

INSTITUTE FOR HISTORICAL STUDY

VOLUME 34, No. 1, SUMMER 2014

NEWSLETTER

Ephemeral Research by Robert J. Chandler

I thought I knew how to research. During a combined graduate school and professional career spanning 45 years, I mastered the normal sources including books, pamphlets, bound and microfilmed newspapers, and manuscripts. As a public historian at Wells Fargo Bank, I got an inkling of the value of ephemera. Often only a money receipt, hand-stamped envelope (Wells Fargo delivered letters from 1852 to 1895), bill of exchange, or photograph told the existence of a long vanished express office.

In February 2014, the University of Oklahoma Press released my handsomely-designed *San Francisco Lithographer: African American Artist Grafton Tyler Brown*. Brown (1841-1918), born in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, succeeded as a lithographer in San Francisco from 1861 to 1882 by “passing” as white. From 1882 to 1891, he became an acclaimed landscape painter in the northwest and Yellowstone Park, before working for the Army Corps of Engineers and the St. Paul Public Works Department.

Apart from newspapers, now happily searchable on-line, a few archival records, and fewer family materials that came to auction late in my project, nothing existed except Brown’s ephemeral job work. Fatefully, my first example was an eye-catching 1876 billhead for Levi Strauss & Co., selling “1 Dozen Patented White Duck Pants” for \$12.

To show Brown’s ability, I would compare him with a changing mix of some 70 printers and lithographers in San Francisco. The production of his 8-man shop was manageable and I compiled a check list of 325 items. On analysis, I found large city views, maps, and county history views had a sameness across the United States. Yet, producing the stock certificates needed to raise capital for Nevada’s booming mining industry, Brown had only one San Francisco artistic competitor, mighty Britton & Rey.

The largest battle was over billheads, lowly mercantile invoices. Job printers took pride in their composition, innovation, and design. I searched for firms where Brown and rivals came into visual conflict. The 1870s saw a transition from letter-press printing to lithography, as more progressive companies chose more versatile stone reproduction. I found a half-dozen examples where a letterpress printer, wood engraver, or another lithographer would produce a billhead and Brown would follow with his design for the same firm.

How do you find such ephemera? With difficulty. Research libraries rarely note job printers and naturally do not file billheads together chronologically. I was unable to find any stash at the Bancroft Library, while the California State Library and Society of California Pioneers held only a few. The California Historical Society logically catalogued its abundance by firm name. Its researchers sought information on specific companies, and not the changing printers of their invoices. The History Room at Wells Fargo Bank grouped its several hundred San Francisco ones by type of business. Luckily, I had 30 years to analyze them by my criteria: year and producer.

When I started writing nine or so years ago, the Huntington Library received the first of two magnificent and nationally significant printing collections. Jay Last donated his unequalled chromolithography, but
continued on next page

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

While many organizations go on summer break, the Institute for Historical Study continues its activities regardless. The climate in the San Francisco Bay Area does not drive people away from too much heat—in fact, some of us leave to find warmer climes. And very few of us are tied to academic calendars with the traditional long summer break. So enjoy our frequent meetings this summer. You can find the latest word on these activities by consulting our website: www.tihs.org.

Of special interest is the July 26 visit to the World War II sites in Richmond, the Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front National Historical Park and the *Red Oak* Victory ship. The day has been organized by the California and the West study group. If you need detailed information, please e-mail Ann Harlow at annharlow@pacbell.net.

As part of our continuing efforts to make ourselves known on the web and to provide information on our own history, we will soon be able to put all the copies of the Institute Newsletter online. Once this has been done, anyone can find Volume I, No. 1, dated December 10, 1979, when the news was of our incorporation under California law, the development of a budget, and organization of study groups. It included a report on the national organizing meeting of groups of independent scholars. All succeeding years are documented in the newsletters, a valuable resource for learning about our past.

– *Ellen Huppert*

continued from front page:

only in later years added billheads. As for the second, genteel San Franciscan Jonathan Bulkley had already showed me his born in bay city fog.

My salvation came as I followed the advice of former San Francisco Gold Rush banker Cump Sherman. In 1864, he ordered his 60,000 blue-clad “clerks” to “forage liberally.” For my part, I devoured auction catalogues, searched eBay, attended paper shows, and perused dealers’ stock to find examples from the crucial 1870s.

The best part of researching Grafton Tyler Brown and his rivals this way was the joy of the hunt. Each day might bring me something new and I loved it! Some of my finds are unique, but I know readers of *San Francisco Lithographer* will quickly inform me of discoveries “Not in Chandler.”

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Maria Sakovich

COPY EDITOR

Ann Harlow

BOOK REVIEW EDITOR

Autumn Stanley

The NEWSLETTER is the official publication of the Institute for Historical Study, a scholarly organization designed to promote the research, writing, and public discussion of history. Membership in the Institute is open to independent and academically affiliated scholars who are in agreement with its aims and who have a commitment to historical study. Membership inquiries should be sent to the Institute address.

ADDRESS:

P. O. Box 5743
Berkeley, CA 94705

www.instituteforhistoricalstudy.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ellen Huppert	President
Kathleen O’Connor	Vice-president
Richard Robbins	Secretary
Georgia Wright	Treasurer
Ann Harlow	
Judith Offer	
Margaretta Mitchell	
Robert Chandler	

THE INSTITUTE is affiliated with the National Coalition of Independent Scholars (NCIS), the American Historical Association (AHA), and the National Coalition for History (NCH).

WORK IN PROGRESS

“The Huppert Family from Poland to California by way of Austria, Czechoslovakia, England, France, and Cuba”

On Sunday, April 27, at the home of Georgia Wright, **Ellen Huppert** presented what she had learned of her late husband Peter’s family. It was a fascinating mix of genealogy and history, as well as an example of great family mobility, a project that she and Peter had embarked on together before his death, and that she now hopes to turn into a publishable work.

The Austro-Hungarian empire in the late nineteenth century, where Ellen’s account begins, was authoritarian, yet (in Ellen’s words) “was in some ways a flexible answer to the complexities of peoples in Central Europe.” Since the “emancipation” act of 1867, Jews by law enjoyed full civil rights. And for Peter’s grandfather, Alexander Huppert, with whom Ellen’s account begins, this was conducive to mobility, both geographic and social.

Born in 1871 in then Austrian Galicia (now part of Poland), Alexander with his family moved west to Bielsko-Biala. He graduated from a German-language commercial high school in Bielitz in 1887, worked as a bookkeeper/accountant, and married Adele Heller (born in Bielitz). By 1901 the couple were in Knittelfeld, in the Styrian province of Austria, where Alexander managed an enamelware factory. How such a leap? It is possible that earlier generations of Hupperts had served as “stewards” for a family of Polish magnates who were connected to the industry.

In 1901 Adele and Alexander had a son, Paul, who would become Peter’s father. Sometime after Paul’s birth Adele died and Alexander married again, fathering another son in 1911. In the following year the family moved to Neschwitz in Austrian Bohemia, which became Czechoslovakia while they were there.

Alexander managed an enamel factory with some 2,600 employees. And there another son was born.

“It seems that the family was happy in the change from Habsburg rule,” Ellen said. “The younger sons eagerly adopted the Czech language along with the German in which they had been educated.” From 1912 to 1919 Paul, the oldest son, attended an academic high school in Tetschen (near Neschwitz), and from there he went to the German University in Prague for a doctorate in chemistry. By 1925 he had held positions in factories in Dusseldorf, Germany and Wolverhampton, England. And in 1928, when Alexander retired from management of his factory to move to Vienna, Paul assumed his position.

With Paul Huppert we begin to touch, lightly, on issues of Jewish identity. In 1934 he married Eva Schwartz. Her father, born a Jew, wed her mother, a Protestant, in a church in Berlin. Now Eva converted to Judaism after her marriage to Paul. In this ease of back and forth, Paul remembered asking, when he began Hebrew studies in Knittelfeld, where he was born, “What? Am I a Jew?”

Ellen’s husband, Peter Alexander Huppert, was born in 1935, in Prague. Another son, Charles Alexander, was born three years later. But now the family’s fortune changed.

In March 1938, Nazi Germany annexed Austria. Peter’s father, Paul, was back working in Wolverhampton, England, and his colleagues urged him not to return but to bring his family there, which he did. Out of Nazi reach but unable to remain in England (because of “enemy alien” laws), the family then moved to France. Both Paul and his brother Walter were now employed in an enamel factory located right up against the Maginot line. With the Nazi occupation of Paris, however, mobility became

flight: the family fled to Marseilles, where they tried to get to the United States. But the U.S. had “quotas,” and the quota for Czech immigrants as well as for citizens of Eva’s German and Paul’s Austrian countries of origin was already full. Eventually, with the help of the American Friends Service Committee, they obtained visas to go to Cuba by way of Portugal.

They arrived in Cuba, the family recalls, on “Pearl Harbor Day,” December 7, 1941. Little Peter was enrolled in a Jesuit school in Havana. After so many languages—German, Czech, French and English—they now all struggled with Spanish. In 1943 they were finally able to enter the U.S. From Florida to Ohio and finally to Canandaigua, on the Finger Lakes of western New York, the family settled, and Paul (again) managed an enamel factory. In 1954, he took a similar job in New Jersey, and in 1959 the family moved to Sacramento, California, where Paul worked for Aero-Jet General. Instead of pots and dishes, he now designed ceramic shields to enable rockets to re-enter the atmosphere. Paul died of a heart attack in 1962. Ellen ended her family saga here.

The Huppert family, thoroughly secular Jews, found themselves potential victims of German efforts to eliminate all Jews. In that, they were no better off than the millions of European Jews who maintained their faith but lacked the educational and financial resources the Hupperts enjoyed. Their experience is part of Jewish history, a part that interests me, especially, in how it differs from the family histories common to the ghettoized Jews of Poland and Czarist Russia.

– *Oscar Berland*

World War I Art Exhibition

Earlier this year in commemoration of the beginning of World War I, St. Mary’s College Museum of Art featured the traveling exhibition

“From Swords to Plowshares: Metal Trench Art from World War I.” Thanks to the enthusiasm of and arrangements by **Monica Clyde**, Institute members gathered for a tour. We are familiar with the horrors of war and of this war in particular, but little thought is given to the “downtime” between battles. Soldiers created functional items and art from the material at hand, empty artillery shells, bullet cartridges and other objects found in the camps and trenches.

Some of the creators already knew the art of metalworking through previous occupations; others were trying their hand at something new. Some of the pieces were highly polished and finished, belying their battlefield experience; other objects retained their original surfaces, better conveying their grim purposes. It is not surprising that we saw many cylindrically-shaped items—originally artillery shells—where variation was provided by height, surfaces, and function. A captivating piece was the cathedral-like structure made out of bullet cartridges.

The exhibit juxtaposed man’s seeming urges for destruction and creation. It also sent me to the internet to learn more. “World War I Trench Art” (<http://www.kitwood.com/>) revealed that groups of soldiers often formed small manufacturing cooperatives to create these souvenirs of war and that local residents after the war also made trench art to sell to tourists. For those who want to delve deeper into the subject see: *Trench Art: An Illustrated History* by Jane Kimball and *Trench Art: Materialities and Memories of War* by Nicholas Saunders. Of course many sites on the internet provide the opportunity to buy these war-related creations.

– *Maria Sakovich*

GROUP REPORTS

The **Play Reading Group** recently read Caryl Churchill's play *Vinegar Tom* and afterwards looked briefly at Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. The former tells the story of women in 17th-century England who are condemned for witchcraft. The latter is Miller's presentation of a more modern "witch-hunt," the McCarthy-era HUAC trials of the early 1950s.

Caryl Churchill was born in London in the late 1930s, grew up in the Lake District, as well as in Montreal. She was educated at Oxford, where she read English. She wrote her first play, *Downstairs*, while still at university and won an award for it. She wrote a number of plays for BBC Radio. Churchill is known for her use of feminist themes, including sexual politics and abuses of power. *Vinegar Tom*, first performed in 1976, is thought by some to be as much about the women's movement of that time as about the witch-hunts in 17th century England and to have been inspired by the Equal Pay Act of 1970. The title of the play comes from the name of the pet cat of one of the characters. The play concerns a young woman named Alice who lives in a small English village with her mother Joan. They are accused of witchcraft after a dispute with neighbors, which was followed by difficulties at the neighbor's farm. These difficulties are supposedly the result of Joan's witchcraft. There is a strong feeling that the cat, Vinegar Tom, may have been involved as well.

The play emphasizes society's rejection of people who appear to be different. The author points out how women not in the mainstream of society, those who did not fit particular social categories, were often labeled witches just because of their differences. Each of the four condemned women characters in the play, Joan and Alice, Ellen and Susan, as well as Betty, act in a manner out of the ordinary and expected, and for this they are suspect, hated, and humiliated. Joan keeps company with her old cat while cursing the neighbors; Alice is unmarried,

a prostitute with an illegitimate child; Susan doesn't want to be pregnant; Ellen, an herbalist, gives out abortion-inducing medicines; and Betty does not want to marry the man she is supposed to—all unacceptable, sexually suggestive postures and activities. Churchill clearly goes beyond the 17th-century historical setting in describing the multi-faceted suspicion and repression of women. (We never learn what becomes of the cat, Vinegar Tom.)

Joanne Lafler then turned our attention to Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, written in 1953, a dramatic, partially fictionalized story of the Salem witch trials of 1692-3. The play is an allegory concerning Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings taking place at that time in Congress, which Miller perceived as a present day "witch-hunt." I had occasion to be in Salem, Massachusetts recently and visited the Salem Witch Museum. On a wall near the exit are listed four examples of "witch-hunts." First was the Salem witch trials, in the course of which nineteen persons, including five men, were hung and one crushed to death! The next three were the McCarthy HUAC trials of the early 1950s, the internment of Japanese Americans during WWII, and the treatment of gays during the 1980s AIDS crisis.

The Play Readers welcome all who are interested. Please contact Joanne Lafler.

– *Edith L. Piness*

At the December meeting of the **Medieval Studies Group**, **Lyn Reese** discussed some of the recent scholarship on the Byzantine Empire. The negative view of Byzantium by the West from the Middle Ages and even up to today has been challenged by new archeological work and closer looks at sources and architectural structures. The current emphasis is to reveal the

GROUP REPORTS

crucial influence that the empire had on the eastern Mediterranean, the Balkans, and Western Europe throughout its one thousand, one hundred and twenty-three year reign.

Constantinople's cultural superiority, as well as its vital position as the conduit for goods traded from the Near and Far East, was well known in the Middle Ages. Less acknowledged is the strength of the Byzantine military. In the east the empire had to contain Persia; in the north and west, Germanic and Slavonic tribes. For Western Europe, the military's primary achievement was to prevent the Muslim effort to capture Constantinople, which would have opened the way to a rapid conquest of the Balkans, central Europe, and probably Rome itself.

As inheritor and as a continuation of the Roman Empire, Byzantium considered its mainly Greek-speaking citizens to be Romans. Unlike the medieval West, it actively incorporated much pre-Christian culture from antiquity into its culture. In the monasteries and the palace, for example, Christian scholars made copies of ancient texts from papyrus onto parchment, thus saving these documents. In the Byzantine schools of higher education, scholars were open to advances in mathematics and science and used ancient notions of philosophical debates. Education was seen as a means of social mobility, and in this relatively literate society some high status girls also were educated, like the historian Anna Komnene who, in the twelfth century, ran literary salons.

Scholars are also interested in how this vast empire was run. Its strength lay in a system which allowed it to integrate conquered regions so that they added to its power and increased its tax base, with the emperor's gold coinage used everywhere as currency. It also managed to feed everyone, a reflection of the efficient exploitation of estates in its provinces and a

level of record-keeping which was almost unparalleled in the early Middle Ages.

Lyn mainly relied on Judith Herrin's book *Byzantium: the Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2007) as her source for fuller views of the Byzantine world. She noted that Byzantium is in the air. Recently Humanities West held a two-day program, "Constantinople in the Byzantine Period," and there is a new exhibition (April 9 to August 25, 2014) at the Getty, "Heaven and Earth: Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections." Mounted by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, it is a unique opportunity to view items which have rarely left Greece.

In January, **Lorrie O'Dell** presented *The Age of Reform, 1250-1550: Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (Steven Ozment, Yale University Press, 1980). Lorrie focused on the years 1300 to 1500, the period of a growing secular society. Many cities, particularly in the German lands, whittled away at traditional clerical privileges and immunities. The abuses of the church were common by both the higher and the lower clergy, alienating both groups from the laity. Also, the papacy was attempting to increase its revenue, aided by the development of a money economy and the growing urbanization of European society. By 1500, one in 10 Europeans lived an urban life.

Aided by the growing number of printing presses (by 1400, there were 200 in cities and towns all over Europe), a literate audience was anxious for the materials that were produced. Traditional religious culture was no longer able to deal with the religious anxiety as well as the idealism of the time. The writings of Marcilius of Padua and John Wyclif circulated among readers who wanted reform. Wyclif's teachings influenced the Hussite Movement in Bohemia, which called for vernacular translations of the

GROUP REPORTS

Bible and lay communion with both cup and bread. (John Hus was eventually executed at the Council of Constance in 1415, even though his safe passage had been guaranteed.)

Generally the laity protested pervasive “absenteeism, maladministration, and concubinage” as well as the large numbers of clergy. By 1300, popular religious movements, such as the Brethren of the Common Life, experimented with simpler “apostolic” lifestyles. At the end of the Middle Ages, various forms of piety had never been so numerous or varied; in many instances they were attempts to return “to the example of the Apostles and revive the moral and ascetic ideals that had transformed the church in earlier times.” By 1500, it was clear that “traditional church authority and piety no longer served the religious needs of large numbers of people and had become psychologically and financially oppressive.”

In June, the group heard a presentation by Nancy Zinn on the book by William W. Farris, *Japan’s Medieval Population: Famine, Fertility, and Warfare in a Transformative Age* (University of Hawai’i Press, 2009). Farris noted that often demography offers the only way to get at the lives of the common people who are little represented in most written sources. There is a dearth of records giving specific population figures for the period, though the numbers of such records have increased in recent years. His focus is on the factors influencing population growth specifically in the period 1180 to 1600, commonly accepted as the medieval era by most Japanese historians. He has compiled/ extrapolated figures demonstrating mortality rates from disease (particularly smallpox, measles, and influenza); from the frequent and devastating climatic events—starvation and famine from drought and floods; and, finally, human depredation due to war and related activities. He also found official records and

anecdotal accounts, largely from elites—aristocrats, clergy, and military figures. Based on his research, he believes that by 1150 the total population was five and one half million. By 1600, the population was sixteen million

– *Lorrie O’Dell*

At the April meeting of the **Writers Group** Louis Trager presented a chapter of his work on the “liberal internationalists” who debated U.S. foreign policy against the “nationalists” before and after World War II.

The consensus of the group was that Louis has terrific material and has made great strides in his research and writing. Yet he needs to strengthen the chronological “spine” of his material. One suggestion was that he focus on four of the figures involved, elaborating on their personal backgrounds and roles in the debate. Another comment was that Louis needs to provide more information, as general readers will not know the background which is so well known to him.

What Louis defined as a chapter may be an outline of his book. The advice the group provided was contradictory, as we asked for more information on some things and less on others!

For our June meeting, Ann Harlow presented three pieces for her dual biography of Anne Bremer and Albert Bender. We read a book proposal, a rough chapter outline, and part of one chapter. We were a large group and had a lively discussion on several issues.

We had differing opinions on what an author must do to obtain a publisher and at what point in the writing process those steps need to be taken. In other words, is a detailed outline necessary before writing? The members of the group differed, indicating that it is a matter of

MEMBER NEWS

personal preference. Another issue is when to find an agent, a moot point for publishing with an academic press.

While having the “elevator summary,” the 30-second statement of purpose, may not be necessary at the beginning of the writing, it helps keep the writer on track. On the other hand, members of the group have changed their minds about the parameters of their projects along the way.

In the future, we may have a general discussion on the question of organizing a biography. Among possible questions: does it need to be strictly chronological?

Any member of the Institute who is currently writing or is contemplating doing so is invited to join the group. Ellen Huppert is the coordinator, so write to her for more information.

– *Ellen Huppert*

Welcome to our newest members: Margaret Simmons, Edward Von der Porten, and Sue Mote.

Margaret Simmons, the daughter of late member Ann Marie Koller, is editing her mother’s manuscript on dancer Tilly Losch to be published by the University of Florida Press. She spent her youth in Paris where she married, had children, danced and went to college. She owned a little book bindery and an antiquarian store. She has taught English and French (and sometimes theater) all over the world including Korea, Cambodia, Japan, and Taiwan.

Edward Von der Porten describes himself as “naval historian, nautical archeologist, museum director, and educator.” His research includes pre-Viking times through 18th-century shipbuilding and the World War II German

Navy. Of his numerous publications (including a Book-of-the-Month-Club alternate), the “small book on Drake in California” is of local interest. Between 1985 and 1992, Edward was director of the Treasure Island Museum. He has organized and directed archeological projects in California and Mexico.

Sue Mote (B.A. in English, Harvard; MS in Community Development, U.C. Davis) is a freelance journalist and novelist. She wrote *Hmong and American: Transition to a Strange Land* (2004) and is currently writing a novel about Viking times in Western Norway. She notes: “I’m interested in knowledgeable input in the area of ‘experiential archaeology,’ in which practice and scholarship inform each other. Looking to breathe authentic immediacy into my writing . . . I learned a good deal by dueling with a savvy friend with wooden swords.”

Judith Strong Albert’s “Commentary on Megan Marshall’s Margaret Fuller: An American Life” was published in the May-June issue of the *Women’s Studies Interdisciplinary Journal* (Vol. 43). She noted that “while my work on the four pre-suffrage women in Fuller’s circle including Fuller, Elizabeth Peabody, Lydia Child and Caroline Healey Dall was a lifelong project (*Minerva’s Circle: Margaret Fuller’s Women*, Paper Mill Press, 2010), Marshall’s biography of Fuller is the most exciting work done on just Margaret in the recent past. Marshall carries the art of writing powerful biographies to new heights. . . . My gratitude to the Institute for serving as my ongoing source of literary and academic writing!” Contact Judith if you would like to read her review or book.