

# THE INSTITUTE FOR HISTORICAL STUDY

VOLUME 36, NO. 3, WINTER 2017

# NEWSLETTER

---

## **Minigrant Report by Neal Dukas**

For my minigrant application I stated that I had been invited to speak on “Hawaii’s Armed Forces during the Reign of King Kalakaua” at the Naval Order of the United States (NOUS) 2016 Congress in Honolulu. Word of my impending visit to the Islands got about and I found myself with a second somewhat last-minute invitation, this one from the Deputy Adjutant General (State of Hawaii, Department of Defense) for a presentation on “The History of Volunteer Service in Hawaii.”

NOUS members are veterans and their families, historians, and authors dedicated to the preservation of US maritime history and ongoing support of America’s sea-going services. My invitation to address the NOUS Congress on October 22 was at the recommendation of fellow Institute member Thomas Snyder. The purpose of my presentation, as I saw it, was two-fold. One, to provide a deeper appreciation for both the accomplishments and struggles faced by a small Pacific nation contending with pressures both internal and external. And two, to foster a better understanding of that legacy. Based on a preliminary conversation with the Congress organizers, I decided to enlarge the scope of my presentation to include Hawaii’s pre-annexation military history from the Classical era (roughly 1795) through 1917, with a reasonable emphasis, given the nature of my audience, on sea power. Though coping with an untimely and distracting head cold, my presentation was enthusiastically received. If there was any doubt in my mind, it vanished on the invitation from a fellow presenter to contribute to a scholarly study on “definitive battles,” which is both gratifying and exciting.

On October 24, I drove out to the 29th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (29 IBCT) facility in Kapolei to give my second presentation. The talk was well attended and, thankfully, I was over the worst of my cold. Aside from the Deputy Adjutant General (DAG), his staff, active and retired members of the Hawaii National Guard (HING), there were also members of the Royal Order of Kamehameha and a “living history” (reenactor) group in attendance. The focus of my talk, on this occasion, was the history of volunteer militia in Hawaii from 1852 to 1917. It was obvious from the breadth and depth of the questions that followed that members of the HING are genuinely interested in their military heritage. I took the opportunity to offer a number of modest proposals for the preservation of HING history, which appeared well received, but only time will tell.

With the time left to me, I was even able to squeeze in a little of my own research at the State Archives and Hawaiian Mission Children’s Society Library. (I’m working on a book about the life and times of Colonel Volney V. Ashford, a Civil War veteran and late commanding officer of the Honolulu Rifles). All in all, it was a busy and highly productive trip that has opened doors to new possibilities. Although there are certain “perks” that go along with being a guest speaker, few hosting organizations these days have the wherewithal to cover airfare from the mainland to Hawaii. The generous financial support of the Institute through its minigrant goes a long way toward making logistically challenging trips such as this feasible and is *sincerely appreciated*. It is also noteworthy that this opportunity came about because of the thoughtful referral of a fellow IHS member. It really doesn’t get any better than this!

***From the newsletter editor:*** My cache of Front Page articles has run dry. Please contribute a new supply—almost any topic related to the practice of history as well as bringing books to our attention.

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

---

Happy New Year!

This will be my last message as president of the Institute board of directors. After six years, my term of service is up and it's time to pass the baton on to others.

Let me say that serving on the board and as president has been a great experience. I want to thank all those who have served with me on the board during the past six years; their hard work and dedication has been extraordinary. Thanks, too, to all the members who developed programs, gave talks, and in other ways shared their interests and achievements with their fellow members and the general public.

The Institute for Historical Study is more than thirty-five years old, and over that time it has served its members and the larger public well. But we also need to think seriously about the future. The key to that future will be the acquisition of new members. Some of our current board, Taryn Edwards, Rose Marie Cleese, and Charles Sullivan, are working on this challenge, and they will discuss it at the annual meeting. But the membership at large must be willing to help in this task by sharing ideas and through individual recruitment. We may need to develop and strengthen ties with other history-focused organizations in the Bay Area and link our group more closely with institutions like the Mechanics' Institute. (Be sure to note the call for volunteers for the upcoming "San Francisco History Days," on the next page.)

The Annual Meeting on February 11, a little earlier than usual, will be a time when we can collectively address the tasks that lie ahead for the Institute. I believe that the program in our afternoon session will be an interesting one as well. I hope to see you all there.

– *Rob Robbins*

## NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Maria Sakovich

## COPY EDITOR

Ann Harlow

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](http://www.instituteforhistoricalstudy.org)

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Richard Robbins	President
Kathleen O'Connor	Vice-president
Taryn Edwards	Secretary
Ellen Huppert	Treasurer
Judith Offer	
Margaretta Mitchell	
Peter Meyerhof	
Sue Bessmer	
Cornelia Levine	
Louis Trager	
Rose Marie Cleese	
Charles Sullivan	

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

## UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

---

### “100 Years Back in California, USA, and International History”

And one might add a look back at a history media project completed 40 years ago. Institute member and Cal State East Bay professor emeritus **Richard Raack** and his former graduate student George Mancuso will revisit the Tom Mooney case in the form of a video that George made as an MA project. Mooney was jailed for 22 years for his 1916 alleged participation in a bombing at the San Francisco Preparedness Day parade. The video documents how Mooney became an international cause célèbre and ends with Mooney’s pardon and release from San Quentin 24 years after the bombing. Local history background, extensive interviews with Mooney’s lawyer, as well as film footage from Mooney’s own media appearances are included. Richard will comment on the international significance of the Mooney case in the light of his recent archival discoveries. This not quite “work in progress” takes place on **Sunday, January 15, 2017** at the home of Georgia Wright, at **2 p.m.**

### Annual Meeting Program

Taking place a little earlier than usual, on **Saturday, February 11**, the annual meeting features an interesting afternoon program devoted to the challenges of “Writing Lesser Known Lives,” a panel discussion by Phyllis Grilikhes-Maxwell, Taryn Edwards, and Rob Robbins. Phyllis will discuss her recently published biography, *Autism’s Stepchild: Her Mother’s Story*; Taryn will talk about her work on the life of Andrew Smith Hallidie, and Rob will speak about his forthcoming study of Vladimir Dzhunkovsky. Presenters will focus on the reasons for the selection of their subjects, problems of research and writing as well as issues of audience and publication.

### San Francisco History Days

This hugely popular, two-day history extravaganza at the Old Mint in San Francisco will take place again, on March 5 and 6, 2017. (When I went last year, it was truly crowded! Interest in history seems to be alive and well. *Ed.*) Dozens of organizations are celebrating and telling the stories of the City’s unique past. Community historians, archivists, genealogists, archaeologists, researchers, educators, re-enactors and other history enthusiasts enjoy a **free** community open house. What a wonderful opportunity to get our mission and organization known and connect with other history organizations. **Volunteers are required.** If you would like to help staff a table to promote the Institute’s aims, programs, and membership benefits, please contact Taryn Edwards. Be sure to check out the schedule of the many presentations. Two Institute members will be in the authors room on Saturday: **Harvey Schwarz** (*Building the Golden Gate Bridge: A Workers’ Oral History*) and **Monika Trobits** (*Antebellum and Civil War San Francisco*).

### California and the West Preliminary Plans

Peter Meyerhof, Edee Piness, and Ann Harlow braved the “storm of the century” on January 7th to meet at Jody Offer’s, to brainstorm the California and the West Study Group’s agenda for 2017. After talking over ideas, including those of Joanne Lafler and Rose Marie Cleese, they came up with the following preliminary plans: ❖ Co-sponsoring a singing group, Los Arrimeños, which sings historic California songs, in a performance, with lecture from the music director. ❖ Commemorating the centenary of the Russian Revolution, which brought an influx of Russians to California. We hope to both visit a local cathedral and have a lecture on the subject, as well as conclude with a visit to a Russian restaurant. ❖ Celebration of

– *continued on back page*

**Where Do Archives Come From?**

On Thursday, November 17, 2016, the Institute sponsored with the San Francisco Public Library a panel of three archivists describing their collection policies. Arranged by **Kathy O'Connor**, the event was attended by a small but eager group of researchers.

Patricia Keats, director of the Society of California Pioneers Library, opened the program. The Society maintains a small but significant archive and library. Pat is the only paid staff, assisted by volunteers and interns. Open to the public by appointment, it contains Gold Rush era diaries and memoirs as well as other manuscripts and published materials. With limited space, the library no longer accepts books or artifacts. Most of the materials in the archive have come from the personal collections of members. One of Patricia's favorite donation stories is about the relative of a recently deceased older member, who called to say that he wanted to donate her materials to the society. Patricia tried to set up an appointment, but the relative was in his truck just outside the library; he was here from Europe to deal with the estate. She accepted the donation on the spot.

Danielle Scott Taylor, Collections Manager and Curator of the North American Collections at Hoover Library and Archives at Stanford University, described her institution. The archive was founded in 1919 by Herbert Hoover, who provided the original funding and inspiration for acquisitions—to collect primary materials on the Great War. Three scholars, in addition to Hoover, were recruited for collecting assignments. The documents and ephemera of post-war events, including the Russian revolution and Paris Peace Conference, where Hoover was in attendance, also became important to the collectors: pamphlets, broadsides, diaries, and other materials from the time the new world was being created out of the rubble of war. By gathering and bringing them

home to Stanford, Hoover created a unique collection of voices and views that are usually overlooked in the vacuum of chaos and are not generally collected by official archives. The library now contains over one million volumes and collections from 171 countries, documenting war, revolution, and peace in the 20th and 21st centuries. (Even this large library, for reasons of space, is unable to accept printed books except for rare items.) The Library and Archives are free and open to the public; a current exhibition highlights recent acquisitions selected by its many area experts.

Catherine Powell is director of the Labor Archives and Research Center housed at the J. Paul Leonard Library at San Francisco State University. A core purpose of the center is to introduce students to its materials and to research methods. It also does extensive outreach to educate the public about labor history in the San Francisco Bay Area. Founded by San Francisco State faculty and labor unions, it has printed and manuscript materials, as well as a collection of posters, buttons, and banners. In addition to collecting the usual business records of the various unions, Catherine also tries to convince unions to save their ephemera, posters, etc. as these types of records often illustrate the mood and creativity of the unions. The archive is free and open to the public.

– *Ellen Huppert*

**Writers' Group**

We have met regularly in 2016 with some exceptions for holidays, etc. Our normal process is for one member to send material for the others to read and critique at our meetings. Our writers are busy, and during our two-hour sessions we focus on the work. Here is a list of the members who have presented work in recent months:

- ❖ Celeste MacLeod offered material relating to her book in progress, "A Woman of Unbearable

## GROUP REPORTS

---

Opinions: Fanny Trollope's Singular Eye on Early America." ❖ Charles Sullivan has a special interest in Elizabethan history, and he presented his paper "Reconstructing the Elizabethan Quest for the Northwest Passage." ❖ From her family's history, Carol Sicherman is assembling "The Vanished World of Galician Jewry: 104 Postcards Sent within Eastern Europe by the Schiff/Sicherman Families, 1905-1921" for an article or book. ❖ Cathy Robbins presented a draft of the last chapter of "A Torrid Splendor: Finding Calabria." ❖ We will soon consider Marilyn Geary's proposed book, "Dreams and Deceptions: Stories of Migration from the Swiss-Italian Alps to the Golden Lands of California and Australia." ❖ In other news, the University of Pittsburg Press will publish Rob Robbins' biography of Vladimir Dzhunkovsky, "Overtaken by the Night: A Russian's Extraordinary Journey Through Peace, War, Revolution and Terror." Dzhunkovsky was a bridge figure from Imperial to Soviet Russia, and publication is set for 2017, just in time for the 100th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution.

We welcome new members. If you are working on a project and would appreciate serious consideration, join us! We meet every second Sunday of the month, beginning at 1:30 p.m., at the home of a member, alternating between the East Bay and San Francisco. For more information, contact our coordinator, Cathy Robbins (crobbins41@gmail.com).

– *Cathy Robbins*

### Medieval Studies Group

On Tuesday, November 15, 2016, Ellen Huppert reported on "The Conversion of Scandinavia." Her sources were Anders Winroth, *The Conversion of Scandinavia: Vikings, Merchants, and Missionaries in the Remaking of Northern Europe* (2012) and Sverre Bagge, *Cross and Scepter: The Rise of the Scandinavian*

*Kingdoms from the Vikings to the Reformation* (2014), the source of the quotes below.

The Scandinavian kingdoms were converted to Christianity about 1000: Denmark by 986; Norway between 1000 and 1030; sources for Sweden are less clear. These conversions were part of a movement among European kingdoms that include Bohemia in the ninth century; Poland in 966, Hungary in 1000, Russia in the early 11th century.

Both Winroth and Bagge can be called "revisionist" in that they rely on nonwritten sources, especially archaeology, while earlier works depended upon only written sources. Those medieval sources reflected the Christian cosmology of their authors, as well as their understanding of the differences between pagan and Christian people. To them, all history was salvation history. So long as the Scandinavian peoples were pagan, they were dangerous enemies, because of the damage they inflicted, but also because they were not Christian.

Those early accounts showed the emergence of Norsemen into history as sudden, dating from the first Viking raids beginning in 793. In fact, a large trading network already existed, evidenced by artifacts found in Scandinavian territory which came from the Mediterranean. Charlemagne had maintained diplomatic relations with the king of Denmark from 782.

Before about 1000, Scandinavian culture was largely clan based, with leaders maintaining control through gifts as much as through force. In that climate, bringing Christianity to their people was a gift like those of gold and silver. "Chieftains brought Christianity to Scandinavia to gain a share in that prestige for themselves—in other words, for the same reason that they brought trade goods. They distributed both the goods and the religion among their followers, to gain new followers and to strengthen the loyalty of those they already had."

## GROUP REPORTS

---

Charlemagne had converted the Saxons by force to bring them into his empire, but Scandinavian kings resisted the efforts of German missionaries, thereby maintaining their autonomy. In return, they increased their own authority by building church hierarchies as well as structures of royal justice and chancelleries to collect and record taxes. Scandinavians were gifted state builders, as were their descendants the Normans. As they changed from raiders to state-builders, Scandinavian kings built fortresses, signifying their turn to power based on land rather than stolen goods. “The conversion of Scandinavia came about because it created a mutually beneficial symbiosis between clergy and kings, not because of the persistent efforts of Christian missionaries.” An ideology of the state was developed with king at the center, whose power was given to him by God.

Bagge places Scandinavia into the general European context, stating that after the Roman empire faded, the papacy accepted the fact that the world consisted of distinct territories ruled by kings but with a single religious power, the church centered in Rome. This division of power between secular and religious authorities was unique to Europe; China and the Islamic states, including the Ottoman Empire, and even the Byzantine Empire with its European connections, were different, with secular and religious authority under one leader. The development of states in Europe underlay its eventual expansion overseas by “a combination of cultural unity with stable political division” from the late middle ages to the founding of the European Union in the late 20th century.

– *Ellen Huppert*

### Play Readers Group

The Play Readers recently completed reading *Jefferson’s Garden* by Timberlake Wertenbaker. On an earlier occasion, the group had read her play *Our Country’s Good*, which chronicled the

lives of the first convict settlers in Australia and the military who ruled them. *Jefferson’s Garden* premiered in 2015, several decades after the earlier play. The action here begins in 1750, but mostly is centered on the period from 1776 to the early 1790s, covering the Revolutionary War and its aftermath, especially the failure of the founders of the Republic to deal with the issue of slavery. The title of the play refers to Jefferson’s idyllic gardens at Monticello.

The important character besides Jefferson is fictional, not historical. Christian, a young Quaker shoemaker, despite his family’s pacifism, goes off from Maryland to Virginia to offer his aid to the Patriots. He falls in love with a black slave, Susanna, but she flees to Philadelphia and, despite her love for him, decides to remain in Philadelphia after the war rather than returning to Virginia and slavery. The play portrays the contradictions in the lives and beliefs of both of these men. Jefferson, an idealist with visions of liberty, is a slave owner and fathers children with one of his slaves, Sally Hemings. Christian, a pacifist but fired by his love of liberty, joins the rebel army and ends up as a plantation owner.

After the war, the Americans face the difficult battle of writing a constitution. Jefferson moves from his pronouncements that all men are created equal with inalienable rights, to accepting that for the purpose of Congressional representation, black slaves will be only three-fifths the equal of white citizens. Supporting characters are also integral to the plot. James Hemings, Jefferson’s man-servant and the brother of Sally Hemings, is an astute character and talented chef who chafes under his bondage. At the conclusion of the play he is given his freedom, but in a powerful scene he makes it clear to Christian that he must leave America in order to be free. Christian has become disillusioned with Jefferson and realizes that, despite his early quest for justice, he is trapped in the system. His dramatic farewell with James

Hemings take place in Jefferson's impeccable garden.

Several historical figures, George Mason and James Madison, appear as well. Mason is anti-Federalist and wishes to limit slavery. Madison, a strict observer of the law, maintains that "laws must be obeyed until legally challenged," even if the laws are of British origin and might go against the right to freedom. Madison finds Tom Paine "too sentimental."

Although born in the United States, Timberlake Wertenbaker grew up in Europe. She maintained a connection with her American cousins in Virginia and sought their counsel while writing the play, which premiered at the Watford Palace Theatre in England in February 2015.

*Jefferson's Garden* was honored as best play by the Writer's Guild Awards. The author's understanding and portrayal of the American clash between idealism and pragmatism is dramatic. She is also innovative and original. Throughout the drama an historical chorus, composed of cast members who appear in other roles, appries the viewer of relevant historical events and communicates with Clio, the Muse of History, a nice touch which we especially appreciated.

– *Edith Piness & Joanne Lafler*

### Minigrants

Three Institute members received minigrants this past fall: **Taryn Edwards**, **Charles Sullivan**, and **Neil Dukas**. Taryn's grant (\$750) will help defray the costs of travel to the UK and lodging and transport from London to Glasgow in order to conduct research in archives relevant to her proposed biography of Andrew Smith Hallidie. She has already done considerable research on the project, thanks in part to a minigrant awarded last year. Charles' grant (\$500) will help cover the costs of travel to a remote site in Oregon–Neahkahnie

Mountain—to examine remains of what might be an Elizabethan-era land survey and to confer with local historians. This expedition will further research already undertaken for a project entitled "New Light on Elizabethan Explorers," which received an earlier minigrant. Neil writes about his grant (\$500) on the Front Page.

### New Member

In the fall newsletter we met new member **Phyllis Peet** by name only. "A member of the Institute for years," she wrote, "I fell between the cracks as I taught women's studies and directed a women's program at Monterey Peninsula College." She received her Ph.D. in art history at UCLA, specializing in American art and architecture. Her interests are women in history and art history, including fine prints and photography. She is recently retired and looking forward to the "camaraderie of the Institute and attending lectures, presentations, and study groups."

### Publications and Presentations

**Phyllis Grilikhes-Maxwell** reports the publication of her book *Autism's Stepchild: A Mother's Story* and its debut reading at Book Passage in San Francisco's Ferry Building at 6 p.m. on February 8, 2017. Steve Silberman, author of *Neurotribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity* (2015), wrote for the book jacket: ". . . a beautiful, heart-wrenching and important book. By relating the life story of Jean with honesty and compassion, Grilikhes reveals the fate of a generation of autistic men and women before their condition was well understood and the psychiatric establishment was still committed to blaming parents. Ending on a note of hope, *Autism's Stepchild* is also a tribute to the brave mothers and fathers who never lost faith in their children's potential." Published by Regent Press, Berkeley, and available at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and select bookstores.

Two items from **Dot Brovarney**: in November she published *The Sweet Life: Cherry Stories from Butler Ranch* through Landcestry, her Mendocino history business. Besides editing this compilation of community stories, which includes seventy-five photographs, Dot contributed historical and biographical context for the book. (It may be ordered for \$26.24, including shipping, through distributor La Vida Charter School, 16201 N. Highway 101 Willits, CA 95490.) Her article, “Out of the Wild and Into the Garden: The Life and Work of Carl Purdy,” appears in the upcoming issue of *Fremontia*, the journal of the California Native Plant Society, to be published in February. Her piece provides a historical perspective for this special double issue dedicated to California’s native geophytes (bulbous plants).

**Karen Offen’s** paper, “Women’s History at the Cutting Edge: a Joint Paper in Two Voices,” by Karen Offen and Chen Yan, presented at the International Congress for the Historical Sciences in August 2015 in Jinan, China, is now available on the internet. Member **Lyn Reese** highly recommends having a look; via Google simply type in the title.

As part of the Cypress Lawn Heritage Foundation’s Sunday lecture series, **Monika Trobits** will present “Antebellum and Civil War San Francisco,” based on her book of the same title, on Sunday afternoon, April 23, at 2 p.m. Book signing follows. Monika also mentioned that her book “was informative to the research” for the exhibit “America’s Shakespeare: The Bard Goes West” at the Los Angeles Public Library, on view through February 26, 2017.

### Back to the Gold Country

In the fall newsletter I promised more about the once-booming settlement of Volcano and its inhabitants and visitors. Two splendid after-dinner talks at the St. George Hotel completed our Saturday evening. Both presentations were

made by descendants of two well-known men who spent time in Volcano. Ron Forsell spoke about his great-grandfather Angelo Rossi, native son and later mayor of San Francisco (1931-44), and Patti Starr Page spoke about her great-great grandfather Thomas Starr King, visiting Unitarian minister. Patti kindly shared her notes, which I summarized, and Ron graciously provided excerpts from his talk.

### Excerpts from speech on Thomas Starr King

Thomas Starr King arrived in San Francisco from Boston in April 1860. His congregation at the city’s Unitarian Church included luminaries who shared Starr King’s early goal of improving the state of civilization in the West: Leland Stanford, John C. and Jesse Benton Fremont, Emperor Joshua Norton, Horace Davis, and Bret Harte. The start of the civil war changed Starr King’s course of action. He became an advocate for California remaining in the Union, and he urged Californians to donate money and men for the cause. Even before the civil war began, California residents were evenly split between the North and the South. The influential New York Unitarian minister Henry Whitney Bellows recruited Starr King to raise money for the recently formed US Sanitary Commission, predecessor to the Red Cross. In the summer of 1862 Starr King stumped in the gold country and north into the Oregon Territory.

One of the minister’s stops was the thriving town of Volcano, population close to 10,000 by this time. The diary of a local teacher (whose name is unknown) records both the town’s civil war sentiments and the visit of Thomas Starr King. “The war between the states is here in . . . Volcano. Our lives are being torn asunder by the . . . urgency of gold for the cause, be it Lincoln’s or the Confederacy. . . . Every stage leaves with patriots for either side, and the stages only carry men of the owners’ political persuasion. . . . Starr King has come and gone. A disappointing figure of a man; frail, young, homely—and then

## RETURN TO VOLCANO

---

he spoke. His voice is deep and mellow; his language strong and beautiful . . . exhorting us to support the cause of Lincoln. He fervently appealed for funds and volunteers for the US Sanitary Commission. . . . He shouted to the crowd: ‘We must give gold, we must give of ourselves, and we must astonish the angels with our charity!’”

After his visit, the school teacher received a letter from the minister: “Volcano is the most generous of all communities. . . .” In gratitude Starr King sent a bell for the Methodist Church (which we saw). By the end of the war, California had contributed \$1.2 million (worth \$18.6 million today) to the US Sanitary Commission, about 22 per cent of the total contributions.

Thomas Starr King did not live to see the end of the war. His relentless traveling and speaking on behalf of the Union exhausted him; he contracted diphtheria and pneumonia and died at home in San Francisco, at the age of 39, on March 4, 1864.

– *Patti Starr Page*

### **Excerpts from speech on Angelo Rossi Sr. and Angelo Rossi Jr.**

When my great-great grandfather arrived in Volcano in the fall of 1850, 299 Italians were residing in California, most from the northern Italian provinces. By the end of the 1870s the number had climbed to 7,537. Angelo Rossi, age 16, had left the small town of Reppia in the region of Liguria, which contributed a good percentage of the gold and land-seekers who settled in the mining districts of Calaveras, Tuolumne, and Amador counties.

Ten years later the census lists Angelo still residing in Volcano. A court record from 1860 reports Angelo along with resident and fellow countryman Joseph Cuneo appearing before the court for serving alcohol to the local Indians. The case was dismissed. Angelo often traveled

with Joseph to San Francisco to testify to the identity and signature of Mr. Cuneo on his many real-estate transactions. On March 21, 1866, Angelo married Maddalena Quirolo, also a native of Liguria, from the town of Carnevale, who had immigrated in 1865. Angelo eventually built and operated a general store, where the family also lived. Angelo and Maddalena would have 7 children, 4 boys and 3 girls, all of whom were baptized at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Sutter Creek. Angelo died in Volcano on July 13, 1884 at the age of 51.

The family continued to operate the store until 1890 when it was tragically destroyed by a fire that had begun in the kitchen while Maddalena was boiling water for laundry. Very little was salvaged and the contents lost in the fire were appraised at \$5,000. Maddalena decided to pack up the family and move to San Francisco to join her sons, Francis, who had already established a residence and was practicing law, and Joseph, a clerk in his brother’s law office.

In order to help support the family, Angelo Jr. (the 6th of Angelo and Maddalena’s children, born January 22, 1878 in Volcano) dropped out of school in the 6th grade and went to work as an errand boy for the florists Carbone and Monti. Later he worked for the prominent florist Frank Pelicano, eventually becoming a partner and then president of the Pelicano & Rossi Company before owning his own florist business on Grant Avenue. Angelo would go on to establish and become the first president of the San Francisco Downtown Association. He served as the city’s Playground Commissioner, Supervisor for two terms, and finally as San Francisco’s 31st mayor, from 1931-1944.

Angelo Jr. never forgot his roots and often shared stories of his childhood with my grandmother. He recalled going with his father down to the creek, which was by the family store, so that his father could breathe easier from the fresh air off the water. According to

## RETURN TO VOLCANO

---

the oral tradition of Angelo Sr.'s granddaughter, Florence Agee, Angelo first developed respiratory problems from the trans-Atlantic ship, which was loaded with marble. Angelo Jr. always had a keen remembrance of his youthful days when his mother would gather her family in the kitchen when the day's work at the store was done. It was said that Angelo first heard the talk of politics around the store's cracker barrel.

Volcano's native son returned to the town of his birth in 1935 and was given a welcome befitting the mayor of a great city. On this day, Angelo was greeted by Governor "Sunny" Jim Rolph and presented with a line drawing of the family's general store that had been signed by all the residents of Volcano. This gift now hangs on the wall of the St. George Hotel's Whiskey Flat Saloon along with Angelo's signed portrait which he gave to the people of Volcano.

– Ron Forsell

### Two more nuggets from Volcano –

#### Another Successful Immigrant

Although Amador County is famed for its many gold mines, numerous marble, limestone, and sandstone quarries also cover the area. From stone quarried locally, Ligurian stonemasons constructed fire-resistant buildings and sidewalks from massive blocks of gorgeous, variegated stone. A plaque on Volcano's main street honors Carlo Andrea Dondero, founder of the California Carrara Marble Quarry. Marble from this quarry was used in the rotundas of San Francisco's City Hall and the Museum Building at Stanford University.

An immigrant from Liguria, Dondero (1842-1939) began publishing the newspaper *La Voce del Popolo* in 1867 for San Francisco's Italian-speaking community. His press printed the first copies of the DeYoung brothers' *San Francisco Chronicle*. Dondero writes of becoming a self-educated journalist and businessman in *Go*

*West! An Autobiography of Carlo Andrea Dondero 1842-1939*. Coincidentally, today the Carrara Marble Quarry is owned by the Oneto family, a name familiar to many descendants of Ligurian immigrants who participated in the weekend's activities.

– Marilyn Geary

#### The Mystery Diarist

In the list of transcribed oral histories accessible on the Amador County Historical Society's website is "Tape 36, Muriel Thebaut, From a Young Lady's Diary–Volcano 1855-1862." The "interview" was taped in April 1979. The young lady is never named. The typescript, barely 12 pages long, suggests that *maybe* Muriel Thebaut was reading excerpts, rather than the whole diary, but this is not clear. (Muriel Thebaut, a history aficionado, had moved to Volcano with her husband in 1948. Long before others, she saw the potential of restoring historic structures and worked to prevent the destruction of Volcano's past. Her connection to the diary is not explained.) The diary, whatever its length, is important, not only because women's accounts of life in California at this time are rare, but also because the writer herself demonstrates a keen eye and sense of adventure.

The diary begins in August 1855 as the young lady leaves San Francisco, where she was widowed, to travel to Volcano, where she will teach in the new public school. This decision to "become a dedicated, pioneer woman," came about from her friendship with a Polish doctor practicing medicine in San Francisco. Here the reader is introduced to Felix Weirzbicki, author of the first English-language book printed in California, *California as It Is and as It May Be, or A Guide to the Gold Region*.

Over the course of the next few years, the young-lady-now-young-teacher vividly describes the setting and inhabitants (especially the men) of her new home as she enjoys

---

*Continued from --*

**page 3:** the 150th anniversary of Canadian independence, to include a lecture on Canadian-American relations; ♣ A book discussion: various titles under consideration include a new book about California Indians and one about Levi Strauss.

**page 10:** Volcano and takes an active role in “establishing an agreeable polished community.” “The entertainment in this town,” she writes, “is superior. . . . I have joined the theater company . . . with my friend Belle. We revel in our roles of the fallen women of the town, and balance our characters by singing in the Methodist choir.”

By 1862 Volcano had changed. The character of mining had become industrial. “The crescendo of the hydraulicking is the crescendo of chaos; every acre is being devastated whether gold-bearing or not. . . . Frantically men are inundating our orchards, shifting stream forces, stripping the forests for their sluice-runs and Mr. Halstead’s famous potato patch is washed into the mud on shirt-tail bend.”

The civil war was also taking its toll on the town; many young men are leaving. It was the diarist’s friend, the Polish doctor, who arranged Thomas Starr King’s itinerary into the Gold Country. During the minister’s passionate speech in Volcano for the cause of the Union, he brought the plea of Jessie Benton Fremont for “strong, dedicated women to join her in the humanitarian work” connected to the US Sanitary Commission. (She had been appointed by President Lincoln to organize the women volunteers.) Perhaps at another junction in her life, the young-lady-now-teacher volunteered to join Jessie Fremont. And here the diary appears to end. Who is this mystery woman? Did she keep a diary for the following years? What happened to her?

– *Maria Sakovich*

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