many tantalizing aspects of Asilomar's history, some of special interest to us include the role of Miss Julia Morgan in designing all the early buildings and the plan of the grounds. Another was the contest the Young Women's Christian Association held after acquiring the property by gift to find a name for their prized possession. A Stanford University woman student won by submitting the name Asilomar, the Spanish term for "refuge by the sea".

…At our first meeting the sunny afternoon of June 6, 1969, the women present had almost all come with others they knew. From Sacramento the delegation included Joan Hoff-Wilson, Paula Eldot, Mary Jane-Hamilton, and Dorothy Sexter. The Holy Names College contingent included Mary Ann Burki, Ellen Huppert, Bogna Lorence-Kot, and myself. As far as I can determine, Margaret Goodart of Sacramento and Sister Ether Mary Tinnemann of Holy Names College … came to their first meeting at Asilomar the next year. The support we had

[17] (New York: Harper and Row). Professor Barzun acknowledged the quality of Marjorie Nicolson's scholarship and quoted a remark made by Gertrude Stein, pp. 211n and 76.

from our own group meant that little was risked by anyone of us in the commitment of time and money to an activity of uncertain professional implications.

The only woman who came lacking comparable support, Sister Agnes Murphy of San Diego College for Women, deserves special tribute. By bus, she made the long, tedious journey alone, in reasonable expectation of meeting women, a number of them, with similar needs. I think the attendance was eleven.

Our exploratory session brought positive results in shaping us into a group and we had a very good time in the process. Like individuals forming friendships and families which gather to unite through marriage, we told each other our stories. These began as we toasted one another and our enterprise, glasses filled with water or drinks brought from home, at a pre-dinner hour outside the lodge, under the pines, on Friday. The stories continued throughout the weekend. Those of Sister Murphy endeared her to us. She told us of other women in Southern California who would be interested in our plans and participated readily in our exchange of information about ourselves. A good story teller, she soon had us laughing with her as she recalled her reservations in accepting the current changes associated with the celebration of the Mass: use of the vernacular, guitars to accompany the singing, and she added with a shrug of distaste "they are all in circles!" She resisted the hand holding; she was not in the practice during the Mass of grasping a sweaty hand of a fellow worshipper. Finally, she gave in, saying to herself, "If this is what God wants me to do…" Linda credits the presence of Sister Murphy with encouraging us to believe that our plans had a future. If Sister Murphy were at all dismayed by our limited numbers, she did not reveal it.

Our after-dinner discussion on Saturday evening dwelt on the activities and future organization. Linda recalled being startled by Mary Jane Hamilton's declaration, after a good amount of exchange of views that our first aim should be to go out of business. Successful infiltration of the profession would accomplish this. In commenting on the remark later, Joan Hoff-Wilson thought that it was not surprising. The women at Sacramento were involved, before coming to Asilomar, in promoting a women's studies program and anticipated an eventual integration of the offering into the department's courses.[18] Going out of business was not in the minds of others who looked forward to a West Coast Historical Conference as planned. Innocent as Mary Jane's remark was, it acted as a catalyst to launch an increasingly serious and creative discussion that went on beyond midnight about what it would take to change the profession. From the discussion and encouragement given by Sister Murphy, we emerged from the first meeting with confidence about the chances for survival of the newborn B.H.C.

For the time being our fledgling group followed along paths well tread by the B.H.C. of planning for future meetings. We invited women historians to a cocktail party in August in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association. Held at San Diego State College, we had only a bare room, remote from the sessions. Plenty of women attended the convention, but they went to other parties. Yet we were heartened when Magdeline Robinson, Professor of History at Brooklyn College, and mentor from the Berkshire Conference, found us.

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[18] Conversations with Linda Kerber, June 25, 1988, and by telephone with Joan Hoff-Wilson, August 1, 1988. Both were able to recall information of importance to this account. I greatly appreciate their help.

Among our other decisions at the June meeting, 1969, we agreed to return to Asilomar and reserved accommodations before leaving for the dates of April 24-26, 1970. The program would be to discuss problems of professional concern for women historians and to describe our current research. At future meetings, husbands would be welcome except for the business meeting. In another action, we planned to hold a smoker at the Los Angeles Biltmore Hotel in April 1970 when the Organization of American Historians met. Linda made double use of the postage by announcing the smoker along with the notice of the second annual meeting.

We featured for the smoker an informal discussion at which Page Smith would be present. The topic would be problems faced by women in the history profession. He was invited because he was a member of the A.H.A. Committee on the Status of Women. For the event, we drew a fair audience.

At the second annual meeting Dorothy Sexter was elected president. I resigned in anticipation of becoming academic dean at Holy Names after July 1. At the same time, Linda was re-elected Secretary-Treasurer.

Members discussed the name of our organization at the second meeting and decided a change was in order, from West Coast Historical Conference to West Coast Historical Association. Soon after the meeting, Dorothy started a newsletter. …Its second issue in October 1970 noted that as a result of a mail ballot we approved use of the new name, West Coast Association of Women Historians. The name, Western Association of Women Historians, dates from 1980.

One more accomplishment of the 1970 meeting gave us a signal of future directions and the sturdiness of the membership. In deciding to meet again during the year 1970, in September, at the time the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association which met in Portland, the members agreed to present a resolution to the P.C.B. business meeting in behalf of more equitable representation of women historians on the committees, programs, and events sponsored by the Pacific Coast Branch.

The impressive accomplishments and rapid growth after 1970 of the West Coast Historical Association, nee Conference, will be the subject of succeeding officers and reports of other meetings. Certainly, all of us gained from the convergence of the work of consciousness raising groups and women's participation in professional meetings. [19]

[19] The second Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, held at Radcliff College and sponsored by the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians attracted a total attendance of nearly 2,000. The tone of President Joan Moon's report was a study in itself of the frustrations women historians on the west coast were encountering. The Coordinating Committee on Women in the Historical Process. CCWHP *Newsletter*, Vol. VI, No., 1, Feb. 1975, pp. 3, 6, 7; West Coast Association of Women Historians, *Newsletter*, Vol. V, No. 2, Nov. 1974, pp. 2-3, 4.

II. The Western Association of Women Historians: The Early Years

By **Ellen Huppert** *and written in 1989 to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the organization.*

These remarks make no pretense at being a definitive history of the Association. They are based almost entirely on my own recollections, with no effort at documentation. I make no attempt at an institutional history, as I never held an office… But I was present at the conception and birth, and I suppose that gives me leave to impose my own personal view of the Western Association. Perhaps I have a special role in the oral history of the organization. I have been told that in courses in property in law school, it is taught that in medieval seisin, the transfer of land in fee simple was established in the memory of a young person. He was beaten so that when he was an old man he would remember the event, reinforcing or replacing written documentation. In my case, it was not a beating that fixes the event in my mind, but the very memorable fact that I was eight months pregnant with my second child at the time of the first Asilomar meeting.

In 1969, I was teaching at Holy Names College in Oakland, when Grace Larsen suggested gathering some women historians together. Grace knew about the Berkshire Conference, which at the time was an informal gathering of the women historians in the East. Those of us at Holy Names, a women's college with a primarily female lay and religious faculty, agreed that meeting some of our colleagues would be interesting. We sent invitations to every name we could find listed as faculty in a four-year college in California.

About a dozen of us met at Asilomar. One contingent came from the Bay area. Another, led by Sister Murphy, came from San Diego. And a state car brought a third and large group from Sacramento State College. Their numbers were impressive for a state coeducational institution, but those women did not enjoy any special benefits from their number. In the first of many lessons we would learn from our gathering, research funds, leave time, and other benefits were consistently more difficult for women to obtain than for their male colleagues.

At that first meeting, we had no program or plan for how to spend our time. We arrived on Friday evening and got acquainted. The next morning, we convened, two or three of us informally discussed our current research. I was writing my dissertation, and I offered to share it with no idea that I was setting an important precedent for the association. I had made no advance preparation, so my remarks were not polished, but no one expected it to be. Our gathering was intended to be informal. The rest of the time was spent talking, walking on the beach, touring Monterey, or Carmel, and eating.

At the end of our first meeting, we agreed that it would be all right to bring spouses and children the next time, an agreement which was very helpful for those of us with small children. The 1969 meeting was my first time away from my two-year-old, and we all survived that, but it was certainly easier to leave two children with Peter for a matter of a few hours than for a weekend. We met for at least two more years at Asilomar. Presentations became somewhat more formal, as members knew in advance that they were going to be speaking. We stayed in one of the older cottages and used the living room for our discussions; no individual sessions of any kind. I remember hearing Carolly Erickson's husband practicing in their room (he was a

violinist) during one of our sessions. But we continued to spend very little time in formal meetings and much time in small and large group discussions at table, at the pool, over wine in the evenings. Then on Saturday afternoon we headed off to the shops in Carmel.

At some point, probably in 1972, we moved our meetings to the Villa Maria del Mar in Santa Cruz. This Victorian hotel belongs to the Sisters of the Holy Names who use it for a retreat house, and it was available and less expensive than Asilomar. In addition to the hotel itself was a motel unit of two stories where many of us stayed. We helped with the kitchen cleanup of meals and were responsible for changing the linen and sweeping up our rooms when we left. The atmosphere was as informal as Asilomar, with a large living room as our meeting place, again for only large-group sessions. The hotel is on a bluff right at the water's edge, so moonlight walks overlooking the sea were very common. I think it was in Santa [Cruz] that we began a tradition of Friday night wine testing, when someone was able to obtain donated wine under that pretext. That predated our use of the occasion to raise money for fellowships.

What was the quality of these meetings? Informality, certainly. With small numbers, it was easy to know everyone, and annual meetings felt like reunions with old friends. Our numbers did grow. When I looked through the current membership list, I found about 60 members who joined between 1970 and 1974, with almost a quarter of those coming on board in 1972. Was that a special year? Yes, we began to have Friday night presentations in what would become the first step toward the more formal program that characterizes our meetings now.

We did not begin as an organization dedicated to the study of women's history. In 1969 such a discipline scarcely existed, although between [then] and the mid-1970s it began to appear as a course in some schools. While the Association predates the development of women's history, among our members in the first years were several women in the profession; Penny Kanner, Frances Richardson Keller, Linda Kerber, Karen Offen, and Joan Hoff-Wilson, who would become published scholars in the field of women's history.

Few of us were situated then to of great professional service to each other; we did not control hiring and at that time were far from having even modest influence on the larger professional organizations. But we could be and were of great help in providing mutual support. It was not just in private or informal discussions that we raised personal issues as well as professional ones.

It was probably the second year that Joan Hoff-Wilson reported on a survey of achieving women. The study revealed that almost all were either only children or oldest children with special relationships with their fathers. She proceeded to survey us informally; I think I was the only one who didn't fit the model. That incident and our willingness to bring our families when we wished are significant. They symbolize the way in which we helped each other to understand our roles as historians who were also women and as women who were also historians. One year, Kitty Sklar reported informally on research on women historians of previous generations. Those women had mostly remained single, and of those who married, almost none had children. Our group was certainly not following that pattern.

Now (in 1989) we have a membership of over [400] members, representing different generations and main career patterns. Some of the original members have retired after long years of work and new members come to the organization, many as they begin their careers. Some of [us] took up scholarship after or while raising children, some of us moved right from undergraduate to graduate school. Some are tenured faculty, others part timers. Still others of us have learned a new phrase for ourselves: “independent scholars” who through choice or circumstance do not have teaching positions but nonetheless regard ourselves as fully functioning members of the profession. The Association has its place on the annual program of the PCB and sends our representatives to the national organizations working for women in the profession.

We should expect this association to continue to flourish, to focus on women’s issues, to provide opportunities for discussion of scholarship, and to bring women historians together as colleagues and friends, just as we did in the first few years.

III. West Coast Association of Women Historians—The Early Years

by **Karen Offen,** President 1991-1993 *and written in 1989 to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the organization*

I first came to the group when it was still the West Coast Association for Women Historians, at the suggestion of Linda Kerber, then at Stanford. I attended the 1971 Asilomar meeting as a newly-minted Ph.D., with my husband and our first child in tow. My husband's job was to entertain the baby between feedings so that could attend the meeting. Good sport that he is, he performed admirably, and so did the baby.

There were not a lot of women at that Asilomar meeting, perhaps twenty-five or thirty. Nor was the agenda exactly formal. We met in one of the little wooden cabins then, not in the main lodge. I seem to remember speaking, perhaps on the beginnings of my work on French women's history. Mostly I was just glad to find some colleagues—the women from Sacramento State, in particular. But I also recall that during the afternoon, people broke away and went off to shop in Carmel instead of plunging into intense intellectual discussion and having come all that way to so the later (instead of taking care of infants—or shopping), I was mildly disappointed. Even so, we three hung around until evening, socialized a bit more, and then drove home.

This was the first of many meetings with the group. By 1976 I had become program chair for the annual meeting. In those days the program chair was not a "real officer" as has since become the case. Our meetings had shifted variously from Asilomar to a Catholic retreat house in Santa Cruz (always on the beach), to a pattern of alternation between northern and southern California. In 1976 we met in Santa Monica, and I had put together a "real program," running several sessions at once. Something was doubtless lost in the transition. But the need for a formal scholarly program had become necessary in order than faculty participants could get their expenses reimbursed for the meeting. So, in that way we became more like other historical societies. But the ambiance nevertheless remained rather special. Women colleagues did have a peculiar bond. A sort of sisterhood was emerging. And leaders were appearing. Some of them have done long ways, like Joan Hogg-Wilson, who is not executive director of the Organization of Women Historians (in 1989) and a founder of the *Journal of Women's History*. Penny Kanner has published her landmark works on British women's history and historiography. Linda Kerber, who moved to Iowa in the early seventies, has had a distinguished career. Others continue to teach and to write in less celebrated ways, making quite but important contributions to the profession of history. A have retired. Some have "come out" as independent scholar instead of accepting the status of "unemployed" or "alternatively careered." The graduate students of the 70s have become practicing historians of the 80s. And the cycle goes on.

One of my chief concerns throughout my early stages of participation was to integrate the WCAWH into the national network of women historians that was then forming. Not everyone saw the need for this, but some were persuaded. Donna Boutelle, John Hoff Wilson, and Frances Keller served us and then went on to become presidents of CCWHP (Conference Committee on Women in the Historical Profession) and again Penny Kanner, one of the early presidents of the Conference Group on Women's History. We did manage to achieve those links and WAWH is

not formally affiliated, in touch with developments in other regional groups as well as with national happenings. This is not an insignificant development. And it is one that must continue.

Now the WAWH has become rather more elegant. And prosperous. We hold presidential banquets and meeting at the Huntington Library as well as the beach. We have established book and article prizes, a graduate student scholarship fund, and the like, as well as running full-scale conference. No longer can they ignore the women historians, as was still the case not so long ago. The great success of the 1988 AHA-PCB meeting in San Francisco, joined sponsored with the WAWH, speaks to this point.

Where will the WAWH go from here? That, in large part, is up to our younger colleagues. It will be in their hands to sustain the momentum, to build on what has been put in place during the last twenty years. Not that we will become inactive, on the contrary. But we need to make space for the newcomers and to allow their great creatively to flourish in shaping the next twenty years of associational life for the Western Association of Women Historians. They have needs that may differ to come extent from those we experienced. When I completed my Ph.D., women were 13% of the Ph.D. crop, in history; today they constitute some 30%. Academic women are less marginalized, but with surface acceptance and numbers come new problems. I trust that WAWH will provide a forum in which these problems can be addressed and in which women's creative historical scholarship will continue to flourish.

IV. As We Celebrate Ourselves

by **S. Joan Moon**, President 1973-1976 *and presented in 1989 at the annual conference to commemorate the twentieth anniversary*

At the 1972 meeting at the Villa Maria del Mar, Paula Eldot presented By-laws that established an association with two officers and marked the first sign of maturation. Donna Boutelle was elected President and I was elected Secretary-Treasurer. When Donna resigned the following year, I succeeded her as president with Gretchen Schwenn, a graduate student at Berkeley, as Secretary Treasurer. Two new offices were created: Pat Fouquet became the Vice President, and Diane Nassir, the Graduate Coordinator. For three years Gretchen and I worked to bring out the newsletter assisted by many members who collected information and contributed articles. Gretchen never finished her degree; she dies of a heart attack in the late 1970s.

In 1972 we also changed the name of the association from the West Coast Historical Association to the West Coast Association of Women Historians. Donna Boutelle created a logo for the newsletter (which has since been revised to the familiar form that appears on our newsletter and stationary). The newsletter was published three times a year. Although there were constant threats to limit the mailing to paying members, we continued to send newsletters to all women historians in the Western states. The newsletters and program were printed at CSUS by Midge Marino, and the History Department paid for all mailings. In 1975 I discovered the virtues of photographic reproduction, so *The Newsletter* got smaller, but it also got longer: the June 1976i issue was 10 pages!

The Newsletters reveal that the period from 1972 to 1976 was one of reaching out and restructuring as we consciously moved to develop an association that would embody and expand the original spirit of Asilomar—a spirit that expressed itself in three major and interrelated concerns: our concerns as feminists, as historians, and as activists for reform.

As feminists, we were aware of the need to transcend the sexists, Anglo-Saxon, snobbish barriers that characterized our profession. But we were mostly a small group of women who had "made it." We were white women with college or university positions and Ph.D.'s. We reached out to women of color, to our colleagues in community colleges, to independent scholars, and to graduate students. We restructured the organization to include these women as officers and members and revised our annual program to provide them with the opportunity to present their research. For example, the PCB did not allow graduate students to present papers at their annual meetings because they considered them "unreliable." We also reached out to network with other women's groups, and many of our members serviced as liaisons to the newly created Coordinating Committee of Women in the Historical Profession (Donna Boutelle and Karen Offen) and the newly created AHA Committee on Women Historians (Dorothy Sexter and Mary Jane Hamilton). The newsletters reported on the Bay Area Group of women historians and the Berkshire Conferences, and supported the formation of California Women in Higher Education (Karen Leonard). We also solicited funds for Laura X's Women's History Library in Berkeley. Our concerns with exposing sexual discrimination led to the publication of reports on sexism in letters of reference and on discrimination against women graduate students. In 1971 Dorothy Sexter had written a report for the AHA Committee on Women Historians tabulating the small

number of women in the historical professional in western colleges and universities; we updated the report in 1974. The newsletters also reported on the percentage of women appearing on the AHA programs—a rather discouraging task; e.g. in 1972 at New Orleans it was 11.8%, in 1973 at San Francisco it was 13.8%, and in 1974 at Chicago, it was 10.5%. We also recorded the number of women participating in PCB panels-- 13-14%. This was a time when women received about 25% of the doctorates.

As historians, we were concerned not only with research and teaching, but with the growing crisis in our profession. While out interests in research and teaching are best illustrated by our annual meetings, the newsletter published articles by Karen Offen on the shortcomings of Edward Shorter, by Sondra Herman on the "New History for the New Student," and by Julie Nash on the Women's Studies Program at De Anza. To assist women in getting their proposals accepted, we published guidelines for submitting panels to the AHA and the PCB. To ensure that women would have a forum at the PCB meeting, in 1974 we had our first panel and hosted a luncheon with Carl Degler as speaker. Although Affirmative Action programs somewhat ameliorated sexual discrimination, by the early 70's, gains were being offset by declining opportunities for employment as students abandoned liberal arts disciplines in favor of business and engineering degrees. In 1972 we summarized the radical proposals of a special PCB panel on the growing "job crisis." The panel suggested that the AHA establish an emergency fund to help unemployed Ph.D.'s who were actively seeking work to get through the crisis, the creation of half-time tenured position; the restriction of summer school teaching to the unemployed; voluntary pay cuts by professors; and the encouragement of early retirement.

As activists for reform we joined with other groups to challenge the white, male-dominated structure of the AHA. When the AHA met in New Orleans in 1972, we conspired with the CCWHP, other women's associations, ethnic minorities, and radical historians to control the General Business meeting. We succeeded in passing three resolutions; that the AHA should continue support for the Committee on Women Historians; that it should be establish an appeal process beyond the university level for women, minorities, and "politically active people," and that it should be aggressive in pursuing Affirmative Action. I do not remember which resolution I presented, but when I began speaking, the Chair turned to the Parliamentarian to rule me out of order. Fortunately, he happened to be an old friend and my chair from Wayne State, and his ruling, as I recall, was "Oh, let Joan speak." In response to this pressure, the AHA established an elected committee called the Professional Division, and in 1976 I won one of the seats by 2 votes (something like 1754-1752; they counted the vote three times, probably hoping they had made a mistake.)

We also decided to reform the PCB. In August 1972 we sponsored a breakfast meeting, then allied with the Association of Chicano Historians and forced a resolution through the General Meeting in increase the number of women and minorities on committees an as officers. Dorothy Sexter was then appointed Chair of the 1974 Program Committee. Grace Larsen, nominated by petition, had just been elected to the Nominations Committee. However, for the 1973 election, the president of the PCB decided to dispense with nominations by petition and simply sent out the ballet with the slate. This began a year-long fight, which we won, to have the right of nominations by petition restored.

…The 1972 meeting in Santa Cruz was attended by a "large and enthusiastic group." (You might note a certain lack of precision in reporting numbers). We met to exchange ideas, hear reports, and conduct business. Four members informally presented their research: (Bell, Goodart, Lawrence, and von Hehren), and Lucille (later Lucia) Birnbaum, reported on an HEW sex discrimination suit against UCB. Positive responses on the research section led to a more structured program the next year.

In 1973 we met for the first time outside of North California in Pacific Palisades… There was no printed program. Sharon Sievers (CSULB) and Vern Bullough (CSUN) presented a panel on teaching women's history. Joyce Baker and Ruth Halpern, graduate students as UCSB, organized a session on experimental approaches to teaching, including a media-music production on real and imaginary images of American women and introduced us to the "Name Game." There were also panels on sex discrimination and alternative employment. Comments on the meeting were generally positive, but there were cautions to avoid formal papers for future meetings. The Business meeting took up the radical step of allowing men to join the association.

In 1974, having had such a successful 6th meeting, we had another 6th meeting. (The 1973 conference was actually the 5th .) We had begun to count. We also reported on the actual attendance—100. The printed program included an evening media production (with wine), sessions (with chairs) on women history as well as work from "traditional history," and a guest speaker, Diane Clements from UCB, who unfortunately could not make it due to illness…At the business meeting, we elected a program committee for the 1975 conference, chaired by Penny Kanner and Cynthia Brantley. The expanding association obviously needed more officers so we created a Vice President and a Graduate Coordinator. We also supported the formation of local chapters throughout all of the Western States. To get out-of-state women on the program, we proposed a voluntary kitty to pay half of the costs for two participants. We also decided to take aggressive actions to encourage women of color to join the association. And we changed our dues structure…Faced with the job crisis, we changed our dues structure: $5.00 if employed $2.00 if unemployed.

One hundred and twenty–eight historians attended the 1975 meeting in Santa Cruz and we proudly published their names in *The Newsletter*. The structure of the program was determined by a questionnaire developed by Penny Kanner and Cynthia Brantley. Sherna Gluck presented an evening on Oral History (with wine); research seminars included the civil war and civil rights, women in the third world, urban history, European feminism, and sixteenth century England. We had workshops on teaching in the community colleges and on curriculum development in Afro-American Studies, Women's Studies, and Chicano Studies. We returned to professional interests with a panel on sex discrimination and the problems facing historians and efforts to unionize faculty, issues concerned with publications and employment…Our guest speaker was Kathryn Kish Sklar of UCLA. While the program was generally well received there were criticisms of too many panels and not enough time for informal discussions and walks on the beach.

The April 1976 conference was my last year as president. We returned to Southern California. The 51 participants on the program included instructors, public historians, university and college instructors, independent scholars, and graduate students from states as far away as

Alabama, New York, Utah, Washington, and Nevada. Comments on the program criticized the number of sessions the lack of free time, the scholarly standards, and an overemphasis on women's history and American history. In the June 1976 Newsletter, Pat Fouquet, the new president, promised to continue experimenting with the program to make it responsive to members' needs. Karen Offen wrote a special report on the importance of maintaining a balance between the spontaneity and intimacy of our early meetings and the increasing formalization and expansion of our association.

Thirteen years later we much ask ourselves if we have maintained the balance. Was the reaching our and restructuring begun in the 1970s successful? Do we still consider ourselves feminists, professionals, and activists? This year's conference answers yes: we have, it was, and we do, the association now boasts a large, diversified membership and Executive Board. The conference continues the structure begun in the 70s. In the last 20 years our association had changed greatly from the early gatherings at Asilomar. Our spirit, however, a spirit of feminism, professionalism, and activism has not remained, but developed. While the next 20 years may see further restructuring, let us continue to struggle to keep the spirit that we share in 1989…as we celebrate ourselves.

V. "Women and Men and the Historical Arts: Directions for Dividends"

Excerpts from a speech by **Frances Richardson Keller**, President 1981-1983 presented to the American Historical Association, Pacific Coast Branch, August 1981

I am able to say these words because in the Spring of 1969 a few women came together at Asilomar, California. I want to share their experiences, for they charted a course. They built an organization. They built a record of achievements. Most importantly they built in the West a heightened public consciousness. They projected a vision of women's full participation in work and in the world; and they shared their hopes with a powerful women's movement of national dimension.

Yet despite these successes the gains for which women have planned, organized, and struggled stand in peril. In this summer of 1981 women – and men --- face uncertainties, stresses, cutbacks, diminutions of personal freedoms, likely defeats in vital areas, attacks on the fundamental democratic philosophy under which they exist. In such circumstances, what should be the role of our organization of women historians?

I suggest that it is up to us to achieve a consummation of the legacies of our founders. It is up to us to cement and express a new consensus of culture and to do this through the arts of historians and in the eyes of society. It is up to us to seek active support from those whose interests we truly serve. Affirming our inheritance as members of this organization, we must now build into the structure of education the truths we have been uncovering. We must affirm those fundamental values of which we have always been guardians. We must make room for broad differences in cultural orientation. We must achieve expression of those deeply held needs we share on a broad spectrum. We must consolidate the support of housewives, politicians, working women and working men, church people, people from ethnic and black communities; most of all we must consolidate the support of men. We must refuse to allow the consensus of culture that does exist to be fragmented by those who raise specters of polarities that do not exist. Particularly we practitioners of the historical arts must set the records straight: There never existed a fundamental antagonism between feminists of both sexes and the institution of the family, in whatever form that institution is manifest. There never was an immutable law that sexual inequalities have to characterize society either within or beyond the family. There never was a denial of the right to bear and to nurture children. There never were denials of the need of all of us for security or of the need of all of us to give and to receive love. American women historians have a vital role to play in making these truths evident and in relating them to the foundation of our society.

Let me review our story. The women who came to Asilomar in 1969 numbered more than a dozen, less than twenty. They differed from one another, but they exchanged ideas, they explored needs, they studied goals. From the start they sensed that their needs arose as women searching for personal identity and as women experiencing professional struggles. But they also sensed that as women historians they possessed qualities that even in the clamorous 1960s found little expression, small support. Our founders intended to assist women to develop careers in the historical profession. That was one goal. They also fixed their sights on long-range objectives: They would work toward the dissemination of human histories, balanced histories, histories to

present interpretations only those working from the almost totally unexplored perspectives of women could write. Our founders believed that historians of both genders were contributing less than they could contribute toward meeting challenges of their times.

Our founders at Asilomar also knew that they were inheritors or an American Women's Movement that began more than a century ago. One of them told me an allegory she thought appropriate. It concerned a round piece of a puzzle that [she] couldn't fit herself into her appointed location. She jumped from space to space, striving to find where she belonged. After many difficult, fruitless endeavors the round puzzle piece did slide into the puzzle, feeling as she did so a sensation of relief. Before long, however, she discovered that she had grown from her difficulties and that she felt most uncomfortable. She shifted about, uncertain of how to relieve her discomfort. She could not shrink, she could not ease herself back, she certainly could not reach out. Finally, she spied a square puzzle piece that seemed to be moving easily, indeed, to be ranging over her entire field of vision. So, she called to the square piece, "May I join you? May I be part of your venture? I've been growing, and I don't seem to fit anywhere and I'm restless?" But the square puzzle piece said, "Well, no. You can't be part of my parade because I've become one thing all to myself. But there's really no reason why you couldn't do as I do and explore along beside me." According to rumors, that's what the round puzzle piece did from that day forward. It wasn't said that the round puzzle piece and the free-flying square puzzle piece lived happily ever afterwards. My informant heard on reliable authority that the round puzzle piece never trimmed her edges back to fit herself into the old puzzle, but she also heard that the square puzzle piece did begin to see that he could profit from taking an interest in her endeavor. My informant could not say whether they learned to soar together. Her analogy suggests, however, that as urgently as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton longed for ordinary opportunities, these twentieth-century Asilomar women longed to dispel perceptions of their sex and themselves as mirrors, as objects, as mindless servants, as decorations; the Asilomar women longed to substitute expectations that their sex would fully participate in the major work and the major decisions of our times.

So, the West Coast Association of Women Historians held conferences. We encouraged scholarships in women's histories and in human histories. We fostered the considerable, the varied, the sometimes-dazzling talents of our members – those holding secure academic posts, those holding part-time, revolving-door assignments, those holding positions in non-academic institutions, those holding no paying positions at all. We provided forums for presentations of their research. We discussed teaching methods and teaching materials. We invited women and men of national stature to speak to us and to speak with us. We evaluated issues. In the Nobel address he was prevented from delivering, the historian-artist Alexander Solzhenitsyn affirmed the centrality of such communications. He found them vital to the welfare of peoples of the world. By our efforts throughout our early years, we seconded resoundingly the thoughts of Solzhenitsyn.

Almost immediately the Western Women Historians established a thrice-annual *Newsletter*. It served as a means of communication between officers and members, it provided news of member's activities, it furnished information on jobs and conferences and publications, and it began to report on political-social issues. We loved receiving that *Newsletter*. It gave us the feeling that we were legitimate inhabitants of the historical profession. The Women's

Movement of the 70s, particularly our part of it, became a source of strength and security, a vehicle allowing us to translate some of our hopes into happenings. At the same time a burgeoning was taking place in the publishing world: books by women and books written from women's perspective suddenly appeared in large numbers. We wrote some of those books and we read almost all of them.

Sponsored by our organization, members began to take places on conference agendas throughout the profession. We published a Directory, an updating of which will appear this year. We proposed nominees for AHA, AHA/PCB and OAH positions; we supported those nominees, often successfully. Over the 70s membership in our organization escalated. Begun in California, we counted by 1980 four hundred dues paying members in thirteen western states. Last year we changed our name to become more appropriately the Western Association of Women Historians. From the start our annual conferences attracted large registration; we presented increasingly sophisticated, scholarly programs. Recently we provided financial assistance for the formation of the Southern California Institute for Historical Research and Services; both new organizations are communities of men and women dedicated to advancing historical research and to bringing historical insights and services to a wide public. Thus, by the end of the 70s we reached a strength as historians; we were looking to a widening community influence.

Throughout those years the women of our organization felt the excitement of discovering a focus and a forum. We drew somewhat apart from our male colleagues. We drew toward one another. We appreciated our expanded membership and we learned from our new members in many states. We drew toward national organizations of similar purposes. We established close connections with the Conference Group in Women's History and with the Coordinating Committee on Women in the Historical Profession; one of our founders accepted the presidency of that Council. Her name is Joan Hoff-Wilson; she carried that responsibility until the Council brought the American Historical Association to the decision to boycott non-ERA states. Any members began in the mid-1970s to feel that political action conceived in the dominant interest-group, particular-issues model of American politics would offer promising avenues of improvement.

Yet suddenly in the 1980s we face an administration threatening to do away with the rights and opportunities we have struggled to win. It is an administration that draws strength from formidable corporate interests. But that might not be enough. It is an administration that draws strength as well from creating, by an apparent consensus of attitudes, a climate of compression. It finds support in a conservative Supreme Court. It takes nurture from a self-styled "Moral Majority." Their programs: abolish laws against sex discrimination, abolish affirmative action, abolish laws providing safe, legal abortion, defeat ERA. These issues they see as Women's Issues. But there is more to the program: Through providing lip-service to the contrary, this administration intends to curtail or crush unions, to control teaching in the schools, to withdraw supports from the needy by denying national responsibility, to wipe out with overkill spokespersons in the congress, to escalate the military. This is a program that looks to a closed society. Such a society depends on violence and such curtailments concern the human rights of every one of us.

So, what should be the plan for an organization of women historians? We must live on in a climate of officially endorsed economy, that is, official economy [not] in areas pertaining to the comfort and advancement of persons, but expansion in military-industrial areas. This species of economy by any name falls heavily upon us. It raises the question; can women historians survive? Can we achieve in a period of contraction what we barely began in a hundred years? Can we contribute those conspicuously missing ingredients now understood as vital components of human histories? The answer is plain: Alone we cannot. The stringencies of the Reagan cuts threaten us disproportionately. That is the case even as we realize a special irony in the backhanded proof that action, like rights, often can be human and not gender determined: we have witnessed Jean Kirkpatrick voting to endanger babies around the world and Anne Gorsuch arranging to abandon safeguards for the environment in which we exist.

What can we do? We can in the 80s learn to broaden our field of vision. We can create a realization of the new consensus of culture that is within our sight and almost within our reach. We can facilitate the emergence of the true consensus attitudes. We have seen a beginning. According to a New York Times analysis, 52% of women voted against Reagan, 45% for Carter, 7% for Anderson. More than two to one, women who were for ERA voted against Reagan. They constituted a voting block of 22% of the total vote and they comprised a larger group than blacks, Hispanics and Jews combined. For women historians this means we must stay alive and it means we must strengthen ourselves by moral initiative as by good business and financial practice. We must look to the next opportunities with a practical eye so that we can be ready to take advantage of them. We must champion the early education of your children woman's past and we must help our sisters and brothers to become aware of how that part relates to their present. We must show those who do not perceive us as part of their world that it is also our world; some of our effort must be political, but we must understand that politics comprehends less than the large consensus culture we seek. We must include and honor the needs of our sisters outside of the academy and of our sisters in every endeavor, in every religion, racial and ethnic situation. We must invite and merit the support of men and good will and we must return that support to them. We must uphold, as we always did, the institution of the family. Above all, I propose that we strive to express in every way open to us and that we strive to consolidate that consensus of culture that truly exists. If we do this, if this is our role, politics will take care of itself.

VI. Highlights of My Administration

by **Jess Flemion**, President 1983-1985, written in 1989 to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the organization.

I followed the very energetic Frances Keller into the presidency of the WAWH. Her administration was crowned by the establishment of the first WAWH award, the Sierra Prize. There was much interest among members in continuing to expand these kinds of activities – both to serve our membership and to increase our visibility around the region and nation. During my term of office, I tried to follow this lead. Just as I arrived in office an anonymous donor (who turned out to be Martin and Sally Ridge) provided the funds for a matching article prize to honor WAWH scholarship.

My energies went into the establishment of the Graduate Fellowship and an attempt (abortive as it turned out) to establish a Graduate Student Paper Prize and Prize Session at the annual conference. By a combination of fundraisers at the annual conference, a local fundraiser in San Diego and transfer of excess funds from the general account, the Graduate Fellowship Fund had been well endowed with nearly $6,000 by the time of my departure.

The second focus of my attention was the annual program, especially the first one held in the South at the Huntington Library in 1984. As an historian who is female but who does not focus her research in women's history, I was anxious to broaden the offerings at the conference which I think was done successfully. I believe that it was the most extensive gathering at an annual meeting to that date.

I also attempted to collect a careful archive that reflected the organization's business during my term in the expectation that these papers and others of the WAWH could be collected and offered to a repository for permanent preservation. WAWH was unable to successfully follow through on this idea, however, and our papers remain scattered. Perhaps this would be an appropriate task to take on again to celebrate the entry into our third decade. Another idea which was unsuccessfully pursued at the time was to computerize our membership records. I am happy to say that this efficiency has been accomplished.

VII. Looking Back Over Twenty-Five Years

Marguerite Renner's Account of WCHA, WCAWH, and WAWH
President, 1993-1995

1969 AND THE EARLY 1970S

The Western Association of Women Historians has existed for the last twenty-five years to meet many diverse needs of women historians in the western United States. When it was first organized in 1969 by Grace Larsen (President, 1969) and Linda Kerber (Secretary, 1969) and named the West Coast History Association (WCHA), the organization brought together women historians in colleges and universities in the West to share their scholarship and develop professional networks in the convivial atmosphere of Asilomar on the Monterey Peninsula of California. Initially our founders met casually. Their intense discussions along the water's edge at the Asilomar Conference Center were followed by ventures to Monterey and an evening of wine tasting. When there were relatively few women in the historical profession such gatherings provided these pioneers with a much-needed opportunity to meet with each other and to share their experiences in a discipline that had long been a male province.

The WHCA grew rapidly and assumed many additional roles. Known as the West Coast Association of Women Historians (WCAWH) from 1971 to 1980, and as the Western Association of Women Historians (WAWH) since 1980, the organization has brought women historians together to share ideas and develop plans that have played a role in redirecting scholarship and changing the course of the profession. The material offered below briefly traces the record of WCHA, WCAWH, and WAWH to show how it has become the successful professional organization that it is today.

When WCHA began as a relatively small group of women in the historical profession in the late 1960s, the organization found itself immediately faced with a crucial question: How inclusive should it be? Had it followed the Berkshire path of the 1930s and 1940s, WCAWH might have become a small coterie of tenured women faculty. But its founders quickly recognized the need to open its doors to the steady stream of women moving into the field. By a three to one margin, members voted in December 1970 to extend invitations to others. Included on their list were community college faculty, who in those days were likely to have completed the masters but not the Ph.D.[20] Soon adjunct faculty, independent scholars, public historians, graduate students in history and even women in the related fields of art history and literature joined WCAWH.

Women from all over the West were attracted to WCHA, including Donna Boutelle (President, 1972-1973), Patricia Fouquet (President, 1976-1977) and Lois Weinman all of California State University, Long Beach; Paula Eldot, Margaret Goodart, Mary Jane Hamilton, S. Joan Moon, Ruth Von Behren, Dorothy Sexter (President, 1970-1972) all of Sacramento State; Rena Vassar from California State University, Northridge; Diane E. Nassir of University

[20] Helen Weinstock, "Letter to the Editor, December 4, 1970," reprinted in the West Coast Association of Women Historians *Newsletter* Vol. 1, No. 3, March 15, 1971, p. 3.

of California, Santa Barbara, and many others. Unfortunately, a complete membership list could not be located for these early years.

This heightened interest in the organization and the growth that followed promoted the next question: Should WCAWH develop a newsletter that would [help] women historians to stay in touch with each other throughout the year? A newsletter was created almost immediately and the logo shortly thereafter. Called the WEST COAST ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN HISTORIANS *Newsletter* until 1982, when it was renamed *The Networker* with the publication of Volume XVI, these early volumes reported on members' concerns and accomplishments in a profession that was only slowly and often reluctantly accepting the women trained in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Still another question arose in those years: Should the organization be more formal? The answer was yes, and Paula Eldot agreed to draft the first constitution and by-laws. This first document created two offices, president, and secretary/treasurer, but quickly had to be amended to add a third officer, a Graduate Student Coordinator. An ever-increasing membership demanded the collection of names and addresses for a directory, and Gretchen Schwenn, the Graduate Student representative, began to collect membership records. Gretchen also served as secretary/treasurer, raised the issues of dues, and took on the task of making the organization self-supporting. Several years later Jacqueline Barnhardt (President, 1987-1989) took up the task of expanding the directory by collecting information on academic specialties and affiliation to create the type of directory WAWH still uses today. Not only has it proved to be an invaluable tool for all WAWH members but has been widely used by other professional organizations to identify women as speakers, to review books and articles, or for other professional work.

Links to other professional organizations, 1969 and the early 1970s

The leadership of the early 1970s, concerned that a professional society made up of women not become isolated from other historians, quickly saw the value of establishing official links to other professional societies. The WCHA was created in 1969, the same year as the Coordinating Committee of Women in the Historical Profession (CCWHP), in response to the same desire to create a voice for women historians. Several of WCAWH past presidents have also served as leaders in the CCWHP, including Margaret Strobel (WCAWH President, 1978-1979) who served as CCWHP president in 1989-1991; Frances Richardson Keller (WAWH President, 1981-1983) for CCWHP in 1986-1988; and Mary Elizabeth Perry (WAWH President, 1989-1991) for CCWHP in 1992-1994. In addition, S. Barbara (Penny) Kanner (WCAWH President, 1981-1983) served as Chair and President of the CGWH in 1982-1984. Also, on the Executive Board of the CCWHP has been Karen Offen (WAWH President, 1991-1993) who served as secretary in 1972-1973 and 1973-1979 and as treasurer in 1975 and 1975-1977. The newsletter editors of CCWHP have included Linda Kerber (WCHA Secretary-Treasurer, 1969), who served CCWHP in 1971-1973, Nupur Chaudhuri, who served CCWHP from 1976-1990.

Involvement in other professional organizations has extended beyond the CCWHP and the CGWH. In 1973 WCAWH sponsored its first breakfast [at] the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association (PCB-AHA). Now it sponsors the WAWH luncheon at the PCB. In addition, WCAWH has sponsored several panels on the program of the PCB, and in

1972 Dorothy Sexter (President, 1970-1972) proposed that the WCAWH be listed as one of the groups meeting jointly with the [PCB].

These were only the first steps WCAWH took to build bridges with other professional societies. Several of our members have gone on to serve on committees in the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians, and as leaders and committee members of the Coordination Committee on Women in the Historical Profession and Conference Group on Women's History, as well as the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association. Dorothy Sexter served on the Committee on Women, which had been established by the AHA in 1972 and as chair of the Program Committee of the PCB-AHA in 1974. Grace Larsen was nominated and elected to a position on the PCB Nominations Committee. In 1974 Dorothy was appointed Chair of the Program Committee of the PCB-AHA; Penny Kanner would assume that job in 1979. But this text by no means exhausts the leadership that has moved from WCAWH and WAWH to the PCB, AHA and other professional societies.

The move to involve women in the leadership of other organizations was not easy. In 1973 WCAWH had to challenge the president of the PCB-AHA for his failure to publicly announce positions for Council and the Nominations Committee. A slate of candidates had appeared in the mail along with a ballot. No prior notification of the slate had been given, and answers to requests for information about making nominations by petition had never been answered. Evidently members of WCAWH hoped to nominate candidates by petition but could not do so under these procedures. Initially nothing changed, but eventually pressure from WCAWH leadership paid off. The PCB adopted a resolution to publish the slate of candidates in sufficient time to permit members to submit nominations using the petition process. That, of course, opened up the opportunity for women to become leaders in the PCB.

Organizational growth and program development, 1969 and the early1970s

Step by step the organization continued to grow in numbers, formality, and stature. An even bigger step in the direction of greater academic convention came with the decision to organize the "program—nothing too formal, but something a bit more than (a) purely impromptu discussion." The argument underlying the move was that a more formal but still supportive and friendly gathering could offer scholars a "dry run" for papers they might propose to the PCB or the AHA. The experiment fared well. As Grace Larsen argued following the 1972 meeting, "A structured program was what we had at this conference and that … gave more breadth and encouraged younger historians."[21]

The task of organizing this program fell to Cynthia Brantley and Penny Kenner. In preparation for a more formal program, Penny and Cynthia organized a Program Questionnaire, which is included among the documents in the Appendix, and a modified version appears in your registration packet. From the returns, Penny and Cynthia organized five sessions for Saturday and Sunday.

[21] Grace Larsen, "Conference Report," WCAWH *Newsletter*, Vol. III, No. 1, October 1972, p. 5.

This move to structure the program and provide an official newsletter increased the responsibilities of officers and the costs of running WCAWH. So, in short order, the constitution was again revised to add a vice president to the Executive Committee. Dues were also increased from the original $2.00 to $5.00 for employed members but remained unchanged for those who were not. Then Joan Moon (President, 1973-1976), taking a step that many of her successors would follow, published a special newsletter column asking the more than 400 readers to pay up.

Issues, 1969 and the early 1970s

WCAWH has provided members with a place to share scholarly research, but it has also offered members a safe place to discuss the many issues facing women historians in this era. Employment opportunity was one of those crucial issues.

In the early 1970s job opportunities for women historians slowly began to open as the numbers of women with doctorates increased and the pressures of Affirmative Action legislation were felt. Under the leadership of Dorothy Sexter, who in those days also served as WCAWH *Newsletter* editor, *The Newsletter* was a clearing house for jobs, providing both the qualifications of women who wanted work and the job descriptions of departments seeking scholars. This WCAWH goal, to match scholars with jobs, was part of a larger program that the Organization of American Historians and the American Historical Association had developed to assist women in finding employment.

But before the first newsletter had reached members, it became clear that reporting job opportunity was not all that members needed. While many institutions had been quick to officially adopt guidelines that put them in compliance with the law, some were slow to implement their guidelines.

The subject of gender discrimination surfaced in several settings and became the subject of WCAWH scrutiny in the early 1970s. In 1972 Sacramento State became the subject of observation. Evidently there were job opening at Sac State, and the word had seemingly gone out, apparently in reaction to the Affirmative Action legislation, "that no while males will ever be hired again" at Sac State. The rumor produced a furor of activity, with everyone closely scrutinizing the hiring procedures. As Sexter reported to members of the association, "the antagonism … served a worthwhile purpose, in that everyone on the faculty is aware that there had been discriminatory hiring in the past and that many members of the faculty are sufficiently alert to this situation to keep watch that it is not repeated." [22]

Sac State should not be singled out as the only institution faced with affirmative action backlash. In 1973 Margaret Bearden, Patricia Fouquet, and Karen Leonard, with the aid of the National Organization for Women, pursued research on hiring practices in the San Diego Community Colleges. From them came "A Report on Sex Discrimination in San Diego County Community Colleges," and a summary was published in the WCAWH newsletter. According to their findings, men held 92 percent of all positions in the Social Sciences and 79 percent in all of

[22] Dorothy Sexter, "An Affirmative Action Program," WCAWH *Newsletter*, Vol. II, NO. 3, 1972, pp. 6-8.

the Arts and Sciences.[23] As similar reports from elsewhere suggested, the proportion of women in the scholarly professions was small.

Opposition to Affirmative Action was not limited to Sac State, San Diego County Community Colleges, or California. As WCAWH learned from close affiliation with the CCWHP, resistance developed quickly and functioned in many ways. A "Special Report: Sexism in Letters of Recommendations: A Case for Consciousness Raising," published in 1973 by the Modern Language Association, revealed a chilling reality. Language used in letters of recommendation served to discourage the employment of women. As one female scholar reported she was described as a "spinster scholar type" who "lacks sociability." These remarks, coupled with references to marital status, tended to invite dismissal of an applicant.[24] This report produced intense discussion within WCAWH and many other organizations as members began to wonder what their own letters of recommendation might say.

A job crisis in higher education further exacerbated difficulties in meeting the affirmative action goals in the early 1970s. WCAWH members and leaders were forced to become even more vigilant and to develop methods for problem solving. They promoted letter-writing campaigns to local, state, and national leaders. Some advised graduate students on approaches to job interviews and techniques for checking letters of recommendation. The newsletter also continued to report on job availability and added lists of grants and fellowships available to historians. Others took up the task of exploring alternatives to teaching. Mary Ann Mason, for example, pursued a law degree. Now she teaches family law at the University of California, Berkeley and has offered her wisdom as a consultant on strategies for fining options in a tight labor market.[25]

WCAWH, working hand-in-hand with the CCWHP in 1972, also proposed the following far-reaching recommendations intended to expand the job market: investigate means of expanding the job possibilities for Ph.D.'s by reorienting the community colleges to accept the idea of hiring Ph.D.'s to teach history; break the high school history-P.E. combination; raise AHA dues so that the national organization could pressure Congress to fund new projects that would employ Ph.D.'s; raise an emergency relief fund for unemployed new Ph.D.'s who are actively seeking employment to tide them over the crisis; create tenured part-time positions for Ph.D.'s who might prefer part time work; persuade fully employed Ph.D.'s not to teach overloads; consider pay cuts for faculty in upper salary brackets; propose early retirement for tenured faculty.

Many of these goals were never fully achieved, but the list raised the issues and helped to create pressure in some colleges. In the meantime, WCAWH leaders refused to give up. Instead they added to the list of services the organization provided and the support it offered to scholars in the mid and late 1970s.

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[23] M. Bearden, P. Fouquet, and K. Leonard, NOW Research Team, "A Summary Report of a Report on Sex Discrimination in San Diego County Community College Facilities," WCAWH *Newsletter*, Vol. IV., No. 1, May, 1873, pp. 8-13.

[24] "AHA Recent News Items," WCAWH *Newsletter*, Vol. IV, No. 2, December 1973, p. 5.

[25] S. Barbara Kanner. Personal Interview. May 2, 1994.

THE MID to LATE 1970s

In response to the increasing numbers of women with doctorates, the job crisis in the profession, and the ever-increasing interest in building a network of women historians, WCAWH grew rapidly and in the mid and late 1970s and expanded its services to keep pace with the needs of the membership. The newsletter became the longer as various new columns – news on Women's Studies programs, reports on CCWHP meetings, a graduate student questionnaire intended to include even more graduates in the organization, announcements of various sorts—were added and then deleted in response to member needs. Conferences not only became more formal, but also included a wider range of scholarly experiences. In addition to scholarly panels focused on research, workshops were offered on manuscript evaluation, publishing, job alternatives to college teaching, pedagogy and specifically the teaching of the history of women, Women's Studies, the use of media in the classroom, and the value of unions to professionals. Colloquia were also organized on subjects such as the relationships of academic women to the community, the issues facing academic couples, and the needs of independent scholars.

Under the leadership of Francesca Miller (President, 1985-1987), Paula Gillett, Carole Hecke, Ellen Huppert, Lorrie O'Dell, and other WCAWH members, the Institute for Historical Studies was created in the 1970s to encourage historical study and research. They organized regional gatherings of members for book discussions and research during the year and at conference time for WCAWH they organized panels which focused on the research these scholars were doing, on strategies for finding employment in the tight labor market of the 1970s, and other topics of particular concern to independent scholars.

Organizational growth required an expansion of leadership structure, and new offices were added along the way. Finally, in 1979 a team, including Margaret Strobel, Alice Clement, and Debbie Kennel, submitted to the membership a modified constitution that included several new offices needed to fulfill the many demands of the organization. The Executive Board now included president, first and second vice presidents (now one office, the president elect), secretary-treasurer (now two separate offices), membership secretary (now part of the function of the secretary), conference coordinator, program chair, past-presidents liaisons, newsletter editors, social action coordinator, and even for a short time a speakers bureau coordinator. Each of these positions is a two-year term of office. Dues were also increased slightly to meet the ever-increasing expenses of the organization.

Issues, the mid to late 1970s

Many issues from the early 1970s continued to be important in the late 1970s. The job market continued to worsen. Teaching assistantships at UCLA, for example, were cut in 1977, forcing female graduate students to organize Women Against Cutbacks, according to graduate student representative Jaclyn Greenberg. But the issue was not limited to UCLA. Across the West universities had begun to cut their graduate programs in response to financial woes and an "over supply" of Ph.D.'s in higher education. These circumstances demanded more long-range planning, and at the next conference Jess (Flemion) Stoddart (President, 1983-1985) responded by organizing a panel focused on the limited success of Affirmative Action, the move by many history departments to cut admissions, and various employment options.

Problems of gender bias continued to create hurdles for women historians. In a brief column, Peg Strobel reported that a candidate for a job at an eastern university was asked the following questions in her interview:

1. Do you have "command presence"? (It was explained, following her inquiry, that "command presence" was a West Point term for an ability to command respect.)
2. Were you a cheerleader in college?
3. Have you ever taken ballet lessons?
4. 'Can you love the white male?' (When she asked what that question meant, it was elaborated, "Can you love the white male as much as you love women?"[26]

Evidently the interviewee answered the questions correctly because she did get the job, according to Peg, who went on to question how a man might have fared. The brief column also revealed the continuing need for WCAWH to provide a haven for women.

Part of the responsibility of the WCAWH has been to share information about issues facing its members, but it also looked outward to address the burning concerns facing all women. In the late 1970s the Equal Rights Amendment was on the national agenda, and WCAWH took up the cause. Working with the CCWHP and CGWH, WCAWH pressured the AHA in 1979 not to meet in states which had refused to ratify this amendment to the Constitution. The same kind of victory was repeated at the 1994 annual meeting, when the CCWHP, WAWH, and other regional associations, along with the Gay and Lesbian Caucus, convinced the AHA board to move the 1995 meeting out of a city which legally discriminated against people on the basis of sexual preference.

The continuing needs of increasing numbers of women produced critical questions about the course that the organization should follow. As Patricia Fouquet commented in her president's message in 1976, "Our eighth annual conference … has left us a legacy." As she went on to explain, "Many of those who attended felt fulfilled and happy at the opportunity to renew old acquaintances and participate in many interesting sessions. Yet there were also criticisms – most of them justified – about the lack of free time, the scholarly standards, the over emphasis on Women's History and American History." And as she went on to argue, "The WCAWH is experimenting."[27] But the experiments led to a new round of structural change and the addition of still further responsibilities.

Organizational growth and program development in the mid to late 1970s

It was not just the change in program format that made the conference in 1975 a turning point in WCAWH's history. As Karen Offen (President, 1991-1993) explained in her report on the conference, "The pounding surf of Santa Cruz (and before that Asilomar) symbolizes for many of us the kind of low-key atmosphere and spiritual uplift that characterized our gatherings in the past, when they were smaller and more casual, more intimate, and – let us be frank – more

[26] Margaret Strobel, "Sexism in Education," WCAWH *Newsletter*, Vol. III, No. 1, July 1976, p. 1

[27] "The President's Message: Greetings from Pat," WCAWH *Newsletter*, Vol. VII, NO. 1, July 1976, p. 1.

frequented by the 'old guard' – the early friends and colleagues that formed our support network… One of the problems that WCAWH faces as we grow is the inclusion of new faces, more diverse interests, but while making our circle larger to make them feel at home, we must still retain the spirit of cordiality and congeniality that bound together the original coterie of women historians."[28]

Karen went on to propose that we alternate types of meetings, one a retreat in the fall for those who prefer to gather in an informal relaxed way, and one in the spring that would allow women to gather for the intellectual exchange that a more urban or collegiate setting would offer. While two meetings a year has not become the tradition of the organization, alternating types of meetings from year to year, one in an urban center and one in a more rural setting has become a common pattern.

The rapid growth of WCAWH not only raised important questions about our internal organization and the purposes of our meetings, but it also raised concerns about our relationship to other organizations. Close work with the CCWHP in the early years had fruitful, but should WCAWH have a closer relationship with the CCWHP? In 1976 the national association asked WCAWH and other regional associations to unite under its umbrella. As Fouquet argued, "If we elect to become a regional branch of CCWHP, we will contribute to the formation of a more solid political block of women historians across the nation." And there were strong arguments to be made in favor of building national strength. "But we also run the risk of losing the values and identity of our own organization at a time when this identity and values are in the process of being re-defined and solidified," she went on to argue.[29]

The question was a crucial one because WCAWH had grown dramatically and was seen by some as competition to the national organization. The final decision was to strongly encourage WCAWH members to join CCWHP, but to keep the two separate. That decision and relationship that followed have continued to be a source of strength to both organizations.

The 1980S AND EARLY 1990S

The decision to remain an independent sister organization to the CCWHP permitted WCAWH to continue to strive to meet its own member' needs. But that also meant that the presidents of the 1980s inherited a large and growing organization and still further challenges to maintain balance between the informal, supportive friendly tone of the early years with the more formal tone that came with the new conferences and growth of the 1970s. Perhaps in an attempt to simplify its work, WCAWH took on a new name in 1980, the Western Association of Women Historians, but the shorter name did not mean a cut-back in the organizations several functions.

The decade of the 1980s brought steady organizational growth. In 1980 the mailing list was 300 long, with a membership of about 100. In 1994 WAWH has more than 550 members

[28] "Reflections on Encino: A View from Karen Offen," WCAWH *Newsletter*, Vol. VII, NO. 1, July 1976, p. 3.

[29] "The President's Message: Greetings from Pat," WCAWH *Newsletter*, Vol. VII, NO. 1, July 1976, p. 2.

who reside in the fourteen western states, several eastern states, and several foreign countries. This dramatic increase in members necessitated an updated directory, and several have been released. It also encouraged the computerization of our membership list, a task accomplished in 1983. The annual conference program continued to be more formal than it was in the early years and several efforts were made to change the format: to alternate scholarly sessions with workshops and colloquia.

Organizational growth also led to changes in the newsletter. Under the direction of Penny Kanner, Michel Dahlin, and Joyce Baker, the format was changed to the 6 by 9 inches and folded, as it still is today. In addition, Penny and the editors collected syllabi from classes in women's history and published these in the newsletter.[30] In the 1982, under the leadership of Francis Keller, it was renamed *The Networker*. It has become an eight- to ten- page document, and since 1988, under the editorship of Susan Wladaver-Morgan (President, 1993-1995) it has been published quarterly. Throughout the years it has included the president's column, members' news, job and grant announcements, and various other columns in response to members' needs, including a graduate student column, and independent scholars' column, lists of members' publications, book reviews, reports on conferences, and more. Most recently, under the co-editorship of Susan Kullmann Puz and Barbara Stites, it has added a column on the electronic highway.

To complete these and many other services required further changes in the leadership structure. Co-editors were chosen to produce *The Networker*. The jobs of the secretary and treasurer were divided, and new tasks were added to the already-existing jobs. These modifications to the constitution are to be officially brought before the membership in 1994.

In addition to maintaining the services provided in the 1970s, WAWH took on several new responsibilities in the 1980s. The first of these was the creation of several awards, the creation of awards committees, and the organization and implementation of various development projects to fund these awards. The winners of these awards are listed in the Appendix. WAWH assumed responsibility to help mainstream the study of women into the curriculum in the public schools. Betsy Perry stepped forward to get non-profit status for WAWH so that membership and other contributions to these awards could be considered tax-deductible. In 1993, Emily Rader, Graduate Student Representative for WAWH, working with the CCWHP, created a computer network program entitled WEB, which allows graduate students to register their research interests and to find others of similar interests so that they can create panels for professional conferences.

The membership of WAWH continues to grow and with that have come added pressures on the leadership to figure out the needs of the large membership. In response to the need to stay in touch, Betsy Perry developed the WAWH: LOOKING AHEAD questionnaire, a mechanism for keeping in touch with those needs. That form, a useful tool, has been used by subsequent presidents to stay in touch with member needs. Responses to the questionnaire in the Winter, 1993 *Networker* helped shape the program for the 1994 conference, further encouraged the work of the Education Sub-committee, and supported the president's efforts to reach out to dozens of

[30] S. Barbara Kanner. Personal interview with Peggy Renner. March 2, 1994.

women who have found employment in the western states since the last formal outreach program was implemented.

Now WAWH needs an archivist. Records do exist in the archives at Sacramento State University, and numerous other small collections have been kept by members of the organization. But we need to develop a plan for further, more systematic record keeping. We are all historians, and we should know how important it is to find a complete and trustworthy collection of data.

Awards, the 1980s and 1990s

Awards for professional accomplishments have come to assume a major role in the work of WAWH. The first of the awards, the Sierra Book Award, was established by Frances Richardson Keller in 1982, when she was president, to show the pride WAWH takes in its members' accomplishments. The dollar value of the award was not grand, but the prestige that it brought to the organization far out-weighed its financial worth. Granting awards created a new responsibility to find funds to cover the costs, but Frances quickly found ways. She did not stop with the creation of one award. She also worked behind the scenes to encourage a close friend and supporter of WAWH to establish a prize for an article published by a member. Several years later the organization learned that Martin and Sally Ridge were the donors and the award has been named after their only daughter, Judith Lee Ridge, who died shortly after birth.

Jess (Flemion) Stoddart added to the awards offered to WAWH members by organizing the Graduate Student Fellowship Award. Originally a $250.00 award, it is now a $1000 award. Jess had to organize ways to raise the funds, and the Friday evening wine tasting, which had been part of the organization's tradition since the early years, was turned into a fundraiser. She also organized other development projects in San Diego, San Francisco, at Stanford, and in Southern California. Betsy Perry and Penny Kanner joined the drive in organizing a luncheon in Los Angeles, and Penny offered a $200 matching funds challenge grant. In a campaign to raise sufficient funds to create an endowed fund, Marguerite (Peggy) Renner (President 1993-1995) has organized still another development project and contributions have been made.

A Graduate Student Paper Award was also created in 1984, and an award was granted. However, the award was promptly discontinued. Evidently the committee felt that the award did not attract sufficient competition. But there may also have been financial concerns.

Still another award was created in 1993: The S. Barbara Kanner Award honors the author of the best scholarly bibliographic and historical guide to focus on Women's or Gender History. Due to the short time with which the award committee had to make their decisions, the committee agreed not to grant an award that year. But there is an anticipated winner for 1994.

Each of these award is now listed in the GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND PRIZES TO HISTORIANS published by the AHA. As a result, the organization has added members from around the country and gained further prominence as a distinguished professional organization.

WAWH also established an honorary lecture in 1990, the Founders' Memorial Lecture, to honor women who have made contributions to WAWH. The decision to create this honorary lecture came in response to the suggestion of Lucia Birnbaum, following the death of Rena Vassar whose membership dated back to the early 1970s. Grace Larsen was selected to give the lecture in 1991 to honor Rena Vassar.[31]

Penny Kanner also proposed the creation of an award to "an outstanding woman historian whose work went beyond the traditional accomplishments of teaching and/or publication and involved extraordinary – unique – unusual professional careers."[32] As Kanner recognized, WAWH has among its members many women who were forced by the limited job opportunity in academe to seek employment in areas outside but who have remained strongly committed to the profession. One such award was given to Suzanne Hull in 1987, whose work to create the Huntington Women's Studies Seminar Series had been instrumental in integrating women into the library.

Annual Conferences, the 1980s and early 1990s

The annual conference has become the biggest of the several functions WAWH serves. Attracting scholars from all over the United States and several foreign nations, its panels reveal the diversity and high caliber of our members' scholarship. Many of our members are trained in the history of women, a specialty that did not exist when the organization was first founded. Their papers have focused on suffrage for women and women in politics in the United States, Europe, Africa, and Latin America, on women in various religions, on the influences of gender in education, medicine, law, and the healing arts, and much more.

Our conference has often been on the leading edge in the profession. Concern about cross-cultural education, for example, surfaced at WAWH conferences long before other professional societies addressed it. Interest in improving teaching, using new pedagogies, has always been part of our program.

WAWH was never intended for just historians of women. Included in our programs have been sessions on diplomatic and political history, on labor and ethnic history, on art and literary history and others, although to the frustration of some of our members, these subjects often have been out-numbered by those focused on the study of women. The program has also included a discussion of the financial crisis in higher education, new approaches to research, guidelines on publishing, alternatives to research and teaching jobs, and more. Our membership directory indicates that we represent a cross-section of all the specialties in the profession, and we encourage scholars from this broad spectrum of specialties to participate in our program.

By the late 1980s WAWH had grown so much that its annual meetings tended to become more impersonal, as often happens in professional organizations. To nip this development before it flowered, Betsy Perry took steps to counter it. Not only did she propose guidelines for reviewing others work in supportive and productive ways, but she organized the WAWH:

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[31] "Words from Our Founding Mothers," *THE NETWORKER* Vol. XXIV, NO. 1, August 1987, p. 4.

[32] Penny Kanner, "Outstanding Women Historians," *THE NETWORKER*, Vol. XXI, NO. 1, August 1987, p. 4.

LOOKING AHEAD survey to identify members interests so that WAWH could respond. Karen Offen followed suit by taking WAWH to Lake Tahoe for a retreat in 1993.

Links with other professional organizations

Efforts to maintain and strengthen ties with other professional associations and to increase women's participation in them continue in these years. The decision to work with CCWHP but to remain a separate organization led to several joint projects. Each year these organizations co-sponsor a cocktail party at the AHA annual convention. Women with joint memberships in WAWH and CCWHP worked together to sponsor panels at the AHA and the PCB-AHA. In 1994, to jointly celebrate the 25th anniversaries of our creation, WAWH and the CCWHP jointly sponsored a drop-in room for graduates at the annual convention of the AHA, and WAWH provided refreshments for the interviewees. Based on the comments heard in the room, young women and men greatly appreciated it alike, who found it a relief to have a place to go before and/or after an interview.

Our efforts to further the voice of the profession and reinforce our ties to other organizations continued through the 1980s. In 1982 WAWH would join the AHA, OAH, and other professional organizations to pressure for the creation of the National Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History to protect the endangered National Archives and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Page Putnam Miller, the director of the NCCPH is the guest speaker at the President's Dinner this year. Frances Keller took the lead for WAWH in promoting this action in 1982, and subsequent presidents have offered support to the work of the NCC. Included among its many accomplishments has been the most recent opening of the Seneca Falls Museum, as an historic site, the plans to establish an historic site of the Underground Railroad and other sites that recall the social history of the United States.

Not all the networks with other associations have run as smoothly as the WAWH/CCWHP connection. In 1984 the WAWH luncheon at the PCB was located next to the student cafeteria, leaving the guest speaker, who did not have a microphone, to compete with the rumble of the lunch hour. Evidently the president of the PCB did not see fit to apologize to Francesca Miller, not even when asked to do so by the president of the AHA. But the PCB atoned for its errors, according to Frances Keller, the following year by providing the best room accommodations and fresh fruit to Miller at the PCB meeting in Hawaii.[33]

Doors to the PCB and other professional organizations that opened in the 1970s did not always stay open. Throughout the decade presidents of WAWH had to remain vigilant to keep other organizations open and receptive to female leadership. In 1982 Joyce Appleby competed for a position on the AHA Council, Frances Keller, for a seat on the Nominations Committee, and both were elected. A dramatic moment in WAWH and PCB relations came in 1988, when Katherine (Kitty) Sklar, WAWH member who had been elected President of the PCB and Jess (Flemion) Stoddart, who had agreed to chair the Program Committee of the PCB, proposed a jointly sponsored WAWH and PCB conference. While WAWH decided against the proposal for fear that it would require a cancellation of the annual WAWH meeting, the two organizations did

[33] Frances Keller. Letter to Peggy Renner. December 20, 1993.

work together to make the PCB program as inclusive of women's scholarship and scholarship about women as extensive as possible.[34] Penny Kanner would follow in 1991 by organizing 25 of the 87 sessions on the history of women. These sessions brought women from Italy, Australia, New Zealand, and other parts of the world to the conference.

These and other accomplishments did not come easily. More importantly, WAWH presidents saw the need to broaden the base of female leadership to include "minorities and independent scholars on the executive board," and to accomplish these goals demanded still further pressure on the PCB and the AHA.[35] Pressure to achieve these ends continues.

Betsy Perry, Penny Kanner, and Maryanne Horowitz, all leaders of WAWH, were on the front line to assist in the creation of the Huntington Women's Studies Seminar Series. The seminar, which conducts four or five sessions annually and brings together scholars from a cross-section of the social sciences and humanities, represents an effort to integrate the study of women into an institution which is internationally renowned for its scholarship.

Karen Offen was present in Athens, Greece in 1990 at the general assembly of the International Committee for the Historical Sciences when the International Federation for Research in Women's History was approved as an ICHS Internal Commission. The aim of the Federation was to encourage and coordinate research in all of women's history at the international level by promoting exchange of information and publication, and by arranging large-scale international conferences and more restricted local meetings. Karen has also gone on to become an officer in this international organization.

Issues, the 1980s and early 1990s

The goal of WAWH to integrate the study of women into mainstream history is slowly being accomplished, but this accomplishment has come slowly. As Susan Groag Bell said in her report from the 1980 AHA conference, "We are still confronted with the classic dilemma of integration and segregation. Certainly, we had derived much strength from our separate conferences. But, until we convince the bulk of the profession that without incorporating women into American history, the present interpretations are at best incomplete and, at worst, blatantly wrong, we will remain pariahs."[36] The tendency at the AHA was to isolate women into separate sessions focused on "women's issues." But few men attended these while they predominated in the sessions not focused on the history of women.

In response to this concern, WAWH has given special attention to the subject of mainstreaming women and the history of women into the profession. The guest lecturer at the WAWH conference in 1981 was Catherine Prelinger, her lecture entitled "Women Historians in Higher Education." The plenary session that year focused on "Mainstreaming: Integrating Material on Women into History Survey Courses," with panelists Catherine Prelinger, President

[34] "Proposal for WAWH Participation in 1988 PCB/AHA," *THE NETWORKER*, Vol. XX, No. 3, April 1987, p. 3.

[35] "Greetings from Penny Kanner," WCAWH *Newsletter*, Vol. XIV, No. 1, July 1980, p. 1.

[36] Susan Groag Bell, "Reports of Conferences," WCAWH *Newsletter*, Vol. XIV, No. 1, July, 1980, p. 5.

of the CCWHP, d'Ann Campbell, of Indiana University, Carolyn Lougee of Stanford, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese of SUNY Binghamton, and Lane Downs of McMurray College.

In 1983 members of WAWH joined with scholars at the OAH annual meeting to focus on the integration of the histories of women into basic courses at all levels. In the mid-1980s several members, under the leadership of June Stephenson, Lyn Reese, Molly MacGregor, Karen Offen, Jean Wilkinson, Frances Keller, and several other members of WAWH, created a committee to examine textbooks in the K-12 schools. In addition, several worked to promote the creation of National Women's History Month, and several volunteered in local public schools to help expand the study of women in the curriculum. Molly went on to help create the Women's History Project.

WAWH continues to pressure textbook publishers and the public schools to move information on women from little boxes inserted in the text and integrate it into the text. In 1991, under the leadership of Karen Offen and Lyn Reese, a standing committee was created in WAWH to work on modifying the curriculum in the K-12 public schools. Lyn and Karen have also become unofficial lobbyists in Sacramento and have established links with the California Textbook League. They also produced a Special Education edition of THE NETWORKER.

The struggle over gender issues was not always an academic/textbook concern in this decade. In 1983 women still had a disproportionate percentage of temporary positions (45%) in in colleges and universities in the U.S., and tenure-track women tended to be denied tenure at a higher rate than men. Even though the percentage of doctorates awarded to women had increased to 28% by 1980, departments remained seriously under-staffed as far as full time, tenure-track women were concerned. Our members were among the many fighting for tenure. One of these fights involved a scholar at Stanford University, whose tenure battle gained national prominence, when the University attempted to deny her on the basis of the legitimacy of women's history.

The fight for inclusion took a different tack at California State University Long Beach in 1983, where the Women's Studies Program was challenged by members of the conservative community, who held that Women's Studies did not teach traditional roles for women. The administration of CSULB responded by demanding an immediate curriculum review, cancelled classes, dismissed adjunct faculty, and suspended the director of the program. Sherna Gluck and Alice Clement, both faculty members at CSULB, brought the issue to WAWH attention and the organization responded to the attack by passing the following resolution:

> "Whereas, the California State University Long Beach administration at the highest levels admitted the politically and religiously motivated attacks on its Women's Studies Program by conservative legislators, right wing advocates and fundamentalist zealots; and
>
> "Whereas the administration at CSULB reacted to this attack in violation of academic freedom and its own internal processes by ordering an unprecedented mid-semester curriculum review of an already approved course; and

"Whereas, even after affirming the challenged curriculum, the administration at CSULB, in violation of due process and constitutional rights, cancelled classes, fired faculty, and suspended the only full-time position in the Women's Studies Program,

"Therefore, be it resolved, that the WAWH condemns the actions of the CSULB administration in their arbitrary response to the political influence of the New Right; and

"Resolved that the WAWH re-affirm the importance of Women's Studies classes and research which examine all aspects of women[?] experience and potential."[37]

The Women's Studies Program at CSULB survived the attack although several women endured several years of anguish while the suit went through the courts. Eventually some left the profession following these events.

WAWH concerns about women's rights were not limited to developments in California. Throughout the decade the organization responded to federal attempts to diffuse the power of the Civil Rights Commission. Frances Keller wrote letters to Senator Alan Cranston objecting to the dismissal of three members of the commission. WAWH members followed suit. Jess (Flemion) Stoddart continued to work on the issue, keeping the organization abreast of efforts in Washington to undermine the work of the Commission, writing letters to the President and encouraging the membership to do so.

Comparable worth was also on the list of WAWH concerns. Frances Keller, in her lecture at the WAWH luncheon at the 1986 PCB [luncheon], argued that comparable worth has become a great unresolved conflict at the center of our working lives," or as she went on to label it, a "national neurosis. The historical foundations of the question of women's worth are long and deep, but solving this problem, she argued was not insurmountable. What was at stake were changing attitudes, and WAWH saw education as the place to start.

WAWH has grown considerable in twenty-five years, and that growth has required the organization to become much more structured than it was in 1969. In addition to the executive committee, the organization has several standing committees which are appointed for two years. The constitution will be revised again. With a non-profit status the organization now needs formal bookkeeping procedures and will approve and official budget this year.

During these years the organization has addressed the needs of its members, but many of the concerns facing women 1969, when the founders first met at Asilomar, are still on the agenda. Members still want to meet to maintain the professional and social networks that were so important to the founders. Our membership now includes graduate students, adjunct and tenured faculty, employees from the community colleges, the state universities, and private schools, independent scholars, public historians, librarians—all in history but it also continues to attract women from other disciplines who do not have the same support group available. WAWH offers

[37] Alice Clement and Sherna Gluck. Resolution submitted to the business meeting of the Western Association of Women Historians, and annual conference, May 14th, 1983. Document in the private collection of Frances Richardson Keller.

people from diverse work settings the chance to meet and mingle and to share their ideas in a warm and supportive environment, to make our heterogeneity our strength.

WAWH has supported women as they make complex decisions about their futures as professionals, and in so doing have set new courses in the profession. WAWH will highlight these accomplishments this year by examining the new definitions that we have given to the term "success." The plenary session at the 1994 conference will explore the various ways in which women have been "successful" in the profession over the last twenty-five years. In 1969 "success" meant a tenure-track job in a major college or university. Although many of our members have taken that path, it is not the only route. Each of the speakers has been selected because she brings an exciting and new definition to success. These many new routes will hopefully assist the next generation of scholars to make the tough decisions that will keep women involved in the profession, that will continue to redirect its course of our profession, and that will also permit women to develop to their fullest potential.

Some come to the annual conference to share their research, to find encouragement to revise the traditional fields and to pioneer new ones. Our meetings will continue to offer members the chance to present new ideas in a collegial setting, where they can freely dare to venture onto new historical ground, to learn new research techniques, and to even find access to the electronic highway. For twenty-five years members have refined and revised our understanding of the past and WAWH will continue to support them in that venture.

Teaching is another important focus of WAWH meetings. Members come looking for ways to respond to our heterogeneous student bodies and for methods for teaching history to our native born, who have heard the story at least once before, and our immigrant students, who know little of that story. Contemporary students are more visual learners than we were, and they need approaches to learning that will allow them to use of their strengths as well as improve their weaknesses. WAWH members come to meetings with new ideas about teaching our students to think critically in a world that offers endless information and little time to digest it. On the agenda this year is collaborative learning and learning communities. Instead of competing, students need to work together to solve problems. These and other needs place new demands on WAWH members to develop new teaching skills. WAWH will continue to provide the supportive setting for this experimentation to develop.

Some of our members have sought to redirect the course of higher education, and that has involved them in administration. Burning issues are on the agendas of most institutions of higher education as state and private institutions across the country re-think their missions. WAWH members are already involved in this discussion. To further advance our understanding and bring us into the decision-making process, the guest speaker at the PCB-AHA luncheon for 1994 will discuss shared governance and join with us to explore ways in which faculty and administration can set the course(s) for our complex system of higher education. In addition, a future guest speaker will address WAWH on the subject of women as leaders and the collaborative approach to decision-making that many women have brought to administration.

WAWH has also invited the director of the National Committee for the Promotion of History to speak at the meeting to address women's successes at the national level, including up-

to-date information on the appointment of the National Archivist and the redefinition of criteria in the creation of national historic sites.

WAWH has been most effective as a professional society by answering the needs of its members. But it can only do so if it knows what those needs are. In your registration packet you will find a copy of the PROGRAM COMMITTEE QUESTIONAIRE, which the original program committee compiled and the WAWH: LOOKING AHEAD form. I ask you please to complete both of these forms and turn them in so that the Executive Committee knows what direction you would like the organization to take.

APPENDIX

Names of the organization

1969 – 1972	West Coast History Association
1972 – 1980	West Coast Association of Women Historians
1980 – present	Western Association of Women Historians

Most of the other materials in the Appendix of the original version of this booklet are not included here because they can be found on the WAWH website.

These include:

- PRESIDENTS of WAWH 1969-1994
- LOCATIONS of MEETINGS, 1969-1994 (now known as) PAST CONFERENCE ARCHIVES
- SIERRA BOOK AWARD, 1982-1993 (now known as) THE FRANCES RICHARDSON KELLER - SIERRA PRIZE
- ARTICLE PRIZE, 1985-1993 (now known as) THE JUDITH LEE RIDGE PRIZE
- GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOWSHIP, 1986-1993 (now known as) THE FOUNDER'S DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIP
- GRADAUATE STUDENT PAPER PRIZE, 1986 (now known as) THE CAROL GOLD GRADUATE STUDENT CONFERENCE PAPER PRIZE
- THE BARBARA "PENNY" KANNER AWARD, 1993 -
- PROGRAM QUESTIONNAIRE
- WAWH: LOOKING AHEAD