

THE INSTITUTE FOR HISTORICAL STUDY

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NEWSLETTER

Closet Archaeology: History under the Floorboards by Carol Sicherman

One day in 2015, Bobby Scotto, a ten-year-old coin collector, noticed a scrap peeking out under a floorboard in his classroom in the Children’s Workshop School on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. He was curious. Using pencils and other improvised devices, he extracted bits and pieces that earlier generations of children had stuffed underneath. Another kid joined, then another, till there was competition for spaces. Pretty soon the entire fourth-grade class joined in the frenzy.

Bobby’s teacher, my daughter Miriam Sicherman, encouraged the kids to research the objects that they found—to write history based on primary research into ephemera. The kids themselves devised better instruments for excavating, and Bobby vowed to become an archaeologist. The project has continued ever since, extending into other rooms. The school building had gone up in 1913, and some of the finds dated even earlier. All the floorboards have been restored, minus past detritus.

The variety of discoveries was extraordinary: candy wrappers, tickets to shows, pencils, coins, love notes, packet of cigarettes (both real and candy), ads for local businesses, scraps of newspapers, baseball cards, a mouse skull, and so on.ⁱ Candy prices were a source of astonishment: 6 Collins caramels for 1¢!

Miriam invited experts to tutor her and the kids. Meredith Linn, an urban archaeologist at Barnard College, outlined the basic principles of classification and display. She talked to the class about archaeology in general and her own work, and answered their many questions; to her, the kids were colleagues. Other visitors arrived after an article in the *New York Times* drew considerable attention.ⁱⁱ Peter Sugar, co-president of the Flushing Coin Society (in Queens), came to see the kids’ many coins, the oldest from 1881. He brought coins that each student could take home; they had been disappointed that they could not keep their finds, now part of a historical record. Robin Nagle, resident anthropologist at the Department of Sanitation, took an interest in the project.ⁱⁱⁱ

Some finds have broadened the direction of the inquiry. In 2017, for example, the closet archaeologists found evidence of a student who attended the school in the 1960s, whose envelope for the school savings account had somehow slipped under the floorboard (he donated the \$2 to the collection). His brother visited the class to describe the school fifty years earlier. Miriam tracked down other graduates who had left traces and contributed their memories from afar. Oral history became part of the mix.

The latest offshoot of the project is “Closet Archaeology: An Accidental Time Capsule,” which fills the City Reliquary, a quirky institution in Brooklyn, until mid-October.^{iv} In specially designed display cases, the show is replete with scraps that tell tales, as well as mysteries that may never be solved. At the opening, on June 3, 2017, two student founders, teacher Miriam, Robin Nagle, and Peter Sugar spoke. “History’s more fun with artifacts,” one girl said. As Miriam wrote in a professional journal, the kids had come to “see the world as a place full of interesting things hiding in plain sight.”^v Closet archaeology satisfied their “intellectual yearning,” their faith in their own creative curiosity. This past July, she told an interviewer that the students had “developed this sense of wonder that anywhere in the world, in the most ordinary place, there can be something fascinating, and it’s worth checking things out.”^{vi} No wonder an independent filmmaker has taken interest. Stay tuned.

– *Continued on the back page*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As individual members of the Institute for Historical Study, what do we have to offer our fellow members? As a well-established organization, what does the Institute have to offer to prospective members, particularly those who may be newcomers to the changing ways of history?

I like to think that we are all engaged in learning, learning conceived as a never-ending process, no matter how much formal education we have completed so far, or how much we have written or published ourselves. There's always something more—a new book or a recent article that deserves our attention, or perhaps it's something that we've read before, but want to take a fresh look at. Can intellectual curiosity ever be fully satisfied?

At the same time, many of us are also engaged in the teaching of history and related subjects, some as college and university professors or instructors in formal, traditional settings, others in less formal or nontraditional settings which now include the internet and all its variations; still others serve as editors or journalists, book reviewers or archivists of rare documents, maps, and other artifacts. But we all have some kind of teaching or sharing activity in common.

It seems to me that these two kinds of interrelated activities, learning and teaching, together define what the members of this Institute do, and what we have to offer, collectively, as mentors or guides to prospective members and new members in the years ahead.

Learn what you need, teach what you know. . .

This could be the framework we have been seeking, to redefine and reposition the Institute for the next fifty or a hundred years of growth and development. Putting together our discussion groups, our writing sessions, our work-in-progress reports, and so on. . . .

Think about it, and then let's talk about it, when we get together next.*

– *Charles Sullivan*

* At the annual potluck supper, November 4—details forthcoming.

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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.

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

“The Unveiling of Andrew Smith Hallidie”

Institute member and board secretary **Taryn Edwards** gave her report on Andrew Smith Hallidie on Sunday, September 17, at the home of Edee and George Piness. It was a well-attended meeting with an appreciative audience.

Andrew Smith Hallidie is known to most of us as the inventor of the San Francisco cable car, and though he orchestrated its emergence in San Francisco, the tale is more complicated than is usually described in museums, guidebooks, and treatises. So also are several other parts of Hallidie’s life, and together they justify Taryn’s title. Her interest in him was prompted by his association with the San Francisco Mechanics’ Institute where she works and has fielded many questions about the man. He was the head of that institute for 14 years; a handsome portrait of him hangs in the library on the third floor.

Andrew Smith Hallidie was an interesting and accomplished person. The sixth child of a notable Scottish engineer, Hallidie was born in London in 1834. He and his father arrived in California at the height of the Gold Rush to take advantage of engineering opportunities there. Hallidie quickly rose to meet the challenges the frontier presented by creatively using his father’s patented wire rope to build suspension bridges, ore transport systems, and mining devices throughout the American West.

By 1873 Hallidie was not only California’s premier wire rope manufacturer and the muscle behind the development of the iconic San Francisco cable car, he had also emerged as a leader of California’s industrial and political endeavors. By the time of his death in 1900, Hallidie’s unrelenting energy, intense determination, and unwavering attention to detail contributed to his success as a businessman, which enabled him to found and guide several cultural institutions into periods of prosperity. Some of his life’s projects included

steering the Mechanics’ Institute to fiscal health, serving on the board of the James Lick Trust, and helping to found the California School of Mechanical Arts (now Lick-Wilmerding High School), the San Francisco Public Library, and the San Francisco Art Association; he also served on the Board of Regents of the University of California for 32 years. His myriad business ventures showed him to be a man of daring, and his interest in and support of education and the spread of knowledge showed him to be a man of caring.

Taryn spoke extensively about the challenges she faces as Hallidie’s biographer and her research strategies. Hallidie wrote about his own activities extensively in the periodicals of his day, but he was vague about much of his life’s details. Her biggest obstacle has been getting around the lack of primary sources. The 1906 earthquake and fire destroyed many official records of Hallidie’s activities and the personal papers of his associates, making it difficult to understand the man, the rationale behind his actions, and what others thought of him. Taryn has scoured sources in the Bay Area, England, British Columbia, and California’s gold country and plans yet more forays into archives elsewhere. Her audience encouraged her to seek publication of her work even before finishing her book.

– *Cornelia Levine*

Play Readers

In recent months we read *Victoria Regina* by British playwright Laurence Housman and *Collaborators* by British playwright John Hodge.

Victoria Regina was first performed in New York City in 1935, starring the young Helen Hayes. It was not performed in London until June of 1937 because the Lord Chamberlain had ruled that no British sovereign could be

GROUP REPORTS

portrayed on stage until 100 years after his or her accession.

The play begins early in the morning of June 20, 1837, when the Archbishop of Canterbury and an official of the Royal Household come to Kensington Palace to inform eighteen-year-old Victoria of her uncle's death and her succession. It ends sixty years later, after the long-widowed queen has celebrated her Diamond Jubilee. The focus is on Victoria's private life. Early scenes depict her discussion about "suitable suitors" with her trusted Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne; her marriage proposal to Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg in 1839; her delight as a new bride watching her husband shaving; her impetuous and sometimes jealous nature, always handled deftly by Albert.

Victoria and Albert had nine children, but there are no allusions to pregnancies or motherhood in the play. There is also no deathbed scene. Albert appears for the last time at the end of Act Two. Obviously close to death, he summons the energy to defuse a diplomatic incident between Britain and the United States. The audience would understand the significance of his last words in the scene, even though they are spoken in German. "Take me to bed, little wife. I am so weak, I have scarcely been able to hold a pen." After the death of her adored husband, Victoria went into deep mourning and for a long time avoided public appearances. A scene in the last act reveals the importance of her Scottish attendant John Brown, and her favorite Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, in these later years.

There have been many portrayals of the long-lived queen, most recently on Public Television. We appreciated Housman's straightforward biographical portrait.

For our next reading we moved from the British Isles in the 19th century to 1938 in the Soviet Union. *Collaborators* is a fact-based, satirical and surreal fantasy about the relationship

between Josef Stalin and Mikhail Bulgakov, a prominent Russian playwright best known today for his posthumously-published novel, *The Master and Margarita*. Hodge's play takes place in 1938, during the final phase of Stalin's "Great Purge." The central historical facts are: Stalin was a great admirer of the playwright (he is said to have seen Bulgakov's *The White Guard* 15 times). Bulgakov did write a play about Stalin's revolutionary youth in the city of Batumi, Georgia. It was banned before rehearsals began, simply because that was what Stalin had the power to do.

All of Hodge's characters except for Stalin, Bulgakov, and Bulgakov's wife Yelena are fictional. The set is simple and clever. With the movement of a few pieces of furniture it represents either the apartment of Bulgakov and Yelena or a secret chamber under the Kremlin where Bulgakov works on the play. Characters pop in and out of a large cabinet at the back of the set, hinting at Marx's famous dictum regarding Napoleon I and his nephew Louis Napoleon: "History repeats itself, first as tragedy, then as farce." In a wildly farcical touch, Stalin decides that he and Bulgakov will swap duties. He will write the play and Bulgakov will assume *his* work as General Secretary, issuing official orders and signing them "J.S." When Bulgakov protests that he can't sign Stalin's initials, the dictator charmingly assures him that "It's our little secret. No one will ever know." This turn of events, amusing at first, becomes grim as the play progresses. Friends of Bulgakov disappear, victims of the notorious quota system for arrests that Bulgakov—in the play, not in history!—has devised.

Collaborators explores the intense and ultimately deadly relationship between playwright and dictator. As Bulgakov loses himself in a world of secrets, threats, and paradoxes, and begins to fall ill from the kidney disease that kills him in 1940, his feverish

GROUP REPORTS

dreams of conversations with Stalin become reality in his mind, just as the state's lies become truths in his play. How could anyone enjoy such a play, often laughing out loud? We were delighted by the wit and imagination of the author and the vibrant pace of the drama.

Play readers meet on weekday afternoons once a month and always welcome new readers. For more information, contact Joanne Lafler (jwlafler@gmail.com).

– *Edith Piness and Joanne Lafler*

Medieval Studies

In July **Lyn Reese** reported on the hefty book *Jerusalem, 1000–1400: Every People Under Heaven*, which accompanied the Met exhibit held last year from September 2016 to January 2017. Over 200 items were displayed which enhanced and enlivened the concept of this medieval city as the crossroads of the known world. Glass, gold, metal trade goods, coins, woven material, maps, pilgrim and merchant accounts, wills, court cases, guide books, and so forth were selected by the Met to highlight various multi-cultural themes. The book expanded on these themes with essays that set out to “define these four centuries as a singularly creative moment in a singularly complex city.” They explore the meaning of the city to its many faiths, and its importance as a destination for tourists and pilgrims.

Six conceptual topics divide the book: “The Pulse of Trade and Tourism,” “The Diversity of Peoples,” “The Air of Holiness,” “The Drumbeat of Holy Wars,” “The Generosity of Patrons,” and “The Promise of Eternity.” One of the ideas Lyn selected to discuss was the importance of the convergence of circumstances which brought new attention to the medieval city starting in the year 1000, spurred by the notable uptick in world travel in general. She

found the first-person accounts by traders and medieval tourists and pilgrims of great value. Among these are a description of the massive haul of goods brought back to Aquitaine by Nompar de Caumont, an early 14th-century pilgrim, and the comments by Felix Fabri about the “light-minded persons” who accompanied this Dominican cleric from Ulm on his trip to Jerusalem in 1437-38. In particular, Fabri lamented those pilgrims who, in acts of “vicious curiosity,” chipped off bits of stone from the Holy Sepulcher to take home, or who left their mark by attaching their heraldic arms to holy sites, thus “spoiling works artistically wrought with great labor and expense.” The richest description of commerce within the city comes from Jacques de Vitry, bishop of Acre, 1214. Among his observations is his dismay about the lively suq that flourished inside the Holy Sepulcher, and the haggling of pilgrims for bargains of stuff to bring back home.

A number of writers focused on descriptions of the types and volume of food necessitated by the sheer volume of visitors. The ways in which agriculture and industry sustained the pilgrim trade was observed by the Iranian poet and theologian Nasir-i Khusraw (1004-1077) during his pilgrimage and the Arab geographer and observer of local customs al-Muqaddasi (945/946 - 991). Both brought attention to the “custom of Abraham” in the hospitality offered to Muslims as well as anyone in need.

Lyn briefly discussed Elizabeth Dospel Williams' essay “Domestic Goods from the Suq to the Home” as a way to imagine the interiors of Jerusalem's Jewish homes. The patronage of wealthy Muslim women who, in accordance with their faith, helped establish schools and food distribution for Jerusalem visitors was also noted. The session ended with the group's examination of some of the exhibit images from the book.

– *Lyn Reese*

GROUP REPORTS

MEMBER NEWS

Writers Group

Four members of the group attended the meeting at Celeste MacLeod's home on September 10, when Celeste presented two chapters from her study of Frances (Fanny) Trollope for discussion.

Chapter XIV is an overview of Trollope's fiction, which Celeste has discussed in earlier chapters that we had not been able to read. For that reason we felt at a disadvantage in commenting on the overview. It was suggested that Celeste incorporate new material in this chapter into the earlier chapters that deal with Fanny Trollope's novels.

One member of the group suggested that instead of insisting on Trollope's uniqueness, Celeste would make a better case for her special qualities by noting other writers of Trollope's time who were producing similar work, especially social novels, and focusing on the differences between her work and theirs. We suggested that she quote less from scholarly writers and critics and use her own judgment as to the value of Trollope's novels.

In the discussion of Chapter XV, which focuses on the relevance of Trollope's famous travel book *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (published in 1832) for readers today, the group cautioned Celeste to refrain from making specific connections between Trollope's comments and our own time, since history is "a moving target." Each generation will find its own parallels to Trollope's observations.

The group agreed that Celeste has a fascinating story to tell, and we were impressed by the research she has done. We hope that our suggestions will help to make her account even more compelling.

– *Liz Nakahara, Ellen Huppert, Carol Sichertman, Joanne Lafler*

In Memoriam

The Institute recently learned of the death of long-term member **Linda Larson Boston** in May, at the age of 61. I enjoyed getting to know Linda a bit better this past February en route to and from the BART station for our annual meeting. I asked her if she would write about the late Kevin Starr, since she had been much influenced by him when she had taken his class in California history. While writing her reminiscences, which were published in the spring newsletter, she also wrote more about herself than I could use. I have excerpted some of this part of Linda's essay because it reveals her early development as a historian and testifies to the value of membership in the Institute.

"As an English major specializing in written communications at Santa Clara University, I was active in all three student publications: *The Santa Clara* newspaper, *The Owl* literary magazine and *The Redwood* yearbook. I took Fr. Gerald McKeivitt's California history survey course and a practicum in the archives under his direct supervision, learning basic archival techniques, such as the use of acid-free folders and pencil (always pencil!). I helped organize the papers of Fr. Bernard Hubbard, known as the Glacier Priest, whose annual expeditions to Alaska proved useful to our military during World War II.

"In January 1977, Santa Clara celebrated the bicentennial of the Mission, the 125th anniversary of the college, and the installation of a new university president. I volunteered to write an in-depth article for the student newspaper to supplement the news articles covering the festivities. When I began my research in the university archives, I soon realized that historical research and writing were what I enjoyed most. Although not previously interested in history, I found feature style writing, which required background research,

MEMBER NEWS

more rewarding than straight news, where being first often took precedence over accuracy.

“When I joined the Institute for Historical Study over 30 years ago, most members held doctorates in history. The Board approved my application with a bachelor’s degree in English and demonstrated interest in local historical research and writing. I’ve maintained my membership because I hope a little of the brilliance of other members will rub off on me! Recently serious health issues have prevented me from pursuing any substantial historical research and writing, but I still enjoy learning about others’ projects. Members encourage me, make valuable suggestions, prod me to continue researching and writing, and last but not least, they smile. Although their historical interests may lie in completely unrelated fields, they encourage me to pursue whatever historical interests I may have.”

In 1993 Linda was appointed to the San Jose Historic Landmarks Commission serving a term through 1997. She was also a member of History San Jose and the Preservation Action Council, where she served on the boards of directors. She published local history booklets on the Jose Theatre, the Light Tower, and St. James Park. Linda’s “33-year career preparing meticulous manuals for operating intricate satellite technology” supported her history work.

New Member

Welcome to **Ernest Hook**, formerly professor of pediatrics at Albany Medical College and professor of public health at UC Berkeley. Among his publications are “Hereditary Themes in Henry VI and Richard III” and “Hereditary Themes in Shakespeare’s Poetry.” Ernest is interested not only in “history in general,” but also American, European, and intellectual history. Currently he is “undertaking several projects in the history and philosophy of science and medicine.” He recently made a presentation

at the 2017 meeting of the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilization.

Elizabeth Thacker-Estrada contributed the chapter “Margaret Taylor, Abigail Fillmore, and Jane Pierce: Three Antebellum Presidents’ Ladies” to the book, *A Companion to First Ladies*, edited by former Institute member Katherine Sibley and published by John Wiley & Sons in 2016. The book has been recognized this year as one of the Top Community College Titles by Choice, the publishing branch of the Association of College & Research Libraries, a division of the American Library Association.

Steve Levi has added another title to his impossible crimes series: *The Matter of the Dematerializing Armored Car*. For the third time Chief of Detectives Heinz Noonan tackles the challenge.

Bright and early on a recent Saturday morning, **Maria Sakovich** made a presentation at the Hillsdale United Methodist Church community speakers breakfast meeting: “An Appreciation of Katharine Maurer: Then and Now.” Deaconess Maurer, in charge of social work at the Angel Island Immigration Station, acquired a legendary reputation for kindness and tolerance of ethnic diversity in an age of prejudice and segregation.

For a week this month, member **Dot Brovarney** is writer in residence at Hypatia-in-the-Woods, a retreat for women writers and artists in the Olympic rainforest in Washington. Dot is devoting the week to completing a chapter of her book documenting the history of Lake Leonard and Reeves Canyon in Mendocino County. She has brought along copies of two hundred pages of letters by Una Boyle that she discovered through computer research in 2015. The residency program offers time, solitude, and space to engage in creative work. For more information, see Hypatia-in-the-Woods.org.

KEVIN STARR — CALIFORNIA HISTORIAN

Rob Robbins will be reading a brief section of his biography, *Overtaken by the Night: One Russian's Journey through Peace, War, Revolution and Terror*, at Book Passage in Corte Madera on Sunday, November 5 at 1 pm, as part of the celebration of the centennial of the Women's National Book Association.

In the spring newsletter we published Linda Larson Boston's remembrances of her former professor at Santa Clara University with the promise that Peter Meyerhof's quite different article would follow. Here it is below.

Kevin Starr - California Historian

When he passed away earlier this year, Kevin Starr was certainly the best known and most honored of contemporary California historians. His family had roots in the Gold Rush, but he found it advantageous to study literature and California history at Harvard University. He was well aware that in these regards he was the historical heir to Josiah Royce, Starr's role model among California historians, who had also been attracted to Harvard to gain a perspective on California through philosophy and imagination. Starr returned to San Francisco in 1973, where he was appointed City Librarian and also speech writer for Mayor Joseph Alioto. That same year he published his first major history, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850 – 1915*. With enthusiastic drive during the following 40 years, he extended book by book this chronological history of California into the 21st century. His history covered the prejudice, the enlightenment, the greed, and the sacrifice that accompanied California's growth into the dynamo of activity it is today. Just as Royce had subtitled his California history "A Study of American Character," so too did Kevin Starr choose to frequently provide a journalistic flavoring to his work. In addition to his writing, he found the time to teach at many universities throughout California. In 1994, he was

appointed State Librarian in Sacramento by Governor Pete Wilson and ten years later he was reappointed State Librarian emeritus. In this position he backed important library and reading programs. In 2006, President George W. Bush awarded him the National Humanities Medal.

With characteristic energy, Starr continued writing history all his life. He published several recent volumes dealing with the Golden Gate Bridge, the Roman Catholic Church in North America, and a timely compendium, *Clio on the Coast, the Writing of California History 1845 – 1945*. Describing another historian in this last book but providing his own epitaph, Starr wrote, "Not since Josiah Royce, perhaps, had any other writer anchored in history and nonfiction narrative been more successful in dialogue with California as an instance of American civilization and a source of social and moral drama."

Kevin Starr's recent passing has been the time for some personal reflection on this amazing individual. I first met him about 20 years ago when he was invited by local historical associations to give a talk at an outdoor picnic. Always accompanied at these events by his wife Sheila who organized his busy schedule, he urged his audience to consider doing research into topics that had been ignored by others, not the hackneyed subjects examined by others. He was a natural story teller who used powerful words and big ideas delivered in a commanding voice. Over the next few years I had the opportunity to hear him several more times and occasionally managed to discuss some of my research with him too. He was always deeply interested and very approachable. On one recent encounter he was conducting his own research at the State Library in Sacramento and could be overheard to tell the librarians in a hushed voice to make sure they didn't favor him with any courtesies they would not gladly extend to all researchers. This was a true historian with passion and humility who will be sorely missed.

– Peter Meyerhof

IN RECOGNITION OF A 100TH ANNIVERSARY

Late in 1917 (October 25 according to the Old Style calendar, November 7 according to the New Style), shortly after the US entered World War I and began sending troops to France on the side of the Allies, Bolsheviks stormed the Winter Palace in Petrograd (today's St. Petersburg) and the Kerensky provisional government fell. So began the Communist revolution and the Soviet period of Russian history.

In November the Institute is cosponsoring with the Mechanics Institute and the Merced Branch of the San Francisco Public Library presentations on this anniversary.

At the **Mechanics Institute on Wednesday, November 8**, "Seize the Day: A Russian Revolution Centennial" will feature speakers showcasing two books and possibly a film.

At 12:30 pm: Richard G. Robbins will discuss his new biography *Overtaken by the Night: One Russian's Journey through Peace, War, Revolution and Terror* (University of Pittsburgh Press).

"Vladimir Fedorovich Dzhunkovsky witnessed Russia's unfolding tragedy—from Tsar Alexander II's Great Reforms, through world war, revolution, the rise of a new regime, and finally, his country's descent into terror under Stalin. Dzhunkovsky was not just a passive observer, but an active participant in his turbulent times, often struggling against the tide. This is a gripping biography of a man of many faces, a behind-the-curtain look at the inner workings of Russian politics at its highest levels, and an engrossing account of ordinary Russians engulfed by swiftly moving political and social currents."

At 6:30 pm: UC Berkeley Professor Yuri Slezkine and Hoover Institution research fellow Bertrand Patenaude will discuss Slezkine's new book, *The House of Government: A Saga of the Russian Revolution* (Princeton University Press).

"... an unforgettable story of revolution, terror, and a building. This book's gripping narrative tells the true story of the residents of an enormous Moscow apartment building where top Communist officials and their families lived before they were destroyed in Stalin's purges. A vivid account of the personal and public lives of Bolshevik true believers, the book begins with their conversion to Communism and ends with their children's loss of faith and the fall of the Soviet Union."

Both events are free for members of the Mechanics Institute and the Institute for Historical Study; admission for each event for members of the public is \$15.

Shortly after the Bolshevik takeover, civil war broke out, with the newly forming Red Army and the "White" forces engaged in attack and counter attack in several regions, including Siberia. The war continued in some parts of Siberia into 1922. California figures in part of this history.

At the **Merced Branch of the SF Public Library, November 15, 7:00 - 8:30 pm**

"Siberia and California: Connections during the Russian Revolution and Civil War" will feature an evening of presentations by Institute and other scholars: The Russian Civil War – A Quick Overview; Making the Connection between Siberia and California; Civil War-Related Collections at the Hoover Institution Archives and the Museum of Russian Culture; the Russian Civil War through the Camera of a Young Officer; the Refugee Experience through Siberia. Speakers are Richard Robbins and Maria Sakovich from the Institute, Yves Franquien from the Museum of Russian Culture and Hoover Institution Archives; and Lada Tremsina, author of *The Last White General* and other books on the Russian civil war.

The evening is free to all.

– *From the first page*

What does this project suggest to us at the Institute, with our commitment to sharing the excitement of historical research with a wider public? In a narrow sense, Miriam’s project defies replication because there are few schools with century-old floorboards. But there are other ways of finding and valuing ephemera as gateways to the past. I’ve used the Ephemera collection in the Africana Library at Northwestern University. Like many of us, I’ve developed stories out of apparent detritus that someone thought should be preserved (like British colonial administrators’ notes preserved in the Public Record Office in London). The Oakland Museum has a huge collection of political posters, thanks to a collector who knew they mattered.^{vii} I end with questions: could the Institute foster awareness of ephemera that might be sources for historians? And could some of those historians be kids?

Readers may ask Carol Sicherman for the footnotes, which were too numerous to be included with the article, or view them in the newsletter at the Institute website.

Check these out at the Mechanics Institute:

Memoir writing with master memoirist Adair Lara, Saturday, October 14, 10:30 am to 5:00 pm.

SAVE IT! How to collect, communicate, and share family and community life stories with Basya Petnick, November 4, 10:30 am to 4:30 pm

Footnotes/Endnotes for Carol Sicherman’s article:

ⁱ All the finds are displayed in Miriam’s Instagram account, @closetarchaeology.

ⁱⁱ https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/26/nyregion/young-treasure-hunters-dig-up-history-lessons-in-a-classrooms-closet.html?_r=0. An excellent recent article in the *New York Post* brings the story up to date: <http://nypost.com/2017/08/12/students-uneearth-trove-in-east-village-classroom-closet>. The latest article appeared in the *New Yorker*: www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/10/02/archeology-in-an-east-village-classroom.

ⁱⁱⁱ Nagle’s book *Picking Up: On the Streets and Behind the Trucks with the Sanitation Workers of New York City* (2013) includes a riveting history of New York sanitation from 1624 to the present. She is a leader in a new field, Critical Discard Studies (www.discardstudies.com).

^{iv} <http://www.cityreliquary.org/tag/miriam-sicherman/>. When the exhibit closes 15 Oct. 2017, all the displays will go to the Children’s Workshop School.

Miriam Sicherman, “Classroom Archaeology: Letting Students Dig Up the Curriculum,” [Social Studies and the Young Learner 28.2 \(November/December 2015\)](#), 26-32.

^{vi} Eric Grundhauser, “What Fourth-Grade Archaeologists Found in Their School’s Closet,” *Atlas Obscura*, 25 July 2017, <http://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/closet-archaeology-fourth-grade-floor> (retrieved 31 Aug. 2017).

^{vii} <http://collections.museumca.org/?q=category/2011-schema/history/political-posters>.