

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL AND GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY FOR
HISTORIANS OF THE GILDED AGE AND PROGRESSIVE ERA

Friday, March 18, 2011

Houston, Texas

President Maureen Flanagan, Michigan State University, called the council Meeting of the Society for Historians of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era to order. In addition to President Flanagan, the following SHGAPE Council, other members, and guests attended the meeting:

Roger Bridges, Bloomington, Illinois
James Connolly, Ball State University
Laura Etheredge, Cambridge University Press
Wendy Gamber, Indiana University
Julia Irwin, Yale University
Alan Lessoff, Illinois State University
Nicole Phelps, University of Vermont
Terry Seip, University of Southern California (Emeritus)
Phil VanderMeer, Arizona State University
Christopher Waldrep, San Francisco State University

Maureen Flanagan reviewed minutes from the previous Annual Meeting (April 9, 2010) which had previously been distributed to committee members. Minutes were adopted.

President's Report (Maureen Flanagan).

Maureen announced that SHGAPE is doing well in terms of membership and participation. She is pleased with our new arrangement with Cambridge University Press, which now manages memberships and subscriptions and publishes the *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*. Maureen commended the professional appearance of the new *JGAPE* and thanked Cambridge, especially Journals Editor Laura Etheredge, for its publicity campaign, including the very prominent display in the book exhibit hall. Maureen also thanked our "patron saint" Vincent DeSantis for his very generous contribution to our endowment fund.

The council then reviewed and acknowledged the written reports from committee chairs and editors that had been pre-circulated.

Executive Secretary's Report (Wendy Gamber).

Wendy reported that transferring membership and subscription services to Cambridge University Press has gone very smoothly. SHGAPE members are now receiving a much higher level of service than they were previously. She thanked the numerous CUP staff members for their efficient and cheerful assistance with various stages of the transition. She also thanked former Subscription Manager Kalani Craig (Indiana University) for producing mailing lists for the April, July, and October issues of *JGAPE* and providing Cambridge University Press with membership data in the requested format.

The Executive Secretary's report included a discussion of membership trends. Laura Etheredge explained that it is too early to ascertain whether institutional subscription numbers are on target; we will have a better sense at the end of April. Thanks to Membership Secretary Skip Hyser's reminders to delinquent members and Cambridge's willingness to send out multiple renewal notices, individual membership as of March 2011 is significantly higher than it was one year ago, but still falls short of our March 2009 and end of year 2009 high points. This suggests that SHGAPE needs to think creatively about outreach.

Finally, Wendy reported that banking (thanks to Roger Bridges' timely intervention) and bookkeeping are proceeding much more smoothly than last year, and that SHGAPE's inaugural attempt at holding electronic elections generated significantly higher turnout.

Treasurer's Report. (Phil VanderMeer).

Phil reported that recent changes, especially our new publishing arrangement with Cambridge University Press, render meaningful comparisons with previous years difficult; most notably, because CUP now directly collects membership dues. Nevertheless SHGAPE is clearly in solid fiscal shape. Our operating account is healthy and our endowment continues to grow (thanks to the generous gifts of Vincent DeSantis and Peter and Jo Ann Argersinger and a lifetime membership from James Connolly), although declining interest rates have reduced our interest income. We are more than capable of meeting anticipated expenses (prizes, the OAH reception, contributions to/"membership" with professional associations, and office expenses) but we need to approach any new initiatives with caution until we are able to predict general financial trends.

Program Committee.

Christopher Waldrep (chair) presented the report of the Program Committee, Christopher Waldrep, Charles Postel, and Amy Wood. The committee received four complete panel proposals, two for the AHA and two for the OAH. The committee agreed to endorse all four proposals. This is a smaller number than SHGAPE has received in the past. Since there is still time for additional submissions before the May 1 deadline, we discussed means of generating greater interest in SHGAPE-sponsored sessions. Laura Etheredge agreed to provide us with a list of current SHGAPE members to whom CFPs can be sent.

DeSantis Prize Committee.

Maureen Flanagan spoke on behalf of the Committee (Leslie Rowland, Chair, David Danborn, and Axel Schaefer). The quality of the nominations received was uniformly high, and the decision to award the prize to David Suisman (University of Delaware) for *Selling Sounds: The Commercial Revolution in American Music* (Harvard University

Press) was unanimous. Leslie Rowland's report included suggestions for ways to better publicize the DeSantis Prize and increasing the number of entries. She suggested placing "box advertisements" (if economically feasible) in the *OAH Newsletter* and the AHA's *Perspectives*, both to congratulate winners and call for future submissions. Rowland also suggested that future committees continue sending mailings directly to academic presses to encourage them to submit recent publications for consideration. Finally, she noted that presses are often reluctant to send examination copies, especially if doing so requires paying overseas postage.

Annual Report, *JGAPE* (Alan Lessoff).

Alan introduced Laura Etheredge, journals editor at Cambridge University Press. Laura summarized the contents of a pre-circulated publishing report produced for *JGAPE* by Cambridge University Press. As noted above, Laura helped us to interpret subscription figures and discussed ideas for marketing and outreach to lapsed and potential members. Laura emphasized that Cambridge was working to address issues concerning the readability of *JGAPE*; planned corrections to font size and spacing should correct the problems. Finally, Laura briefly discussed CUP's recently redesigned journals website, *Cambridge Journals Online* (CJO), which has uploaded all issues of *JGAPE* and makes them available online to members and people with access to institutional subscriptions. In all, SHGAPE's publishing arrangement with CUP has worked out very well.

Alan provided an overview of the planned contents of volumes 10 and 11 of *JGAPE* and presented submission, acceptance, and rejection figures. He also outlined plans for upcoming themed issues.

Other Business:

Committees: The Council discussed composition for next year's Nominating and Prize committees. There was a general discussion of the need for committee members who would play an active role and a discussion of the merits and pitfalls of using committee appointments as a means of attracting new SHGAPE members.

Membership Secretary: The Council discussed whether SHGAPE needed to change Membership Secretary Skip Hyser's title with a designation more directly connected to outreach. After it was determined that Skip had previously worked to recruit new members in his capacity as Membership Secretary, it was decided that a change in title was not necessary. Skip has generously agreed to send letters urging lapsed members to renew as well as to send (via U.S. mail) invitations to scholars whose research and teaching interests fall within SHGAPE's purview. We may want to appoint another member who will contact lapsed and potential SHGAPE members via email.

Graduate Student Representative: The Council discussed the need to appoint a new Graduate Student Representative and means of identifying likely candidates.

Newsletter, Outreach, and Websites: A general discussion of a variety of related issues followed. We once again raised the question of whether SHGAPE needs a newsletter; all agreed that a revived newsletter—if approved— should exist strictly in electronic format. It was decided that the newsletter issue should be part of a larger discussion of the relationship between various websites: H-SHGAPE (<http://www.h-net.org/~shgape/>), www.jgape.org, and CJO; a SHGAPE-sponsored website might be the best place to publish news of members, prizes competitions, etc. An attractive website could also be a means of recruiting new members. Some participants pointed out that SHGAPE does not have its own website, and that perhaps it should. After discussion, Alan Lessoff editor offered to form a committee to deliberate via email the respective goals and relations of the three websites. The committee will consist of Lessoff, John McClymer, James Connolly, and Kate Masur (representing the journal); Christopher Nichols and Katherine Osburn (representing H-SHGAPE); and Laura Etheridge (on behalf of Cambridge).

Maureen Flanagan declared the meeting adjourned.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Wendy Gamber (Executive Secretary)