

Houston Philosophical Society  
630<sup>th</sup> Meeting

April 16, 2009

Rice University

Cohen House

The 630<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Society was called to order by President Robert Patten who reminded members of the business of the evening in addition to address by Dr. Michael Gillette. He asked those present to vote on the revision of the constitution recommended by the Executive Committee and circulated to the members in the announcement of this meeting. The purpose is to reflect the efforts of the Committee to balance the numbers among the sections. The amendment was unanimously accepted. President Patten called attention to the fact that new members will be elected this evening along with nextyear's officers and section leaders.

The slate of officers was approved: President—Evelyn Keyes, Vice President—Herb Ward, Treasurer—Laney Littlejohn, Recording Secretary—Don Byrnes, Membership Secretary—Fields Alexander, Custodian of Records—John Boles, Past President—Bob Patten.

After dinner eleven new members of the Society were approved by vote of the members:

Section A: Mr. Norbert Dittrich, Dr. Walter Worth

Section B: Dr. Timothy Palzkill

Section C: Mr. Matt Cooper, Mr. Jeffrey Kubin, Ms. Ruth Goldberg

Section D: Dr. Jim Granato, Dr. Steve Murdock, Dr. Will McCorquodale

Section E: Ms. Patsy Cravens, Mr. Antoine Plante

The Sections then caucused and the following persons were selected as Section Leaders for the 2009-2010 term:

Section A: Giles Auchmuty

Section B: Joe Schoolar

Section C: Fields Alexander

Section D: Randal Hall

Section E: Walter Widrig

Section F: Chuck Duncan

President Patten then introduced Dr. Michael L. Gillette, the executive director of Humanities Texas, the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. He received his baccalaureate degree and his doctorate in history from the University of Texas. Previous assignments included heading the LBJ Library's Oral History Program

from 1976 to 1991, and twelve years of service as the director of the Center for Legislative Archives of the National Archives and Records Administration. His presentation this evening was “Tales from the Crypt: Inside the National Archives.”

He was frequently called upon to escort various dignitaries such as Lieutenant Governor Bill Hobby and his wife Diana on tours of the collections in the archives. He included for tours a broad array of documents that were moved into a vacant vault in the Archives where they filled three map cases and many shelves of documents.

Documents included papers of various Presidents including Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, and Jackson. Material was included on the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the Monroe Doctrine, Washington’s first Inaugural address, Hamilton’s Report on Manufactures, Jackson’s Veto of the Bank, Clay’s drafts of the Compromise of 1850, an 1868 Universal Suffrage Petition by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and the reading copy of Franklin Roosevelt address to the Joint Session of Congress on December 8, 1941 styling December 7 as a Day of Infamy.

He reminded his audience of the Rotunda of the National Archives building and the “raising” of the documents from their underground storage to be seen by the public including the Emancipation Proclamation, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States.

The National Archives serve as the repository of the work of the government and it is a monumental task to hold them and to organize them for access by scholars. Concerns in document repositories include preservation of parchment and lesser forms of paper and the inks of the various periods of American history. The arrival of the digital age has further complicated the life of the archivists.