

# SOCIETY FOR HISTORIANS OF THE EARLY AMERICAN REPUBLIC

## *Office of the President*

### SHEAR Distinguished Service Award for **Daniel Feller**

I believe I first met Dan Feller as I was boarding a bus to Gunston Hall during the 1985 SHEAR conference at George Washington University. He already was seated, and as I climbed aboard he spied my name tag and said in his inimitable way: "Hah! So you're the guy who got my job at Purdue." Hoping we would enjoy a long and happy friendship, I thanked him for ceding the Purdue appointment which proved life-defining for both of us. I continue to toil away in the deep-red state of Indiana; Dan spent three years on the Jackson Papers, seven years in sun-drenched Albuquerque, and then moved up to Knoxville where he now directs the Papers of Andrew Jackson.

In the early days of SHEAR, conferences were made up "on the fly" by the unsung efforts of generous individuals who wrangled invitations and venues wherever they had any leverage. (They did not go unpunished.) The success of the conferences placed enormous pressure on these ad hoc proceedings until, in 1991, Dan Feller took on the role of SHEAR Conference Coordinator.

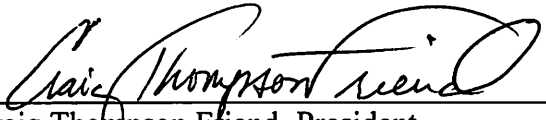
The first thing Dan had to do was explain to us that Saturday noon at one meeting was much too late to begin asking about the next conference. Planning needed to stretch out two years and more to allow for arrangements and to line up support. SHEAR was still relatively small, so the universe of potential local arrangements chairs was pretty limited. Furthermore, we were poor as a church mouse and had to beg potential hosts for cheap or free accommodations. Our general practice was to try to get dormitory housing and campus meeting rooms with a hotel option for the well-heeled members. Finally, to make it even more complicated, we liked to have a historic site to visit, some local thematic connection, perhaps a little entertainment, cheap and easy transportation, and nice weather in the third week of July.

For the next fourteen years, Dan magically presented proposals from a terrific set of venues for a series of conferences that grew like Topsy every year and acquired the professional class *and* relaxed aura for which we have become famous. With enormous patience, Dan listened as Council members debated airline fares and curb appeal. (What Dan knew was that we would run out of time, vote for whatever he had arranged, and rush off to the afternoon sessions.) Local Arrangements chairs would be applauded warmly as each gathering came together; rarely was Feller recognized for all the hidden advance work.

Conference Coordinator is the centerpiece of Dan Feller's service to SHEAR, but it is but one aspect of his rich and important professional career. His first book, *Public Lands in Jacksonian Politics* (1984) remains a foundation text on the subject. *Jacksonian Promise* (1995) stands as a useful classroom text and an important rebuke to those of us who take a darkly critical view of our \$20 president. Dan's many papers, articles, and chapters have decorated our SHEAR programs and reading lists, while his critical reviews repeatedly challenge us to beware the winds of fashion. His painstaking leadership at the Jackson Papers continues to yield outstanding letterpress volumes

even as the digital vultures circle ominously overhead. He serves or has served on advisory councils and editorial boards of SHEAR, The Hermitage, the Miller Center for Public Affairs, the Association for Documentary Editing, the Southern Historical Association, British American Nineteenth-Century Historians, and the *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*. He even made a movie about Andrew Jackson (in which several of us were honored to be cast as minor hecklers of Old Hickory).

For fully thirty-seven years of loyal service to the historical profession, to higher education, to our understanding of Andrew Jackson and his era, and to this professional organization, it gives me great pleasure to present the SHEAR Distinguished Service Award to Daniel Feller.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Craig Thompson Friend". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "C".

Craig Thompson Friend, President

(Written with and presented by John Lauritz Larson)

21 July 2018