



Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends:

Perhaps it is the firmly rooted western tradition from which I have descended that provokes reflection at certain milestones, in this case the 12-month cycle of our annual report to the membership on our mission, what we do, and how we strive to be relevant. History, at its most basic—derived from the Greek *historia*—is the gathering of information and the action of inquiry for the express purpose of drawing out truth. How others define history makes for interesting reading. A case in point: this year is the 40th anniversary of the highly controversial historian E. H. Carr’s essay “What is History?” In spite of his many critics, Carr’s words carry special meaning for me when he writes, “history is an unending dialogue between the past and the present.” Arthur Marwick, one of Carr’s detractors, seems to agree on the essential need for history when he says, “without knowledge of the past we would be without identity, we would be lost on an endless sea of time.”

In the spirit of Carr and Marwick, much of what we undertake at AHS—activities, programs, publications—is about what happened in the past, what confronts us today, and how it might affect our future: who we are as a people and where we are headed. For instance, in 2010-11 AHS Fellow Torsten Kathke researched AHS manuscripts, newspaper microfilm, and biofiles to propose the emergence of a distinctive Arizona

identity that developed from the mid-19th century and culminated with statehood in 1912. His research has application to the processes of nationalization on a global scale that is so relevant today.

Less academic, but no less significant as a lens on Arizona, is the partnership between AHS and the Quilters Hall of Fame organization, which will result in a major exhibition next year. AHS members will hear more about this project during the 2012 Centennial but, for the moment, we are reminded that quilting has a long history of illustrating symbols that are important to their creators. Comparing historic quilts with contemporary examples displays recurring themes of daily life embedded in Arizona's social, cultural, and natural landscapes. While quilters express their thoughts in fabric, Historymakers© tell their stories in words. Sponsored by the Historical League, Inc., for the benefit of AHS, the Historymakers© February gala not only brought together living Arizonans who have shaped our modern state, but highlighted the collected reminiscences of a decade's worth of personal stories from the fields of entertainment, politics, enterprise, and sports that are now widely available in DVD and book form.

AHS sponsorship of Arizona's participation in the National History Day Competition focuses on our younger generations who will be tomorrow's leaders. Students research and present individual topics, and then compete on local, regional, state, and national levels with the energy of computer gamers and access to a variety of iPod apps.

Like other prominent historical societies across the United States, AHS has added what may be described as a natural history component to its programming, as the state entrusted us with one of the finest mineral collections anywhere. Staff is currently

developing public programming that will utilize this remarkable resource to provide geosciences-based learning opportunities.

We can dwell on challenges, but challenge seems to be the ever-present reality of our planet, let alone the State of Arizona. AHS continues to offer members, friends, and visitors a long list of special events, exhibits, publications, grants, and public programs for all ages. Our redesigned website will soon enable us to provide even more diverse, interesting, and easily accessible possibilities for our audiences to experience Arizona history. Your continued support of the Arizona Historical Society enables us to provide you with good value for your membership dollars. It is deeply appreciated

Reading, learning, and experiencing—history can provide a sense of optimism that not only affords us the strength to weather crisis, but that enables us to make productive decisions, solve problems, and emerge successfully at the other end. History is the force that gives society perspective on the past and hope for the future.

Anne I. Woosley, Ph.D.

Executive Director