

THE INSTITUTE FOR HISTORICAL STUDY

VOLUME 37, No. 1, SUMMER 2017

NEWSLETTER

Just When You Thought You'd Finished Your Research, by Ellen Huppert

I've been working for years on the history of the family of my husband Peter Huppert. I knew that his grandfather Alexander was born in Austrian Galicia in 1879. I tried to learn more, especially about earlier generations, but without any success. Ultimately, I reconciled myself to the fact that I would never be able to determine the names of his parents or other ancestors. Instead, I concentrated on establishing the social and political context in which the family lived in the last years of the Habsburg Empire.

Finally in 2016 I decided that I had learned enough to describe that background, to finish my manuscript and publish it, perhaps only for the family. Yet my curiosity about the world from which they came kept me reading materials which were at best peripheral to my story. (I am one of those scholars for whom research is always more enticing than actually writing). Elisabeth Roudinesco's biography *Freud in his Time and Ours* begins by describing the roots of Freud's family in eastern Galicia. They moved west, finally settling in Vienna. The relevance to my Huppert story is only that another Jewish family moved from Galicia west. This tidbit merited at most a short mention in my manuscript.

Then I came across a copy of *Comrade Huppert: A Poet in Stalin's World* by George Huppert. Hugo Huppert, the subject of the biography, was born in Teschen, in the same general area of the Habsburg Empire, as my Hupperts. In fact as a child he lived in Biala, the city where Alexander Huppert finished his education and married. But I found no family connections.

George Huppert, author of the biography, was like Hugo Huppert born in Teschen. This added another tidbit to my story, the fact that the Huppert name was fairly common in Central Europe. More importantly, George Huppert's account of Hugo Huppert's background reminded me of a factor I had ignored. While Jews within the Russian Empire after 1881 were subject to anti-Semitic violence in the form of pogroms, within the Habsburg Empire, Jews had met with less overt hostility. These Emperors protected their Jews. However, that did not prevent the continuation of the age-old belief in blood libel, that Jews killed Christians to use the blood of their victims to make the matzoh for Passover. Periodically the outcome of murder cases reflected this prejudice. Such a case had occurred in Hungary in 1881.

More to the point of my story was a similar case in 1899. In Polná, near Iglau (now in the Czech Republic and the birthplace of the composer Gustave Mahler), a 19-year-old girl was found dead in the woods. Leopold Hilsner, a Jewish idler well known in the town, was tried for murder, found guilty and sentenced to death. Without evidence, many believed that a ritual murder had been perpetrated by a Jew. Amongst much yellow journalism and the urgings of both secular and clerical anti-Semites, one man spoke out demanding a new trial for Hilsner and filing an appeal for him. That brave man, Tomas Masaryk, was a professor at Charles University in Prague and later the first president of independent Czechoslovakia. While a new trial resulted in the reconviction of Hilsner, his sentence was commuted by the Emperor and he survived.

Jews in Central Europe would have been aware of these trials and of the anti-Semitism growing around them. Peter's father, Paul Huppert, attended Charles University starting in 1919 and surely knew of the anti-Semitic riots that occurred there. Yet the members of the family I knew were loyal to their Czech roots. They appreciated the fact that they lived in a major industrial area, thoroughly westernized, and

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

First, a note of thanks to those who have been serving the Institute for Historical Study—as officers, board members, program chairs, workshop hosts, events arrangers, newsletter writers, and in many other capacities—so diligently and effectively, year after year. And a big thank-you to those who make financial donations to our annual budget above the membership dues. We don’t have a gilded honor roll of all the names, but I assure you that your efforts are recognized and appreciated!

Second, a note of welcome to new or recently enrolled members, especially those who would like to become more involved in one or another of the Institute’s activities. This edition and previous editions of the Newsletter provide various examples, ranging from staffing a table at San Francisco History Days to reviewing books written by IHS members. Other examples can be found on our website, www.instituteforhistoricalstudy.org.

Third, a note of encouragement to members who are now engaged in the early stages of their own historical research. Getting started may not be easy or rapid. In my case, as a newcomer to California in 1997, I was intrigued by the notion of Francis Drake landing somewhere along this coast during the Elizabethan era. I walked the quiet beaches near Point Reyes more than once and read a recent, generally skeptical book about his “famous voyage” of circumnavigation. But it was not until I found an earlier book in the library of the Mechanics’ Institute that my interest was really aroused. *New Light on Drake*, published in 1914, is based on 16th-century Spanish reports about Drake, translated by Zelia Nuttall, a nearly forgotten San Francisco scholar, who had traveled to Mexico and Spain in search of these primary sources. She seems to have been professionally trained in Spanish literature but self-educated in colonial history, and strongly self-motivated—just the sort of person we would welcome to the Institute today!

I hope other members will use the Newsletter to share stories of how they got started on the history projects that occupy them today (the perfect First Page essay). Please give due credit to scholars who have gone before you, and to the libraries where their books and journal articles can be found.

– *Charles Sullivan*

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GROUP REPORTS

Medieval Studies

At the July 12th meeting, **Lyn Reese** will discuss *Jerusalem, 1000 -1400: Every People Under the Heaven*, the large coffee-table-size book published in conjunction with the 2016 - early 2017 Metropolitan Museum exhibit. She will focus on two of the exhibit's themes: "Trade and Tourism in Medieval Jerusalem" and "Patronage in Jerusalem" and will briefly discuss thoughts on the essay "Seeking the Eternal Jerusalem." For additional information contact Lyn Reese: lynreese@aol.com

At a recent meeting **John Rusk** reported on the Mayans: "The Mayan civilization, located in what is now the southern part of Mexico and northern Central America, is more or less contemporaneous with the medieval period in the Old World and, thus, a fitting topic for the Medieval Study Group. The history of the Maya is handicapped by destruction of codices by Spanish conquerors, but archeologists and linguists have finally deciphered Mayan glyphs, allowing them to establish timelines and to learn a bit about some of the elites. Perhaps best known is the ruler of Palenque, often called Pacal the Great. He became designated as heir at the age of 8 in 610 or 611 C.E. through the diligence of a remarkable mother, who acted as regent until Pacal came of age. Pacal lived until he was 80, always protecting and expanding the power of his medium-size state through diplomacy and bloody wars."

For those wishing to know more, John notes: "A good introduction is Michael Coe and Stephen Houston, *The Maya*. I also consider John L. Stephens' 1843 classic, *Incident of Travel in Yucatan*, important in providing context as well as a repository for Frederick Catherwood's outstanding illustrations. And Google is your friend!"

California and the West

Ann Harlow and **Jody Offer**, co-chairs of the group, announce three activities for the balance of 2017. All Institute members are welcome.

Fandango: In the East Bay town of Martinez, on September 30th, a group called Los Arribeños de San Francisco will present a Californio Fandango at the Martinez Adobe at the John Muir National Historic Site. An early evening event, the fandango attracts families, people who like to sing, dancers, and historians like us. The purpose of the event, according to its director, Lance Beeson, is to demonstrate what such a community event would have looked like in the Mexican years (ca. 1820-40), including historically appropriate music. Institute members can also choose other options as well: a lecture from Mr. Beeson before the show; dinner together at a local restaurant; an afternoon visit to the Contra Costa Historical Society's History Center, also in Martinez. Details will go out to the membership by e-mail, but feel free to contact Jody Offer with questions.

2018 Planning Session: Interested Institute members are welcome to join our organizing committee on October 21st at the home of Jody Offer. Here we will discuss suggestions for the quarterly meetings, which can be field trips, lectures, book discussions, or any other scholarly activity related to California and the West. After planning the year, the group will enjoy a light lunch. Contact Jody Offer to attend.

"Siberia and California: Connections during the Russian Revolution and Civil War," a presentation on November 15th, at the Merced Branch of the San Francisco Public Library by a panel of four, including Institute members **Rob Robbins** and **Maria Sakovich**.

Writers Group

Our most recent meeting began with exciting news. **Rob Robbins's** new book—evocatively titled *Overtaken by the Night: One Russian's Journey through Peace, War, Revolution, and Terror*—is scheduled to be published in November by the University of Pittsburgh Press. In the group we have followed Rob's work on his biography of Vladimir Dzhunkovsky (1865-1938), a man in all seasons: courtier, governor, security chief, soldier, political prisoner, memoirist, and Terror victim. We had a sneak peek at the handsome cover design and sympathized with Rob, who was engaged in the tedium of checking the copy-editing.

Ellen Huppert presented pages from her chapter on the journey, by horse and carriage, undertaken by her great-grandfather Barton Taylor and his family in 1850, from their home in Michigan through Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama. The primary source for this chapter is a diary kept by Taylor's first wife, Marietta, who supported the venture by singing in a variety of venues, often accompanied by her son Augustus. Ellen also wove into the story her observations from the trip that she and her sister Frances took by car, earlier this year, through the towns that Barton and Marietta Taylor had visited 167 years earlier.

We all found the story itself—both the 1850 and 2017 journeys—fascinating. Discussion centered on the best way to tell the story. We generally agreed that Ellen should eschew a chronological approach, which tends to be repetitive, in favor of addressing various themes that emerge from the story. These might include the Taylors' reactions to unfamiliar environments and people; varying conditions of travel; differences between isolated villages and larger towns; Marietta's complicated feelings about her success as a performer. We look forward to seeing more of the chapter and Ellen's revisions.

In Memoriam

Jules Becker, a founding board member of the Institute, died June 10, 2017, age 94. Recruited by Paula Gillette in the early 1980s, his enthusiasm, savvy, and good humor were crucial as we organized and raised funds. His public relations office served as our first mailing address, and his Tahoe cabin was the site of several very lively organizing meetings. He twice served as a dynamic board president and was active in the California History Group.

Born in Chicago—a life-long Cubs fan and Democrat—Jules graduated from the University of Illinois. He then joined the Navy in 1942, serving as an officer in the Pacific campaign. He first worked as a sports writer in Chicago and then San Francisco. He founded a public relations firm. Jules was active in the Marin County community. All was prologue to his second parallel career teaching journalism and history. He earned a history Ph.D. at Cal at age 64, with a prescient study of the impact of Chinese immigration on San Francisco. Jules was one of the vital shapers of the Institute, and he is very much missed.

— *Peter Mellini*

I served two four-year terms on the board of the Institute with Jules Becker. Others knew him a lot better than I did; still I came to regard him as a friend. Our friendship was helped by a mutual interest in the history of American attitudes toward Asians. As a Midwesterner, I enjoyed his tales of newspaper days in Chicago, on, as he reminded me several times, the same paper that once employed Ben Hecht. He was brilliant and always charming, even when twisting my arm to join the board for the second time. That arm-twisting finally taught me why Lyndon Johnson was a successful politician. Both Jules and LBJ knew how to keep pressing until they achieved desired results. The Greeks supposedly believed

that a person didn't really die while stilled remembered by others. Jules will live on for at least a few more years in my memory.

– *John Rusk*

Awards and Activities

With mention of a body of work including her newest book, *Framed by Sea & Sky: Community Art in Seward, Mural Capital of Alaska*, and noting that she “meticulously collects, records, and shares the stories of the people, history and culture of Seward through her research, presentations, and publications,” **Jackie Pels** (Hardscratch Press) has received the 2017 Historic Preservation Award in her hometown of Seward, Alaska. She says she is most pleased by that word “meticulously.”

Ann Harlow has been elected president of the Berkeley Historical Society and continues to serve as editor of its quarterly newsletter (as well as copy editor of our newsletter, the newsletters of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley, and the magazine *American Art Review*).

Monika Trobits will be teaching her third course for San Francisco State's OLLI (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute), beginning in late August. “San Francisco Urban Journeys” will consist of 5 walking tours exploring the Embarcadero, the Haight, Civic Center, and Russian Hill. These journeys will begin at 10 a.m. the week of August 21, on either Monday or Wednesday (the course schedule is still being worked out). For more information and to register: (415) 817-4243 or www.ollisfsu.edu. “Meanwhile,” she writes, “I continue to fine-tune my second book for publication in late 2017 or early 2018. This one will trace the story of a commodity in the San Francisco Bay Area from the gold rush era to the present day.”

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Edward Upward: Art and Life. Peter D. L. Stansky (Enitharmon Press, London, 2016)

Long-time Institute member Peter Stansky, Frances and Charles Field Professor of History, Emeritus, Stanford University, has written a classic biography of Edward Upward, a man of mystery. A leading light of the English literary world in the 1930s, he is widely unknown, even though he lived to be slightly older than 105 (1903-2009), was author of twelve books, and still has, posthumously, seven books in print. Stansky's is the first biography of this important figure.

Stansky succeeds at highlighting the details of Upward's life while also focusing on the refrain that repeats throughout his life and has universal impact: which must one put first—art or life? The book's title demonstrates Stansky's conclusion that Upward achieved in both.

Edward Upward was born in Essex. His father was a doctor. His father's family had made money through the first wholesale grocery import business in England. Welcome to English hair-splitting class definitions. To have money is good, but trade is middle class. A doctor is a professional, but, at the opening of the 20th century, medicine did not have the cachet it would later achieve. Edward Upward was in the middle (or upper) middle class with enough advantages to have the childhood of a young gentleman.

He attended a prep school, a reputable public school, Repton, and Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. He hated these schools. He had good times at sports, saw his early poetry published in school journals, and won the Chancellor's Medal for English Verse at Cambridge. However, schools were for him replicas of Hell. Still, he became a schoolmaster. He felt the need to support himself; being a schoolmaster gave him security.

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Upward saw beating and bullying in schools as a parallel to England's class system which he despised. His sense of injustice led him to Marxism-Leninism and, later, membership in the Communist Party.

Whatever his socio-political analysis of school life, he gained an education and friendship that deepened his creative gifts and refined his literary perceptions. Christopher Isherwood, novelist and short story writer, arrived at Repton a year after Upward. Isherwood describes him in his memoir, *Lions and Shadows*: "Everything about him appealed to me. He was a natural anarchist, a born romantic revolutionary." (Stansky, 55) Stansky conveys the friendship between Upward and Isherwood in its many levels of understanding and the help they gave each other throughout their lives.

Isherwood revered Upward. They were each other's first readers of new writing. Isherwood introduced poet W.H. Auden and Upward, in 1927. Auden was three years younger than Isherwood whom he knew from prep school. Though Auden later abandoned the left, Upward's politics influenced him. Auden adopted aspects of Upward's fantasies into early poems. In fact, when Auden gave Upward his book, *Poems*, in 1930, the poet wrote in it that he wondered how much he had "filched" from Upward by way of Isherwood. (Stansky, 131)

These literary relationships, as described by Stansky, put Upward at the center of 1930s English writers, the "Auden Circle."

Together at Corpus Christi, Upward and Isherwood wrote stories of a fantasy world they invented. It had a map, characters fulfilling basic village roles, but the stories' events were surreal. In the stories of Mortmere, Isherwood and Upward became Starn and Hynd, professional pornographers. The Mortmere fantasies are obsessed with sex, violence, and potty jokes. They were the works of brilliant

men in their teenage to young adult years. Upward wrote that Isherwood wrote "about shit-eating and I about necrophilia." (Stansky, 93) Upward destroyed his own writing but kept Isherwood's.

Stansky notes that Upward cites Wilfred Owen, Katherine Mansfield, and Emily Brontë as the greatest influences on him when an undergraduate. Emily Brontë and her sister Anne, when ages sixteen and fourteen, created the fantasy island world of Gondal which was then matched by Charlotte and Branwell with their fantasy island, Angria. These worlds were preoccupied with war, spies, and romance. One wonders if "Hynd and Starn" knew about Gondal and Angria and decided to make their own complete world which was on the Atlantic coast of England rather than in the Pacific like Gondal and Angria. Stansky succeeds in describing Mortmere's significance in the English literary tradition of imaginary worlds.

Upward became a master at Alleyn's School, Dulwich, South London, in 1932 and stayed until he retired in 1961. The year 1932 was also the year he joined the Communist Party and met his future wife, Hilda Percival, a teacher. Having met Hilda when she gave a talk at a Party meeting, he recognized she had a different status than previous women he had known. He felt she connected him to the Workers, though Stansky shows she better fit the lower middle class. Hilda and Edward Upward had a happy family life, including two children. Together they continued to work for their local Party: going to meetings, selling publications, spreading the word. His love for Hilda grew throughout their lives. "I am very lucky to have Hilda," he wrote to Isherwood. "Marrying her was one of the few really sensible things I've done in my life." (Stansky, 241)

In 1932 Upward also went to the USSR with a group primarily of teachers. The trip helped to put Upward on a watch list for MI5 and the

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Special Branch of the Police. He had gotten their attention when he contributed to a *Daily Worker* fund in 1931. Hilda made a trip to Russia in 1933. There were files on both of them.

Upward's life seems quiet, devoted to family, teaching, and faith in Communism while his inner life could be in turmoil. His inner debate did not stop even after he and Hilda left the Party, in 1948. Could he focus on writing and shortchange political action? Would he be just another bourgeois individualist? He led a peaceful life but believed that violent revolution was necessary to change English society.

He wrote *The Spiral Ascent*, his trilogy, in plain, straightforward prose. He abandoned his surrealist style so that workers would have no trouble understanding exactly what he wrote.

In 1958, when Upward had a breakdown and might have given up writing, Isherwood wrote to Hilda, sad that his friend might abandon this part of himself. "I feel this not only because I love him but because I'm only a writer myself because of him. At the beginning he taught me everything and I've always felt his talent is far greater than mine, even if he hasn't used it as much." (Stansky, 287-288)

Stansky presents good and bad reviews of Upward's writing and shows how it was received in the literary world. He doesn't take sides but does create sympathy for his subject. Upward was dedicated to writing but had to fight himself to do it.

In addition to being a bourgeois amongst Communists, Upward was a heterosexual among homosexuals. His best friend, Isherwood, and others of the Auden Circle had active homosexual love lives and partnerships. None of this appears to have ruffled Upward. When young, he wrote about his need for sexual encounters and described, in less than politically correct language, to Isherwood how it was

working out with the women he saw. He and Isherwood exchanged this kind of information without hesitation.

Upward believed he needed to be politically active to be able to write. Yet, after the Hogarth Press published his novel *Journey to the Border*, in 1938, until he broke with the Party 10 years later, he could not write. This biography offers insights that will especially excite readers interested in the 1930s, the literature of the time, the particular character of the English Communist Party.

Upward was a man of mystery in the contradictions within his seemingly calm life. However, it is hardly necessary that a communist should be wild eyed and badly dressed. Some of these contradictions are stereotypes in the mind of the beholder. His anxiety over the choice between art and life may have been resolved through writing how he found, as in the name of the last book of his trilogy, there was "No Home But the Struggle." Having written that book, he brought the two into one.

– *Leslie Friedman*

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On June 24, the City of Sonoma unveiled a fullscale bronze statue of city-founder General Mariano Vallejo portrayed sitting on a bench in the central Plaza. **Peter Meyerhof** was one of the seven-member committee of citizens which planned all aspects of this monument, hired the skilled artist Jim Callahan to fabricate it, and raised the necessary funds entirely from private donations. This interactive creation was given to the city at a dedication ceremony attended by approximately 300 people. Because of General Vallejo's historically invaluable memoirs, Peter made sure that he was depicted holding a book entitled *Recuerdos*.

that Prague was west of the Austrian capitol Vienna. They enjoyed the feeling that they came from a part of Central—never Eastern—Europe that was essentially part of the secular western world.

Yet I'm revising my understanding of their feelings of comfort and pride in their Czech roots. Those feelings may always have been mixed with the apprehension that at any moment their neighbors might turn on them. In fact, it was invaders from Germany who created the danger that caused them to flee. While it was never apparent to me, it could well be that the Hupperts worried about anti-Semitism even in the United States. There had been a rumor of blood libel in northern New York State in 1928, although it was quickly refuted. There would have been plenty of hostility to families like the Hupperts, who were German-speaking, during and after the war. They probably avoided using the language outside of the house.

My efforts to understand and appreciate their realities will continue beyond the publication of my version of their story.

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Late-breaking news: The Institute's board of directors is pleased to announce the minigrant program for 2017. The purpose of this program is to further historical scholarship by Institute members in good standing through partial payment for support services and other expenses. Our goal is to make a difference by helping member-scholars successfully complete worthy, sound, and original projects. Past minigrants have been used to pay for duplicating, photocopying, translating services, travel, and conference registration, but are not limited to these uses. However, grants are not to supplement living expenses.

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