

THE INSTITUTE FOR HISTORICAL STUDY

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NEWSLETTER

Another Role for Historians

An important source of historical documents can sometimes be found among family possessions. Often they are worth preserving in public collections where their longevity is secure. But accomplishing this delicate transfer from family to historical society/museum /archives is challenging. I thought it worth sharing a couple of my experiences, and I have asked members Dot Brovarney and Rob Robbins to join me in exploring a topic not often considered. Rob's contribution will be the Front Page article in the summer issue of the newsletter. – Ed.

In the 1990s and into the 2000s I managed to interview a few oldtimers who had settled in San Francisco as refugee emigrants from the Bolshevik revolution and subsequent civil war. At the time of arrival they ranged in age from early twenties to five-years-old. One of my most important “finds” was a photo album of pictures of everyday emigrant life from the 1930s, mainly domestic and work activities, as well as the interior of a café that featured Russian decor and entertainment. In these pre-digital scanning days, I borrowed the album from these family friends and xeroxed the images of interest for my files. Later I borrowed the only pictures I had seen of detained post-revolution Russians at the Angel Island Immigration Station to be scanned by the folk at the AIIS Foundation, for their use as well as mine. At least these were preserved. (I intended to use the album's photos for presentations and articles; the album would ultimately end up in an appropriate archive.)

A terrible conjunction of the imminent death of the widow of the photographer (I didn't know that she was so seriously ill) and my not being able to drive for a few weeks, along with my earlier reticence to ask for the album, resulted in disaster. Although I soon asked the photographer's stepson for the album, telling him of its importance, I never heard back from him. When I eventually knocked on his door, he told me that he had taken the albums to the dump! (Another “horror story” to add to those I had heard before: the disposal of papers and photographs of deceased Russian elders, sometimes because they did not have children and sometimes because their adult children did not want their parents' “stuff.”) The stepson did produce his mother's and grandmother's Chinese passport and a few other photos, but the experience still haunts me.

Some time later going through the papers and photographs of a local Russian artist active in 1930s and 1940s San Francisco produced better results for me. I was able to scan original photographs and I made copies of letters which were translated and shared with the adult offspring, all six of them. Although I produced a written description of the collection and made recommendations for its preservation (with either the Museum of Russian Culture or the Hoover Institution Archives), its future remains in limbo; the last I heard is that it had been moved from a room indoors to the garage.

These experiences were some time ago. I eventually acquired a flatbed photo scanner and now do my own scanning on site, making sure, of course, to secure permission from the family member/s to use the material in presentations and published work. However the question of the future of some family collections often remains up in the air and sometimes “family” is one elder left alone. – *Maria Sakovich*

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

As a museum curator and subsequently an independent historian, I have been fortunate to enjoy access to family artifact and photograph collections and historical documents. It has expanded and deepened my research process and my understanding—family knowledge provides details and a personalized history that archives and museum collections often lack.

– *continued on page 11*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Following the annual business meeting on February 28, the board met and reelected the same set of officers. I reluctantly agreed to serve one more year as president, giving me the dubious distinction of the longest-serving president in Institute history (four consecutive years). We also welcomed two new board members: Dan Kohanski and Liz Thacker-Estrada. Louis Trager was termed out but has graciously agreed to continue coordinating monthly programs.

The controversy over the renaming of 44 San Francisco public schools, which caught the attention of national media, sparked some lively discussion at the annual meeting and in a subsequent meeting convened by Rose Marie Cleese, our vice-president. She is hoping to work with other historians and history organizations in the Bay Area to suggest some guidelines for bodies like the school board who are considering removing historic names. This could take the form of questions to ask, along the lines of:

- What is the name in question commemorating, honoring, or recognizing: person, place, event, etc.?
- What is the historical significance? If it is a person, for what accomplishments are/were they being honored?
- How did the actions or events shape the community?
- What are the negative aspects of the person, place, or event from the perspective of today?
- Have the stated negative aspects been properly vetted for historical accuracy?
- How far should we go in applying today's standards to behaviors in past eras?
- Is the name causing pain or injury to community members today? How and to what degree?
- How can the name be used in a teachable way to further the community's understanding of history?
- Considering both the negative and positive aspects of the person, place or event, does replacing the name warrant the expense involved and the loss of continuity?

– continued on page 11

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ANNUAL MEETING AND MONTHLY PROGRAMS

Following the morning's business part of our annual meeting on February 28, three of our new members introduced themselves, describing some of their background, current projects, and how they heard about the Institute.

Stephen Barton described the subject of his forthcoming book, "J. Stitt Wilson: Socialist, Christian, Mayor of Berkeley." He had become interested in Wilson (who served as Berkeley mayor from 1911 to 1913) while working for the City of Berkeley. After many years of research and writing, greatly aided by the internet, the biography will be published this spring by the Berkeley Historical Society.

Stitt Wilson was ordained as a Methodist minister, but soon resigned in anger over how little the church was doing to help working-class people. He became a famous public speaker on Christian socialism. Steve noted that he wanted to write about Wilson on three levels: to set the story straight where others had made mistakes; to include some surprising stories; and to contribute to the history of American socialism, which has mostly focused on the more radical Marxist wing of the movement.

Steve is now working on a history of efforts to "socialize" the American economy from the Gilded Age to the present, exploring different approaches to private property and public benefit.

Laure Latham's background included growing up in New Caledonia and Thailand, living in France, getting a law degree, and moving to San Francisco in 2001, where she became fascinated by local history and volunteered at the Haas-Lilienthal House. In 2011 she published *Best Hikes With Kids: San Francisco Bay Area*, including history sidebars. She co-authored *George-Daniel de Monfreid: Ami et confident de Gauguin*, her great-grandfather. She is currently working on a historical novel set in Russian California in 1839 and featuring the

interactions between the Russians and the Ohlone people. Now living in London, she has been able to participate in our Writers Group and the annual meeting via Zoom. She heard about the Institute through one of my Berkeley Historical Society colleagues; they are in another writing group.

Walt Stevenson teaches business management at Golden Gate University and regularly tries to incorporate history in his teaching. He is also an artist who paints on silk, and he traced many connections between history and his art. For example, while painting outdoors in places including San Francisco, Pacifica, and Lake Tahoe, he is very conscious of the people and activities that were there in the past. He heard about the Institute through the "Harlem of the West" program and is especially interested in the viewpoints of other artists in our organization. As an example of using history in his teaching, he described a "stand-up timeline" in which students stood around the room, representing different 20-year time periods, and gave short talks about the subject at hand as it applied to their period.

– *Ann Harlow*

"Lost Department Stores of San Francisco"

Making the rounds of the great locally-owned department stores and oversized specialty stores of downtown San Francisco: that was the throwback experience—sans hats and gloves—Anne Evers Hitz provided fellow Institute members, virtually via Zoom, in our monthly program for October 2020.

Anne's presentation was an excursion not only around downtown but also through time: from the founding of six essentially San Francisco stores, by merchants who had immigrated from France, Germany, and Holland, through their 20th-century heyday, each with a unique personality and a personal service touch, to their

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demise late in the century, at the hands of scattered shopping centers and chain big-box stores, as glamorous as their label suggests.

Long intrigued by the city's history and lore, Anne is a fifth-generation San Franciscan and a descendant of one of the Emporium's founders. She is the author of *Emporium Department Store* (Arcadia, 2014), *San Francisco's Ferry Building* (Arcadia, 2017), and *Lost Department Stores of San Francisco: Six Bygone Stores That Defined an Era* (The History Press, 2020), for which Anne received an Institute minigrant to help complete. A graduate of UC Berkeley, she's a writer, editor, and project manager. She is also a guide at the Ferry Building for City Guides, a group of local volunteers who give free walking tours of San Francisco.

Anne's presentation covered the City of Paris, the Emporium, Gump's, I. Magnin, Joseph Magnin, and the White House. All dated from the 19th century and opened to take advantage of the flood of new wealth from the Gold Rush and after. She highlighted common features that made the stores great: a central location accessible by public transportation; a wide variety of goods; features at no charge such as delivery, liberal credit, and merchandise returns; salespeople on the floor to give customers personal attention; and most distinctively from our vantage point, a local owner—typically a son of the store's founding family—with a high profile and personal relationships with employees and in the community. “The best fertilizer is the foot of the owner on the soil,” as Ellen Magnin Newman, a great-granddaughter of the founders of I. Magnin and one of the geniuses behind Joseph Magnin, put it. “In every store the owner was present.”

Anne quoted from novelist Gertrude Atherton's memories of Raphael Weill, who emigrated from Alsace Lorraine in 1854 and established the White House. “He was a rather short stout man with a beaming intelligent face. One rarely

entered the White House without meeting him, for he knew all his customers personally and liked to chat with them. I cannot remember how many times he informed me that he had known five generations of my family, but he [then] liked to divert the conversation to France, to which he was still devoted with his heart if not his honest and enterprising head.”

Weill was known as one of San Francisco's leading citizens and a great promoter. But after the 1906 earthquake and fire, he quietly had thousands of garments shipped in to distribute to women and girls among the refugees. By the middle of the century, though, the store, at Grant Avenue and Sutter Street, had lost its cachet. It was also suffering from an inefficient floor plan, sprawled across four buildings, and from the loss of \$2 million in an ill-fated expansion to Oakland. The business closed in 1965, throwing 850 employees out of work—but not before Pinkerton guards had to be hired to control the crowds out the door during the store's final days.

—*Louis Trager*

“Digging for Online Gold from Alaska (or Anywhere)”

Steven Levi's presentation in January (via Zoom) on Alaska and Alaska history began by explaining how Alaska is different from the Lower 48. Alaska is not a “state” the way most people think of one; rather it is a “small town in the middle of nowhere.” Half the population of the state lives in Anchorage, a city of 350,000, which is four hours by jet from Seattle, the terrain below nothing but forest. For the scholar, this has been both a blessing and a curse.

The sparse population and remoteness are a blessing because the sources of historical information are few and their documentation nearly all leave Alaska. Historians have to search for those documents elsewhere. There are only three archives in the state. Previously there

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had been four, but the Anchorage branch of the National Archives closed, sending some of the records to the State Library in Juneau and some to branches in Seattle, San Francisco, and Perris, in Southern California.

By comparison, Steve's San Francisco research required visits to the San Francisco Public Library, Wells Fargo Archives, California Historical Society, San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley, Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford, Santa Clara University Archives, National Archives at San Bruno, and the Huntington Library in San Marino. His research on labor also took him to a dozen labor unions with their own documents, newsletters, and minutes.

But Alaska history also comes with a curse. In the case of Steve's scholarly interest in the Alaska Gold Rush, participants in the gold rush wrote plenty, diaries and letters, for example, but they took or sent them home to Philadelphia, New York, Atlanta and later gave them to local archives. So Alaskan historians have to look everywhere for Alaskan documents of this era.

Steve explained that so little is known about the era that most people believe the Klondike Gold Rush, made famous by Jack London and Robert Service, *IS* the Alaska Gold Rush. It is not. The Klondike Gold Rush took place in Dawson in the Yukon Territory of Canada. It covered an area of about 300 square miles and lasted about 18 months. The Alaska Gold Rush, however, started in 1880 and continued until the Second World War. The gold-bearing area covered an area one-fifth the size of the Lower 48 and, to this day, there are still dredge operations in Nome and Fairbanks, and every summer there are more than a few gold panners on the beach in Nome.

Steve noted that Alaska is so unusual that many in the Lower 48 will believe just about anything about the state: Alaska has six months of pitch

darkness—the Land of the Midnight Sun—followed instantly by six months of unbroken sunshine; Alaska has penguins, clams large enough to enclose a man, and gold nuggets the size of goose eggs you can “just pick right off the ground.” From the days of the Territory, however, Alaskans have used these myths to make money, for example, by selling photographs of salmon that had be hauled by trucks and ice worms which could be harvested off glaciers.

That being said, Steve noted that many things ignored in the Lower 48 are understood to be normal in Alaska, and particularly Alaska history. African Americans, for instance, are acknowledged to have been instrumental in Alaska's development. Buffalo soldiers from the “Wild West” were sent to Skagway to restore order during the 18 months of the Klondike Rush, and the Alaska-Canada Highway was built by Black construction crews during World War II.

The military has played a prominent role in recent Alaska history. During the Second World War, Alaska was on the front lines. One of the bloodiest battles of that war was in the Aleutians (Attu). After the war ended Alaska became home to four massive—supposedly top secret—military lines of defense: DEW (Distance Early Warning), LORAN (Long Range Aid to Navigation), NORAD (North American Air Defense) and WHITE ALICE (a microwave communication network), as well as to two large Army and two Air Force bases and scattered TAC (Tactical Air Command) bases.

Steve completed his presentation by turning to online/internet communications. He recommended the Institute establish a scholarship community where members can advertise their books. That way, if someone asks a member “what's the best book on women's history,” the member can say, “Go to our

website and see what's available by the best scholars in the business."

Steve also had strong praise for ACX, the audio arm of Amazon publishing. There is no cost to use the service. ACX allows writers to create audiobooks by uploading their work to attract voice talent to create an audiobook. ACX does not pay much, but it is a way for scholarly work to reach more readers—particularly in these days of COVID-19 lockdowns when library services are limited. An added benefit is that when the "voice" reads the book, errors are corrected in the audio version and the writer is notified to correct the written "upload."

– *Kindly prepared by Steven Levi*

Writers Group

We continue to work successfully via Zoom, and we are happy that this medium has allowed us to enjoy the insights provided by our new colleagues in England, **Esther Shallan** and **Laure Latham**.

In January we began the new year discussing a chapter of "After God," Dan Kohanski's secular survey of religion, this one entitled: "God Goes to War." In it Dan examined the role of religious ideas and beliefs in generating, justifying, or intensifying war. He concentrated on the "Abrahamic" faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all of which proclaim peaceful intent but have served throughout history as "force multipliers" of conflict even if the wars themselves were not begun for religious reasons. Peace, Dan maintained, is perhaps best secured via a secular state that is neutral with respect to all faiths. Dan's chapter provoked a lively exchange. Members praised the clarity of Dan's writing, but urged him to bend it so as to better reach a broad nonspecialist audience.

Both discussions in February and March were devoted to chapters in Jim Gasperini's exciting work "Fire in the Mind." In February we discussed a segment that may be its concluding section, entitled "The Death and Rebirth of the Fire Ritual." It examined the many current uses of fire in ways that are often spiritual but not necessarily part of a religion. Toward the end of the chapter Jim gave a colorful and frequently hilarious account of his personal experiences at some of the "Burning Man" events. In March we turned to a chapter that will be located earlier in the book: "Fiery Omens, Miracles, and Signs." Here Jim discussed forms of "uncanny" fire and the miraculous immunity some people have to fire's effects. He examined the various ways supernatural powers have been believed to signal humans through fire or have been called on to answer questions humans pose. The members felt that both of Jim's chapters were extremely well written and were excited by the prospect of the book's publication. Their most consistent concern was for Jim's extensive use of block quotations. While these quotations are sometimes necessary, most readers felt that their use should be limited and urged Jim to present most of the information and ideas they provide in his own voice.

– *Rob Robbins*

When Your Historical Subject Is a Racist

As a novice historian, I have learned to temper my disappointment when I learn the subject of my research was human, flawed, a product of the times. I suppose that is one of the consequences of historical research, bringing ugly truths to the surface. However, it can still be emotionally challenging when your subject—so glowingly portrayed in short biographies—was basically a racist and worked to implement policies of discrimination.

Amos P. Catlin has been largely forgotten when it comes to California history. Notably, as a State Senator in 1854, he sponsored the legislation to move the State’s Capital from Benicia to Sacramento. Amos had come to California in 1849 as young lawyer from New York. He founded the Natoma Water and Mining Company along the South Fork of the American River, and those water rights still serve the residents of Folsom today.

Aside from a few mentions about the history of the State Capitol, Amos’ only legacy is having a park named after him in Folsom. Unlike so many other 1849 immigrants, Amos, who made his home in Sacramento, did not fade away. He was active in politics and had a very successful law practice. He was nominated for a Supreme Court Associate Justice seat. Eventually, in 1890, he was elected as a Superior Court Judge in Sacramento County.

Amos was also a racist. He supported the Kansas-Nebraska Act and California’s versions of the Fugitive Slave Act while a State Senator and Assemblyman. Later in the 1870s he denounced Chinese immigration as the greatest evil to California. He saw no reason to extend suffrage to black men or to women.

The prospect of discontinuing my research, and ultimately a book on Amos, has never occurred to me. My mission to research the people who had such a tremendous impact on the Sacramento region is bigger than one racist. I don’t know if when I release my book, and Amos is outed as holding such racist and bigoted views, if the City of Folsom will reconsider renaming the park honoring him.

I admit to increased diligence to find ameliorating facts and anecdotes that speak to Amos’ character. There are numerous accounts, some written by Amos, that soften the hard-edge charge of racism. He denounced the violence against Chinese miners who were being served by water from his Natoma water ditch, and as a

judge he applied the law without overt discrimination based on the color of the offender’s skin or gender.

This is the point at which I am acutely aware that I am not a trained historian. I struggle with how to write about the character of a man who can in one breath demonize the Chinese, then in the next breath display empathy for their condition. Perhaps that is the conundrum of all history writers and the point that many who are against the wholesale renaming of schools wish to convey; humans are complicated.

– *Kevin Knauss*

Member News

Leslie Friedman’s play, “The Exhibitionist,” received three Zoom presentations. Play by Play, the organization founded and led by Institute member **Judith Offer**, presented it on a program that included Judith’s play, “Not Too Kosher,” on January 31. That reading/performance led to two more, on February 3 and 11. “The Exhibitionist” is a satirical, one-act play with two characters re-meeting on what might be a date. Jonathan Clark (Leslie’s husband) played Danny and Leslie played Lily.

Leslie has also been invited to give a talk about her recent book, *The Story of Our Butterflies: Mourning Cloaks in Mountain View*, for Stanford’s program, Company of Authors. The virtual program will appear on April 24. Authors from many different disciplines will speak. It is a free event. Information and registration can be found on the website for Stanford’s Continuing Studies. Books discussed at the event will be available through Stanford’s Bookstore.

John Graham’s second book, *The Reeducation Of A Turd Peddler*” is available for purchase (www.thebookpatch.com). He describes it as “historic, meta-fiction, and satire” which follows Junipero Serra’s heart “stuck in a jar

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for two hundred years and reveals who stole it and why.”

As of March 2021, Bert Gordon is Associate Editor of the *Journal of Tourism History*, a peer-reviewed journal published by Taylor and Francis in England. He may be contacted with questions about the journal at: bmgordon@mills.edu.

Susan Nuernberg reports that she is moving back to Wisconsin, where she will continue her work on Charmian Kittrege London, transcribing and annotating her handwritten diaries (1904-1916) for publication by the University of Nebraska Press. She expects to complete her project in a year.

***The Story of Our Butterflies*, by Leslie Friedman (The Lively Foundation 2020)**

Leslie Friedman is an historian, a dancer and choreographer, and now a perceptive writer about nature. In her previous book, *The Dancer's Garden*, she vividly dealt with largely stationary but growing objects: flowers, fruits and trees. Now in a second splendid work she takes wing into the world of butterflies. As in her earlier book it is firmly rooted in her home in Mountain View. She and her husband Jonathan Clark follow and are deeply involved in the lives of a group of local about-to-be butterflies. Her text as well as handsome photographs by Clark and Friedman chronicle a very complicated life cycle, observed and facilitated by their loving care. They develop a personal relationship with these tiny creatures.

It begins with their discovery of butterfly eggs and their carefully nurturing them, finding them the right leaves to feed on as they develop into caterpillars. What I think makes the life cycle particularly fascinating is the extraordinary contrasts that take place. Quite rightly the strong word metamorphosis is used to mark the stages. It would be hard to think of a greater difference

in looks between a caterpillar and a butterfly. The eggs develop into caterpillars, really rather odd looking creatures with their many legs and in this case mostly black with some spots of color. The caterpillar seems very much an earth bound creature as it moves about in its somewhat strange way. Eventually it attaches itself to a branch, builds a cocoon about itself and becomes the chrysalis, an inert and a not particularly attractive object. This is known as the last instar in this deeply contrasting life cycle of what eventually gloriously becomes a butterfly, the climax of its life.

A beautiful creature emerges. The many that appear in this account owe their existence to their protective caregivers. They find them food, buy them a house to protect them during their life stages, travel up the Peninsula to Filoli, Edgeware Preserve, and San Antonio Park where when released they will have the best chance of survival. The reward is seeing them flying about in their extremely graceful way.

There is a brief discussion here of butterflies in music, literature, and also of those who hunt them. Even Butterfly McQueen the fine actress makes an appearance as well as quotations from Shakespeare. Butterflies are beautiful and represent beauty. They have been taken to stand for inconsistency. There is even the contrast in their name—butter is rather nice, fly less so. One is grateful for this delightful book, so well written and illustrated.

– **Peter Stansky**

In the fall 2020 newsletter I published Jim Gasperini's longer-than-usual article "Whatever Happened to Great-Uncle Jay?" as "a departure from newsletter tradition," noting that "if there are enough motivated writers, such articles could be occasionally included." David Rosen submitted two. The first begins on the following page. – Ed.

SPECIAL: REMEMBERING A SECOND HOME IN SWABIA

Cholent

“Daffy”

Like Huck Finn I wandered away from my childhood moorings at an early age. At seventeen, I had saved enough travel money for a journey to a school in the Black Forest, where I studied German language and literature in a more idealistic fashion than possible in busy America.

Aside from my intensive studies, my interest was absorbed by the singsong dialect of the local Swabian villagers, from the rural hello (“may God greet you”) to the French-sounding “Ade,” or goodbye. The locals called me “Davey,” which came out of their mouths as “Daffy.” Their avuncular affection worked as a balm on my battered soul, barely recovered from the loss of my mother. Somehow I shared the Germanic belief in a “work cure” for certain problems. Moreover, the dramatic landscape of rolling hills and dark fir trees prepared me for a lifetime of rural wandering, a central European passion.

What impressed me most was the general respect for learning and self-education in this remote corner of Swabia. A young American could bike to a library in a millennium-old monastery or visit a museum with century-old clocks and scales that still worked, all the while enjoying an Old World hospitality straight out of the *Black Forest Village Tales* of Bertholt Auerbach. The populace respected my intellectuality in a way unknown at home outside the ivory tower. The respect for *Bildung*, or self-education, struck a responsive chord deep inside me.

My mentor, Dieter Schmidt, a musician from a local farming family, shared my interest in languages—Germanic, Romance, and Slavic—and once asked me to sing a few words of Yiddish folksongs. All I knew were songs full of German cognates, which fascinated him. One Friday, enjoying his hospitality, I teased him by

saying I had to return home to start the *cholent*, or Sabbath stew. At this, he became meditative, asking me to elaborate and repeat this concept to his family and friends at their weekly reunion Saturday.

Stammtisch

At their weekly reunion, or *Stammtisch*, I described the Sabbath stew, which in Germany where beef was a luxury was often made with ham! After a short pause, my friend explained that his grandmother had always made a Friday stew until the 1930s. At that time she suddenly stopped. No one in her village publicized that she was partly Jewish, and she survived the Brown Years unscathed. Decades after her death, her *cholent* was still remembered fondly.

Father Schmidt, however, had a more complicated life. As a member of a socialist soccer team, he was put in Sachsenhausen in the early 1930s, an experience he would not describe. Leaving the camp, he was drafted into the SS, served in the cakewalk into France, and then was sent to the Eastern Front. He barely survived the retreat to Berlin and was ultimately put in the same camp by the Russians. As a result of his wartime experiences, he later encouraged his son’s desire to work in a kibbutz and his daughter’s work in restoring Jewish graves in Poland.

Rooted in the Soil

It seemed that in the new Germany it was very important to be a good Jew, while in America it was increasingly irrelevant. Just two generations earlier, the elderly farmers of this region had respected the children of Abraham to the point of hiding the *afikomen* matzo for luck, waiting for the Jews to plant in the spring, and expecting frost after the blowing of the *shofar* for *Rosh ha Shonah*.

Meanwhile, one generation later those who were still attached to the soil, or *bodenständig* (rooted), were told they were the Nazi ideal. Yet

SPECIAL: REMEMBERING A SECOND HOME IN SWABIA

nobody was more rooted than Lydia, my teacher's stepmother, who at 92 was working her own vineyard near the Neckar River. Visiting her was a delight, as we enjoyed homemade sausage and wine and chatted with her neighbors on long tables in the outdoors, a Swabian village tradition called the *Hockesitte*, roughly "sit on your rear."

After one such feast I found an envelope from Oakland, California and asked about it. Lydia's letter was from her best school friend from the early 1900s, a Jewess who became a cabaret singer in nearby Stuttgart. Lydia had mortgaged her land to provide bribes and escape money in the fascist days, and some of the locals had shunned her for years. "They'll have their just desserts in the end" was her conviction. (At the moment she was dotting on an immigrant family from Rumania to whom she had given refuge on her land.)

Fiat Lux

Not long afterward my teacher was happy to show me the grave of "Old Fritz," King Frederick II, the friend of Voltaire and of Moses Mendelssohn, founder of reform Judaism. Sightseeing in Hechingen, I realized that *der Alte Fritz*, the underdog hero of many battles against the dominant Habsburg imperial power, became a man of peace and culture after his victories. He redefined the idea of a monarch to be "a servant of the state," i.e. *ich diene*. Traditional social and religious institutions were gradually altered by a new humanism and meritocracy.

Simultaneously, Moses Mendelssohn was retranslating the Old Testament, modernizing Jewish ritual and arguing that God still lived. For his last idea he won the Kleist prize of the Prussian Academy of Sciences, having been chosen over Immanuel Kant. His fellow Jews reported that "Moses spoke and again *there was light*." For a century and a half the German Jews clung to the ideals of the Enlightenment—self

education, intellect, culture, and professionalism—while many contemporary leaders abandoned them.

These humanistic ideals became my own. Periodic trips to Tübingen, the nearby college town, enlivened my studies of classical writers and modern thinkers, finally introducing me to Viktor Klemperer. His initial 5,000-page diary gripped my soul. It provided the basic answer to the great question of how the German populace and cultural elite became infected with the fascist disease.

Heimat

Why do I feel so at home in this corner of central Europe? Does this reflect what Freud called the "coziness of similar mental constitutions"? People in this part of the world share a common underlying view of human action and challenges. My teenage imagination felt that this was my second home.

Heimat is literally "homeland" as in your city, state, and/ or nation—wherever you feel most rooted and loyal. What place do you miss most when you don't travel or when you do? Moreover, in German it connotes a deep, spiritual nostalgia—a reflection of your inner self. It's similar to the yearnings in Romantic poetry.

In my early adulthood and again in my maturity, the thinkers of Berlin and Vienna enriched my life and involved me in an intellectual tradition largely buried in the worldwide glut of media-driven consumerism. Later still, undertaking genealogical research during a sabbatical, I found my own family had been lumber exporters and tavern keepers in the 1700s and 1800s in a nearby corner of central Europe. Their homes hosted German intellectuals, Polish gentry, and Russian officers, providing a liaison between Jews and gentiles before the curse of modern nationalism. Urbanization and prosperity made the next generation teachers, writers, and nurses.

CONTINUATIONS

Years ago my experiences in my family's former homeland taught me the importance in modern times of staying spiritually rooted. The *kabbala* teaches that our calling back the shadows of the past helps restore the wholeness of the world. Perhaps the study of history is merely a continuing search to discover our hidden selves. In any case, I began a ceaseless quest to understand the past long ago in friendly Swabia.

– *David Rosen*

President's Message continued from page 2:

These are just a rough draft. Rose Marie would welcome your suggestions at releese@earthlink.net. Peter Stansky has encouraged us to attend the virtual meeting of the Stanford Historical Society on May 13, with a panel presentation entitled "What's in a Name?: Renaming at Stanford" (<https://historicalsociety.stanford.edu/events/what-s-name-renaming-stanford>).

We do not want to come across as reactionary, but many of us do have concerns that the renaming trend can go too far. So it'll be interesting to see if we can gather a coalition of historians willing to speak up and perhaps influence public policy in this regard.

– *Ann Harlow*

Other efforts to bring history into public life are found in online initiatives which provide historical context for current events. Nearly two and a half years ago Ann Harlow prepared a list of websites that provide those historical back drops. It seems the right moment to bring the list out of my files. The websites are still operative, though one has morphed into an archive of previous programs. –Ed.

History News Network: historynewsnetwork.org

American Historical Association:
www.historians.org/news-and-advocacy/everything-has-a-history/

"Origins: Current Events in Historical Perspective," an online initiative of Ohio State University and Miami University in Oxford, Ohio: origins.osu.edu

"Back Story with the American History Guys":
backstoryradio.org

Washington Post's "Made by History":
www.washingtonpost.com/news/made-by-history

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One independent exhibit that I developed would have been impossible without family cooperation. While bits and pieces of the subject's life (1861-1945) can be found in several institutions, his family has retained most material. While descendants had preserved photographs and documents, especially his journal articles and important correspondence, I soon discovered more. A visit to the subject's home in the mountains—retained by the family but left largely uninhabited since the 1950s—revealed some surprises. I found a 1925 newspaper announcing the death of a prominent person neatly folded in a bedside table drawer. This famous person was a close colleague and friend of my subject. It was not difficult to imagine that this item had been tucked away in this spot for eighty-five years! I opened the cover of an antique desk and discovered a journal of a family member documenting details of some important work that my subject did, which he himself did not record. Decades of business records had been stored in a basement that also served as home to rodents. The success of the exhibition, in great part, rested with the descendants' generous loan of artifacts,

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photographs, and documents for the duration of the show. The other positive consequence of the project and the relationship I was able to build with the family (gaining trust being a key factor) was their agreement to relocate the abandoned documentary material to safer space at the family home in town. Here in plain sight it might serve as a reminder of its importance, as opposed to its former out of sight/out of mind status. It would better protected, and potentially accessible to other researchers.

I recently contacted a family member to inquire—a decade after the exhibit—whether any consideration had been given to donating the collection to a local archive. I got a mixed response, likely typical of many families holding material saved by their predecessors. One family member believes donation is the right thing to do, rather than saddle the next generation with storing this large assemblage of material. This person also recognizes the educational value inherent in this particular collection. She also rightly understands that this collection requires and deserves more than storage—management, including, cataloguing, conservation, and public accessibility are equally important. However, another key individual in the family is unwilling to let it go.

There is no simple formula for historians to assure preservation of a family's historical legacy, whether through commitment from the next generation, or by donation to a professionally-managed archive. Nonetheless, historians hold a key to opening the door to this issue. We have an obligation to build trust with families who are generous enough to share their historical material with us. That they have preserved their collections, and are willing to share them are signs that they cherish their family records and attach importance to them beyond the nucleus of family. Establishing a trusting relationship with people who appreciate history and are willing to work, in effect, as research partners, opens the door a crack. We are then in a good position to appeal to the family's sense of legacy, and advocate for the value of institutional preservation. Museums, libraries, universities, and local historical societies offer long-term conservation of family heritage resources, and, at the same time, provide a space where these historical materials will be available to the public for generations to come.

– *Dot Brovarney*

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