

A History of the Haskins Society

by
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The Charles Homer Haskins Society began as a gleam in the eyes of a number of graduate students at the University of California Santa Barbara studying under C. Warren Hollister. Thomas K. Keefe was the first to come up with the idea of a society focused on Norman and Angevin history, and pressed for it most. The cohort on the job market at that time—Tom, Marc A. Meyer, David Spear, Joe Leedom and Sally Vaughn—all agreed that the first to land a job at a major university would try to get the society started with a series of conferences. After Sally Vaughn was hired at the University of Houston in Fall 1981, she requested support for such a conference, and UH Dean of Humanities and Fine Arts James Pickering granted such support, at the urging of History Department Chair James Kirby Martin. Vaughn brought news of this to C. Warren Hollister at the May 1982 conference at Kalamazoo, where Hollister and Vaughn held a meeting to launch the society with its first conference scheduled at the University of Houston in November 1982. Present at that meeting, and supporting the idea, were Bernie Bachrach, Tom Schlunz, Vicki Chandler, Ralph Turner, Boyd Breslow, Bob Patterson and many others. The response was very enthusiastic, and the society was launched then and there.

It was C. Warren Hollister who proposed naming the new venture The Haskins Society for Norman History, and various people suggested extending the name to include Anglo-Saxon and Angevin history. Vaughn pressed for including Viking history, which was little studied in the United States at the time. Officers were elected, including Warren Hollister, President, Tom Keefe, Vice President, Sally Vaughn, Vice President and Conference Director, Vicki Chandler, Secretary, David Spear, Newsletter Editor, and a board of directors. The first conference was held in Houston in November, with two speakers from England and one from the United States. Warren invited the speakers and arranged speaking tours for them at other universities that first year and for a number of years thereafter. The Conference continued to meet at the University of Houston under Sally Vaughn's direction for the next fifteen years, and included such keynote speakers as Frank Barlow, R. H. C. Davis, Eleanor Searle, Andrew Lewis, Marjory Chibnall, W. L. Warren, Bernie Bachrach, John Baldwin, Walter Goffart, Jesse Byock, Graham Loud, John Gillingham, Antonia Gransden, Henry Loyn, Jim Holt and H. E. J. Cowdrey, to name just a few. David S. Spear began the newsletter, *The Anglo-Norman Anonymous*, that first year, and continued as editor for some twenty years. At Vaughn's urging, early on, Hollister proposed the Bethell Prize, to honor Dennis Bethell, for the best paper by a junior scholar at each conference. Hollister and Vaughn together proposed that The Haskins Society begin publishing an annual volume of articles, to be called *The Haskins Society Journal*, which began publication in 1989 with Robert B. Patterson as editor, and has now reached volume 20.