

# THE INSTITUTE FOR HISTORICAL STUDY

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# NEWSLETTER

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## **Driving with Dictators by Oliver B. Pollak**

“Finocchio’s Club: A San Francisco Legend” by James Smith, in the Winter 2018 issue of *The Argonaut*, made me aware that the Studebaker Brothers Manufacturing Company in South Bend, Indiana, started with wagons in 1852 and automobiles in 1902. It produced the “Dictator” from 1926 to 1937. Joe Finocchio arrived in San Francisco from Italy in 1910 at the age of 14. The November 8, 1936 *San Francisco Chronicle* reported he drove Studebakers for 15 years, racking up 500,000 miles. He flew to Chicago and took delivery of the Dictator in South Bend. He drove it back to San Francisco in three days. Despite high speeds he got 19 miles to the gallon.

Other Studebaker authority-laden model names included the President, Chancellor, Director Royal Sedan, Victoria Coupe, and Commander. My wife’s parents won a 1951 Studebaker Champion in a raffle. My neighbor’s father had three Studebakers. If you watch “Grace and Frankie” on Netflix, Sol (Sam Waterston) drives a 1959 Studebaker Lark. Studebaker and Packard merged in 1954. The Lark, as well as the Avanti, ceased production in the mid-1960s when Studebaker closed down in America and Canada.

During the 1960s in graduate school I read *Imperialism: the Story and Significance of a Political Word, 1840-1960* (1964) by Richard Koebner and Helmut Dan Schmidt. It forever sensitized me to the power of words to mask multiple images. I follow new words, words being used with greater frequency, words and expressions withering on the vine, and the end-of-the-year buzz for anointing the word of the year. My two volume microprint *Oxford English Dictionary* has been abandoned in favor of the *OED* on line.

Manufacturers and ad men name cars to lure buyers, evoke status, identity and branding. The auto trade is the life blood of American capitalism and marketing. The automobile driver rules the road. Car names with authority include the King (built by Charles Brady King), American Motors Corporation (AMC) Ambassador, and AMC Rebel, GMC Envoy, Buick Regal, Ford Crown Victoria, Consul, Prefect, and Royale, Chrysler Imperial, Opel Regent and Senator, and India’s Premier. They impart power and prestige. Studebaker’s “Dictator,” however, went from possibly acceptable, if ill advised, to unacceptable. Regardless of features and competitive price, the name no doubt in the 1930s became a burden and reduced sales.

Fiat, Italian for decree, is also an acronym for Fabbrica Italiana di Automobili Torino. Mussolini’s rise to power in 1922 and dictatorship after 1925 may have influenced Studebaker marketing. Mussolini for some projected an aura of romantic effectiveness, making Italy Great Again, with Caesarean regalia, trains running on time, and reclaiming lost colonial territory, Ethiopia, in 1936.

Berliner Hans Roger Madol (né Gerhard Solomon), a biographer of European royalty, wrote for the *Preussische Jahrbücher* until 1933 when Hitler’s rise to power quickly placed the livelihood and lives of German Jewish writers, politicians, lawyers, physicians and many others in jeopardy. Madol published *Godoy, The First Dictator of Modern Times (1767-1851)* in German, Spanish, and English, 1932, 1933, and 1934. Ralph Korngold followed shortly with *Robespierre, First Modern Dictator (1758-94)* in French and German in 1936 and in English in 1937. The Spanish Civil War raged from 1936 to 1939. Charlie

– continued on the back page

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Chaplin starred in *Modern Times* in 1936 and *The Great Dictator* in 1940. Dictator was an unfortunate currency of the times.

“Dictator” first appeared in the *New York Times* in October 1851, followed by 50,138 further mentions through 2014, an average of 305 times a year. The decades of the greatest frequency are 1930-39 and 1940-49 when the term appeared 9,282 and 5,955 times, 30 percent of the total.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* has 44 examples of dictator being used from Old English, 1387 to 2007. There is only one example from the period 1920 to 1950, to wit, in 1938, “Foreign Service February 9/3 Our democratic institutions are the subject of jeers by foreign dictators.” However, Appeasement, Hitler and Fuhrer are cited 11, 11, and 6 times during the same period.

Many book titles include the term Dictator, along with the names: WorldCat and AbeBooks reveal books on Julius Caesar, Oliver Cromwell, Napoleon, Napoleon III, and Hitler. The Soviet Union and its satellites include Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, and Tito. The Spanish-speaking world features Franco, Augusto Pinochet, Porfirio Diaz, Batista, Papa Doc, Fidel Castro, Noriega, Trujillo, and the outlier Marcos. The Middle East provided Mustafa Kemal, Saddam Hussein, and Arafat. There is one title each for Mao Zedong and Robert Mugabe. There were no books about women dictators.

At least three additional curiosities remain to be mentioned, *Adenauer*, *Democratic Dictator*, *America's Dictator: FDR the Red*, and journal aspersions to Abraham Lincoln as dictator.

The cars that real dictators, tyrants, autocrats, despots, and authoritarians traveled in are another story.

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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The Institute has enjoyed a busy few months! On February 24, about 30 of us got together for our annual meeting, with reports, election of board members, a talk by Monika Trobits, and, of course, food and drink. Thank you to Taryn Edwards for hosting us at the Mechanics' Institute, arranging for catering, printing handouts, and taking minutes. Thanks also to retiring board members Taryn, Charles Sullivan, Ellen Huppert, Gretta Mitchell, Kathy O'Connor, and Jody Offer for their leadership. We welcome newly elected board members Oscar Berland and Mike Griffith. (Ross Maxwell was also elected, but has since resigned.)

On March 3 and 4, we participated in San Francisco History Days, where we sponsored a panel presentation and made a more concerted effort than in the past to invite history researchers and writers to join our organization. Six new members have joined us, and we haven't even sent out our follow-up letters to others.

On March 17, we held a retreat of current and past board members to talk about the history and core values of the Institute with regard to a changing future. (See pages 8-9.) And on March 31, we hosted the second of our panel presentations, "The Future of the Past in the Digital Age." We greatly appreciate all the work Rose Marie Cleese put into organizing this pair of public programs, as well as the upcoming discussion with author Benjamin Madley on April 27 (see page 11).

I want to encourage you to attend as many of our programs as you can. Face-to-face communication with fellow historians still seems to be highly valued by our members. Also, we want to help our members navigate the ever-changing environment for research, writing, and publishing. Please contact me if you would like to help develop workshops or recommend specific speakers or publications.

In the near future, I hope to replace the e-mail system we've been using, in which you receive Institute announcements from my outbox, to a listserv format in which you can all exchange information (and also receive announcements and reminders of upcoming events). Watch for an invitation to join that Google group, or whatever form it may take.

– *Ann Harlow*

## NEWSLETTER EDITOR

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Ann Harlow

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## WORKS IN PROGRESS

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### “Political Correctness in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603)”

On January 21 at the home of Georgia Wright, **Charles Sullivan**, former president of the Institute, presented his essay with the intriguing title “Let Us Not Praise Famous Men: Political Correctness in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth I.”

Charles became engrossed in the Elizabethan period during a stay at Oxford in England while he was attending summer courses at the university. In studying the relationship between Elizabeth I and her supporters, Charles came to connect the attitude of the queen toward loyal supporters and their behavior toward her with political correctness, a rather loaded term in our day. He pointed out, however, that political correctness is nothing new. It pervades the history of powerful rulers and those who served them. The queen’s shrewd practice of the art of politics informed the way her supporters behaved toward their monarch. Wielding enormous power, she decided what was politically correct. Supporters needed to please the queen in order to stay in her good graces. Political correctness was calculated to serve both sides well.

Charles decided to focus on a number of less well-known stalwart supporters of Queen Elizabeth, those who were not famous, as he put it in the title of his essay. He examined how political correctness—or defying political correctness—played a role in their careers and lives. He created several categories for presenting these men: stalwart supporters, early favorites, knights-errant, and the perfect knight. All of these were men chosen for specific qualities the queen considered of advantage to her rather than their background as members of aristocratic elites and their achievements.

One of those stalwarts was Sir William Cecil (1520-1598), better known as Lord Burghley, a cautious and pragmatic man, who was clever

enough to handle the finances of the queen in a manner that always benefitted her. Seldom in the public eye, he served as the queen’s secretary of state. Similarly devoted was Sir Francis Walsingham (1532 -1590), who arose from obscurity to become a protector of the queen. He was in time rewarded by becoming the queen’s principal secretary, an influential post he held until his death.

Among her early favorites were people like Sir Robert Dudley (1532-1588), later the Earl of Leicester, who doted on the queen as a personal friend. He lavished praise on the monarch, thereby demonstrating his loyalty. Sir Christopher Hatton (1540-1591) was another early favorite who carefully cultivated the reputation of a model courtier, flattering the queen as a dance partner and friend. However, he got on the wrong side of the queen when he outspent her on the palatial housing he built for himself, thereby violating the code of political correctness when he overshadowed the queen with his ostentatiousness.

Knights-errant were another category of loyal supporters of Elizabeth I, men who dared to venture overseas to seek territorial advantage for the queen, something she would support if it enhanced her power. The danger here was that their heroism on such overseas adventures could be politically troublesome if it could be considered rivaling the queen. “Hero today, rival tomorrow” was a potential danger and politically extremely incorrect. Sir Humphrey Gilbert and Sir Richard Grenville were two that Charles mentioned for their enthusiasm in overseas expansion that the queen seems to have mostly supported. Sir Humphrey paid for his ambitions, however, by drowning on one of his voyages.

Charles concluded his presentation with the quotation from the King James Bible, Ecclesiastes, 44:1: “Let us now praise famous men . . .” which he reformulated for his talk as

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“Let us not praise famous men.” He explained that his focus was mostly, though not exclusively, on the lives of men who were not famous in their day but served their queen loyally and deserved being recognized. They stayed within the parameters of the queen’s understanding of what loyal subjects owed her, thereby practicing political correctness in their time. Discussion afterward centered on the use of the term political correctness in the context Charles had suggested. Could a term so highly political and controversial in our day really apply to historical events and powerful monarchs in times gone by? There was no time to come to a conclusion but the question offered listeners much to think about.

– *Monica Clyde*

### “The Filibusterers and Freebooters of California”

On March 18 at the home of Nancy Zinn, **Neil Dukas** discussed the phenomenon of filibustering, a subject that informs part of his book in progress—a biography of the Canadian-born adventurer Volney Vaillancourt Ashford (1845-1900).

Because “filibuster” connotes something very specific to most of us today, Neil began by explaining the significance of the word in mid-19th-century America. A filibuster was the invasion of a sovereign nation by independent groups of men without authorization from the American government. Those who engaged in such actions were also called “filibusters” but also “filibusterers” (I will use the latter term). The Dutch word from which “filibuster” derives suggests piracy, but American filibusterers were not pirates, collecting loot and carrying it away. They intended to claim and rule over private fiefdoms in foreign countries, actions that were clearly illegal under of the Act of Neutrality of 1794. Despite their illegality, filibusterers attracted investors and were sometimes tacitly encouraged by citizens and elected officials.

Neil noted that belief in the inevitable advance of America across the North American continent (“Manifest Destiny”), and the opposition to European expansionism in the western hemisphere expressed in the Monroe Doctrine, lay at the heart of the filibustering phenomenon. Some of the men were celebrated as patriots and popular heroes. The focus of Neil’s presentation was California during and after the Gold Rush, when the wide-open city of San Francisco became fertile ground for adventurers of all kinds. Neil stressed that most of the ventures ended in failure, but this never discouraged the ever-hopeful. Samuel Brannan, the Mormon leader who became the wealthiest man in San Francisco, had stopped in Hawaii in 1846 on his way to California. In 1851 he returned to Hawaii with the intention of establishing a colony and becoming the power behind the throne of Kamehameha III. On the outward voyage he and members of his party searched the ship’s mail bags and destroyed letters that were deemed unfavorable to them. When the ship landed, reports from outraged passengers reached the king, who immediately ordered Brannan to return to San Francisco.

Other targets for California adventurers were closer to home: Baja California and the sparsely-settled Mexican state of Sonora. Filibusterers from San Francisco found investors, hired troops, amassed supplies, and set off for the Mexican border, but they were ill-prepared for resistance from Mexicans and for harsh political and climatic conditions. All of these ventures ended in failure; two leaders were captured and executed by military firing squads.

Chauvinism and racism also played a role in the history of filibustering. Forays from California to Mexico took place during the lead-up to the American Civil War, when southerners were searching for opportunities to extend slavery beyond the borders of the United States. Enter the most notorious filibusterer of them all,

William Walker. A native of Tennessee, Walker had come to California during the Gold Rush and quickly earned a reputation as a trouble-maker in San Francisco. After establishing a law practice in Marysville his ambitions turned to Baja California and Sonora, where he hoped to found independent colonies. He renamed the small region around the town of La Paz “The Republic of Lower California,” with himself president, and instituted slavery, which had been illegal in Spanish colonies in Central and South America since the early nineteenth century. Before long Walker faced armed rebellion and was forced to retreat with a greatly depleted party. When he crossed the American border at San Diego in May of 1854 he was arrested and tried for violating the Neutrality Act. His fame and popularity were so great that the jury took only eight minutes to acquit him.

Walker’s filibustering from California came to an end, but not his career as a filibusterer. The story of his successes and ultimate failure in Central America is too long to recount here. Suffice to say that Neil’s listeners were not disappointed to learn that in 1860 Walker met death by a firing squad in Honduras. The timing was also right. Secession and the outbreak of the Civil War made filibustering irrelevant.

We look forward to hearing about Neil’s biography of V.V. Ashford, whose military career took him from the Civil War in America back to Canada and its defense against Fenian raids from Vermont—an important part of history that Neil illuminates.

– *Joanne Lafler*

**“From Vigilance in Early San Francisco to the 1859 Duel”**

On February 24 at the Institute’s annual meeting, **Monika Trobits** gave a polished, illustrated talk about the “wild west” days of San Francisco from the Gold Rush to the Broderick-Terry duel. She presented it in five

“acts,” with many colorful anecdotes. The cast of characters included several men with streets named after them—Sam Brannan, David Broderick, Isaac Bluxome, Hall McAllister—plus William Gwin, one of California’s first two Senators, and the feuding newspapermen James Casey and James King. Some of the people she spoke about are buried at Mission Dolores.

Between 1848 and 1851, the city suffered from gang violence, uncontrolled by a weak and corrupt city government. The self-proclaimed “San Francisco Society of Regulators,” nicknamed “the Hounds,” was the first big gang. Sam Brannan pulled together a voluntary police force that captured about twenty of them and put them in a floating jail, one of the many abandoned sailing ships that were being converted to land-based uses. One of the judges at their trial was William Gwin, a former Mississippi slaveholder with political ambitions.

Soon a worse gang arose, the “Sydney Ducks,” many of them ex-convicts from Australia. Their crimes and a series of arson fires they were blamed for led to the creation of the Vigilance Committee of 1851, which soon had 700 members.

David Broderick, who arrived in San Francisco from New York in 1849, soon held state office and wielded great power in San Francisco. Broderick and Gwin were both Democrats, but Gwin was pro-slavery and Broderick against it. James King, from Virginia, published a newspaper that frequently criticized Broderick. James Casey had another paper that supported Broderick and upon being repeatedly insulted by King shot him in 1856, which led to the second Vigilance Committee. This committee, which boasted 6,000-8,000 members, convicted and hanged James Casey and a man named Charles Cora, who had shot and killed U.S. Marshall William Richardson after the latter had insulted his mistress.

David Terry, another Democratic politician, was Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court from 1857 to 1859. He had a notorious temper and stabbed a member of the Vigilance Committee. He was held for several weeks in the Committee's "Fort Gunnybags" but released when the victim recovered.

Terry and Broderick, who had been friends, disagreed about slavery and had a major falling out, with a public exchange of insults. Terry challenged Broderick to a duel, and despite police efforts to prevent this illegal practice, they met just outside the city. Terry shot Broderick through a lung, and Broderick died three days later. Terry was arrested for murder, but a Southern-sympathizer judge started the trial a day early, no witnesses arrived, and he dismissed the charges. Eventually, however, Terry was shot to death in another violent incident.

And we thought things were bad in today's politics!

– *Ann Harlow*

### **“The Future of the Past in the Digital Age, 1.0 and 2.0”**

*Institute member and new vice-president of the board Rose Marie Cleese organized a pair of panels that explored the intersection of digital technology and history and how today's technology tools are changing the ways anyone interested in history examines the past. She kindly also provided the summary below. Ed.*

The first panel took place on Saturday, March 3 as an Institute-sponsored event at “San Francisco History Days” at the Old Mint. It featured two speakers, Chris Carlsson, founder of two San Francisco-focused history websites, and Daniel Hartwig, university archivist at Stanford University Libraries. The “2.0” version of the panel was held on Saturday, March 31, at

the San Francisco Main Library, cosponsored with the library's San Francisco History Center. Chris Carlsson and Daniel Hartwig were joined by Barbara Hui, software developer at UC's California Digital Library. Susan Goldstein, the center's director and official archivist of the City of San Francisco, introduced Rose Marie, who welcomed the audience and talked about the genesis of the two panels stemming from the fact that many individuals who are writing and researching history-related topics are unaware of the many new technology tools now available. Panelists would speak about how these tools can help with research and how they can be accessed.

Barbara Hui used a Powerpoint presentation to walk the audience through the two sites operated by the California Digital Library, revealing what a valuable source of primary historical material is available to researchers of history. The Online Archive of California ([www.oac.cdlib.org](http://www.oac.cdlib.org)) provides free public access to detailed descriptions (finding aids) of primary resource collections from more than 200 contributing institutions throughout California and the ten UC campuses. More than 220,000 digital images and documents are viewable online. Calisphere ([calisphere.org](http://calisphere.org)) provides the researcher access to more than 1,000,000 digitized primary sources from UC libraries and other institutions throughout California. The site provides access to documents, letters, diaries, oral histories, photographs, artwork, films, advertisements, musical recordings, and more.

Daniel Hartwig switched gears from his first talk at San Francisco History Days, during which he presented the Stanford Libraries' digital offerings (open to the public), to discuss the ethics involved in saving and managing digital archives, a complex topic that has gotten less public coverage than it likely deserves. He started with appraisal (what materials to save, how much, etc.), then talked about consent (who

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gives it, etc.) and the issue of access (processing, permission, how available and to whom, etc.), and concluded with privacy, confidentiality, and sensitive content. One of the cases he cited, papers and research on human sexuality donated by a Stanford professor, raised many issues. Daniel deftly illustrated the challenges facing archivists today. He acknowledged that some history has been lost because archivists were slow to respond to the digital revolution and to the challenges of myriad ethical issues that digitized documents, images, and audio and video recordings present.

Chris Carlsson gave the audience a tour of the two websites he founded, Shaping San Francisco ([shapingsf.org](http://shapingsf.org)) and Found San Francisco ([foundsf.org](http://foundsf.org)), as well as a wry account of how his sites came to be, each an iteration stemming from changes in digital technology. Over the years he developed partnerships with several organizations, including San Francisco Museum and Historical Society, San Francisco History Center, and the Prelinger Archives (a rich collection of “ephemeral”—advertising, educational, industrial, and amateur—films).

The emergence of digital technologies in the late 1990s, Chris noted, has given much greater access to historical materials to far more people. This fact, coupled with the resulting breakdown of traditional professional gatekeeping in the field of history, has led to a proliferation of new emphases, new ways of framing stories, and new credibility for oral histories and lived experience. In his view, these dynamics greatly raise the responsibility of all citizens to engage in an active process of “making history” through critical thinking, robust public debate, and careful attention to how we give credence to different types of sources. Chris considers that the past few decades of new scholarship have brought about the long-term unraveling of the “Grand Narrative” of American history that students were taught through much of the 20th

century. (He referred to three books on this topic: *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* by Michel-Rolph Trouillot; *Past Imperfect: Facts, Fictions, Fraud in American History* by Peter Charles Hoffer; and *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States* by James C. Scott.)

The question-and-answer session that followed the presentations was lively, as exemplified by the panelists’ widely divergent views on permissions and copyrights in today’s dynamic, ever-changing, and often confusing digital era. You may view the talks: Chris - <https://youtu.be/HAOpnh9MtPU>; Daniel - [https://youtu.be/-mH\\_3COii8M](https://youtu.be/-mH_3COii8M); and Barbara - <https://youtu.be/KzGOvpVZFeQ>.

### Play Readers

Since the last newsletter the play readers read *Longitude*, by British playwright Arnold Wesker, based on the book of the same name by Dava Sobel. The central figure is John Harrison, an eighteenth-century carpenter and clockmaker who created an accurate chronometer for sailing ships to calculate their longitudinal position and avoid hazards at sea. It premiered in 2005 at the Greenwich Theatre, located near the Royal Observatory where Harrison’s work is on view.

Wesker earned fame in the 1950s with three plays inspired by his experience as the child of Jewish socialists in London’s East End. The so-called “Chicken Soup Trilogy” was noted for natural dialogue and settings and for its political passion. In recent years Wesker, now Sir Arnold, turned to writing history plays, imbued with the same passion but written in a less naturalistic style. In *Longitude* repeated scenes, inspired by the artist Hogarth, in which working people bustle across the stage calling out their wares, are interjected between intimate scenes in settings that range from church pews to a workshop, a ship at sea, Harrison’s home in

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London, an observatory, the Admiralty, and so on, rendered in minimal detail. Harrison's wife serves at times as a one-woman chorus, intoning litanies of ships lost at sea with their crews and cargo. From a high platform, a commissioner of documents addresses the audience with periodical announcements on the progress of Harrison's work.

Wesker was clearly attracted to the story of a self-educated carpenter and clockmaker who had the audacity to compete for the £20,000 prize—worth £2,890,000 today!—offered by Parliament in 1714 to the winner of the Longitude Competition. (To understand more about the complexity of determining longitude cf. latitude, google “history of longitude.”) Harrison was humble in everything except belief in his skill. We see him battling over the years with powerful figures, some of whom he excoriates as “bloody priests and professors!” The astronomer Edmond Halley appears as kindly and open-minded, unlike Harrison's narrow-minded opponents like Nevil Maskeleyne, who clings stubbornly to his lunar theory. George III, in the play as well as in history, appears in Harrison's life at a critical time.

The play took us through three decades in which Harrison refined his chronometer, under constant harassment by members of the Longitude Committee who demanded new modifications and more tests. His salty, indomitable spirit, brilliantly portrayed by Wesker, finally saw him through. We have rarely had so much fun and learned so much about an important piece of history. (While I was working on this report on April 3, Harrison achieved worldwide recognition as the Google Doodle for the day. It was his 325<sup>th</sup> birthday.)

As always, we invite new members. Check the Play Readers listing on the Institute website, under “What We Do.”

– *Joanne Lafler*

### **Writers' Group**

We have had a busy spring. We meet monthly to critique each other's work and occasionally to discuss matters of interest to writers. We kicked off the new year with a lively conversation about how a writer navigates the political environment that can affect creativity. In February, Ellen Huppert presented a chunk of her fascinating book on the Huppert family from its beginnings in the Hapsburg Empire and across Europe to America. Then in March, Marilyn Geary offered another selection from the book she is writing on Italian Swiss immigrants. Of two brothers, one settled in the Bay Area, the other in Australia. In March, we also welcomed a new member, Joe Miller, who is writing about women's suffrage from an unusual perspective. The book's tentative title is “Wild Women Suffragists and the Sex Scandals That Almost Sank the Movement.”

We meet on the second Sunday of each month at 1:30 p.m. at the home of a member, alternating between the East Bay and San Francisco. (Please note that because of the Mother's Day holiday, we will meet on the second Saturday instead.) This is a working group, and we welcome active participation. For more information, contact Cathy Robbins (crobbins41@gmail.com), the group's coordinator.

– *Cathy Robbins*

### **Report from the Board**

One of the items for discussion at the board retreat was whether we want to define and market our organization a little differently than we have done in the past. There has been concern on the one hand that calling it “a community of scholars” and inviting people to “apply” for membership might be off-putting and self-defeating, and on the other hand we are looking for people working in fairly serious historical pursuits, as opposed to history

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fans. We also discussed the results of our recent survey of members. A growing concern, reflected in survey answers, is the increasing difficulty of driving around the Bay Area to get to meetings. We would love to see subgroups develop in the Peninsula/South Bay and the North Bay, so if you live in those areas, please think about inviting others to get together on some kind of regular basis and recruiting new people to reinforce your numbers.

– *Ann Harlow*

### Welcome New Members

Among **Jim Gasperini**'s history activities since earning his B.A. from Williams College has been writing interactive books about history for young adults in the Bantam Time Machine series, writing and designing a computer strategy game about Central America, "Hidden Agenda," and designing and writing "The Colburn Chronicles," an online family history. He is currently working on a cultural history of fire, provisionally titled "Fire in the Mind . . ."

With a background in museum exhibit design and multimedia development, as well as degrees from Harvard and UC Berkeley, **Richard Hurley** has just founded California Educational Multimedia, a 501.C3 nonprofit designed to apply digital technology to historical education. His subject interests include California and the Civil War: he has co-authored a novel, *Queen of the Northern Mines*, and written a nonfiction book, *California and the Civil War*.

**Anne Evers Hitz** is the author of *Emporium Department Store* and *San Francisco's Ferry Building* (Arcadia), and she is currently working on a book about San Francisco's lost department stores. She is a graduate of UC Berkeley and St. Mary's College Executive MBA Program with her own communications consulting firm. In her background is also four years as publicity director at UC Press and editor of *Research Magazine*. She is currently a member of City

Guides, leading tours of the West End of Golden Gate Park and the Ferry Building.

Like Anne, **Steven Sodokoff** combines a career in business (fine jewelry and corporate fundraising for homeless issues) with interests in the arts and history. He has become active in the San Francisco History Association and the Westerners San Francisco Corral and is working on "Timepieces Hidden in Plain Sight," a book about San Francisco's public clocks. He is a graduate of Cornell University.

**Joe Miller** has an MA in Psychology. His article, "Never a Fight of Woman against Man: What Textbooks Don't Say about Women's Suffrage," published in *History Teacher* (Spring 2015) was a prelude to his current work on a book on women's suffrage.

**Chris Webber** is nearly finished with "Black Doctor," a biography of James McCune Smith, the first African American physician in the United States and an abolition leader. Chris is the author of 35 books including *American to the Bone*, a biography of James W.C. Pennington, a fugitive slave and abolition leader. He holds degrees from Princeton University and General Theological Seminary (DD) in New York City.

Earlier this year **Judith Strong Albert** won the drawing for completing the member survey. In her thank-you note, she wrote that the book gift card enabled her to purchase *Ray Stanford Strong, West Coast Landscape Artist* by Mark Humpal (University of Oklahoma Press, 2017). When I asked Judith if the artist was a relative, she responded: "You are right, my father's brother, Ray Stanford Strong was a California landscape painter whose long career included painting murals, dioramas and hundreds of landscapes—many of our Marin hills. A resident of Mill Valley for decades, he lived to be 101 years old, with a painting life beginning with WPA Projects during the New Deal era and

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extending for more than half a century. He was celebrated in two world expositions and helped in the founding of the Santa Barbara Art Institute and taught a generation of plein air artists. His many friendships included writers, photographers and painters such as Maynard Dixon, Ansel Adams, Frank Lloyd Wright and John Steinbeck. In sum: he was a larger-than-life figure who swept through my life as family and as artist.”

**Richard Robbins** gave a presentation of his book *Overtaken by the Night* at Octavia Books in New Orleans on March 12 and on March 24 he gave a talk about Vladimir Dzhunkovsky at the Museum of Russian Culture in San Francisco.

Also in March, **Tom Snyder** gave a paper, “The Influence of the Spanish Influenza Upon U.S. Fleet Operations in European Waters,” at an Army-sponsored symposium on the medical history of World War I. He continues work on his book on the history of the Navy’s first west Coast hospital at Mare Island—a project over which his wife Gina threatens, “If you don’t get this book done before you die, I will kill you!”

On March 29, **Cathy Robbins** arranged and participated in a panel discussion about Calabria at the Italian Cultural Institute with two other speakers, Margherita Ganeri and Rosetta Costantino. Their subjects were, respectively, history, literature and food. Cathy set the scene with a review of Norman Douglas’ *Old Calabria* and its influence in defining this region of Italy, the ‘toe’ of the boot. Professor Ganeri showed how contemporary literature from both Calabrians and Calabrian-Americans fits into or bucks the stereotypical view of the region. Rosetta Costantino, a well-known teacher and author who specializes in the cuisine of Calabria, talked about the many cuisines that have entered into Calabria since antiquity—Greek, Roman, Arab, New World.

**Stephen Levi** reports the publication in March of his “impossible crime novel,” *The Matter of the Dematerializing Armored Car*.

Internet searches led **Dot Brovarney** to a family in Washington state who inherited a treasure trove of documents, thirty years’ worth of letters related to her book subject, Lake Leonard, a headwater of the Russian River in Mendocino County. Not only had the letters been saved over many years, but also transcribed, ostensibly with a plan to publish. Discovery last fall of a set of photograph albums in the basement of the family home in Gig Harbor led Dot to her second trip north. She is now poring over this collection of images, dating from 1907 to 1949, that effectively illustrates much of the correspondence. Selecting photos for the book will be a challenge, especially since her first run-through produced 105 images of value. With such a rich supply of documentation at her fingertips, Dot now is tempted to edit and publish Una’s correspondence in a second book, perhaps as a companion piece.

**Stephanie McCoy** reports that she “is honored to have been accepted at the American Academy in Rome for two weeks in May. I will continue my research on the American author Constance Fenimore Woolson, who first traveled to Rome in 1881.”

Also in May, **Jackie Pels** will be the speaker at a conference of the Kenai Peninsula Historical Association, made up of representatives from individual historical societies on the peninsula. She was asked to talk about books she has edited and published and in a few cases written about that area of southcentral Alaska. She plans to talk also about the role of an editor and about varying ways to tell a story (a hint on the latter: two musician friends have agreed to come along).

## FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES

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On Friday, April 27, noon - 1:30, at the Mechanics' Institute (57 Post Street, San Francisco, 4th-floor meeting room), a presentation by the author Benjamin Madley, sponsored by both Institutes: "**The Making of An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846–1873**" (Yale University Press, 2016). The book received a *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize for History, one of numerous prizes, and was a *New York Times Book Review* Editor's Choice. Madley, who teaches History and American Indian Studies at UCLA, will discuss the stakes associated with writing about genocide, his archival and on-reservation research, and the book's public impact. He will also offer his advice to writers working on history-related projects on how to make it to the finish line. The event is free, but attendees must register beforehand: on Eventbrite.com or by e-mail (tedwards@milibrary.org).

Join the **California and the West Group** at Niles Canyon in Fremont on Sunday, May 20, for an entire day of history-laden activities organized by Rose Marie Cleese. "Tentative plans call for a late-morning half-hour ride on the historic **Niles Canyon Railway** from Fremont to Sunol (for a nominal fee), during which we'll learn about the line's role as the last leg in the Transcontinental Railroad in the late 1800s. We'll grab lunch in Sunol and possibly hear a talk about San Francisco's Hetch Hetchy water delivery system from a Public Utilities Commission spokes-person. We'll return by train to Fremont mid-afternoon, then drive a few blocks to the Niles neighborhood to tour the amazing **Niles Essanay Silent Film Museum**. While there, we'll hear a specially arranged talk about the films Charlie Chaplin made in Niles at the start of his career and also view a selection of silent film clips. For those who don't want the day to end, we'll convene at an Afghan restaurant for dinner in Fremont's "Little Kabul" neighborhood. Watch your e-mail for

the official announcement, which will include the final confirmed itinerary for the day."

This spring the Mechanics' Institute is offering public programs that might be of interest to Institute members. They include: "**The Creative Writer's Professional Toolkit**," on April 28, 10:30 am - 4:30 pm. Reservations should be made via [www.milibrary.org/events](http://www.milibrary.org/events): \$29 MI members/\$39 public.

"**How to Collect and Organize Family and Community Life Stories**," with Basya Petnick, Saturday, May 26, 2018, 10:30 am - 4:30 pm. Reservations via [www.milibrary.org/events](http://www.milibrary.org/events); MI members/California Genealogical Society \$100; public \$125.

Celebrate the **80th anniversary of San Francisco's 49-Mile Scenic Drive** with a book presentation: *Walking San Francisco's 49 Mile Scenic Drive* by Kristine Poggioli and Carolyn Eidson, June 8, Noon to 1:00 pm. Free.

### An Experiment

On occasion the editor of the newsletter is confronted with looming, unfilled space. Small blank areas are okay, but a whole page, or nearly a whole page, is not. Since the Institute newsletter is created with even numbers of pages, i.e. 1-4 or 1-6 or 1-8 or 1-10 or frequently 1-12, a newsletter of 3, 5, 7, 9, or 11 pages just won't work. So she is considering "fillers" ("a short item used to fill space in a publication"). If readers see something of interest related to history in general or your research specifically, I might be able to use this as a filler in the newsletter. I'd like to start gathering interesting material, not to exceed 600 words, that might fill some space. Send it along with the source and perhaps how you found it. And don't forget I am always looking for "Front Page" articles, 800 words in length. Having a cache keeps the panic at bay!