



PERMANENT THINGS

Number 10

This number of Permanent Things reports on a gathering at the Kirk Center of the University of Chicago's Edmund Burke Society, Resident Fellow Michael Andrews' academic work, and a program update and appeal.

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO'S BURKE SOCIETY GATHERS IN MECOSTA

Members of the Edmund Burke Society of the University of Chicago (a majority being graduates in the university's School of Law) visited the Russell Kirk Center to participate in a two-day conference entitled "Burke at Mecosta." This event was organized jointly by the Edmund Burke Society at the University of Chicago and the Edmund Burke Society of America, and was sponsored by the Russell Kirk Center.



Students from the University of Chicago attend a "Burke at Mecosta" seminar.

After dinner on the evening of the group's arrival, Ian Crowe, Director of the Edmund Burke Society of America and Program Director at the Kirk Center, spoke on the similarities between Edmund Burke and Russell Kirk as thinkers and writers, and outlined some of the reasons why it was appropriate for the newly established Edmund Burke Society to set up headquarters in the village of Mecosta. In particular, the similarities between Burke and Kirk fitted closely with the stated aims of the Society, and reflect a deeper truth about the way in which conservative ideas have best been transmitted over the centuries and miles that divide these two figures. That truth was perhaps most memorably expressed in the words of Gerhart Niemeyer: "Conservatism depends on exemplary characters, one's outstretched finger guides the spark to another's hand."

The Friday program fell into three parts, centered upon a formal seminar address by Dr. Bruce Frohnen in the morning. Entitled "Edmund Burke on Lawyers and the Law," Dr. Frohnen compared the virtues and responsibilities

of lawyers and of statesmen through a focus on Edmund Burke's writings on India, and ended his observations by exploring possible parallels between Burke's impeachment of Warren Hastings and the recent impeachment procedure against President Clinton. Ian Crowe led a more informal discussion group in the afternoon on Burke's tracts on the popery laws.

Joel Hunter, chairman of the Edmund Burke Society, communicated his appreciation to the Center in a recent letter: "Thank you for a wonderful weekend. I can think of no better way for a group of students to spend a weekend than by strengthening their connection to the foundations of conservatism. We truly appreciate all the work you are doing to preserve those foundations and keep them accessible to those who are eager to learn more." Gregg Nunziata, a student and Burke society member, concurred: "I am sure I speak for all of my companions when I express gratitude for the two remarkable days we spent in Mecosta. I am particularly appreciative for the first-rate academic program [which] perfectly anticipated the needs and interests of our Society."

RESIDENT FELLOW TACKLES DISSERTATION, ADAMS, AND JEFFERSON

Resident graduate fellow Michael Andrews spent the past summer at the Center working on his Ph.D. dissertation for Tulane University, entitled "The Endless Republic: Liberty, Tradition, and the Flight from the Past." The overarching theme has two basic components: freedom, as understood by Americans, is almost always placed in opposition to history and tradition. The other component of this theme is the tendency of American intellectuals—including diverse figures such as Jefferson, Emerson, Thoreau, any number of

Jacksonian intellectuals, William James, Frederick Jackson Turner, and numerous others—to treat liberty not so much as a basic human good, but as an end in its own right. Michael developed these ideas during several seminars, including a memorable presentation on John Adams and Thomas Jefferson and their differing stances toward history.



Michael Andrews (second in from left) and other resident fellows attend an "in-house" seminar.

“Russell Kirk,” Andrews observed, “once said that conservatism rests upon a spirit of gratitude. There is something liberating about the atmosphere of Piety Hill, not in the crude sense of freeing us from the burden of ‘dead men’s thoughts,’ but by freeing those who live and work there from the confusion of the present. Too often we are told that to be free, we must break away from the past. Rarely does anyone seem to consider that true freedom might be won not by fleeing society, or escaping history, but by understanding how we have been formed by the past and by the particular communities into which we were born.”

LEARNING AND THE RENEWAL OF CULTURE

The Kirk Center has enjoyed a vibrant program of weekly and monthly seminars during the academic year, at which resident fellows and guests heard papers on topics ranging from the satirical art of Jonathan Swift to the meaning of “culture.” Resident



Program Director Ian Crowe leads the regular seminars.

fellows themselves delivered many of these papers, basing them on the research that they were pursuing at the Center. Some representative sessions included Steven Schloeder on contemporary issues in sacred architecture; Dr. Benjamin Hutchens discussed philosophical perfectionism; Mr. Joseph Stuart examined the political thought of Orestes Brownson; and Mr. Morgan Knull considered Benjamin Disraeli’s response to the Whig interpretation of history. Their work demonstrates the potential for vital, broad, and deep research work at the Center that exists in the resident fellows program.

Some of the many recent visitors to the Center included research fellow André Gushurst-Moore, whose seminar address on “Jonathan Swift versus the Enlightenment” was later published in the *Salisbury Review*; Stephen Krason, professor of Politics at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, who spoke on his current manuscript work, “The Public Order and the Sacred Order”; Mark Henrie, from the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, who spoke on the “New Urbanism: A Conservative Perspective on Towns and Communities;” the British scholar Dr. Brigid Boardman, who spoke on “The Hound of Heaven: A Perennial Poem;” Dr. Kenneth Moore, former professor of Anthro-

pology at the University of Notre Dame, whose paper explored “The Meaning of Culture”; and Dr. Paul Vitz, from the faculty of New York State University, who led fellows and staff in an informal discussion of the cultural implications of the postmodernist ascendancy. The range of topics addressed through the Center’s weekly and monthly seminar program reflects Dr. Kirk’s own diverse interests, and is an ongoing sign of the hope he had that gifted young scholars would continue to think deeply about humane letters, civil and social society—an endeavor crucial to cultural renewal.

PLEASE CONSIDER A GIFT FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE



*Kirk Center staff and faculty
at a recent seminar.*

The Russell Kirk Center had a full year of educational programs and publications in 2001—some of which you have followed in *Permanent Things*. The Kirk Center continues to provide unrivaled opportunities for serious scholars and students to participate in the renewal of our civilization by means of a unique residential study program, a seminar program that aims to revive historical consciousness in our forgetful age, and a publications program

that features our new look and expanded flagship journal, *The University Bookman*.

We have a number of exciting plans for the New Year, but to realize the promise of this past year we need your support. Please consider a gift to the Kirk Center to help support its mission and the hundreds of students that benefit from its work. In today’s educational climate it is difficult for promising young minds to encounter the great tradition of Western and American thought and political practice. Yet any prospects for renewing our culture depend on the transmission of our legacy of ordered freedom to successive generations. We have ambitious plans to advance this critical process of “enculturation.” Please help us do so with a contribution to this effort. As always, an envelope is included for such a gift. We are grateful for your consideration of this request and for your goodwill and prayers.

Permanent Things, a newsletter of the Kirk Center, is written by Cecilia Kirk Nelson.

Contributions are tax-deductible and should be made payable to the Russell Kirk Center, P.O. Box 116, West Grove, PA 19390 or you may use the enclosed envelope to make a donation.