

BOOK REVIEWS

The Anza Trail and the Settling of California. By Vladimir Guerrero. Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 2006. Maps. 240 pp. \$16.95 paper.

Reviewed by Donald T. Garate, Historian and Chief of Interpretation, Tumacácori National Historical Park, Arizona.

At long last, a highly readable, comprehensive single volume account of Juan Bautista de Anza's expeditions to, and settlement of, the San Francisco Bay Area is now available. Dr. Vladimir Guerrero, a professor of Spanish language and literature, has compiled a concise, 220-page account of both the 1774 and the 1775-76 expeditions. This is especially good news to enthusiasts of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail who have struggled for years to know and understand this dynamic story by relying on bits and pieces of information gleaned from various publications or the Internet, or by struggling through Herbert Bolton's long, out-of-print (and thus difficult to find) five volumes on the subject. Even more so, to tourists and travelers along the 1200-mile route that lies within the United States, this new book will provide a quick and easy read to get all the basics of these phenomenal expeditions.

Beyond the basics, Guerrero also offers some welcome interpretation that has been lacking. His most significant contribution shows how important, even vital, Indians Sebastian Tarabal and Salvador Palma were to the success of the expeditions. The book includes writings and viewpoints from the diaries of Anza, Francisco Garcés, and Pedro Font as well as the writings of Father Junípero Serra, and combines them into a highly readable and interesting day-by-day account of the expeditions. As a trained linguist, Guerrero is able to provide new interpretations of the original Spanish, which will undoubtedly be of great help to those who are not bilingual, and certainly to those who want to examine the finer shades of meaning in what the original authors' intent might have been.

While Guerrero's translations are generally reliable, a word of caution about livestock is in order. In the numerous instances in which the author uses the word "steer" and in one instance "bull," the Spanish word from which these translations came was *res*, which is literally a "head of livestock" of unspecified gender (and proper English in its plural form is "head of cattle" not "heads of cattle," which the editors let slip). Even more importantly, *caballería* cannot universally be translated as "horse" as Guerrero does here. *Caballería* literally means "mount," or "riding animal," and could just as well have referred to a mule as a horse. In spite of the author's postulation that mules would have been useless if the expedition was attacked, soldiers on the frontier were often mounted on mules and knew them to have many qualities not possessed by horses.

A major drawback of the book, from the viewpoint of a researcher or historian, is its lack of an index and footnoting. The book follows the trajectory of the expeditions closely because the author has drawn his information mostly from the original Spanish writings. Readers who desire to learn more about any specific detail in the story, however, have no notes to direct them to the relevant primary sources. And without an index, the book will be extremely difficult to use as a reference work.

Along these lines, since the author used only the writings specific to the expeditions, some of his interpretations of the people and places are inaccurate, or at least speculative and undocumented, since the original diaries do not treat those subjects. For instance, how can we know that Fernando de Rivera was a “big, powerful, *mestizo*” when his birth record says he was pure Spanish? How could Father Tomás Eixarch have been a “guest at Tumacácori” when he was the assigned minister there in the years before he left on the second expedition? How could Juan Capistrano Felix, the “healthy boy” born at La Canoa have “live[d] to maturity in Alta California” when San Gabriel Mission records show that he died at eleven months of age?

These reservations are not to suggest that Guerrero’s book is not a successful account of the Anza expeditions. Rather, the reader needs simply to be aware that he or she is not reading a history of Sonoran missions or early California military personnel. Nor is this a biography of any person or persons on the Spanish frontier. It is, plain and simple, an excellent retelling of the story of finding a route through a formidable wilderness to the Bay of San Francisco, and then the transporting of several hundred people and livestock over 1800 miles of that wilderness to establish what is today one of the largest and best known cities of the United States.

Beloved Land: An Oral History of Mexican Americans in Southern Arizona.
By Patricia Preciado Martin. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2004.
Illustrations and photographs. vi + 151 pp. \$17.95 paper.

Reviewed by Richard Griswold del Castillo, Professor, Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, San Diego State University.

The Mexican Americans of southern Arizona have a rich history dating back to the seventeenth-century missions and presidios. They have survived in a harsh and unforgiving environment and their way of life is an inspiration for us today. Living descendants of the first European pioneers of this region tell the stories of their lives in this collection of oral histories. Patricia Preciado Martin has devoted her life to preserving the oral history of the elders who grew up on the ranchos surrounding modern-day Tucson. This is a beautiful book, not only because of the wonderfully rich first-person narratives about daily life, but also because of the photographs by José Galvez, a Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer.

As mentioned in the preface by Thomas Sheridan, the ranchos surrounding Tucson have slowly given way to developers, and the way of life described in these oral histories has faded. The Mexican *rancheros*, the men and women who led rugged lives in the desert, are documented in this book’s collection of ten individuals. There are tales of children and their parents working, playing, praying, learning, and singing together. There are stories of suffering and tragedy, such as Ellena Vásquez Cruz’s memories of how babies died for lack of access to doctors. There are tales that will make us smile, as when Rafael Orozco Cruz remembered how his friends learned about the birds and bees by accident. The smells of the roasting meat and pan-fried tortillas come up to us through pages

describing the details of food preparation on the rancho. The songs they sang—the lyrics at least—are in the book, too. The reader almost hears the way they used to sing every morning and on special occasions such as Christmas. We learn first hand of how the real cowboys—the Mexican vaqueros—worked and lived on this forgotten frontier.

For those unfamiliar with Hispanic culture, this book is an excellent introduction to the strong values of the parents, their love and discipline, and the customs and celebrations of the wider community. Those who criticize the new immigrants coming to the United States should remember that they too share in the customs and heritage of some of the oldest families in the Southwest, and this heritage is one of respect, hard work, and love for family and God. This book will be a beautiful addition to anyone's library. The next time you drive through Tucson remember the beautiful faces and stories you encounter in *Beloved Land* thanks to the work of Patricia Preciado Martin.

Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge. By Linda Nash. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006. Maps, photos, index, and notes. xiii + 332 pp. \$24.95 paper.

Reviewed by N. Pieter M. O'Leary, J.D., M.A. Attorney and historian, San Diego, California.

Linda Nash has produced a brilliant survey of California's Central Valley from early nineteenth-century settlement to the inundation of the valley (and the bodies of its inhabitants) with pesticides, herbicides, and other "modern" means of increasing agricultural productivity during the latter half of the twentieth century. Nash restores the human body to the center of environmental history after prolonged efforts by scholars and non-scholars alike to separate the study of human bodies from the rest of nature. This is a thoroughly researched work, expertly conveyed, which analyzes key events from California's history from the perspectives of human health and the natural environment.

In her first two chapters, Nash chronicles the concepts of healthy and unhealthy landscapes in nineteenth-century California. She suggests that while historians of American expansion have not neglected the study of disease and its role in the nation's settlement, these historians have overwhelmingly focused on the "disease experience of Native Americans" (p. 16). Nash focuses on white and non-white bodies alike, which she describes as "malleable and porous entities that were in constant interaction with their surroundings" (p. 18). She argues that human bodies became important means through which settlers and migrants (as well as the physicians who examined them) understood the new environments of California and especially the Central Valley. From the onset of fever to the fluctuations of menstrual cycles, bodies facilitated colonial expansion and registered the physical effects of that expansion.

Nineteenth-century California was a place of contrasts. State Board of Health officials viewed the state's many different environments as having their own effects on health. Physicians of the time even divided the state into three separate

regions to assess scientifically the relationship between environment and health. For example, coastal regions like San Diego were generally believed to foster convalescence for certain patients. The Central Valley, however, was seen as an “insalubrious region” (p. 51). Apparently beneficial characteristics like the warm temperatures, long growing season, and fertile soils actually brought a physical danger to the body of the settler.

Nash also argues that ideas about health influenced human alterations of the environment. Her history of the eucalyptus tree is one good example. From a nineteenth-century medical standpoint, these trees were seen as the most important in California. Few questioned the tree’s ability to “render healthy otherwise uninhabitable districts” (p. 72). The strong aroma was said to have a “prophylactic effect” and was also said to protect the soil from heat as well as allowing it to “absorb excess water and humidity” (p. 72). Due to the apparently salubrious effects of the eucalyptus, more than a million of them were planted by 1874. Locals in Tipton reported a “significant decrease in disease” after they planted over 120,000 of the trees (p. 72). As a result, the eucalyptus was well on its way to becoming a fixture in the California landscape.

In general, Nash writes, “nineteenth century understandings of health required physicians to pay close attention not only to the sufferer’s body but also the surrounding landscape” (pp. 44-45). With the development of the germ theory of disease, however, physicians began to focus more tightly on the human body and the laboratory. The study of the natural environment and its impact on human health, for the most part, fell to others.

In the following two chapters, Nash takes the reader through the “rise of germ theory and the corresponding decline of environmental medicine” (p. 81). The focus was now the human body. As theories of disease-causing agents and disease transmission gained currency, the state’s Public Health Services and Public Health Boards developed irrigation, sewage treatment, and sanitation plans. In places like San Francisco, for example, Dr. Rupert Blue of the U.S. Marine Health Service pushed for the replacement or removal of wooden homes and structures, for the paving of city sidewalks and markets, and finally the proper handling of animal manure and human trash.

As the germ theory of disease blossomed, so too did the citrus groves, vineyards, and orchards of the Central Valley, as ever increasing acreage was cultivated. Nash’s fifth chapter examines the 1970s and 1980s as a toxic period in the history of the Valley. Using the cancer clusters located in and around McFarland to drive home her point, Nash discusses the movement of pesticides, defoliants, and other toxic chemicals through the region’s soil, aquifers, and air. As these chemical pollutants were dumped into the region, cases of new, more complex illness such as cancer, asthma, and neurological disorders appeared with increased frequency. Studies of these ailments led to a renewed awareness of the importance of the environment on human health. Human bodies alter the environment they inhabit, and that same environment affects the bodies within it.

After nearly one hundred years, the study of human health and disease again links the human body and the natural environment. Nash’s contribution is to reveal how alterations of California’s environments have helped scientists recognize the interrelationship between the two.

Writing the Trail: Five Women's Frontier Narratives. By Deborah Lawrence. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2006. Illustrations, index, and notes. x + 158 pp. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Paige Griffith, Master's Candidate, New York University.

The myth of the American West has been dominated by notions of physical strength, moral weakness, and above all, masculinity. This mythical West is hardly a place for the "true woman" of the nineteenth century. But as Deborah Lawrence exhibits in *Writing the Trail*, women were not only present, but a significant component of westward expansion. The plethora of western writings by men, and their failure to recognize women, has blinded many to these contributions. Throughout her book, Lawrence emphasizes that "To truly appreciate [the American frontier's] complexity, we must look to noncanonical women's diaries and journals that have for too long been ignored by us in literature" (p. 3). These works, though previously considered "subliterary," provide information that can only enrich the public's understanding of true western heritage. Through the analysis of five writings, Lawrence presents both a general introduction to the female narrative genre and specific examples of how women adapted to and persevered against demanding situations.

The five women that Lawrence chose reflect the variety of circumstances western travelers faced. Susan Shelby Magoffin accompanied her new husband down the Santa Fe Trail into Mexico and back home to Kentucky. Luckier than most, Magoffin traveled in her own wagon with a maid. Her description of "the life of a wandering princess, mine" hardly begins to describe her good fortune (p.16). One of the primary themes running through all five narratives is transformation both on and through the journey. Magoffin, who found herself a temporary shopkeeper by the end of her travels, is a fine example of the transformative nature of the trip west.

So too is Sarah Bayliss Royce, one of the first women to participate in the California gold rush and author of the second narrative. During a time when a woman was defined by the house she kept, western women like Royce were forced to create a home without the actual structure. Things that defined a woman as middle class (extra clothing, musical instruments, books) were always the first to be dumped on the trail, and the constant invasion of dirt made the whole process unbearable. But Royce, stripped of the majority of her defining substances, found salvation in her sex. Lawrence points out that many women were paid well, even better than their husbands, for the performance of domestic tasks. And paid labor was just one way that these women found some modicum of autonomy: "Contrary to the nineteenth-century stereotype of feminine helplessness, narratives like Royce's indicate that pioneer women took action to manage their lives" (p. 54).

The inclusion of the famous Dame Shirley letters serves two purposes. The notoriety of Louise Smith Clappe and the contents of her letters make Lawrence's work much more accessible. But more importantly, Dame Shirley's writings parallel the theme of *Writing the Trail*. Dame Shirley provides observations about and examples of women and their shifting place in the California mining camps. A camp could provide many opportunities for almost any woman, but not without intense sacrifice.

The final two narratives provide evidence of demographic groups previously neglected by scholars. Eliza Burhans Farnham was a widow traveling west. Taking up a rancho after her husband's death, she comes to appreciate her hard work for what it can bring her as opposed to what it is denying her. Although Farnham is a good example of the possibility of physical change, her prejudices against her neighbors and the native people, and her emphasis on bringing order and "gentility" to the West indicate the limits of the transformative power of the western voyage. The final narrative is written by Lydia Spencer Lane, an officer's wife. She provides insight into the female-centered community of the military outpost, and the importance of friends in general. Her changing attitude towards physical appearance and Native Americans are two examples of how life in the West could alter perceptions.

Writing the Trail, though an excellent introduction to the works of pioneer women, is not without its flaws. The primary sources are so dissected that the reader has little chance to interpret anything for him or herself. Furthermore, some of the examples of transformation and connection to nature seem strained. Most notably, if one has any familiarity with scholarship concerning pioneer women, this book provides little new insight. However, Writing the Trail would be an excellent resource for introducing students to the social history of the westward movement. It would also be a useful text for women's studies groups or anyone interested in augmenting his or her knowledge of the great American West.

The Devil in the Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans.
By Stephen J. Pitti. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003. Bibliography, illustrations, index and notes. xiv + 297 pp. \$19.95 paper.

Reviewed by Linda Heidenreich, Associate Professor, Department of Women's Studies, Washington State University.

In *The Devil in the Silicon Valley*, Stephen Pitti explores San José and the Santa Clara Valley, where "Latinos...helped to shape this region...for more than two hundred years" (p. 1). His dense study analyzes the many roles of Latinos in building the region and the role of the devil – racism – in facilitating their exploitation. Pitti's work serves as a counter narrative to the booster literature of the region, making visible the lives of those workers whose labor built it. He brings to his study a broad lens, beginning with eighteenth-century contact and conflict between Spanish-Mexican settlers and the Ohlone people, and closing with the late twentieth-century rise of the Service Employees Industrial Union (SEIU). For each generation that he studies, Pitti maps their struggles and conflicts. The devil of racism is a consistent thread bringing cohesiveness to his expansive narrative.

Like other historians of his generation, Pitti brings no romance to his subject. In Pitti's telling, the early contact between the indigenous peoples of the area and Spanish-Mexican colonizers is rooted in violence. Enlightenment philosophies prevented both church and state from seeing the Ohlone and other indigenous peoples of the region as fully human. With the U.S.-Mexico War and the gold rush, indigenous peoples were once again hyper-exploited, this time by American

settlers, and the *Californio* population of the region was displaced from positions of economic and political influence into unskilled, high-risk occupations. While this tale of displacement is a familiar one, Pitti's careful attention to this particular region allows him to map resistance, including labor organizing in the mercury mines of New Almadén. Segregated by mine owners into an area called "Spanishtown," the workers of New Almadén founded their own school, cemetery, and butcher shop. They also established mutual aid societies, institutions that would serve as a means of resistance throughout the history of the region.

Pitti's attention to the early twentieth century, a much under-studied time period in the history of the West, makes this work especially important. For it is in the early twentieth century that a new wave of boosterism masked the struggles of ethnic Mexicans living and laboring in the valley. Like their nineteenth-century counterparts, ethnic Mexicans in this period were confined to the secondary labor sector and, like their predecessors, they too engaged in resistance. Pitti's pages are replete with histories of mutual aid societies, labor organizing, and coalitions among workers from different ethnic backgrounds. His careful attention to labor organizing helps make the success of later organization such as the National Farm Labor Union and the Community Service Organization (CSO) understandable.

As he describes the rise of the CSO in San José, Pitti is able to weave together the lives and work of well-known historical figures such as Ernesto Galarza and César Chávez with those of lesser known organizers such as Helen Valenzuela. The CSO, in Pitti's narrative, did not introduce any new way of organizing to the area; instead, it built on a long tradition of local resistance, making possible the later activism of the Chicano Movement. In this context, the organizations of the Chicano Movement were yet another wave of resistance, building on the old, making possible the new. In this text they are neither climax nor anti-climax, they are an important part of a long tradition. And so Pitti ends not with the rise of the Chicano civil rights organizations of the 1970s, but with the emergence of service workers' unions and the successful resistance of ethnic Mexicans to white supremacist boosterism at the close of the twentieth century.

Pitti's work is a pleasure to read. His careful attention to a specific place introduces readers to narratives of resistance that are often overlooked in other California histories. By focusing on the "devil" of racism, he is able to reveal exploitation and resistance as well as critical coalition building among workers. While the text may be a bit encyclopedic for lower division students, those teaching upper division and graduate courses in western history, Chicano history, and/or labor history will find in it a great aid for introducing students to the complex and layered struggles of which history is made.

Fit to Be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939. By Natalia Molina. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. xvi + 279 pages. \$50.00 cloth. \$19.95 paper.

Reviewed by Sylvia Hood Washington, Research Associate Professor, University of Illinois, School of Public Health, Institute for Environmental Science and Policy.

Natalia Molina's first monograph, *Fit to Be Citizens?*, is a well written and impressively researched study that poignantly elucidates how the ever changing notions of race—and particularly “whiteness”—not only influenced social status but also the health of those communities who did not fit neatly into the traditional “white versus black” racial dichotomy in the United States. Furthermore, Molina provides the reader with strong evidence of how the fate of these communities was determined by varying measures of medical and legal discipline that accompanied their identities as “non-whites.” Throughout the book Molina provides a wide array of evidence that supports her primary argument that not only did “medical discourse [have] the power to naturalize racial categories, it also had the effect of naturalizing social inequalities...By shaping racial categories and infusing them with meaning, health officials helped define racialized people's place in society” (p. 8). Although the book's title specifies “race,” Molina informs the reader in the beginning that the study is specifically focused on the public health consequences of the fuzzy social constructions of race for individuals of Mexican or Asian descent in Los Angeles. According to Molina, the larger percentage of Asians and Mexicans in the Los Angeles population resulted in racial prejudices which were normally “reserved for African Americans” being applied to people of Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican descent.

This compact monograph tells its story succinctly in five chapters totaling a mere 188 pages. Molina examines decades-long public health struggles of Asian and Mexican communities against forced sterilization, tuberculosis, typhus, and the plague. These communities, economically marginalized and physically separated from Anglo neighborhoods by a range of legal and extralegal practices, suffered under the burden of poor housing conditions and neglect on the part of public health officials. When these factors led to outbreaks of disease, as in episodes of typhus and plague in the 1910s and 1920s, health officials blamed Asian and Mexican residents. These officials frequently maintained that disease stemmed from non-white Angelenos' cultural practices and ignorance of the principles of sanitation. Such complaints led some to conclude that ethnic Chinese, Japanese, and Mexicans were not only disease-carrying vectors who threatened the larger social body but also that they were essentially inassimilable. Indeed, Molina highlights connections between such public health discourses and both immigration restriction and the repatriation of ethnic Mexicans in the 1930s. When Los Angeles's non-white residents did receive medical attention from city authorities, they found it in racially segregated health clinics “that proved to be not only separate but also unequal” (p. 90).

My only criticism of this work is the immediate dismissal of African Americans from the study. Her thematic points would have been stronger if she had addressed how Asians' and Mexicans' public health problems compared to those

of blacks in the same geography, particularly when they were all were considered medical and public health anathemas in the same era. This is a critical question particularly because Molina argues that both Asians and Mexicans were preferred as labor sources over African Americans and as a direct consequence were allowed into the area in larger numbers. It is not apparent to this reader that their experiences were uniquely different from those of African Americans on the West Coast.

The documentation for *Fit to Be Citizens?* is impressive. Students as well as senior scholars who read this work should take advantage of the insights and knowledge provided in Molina's copious notes and detailed bibliography. This reader strongly recommends this monograph as a must read for historians of public health, environmental scholars, and scholars interested in the role of ethnicity and race in shaping America's public policies during the early modern era, when Social Darwinism wielded its greatest impact on immigrants and ethnic groups who found themselves at the racial margins of "whiteness."

César Chávez, the Catholic Bishops, and the Farmworkers' Struggle for Social Justice. By Marco G. Prouty. Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 2006. Bibliography, illustrations, index, and notes. iii +185 pp. \$40.00 cloth.

Reviewed by Richard A. Garcia, Professor of History, California State University, East Bay.

The title of this text is a misnomer. It should be "The Catholic Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee and Its Role in César Chávez's Farmworkers' Struggle." The central focus is not the farm workers or even Chávez. Instead it is the American Catholic Church, specifically the role of the Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee and its attempt to provide mediation between the growers and Chávez's United Farm Workers (UFW) in the 1965 to 1970 grape strike and then the 1970-1977 lettuce boycotts. The Catholic Church created the committee, led by Monsignor Higgins, the "Labor Priest," to forge a partnership with Chávez and the farmworkers. Prouty's thesis is straightforward: "During this epoch the [American] Catholic Church, through the Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on Farm Labor, played an invaluable role in bringing peace to the California valley and victory to César Chávez's movement—La Causa (the Cause)" (p. 3).

Prouty builds his arguments, especially the theory that the Church played the central role in Chávez's two victories, around the Catholic Church's newly opened archival communiqués. Adhering to the Church's interpretations, Prouty asserts that these successes were a result of a "partnership" with Chávez (p. 3). Prouty argues that three basic institutional changes led to Chávez's victories: "the end of the Bracero Program, the rise of the Civil Rights movement, and the support of the Catholic Church" (p. 3). He suggests that the farmworkers' victory in the lettuce strike was a result of the Church's move from mediation to more outright support of Chávez's union. There is very little mention, however, of the social, cultural, and political forces in the sixties that supported the farmworkers' movement. Prouty presents a historical context that is synchronic and not diachronic. He does not

really develop a historical analysis, but one, it seems, emanating from institutional historicism which relies on David Easton's systems theory that analyzes "power" based on the different "strengths and weaknesses" of the institutional "players" struggling for systematic power and institutional hegemony. In Prouty's telling, the Church was the mediating institution that could bring stability to the California valley.

The author's readings and interpretations of the archival sources seem to be accepted without much scrutiny. In short, Prouty is led by the sources and his own biases. Prouty's book should have focused on the role and activities of Higgins who, in fact, was the central figure in this drama. Higgins guided the Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee's fight for what he believed was the true "intellectual framework" of the Church: social activism, as outlined in the major Papal encyclicals, from Pope Leo XIII's 1891 *Rerum Novarum*, the Catholic Magna Carta, through the 1965 Vatican II reforms. Historically, these encyclicals were to be the core of the Church's intellectual mandate, but they conflicted with the Church's traditions and bureaucratic nature. The strength of Prouty's book is that it allows us to see the central ideological split between the residue of Aquinas's scholasticism and the traditionalism of the Institutional Church as it sharply conflicts with Erasmus's humanitarianism, the Papal social encyclicals, and Vatican II's reforms echoing Martin Luther's Reformation. This central religious and philosophical conflict in the U.S. Catholic Church is, in fact, the hidden textual core of the book but Prouty does not fully address it.

Overall, Prouty accepts the Church's logic that its lack of full support for the farmworkers' struggle was caused by an early period of internal differences in what the Church believed was just an intrafaith conflict. Despite Prouty's "scholarly" weaknesses, he gives us a glimpse into the promise of what the field of institutional history can be, if done with criticality and imagination and not led by the sources. Unfortunately, this work does not fulfill the potential of institutional history and does not appear to be based on the central notion that historians need both to structure and interpret history, not just report it.

DOCUMENTARIES

Cul de Sac: A Suburban War Story. Directed by Garrett Scott and Ian Olds. Brooklyn, NY: First Run/Icarus Films, 2001. 56 minutes. \$75.00.

Reviewed by Matthew Bokovoy, Acquisitions Editor, University of Nebraska Press.

San Diego police authorities found themselves in a panic on May 17, 1995. Shawn Nelson, a 35-year-old U.S. Army veteran and unemployed plumber, drove through the streets of Clairemont, the Sports Arena, and Highway 163 in a 57-ton M60 Patton tank stolen from the National Guard Armory in Kearny Mesa. The roughly 45-minute joy ride resulted in crushed cars, mangled street lights, and broken fire hydrants. It also resulted in Nelson's death at the hand of San Diego police authorities. What circumstances had led Shawn Nelson to this final, desperate act?

Cul de Sac: A Suburban War Story by award-winning film makers Garrett Scott and Ian Olds provides a compelling narrative to understand how a well-regarded and warm-hearted tradesman from Clairemont unraveled into unemployment, alcohol abuse, and methamphetamine addiction that led to his final act on earth. The film makers use the tragic trajectory of Nelson's life to explore the shadows of the Southern California economy, namely the demise of the post-World War II defense suburbs that had provided skilled and semi-skilled workers with the decent salaries and high wages that ushered them into the middle class and the American Dream.

As a native son of a safe, suburban upbringing in Clairemont, Shawn Nelson, and many of those he grew up with, became casualties of the end of the Cold War. Nelson's father had been a technician at Convair's Atlas Missile production facility in Kearny Mesa and moved his family to the suburb of Clairemont, built by developer Lou Burgener (and named for Claire Tavares) to supply returning veterans with affordable, modern housing. According to Scott Nelson, Shawn's brother, the neighborhood was so safe and nurturing you could leave your keys in your car and kids roamed in packs along the streets without worry. The economic decline of the 1989 recession manifested itself locally in falling property values and a methamphetamine addiction epidemic. In one interview, Michael Stepner of the redevelopment authority noted that perhaps Clairemont had reached the end of its useful life, a casualty of the decline of the local defense industry.

When talk of the peace dividend gave way to both military base closures and the winding down of the defense industry, blue collar Californians in communities like Clairemont suffered diminished expectations through the mid-1990s. With a lack of good blue collar defense jobs, Clairemont went through economic decline, offering its residents little economic opportunity for upward mobility. Nelson proved resourceful as a handyman and electrician with a reputation for helping down-and-out friends. But not even an optimistic Shawn Nelson could overcome the privations of self-employment. Chronically unemployed and grieving over a divorce and the death of his parents, Nelson's life spun out of control into alcoholism and meth addiction. During his last days, he had dug a seventeen-foot-deep "gold mine" in his backyard and believed a government helicopter was

following him to steal his mineral rights. The bank was ready to foreclose on his home. Under duress and with no resources for medical assistance, he stole the tank from the Kearny Mesa National Guard Armory.

The film stylistically weaves interviews with Nelson's family and friends, public officials, and urban historians with stock footage from World War II, the San Diego defense industries, and the Vietnam War. Scott and Olds imply that a city and region based on a war economy will experience a certain type of cultural blowback that results in a kind of institutionalized violence lying beneath the social structure. Scott and Olds connect Nelson's life story to the larger forces that transformed the defense suburbs of San Diego throughout the 1990s. What emerges is a poignant tale of class consciousness in Southern California filtered through Shawn's life and the many family members and friends still trying to understand the reasons for his demise. Despite the human shortcomings involved in Nelson's tragedy, every interview segment suggests economic and social injustice. All who knew Shawn interviewed for the film—his brother, his friend Fela, Karen Rowlands, Chuck Childers, Chuck Johnson, Dale and Diane Fletcher, and roommate Tim Wyman—confirm that he was a good man, even if somewhat troubled. In a compelling scene of philosophical reflection, Nelson's friend Fela believed that Shawn had tried to stand up to the authorities, and they had taken his life. Fela notes with disgust that the authorities had the power, but will never have the morality. *Cul de Sac* unflinchingly moves beyond the media sensationalism that emerged from Nelson's rampage to ask the important question of how and why this man committed this desperate act.

Ripe for Change. Written and directed by Emiko Omori. Produced by Emiko Omori and Jed Riffe. DVD. Independent Television Service, 2005. 55 minutes.

Reviewed by Jeffrey Charles, Associate Professor and Chair, History Department, California State University, San Marcos.

In the first half of 2008, food shortages caused riots around the globe and salmonella outbreaks from imported produce sickened thousands of Americans. The skyrocketing price of oil put enormous strain on farmers who depended on gas-fueled farm equipment and petroleum-based fertilizers, and farmers all across the South and West complained about the shortage of labor caused by a U.S. Border Patrol crackdown. Based on this evidence alone, the food and agricultural system is certainly "ripe for change." Teachers and an interested general audience can turn to this documentary for its presentation of some alternative possibilities to today's global, industrial agriculture system – a system that California growers helped create beginning in the early twentieth century, and one that some Californians have always worked hard to reform.

Ripe for Change first aired in May 2006 as part of the PBS series, *California and the American Dream*. This four part film series focused on how the Golden State is being transformed by immigration, economic development, and community restructuring. The series is now available on DVD as four separate films. These DVDs probably will be of most interest to libraries, educators and scholars,

although of the four, *Ripe for Change* has the most general appeal.

Ripe for Change makes the case for sustainable farming in California largely through interviews with key figures in the recent movement toward local, non-industrial agriculture. These interviews include such well-known figures as restaurateur Alice Waters and farmer and author David Mas Masumoto. But they also include eloquent testimonies from lesser-known growers such as Maria Inés Catalán, an immigrant organic farmer, and Will Scott, Jr., president of the African-American farmers of California. Interviews with academics and journalists also play a key role. The geographic range of those interviewed is limited to Northern and Central California – those interested in San Diego, or even Southern California in general, where agriculture still plays a crucial economic role, will be disappointed.

The film's message is a laudable one – that we should encourage small growers, including women and poor immigrants, as they work hard growing and selling pesticide-free produce direct from their farms to local markets. Yet the documentary falls somewhat flat, in part because the filmmaking itself is rather uninspired. There are many “talking heads,” but not quite enough connecting narration, nor are there many arresting images. A few more lingering shots of Masumoto's luscious peaches would have constituted a more effective argument for small, sustainable farming than the somewhat tendentious on-camera interview of the environmental lawyer and activist Claire Hope Cummings. This is not to say that Cummings's critiques of the current food system and her comments about the corporate origins of genetically modified crops are without merit, just that they might have been more cinematically illustrated.

In general, the film suffers from a lack of emotional power or dramatic tension, yet the interviewees do touch upon some of the controversies involved in reforming our agro-food system, and a sustained focus on just a few of these would have made the film's analysis more thought-provoking. To mention a few of the issues the film introduces but leaves hanging: Would the consumer buy wormy or spotted lettuce if pesticide use was discontinued? Is small farming a necessity for a sustainable agriculture, or can large farms also function sustainably? Do genetically modified crops offer promises of conservation of water and fertilizer, or are they simply instruments of corporate control? Can farmers' markets be scaled up to address the inequities of food distribution, providing the poor their share of fresh fruits and vegetables – or are they, like the organic offerings of the grocery chain Whole Foods, going to be limited to a more upscale clientele? And what about the fate of farm work in a reformed system, since organic farming is far more labor-intensive? Are we willing to pay these farm workers adequately? Finally, if we move to reduce our dependence on distant markets, will our urbanized society be able to provide enough land, water, and farmers to ensure our food supply?

For those who are unfamiliar with issues of agricultural sustainability and the problems with our food “chain,” this film would make important viewing. For others more aware of current issues, the interviews of significant figures in recent Northern California agricultural and food history could also make the film valuable. If problems concerning food continue to generate headlines, however, perhaps a new, more definitive documentary on recent California agriculture is in order.

BOOK NOTES

Ho for California! Women's Overland Diaries from the Huntington Library. Edited by Sandra L. Myres. San Marino, CA: Huntington Library Press, 2007. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, and index. 337 pp. \$24.95 paper. The Huntington Library Press has reprinted the late Professor Myres's annotated collection of five women's diaries. These accounts come from three primary routes to California from the era of the gold rush to the 1860s.

The Imaginary Line: A History of the United States and Mexican Boundary Survey, 1848-1857. By Joseph Richard Werne. Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 2007. Photographs, maps, bibliography, and index. 272 pp. \$34.95 cloth. This monograph chronicles the work of the joint boundary commission to determine the location of the international border. Joseph Richard Werne explores the political, economic, and technological obstacles that made this project a decade-long endeavor.

Perfume Dreams: Reflections on the Vietnamese Diaspora. By Andrew Lam. Foreword by Richard Rodriguez. Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 2005. Photographs. xv + 143 pp. \$14.95 paper. In sixteen short essays, journalist Andrew Lam reflects on his experiences as a Vietnamese living in the United States. Lam, who at age eleven fled South Vietnam shortly before the fall of Saigon, investigates the pull of both American and Vietnamese culture on himself, his family, and other members of the refugee community.

Positively No Filipinos Allowed: Building Communities and Discourse. Edited by Antonio T. Tiongson, Jr., Edgardo V. Gutierrez, and Ricardo V. Gutierrez. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006. Photographs, notes, and index. xi + 258 pp. \$27.95 paper. Twelve essays by scholars from a range of disciplines explore numerous aspects of Filipino American history. Common themes uniting the essays include the legacy of American colonialism in the Philippines, the racialization of Filipinos, and the politics of identity.

The Search for a Civic Voice: California Latino Politics. By Kenneth C. Burt. Claremont, CA: Regina Books, 2007. Photos, illustrations, tables, notes, bibliography, and index. xiii + 438 pp. \$24.95 paper. This historical account traces Latino politics in California from before World War II through the coalition-building that helped propel Antonio Villaraigosa to victory in the 2005 Los Angeles mayoral election.

Shaping the Shoreline: Fisheries and Tourism on the Monterey Coast. By Connie Y. Chiang. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, and index. 320 pp. \$35.00 cloth. Connie Chiang examines the ways various actors have attempted to derive profits from the Monterey coast. In the process, the book explores how human perceptions of nature have shifted as the area moved from a coastal resort to the working-class town of John Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* and back to a tourist destination by the close of the twentieth century.