

# SOCIETY FOR HISTORIANS OF THE EARLY AMERICAN REPUBLIC

## *Office of the President*

SHEAR Distinguished Service Award  
for  
**Barbara B. Oberg**

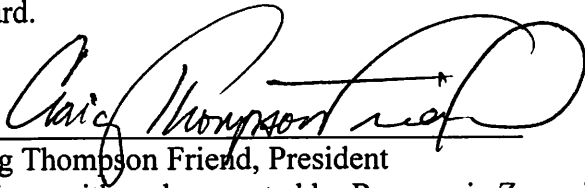
As historians, many of us from SHEAR are able to recall minute details from the distant history of obscure organizations that existed well over two hundred years ago. At the same time, many of us know relatively little about the history of institutions that are integral in our own daily lives—institutions such as SHEAR itself. This service award helps us recall SHEAR's recent institutional history as well as honors a person who was essential in making SHEAR into the vibrant and dynamic organization that it is today.

Barbara Oberg is best known perhaps for her work as a documentary editor, especially as Editor in chief of the Papers of Benjamin Franklin and, later, of the Paper of Thomas Jefferson. Yet during the same years that she served in these demanding roles, Barbara took on a series of increasingly important roles within SHEAR. She sat on the editorial board of the *Journal of the Early Republic* from 1982 to 1986. In 1986, she, along with Carol Berkin, co-chaired the annual meeting's program committee. She served two consecutive stints on the advisory council from 1986 to 1993, before returning to the JER editorial board from 1996 to 2000.

Most notably, the Society elected Barbara as president for 2003-2004. This proved to be a pivotal moment in the organization's history. It is important to set the scene: SHEAR had committed itself to a major transformation—to becoming what was called at the time "SHEAR Plus." As part of the new structure, all of SHEAR's operations were to be centralized in Philadelphia and coordinated with the McNeill Center for Early American Studies. At this moment, however, SHEAR's long-time executive director, Jim Bradford was stepping down.

As the new president, Barbara would bear the ultimate responsibility for overseeing SHEAR's move to Philadelphia. A replacement for John Larson and Mike Morrison, the long-time editors of the JER, needed to be found. Under her supervision, Roderick McDonald was chosen to take their place. The journal's first managing editor was also hired. In addition, changes were afoot concerning the annual conference. After Dan Feller departed as the conference coordinator, Barbara sought out a successor, managing to persuade Craig Friend to take on the job. A myriad of new programs and initiatives had to be launched: SHEAR's first conference in Philadelphia would be held the following summer; SHEAR Research Fellowships were to be coordinated with the Library Company of Philadelphia, the American Philosophical Society, and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania; and a new partnership was established with the University of Pennsylvania Press. Although many individuals made SHEAR's transformation into "SHEAR Plus" possible, Barbara's guided the entire process with a firm hand. Her patience, grace under pressure, and attention to detail enabled SHEAR to expand, grow, and embrace the future while also remaining true to its original mission.

For her leadership in a pivotal moment in SHEAR's history and her dedication to the organization, we hereby recognize Barbara J. Oberg with the SHEAR Distinguished Service Award.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "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 Rosemarie Zagarri)

21 July 2018