

# MELITENSIA

THE MALTA STUDY CENTER AT THE HILL MUSEUM & MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY

Summer/Fall 2011

*The Latin word Melitensia denotes "things pertaining to Malta," and it is most frequently used in the world of rare books and manuscripts to describe written collections of the history and culture of the island of Malta.*

*This newsletter reports the activities of the Malta Study Center, and features information about the history of the Knights of Malta and the history and culture of the country of Malta itself.*

*We welcome your comments and your communication about others who might share an interest in this core program of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library.*

*Email: [hmml@csbsju.edu](mailto:hmml@csbsju.edu)  
Phone: (320) 363-3514  
[www.hmml.org](http://www.hmml.org)*

Right: Modern scaffolding surrounds the main entrance to the Palace of the Grand Masters, Rhodes. The upper portion of the structure was rebuilt by the Italian occupiers of Rhodes in the 1930s. The 20th-century reconstruction now requires repairs and restoration. (Photo taken April 2011.)

## Politics and Preservation

*...At the spur of a gentle incline we turned into the famous Street of the Knights at the top of which lay the Castello – that monument to bad taste executed by the latest Italian governor. By now the hideous archness of the restoration work was becoming fully apparent. Gideon, who had seen the island under a kindlier dispensation, became plaintive and fretful. 'This will never do' he said reproachfully... I do not think that the most liberal of conventions would allow me to transcribe half the oaths that Gideon shed as we walked from room to garish room, from chapel to chapel, corridor to corridor; wherever you turned you were greeted with ugly statuary, tasteless hangings and tapestries, and the kind of marquetry work that suggested the lounges of passenger steamers....*

Lawrence Durrell, *Reflections on a Marine Venus: a companion to the landscape of Rhodes* (London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1953) p. 28.



Although Lawrence Durrell put this profane reaction to the extensive restorations the Italian government carried out in Rhodes before World War II into the mouth of his friend, Gideon, it is clear that the author disliked his first viewing of the Italian intervention. Anyone who knew Rhodes as it was before the Italian invasion in 1912 and its annexation to Italy under the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 would have returned after the war to find it no longer existed. The Italian governors not only worked to turn Rhodes into a vacation destination, they intended to recreate the era of the Knights of the Hospital. By doing so they erased almost all evidence of Turkish life from the facades of Hospitaller Rhodes.

The years 1912 to 1923 coincided with the rise of Benito Mussolini, the Fascist dictator of Italy. Mussolini, entranced by the history of the Knights of Rhodes and their defense of the island against the Ottomans in 1480 and 1522, appropriated the martial spirit of the knights as a Fascist model. While his government planned and rebuilt other Greek islands in accordance with its ideological program, the restoration of the Old City of Rhodes invoked a medieval mythos celebrating Christian military action against the Ottoman Empire. The restorations focused on recreating the period 1500-1522, when the Knights had begun experimenting with the bastion and completed the large hospital.

The first Italian scholars and archaeologists documented what they found and excavated. Their work provides the best record we have of antiquities on Rhodes before the extensive interventions. The works, such as Albert Gabriel's *La cité de Rhodes, MCCCX-MDXXII* (Paris, 1921) and *Clara Rhodes*, a journal published by the Rodi Istituto

storico-archeologico between 1928 and 1941, are difficult to obtain today but remain an essential starting point for scholarly research into the island's antiquities.

By the 1930s, the restoration work minimized the Ottoman presence in the Old City, sweeping away wooden balconies and rebuilding Hospitaller structures using parts recycled from other buildings. At the same time, the Italian government invested heavily in the infrastructure of Rhodes, building new roads, hotels, reforestation projects, and installing new sewers, all in an attempt to make Rhodes a popular tourist destination. Travellers would arrive to find Rhodes a typical "Mediterranean" style city, with strong Italianate touches.

The greatest change was the reconstruction of the Palace of the Masters. The upper floors of the Palace had been destroyed when the near-by Conventual Church blew up in the nineteenth century. The Ottomans chose not to restore either building. The remains of the Palace became the prison, and a new school was built on top of the old Conventual Church. The Italian governor of Rhodes, however, decided to rebuild the Master's Palace as a summer home for either the King of Italy or Benito Mussolini. The interior was decorated with statues and mosaics taken from neighboring islands. But neither the King nor Mussolini ever stayed there, and today it is a museum.

No one denies that the Rhodes tourists come to see is a twentieth-century recreation inspired by totalitarian aesthetics and identity. And before the Italians came, the Ottomans had ignored or renamed the buildings of the Knights, letting neglect eradicate an unwanted layer of history. The Fourth Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities in Rhodes does its best to educate visitors by posting

didactics in the Street of the Knights, showing what the Italians had changed, what was original and what was restored. Without these didactics, it is difficult for visitors to understand how much of what they see is authentic and how much is a modern recreation.

It is ironic that the very same woodwork, fixtures, and hangings in the Palace of the Masters that provoked Gideon over sixty years ago are in need of restoration today. The parts of the building that Gideon didn't see, like the roof and the wiring, need to be updated. By now the world has gotten used to the Italian reconstruction of the medieval city of Rhodes, and it is unlikely that it will be swept away. The Italians left Rhodes with an architectural prize that attracts visitors from all over the world. Twenty-five years after the publication of *Reflections*, Lawrence Durrell ruefully acknowledged the Italian contribution to the cityscape of Rhodes:

*...Rhodes is naturally fertile, but the Italians succeeded in increasing water and greenery and for this they must be much commended. That there is a slight feeling of theatrical deadness about their Rhodes reconstruction does not diminish its interest for those who would like to refashion in their minds the sort of backdrop against which the Crusades were launched. The museum is a model of its kind, and the envy of curators on other islands. I spent some time trying to persuade the Greek authorities that these august precincts might make an admirable small university, which would attract pupils from all over the Middle East...*

Lawrence Durrell, *The Greek Islands* (New York: The Viking Press, 1978), pp. 120-122.

Bottom Left: Italian soldiers pose with local children in front of the Auberge of France on The Street of the Knights, ca. 1912. From "Monumenti ed arte dei Cavalieri Gerosolimitani a Rodi," *Clara Rhodos I* (1928): 140.

Bottom Right: The same building in 2011. Note the removal of the wooden balconies and the replacement of windows, doors and arches. (Photo: T. Vann).



FIG. 115 — RODI - LA VIA DEI CAVALIERI PRIMA DEI RESTAURI.



## The *Spoglia* of the Knights

In modern Italian, “spoglia” means spoils, loot, or mortal remains. Its Latin root, “spolia,” means much the same thing. Therefore it is unclear how the word came to be applied to the estate of a deceased knight of the Order of Malta, unless as a commentary on how his wealth was obtained. If a knight died intestate, a Commission of the *Spogli* inventoried his property, identified his creditors and debtors, and then auctioned the property to settle all the claims on his estate. Any money left over then was deposited into the Common Treasury of the Order. The Commission’s decisions on the disposition of the estates of some 1,000 knights who died on Malta between 1549 and 1772 survive in seventy-two consecutive volumes divided into two sections: Section A, the *Sentenze degli Spogli* (32 volumes, 1549-1687); and Section B, the *Processi degli Spogli* (40 volumes, 1688-1772).

Originally, the *Spoglia* formed part of the Archives of the Knights of Malta. After the Knights left Malta in 1798, the volumes of the *Spoglia* were deposited in the archives of the Mdina Cathedral, where they remain to this day. Despite the title change in 1688, there is little difference between the *Sentenze* and the *Processi*. Each volume consists of loose documents which were then bound together under the name of the deceased knight. Volume 1 documents the spoils of Grand Master Hughes Loubenx de Verdale, who died in 1595. His estate was disputed by the Roman Inquisitor on Malta, who claimed

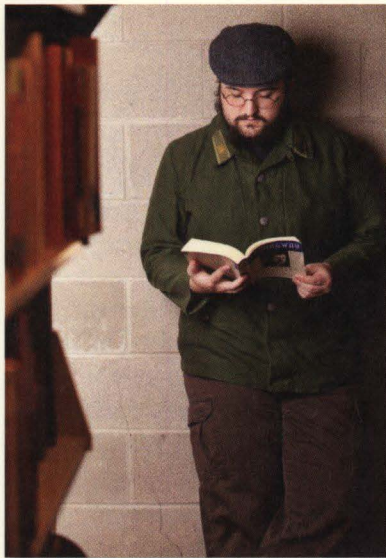
it because Verdale was also a cardinal. The Commission later processed the estates of other grand masters of the Order: Raphael Cotoner (died 1663, but his estate was not settled until 1685); Nicholas Cotoner (died 1680); and Adrien de Wignacourt (died 1697).

The collection is important for scholars researching the type of “moveable goods” that members of the Order possessed, such as books, weapons, armor, furniture, paintings, jewelry, and many other items found in aristocratic households. There is no index of the collection, but some initial cataloguing exists. Joseph Galea, *An Inventory of the Manuscript Volumes of the “Spoils” (1549-1772) Preserved in the Archives at the Cathedral Museum, Mdina — Malta* (Collegetteville, 1998), was prepared for the Malta Study Center’s microfilm project. Also, Giovanni Maria Caravita, *Compendio alfabetico de statuti della Sacra Religione gerosolimitana per facilita` alla ricognitione de medemi* (In Borgo Novo, nel marchesato di Roccaforte: per Antonio Scionico, 1718) explains the workings of the Commission of the *Spoglia*. Manuscript copies of Caravita’s description of the Commission and the Treasury exist in archives, particularly Mdina, Cathedral Archives, Archivum Inquisitionis Melitensis, AIM Misc. 53, *Compendio degli statuti della Sagra Religione Gerosolimitana - di Caravita*, 20th-century copy (Malta Series I, 4923).

### *Related Materials in Other Collections:*

The National Library of Malta also has material about the *Spoglia* in the Archives of the Knights of Malta, Section 6, The Treasury:

- AOM 924-926: Spropriamenti dei gran maestri, 1622-1797(4 mss). AOM 926 records the disposition of Grand Master Rohan’s estate in 1797
- AOM 927-930, 931 (parts 1-44): The spoils of Italian, German, French, and Spanish knights (48 mss) 1604-1798. AOM 932 contains the index to AOM 931.
- AOM 933-939: Bilancio degli spogli (7 volumes) 1729-1798. AOM 940 contains the index to the balance sheets.
- AOM 941: Libro ausiliare degli spogli (1 ms) 1795-1798. Brogliardo, or land registers, of those who died in the Central Convent.
- AOM 942-943: Conti delli commissari degli spogli (2 mss) 18th century
- AOM 944: Processi degli spogli (1 ms) 1750-1754
- AOM 945-947: Sentenze delli commissari delli spogli (3 volumes) 1669-1798
- AOM 948: Spogli del gran priore di Boemia, (1 ms) 1726
- AOM 949: Diversi conti degli spogli (1 ms) 1797
- AOM 950-951: Spogli del fu commendatores (2 volumes) 1642, 1719



**Robert Lennon graduated from Saint John's University in 2011. The Malta Study Center employed him as a student worker between 2009 and 2011. During those years he studied abroad in Ireland for a semester, and wrote a Senior Honor's Thesis on his original research into the Archives of the Knights of Malta. But let him tell it in his own words:**

My hometown is San Mateo, California (about 20 minutes south of SF), but I have lived and traveled all over the world. My hobbies include learning languages, writing (I have

pretensions to poesy), and listening to my decently large collection of music. My favorite beer in the U.S. is probably Grain Belt Premium, but in Ireland I am very partial to a pint of Beamish or Shandon Stout, both brewed in Cork city.

I had known about the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library in general since I arrived at Saint John's. When I was applying for university, HMML had been one of the great draws the place had for me, as I had known then that I was interested in pursuing studies in Medieval Europe. My first year it stayed in the background - I saw a presentation on the Saint John's Bible, but went into the Library not at all. It was in my second year that I decided I should attempt to work there over the summer. In the fall I approached Dr. Vann, throat dry and knees all a-trembling, and asked if maybe? perhaps? possibly? there was a small chance that I could work for her full-time in the summer? She said she would look into it, and promptly returned to her far more important work. It was only later on, in the spring, that the details were worked out, and I began my time at the Malta Study Center. [There was just the little matter of Robert leaving his previous student job and securing funding for a full-time summer worker. That's all. —TV]

My very first assignment, that summer of 2009, was much the same as in 2011. I look through a catalog of the manuscripts of the Order of St. John that are held in the National Library of Malta in Valletta, and translate the descriptions from Latin into English. Those translations are part of the OLIVER database of manuscripts, and are searchable on the HMML website. It is my hope that my work will expedite the process for other scholars interested

in these archives, that they will be able to find what they need without having to page through every volume of the Reverend Mizzi's work. This is my perennial project. If I have 'nothing' to do, I work on this.

Beyond that I act as a general helper around HMML. That first summer I both attended and helped facilitate the annual manuscript workshop that HMML puts on. Which made for a sense of déjà vu when I came into work recently and saw there was a group of graduate students from Fullerton, going through the same lectures and workshops I had almost two years previously. I've worked in the gift shop, helped set up the current Saint John's Bible gallery, and copied books and articles for Dr. Vann's work.

Knowing that I would be working with Dr. Vann for my thesis was a great influence while I studied abroad in Ireland. At University College Cork I jumped into several courses on medieval topics that helped me get into the mindset for thinking about the Hospitallers as a topic for study. Knowing that I had the resources at the MSC for an in-depth study on the Order allowed me to think about the Knights beyond their military activities, as the governing institution that they were on both Rhodes and Malta. I don't think I would have gone down this route without having seen and worked with the microfilms and catalogs I had access to at the MSC.

My research for my thesis has focused on the Hospitallers as the governing body on Rhodes. In the fall of 2010 I wrote a paper examining the legal treatment of the Greek Rhodians by the Order in several areas, including property rights and religious freedom, and compared the Order to some of the other Latin states in the Aegean, such as Venetian Crete and Cyprus. In spring 2011 I narrowed my focus greatly, and have been working on a quantitative evaluation of property grants made by the Master or Council to the inhabitants of Rhodes. From those documents I have been assessing trends, such as which groups receive more grants, the physical location of the properties, and what rights the recipients had on the properties, among others. The year has been very tough, but incredibly rewarding.

In August I leave for Tabgha Monastery, on the Sea of Galilee, where I will have a year-long volunteer position through the Benedictine Volunteer Corps at the guesthouse the monks operate. After that I hope to make my way back to Cork for some time, as I fell in love with the city when I stayed there in 2010. Beyond the where, I hope to continue my writing, keep up my Latin and learn more languages, and try to have fun.

## The Friends of the Malta Study Center

The Friends of the Malta Study Center is an advisory group that cultivates relationships with individuals, groups, and organizations interested in advancing the work and the mission of the Malta Study Center. The Friends held their second meeting at Saint John's University on April 18th, 2011. During the meeting Dr. Vann briefed the Friends on the Center's progress and presented a five-year plan for the completion of the Center's digitization projects, plus a fifteen-year plan identifying the Center's goals in programming and web accessibility.



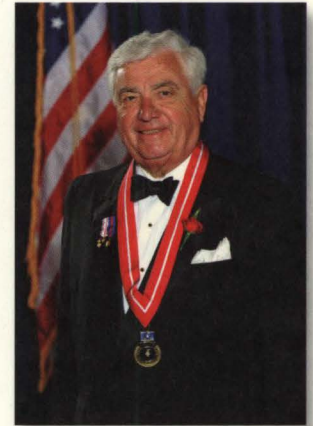
**The Friends of the Malta Study Center.**  
From left to right: Fr. Eric Hollas, Nicky Carpenter, John Bycraft, Lucy Jones, Joseph Micallef, Robert Shafer, Fr. Columba Stewart, Theresa Vann, Tom Joyce, and Robert Weyerhaeuser.

At the meeting, it was announced that the American, Federal and Western Associations of the Order of Malta have each pledged \$5,000 towards annual support of HMML's Malta Study Center. The Order of Malta is a worldwide, lay, religious order of the Roman Catholic Church, which seeks to glorify God by promoting the sanctification of each member through his or her work with the sick and the poor and defense of the Catholic faith.

The Malta Study Center also received an invitation to submit a proposal to the Cherbec Advancement Fund for support during fiscal year 2012 (July 1, 2011-June 30, 2012). A request has been sent.

## Honors

The National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations awarded the Ellis Island Medal of Honor to Joseph S. Micallef on May 7th, 2011. The Ellis Island Medal of Honor pays homage to the immigrant experience. Medals are awarded to U. S. citizens from various ethnic backgrounds. The ceremony took place on Ellis Island, New York.



The honorees are remarkable Americans who exemplify outstanding qualities in both their personal and professional lives, while continuing to preserve the richness of their particular heritage. The recipients have made outstanding contributions to their nation and to the world. Micallef was recognized not only for his professional accomplishments, but also for his service as Honorary Consul General of Malta at St. Paul/Minneapolis since 1967, and for his contributions as Founder Emeritus of the Malta Study Center at the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library.

The Malta Historical Society awarded Monsignor John Azzopardi, field director of the Malta Study Center's Mdina Cathedral Museum Microfilm Project between 1973 and 1989, the Meritorious Historian Award in a ceremony at San Anton Palace on 20 December 2010, in recognition of his life-long contributions to the archival profession in Malta. Monsignor Azzopardi has written numerous books and articles, and serves as a member on the National Archives Council of Malta.



*Photo: Stephen Busuttill on behalf of the National Archives of Malta.*

# Curator's Activities

Dr. Theresa Vann presented four papers in April and May that examined different aspects of the theme of Hospitaller identity and Muslim relations on Rhodes.

## **Mediterranean Identities Conference**

*"Identity in the Mediterranean World:  
From the Middle Ages to Today"*  
University of Minnesota, April 7-9

Vann's paper "Muslim Identities in Christian Rhodes," was the culmination of a two-year research collaborative entitled "Mediterranean Identities from the Middle Ages to Today," sponsored by the Institute for Advanced Study at the University of Minnesota. The cross-disciplinary project focused on the construction of identities in the Mediterranean world from the Middle Ages until the present, crossing geographic and political boundaries.

The collaborative invited speakers and held discussions that crossed geographic and political boundaries to explore the nature of identity in a region notable for long-term and on-going cross-cultural encounters. The Mediterranean Identities Conference was cosponsored by the University's Center for Medieval Studies, the Center for Jewish Studies, the Center for Early Modern History, and Global Studies. Dr. Vann's paper, which compared the propaganda that the Hospitaller chancery generated for European consumption with archival evidence of Turkish and Mamluk travellers to Rhodes, was informed by her participation in the collaborative. It was videotaped and is available on the conference's website. (Streaming video at <http://www.ias.umn.edu/collabs10-11/MediterraneanIdentityConference.php>; audio download at <https://mediamill.cl.umn.edu/mediamill/download.php?file=108042.mp3>.)

## **Islands and the Military Orders Conference**

*Rhodes, Greece, April 27-29*

She presented a paper entitled "Muslim and Infidel Identity in 15th-century Rhodes." This conference posed the question if islands such as Cyprus, Rhodes, and Malta affected the development of the military orders, and examined the political, military, social, economic, cultural, architectural, and archaeological aspects. The organizers, Simon Phillips (University of Cyprus), Emanuel Buttigieg (University of Malta Junior College), and Ioannis Seimenis (University of the Aegean) assembled a program of European and Mediterranean scholars who explored aspects of connectivity and insularity as it affected the military religious orders. Although most of the papers looked at Rhodes, Malta, Cyprus, and Crete, there were papers that focused on the Balearic islands, Madeira, the Caribbean, and England. Vann's paper focused on the diplomatic

relations between the Hospitallers, the Ottomans, and the Mamluks between 1453 and 1495.

## **International Congress:**

**Endangered Connectivity: Piracy in the Mediterranean in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Modern Period**  
*Center for Mediterranean Studies at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum (Germany), May 5-7.*

The Director of the Center, Nikolas Jaspert, ably assisted by Sebastian Kolditz, organized the conference to investigate Mediterranean piracy and correlating phenomena from systematic points of view, transcending traditional boundaries between historical topics. Vann's paper, "Hospitallers and Piracy on Malta and Rhodes in the 15th and 16th centuries," discussed the disinclination of Hospitaller scholars to call the Order's pirates. She suggested that the similar environments found on Rhodes and Malta may have created more continuity in Hospitaller naval policy than previously thought.

## **International Medieval Congress:**

*Western Michigan University  
Kalamazoo, Michigan, May 12-15*

Finally, after two days at home, Vann made the yearly medievalist pilgrimage to the annual Medieval Congress. There she organized a session entitled "Mediterranean Identities," where she gave a paper entitled "The Role of Diplomacy and Compromise in Hospitaller Aggression against the Muslims in the Eastern Mediterranean," which she readily admits consisted of all the best parts of the three papers she gave earlier that month. After serving as one of the hosts of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library's reception at the conference, she spent too much money on books and went home to a month's worth of laundry and cat hair.

## **Articles**

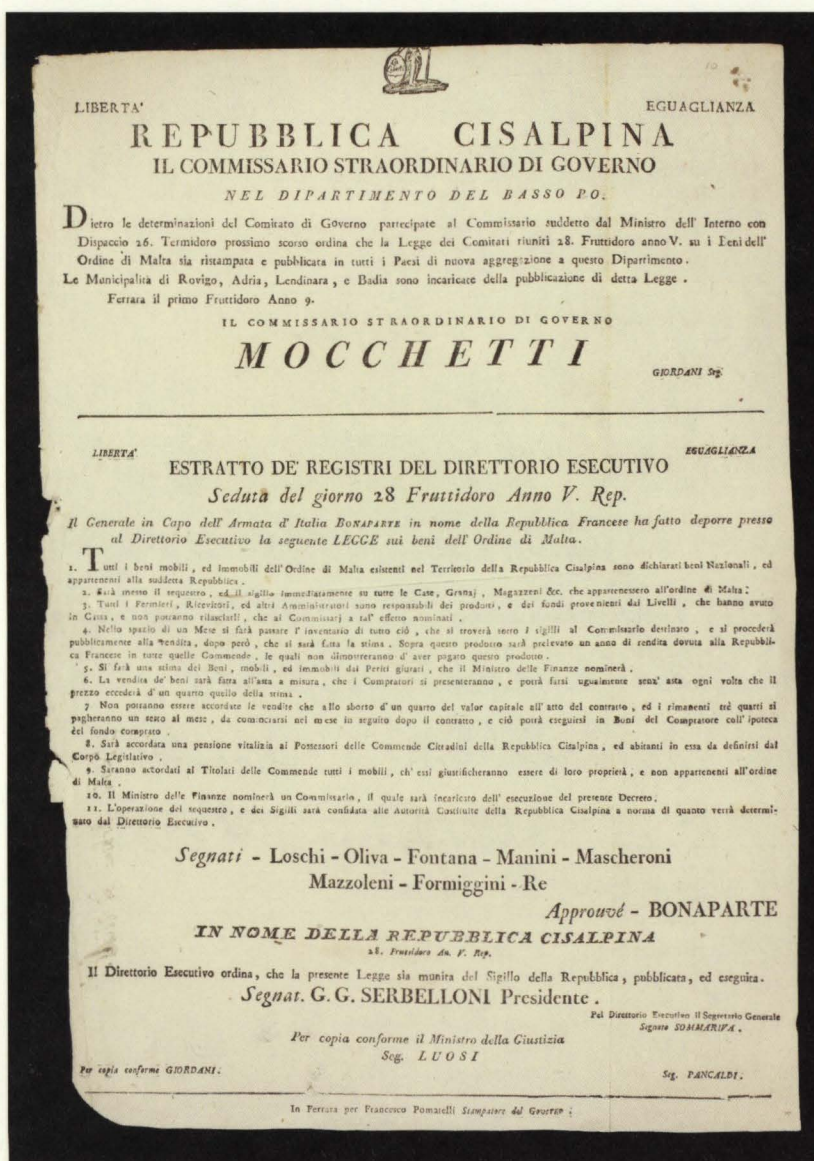
Two of Vann's articles were published during the academic year 2010-2011:

"The Assimilation of Templar Properties by the Order of the Hospital," in *The Debate on the Trial of the Templars (1307-1314)*. Ed. by Jochen Burgdorf, Paul F. Crawford and Helen J. Nicholson (Ashgate, 2010): 339-346.

"'Our father has won a great victory': the authorship of Berenguela's account of the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, 1212." *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 3 (2011): 79-92.

The latter article formed the basis for the paper she read at the International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, July 13th, "Remembering warriors and crusaders: the role of Leonor of England and her daughters in commemorating the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa (1212)."

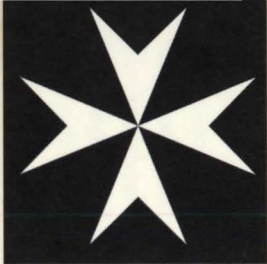
## RECENT FINDS



HMML volunteer Phil Mulvaney had been working with Dr. Matthew Heintzelman, Curator of the Austria/Germany Study Center and Cataloguer of Rare Books, to catalogue the Jude Koll OSB collection of 18th-19th century printed broadsides when he came across this proclamation. Issued by the Cisalpine Republic, it announced the appropriation of all the properties belonging to the Order of Malta located within its boundaries.

Napoleon Bonaparte created the Cisalpine Republic in June 1797 during his first Italian campaign, when he was still technically a general in the service of the French Republic. He added new territories to it in July and October 1797. By the end of the year, the Cisalpine Republic consisted of most of northern Italy, with Milan as its capital. Note that this broadside is dated according to the Republic calendar, 28 Frutidor, Year V (which is 14 September 1797 in the Gregorian calendar). Bonaparte discontinued the use of this calendar in 1805.

Historians comment that one of the reasons for the Order's loss of Malta in 1798 was because it lost income when the French Republic confiscated its French properties. This broadside, which had been sitting in a box in the basement of Saint John's University's Alcuin Library, reminds us that the Order lost other European properties to Napoleon Bonaparte even before his Egyptian-bound fleet arrived in the Great Harbor of Valletta in June 1798.



The Malta Study Center  
Hill Museum & Manuscript Library  
Saint John's University  
Collegeville, Minnesota 56321-7300

(320) 363-3514

[www.hmml.org](http://www.hmml.org)

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