



MARCH NEWSLETTER
2015-2016 NUMBER 7

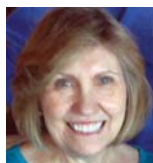
Editor: Shirley Baugher
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FRIENDS OF AMERICAN WRITERS CHICAGO

www.fawchicago.org

President's Message

ROBERTA GATES, *President*




Each year, hundreds—perhaps even thousands—of good books sink from view only a few months after being published. If you're not a celebrity author with a "platform," it's hard to attract attention. And if you're published by a small press, chances are there won't be money for the publicity that's needed to get a "buzz" going.

Friends of American Writers can't fix this problem, but we *are* dedicated to searching out new and promising voices and bringing them to the attention of the outside world through the prizes we give. That doesn't mean we won't choose an author who's had some success in the publishing world, but nonetheless we take special pleasure in shining a spotlight on someone new who can really use a boost.

Believe it or not, Gillian Flynn, a mystery writer who is now a megastar, was just such a choice. When we awarded her a second-place prize in 2007 for her book *Sharp Objects*, she told us that our award made a tremendous difference at a time when she and her young husband were struggling and she hadn't yet gained prominence for her writing.

So think about the support and encouragement we've given to writers like Gillian Flynn when you write this year's check for the Patrons' Fund and be as generous as you can. Just fill out the contribution form on page 2 of this newsletter and send it to our treasurer along with your donation.

We'll be grateful and you'll feel good about doing your bit to help new writers in need of encouragement. 

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Leslie Goddard TO PORTRAY THE LIFE OF A 'DOWNTON ABBEY'-ERA MAID

By ROBERTA GATES

Leslie Goddard, a popular FAW presenter, returns again this year with a portrayal of Margaret Powell, the kitchen maid whose memoir helped inspire *Downton Abbey* and the 1970s series *Upstairs, Downstairs*.

Powell's book, entitled *Below Stairs*, was written by a woman who'd won a scholarship to grammar school at the age of 13 but was forced to go into service instead. During her time as a servant, Powell worked as an under-housemaid, a kitchen maid and a cook who could whip up seven-course meals. Her memoir, published after her children were grown, made Powell a staple on the talk-show circuit and enabled her to leave behind an estate worth £ 77,000.

Leslie Goddard, who will be giving us her interpretation of Powell, is not only an award-winning actress but a historian with a Ph.D. from Northwestern University. She has worked as a museum director and is also the author of two books on Chicago history.

With the final season of *Downton Abbey* fresh in our minds, Leslie Goddard's presentation of Margaret is certain to be one you won't want to miss! 



▲ Leslie Goddard as the kitchen maid from Downton Abbey



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Luncheon Reservations

Luncheon reservations for the March 9, 2016 meeting of the Friends of American Writers are due no later than 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, March 6, 2016. Please note, this deadline is firm. No reservations will be accepted following this date and time. To reserve, please contact only Lorraine Campione (773-275-5118) or Pat Adelberg (847-588-0911). Luncheon will be served at 12:00 noon in the main floor dining room of the Fortnightly Club of Chicago, 120 E. Bellevue Place tea. The cost of the tea is \$40 payable by check (preferred) in the front lobby on the day of the meeting. If you are reserving for a group, we ask that only one person make the group request to avoid confusion. Please note, if you make a reservation and find you cannot attend, you must cancel no later than 6:00 p.m. on the Sunday preceding the meeting. Reservations not cancelled must be paid for by the member. Parking is available at the parking lot at 100 E. Bellevue Place.

Literature Awards

TAMMIE BOB, *Chair*
Tammie reported that the last committee meeting was very productive. Members went through all of the books on the list and gave input. The entries were so good it was hard to narrow them down, but the group

finally selected 27 finalists from which the winners will be chosen. Winners will be announced at the April Board meeting.


Young People's Literature Awards

MARTI DANIEL, *Chair*
Marti announced that the entries in this category had been narrowed down to 17 at the committee's last meeting. The winners will also be announced at the April Board meeting. Members are considering offering a special prize to an illustrator because of the great images in the books they reviewed

Membership

SANDIE WEISS, *Chair*
While there were no new members for the month of January, Sandie noted that 41 new members have joined FAW in the past year and a half. She suggested that current members might consider bringing a guest to the March meeting as a way of spreading the news about "... the best-kept secret on the Gold coast, our fantastic organization, the Friends of American Writers. Membership offers women (and men) an opportunity to meet, discuss wonderful writing, hear authors talk about their work, eat a fabulous lunch, and make new friends. Let's make it a goal to bring in one new member this year and share our secret with other like-minded individuals."

Upcoming Luncheon Dates

- **March 9, 2016 Leslie Goddard**, popular dramatist who will portray Margaret Powell, kitchen maid whose memoirs helped inspire *Downton Abbey*
- **April 13, 2016 Jenny Riddle**, dramatic book reviewer and actress who brings books to life with unique interpretations of best sellers and classics.
- **May 13, 2015 Annual Awards Luncheon** 

Jeane Williams, Former FAW Member Dies

Jeane Williams, a former FAW member has passed away. Jeane joined the club in 1983 and was active until 2006. She served numerous times as Bulletin Editor, Yearbook and Printing Chair, and Publicity Historian Chair. Several times her husband, Frank, printed the program for our annual awards luncheon and the certificates we formerly gave to the winning authors. She was on the Adult Literary Committee for at least 6 years, reading and reviewing the committee's choices. Extremely hard working, Jeane was quiet, but had a sly humor, a twinkle in her eye, and a huge grin that lit up her face.

—VIVIAN MORTENSON



PATRONS' FUND CONTRIBUTION FORM

Member's Name _____

Fund to Which Contribution Should be Applied (Mark with an X):

- Literature Awards (books for adult readers)
- Young People's Literature Awards
- Split Equally between Literature Awards and Young People's Literature Awards

Amount of Contribution _____

Return to:
Dory Roskin
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Chicago, IL 60611

If your contribution is \$25 or more, how ow you would like your name to be listed in the program book

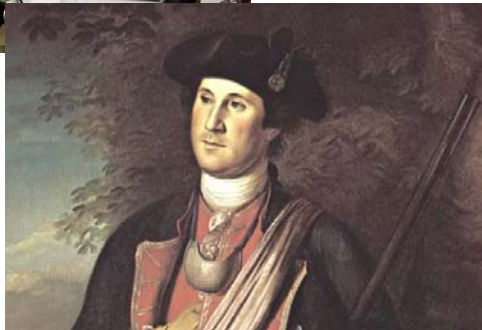
Note: this feature first appeared in 2014 during the mid-term elections. Since it holds so much relevance to what is happening on the current political scene, I have updated it and offer it for your consideration.

Voting in George Washington's Day and Now



▲ Voting now: Iowa Caucus 2016

▶ George Washington as a young man



No doubt most of you are sick of all the negative ads, screaming debates, and mean-spirited campaigning surrounding the 2016 presidential elections. Instead of telling voters what they will do for the country, candidates spew venom, spread fear, and denigrate each other. The current nasty politicking is a far cry from the way it was in the eighteenth century, shortly after we had become a nation. To understand voting procedures in the early days of the republic, one has only to look at a brilliant little book by Charles Sydnor titled *American Revolutionaries in the Making: Political Practices in Washington's Virginia*. It's only about 100 pages long, and is a very good read. It explains clearly how voting was done back then and it will give you pause to consider how our political landscape has changed. Here are a few of the highlights.

The Voters

First, consider who was eligible to vote in Virginia in the late 18th century. Not surprisingly, the voter had to be free, white, and male. When Washington was a young man, most of the Virginia voters qualified by owning at least 25 acres of land with a house on it. The houses didn't need to be anything more than a one-room log

cabin, and it didn't matter if the house was occupied by a tenant or the owner. Only the owner could vote. Since the required acreage was so small, a man didn't have to be rich to vote. About half of the adult, white males in Virginia were qualified to vote in 1785. Usually about fifty percent of qualified voters actually cast their ballots. It would seem not much has changed in that regard.

Interestingly, Virginia law required all freeholders to vote in elections. A man who failed to exercise his right to vote in the county where he lived could be brought before a grand jury and fined. The law was rarely enforced, however, and a number of factors entered in to whether a man actually went to the polls on election day. Weather was one. Voters did not like to travel on foot or on horseback in bad weather. How many of today's eligible voters stay away from the polls simply because it is raining, or cold, or even threatening?

Distance was another deterrent. Voting took place at the county court house, and some courthouses were not easily accessible. Unless there was a hotly contested race between two influential candidates, most freeholders didn't bother to show up. Such was the case in one county in 1788 when two prominent men were running for the Virginia legislature. In that election, 400 men showed up to vote. But four years later, when George Washington was running uncontested for President of the United States, only 19 men voted. Given the hotly contested races in both political parties this year, logic suggests a big voter turnout. Still, the times being what they are, who knows? Some might just say a plague on both your houses and stay home—which would be disastrous.

Freeholders could vote often, if not early because of the distance they traveled. Men who owned land and a house in more than one constituency were eligible to vote in each. One Virginia gentleman prided himself on voting in four counties in one day. Given the distance between polling places, he accomplished this by having relays of horses ready to take him from one county to another.

So who could *not* vote? First, men who did not own property, say second sons of plantation owners who were not landowners were ineligible to vote. Tenant farmers, slaves, and women were all excluded. This would suggest that landowning was the primary concern of the early Virginia legislatures. It was not. What they really wanted to do was give the vote to men who were heads of families

Continued ▶



▲ The disenfranchised



▲ Convention of all-male, all-white Virginia gentry

and who had a stake in the community. As head of a family, it was a man's business to manage his farms, care for his dependents—black as well as white—and to represent his family in business dealings with the world around him.

The Candidates

Now that we know who could vote, let's consider who could run for office. It will probably come as no surprise to learn that political power was vested in the few, the landed aristocracy, with an emphasis on aristocracy. Colonial Virginians did not believe that all men were created equal. There was a stratified society with great landowners (the gentry) at the top. These were men whose wealth was inherited. Next to them were the "pretenders"—those men who had acquired their wealth in the new world. At the bottom of the ladder were the tenants, ordinary workers, and slaves, none of whom could either vote or run for office.

Membership in a prominent family and the possession of a considerable estate did not automatically put a man in office, but those who were elected usually had

these qualifications. The top families of the Virginia planter aristocracy held all of the important and lucrative offices in the Commonwealth. From 1680 until the time of the American Revolution,



◀ Virginia gentry in the House of Burgesses

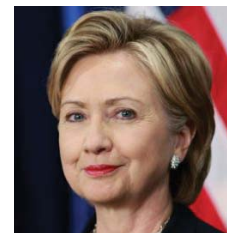
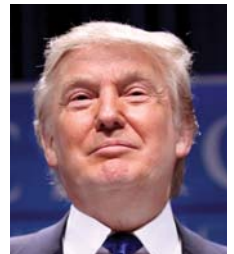
nine family names account for one-third of the top offices; fourteen other names for another third. These were the: Burwells, Byrds, Carters, Custises, Harrisons, Lees, Ludwells, and Wormleys—names familiar to most of us today.

Not only did the gentry possess great wealth, they were also cultured, educated gentlemen. Those who were uneducated, or who had only limited learning, had great respect for "their betters". The commoners wanted their leaders to come from the upper levels of society; and the gentry believed that they had an obligation to lead by virtue of their wealth, education, and status. *Noblesse oblige*.

Compare this with some of the candidates running for office today. They are mostly wealthy, well educated, and socially prominent. A few consider themselves entitled to the office by virtue of their wealth and accomplishments. Their objective is not so much to serve the people as to gain and exercise power. That would have been a no-no in Washington's Virginia. Some are respected among their peers and constituencies; others, not so much.

The Political Process

How did a candidate actually get elected in the 18th century? Politics and campaigning in colonial Virginia



► Marco Rubio, Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders—four white males, one female



▲ Casting a vote in colonial Virginia—no such thing as a secret ballot

▼ Voting in the New Hampshire primary 2016



were both different and similar to the contemporary political process. Attendance at the polling place was mandatory. Virginia law required that candidates be present at the courthouse on election day. A candidate who did not show up at the polling place would likely lose.

Privacy in the voting process was not important. There were no voting booths or paper ballots. A voter stood, addressed the election judges, and spoke the name of the candidate for whom he was voting. The candidate, who was present at the end of the table, thanked the voter for his support. In a way, the voting was rigged because members of the great houses voted first. Others who were standing in line behind the prominent voter and who wanted to gain favor with the gentry, usually voted the same way.

Perhaps the biggest difference between politics of the eighteenth century and now had to do with campaigning. Electioneering was considered distasteful. Candidates were discouraged from mingling with the voters and directly soliciting votes. Voters were advised: “If a man solicits you for your vote, avoid him; self-interest and sordid

avarice lurk under his forced smiles, hearty shakes by the hand, and deceitfully enquires after your wife and family.” Imagine any one of today’s candidates not mingling with voters and soliciting their support. That person would lose before election day dawned.

While most office seekers in Washington’s day did not entirely insulate themselves from voters before elections, they avoided “unseemly and ostentatious activity” in their interactions. There were no big rallies, no town hall meetings, no caucuses, and no handshaking in towns on special occasions likely to draw crowds. Certainly, there were no debates between or among candidates.

On the other hand, there was a certain amount of dirty politicking. Candidates then, as now, found ways to hurt their rivals. A common practice was for one candidate to start a rumor that the opposing candidate was withdrawing from the race in order to get that candidate’s votes (just as Ted Cruz announced recently that Ben Carson was withdrawing from the presidential race in order to steal his supporters. He later had to apologize for spreading a false rumor.) Another was to say that the candidate associated with men of bad character. A sure way to get at a rival was to allege that he was a drunk or to hint that he despised poor people. And a common dirty trick was to blame a rival for creating high taxes. Then, as now, that accusation, true or false, never failed.

If a candidate knew that the rumor was false (and most were), he actually had one of his supporters join in circulating it so that he could openly and forcefully deny it. But in those days, unlike now, candidates were less concerned with smearing their rivals than with putting themselves and their views on current issues in a favorable light. That was what interested voters most. Times and campaign methods have certainly changed. Imagine a campaign with no mud-slinging, no demeaning, and no attack ads.

Candidates were also discouraged from making campaign promises they could not keep. If they did so, they were likely to be investigated and exposed for campaigning under false pretenses. Think how such a rule would affect today’s candidates, one of whom is constantly accusing her opponent of making promises on universal free public education that he cannot possibly deliver. It was not uncommon for eighteenth century candidates to flip-flop on campaign promises. One early Virginia candidate who had made some outrageous promises prior to the election calmly stood up just before the polls opened and publicly declared that he did not consider any of the promises he had previously made to the people binding. He proclaimed they were all void.

Continued ►



▲ I may have promised that, but I really didn't mean it

Swilling the Planters with Bumbo

A sure-fire way to get votes was known as “swilling the planters with bumbo”. In other words, hand out food and drink (mostly drink) to the voters. Although the law strictly prohibited a candidate from giving refreshments in order to be elected, office seekers got around the law by swearing they were not giving treats to be elected, merely offering refreshments to friends who, having traveled long distances to vote, were hungry and thirsty. Many candidates held open houses for voters on their way to cast ballots, or they passed out treats along the way—sometimes in someone else’s name to avoid any appearance of impropriety. Rather like an influential person today holding a fund-raising event for a friend. Candidates also took care to give refreshments to men of every political opinion. During one election, George Washington supplied 160 gallons of liquor to 391 voters and spectators: 28 gallons of rum, 50 gallons of rum punch, 34 gallons of wine, 46 gallons of beer, and 2 gallons of cider—a quart and a half for each voter. He did so with the stipulation that no exception be taken to anyone who voted against him—and that all could drink until they had enough.

▼ George Washington “swills a planter with bumbo”



How Did It All Work Out?

If we were to judge the effectiveness of the political system in 18th century Virginia in terms of bringing qualified, able men to power, we would have to say the system worked. We would also have to say it was seriously flawed. Political and social equality were nonexistent. The men who were elected to office believed that government was a burden to be carried by a privileged few. Thomas Jefferson, publicly stated that men were unequal in natural talents and in the use to which they put those talents. Democracy had to be led by an aristocracy of the best-trained and ablest men. Nowhere was this inequality more obvious than in voting eligibility. There was discrimination against women, poor men, and African Americans.

Other serious flaws included the lack of secrecy in voting, the distance between polling places, and the fact that there was usually only one party from which to choose. Government was totally undemocratic. Few offices were filled by direct vote of the people. There were no primaries, initiative, referendum, popular recall, or proportional voting. And yet, the system worked. It was suited to the social order in 18th century Virginia, and it brought to power such men as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson: men who were not looking for wealth or power. They already had those. These were men looking to fulfill what they considered to be their duty to their communities. *Noblesse oblige.* ■■

The Reading Corner

What's New with Our Past Award Authors?

By VIVIAN MORTENSON

As most of you know, FAW gives annual awards to emerging authors who have published no more than three books. Here are some of these authors' works published since they received our recognition.

Dean Bakopoulos (2006 Winner)

Summerlong (Ecco, 2015) describes the sweltering heat one summer in a small Midwestern town during which a couple discover their marriage is not as solid as they thought. As the temperature climbs, both spouses grow more wild and reckless in humorous, biting situations.

Sara Gruen

In 1945, a foolish trio of rich Americans arrive in Loch Ness to search for the famous monster in *At the Water's Edge* (Spiegel & Grau, 2015). While her brother and his friend try to find Nessie, Maddie is left on her own and begins to uncover truths about her family that force her to reevaluate her life.

Jim Kokoris (2002 Winner)

It's Nice. Outside (St. Martin's Press, 2015) presents a father and son road trip from Chicago to Charleston. John, a 50-something underachiever is traveling with his disabled teenage son to attend his eldest daughter's wedding. Rather than a joyous family get-together, this event is hilariously doomed with major life decisions to make and a bitter ex-wife to confront.

William Kent Krueger (1999 Winner)

Cork O'Connor, the character in Krueger's winning mystery, is back in *Vermilion Drift* (Simon & Schuster, 2015). When the body of a teenage Ojibwe girl washes up on an island in Lake Superior, residents of the Bad Bluff reservation blame a mythical beast named Windigo. But private eye O'Connor thinks that rampant sex trafficking is the explanation.

Robert Kurson (2005 Winner)

Pirate Hunters: Treasure, Obsession and the Search for a Legendary Ship (Random House, 2015) is the rollicking true story of two archaeologists looking for the elusive Golden Fleece, the 17th-century ship captained by Pirate Joseph Bannister, lost somewhere in the waters near the Dominican Republic. Besides the thrilling hunt are tales of pirates, lost ships and modern day research.

Mary Morris (1986 Winner)

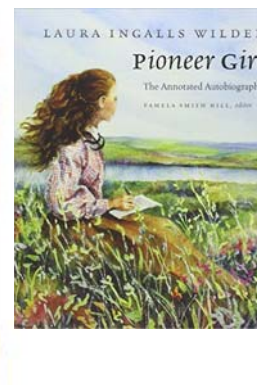
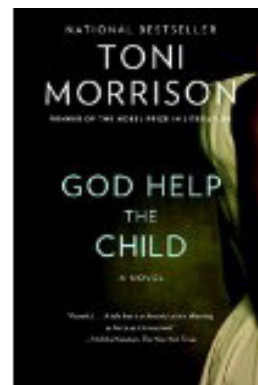
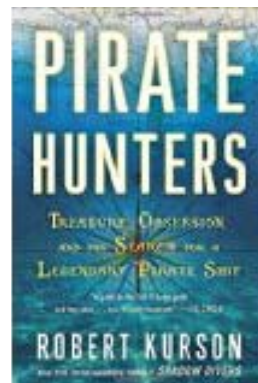
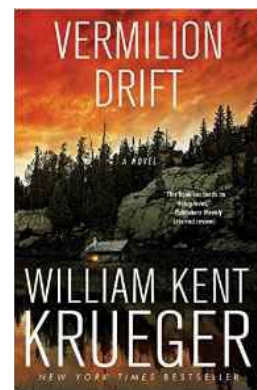
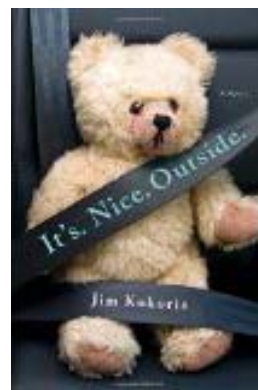
Morris' *The Jazz Palace* (Doubleday, 2015) is set in 1915 Chicago. The Lehrman family who run a hat factory, lost a son in a blizzard years earlier so they want Benny, one of the remaining children to carry on the family business. Benny however has no interest in making hats. His true passion is piano, especially jazz, and he spends his nights in local clubs.

Toni Morrison (1978 Winner)

Nobel prize winner Morrison newest work is *God Help the Child* (Knopf, 2015). Sweetness, a black woman who likes passing as white, gives birth to the midnight black Lula Ann. Ashamed, she raises her at a bitter distance, rationalizing that this will toughen her up. But without love, Lula Ann has no moral compass and causes pain to those around her.

Bich Minh Nguyen (2010 Winner)

In *Pioneer Girl*, (Viking, 2014) PhD graduate Lee Lien discovers a family heirloom that her mother may have



received from Laura Ingalls Wilder. Intrigued she begins to explore any connection between her ancestors and the famous pioneer author.

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SHIRLEY BAUGHER
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Chicago, IL 60614

Sara Paretsky (1985 Winner)

The seventeenth entry in the V. I. Warshawski series, *Brush Back* (Putnam, 2015) finds V. I. Warshawski reluctantly helping a former boyfriend who discovers his mother was framed for murder. To find the real killer, Warshawski is forced to confront ugly politics and violent elements in her Chicago neighborhood.

Mona Simpson (1988 Winner)

In *Casebook*, (Random House, 2014) Miles has always sensed the vulnerability of his mother, a recently divorced mathematician, and throughout his childhood and adolescence feels the need to look out for her. When Irene falls in love with Eli, Miles is highly suspicious. He enlists his best friend to help him look deep into Eli's background, going so far as to work with a private investigator.

Jane Smiley (1982 Winner)

Golden Age (Random House, 2015) is the third book in the Last Hundred

Years Trilogy (Some Luck was published in 2014 and *Early Warning* came out in 2015). This book opens in 1987. The next generation of the Langdon family is facing economic, social, cultural, and political challenges unlike anything their ancestors had encountered before. Richie and Michael, the rivalrous twin sons of Frank, the golden son and World War II hero, have grown into men, and the wild antics of their youth slide seamlessly into a wilder adulthood in finance on Wall Street and in government in Washington, D.C.

Larry Watson (1994 Winner)

Let Him Go (Milkweed, 2013) Years after their only son was killed in an accident, his parents travel miles to reclaim their grandson whose mother has remarried and cut all contact to them. However, their mission proves complicated as Lorna, the daughter-in-law, has become a virtual hostage in the home of her new in-laws. ■■

