THE INSTITUTE FOR HISTORICAL STUDY

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Slander Sells by Judith (Jody) Offer

I joined the Institute because I was writing my first history play for adults, "A Shirtwaist Tale," about a garment strike on New York's Lower East Side in 1909. I had written several fourth-grade history plays, and in fact had compiled a teachers workbook, *California History Plays for Young People*, that was selling well. I hoped to absorb clues from a group of historians about including the right information, where to find it, and how not to contradict the preciously garnered truth with false information. I have found help with all of that from our group, and I also have found moral support for caring about those things and for thinking an audience might care.

Julia Morgan is the subject of one of my plays. I chose her because she was a woman, an Oaklander, the first woman to graduate from the Ecole des Beaux Arts in architecture in Paris, the first licensed woman architect in California, and the designer of some of California's most beautiful and cherished buildings.

When I started my project, it wasn't easy finding information about "Miss Morgan," as everyone called her in her day. Like many people well known in their lifetimes, she had receded in the public memory. "Who?"people asked me when I mentioned I was researching for a play about her. I tromped around California, talking my way into her buildings, reading her mother's letters at the library at Cal Poly, and interviewing the daughter of Julia's secretary. Doing all this was, of course, a romp. I was almost disappointed when one Sara Boutelle put out a beautiful and highly informative book about Julia.

But what I found out about my subject was frustrating from a dramatic point of view. Her buildings were more than entertaining, but her life made a fairly dull play: she worked, and then worked some more. In her spare time, guess what? She worked. She didn't have romances; she had buildings. She didn't have histrionic arguments; she explained carefully why a proposed structure needed reinforcement or didn't fit a landscape or expected use. She got up early to travel to San Simeon, and worked late, fueled by coffee and chocolate, to redesign something that wasn't working. She wouldn't do interviews. "I want my buildings to speak for me," she said firmly.

Miss Morgan helped support her parents and a mentally unstable brother, and had lunch with her sister—a lawyer—and consulted endlessly with clients and associate architects and craftsmen. She spent enough time with William Hearst to annoy his mistress, Marion Davies, but there is no suggestion of scandal in their relationship. Julia's letters to Hearst, and his to her, are full of architectural issues, often a bit testy, and signed "Julia Morgan" and "William R. Hearst." She had many admirers among the builders, contractors, architects, and craftsmen with whom she worked, but only because she was unfailingly careful, polite, determined to use the best materials, and she paid well–and helped their children with school tuition and her employees with mortgage down payments. Not because she flirted. She wanted to be a fine architect. More than anything.

So several years ago, when I attended a reading of a new play about Julia Morgan, I wondered what the playwright was going to use as the central plot in her play. I had long since decided to turn mine into a reading play, an informational piece, obtaining "tension" in each scene with the disagreements between others I had read about, and with as much humor as I could find in the situations: her mother and her mentor arguing about whether she should stay in Paris; William and Phoebe Hearst arguing about whether

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings!

We had a wonderful Annual Meeting on February 27th. It was great to see so many friends and colleagues and to touch base. We heard very stimulating short talks from some of our new members. We learned a lot and were happily reminded of how much exciting stuff is going on in our ranks.

Right now America is experiencing a "populist moment" in its political history. The excitement felt in both parties recalls earlier times when similar explosions took place. I encourage you all to read (or reread) Vachel Lindsay's wonderful poem, "Bryan, Bryan, Bryan, Bryan: The Campaign of Eighteen Ninety-six as Viewed at the Time by a Sixteen-Year-Old, etc." which captures the spirit of a previous age that still echoes today. Then, as now, "all the funny circus silks of politics" were unfurled; then, as now, "there were truths eternal in the gab and tittle-tattle." And to get a sense of that, reread Bryan's famous "Cross of Gold" speech. While much is dated, one passage jumped out at me: "There are two ideas of government. There are those who believe that, if you will only legislate to make the well-to-do prosperous, their prosperity will leak through to those below. The Democratic idea has been that if you legislate to make the masses prosperous, their prosperity will find its way up to every class that rests upon them." My grandmother recalled that during the 1896 election, kids in her school yard would challenge one another: "Silver standard or the Cross of gold?" How will youngsters of today remember "Bernie, Bernie, Bernie, Bernie" and "Trump, Trump, Trump, Trump"?

And speaking of political revolutions, our Institute needs to consider ways to commemorate the earthshattering events of 1917—the revolution in Russia and the US entry into the Great War. Today, in Russia and the US, both are viewed with jaundiced eyes, but no one can deny their significance. I hope ideas about observances will filter up rather than trickle down.

On November 7, 1967, Cathy and I witnessed the 50th-anniversary celebrations of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Moscow. We took in the big parade standing on the doorsteps of the Hotel National right next to a gaggle of Italian Communists, swathed in expensive fur coats, nibbling caviar canapés and chanting "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Min!" Where are they now? "Gone to join the shadows with the pomps of that time...."

Rob Robbins

NEWSLETTER EDITOR
Maria Sakovich
COPY EDITOR
Ann Harlow

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ADDRESS:
P. O. Box 5743
Berkeley, CA 94705

www.instituteforhistoricalstudy.org

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ANNUAL MEETING

The presenters offer their summaries below.

Charles Sullivan: Currently I am reading and writing about Elizabethan history, particularly the overseas efforts led by Drake, Raleigh, and others, which anticipated the British Empire of later years. This is a strong new interest of mine, relatively late in life, so I am working hard to catch up with people who have been at it much longer.

I started off my studies by attending summer sessions at Oxford (the UC Berkeley program, which I highly recommend) in 2013 and 2014. My tutor encouraged me to continue on my own, but emphasized the importance of using "primary sources" (16th-century documents in my case). Original documents are more readily available in England than in California, for obvious reasons, but fortunately for geographically distant scholars like me, the digital revolution (moving so many sources online) has put us on virtually the same playing field that is enjoyed by historians in the UK.

I already knew how to do advanced research in various fields (English literature, social sciences, etc.) and I understood the importance of open-mindedness, hunches, and good old serendipity. My hunch was that various Elizabethan explorers cooperated with one another on some of their big projects. So I was delighted, but not totally surprised, when, by putting various combinations of names and words into Google Scholar, I found various old documents linking Drake, Raleigh, and others to the search for the Northwest Passage. I presented a paper about this at a history conference in London last July and am now working on the next installment for presentation in Newport, Rhode Island next September.

Taryn Edwards: I am a librarian and historian at the Mechanics' Institute of San Francisco. In the course of my nearly nine-year employment there, I have become fascinated with one of its presidents, Andrew Smith Hallidie, and his contributions to libraries and education. I am working on a book about him—no word on when that will be finished—but as the recipient of one of the Institute's minigrants I recently made a research trip to British Columbia.

Andrew Smith Hallidie is most famous for his role in the development of the cable car in San Francisco, but his life was crammed with invention, action, and selfless service to the causes he cared about. By the end of his life in 1900, Hallidie had established himself as California's premier wire rope manufacturer, a leader of the state's industrial endeavors, and a champion of the region's libraries and educational institutions. He was instrumental in the development of the University of California, the San Francisco Public Library, Mechanics' Institute, the San Francisco Art Association, the Lick Observatory, and what is now known as the Lick-Wilmerding High School—and these are just the organizations that are still around today.

I still have a great deal of research to complete but hope to spend the summer and fall organizing my research and commencing with the outlining process.

Phyllis Grilikhes-Maxwell: I was glad to have the opportunity to introduce my new book, "Autism's Step Child," about a girl born before autism was known to be a separate clinical entity. Not only did I know the subject during part of her lifetime, but I was able to draw from her mother's diaries to document the many struggles and feelings of futility in this then-uncharted territory.

David Hirzel: I was pleased to make the acquaintance of Institute members and offer a brief overview of my studies and work in the field of Antarctic exploration during the "heroic era," 1901-1916. The result of two decades of research, my trilogy of the Irish explorer Tom

Crean tells the story of his adventures from the viewpoint of Crean himself.

Although Crean was an essential member of the expeditions of Captain Robert F. Scott (1901 and 1910) and Ernest Shackleton (1914), he left few words of his own. In my books the reader knows no more than the explorer does, of what hardships and calls to action may lie ahead, and how history will interpret them. The story of Crean's 1,350-mile round trip walk toward the South Pole and back through the crevasse-riven glaciers and endless stretches of the Great Ice Barrier has no equal. His is the story of an ordinary man in extraordinary circumstances, where unbearable hardship and certain death are met and overcome with equanimity and endurance. His life and response can serve as an example to all of us.

Like that of many of his messdeck peers, Crean's story has remained largely untold, but the three books about his incredible adventures, *Antarctic Voyager*, *Sailor on Ice*, and *Hold Fast*, are all available online and from Terra Nova Press.

Lori Hart Beninger: I am not an historian. I am a writer of historical novels. However, unlike many novelists, I am an author who demands my novels to be steeped in accurate, realistic history. Fiction cradled in truth.

Since I am not the expert, I respect and rely on those who are. Thus my clarion call to Institute members. I don't expect you to do the research, but I want your help to find my way. My four-part historical "Embracing the Elephant" series follows the lives of two American teenagers through the rigors of the California Gold Rush and early San Francisco, then (as adults) onto the pre-Civil War turmoil and, ultimately, through the war itself.

The first two books are published: *Embracing the Elephant* (a finalist for the Independent Authors Network' Book of the Year) and *A Veil of Fog and Flames* (a finalist for *Foreword Reviews*' 2015 INDIEFAB Book of the Year). The third book is one-quarter written. The final book is in the state of imagination.

It is with this last book I need the most help, for my characters will not be participating in well-known or well-documented military skirmishes. Instead, they will be living as civilians in a war-torn country.

My novels have been praised for historical realism, depth, and accuracy while avoiding the common trap of romanticizing history. My understanding of the trials experienced by civilians during the Civil War will enable me to create novels rich on history and absent of tripe.

Writers Group

Six writers, trying to navigate today's stripped-down publishing industry, discussed editing, publishing, and publicity services at their February 14th meeting in the home of Ellen Huppert. Several members described their writing projects and invited suggestions on publishing scholarly works that won't attract Big Six (conglomerate) publishers.

Online research by **Joanne Lafler** and **Liz Nakahara** turned up many services available to writers, including editing companies, pay-for-services publishing houses, and coaching businesses. For example, Trio Bookworks in Minnesota is an editing-design-consulting-production service that works collaboratively with authors needing editorial guidance and jointly with publishers wanting backup for harried, in-house editors. The company's three partners can design covers, manage projects, restructure manuscripts, and draft marketing materials. Because of their publishing connections, they can refer authors to appropriate publishers. A complete publishing package

costs $3,500 to $5,500. (One of the Trio staff is Beth Wright, daughter of member Georgia Wright, who some years ago gave a helpful presentation to Institute members. *Ed.*)

She Writes Press in Berkeley is a pay-for-services publisher which carefully selects clients by vetting their manuscripts for a $25 fee. She Writes Press offers editing, design, production, marketing and distribution services. Their publishing package costs $4,900. For writers experiencing difficulty completing their manuscripts, She Writes Press offers coaching services.

Writers' Relief helps aspiring authors draft book proposals and cover letters so they may peddle manuscripts to small and mid-level publishers not requiring agent representation. The writer submits a finished manuscript, which WR reviews, then either accepts or rejects. If invited to be a client, the writer sends a book proposal and cover letter, which WR revises, then returns to the author for his/her approval. Soon, the author receives roughly two dozen individually addressed cover letters, a sheet of corresponding address labels and a hard copy of his/her manuscript ready to be photocopied and sent to the appropriate publishers. WR provides authors with personal websites for recording all correspondence. The cost for this service is $500 and each subsequent submission round is $300.

Writing group members were unimpressed by WR's services, as described on its website and by an online reviewer. One member called Writers' Relief "an over-the-counter med."

If authors don't want to hire businesses that offer publishing packages, they can hire freelance editors, indexers, and layout artists. For example, Stephen Tiano has a website describing him as a "book designer, page compositor and layout artist" located in Calverton, New York. Marian Aird's website describes her as a Cambridge-educated, highly experienced indexer residing in France. Closer to home, James Minkin owns an indexing service in Middletown, California.

Finding a freelancer online can be tedious, time-consuming, and risky. Liz, who is writing a book about contemporary photojournalists, reported finding a legitimate-looking business called Book Editing Associates. The website listed editors, showed their professionally-made headshots, and described each editor's experience and specialty. One editor sounded especially appropriate because he had edited books by long-time journalists Catherine Crier and Chris Wallace. In addition, he had sold several of his editing projects to movie companies. But googling his name turned up a mini exposé on the website Book Country. And googling the exposer's name turned up information clarifying and refuting portions of the expose. To avoid dissatisfaction or scamming, insist on: 1) interviewing the prospective editor by telephone and 2) contacting his/her most recent clients.

Rob and Cathy Robbins said they did their own copy editing by reading aloud their manuscripts to each other. "We sat down with galleys, read aloud and still found typos," according to Rob, who added, "Academic publishers are not going to promote your book. It's surprising how little they do. Academic publishers print enough books to get to libraries and for idiots willing to pay $40 for an academic book." Cathy, who had a good experience with University of Nebraska Press, said an editor warned her she might spend $5,000 to promote her book, something she did not have to do. Most importantly, Nebraska had good editors and "was quite accommodating when it came to choosing fonts and designing the cover."

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GROUP REPORTS

Medieval Studies Group

John Rusk reported on Michael Pye's *The Edge of the World* at our meeting on April 5th. The work studies the changes that took place among the people whose lands bordered the North Sea in the nearly 1000 years between 700 CE and 1648 CE. In the 330 pages of text and 100 pages of endnotes we move from the Frisians, whom Pye considers the first traders, to (now) Saint Bede, to the Vikings. We continue through the Norse settlements in the British isles and the Mongols to the Hanseatic League with way stops on the rise of lawyers, on fashion, and beguines. We end with the rise of pomp and circumstance in the Duchy of Burgundy and, finally, the 80-Year War. There is much to recommend Pye's book: even specialists in medieval history will learn facts they never knew. The work's Achilles' heel is that the generalizations are too broad, Pye's knowledge of many events is too shallow, and the frame-work is too shaky to support the thesis. In short, *The Edge of the World*, while a noble effort, must be judged a failure.

On May 24th at the home of Lorrie O'Dell, Ellen will report on *The Murder of William of Norwich*.

–Lyn Reese

Play Readers Group

We recently read *Our Country's Good* by Timberlake Wertenbaker, which was written and performed in 1988 at the Royal Court Theatre in London. It is an unusual historical play, based not only on a documented event, but also on an historical novel, *The Playmaker* (1987) by Australian Thomas Keneally. Keneally is also the author of *Schindler's List* (1982).

Eleven vessels sailed to Botany Bay in 1787/88, a voyage of more than eight months. The passengers included over 500 male convicts, several hundred female convicts, children of convicts, marines and their families, crew and some officials. A site called Botany Bay was chosen based on earlier explorations by Captain Cook. Arthur Phillip, leader of the expedition to Australia and the colony's first governor, later determined that the area would not support a colony and the group moved to a site which Phillip named after the British Home Secretary, Lord Sydney. A year later in 1789, the convicts performed a play in the Sydney prison colony. Almost all of the characters in Wertenbaker's play, like Governor Phillip, are based on historical figures.

Life in the colony was difficult, especially for the women, who were subject to sexual violence. There was a scarcity of food, which led to theft and hideous punishment. On a happier note, on ending their convict status, former prisoners were granted land and participated in the growth of the city of Sydney.

In an early scene Governor Phillip and Major Ross debate the purpose of prison—is it punishment or rehabilitation? Phillip suggests that as a means of rehabilitation the convicts could stage a play. Ross is opposed, but plans for the performance go ahead. George Farquhar's Restoration comedy, *The Recruiting Officer*, is chosen and auditions are held. The play is to be performed on June 4, 1789, for the birthday of George III.

Military officers who attended the 1789 production left brief accounts of it, but there is no evidence for the rehearsal process or for the specific convicts who participated. The novelist and playwright, exercising poetic license, focus on the rehearsal period, in which the convicts bicker among themselves, find it difficult to understand the upper-class characters they are portraying, and finally grow into their characters. Wertenbaker, who had seen convicts in a London prison perform a play, believed in

the redemptive power of theater. As readers, we agreed that she had demonstrated that.

Our next meeting produced a complete change of format. Instead of reading a play aloud, the group watched a video of *Caesar Must Die*, a 2012 winner at the Berlin International Film Festival. It is an Italian drama directed by brothers Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, both in their 80s. The setting is Rebibbia Prison, a maximum security prison in the suburbs of Rome. As in *Our Country's Good*, the prisoners are the actors, this time in Shakespeare's *Julius Casear*. The Tavianis had earlier been invited to see a performance by the Rebibbia convicts. Initially they did so reluctantly, but were very impressed and proceeded with their own production.

In this film, as in the Wertenbaker play, there are auditions. It is riveting as the prisoners, who include murderers and Mafia members, throw themselves into different roles that they are asked to play at the audition, expressing both sadness and anger. We see the prisoners rehearse the scenes involving the planning for Caesar's death, the deed, and the dramatic aftermath. These scenes are shot in black and white, with cells and recreation areas of the prison somehow transformed into the Senate and Forum of Rome. The speeches by Brutus and Marc Antony over Caesar's corpse take place in the exercise yard with prisoners at the surrounding windows acting as the crowd. The actors begin to see parallels between the play and their own lives. The inmate who plays Caesar remarks "To think, at school I found this so boring." The prisoner who plays Brutus observes, "Since I got to know art, the cell has become a prison."

–Edith Piness and Joanne Lafler

California and the West Study Group

On January 28, **Ann Harlow** led members on a discovery of the "Art Capital of the West," the name given to Berkeley in 1907 by a visitor who was amazed to find "so many fine artists that this place surpasses San Francisco…." Our first stop was the exhibit that Ann curated for the Berkeley Historical Society, housed in the Veterans Memorial Building on Center Street. It told several stories: the history of art museums on the Berkeley campus over the period of 1881 to 1970; the lively arts scene off-campus; imagined but unrealized museums and galleries both on- and off-campus; the newly opened UC Berkeley Art Museum at Center and Oxford Streets, which straddles "town" and "gown."

For the exhibit Ann collected materials from a wide range of sources. Blueprints, architects' drawings, photographs, posters, invitations to grand openings, and interviews trace the history of art museums on the Berkeley campus. Bacon Hall (1881) housed a library and the university's first art gallery. The much-beloved Power Plant Gallery on Strawberry Creek (1934) included works donated by philanthropist Albert Bender. The Worth Ryder Gallery in Kroeber Hall (1959) on Bancroft Way features works by UCB faculty and students. The University Art Museum on Bancroft Way (1970) became a home for an extensive art collection that had outgrown previous gallery space on campus, the acquisition of new works, and a place for the Pacific Film Archive. But as the exhibit showed, it had not been built to survive a serious earthquake. A site had to be found for a new museum.

A question frequently asked, and never fully answered, is why it took so long for UCB to have a full-fledged art museum. It was not for want of trying, as the exhibit makes clear. Ann found fascinating work that was never realized, including blueprints and drawings for a gallery

dedicated to the work of painter William Keith and plans from 2006-08 for an art museum that was architecturally striking, but too expensive to build.

Ann's exhibit concluded with a history of off-campus arts activity in Berkeley from 1900 to 1990, mostly unknown after restaurants and retail businesses had taken over much of Shattuck Avenue. Who knew that the attractive building on the northeast corner of Shattuck Avenue and Addison, built in 1905 (and now on the National Register of Historic Places), was the first home of the California School of Arts and Crafts? That there was a Berkeley Art Museum on Shattuck Avenue near Kittredge, founded by Samuel Hume, director of the Berkeley Art Association? That the Claremont Hotel housed an art gallery, as did the Berkeley City Women's Club (now the Berkeley City Club)? The creators of the recent Downtown Arts District, centered on Addison Street below Shattuck, may not have known that Shattuck Avenue once boasted numerous studios and small galleries, displaying the work of local artists such as UC professor Chiura Obata.

After the tour of the exhibit Ann led us to a large room on an upper floor of the building where the historical society's collections, including some large artifacts and paintings, are stored, and researchers can make themselves at home. It was difficult to leave, but downtown Berkeley is also the home of delicious multi-ethnic cuisine, and lunch at a Brazilian restaurant was awaiting us. A walking tour of the former arts district on Shattuck Avenue was the perfect ending to our day of discoveries.

–Joanne Lafler

– more Writers Group, from page 5

Celeste MacLeod, who has been working for several years on a book about the 19th-century British author Fanny Trollope, reported that she is nearing the end of the final rewrite. The latest title is *A Woman of Unbearable Opinions: Fanny Trollope on American Hubris and Restrictions on Women's Lives.* Although Celeste mainly focuses on Trollope's controversial 1832 book, *Domestic Manners of the Americans,* she also includes commentary by other foreign observers at that time, including de Tocqueville. The second part includes a few chapters about some of the 40 books Trollope wrote after returning to England, mainly novels about women's lives. The final two chapters relate Trollope's observations in the 1830s to commentary on present-day America. Celeste is about to write an introduction explaining how these parts fit together.

Carol Sicherman's project crosses disciplinary lines. She is working with 99 postcards sent to her husband's mother in Eastern Europe from 1905 to 1921, and later inherited by her husband and his nephews. She had the postcards translated into English from German, Yiddish, Hebrew, and Polish. The postcards provide a glimpse into not only the everyday lives of World War I-era Galician Jews, but also the war-battered romance of a draft-age couple. Her father-in-law's autobiography complements the story of the postcards, as do books by two other relatives.

"The autobiography and postcards are an immediately accessible story," according to Carol. The autobiography, now substantially translated, is written in biblical Yiddish and infused with quotations from the Bible and medieval sages. There is particular emotional power in the postcards when the husband is drafted into the Austro-Hungarian Army. He writes with feeling, yearning to get back to his wife.

Carol envisions the book as a photo-and-text combination: the image of both sides of the postcard on one page, and the translation, transcript, and notes on the other side. She has prepared appendices with additional information, and a volunteer is making an accordion-style genealogical chart. "I probably need a niche publisher," Carol says. A group member suggested consulting an expert at the Judah Magnes Museum* to identify potential publishers.

–Elizabeth Nakahara

(*Now the Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life housed both at the Bancroft Library and at a downtown Berkeley location. *Ed.*)

– from the front page

a woman could design a large building so it would stay up. I sat down to the reading, a bit envious that the playwright had discovered something important I had missed.

Imagine my shock when the first scene purported to show Julia meeting a daughter she had abandoned as a baby in Paris, after a love affair with the "Dean" of the Ecole des Beaux Arts! And it suggested that the Dean fixed Julia's failing grades so she could graduate! In spite of elegant period costuming, the play was riddled with every sort of historic inaccuracy and misrepresentation. It was disgusting. I would have walked out, but I wanted to hear the audience discussion when it was over.

Another shock: "So imaginative." "Really dramatic and clever." I was tempted to speak, but felt constrained by the upcoming readings of my play in the same venue—the Berkeley City Club of all places, one of Morgan's most beautiful and beloved structures. Finally after about ten agonizing minutes, a man in the second row stood, said he taught at the UC School of Architecture, and that he was appalled by the inaccuracy and slander in the play. He opined that Julia and her mother would be devastated by the tampering with the truth. After that, two or three other people also spoke up, agreeing with him. The director of the play then jumped up and ended the discussion: "We all have our opinions, and you are entitled to them, but the program says clearly that this is "an imaginative journey." Okay then, destroy someone's reputation with your fab "imagination." That works.

My husband was sanguine, as always. "This will die an early death. It's not well-written; no serious theater will want it."

– ***continued on the back page***

Member News

In September the University of Washington Press published **Harvey Schwartz's** *Building the Golden Gate Bridge: A Workers' Oral History.* (See the review on page 11.) Harvey wrote: "The book got nominated by the Northern California Independent Booksellers Association for a book award. That's the good news. The bad news is that they put me in the "local interest" finalist category with Gary Snyder and Dave Eggers. Oops! That's checkmate, I am sure, but it was still nice to get a bit of a nod."

Peter G. Meyerhof was recently invited to give a talk entitled "A New Theory on the Location of the Missing Sonoma Mission Cemetery" to the annual conference of the California Mission Studies Association held at the Mission San Juan Bautista in February. (He had previously presented some of his research on this subject at a work-in-progress last year.) The historical evidence he has discovered suggests that this Mission cemetery, probably containing the graves of 900 Native Americans, is located a few hundred from the Sonoma Mission. What

makes this cemetery particularly interesting, if he has correctly interpreted the documents, is that it lies on previously undeveloped privately-held land, and may still be intact. With the property owner's approval, he is about to begin a search for physical evidence in conjunction with a professional archeologist and has promised to keep us informed of the results.

Charles Sullivan's paper "From Sea to Shining Sea: Measuring North America in the 16th Century" was accepted for presentation at the annual meeting of the Society for the History of Discoveries, September 2016, in Newport, Rhode Island. His review of *The Sea Mark: Captain John Smith's Voyage to New England*, by Russell M. Lawson, has been published in the current issue of *Terrae Incognitae,* in print and online.

Judith Offer (Jody) was featured speaker and reader at a Poetry Month event at the Merced Branch of the San Francisco Public Library on April 20th. She read a number of poems and made brief comments about poetry under the title, "Poetry: Music, Survival, and Celebration." "This is a history event only insofar as I am making history rather than reporting it!"

At a January evening gathering at San Francisco's Russian Center, **Maria Sakovich** presented a talk about a photograph, taken at Fort Ross in 1927. She had difficulty coming up with a title and entertained three: "Four Clerics in a Boat," "Fort Ross: Crossroads between Alaska and Russia," "Russian California: 4 July 1927." Nevertheless her remarks were well received.

Dot Brovarney was just awarded a week's residency at Hypatia-in-the-Woods in Washington state. She writes: "I was chosen to occupy the isolated cabin in the woods at the opening of the wettest and dreariest season in the northwest! My residency will be December 4-10. As long as I don't freeze, the weather and isolation should be a boon for my writing. I hope to be in the completion stage of my book manuscript that tells the history of the characters who lived in Mendocino's rugged Reeves Canyon and on the shores of Lake Leonard. Optimism yet abounds!"

Tom Snyder reports that his hometown, Vallejo, is now "officially" the most diverse city in the nation, with a population mix, roughly, of 25% Black, 25% Asian, 25% Hispanic, 25% Caucasian. "Historically," he writes, "most of the city's history has reflected the dominance of Caucasian culture and endeavor, but I have noticed that many people from the other cultures are now engaged in researching and writing their histories as well. In the hopes of capturing this diverse history and recording it lest it become lost, I recently organized a new history club. At its first meeting, members voted to call it 'Vallejo History Sleuths.' The Club's motto is 'Diverse City, One History—Ours!'" Tom is now in the process of recruiting more members and seeking meeting venues from across the communities.

BOOK REVIEW

***Building the Golden Gate Bridge: A Workers' Oral History* by Harvey Schwartz**
(University of Washington Press, 2015)

With permission from the History News Network, from former Institute member Bill Issel, and from current member Harvey Schwarz, we are pleased to offer this book review.

The Golden Gate Bridge, which opened for traffic in May 1937, took just over four years to build. Now, 78 years later and for the first time, the men (they were all men) who assembled that iconic structure are being properly acknowledged for their heroic labors in *Building the Golden Gate Bridge*. The author, historian Harvey Schwartz, is well known for his labor history scholarship, most recently *Solidarity Stories*, an oral history of West Coast dockworkers. In 1987, in connection with the bridge's Fiftieth Anniversary, he interviewed a number of its builders, and their edited oral history narratives, along with dramatic photographs taken during the construction project, make up this new volume.

The book is a beautifully produced tribute to the unknown and unsung iron workers, cable spinners, electricians, and laborers whose efforts literally put one of America's most photographed and visited landmarks on the map. Schwartz begins with an introduction that provides a capsule history of the bridge. This is followed by chapters devoted to each of eight builders and two maintenance workers whose experiences are included, along with those of two nurses who cared for hospitalized workers injured on the job. An excellent set of endnotes filled with informative details on technical terminology and a "suggested further reading" section close the volume.

In addition to its value in providing us access to the stories of these workers, *Building the Golden Gate Bridge* makes important moral points. It is a timely reminder of how the United States has benefitted immensely by the talent of newcomers. Five of the eight men and one of the two nurses were the children of immigrants. The testimony of these workers reminds us of a time when the United States, even during its Great Depression, was a place that provided opportunities to ambitious young men and women willing to work. They took pride in their ability to do hard physical labor and thereby contribute to the improvement of the environment. A consistent theme in these workers' stories is their certainty that they were not only making a living during hard times, but they were also contributing to their families and their country and thereby earning a stake in its future for themselves, their children, and their grandchildren.

This excellent volume is an indispensable addition to the literature on the building of the Golden Gate Bridge, as well as a "must read" for those interested in American social history and the labor history of the American West.

– William Issel

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Well, Institute members, not only was this very play scheduled for production in Marin in February, but it had its debut in the very Berkeley City Club where it had a reading. Evidently the board of that building is also fine with slander—the rent money can help preserve the building.

As I write this, we are in the throes of a presidential campaign which is setting new lows for scandal and trash talk. A blustering Hitler-wanna-be is swearing, using every sort of foul language and insult, invoking sweat, menstruation, criminality, pestilent ethnic groups, and crude humor, completely avoiding the issues. All the reporters, looking for something positive to say, agree that he is "entertaining." His competition copies him. Entertainment rules.

Is this what we are now? People who don't want to hear anything about women who work sixteen hours a day or women who march through snow for ten weeks to accomplish a serious goal: to build something beautiful; to help their siblings; to add something positive to the world?

Do you think of yourself as someone who helps carry our story as a people forward? Who passes on the human saga for the next generation who wants to know "what really happened"? I do. And I also think of myself as particularly telling the real story of women, what we have done, and therefore, can do. But I feel right now that the good parts of our culture are being marched over, beaten down by people willing to say or write anything to be "famous" and "important." Is this your impression? If it is, what can we, as some of the keepers of our country's story, do about this? Does anyone out there care?

Institute for Historical Study
P.O. Box 5743
Berkeley, CA 94705