

THE INSTITUTE FOR HISTORICAL STUDY

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NEWSLETTER

Pandemic and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1768-1771) by Oliver B. Pollak

COVID-19 has affected what we read, watch, smell, hear, touch, eat, think, wear, and changed our habits. In 2020 John M. Barry's 2004 book *The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague* quickly made the nonfiction bestseller list. The media has been filled with 102-year lookbacks to the 1918 Spanish flu. The *New York Times* published many long articles about the 1918 influenza. Donald G. McNeil, Jr., *New York Times* science and health reporter invoked history in "To Take on the Coronavirus, Go Medieval on It" (February 28, 2020). And even in the Institute's newsletter, beginning with the summer issue, writers have been looking back at this pandemic.

The three-volume *Encyclopedia Britannica* appeared between 1768 and 1771, just over 103 years after the 1665 Great Plague of London. England had been visited by plague at least seven times since the 1349 Black Death. Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) published the historical novel *Journal of a Plague Year* in 1722, when he was 62. Recent plague novels include *Year of Wonders* (2008) by Geraldine Brooks and Rachel Kadish's *The Weight of Ink* (2017). England was plague free after 1666.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, conceived in the 1760s, was an Enlightenment compendium of knowledge. It contained 2,453 pages: 596 pages (25%) were devoted to anatomy, medicine, midwifery, and surgery. The Index included Disease, Epidemic ("among physicians, an epithet of diseases which at certain times are popular; attacks great numbers at or near the same time"), Pestilence, and Plague.

The Pestilence article discussed familiar topics: transmission, fleeing, mental health, civil leadership, quarantine, masking, washing, treatment, "social distancing," and class divide. "A pestilential fever is a most acute one, arising from a poisonous miasma, brought from eastern countries; and unless immediately expelled out of the body, by the strength of the vital motions, by buboes and carbuncles, it is fatal."

Mental attitude was vital. "Nothing brings on...distemper more than fear, dread of death, and a consternation of the mind." Far "more die of terror than of the plague itself." Google Books reveals this line in Dr. Gideon Harvey's two-volume *The City Remembrancer: Being Historical Narratives of the Great Plague of London, 1665; Great Fire, 1665; and Great Storm, 1703* (London: W. Nicoll, 1769).

The plague "is not a native of our country, but is brought from remote places: whence the best preservative is to fly to a distant country; for the same reason, those princes best consult the welfare of their subjects, who in the time of the plague endeavor to prevent the spreading of the infection, and, when a family is afflicted, separate the well from the sick, and burn all their movables."

"Those who are obliged to be near the sick, must take care that the miasma do not approach their vital juices nor yet the saliva. To this purpose, frequent spitting, and washing the mouth with vinegar, or wine, or snuffing them up the nose, are useful." Miasma "among physicians, denotes the contagious effluvia of pestilential diseases, whereby they are communicated to people at a distance."

Patients with the plague should be fed – "But above all, acids are highly praised; such as, juice of citrons, Seville oranges, lemons, vinegar, etc, which resists poison, putrefaction, and prevent the dissolution of the blood," a remedy similar to treating scurvy with vitamin C-rich fruits, discovered in 1747, and discussed extensively in the encyclopedia.

– *Continued on back page*

The pestilence account closes with the statement: “It is worthy observation, that few medicines are best; for which reason people of the lower class generally come off better than persons of distinction,” a comment about class and the efficacy of medical treatment. The state of knowledge about causes and treatment were confused and awaited scientific explanation. One hundred and seventy-five years would pass before Alexandre Yersin in 1894 discovered the plague transmission culprits, fleas and rats.

America’s population is three times what it was in 1918. In 1920 agricultural employment accounted for 25 to 30% of the population, in 2020 less than three percent not including the supply chain of transport, wholesale and retail distribution. The 1918 influenza, more devastating in loss of life and apparently less economically disruptive, does not appear to have been politicized. President Wilson himself appears to have suffered from the influenza.

The integration and interdependence of the economy, unemployment, interest rates, healthcare, amazing communication and obfuscation capacity, and federal assistance, necessitates intelligent policy rather than reliance on Enlightenment laissez faire and the Originalist doctrine of States’ Rights. The ancient Chinese concept of the Mandate of Heaven notes that natural disaster validates leadership changes. Future historians will drain the COVID-19 swamp.

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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Greetings from your still-cloistered president!

I want to thank everyone, especially Rose Marie Cleese, who helped create our three recent programs on Black history. Attendance by Zoom has been higher for both public and member-only programs than when we meet in person.

The Institute is one of seven partner groups affiliated with the National Coalition of Independent Scholars (NCIS). I recently participated in a Zoom meeting of presidents of the partner groups with three board members of NCIS and was inspired to become an individual member.

Despite its name, NCIS is now international. The other partner groups are the Minnesota Independent Scholars Forum, Princeton Research Forum, San Diego Independent Scholars, Northwest Independent Scholars Association, Independent Scholars’ Association of Australia, Independent Researchers in France, and the Forum for Independent Research Endeavours in England.

Our group is one of the oldest and was actively involved in the creation of NCIS. Joanne Lafler served on the founding board (representing the Institute) when it was created in January 1989 and for years afterward. Ellen Huppert and Georgia Wright were even more active over the years. In fact, Georgia began editing “The Independent Scholar”—the NCIS newsletter—even before NCIS existed formally, and she remained the editor for many years. Ellen and Joanne each served as president of NCIS more than once. The Institute hosted two NCIS national conferences: one at Mills College and one at San Francisco Public Library. It sounds like NCIS never would have existed without IHS, and IHS remains one of its largest—if not *the* largest—of the partner organizations.

There are certain benefits for being a member of NCIS, or even for just being a member of one of its partner groups like the Institute. For example, you can submit articles or have your book reviewed in the journal *The Independent Scholar*. For details, go to ncis.org.

– *Ann Harlow*

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*October finds us still in the midst of the 2020 pandemic. In May in lieu of the Institute's 40th anniversary celebration, scheduled for Saturday the 23rd, member **Oliver Pollak** gave our first monthly program via Zoom, and they have continued. Two public programs drew many interested viewers and they are reported on in this newsletter. October and November's monthly programs ("Lost Department Stores of San Francisco: Six Bygone Stores That Defined an Era" and "Campaigns of the California Volunteers in the Civil War"), as well as the May Zoom talk, will be summarized in later newsletters. A celebration, of sorts, of our 40th anniversary will take place via Zoom, on December 13th, with Oliver's presentation on the Institute's history; other speakers may join him. (And **Rose Marie Cleese** has suggested a "virtual party" to follow.)*

"Exploring the Links between Tourism and War"

On Sunday, July 26 Bert Gordon discussed his book *War Tourism: Second World War France from Defeat and Occupation to the Creation of Heritage* (Cornell University Press). His talk was presented in memory of our late member **Georgia Wright**. Bert kindly provided his summary for the newsletter.

War Tourism is the product of a longstanding interest in Second World War France and the history of tourism. It was sparked by my discovery of *Der deutsche Wegleiter für Paris* [The German Guide to Paris], published biweekly during the Occupation, in the annex of the old *Bibliothèque nationale* at Versailles. The *Wegleiter* listed restaurants, films, and tourist sites for the German soldiers. German authorities had organized tours in Paris for tens of thousands of their military and civilian personnel stationed there. Virtually nothing had been written about this kind of war tourism in France.

War Tourism is organized along three main themes. First is French tourism between 1940 and 1944. Magazines, such as *Paris toujours* [Paris Always] promoted a spirit of carrying on despite the occupation and its privations. *Paris Programmes* advertised restaurants, musicals, and shows. Michelin restricted the publication of its guidebooks but produced one for the Auvergne in May 1942, suggesting that automobile tourism might be replaced by trains, buses, bicycles, and walking. A governmental hotel organization in Vichy helped pensioners with paid vacations find hotel lodgings. Reading and movie-going increased in a "virtual" tourism paralleling today's Covid confinement. Pilgrims continued to travel to Lourdes.

A second theme is tourism representing a manifestation of German power. William L. Shirer, who witnessed their arrival in Paris, observed: "Most of the German troops act like naïve tourists, and this has proved a pleasant surprise to the Parisians." One of Hitler's first acts following his victory was to tour Paris and be photographed in front of the Eiffel Tower. German service women visited Notre-Dame, the Invalides, and other monuments in the city. Despite Hitler's orders that Paris not become a pleasure center for German soldiers, sex tourism was common with visits to brothels such as Le One Two Two and Le Sphinx. The German *Kunstschutz* [Art Protection] organization suggested the presence of a cultured people who appreciated fine art while at the same time protecting it even better than had the French. Articles in the *Wegleiter* praised French culture but portrayed timeless and unchanging stereotypes in ways that Europeans had often viewed colonized peoples. The 1944 Liberation was accompanied by English-language tourist literature, not unlike the *Wegleiter*, which appeared for the Allied armed forces.

Lastly, post-Liberation memory tourism reflected changing views of France's role in the

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war, from Gaullist narratives of nearly unanimous resistance to more nuanced accounts of accommodation. The Allied landings in June 1944 on the Normandy beaches formed a new tourist circuit, along with museums such as the Musée du Débarquement in Arromanches-les-Bains and the Musée Mémorial du Débarquement in Bayeux. The Mémorial des Martyrs de la Déportation on the Ile de la Cité and the Mémorial de la Shoah, both in Paris, commemorated the deportees and the Jews, respectively. Attempts to preserve intact the town of Oradour-sur-Glane, where 642 civilians were massacred by the SS, required intervention and alteration. Vichy officials have struggled with the negative association with their city, while welcoming the tourism it brings.

Tourism helped people assimilate the experience of war, humanizing it and making it comprehensible for the French in the spirit of “life goes on,” giving the occupying Germans an appearance of seemingly “ordinary tourists,” and in postwar memory tourism oscillating between conflicting visions of the war and the temptation to turn sites into theme parks for commercial purposes. Monuments and their memories will continue to change as the history of Second World War France is progressively integrated into the long sequence of France’s wars and battles.

– *Bert Gordon*

“Harlem of the West: The Fillmore Jazz Era and Redevelopment”

*The Institute invited members of the Presidio Historical Society and the San Francisco History Association to the August program. The presentation can be viewed.**

Real-estate profits, city-hall fiat, and official racism combined to shatter “a very thriving and vibrant neighborhood,” which was largely Black—killing its jumping music and nightlife scene and wiping away Victorian architecture, author

and filmmaker Elizabeth Pepin Silva told—and showed—the large and appreciative audience. The pillaging took place not far off in Dixie or back in some distant time, but in the reputedly cosmopolitan and tolerant San Francisco of the mid-20th century.

Silva, coauthor of *Harlem of the West: The San Francisco Fillmore Jazz Era*, now in its fourth edition and second publisher, presented viewers with scores of the book’s 220 photographs, representing decades of research and testifying to “a thriving district of Black-run nightclubs, shops, and restaurants which lined the streets of the Fillmore.” Mostly in glorious black and white, the photos were lovingly restored by her co-author, Lewis Watts, a photographer, archivist/curator, and emeritus art professor at UC Santa Cruz. The authors originally envisioned “Harlem of the West” as a “one-off”; yet years later the project lives on through its website (harlemofthewestsf.com), home to the photographs and interview transcripts, including recordings of some.

Before World War II nearly 5,000 African Americans lived in San Francisco, mostly in the Fillmore District; by war’s end the number had leaped to over 42,000. Many had been recruited from their small towns in Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas to work in the region’s shipyards. With the wartime boom, the music scene proliferated, and it was said, “you could go out with money falling out of your pockets and nobody would bat an eye,” Silva recounted.

The clubs attracted many of the biggest names in music, including Eartha Kitt, Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Fats Domino, Louis Jordan, Little Richard, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Johnny Mathis, and Sammy Davis Jr. After-hours clubs and house parties ensured that there was rarely a dull moment, especially over the weekend. “You could go out on a Friday night and not come home until Sunday morning, and never stop listening to music,” an interview

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subject recounted. “That’s how much music was going on in the Fillmore.” (In addition to the music venues Black-owned businesses included hotels, cafes and restaurants, beauty and barber shops, as well as other services.)

Then came redevelopment. The Fillmore District was the second target, after the produce market on the Embarcadero. Newspapers began a drumbeat of descriptions of the neighborhood as a rat-infested slum. “That wasn’t the case at all, and what they were doing was trying to set the stage for what was to come and justify it.” Silva presented photos of well-appointed homes and residents to show that “it really didn’t look blighted at all.” Through eminent domain the Redevelopment Agency gave property owners take-it-or-leave-it compensation and three months to vacate, along with any tenants, who received no help. The uprooting was not only traumatic to the African American community but also to Japanese-Americans who had returned from wartime internment.

The fates of buildings were determined by inspectors’ ratings of their conditions. Victorians that “would now be worth millions and millions” received the lowest ratings, dooming them simply for needing a coat of paint or having ethnic-minority residents, Silva said. “It was as much racial policy as building policy.” By 1986, when she began her research, much of the Fillmore “looked like a ghost town.”

The old Fillmore and its jazz district were destroyed in the end—but not without some partially successful resistance. “The Fillmore became a blighted area for 20 years because of redevelopment,” writer and performer Noah Griffin commented during the discussion period. But a lawsuit by the Western Addition Community Organization, named for the huge redevelopment area that included the district, saved a few Victorians by getting them moved and set a national precedent that recognized a

stake for tenants in the fates of their neighborhoods and forced authorities to negotiate with them and owners. *(The talk can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-pO8xDnRPg&t=4453s>.)

– *Louis Trager*

“Blacks in Marin from the Spaniards to the Great Migration”

Our Monthly Program series continued (via Zoom) on Sunday, September 20th, with **Marilyn L. Geary’s** presentation about Blacks in Marin County’s history. Although African Americans in large numbers did not reside in the county until World War II, Marilyn identified several individuals whose lives offer a view into the Black experience in Marin’s predominantly White communities.

Marilyn began with the Spanish period (1769-1821) when the first known immigrants of African descent appeared in California. Records show that many of the soldiers and settlers coming from Mexico had some Black heritage: of the 46 *pobladores* who founded Los Angeles, 26 are said to be of African or mixed-African descent. Responding to interest in Spain about the mixtures of races in the Americas, New World artists created casta paintings, colored tableaux of races and mixtures, along with their proper “names.” For example, a person of 1/2 Spanish, 3/8 Indian, and 1/8 African background was called a “Coyote.” Although we don’t know how many people actually used those terms, they reflect the mixtures of peoples at the time.

In Marin County specifically one of the first known immigrants of Black heritage was a member of the Arguello expedition to Bodega Bay, Bartolomeo Bojorquez. Sent to explore the area in search of Russian activity, Señor Bojorquez fell in love with the area and petitioned Governor Pio Pico for a land grant. In the style of the day he was given 25,000 acres (of Indian land) in what is now western Marin County.

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Eventually, however, even after trying to reduce taxes by imparting parcels of property to his children, the entire grant, as happened to many Californios, was lost to the family.

A later source of Blacks in Marin County were the several slaves brought by Dr. Rueben Knox, who arrived in California from St. Louis in 1850. (The doctor made them work off their purchase price on a hay ranch in Novato.) John Pinkston, also known as Juan Negro, was another early Black immigrant who married the adopted daughter of Camillo Ynitia, Miwok leader and grantee of the Olompali Rancho. Their son, Juan Pinkston, was awarded by Ynitia a part of the Olompali rancho, which John Pinkston managed until his son came of age. John Pinkston served as an intermediary between Miwok and White society. Several locations around Novato bear Pinkston's name, including Black John Road and Black John Slough.

A particularly successful Black immigrant was Daniel Brown, a Canadian-born man working for a wealthy Chicago family, the Albert Kents. Shortly after the great fire, the family moved to California, where Kent had vacationed, and bought a large Marin estate. Daniel Brown worked as the family's coachman and married Grace Johnson, a Black woman from Petaluma. That marriage produced eight children, six of whom survived to prosperous, successful adulthoods. (Several of Brown's descendants are still in the area and once came to a talk Marilyn gave. The California Room of the Marin Free Library has a collection of Brown family documents, as does the African American Museum and Library in Oakland.)

Marilyn noted the anti-Black sentiment which grew in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the growth of Jim Crow nationwide. The distribution of the 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation* along with the rise of the KKK in California solidified these feelings.

Another successful Black Marinite was William Patterson (1891-1980) who became the first Black graduate of Tamalpais High School. He had been an exceptional student and entered UC, but was expelled for refusing compulsory military training. When he moved to New York he became part of the Harlem Renaissance. He joined the Communist Party and eventually petitioned the UN, charging the United States Government with genocide. Known informally as "Mr. Civil Rights," in his autobiography, he attributed the start of his progressive views to a teacher at Tamalpais High who gave him a copy of Karl Marx' *Das Capital*.

During World War II, Marin City was built to house workers and their families of the new shipyard, Marinship, located in Sausalito. Among the influx of workers were African Americans from the South, who, after the war, became the predominant residents. (Marilyn suggested her book *Marin City Memories*, based on oral histories, as a good source of detail on Marin City, which still has a significant Black population.)

During the discussion which followed the talk, Joanne Lafler asked why Marilyn didn't write more about Black John Pinkston and his role as an intermediary between Miwok and Whites. Marilyn quoted the phrase "Nothing about us without us," and a very interesting discussion ensued. One and all seemed to agree that this was a well-spent hour and a half, and that we had an interesting new view of Marin County.

– Jody Offer

An Institute-sponsored Talk

On Saturday, September 26th, at the "virtualized" very popular San Francisco History Days, the Institute sponsored Susan D. Anderson's presentation to a "sold-out" audience of 100. "Revealing San Francisco's Hidden 19th-century Black History: A tour of

California Historical Society Artifacts” was the very first and one of only two History Days events to reach capacity! Anderson gave an engrossing and revelatory talk about several Black individuals and families who were early pioneers in Northern California, “proving,” she said, “California history is more challenging, complicated, and fascinating than we’ve been taught.” She augmented her talk with rare photos and documents from the California Historical Society’s archives.

Previously the director of collections, exhibitions, and programs at the California Historical Society, Anderson is the newly-appointed history curator and program manager at the California African American Museum located in Los Angeles. That museum as well as the California Historical Society cosponsored Anderson’s talk, which was spearheaded by Rose Marie Cleese under the aegis of the Institute’s California and the West group.

– *Rose Marie Cleese*

Writers Group Report

We are Zooming write along. Although many, perhaps all, members are frustrated by not being able to get together for wine and cheese as we whine about our own and others’ writing, our sessions have been fun and profitable. Long-distance discussions has had one unexpected benefit. We have added a new member to our writing ranks, Esther Shallan, from London in the UK. She is working on a book “God, Good and Evil: The Problem of Moral Evil Re-evaluated” and has stated her desire to participate in the group. We can now look forward to chapters and comments from across the pond.

Our last three sessions have been fruitful. In July, **Pam Peirce** presented a chapter of her biography of Katherine Gibson which covered her teenage years. While members offered suggestions for a number of changes in style, the general feeling was that this is a strong piece

and augers well for the entire book which is now completed and being readied for professional editing.

In August **Dan Kohanski** presented the reworked opening chapter on his book currently titled “After God.” Dan queries whether the notion of a God that is active in the world is valid on rational grounds. This chapter concentrates on the Jewish conceptions of God and divine law. As always, Dan’s work is marked by extensive research, logical presentation, and excellent style. The only concerns that the group expressed were about the audience for the work in progress, but there was a strong feeling that he has made considerable advances in bringing his erudite arguments within the range of the general reader.

At our September meeting we discussed a chapter in **Katya Miller’s** book on “Lady Freedom,” a biography of the statue that sits atop the Capitol dome in Washington, DC. This segment centers on the issues that swirled around the way our freedom would be presented in sculpture. It contained a fascinating account of future Confederate President Jefferson Davis’s efforts to prevent the statute from being depicted wearing the Phrygian cap worn by freed slaves in ancient Rome and had been adopted during the French Revolution as a symbol of liberation. The group suggested a number of structural changes to the chapter, but were excited about the content and the steady progress that Katya is making.

–*Richard Robbins*

Member News

Welcome to our newest members, both currently residing in London, England.

Laure Latham describes herself as “a blogger, storyteller and lawyer,” holding a B.A. in religious anthropology from Paris Jussieu University and a B.A. in law from La Sorbonne.

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She has practiced law at the Paris Bar and has taught international tax at La Sorbonne. Her writings include articles on the environment as well as children and the outdoors. Laure co-authored *George-Daniel de Monfreid: Ami et confident de Gauguin* and is currently working on a fictional account of Russian America and Ohlone people taking place in 1839 California.

Esther Shallan is a philosopher (PhD in Philosophy from Oxford Brookes University and Mphil in the philosophy of psychology from Kings College London) with interests and research on the problem of evil, the nature of suffering, and personality traits. She is also a psychotherapist working in North London who specializes in bereavement, depression, and anxiety disorders. Esther is currently working on a book entitled “God, Good and Evil: The Problem of Moral Evil Re-evaluated.”

Originally published in 2004, **Neil Dukas’** *A Military History of Sovereign Hawai’i* “has just been republished (Kaladar Books). The new edition reflects recent findings and new schools of thought. Some great new illustrations as well.”

This summer saw publication of **John Graham’s** *Looking For Elves At Wood Creek: Hunting And Other Stories* (TheBookPatch), which “follows my relationship with a ranch property that I visit in San Benito County. It covers some history of San Juan Bautista, Paicines, Tres Pinos, Highway 25 and local flora and fauna.”

Oliver Pollak’s “Downsizing Generations of Family photos,” republished from *San Diego Jewish World* can be found at: <https://jewishwebsite.com/featured/downsizing-generations-of-family-photos/61421/>

Peter Stansky has just published *Twenty Years On: Views and Reviews of Modern Britain* (Pinehill Humanities Press). It is a selection of the pieces he has published over the last 20

years on aspects of British history and culture, notably on William Morris, the Bloomsbury Group, and George Orwell as well as other topics, introduced by an essay on how and why he became a historian of Britain. It is available as a paperback or an e-book from Amazon and other sites.

Elizabeth Thacker-Estrada completed a biographical sketch of Alice Charlotte Williams (1877-1945) for the *Online Biographical Dictionary of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the United States*. Williams served as the corresponding secretary of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association from 1905 to 1909. She was also a librarian. Liz appreciates the perceptive comments she received about the sketch from Institute members Joanne Lafler, Rose Marie Cleese, and Bonda Lewis.

Leslie Friedman’s play, “The Panel,” was the September offering of Play by Play, the organization presenting performance readings of new plays founded by Institute member Judith Offer. “The Panel” was originally accepted for March, but the pandemic cancelled the live event. Leslie was delighted to have The Panel read online and to receive many positive responses to it from audience members. After the reading Judith led a discussion about funding for the arts and diversity.

On October 24 Leslie also presented her book *The Dancer’s Garden* at Stanford’s Company of Authors, an event founded and directed by Institute member and Stanford professor emeritus Peter Stansky. This program was originally slated for live presentation on May 2, but rescheduled for the Zoom format.

Bonda Lewis reports: “I’m doing my first show by Zoom on 28th October, for a Rotary meeting in Los Gatos. Is that sort of off-the-wall? I think so—but it’s an interesting challenge to perform for one camera—and that fixed—and no real audience. (Even when doing television, there

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are crew members and production types as sounding board.)

Ernie Hook notes that “I just finished an article on aspects of the history of therapeutic bloodletting, far I suspect from the general interests of almost all members.”

Kevin Knaus writes that he has recently started writing the biography of Amos P. Catlin, who came to California in 1849 and was active in mining, business, politics, and eventually was elected as a Sacramento County Superior Court Judge. “Catlin was a very honorable and ethical man. The drama and interest of his life comes not from personal failings, but the politics and law suits he was involved with.”

Leonard Woolf: Bloomsbury Socialist
By Fred Leventhal and Peter Stansky
(Oxford University Press, 2019)

Leonard Woolf was the secular saint who helped his famous wife, Virginia, through mental crises. Historians Leventhal and Stansky show he was much more. Leonard Woolf was also a leader, scholar, activist, successful author of fiction and deeply researched papers on international government and economy, creative cofounder and business director of the Hogarth Press, anti-imperialist statesman, Foreign Service diplomat, spokesperson for mutual security agreements of the League of Nations, devoted gardener, dog lover.

This is a breakthrough book. It restores Woolf to a place of his own and demonstrates why his contemporaries revered him as a moral intellectual, a paragon.

The first part, “The Personal Journey,” covers Woolf’s family, education, marriage, and friendships—all in historical context. It gives an intimate look at his years in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in the Foreign Service. This section examines the influence Woolf’s friends had on his intellectual and spiritual development.

Virginia, through their love and shared work, is a major presence. In Ceylon, he had authority over a large district. He collected revenue, dispensed justice, interacted personally with individuals. While he worked twelve hour days, expanding agriculture and building schools, he received letters from his friend Lytton Strachey urging him to propose to Virginia, maybe by telegraph. This part of the book is distinguished by psychological insights, sympathy with the subject, and examination of social and intellectual classes.

The second part, “The Political Journey,” analyzes Woolf’s studies of economics, trade, and labor in nations and colonies around the world. He wrote for the Fabian Society and the Labour Party. Woolf was aligned with the Fabian Society, the British Socialist organization that sought reforms leading to democratic socialism. However, Woolf favored individual rights over state authority and nationalism. In early days in Ceylon, he believed that Britain helped colonials solve problems. Later, he favored self-government. He adopted that attitude toward other British colonies, though not all simultaneously.

His many, gigantic research projects include the books *Empire and Commerce in Africa*, written for the Labour Research Department, 1920, and *International Co-operative Trade*, for the Fabian Society, 1922 (both published by George Allen & Unwin); and *Foreign Policy: The Labour Party’s Dilemma*, Fabian Research Series/Victor Gollancz, 1947. The presentation of the studies’ details and purposes is admirably clear and shows how the work shaped Woolf and how his intellect shaped the work.

Labour’s dilemma was how to react to human rights abuses in the Soviet Union. Woolf’s opposition to the Soviets’ cruelty was steadfast as it would be to China’s. His lifelong belief that an international system was the only hope to avoid another cataclysmic war led him to

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advocate for the League of Nations. His findings supported collective security agreements. He was among the first British writers to recognize the truth about the Nazi regime. For the United Nations, he urged collective security against militarized nationalism. His work is timely now: international cooperation is threatened by attacks on the European Union, the US refusal to support the World Health Organization, and scorn from Brazil and the US for steps against climate change.

At his public school, St. Paul's, though an outstanding scholar and athlete, he was taunted for being Jewish. At Cambridge he was part of the most elite, intellectual cliques yet defined by friends as a Jew. Judaism and Hellenism combined to form his philosophy. He credited the Hebrews with establishing the value of individual lives through the non-negotiable Ten Commandments and the Greeks with secularizing government by being skeptical about religion while keeping spiritual values. His integrity was as powerful as his intelligence. This book brings us Leonard Woolf, and we need him.

– *Leslie Friedman*

Joanne Lafler's article from the December 15, 1982 newsletter completes our brief review of the origins and early years of the Institute for Historical Study. Something else was afoot besides the new movement of independent scholarship: the digital revolution. And revolution it proved to be for history research.

“Of VDT's, CRT's and Historians: An Editorial”

A vision of historians seated before video display terminals and cathode ray tubes is perhaps alien to those who have been steeped in the humanistic tradition; it may even be threatening to those who harbor a suspicion of things mechanical and numerical—or, more precisely, electronic and binary. We routinely use many products of the so-called “new

technology.” In most large research libraries, VDTs are as prominent as card catalogues. But it is a different matter to see ourselves as manipulators rather than passive recipients of this technology; to understand how it may affect the conduct of our own work and historical study in general.

The humanities have tended to lag behind other disciplines in the use of electronic data processing. This is due in part to the fact that the need for current information is not as pressing for the historian as for the researcher in business, medicine and the physical sciences, as Richard M. Kesner writes in “Historian in the Information Age: Putting the New Technology to Work,” in the Summer, 1982 issue of *The Public Historian*. Yet, for reasons of greater efficiency and economy, libraries and publishers are eschewing card catalogues and printed bibliographies in favor of “on-line” systems, and Kesner points out that “the user may find that the tools for a manual search of the literature are not even available.” Like it or not, we have entered the age of “information science.”

Many of the benefits are obvious. Computerized bibliographies and indexes have been, or are being developed for use by scholars in the humanities. The creation of a national information network for manuscripts and archives has recently been undertaken jointly by the Society of American Archivists, the NEH, and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. Many archives are already using computerized systems. These developments are significant, especially for independent scholars who live far away from large research facilities. The day may not be far off when the owner of a microcomputer can plug in to data banks around the country.

The use of electronic databases for qualitative historical scholarship is not a recent phenomenon, but newer developments have made this available to personal computer

owners. Unfortunately, the proliferation of software for personal computers, each with its claim of perfection, presents the unsophisticated user with a bewildering array of choices.

More and more scholars are using word processors, not only for their “secretarial” benefits but also as aids in the manipulation and analysis of texts. As Kesner notes in his discussion of bibliographic databases, increasing ‘user sophistication’ will result in increasingly sophisticated and varied applications of this technology. One enterprising company, Bible Research Systems in Austin, Texas, has marketed THE WORD processor, which includes a disk copy of the complete King James version of the Bible, ready for various kinds of textual analysis. Can THE BARD be far behind?

Computer technology has already begun to affect the publication of books, articles and journals, allowing writers to typeset their own work or communicate directly from their word processor to a publisher’s typesetting system. But some printed material may disappear altogether, to be replaced by the ‘electronic journal’ which, as Kesner describes it, would exist in machine readable form available to subscribers through a CRT terminal. The publisher would print hard copies only of those portions specifically requested by subscribers.

We have seen the future, and it does not look like a book, a typewriter, or a card catalogue. The challenge will be to make the most informed use of the benefits it offers. In an address to the annual meeting of the American Society for Theatre Research, reprinted in the November, 1981 issue of *Theatre Survey*, ASTR president Joseph Donohue expressed concern that humanists were not training themselves to use the new technology more effectively, that a naive faith in the efficacy of computers was often felt to be sufficient. In the winter of 1981 he knew of no graduate program in the humanities which required basic computer literacy of its students.

The situation for graduate students may have changed in the last year, but there still remains the need for scholars to attain some degree of

‘user sophistication.’ Out of the recent meeting on word processors has come the suggestion that further meetings be held on various aspects of computer technology in relation to historical study. One topic suggested so far is the use of computers for genealogical research. Other sessions might be devoted to developments in publishing and the use of computers in quantitative history. These meetings should be geared to the needs and interests of our members. Let us hear from you.

Seven years later (Winter 1989) Georgia Wright wrote about a workshop for UC Library patrons using MELVYL and GLADIS—“Why is This Woman Smiling?” A few excerpts here:

The two systems have their secrets, which they will impart only if you know something about how their minds work. . . . Say you want to gather some bibliography on light bulbs, and the subject heading, which you tried on MELVYL (**f su light bulbs**), showed 0 records. Try **f tw (find title words) light bulb#**. The # sign means “truncated word” and will offer bulb or bulbs. Ecco! Five titles. To view these titles quickly, type **d rev (display review)** and you will get a string of concise, one-line titles rather than two or three per screen. Then you can go to **d 2 5**, which will give subject headings for titles numbered 2 and 5, which you had chosen for the likelihood that those two books deal with your subject. Or you can use the very useful “long” command, typing **d 2 long**, which will give you the “whole” card: series title (if any), notes on contents, and subject headings. . . . You may narrow a search by typing in **not language English** or **date recent**. The foregoing search strategies can only be used on MELVYL. . . .

This is only a sketch of what Anne Lipow did for us, explaining all those little personality traits that had so irritated me over the last few years and providing a combined introductory and advanced orientation, putting into our hands a comparison of the codes used for inputting bibliography in MELVYL and GLADIS so that we know how each system interprets **pn, cn, ti**, and so on. . . . If you want to receive the lesson we prepared . . . send an SASE with fifty cents postage to GW. . . .

SPECIAL: 1918 RECALLED

In response to my summer's observation that the "1918 pandemic seems not to inhabit space in our collective memories," Jim Gasperini wrote the article below. Leslie Friedman also commented: "I know I lost at least one relative in St. Louis, my father's grandfather, but no one talked about it beyond my finding out that that had happened. When I was little I think I was always asking about what had happened long ago, but a lot was not spoken about." Jim's article is a departure from newsletter tradition, but if there are enough motivated writers, these longer articles could be occasionally included. –Ed.

Whatever Happened to Great-Uncle Jay? by Jim Gasperini

The great pandemic of 1918 made a surprisingly weak impression on the American collective memory, given the scale of its devastation. A mysterious lost branch of my mother's family exemplifies the collective willingness to forget.

I spent many happy childhood summers visiting the village in upstate New York where my mother, born Charlotte Colburn, had grown up. Eight miles south of Cooperstown, home of the Baseball Home of Fame, Milford NY prospered in the 19th century as the main railroad depot for central Otsego County. Its fortunes crested around the turn of the 20th century, when the area led the nation in the production of hops. A series of challenges to hop production—a fungal blight, a plague of aphids, new competition from Oregon, and finally Prohibition—forced local agriculture to refocus on dairying. The town went into slow decline. When I began visiting in the late 1950s, however, Norman Rockwell could have found in Milford the same sort of models for illustrations of small-town American life that he found near his home in Vermont.

As I biked around town, I could visit relatives from several progenitor clans, spanning generations. My cousin Mike lived in one side of a grand old Victorian with wrap-around porches, built in the 1870s by great-great-great-grandparents. His father had remodeled their side to 1950s tastes, covering the old oak floors with wall-to-wall carpeting. In a ground-floor apartment on the other side of the same house lived ancient Aunt Libby. Stepping through her door felt like taking a trip in a time machine. In a space dense with stained-glass lamps, dark wooden furniture, and paintings with thick gold frames, a tiny woman dressed in black lace rose smiling from a rocking chair backed with floral upholstery to offer strange fruit-flavored candies from an ornate metal box.

Listening to family stories, I gradually gained a piecemeal child's understanding of the interlocking clans that had produced me. I learned for example that my grandmother, born a Smith on the Hawver side, couldn't abide one of her Colburn husband's sisters. When the sister died and Grandpa inherited her beautiful house, Grandma refused to set foot in the place. Only after Grandpa emptied it of every object belonging to the detested Aunt Mae would she relent. On the other hand, everyone remembered fondly Grandpa's youngest sister, Aunt Blanche.

An odd gap in this patrimony of small-town gossip was that no-one ever mentioned Grandpa's elder brother Jay. When I asked about the boy standing stiffly in his Sunday best in old family photographs, I received little response. The only thing I remember was an aunt's comment, "I heard they were strange." None of my mother's generation remembered him. He had died the year she was born, in 1918.

Some fifty years later I compiled an online history of my mother's family, tracing the Colburns from eastern England during the time of Henry VII through the arrival of Puritan emigrants to Massachusetts in the 1630s to the settling of Otsego County after the Revolution.[\[1\]](#) While writing the story of my great-grandfather Charles, I decided to see what I could find about his mysterious eldest son. I managed to

learn that Great Uncle Jay grew hops and bred Ayreshires on a large farm named “Grasslands,” between Milford and Cooperstown. The land, still known by that name, now forms part of the extensive gentleman-farmer holdings of the Clark family, heirs to the Singer Sewing Machine fortune, one of the two great museum-founding families of Cooperstown. I found a gravestone on findagrave.com inscribed with Jay Colburn’s birth and death dates, those of his daughter Mildred, and the birth date of his wife Alta. No-one had ever filled in the date of Alta’s demise.

A Google search turned up a clue, in the December 13, 1918 edition of the weekly *Otsego Farmer and Republican*.^[2] Four of its eight pages consisted mostly of chatty social news sent in by anonymous correspondents from towns and villages around the county. The correspondent for Milford led that week with:

The many friends here of Mildred Colburn Cookingham of Endicott are sorry indeed to learn of her husband's death, and only a few months since she lost her father. Mildred is one of our Milford girls and will have the sympathy of all in her sorrow. The memorial service which was to have been held last Sunday was postponed indefinitely, but will be held when there are not so many sick as at present.

Poor Mildred, widowed at 20, had only been married for a few months. The correspondent did not mention the cause of death of her husband, nor that of her father Jay, nor what illness afflicted “the many sick at present.” Given the prevalence of influenza at the time, she likely felt no need to spell it out. One of the seven other Milford mini-stories that week informs us that

Mrs. Mina Turner was called to Sharon Springs last week by the death of an aunt. Since then she visited friends in Cobleskill and Richmondville, going the first of this week to Sharon again to attend the funeral of a cousin, who was only ill a few lays with “flu” and complications.

Though local news makes up most of the *Farmer and Republican*, events and trends in the larger world do get scattershot mention. Stories about the recently-concluded war, emphasizing the roles played by soldiers and units of local origin (ROUGH TOUGH AND RUGGED—Reputation Won by Boys of 27th) share space with lighter fare (GREEDY HUNTER PAYS BIG FINE and SUSPENDER SHORTAGE THREATENS). An editorial cartoon on page 2 shows a boy labeled “Germany” with his arm in a sling, staring resentfully at a fireplace labeled “Peace Conference.” The boy has decided not to bother hanging up his Christmas stocking because, as the cartoon title explains, “Santa Claus Never Remembers Bad Little Boys.”

Though death by influenza comes up frequently in the paper’s oddly heterogeneous editorial content, each mention seems *sui generis*, as if no one thought to notice that it formed part of a larger, worldwide catastrophe. The one mention of the disease on the front page, below a story about the failure of a local toy company, focuses on how the town of Brookfield “is just now having its first experience with influenza pneumonia. . . . Here’s hoping Brookfield’s affliction may be light and short lived.” [Then,] in DIED OF PNEUMONIA WHILE SERVING COUNTRY, we are told how a local mother learned of her loss, first from a letter sent by a nurse in a hospital in France, then almost a week later through official “intelligence” from Washington. The longest story by far, though, gives details of a victory by the Cooperstown high school basketball team.

The one direct discussion of the pandemic turns out to be something other than what it first appears. On an inside page, below the local news from Milford and other towns, a column displays under the usual all-caps headline: SPANISH INFLUENZA MORE DEADLY THAN WAR—Said That Epidemic Cost

More Lives Than American Loss In Battle—Danger Not Over—Great Care Necessary To Prevent Further Outbreak—

The appalling ravages of Spanish Influenza in this country are perhaps best realized by the statement recently made, that more deaths have resulted in little more than a month from this disease than through our whole participation in the battles of the European War.

Our greatest danger now, declare authorities, is the great American tendency to forget easily and to believe the peril is over. Competent authorities claim the coming of cold weather is very apt to bring a return of the disease and there should be no let-up throughout the winter months of the following easily observed precautions . . .

In a publication that seems determined to only discuss the pandemic through indirect reference to funerals postponed and good wishes for towns newly afflicted, here the subject finally gets addressed head-on. Why though does the *Farmer and Republican* bury this important story in the middle of page 3, among the chatty reports from local correspondents from Milford, Schuylerville, and Cherry Valley? Because the “story” is actually an advertisement – what today would be called “branded content.”

The distinction between paid and editorial content seems quite loose in the *Farmer and Republican*. Though some stories that display just like “news” content are clearly ads (CASH FOR OLD FALSE TEETH) sometimes the reader must get well down the column before reaching the pitch. The SPANISH INFUENZA “story” continues:

No safer precaution against Influenza could be employed . . . than to get from the nearest drug store a complete Hyomei Outfit consisting of a bottle of the Pure Oil Hyomei and a little vest-pocket hard rubber inhaling device, into which a few drops of the oil are poured. You should carry this Inhaler about with you during the day and each half-hour or so put it in your mouth and draw deep breaths of its pure, healing germ killing air into the passages of your nose, throat and lungs.

An Internet search for “Pure Oil Hymoei” finds many antique medicine bottles for sale, dating from the early 1890s to the 1930s, as well as old advertisements pitched to those afflicted with such ailments as catarrh, croup, bronchitis, and deafness. The Food and Drug Administration repeatedly confiscated batches of Booth’s Hymoei, as early as 1913 and as late as 1935. Over and over the FDA determined that it consisted of eucalyptus oil, alcohol and petroleum, deemed its claims to being an “antiseptic breathing treatment” false and misleading, and ordered the seized supplies destroyed.^[3] The FDA’s actions seem to have been limited each time to the particular batch impounded, and did not extend to outlawing the creation and sale of new batches.

The sad story of the Jay Colburn branch of my mother’s family continued in the next issue of the *Farmer and Republican*, for December 20, 1918. The anonymous Milford correspondent reported sad tidings from Endicott (about 80 miles away):

Many hearts were made sad when a telegram came to relatives here telling of the death of Mrs. Mildred Colburn Cookingham from pleurisy following influenza. Only last week we told of the death of her husband. . . Six months ago they moved to Endicott, where Mr. Cookingham was stricken with influenza and died about ten days ago. Mrs. Cookingham accompanied the body of her husband to Schuylerville and on her return was herself stricken. Her mother, Mrs. Colburn, and the latter's son, Percy Colburn, are both ill of the same disease at the family residence in Endicott.

Our schools and churches are again closed, owing to the “flu” which is very prevalent, but mostly in a mild form. No public meetings of any kind for a time. . . .

Both Mrs. Alta Colburn and her son Percy recovered, then moved west, dying decades later in Tacoma, Washington, and Riverside, California, respectively. As far as the relatives left behind in Otsego County were concerned, however, that branch of the family seems swept into the dustbin of history.

It’s not that my mother’s family chose to forget all unhappy events. I learned as a child that one of Grandma’s brothers died in a runaway carriage accident, thrown from his mother’s lap when the horses spooked. Her other brother drowned as a teenager, swimming in the Susquehanna River, explaining why Grandma never learned to swim. Grandpa’s cousin Starr died from being kicked in the head by a horse. What explains the reticence about telling the story of the family losses to influenza? Perhaps some long-lost personal dynamics caused the erasure of the Jay Colburn branch from family memory. Or perhaps there was something about that particular type of tragedy that made it something people just didn’t want to remember.

From my brief review of a few 1918 issues of the *Farmer and Republican*, I have the impression of a rural community doing its best, despite the extraordinary depredations of a terrible disease, to soldier on in the stoic tradition of their Puritan ancestors. That many young people were prematurely passing had to be acknowledged, in social notes and brief obituaries. Sad, of course, what happened to Uncle Jay and Cousin Mildred. But life goes on. Other stories demand our attention.

Look here, Mother, what it says in the *Farmer*: Fred Smith has captured a great horned owl, which had been stealing his hens! THE WORLD’S LEADING KNITTER HAS DIED. A woman walking on the Whitesboro Road is in critical condition after a “villainous assault by a fiend in human form, whose action, if performed in the south by a man of darker color, would result in lynching.” The Republican candidate who narrowly lost the election for Governor has decided to forego further appeals.

That somewhere in the back of the paper we are warned that “Our greatest danger now, declare authorities, is the great American tendency to forget easily and to believe the peril is over,” well, that can be ignored. After all, it’s just someone trying to sell us eucalyptus oil.

[1] <http://www.clubmobile.org/Colburns/Introduction.html>

[2] Published from 1911 to 1972, the *Farmer and Republican* merged earlier papers begun in 1885 and 1878. Citations are taken from PDFs #0826, 0828, 0836, [https://fultonhistory.com/my old photos/Historical Newspapers United States and Canada/Cooperstown NY Otsego Farmer/Cooperstown NY Otsego Farmer & Republican 1917 - 1918 grayscale/index3.html](https://fultonhistory.com/my%20old%20photos/Historical%20Newspapers%20United%20States%20and%20Canada/Cooperstown%20NY%20Otsego%20Farmer/Cooperstown%20NY%20Otsego%20Farmer%20&%20Republican%201917%20-%201918%20grayscale/index3.html)

[3] *Misbranding of Booth's Hyomei Dri-Ayr*, case #1181 in “Food and Drugs 1908-1943,” U.S. National Library of Medicine, <https://fdanj.nlm.nih.gov/catalog/fdnj04991>
Notices of Judgment Under the Food and Drug Act, United States Department of Agriculture - Food and Drug Administration, January 1935, pp 152, 349