

BOOK REVIEWS

Contest for California: From Spanish Colonization to the American Conquest. By Stephen G. Hyslop. *Before Gold: California under Spain and Mexico*, vol. 2. Norman, OK: Arthur H. Clark Company, 2012. Bibliography, illustrations, index, and notes. 448 pp. \$39.95 paper.

Reviewed by Theodore A. Strathman, Lecturer, Department of History, University of San Diego.

In this latest installment of the Arthur H. Clark Company's series on Spanish- and Mexican-era California, independent scholar Stephen Hyslop explores the struggle for power and moral authority among the various residents, sojourners, and commenters drawn to California. Utilizing a wealth of primary source materials, Hyslop combines eloquent and engaging storytelling with deft analysis of the motives of those vying for control over California, including useful commentary on the lessons to be gained from this struggle.

The book is organized chronologically into four parts, the first two of which cover the Spanish era. Part One provides a useful discussion of the early stages of Spanish colonization and does well to examine both the physical process of settlement and the goals of this incursion. A particular strength of this portion of the book is Hyslop's investigation of conflicts between Franciscan missionaries and officials of the Spanish crown over issues such as the commitment of resources to pueblos and Spanish soldiers' mistreatment of Indian neophytes. Hyslop insists throughout the book that the principal sets of actors in the contest for California – Spaniards, Californios, Indians, and Anglo Americans – were not monoliths but groups marked by internal disputes and competing visions. Part Two explores the increasing foreign interest in California from the late eighteenth century to the end of the Spanish era. Here Hyslop's accounts of smugglers, trappers, and explorers suggest the remarkable human diversity of the Pacific Coast in this period. He relates, for instance, the experience of the American Joseph O'Brien, who sailed for the Russian American Company and organized a venture that featured Aleut hunters plying the waters off Baja California in their kayaks.

The theme of foreign incursion continues in Part Three, which chronicles the accelerating influx of American trappers and emigrants in the early years of Mexican rule. What emerges here is one of Hyslop's main themes: Anglo Americans came with a brazenness and disdain for Mexican rule that helped justify the eventual conquest of California. Trespassers like Jedediah Smith violated

Mexican law by their very presence, yet claimed that they were the innocent victims when Mexican authorities tried to curtail their activities. Meanwhile, Mexican officials found their ability to act against such newcomers burdened by financial constraints and the vastness of the territory. At the same time, the desire for economic development led some Californios to seek accommodation with foreigners like John Sutter.

Part Four examines the American conquest from Commodore Thomas ap Catesby Jones's premature seizure of Monterey in 1842 to the suppression of *Californio* resistance during the Mexican War. Hyslop argues convincingly that the actions of John C. Frémont and the Bear Flaggers, while not officially sanctioned by the United States government, were nevertheless consistent with American policy towards Mexico. The book's account of key events like the American occupation of Los Angeles and the Battle of San Pasqual suggests that the arrival of American forces did not make the conquest of California a *fait accompli* and that the conduct of the conquerors would have important consequences for postwar relations between Anglo Americans and Californios.

Hyslop's engaging discussion of voyages of exploration, emigration, and enterprise at times leaves the reader curious about developments among those already residing in California. The author acknowledges in the introduction that he pays particular attention to those who journeyed to California and that the book is not intended as "a comprehensive history of the Californios or the Indians among whom they lived" (p. 13). Nevertheless, the focus on the journeys and observations of Anglo Americans in Part Three seems to give short shrift to important internal developments like the secularization of the missions and the rise of the ranchos. These processes are certainly not ignored entirely, but readers may wish for more discussion, for example, of the role of Californios in secularization and the labor regime that developed on the ranchos. Surely these issues surrounding land and labor were at the heart of the "contest for California" as it unfolded in the Mexican period.

Furthermore, professional scholars may desire more commentary to link Hyslop's work to the historiography of California in this period. Hyslop does note in the book's acknowledgements some of the secondary sources that shaped his research, and in his conclusion he does engage directly the work of the nineteenth-century scholars Hubert Howe Bancroft and Josiah Royce. However, some discussion of the rich contemporary scholarship from the likes of Douglas Monroy, Albert Hurtado, and James Sandos would have helped situate this fine book within the larger sweep of California historiography. Still, *Contest for California* is an engaging work that deserves a place on the reading list of scholars and lay readers interested in how and why the United States claimed this part of the Mexican North.

An Archaeology of Desperation: Exploring the Donner Party's Alder Creek Camp. Edited by Kelly J. Dixon, Julie M. Schablitsky, and Shannon A. Novak. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011. Bibliography, illustrations, index, and notes. xiv + 390. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewed by G. Timothy Gross, Archaeologist, Ecology and Environment, Inc., and Adjunct Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of San Diego.

Cannibalism is a controversial topic in archaeology. Some archaeologists reject out of hand even fairly clear-cut physical evidence in prehistoric sites and label those who present the interpretation of the evidence as at best insensitive to the descendant populations, and at worst, outright racist for even raising the topic. *An Archaeology of Desperation* comes at the issue from another angle, taking an archaeological approach to the rather well-documented incidents of cannibalism at the Donner Party Alder Creek camp. The book is, however, much more than an archaeological report for the general public.

The eleven chapters of the book present the story of the Donner Party and provide a context to discuss the archaeology of the Alder Creek camp, one of two occupied by members of the party after they were halted in their journey by the advance of a severe winter. The first two chapters (by Kristin Johnson) provide the context both for the events that led to the establishment of the camps (the individuals involved, the journey west, the winter storm) and for the excavation. The history of the Alder Creek camp and its relationship to the other camp at Donner Lake is reconstructed from documentary sources, and the history of the camps after the survivors were rescued is considered. Attention is paid to both the efforts of survivors to retrieve wagon cargo and to other visitors to the camps, many of whom took souvenirs.

Donald L. Hardesty provides the context for the Alder Creek excavations in light of earlier archaeological work at the Donner Lake camp. The recent excavations are presented next. Kelly J. Dixon covers the archaeology of the camp, including how it was found and what was recovered in the excavation. Julie M. Schablitsky then presents an analysis of the site specifically as a survivor camp, reconstructing activities that may have gone on there.

Two chapters deal with bone identification. Bone fragments were abundant among the artifact assemblage of the Alder Creek Camp. Determining whether or not human bone is present at the sites and if there is evidence for preparation and consumption of human flesh is, of course, an important aspect of the investigation. Gwen Robbins Schug and Kelsey Gray (with contributions by Guy L. Tasa, Rene Danielson, and Matt Irish) discuss identification of the many very small pieces of

bone, including microscopic analysis. Shannon A. Novak looks at the bone from the excavations in terms of social context, including the probable consumption of a pet dog within the larger context of nineteenth-century pet ownership. Evidence of butchering is also presented. Following these two chapters is a discussion by G. Richard Scott and Sean McMurry of patterns in both historic and prehistoric cannibalism.

Three chapters finish out the book. The oral history of the events at Alder Creek and Donner Lake camps as seen by the Washoe, the Native Americans in whose territory the camps were located, is presented by Jo Ann Nevers and Penny Rucks (with contributions by Lana Hicks, Steven James, and Melba Rakow). Will Bagley and Kristin Johnson explore the effects of the Donner Party experience on other immigrant parties and the general western expansion in the next chapter, and the last chapter, by Dixon and Schablitsky, summarizes the conclusions.

An Archaeology of Desperation succeeds in putting the Donner story into its historical setting. The chapter on Washoe oral history is a fascinating example. According to these accounts, Washoe individuals recognized the plight of the stranded travelers and tried to help with gifts of food. Due both to past hostile encounters with Indians during the journey west and general cultural attitudes, members of the party met such attempts with gunfire. One wonders if the story might have had a different ending had the Washoe been allowed to help.

The editors have assembled a collection of papers that are both interesting and informative. As an edited volume, the book will not satisfy all readers. The chapter on the archaeology, for instance, has generally less detail than an archeologist would need to evaluate the project, while the discussion of bone identification includes more detail on sampling adequacy, the bone identification criteria, and the general characteristics of bone than most non-scientists would want.

An Archaeology of Desperation is an interesting read and has a place in the library of anyone interested in western expansion, historical archaeology, or the controversial area of archaeological identification of cannibalism. At Alder Creek, where historic accounts, including those newly presented accounts from Washoe oral history, indicate humans clearly ate other humans, no definitive archaeological evidence of those acts was recovered. The authors explore the possible reasons for this, but whatever the cause, this certainly demonstrates that the archaeological record can sometimes be quite perplexing.

El Capitan: Adaptation and Agency on a Southern California Indian Reservation, 1850 to 1937. By Tanis C. Thorne with photo essays by Heather Ponchetti Daly. Banning, CA: Malki-Bellena Press, 2012. Appendix, bibliography, illustrations, index, and notes. v + 235 pp. \$24.95 cloth. \$15.95 paper.

Reviewed by Eliza Martin, Ph.D., Visiting Lecturer, Department of History, Georgia State University.

Historian Tanis Thorne's *El Capitan: Adaptation and Agency on a Southern California Indian Reservation, 1850 to 1937* offers a history of San Diego's Capitan Grande Indian Reservation and its residents. Employing sources such as Bureau of Indian Affairs records, oral histories, and photographs, Thorne aims to use the reservation and its inhabitants as a case study to examine the history of Indian/white relations in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Southern California. This richly illustrated, "Indian-centered" (p. 15) history offers a story of agency and adaptation, arguing that Capitan Grande's residents shaped their own lives and were not "passive, weak, or helpless" in the face of the massive social, cultural, political, and economic disruptions that swept Southern California from the Mission Period onward (p. 171). Thorne successfully highlights the complexity of Indian identity, the harried relationships among Indians, the Mission Indian Federation, the BIA, and local residents, and the internecine debates amongst the Indians over access to funds and land.

Thorne's work touches on themes central to recent research regarding Native Americans in California and the broader United States, including dispossession, adaptation, cultural flexibility, and hybridity. The experiences of Capitan Grande's residents speak to many of the broader issues both Southern Californian and American Indians faced during this period, especially the challenges of land and resource loss. Federal government involvement with Native welfare is another common thread woven throughout the narrative. Throughout the book, Thorne highlights the Capitan group's contentious relationships with the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs, which, according to Thorne, seemed more interested in ending federal responsibility for Indian welfare than protecting Indians' land and resource rights.

One example of the clash between reservation dwellers, the BIA, and the broader community—an incident that makes Capitan Grande a particularly interesting case study—came with debates over the use of the San Diego River. The Capitan Grande reservation happened to be located along the course of the San Diego River, a water source that became increasingly important to the rapidly growing city of San Diego. The San Diego Flume Company first tapped the river

in a significant way in the 1880s, building a water system across the reservation to bring San Diego River water to white farmers and urban dwellers. Controversially, the Flume Company began the project without the required federal permission to utilize reservation land and water. Eventually, as disagreements over access to this water and potential dam sites on the reservation came to a head, the Bureau of Indian Affairs sided with the residents of San Diego, putting San Diego's desires for a more abundant, reliable source of water above the needs of their Indian wards. In order to construct a dam on the reservation to supply the city, a dam that would place the most productive reservation lands under water, the City of San Diego and BIA moved either to relocate reservation residents from their homes onto new reservations, or disband the reservation communities altogether. But while the Indians of Capitan Grande stood to lose their homes, they ultimately defined the terms of their removal. A group of reservation residents challenged the city and the BIA, refusing to leave Capitan Grande until they received the specific property they desired at the Barona and Viejas Ranches and the right to relocate as communities. This on-going act of civil disobedience essentially jeopardized a massive infrastructure project city leaders viewed as imperative for the region's future, and led to reservation residents being relocated together to the land they requested.

Thorne adroitly applies the primary sources related to the reservation and searches out the Indian voices that are often elusive in the historical record. Yet referencing materials from extant secondary sources on water in San Diego could further bolster her argument. The links between water, Native American land claims, and federal intervention are central to the experience at Capitan Grande, and a further exploration of this literature would strengthen the author's analysis. Thorne also occasionally falls away from the theme of agency, such as referring to the residents of Capitan Grande as "pawns" in the fight over San Diego River water (p. 94). Though perhaps beyond the scope of this study, Thorne could broaden the context of the work by drawing stronger links to the experiences of other tribes in Southern California, as well as groups throughout the arid Southwest and across the border in Mexico.

The story Thorne tells—a narrative of both loss and agency—is not new when it comes to Native American history, but the setting and the pursuit of that narrative into the twentieth century are welcome supplements to the current literature. Overall, Thorne's is the most thorough study to date on the Capitan Grande Reservation and its inhabitants.

The Politics of Exclusion: The Failure of Race-Neutral Policies in Urban America. By Leland T. Saito. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009. Illustrations, notes, references, and index. 275 pp. \$22.95 paper.

Reviewed by Jesse Mills, Assistant Professor, Department of Ethnic Studies, University of San Diego.

“We lost a jewel,” San Diego Historical Society’s Larry Malone thought when reflecting on the 1985 demolition of the Douglas Hotel near the downtown Gaslamp Quarter. Few community members and no developers, however, had seen the Douglas as more than a dilapidated building in the way of progress for a growth machine poised to revitalize San Diego’s urban core. So what was lost? And why around that same time was the Chinese Mission spared, or even more significantly, wrapped within an Asian Pacific Thematic Historic District in the new millennium downtown cityscape? And later, why did the once “Colored only” Clermont Hotel become “the first building identified as a local historical landmark associated with African American history” (p.86)?

Leland Saito’s *The Politics of Exclusion: The Failure of Race-Neutral Policies in Urban America* untangles from these landmarks, or more accurately the struggle over monumentalizing these landmarks, a complex fabric of colorblindness in public policy, of ongoing race disparity in the story of San Diego’s past, and of maverick community activism to protect the socio-cultural history of displaced racial minorities. An accessible yet layered study, Saito’s book links San Diego historic preservation with electoral redistricting for Asian Americans in New York City and Latinos in Los Angeles in a broad examination of race, place, and space in the United States. Ultimately, Saito finds, while redevelopment and redistricting professionals and commissions operate in ways that they consider free from racial bias, the decisions they make and the policies they create have racialized consequences. This is to say that groups that have experienced a history of forcible race-based exclusion from political and economic opportunity still find themselves fighting virtually on their own for recognition and validation against conglomerations of university professors, elected officials, experts, and their institutions.

All local history stewards, Saito points out, find themselves in a pitched battle against high finance-driven urban renewal schemes that, in San Diego, carelessly reduce the tapestry of the past into “theme park” cultural tourism that serves consumer-oriented “growth machine” strategies. Urban renewal, a euphemistic term many scholars characterize as a wrecking ball and bulldozer approach to economic improvement, is often a form of gentrifying urban core

neighborhoods that have already experienced white flight, capital flight, and dense in-migrations of working class people in search of opportunity. It has been identified as “Negro removal” or “Chicano removal.” Taking into consideration the context of nineteenth-century Chinese Exclusion, Alien Land Laws, internment camps for Japanese Americans, paternalistic “benevolent assimilation” policies for Filipino Americans, decades of Jim Crow, and confinement to morally suspect and “dirty” vice districts like the Stingaree, and you get the back story behind the fact that fewer than 3% of public historic monuments deal with non-whites and an understanding of why in 1985 no business owners or community leaders pulled their attention away from the African American community’s struggle in southeast San Diego to “save” the downtown Douglas Hotel.

Against this back story, the activism of community leaders becomes even more remarkable. Former city council member Tom Hom and the Gaslamp Quarter Association battled from the mid-1970s through the mid-1980s to save the Chinese Mission from demolition, and ended up helping to found not just a Chinatown, but the more inclusive Asian Pacific Thematic Historic District to honor many of San Diego’s Asian American ethnic communities. Karen Huff created the Gaslamp Black Historical Society from the dust (so to speak) of the Douglas Hotel and pioneered unprecedented recognition for downtown black history in the new Padres ballpark and beyond.

Saito is a master storyteller and interdisciplinary social scientist who brings together the historical record and the main voices in these battles over “race-neutral” historic preservation and economic revitalization in San Diego. Thus the book pairs exceptionally well with the Winter 2008 Race and Space special issue of this journal (Vol. 54, No. 1, which also contains Saito’s quite complementary shorter piece on the same topic). With Saito’s book, the eager and open-minded reader will also be treated to similarly detailed accounts of ethnic community mobilization around political representation in New York and Los Angeles in this richly informative text. One caution, though, is to read with patience as the leaps between places, communities, and times can appear deceptively simple in the hands of such a skilled writer, yet can leave the reader struggling to keep all of the pieces and moving parts of this sophisticated analysis together, struggling not to lose any of its many jewels.

Wyatt Earp in San Diego: Life After Tombstone. By Garner Palenske. Santa Ana, CA: Graphic Publishers, 2011. Bibliography, illustrations, index, and notes. v + 204 pp. \$39.99 cloth.

Reviewed by Matthew Schiff, Director of Marketing, San Diego History Center.

Most Americans are familiar with the name Wyatt Earp. Just hearing the name conjures up mental images of the strong and capable lawman working on the wild American frontier, keeping towns safe from marauding villains and opportunistic bandits. It is a vision of a hero—of a legend that was forged in the gunfight at the O.K. Corral. Most Americans, however, as well as some San Diegans, do not consider the events before or after. Fewer still know that Wyatt Earp and his common-law wife, Josie, lived in San Diego just four years after the famous incident. Garner Palenske begins *Wyatt Earp in San Diego: Life After Tombstone* with this event, cloaking Earp in the usual legendary description, though he quickly and successfully guides the reader from the world of legend into the real life exploits of a former lawman turned businessman in the boom times of San Diego in the mid-to-late 1880s.

Wyatt and Josie arrived in San Diego via the newly completed California Southern Railroad from Colton, California, where his parents lived. Palenske masterfully reconstructs the environment of the city at that time as still very much a frontier town where enforcement of the law was not rigorously pursued. It was a town, however, in transition. The booming real estate market, as it was at the time, consequently brought a new kind of citizen to the town, one who wanted a safer and less rowdy place to do business. The author depicts Wyatt Earp as a man likewise in transition. He was no longer a lawman and like so many others, Earp sought the myriad opportunities for investment in the desirable, and now accessible, real estate of San Diego. But in these times of transition, Palenske points out that the line between the lawful and lawless activities often became blurred.

As a frontier town, San Diego's "vice industries," as Palenske calls them, were politically connected. He cites numerous examples of payoffs to officials in exchange for overlooking nefarious activities. As less-tolerant citizens moved in, however, it became harder for officials to avoid having to crack down on drinking, prostitution, and gambling. Earp, who in Tombstone had a number of gambling interests as well as being a lawman, came to San Diego with intentions of establishing similar gaming pursuits. As luck would have it, San Diego's president of the city council (mayor) at the time of Earp's arrival was William Hunsacker, who had befriended Wyatt years prior when he was a defense attorney in Tombstone. The author highlights the relationship that Earp developed with

many San Diego lawmakers of the day and how his previously earned notoriety helped him sidestep some of the obstacles to running games of chance at this time. Much of the book is devoted to these near scrapes with the law as well as to many of Earp's legal troubles when his properties lost value in the bust period that followed the boom in 1888.

To avoid scrutiny and prosecution for larger scale gambling events like boxing, horse racing, and cock fights, Earp and others took their events to locations outside of town such as Pacific Beach and Tijuana. The author explains in great detail the level of involvement Earp had with horseracing and boxing, listing several of the races his many horses won as well as the numerous bare knuckle and gloved boxing events he refereed. Wyatt was a fair and capable referee but it was horse racing that he truly loved. Readers familiar with San Diego landmarks will marvel at how in a time before the automobile and freeways, places like Pacific Beach and Tijuana were considered remote.

Palenske succeeds in chronicling in vivid detail the five short, but active, years the Earps spent in San Diego. What is more, the author helps to make the man, Wyatt Earp, more accessible to those who read the book. Earp's unique experience as a lawman vaults him to a level worthy of collective respect and admiration in the canon of the American West, but this expose of his time in San Diego brings out the man behind the name. While *Wyatt Earp in San Diego: Life After Tombstone* dilutes to some extent the legend, it paints a more accurate picture of an opportunistic capitalist susceptible to the whims of fortune and risk, and provides another perspective to consider on a well-known subject of American history.

Calexico!: True Lives of the Borderlands. By Peter Laufer. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2011. Foreword, illustrations, and afterword. 248 pp. \$19.95 paper.

Reviewed by Eric Boime, Associate Professor, San Diego State University-Imperial Valley Campus.

Peter Laufer deserves credit for his attention to the largely ignored but historically vital border town of Calexico, California (located in the poorest, most arid part of the United States). The fluidity of Calexico and Mexicali, Mexico, lends much needed nuance to mainstream debates about immigration and post-9/11 security, topics on which Laufer is an undisputed expert.

Laufer's expertise sustains an investigation that otherwise appears lackluster, especially compared to William Vollmann's recently-released *Imperial*. Though

the comparison may be unfair, Vollmann's study of the same county spanned an almost outlandish 1,300 pages. His attempt to untangle the region's complexity of race, class, nature, and nationhood seemed to have pitched him into a rabbit hole whose exit expended incalculable amounts of physical and mental toil.

Laufer avoids this fate by flying directly into Imperial Airport and staying a total of five days at the Barbara Worth Resort, a fading, now defunct, hotel located a full half-hour away from Calexico. It's fine that Laufer doesn't smoke meth with Mexicali prostitutes to score an interview (as Vollmann did), but it is not unreasonable to wonder why he couldn't stay in town. He incorrectly suggests that there are no hotels with high-speed wi-fi in Calexico, and, for that matter, no *taquerías* open after eight. In chapter 1 (Monday), he is hungry, but unwilling to wait in the lengthy line of cars leading to Mexicali's trove of restaurants. He settles for Denny's. If Laufer resided locally, he might have discovered that walking across the border and hailing a cab takes a matter of minutes. Even if, on the return, he ended up walking back when many hundreds of contract workers make their daily slog to the American fields (starting around 3:00 A.M.), he would have had an authentic glimpse of Calexico. These migrants might have even have directed him to Calexico's 24-hour taquerias which owe their livelihood to such crossers. He eventually visits Mexicali on Thursday (chapter 4).

Laufer lands some solid interviews to make his case for deregulating the border, though almost half of his interviewees live outside Imperial County. The latter range from a national security expert, the mayor of Sarnia, Ontario, to the drummer/singer of a Tucson-based band named *Calexico*. Of those interviewed from Imperial County, almost half live outside Calexico. These tallies speak to Laufer's larger inability to convey Calexico's unique qualities.

This inability partially stems from the absence of any historiographical references (to either the borderlands or the Colorado River Delta). More than a few historians of the American West might bristle at Laufer's stated desire to get to know "Ms. Barbara Worth and her friends" (p. 11) (even after discovering that the waitress of the Barbara Worth hotel has no idea who she is). Harold Bell Wright's fictional account of the valley's founding, *The Winning of Barbara Worth*, was a best-selling novel (1911) and block-buster motion picture (1925) predicated on western mythologies that have been thoroughly debunked. "Ms. Worth" is largely irrelevant to Laufer's subtitle. In any case, Calexico's and Mexicali's bearing on California and American western history is unelaborated.

More problematic is Laufer's insistence on engaging the "Lou Dobbs-Patrick J. Buchanan-Bill O'Reilly troika" (p. 102) and the "Lou Dobbs-types" (p. 201), when life in Calexico shatters the most sensationalist immigration debates (such as those regarding "English only," taller fences, and "show me your papers"). Laufer's own

anecdotes make this clear. Mexican elites drive to Calexico's Walmart seeking bargains. Children cross the border to attend Calexico's public schools. A candidate for Calexico City Council skips a campaigning event "because his English wasn't adequate enough" (p. 155). Laufer's passionate defense of undocumented workers is truly laudable, especially in the current political climate, but he does himself no service by letting the media's most myopic segments frame the debate. One prominent example is his major conceit: that the U.S.-Mexican border is analogous to the Berlin Wall. He makes the comparison multiple times, despite an admission that it is "dead wrong" (p.33).

EXHIBIT REVIEWS

Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition. An exhibition at the San Diego Natural History Museum, Balboa Park (February 10, 2012 - September 9, 2012).

Reviewed by Neva Sullaway, editor, *Mains'l Haul - A Journal of Pacific Maritime History*, Maritime Museum of San Diego.

As the exhibit announces from the outset, there have been many presentations of the *Titanic* story: in film, poetry, literature, exhibits, and even in children's coloring books. What is it in our nature that draws us back to such a cataclysmic event, not in a lightly curious way, but in the slightly obsessive manner of someone looking for an answer? The question of course remains: How could such a grand ship, crafted with all the finest materials, knowledge, and technology of the modern era, come to such an abrupt and desperate end?

The exhibit quite clearly has some of the answers, but they are not divulged until the end, until one is immersed in the history, the glory, the grandeur of the objects that lay before the viewer, and the sheer opulence of the ship itself. The juxtaposition of these marvels with the mortality of the vessel is stunning. The visitor to the exhibit is reminded of the brilliant drafting of the ship's lines, the 10,000 men who worked for three years just on the hull and interior, and the fifteen water-tight bulkheads (a technological feat by any standard). Then, a hand's breadth away lies an artifact that is part of the guts of the deceased ship, "the Eccentric Strap," part of the two reciprocating engines, dislodged when the ship broke apart.

Further on, we are ever reminded of the delicacies apportioned in First Class: the fine crystal, porcelain dishes, and the actual First Class Cabin itself, procured for a mere \$2,500 in 1912, but at today's values \$57,000 (and twice that for the most exclusive cabins). The menus in the recreated café suggest the shipboard disparities: Filet Mignon in First Class, Curried Chicken in Second Class, Roast Pork in Third Class. Would this matter in the end?

The artifacts themselves are impressive, in part, for their condition. While peering over a "Plate with Gold Flowers," I marveled that there was no hint of imperfection in the plate; it seemed impossible, in fact, that this plate, this glorious piece of artwork could possibly have survived the rigors of the North Atlantic Sea, but what better place to be frozen in time than in near-freezing water?

Rather than the emotional and highly romanticized 1997 Titanic movie's musical score playing in the background, one was aware of the churning of the ship's engines that stopped for a moment, probably not by design, but it still made the heart stop and wonder what that moment would have been like – the sound of the ice pressing against the hull, a long thudding sound to those nearest to the waterline and below, and the very slow awareness of imminent danger.

The exhibit visitor turns a corner and leaves behind the artifacts. Here it is revealed that Captain Edward J. Smith has neglected to heed three strong communiques from other ships in the area warning of icebergs. Furthermore, the ship continued at twenty-one knots, full-speed ahead into the minefield of icebergs. Why? British historian Tim Maltin suggests that the vision on the bridge might have been distorted by an extraordinary bending of light that caused a mirage effect. And so, the questions remain.

Why maintain an obsession with a tragedy that happened 100 years ago? Certainly, the world has suffered many more since that fateful night in 1912. Is it sensationalism, capitalism, or the strange desire to identify with the tragic? Perhaps, it is the human part of us that wants to survive – that believes in our ability to overcome the unimaginable, to press on in the face of our darkest hour. And so, the image of the delicately embroidered handkerchief monogrammed with the letter "F" stays with me, hauntingly, as I depart. It belonged to someone, it touched someone's hand, maybe dried a tear from someone's face. I will never know.

Coronado on the Frontline: 1942-1945. An exhibition at the Coronado Historical Association (through October 31, 2012).

Reviewed by Casey Tanaka, Advanced Placement U.S. History teacher, Coronado High School and Mayor, City of Coronado.

If you stop by the Visitor Center operated by the Coronado Historical Association at 1100 Orange Avenue, you will have the chance to peruse a small but charming set of museum exhibits about Coronado's unique and varied history. This museum has two permanent displays and a third temporary one. The two permanent displays are about Coronado's early years and the Hotel Del Coronado. The third display focuses on life in Coronado during World War Two. This display is an elegant encapsulation of readily familiar items like ration booklets and wartime posters, but it also finds time to examine some aspects of the World War Two experience more particular to small suburban communities like Coronado. Oral histories conducted by staff at the Coronado Historical Association have uncovered the existence of a POW camp at the Naval Amphibious Base in Coronado, which today is better known for being home to half of the U.S. Navy's SEAL Teams. During the Second World War, there were German prisoners of war housed on this base and included in this exhibit is a portrait painted by one of these prisoners of the daughter of the commander of this installation.

Perhaps the most poignant piece in this exhibit is a scrapbook put together by CHA staff of the letters written by Ensign Herbert C. Jones prior to the December 7 attack on Pearl Harbor. Ensign Jones died during the battle and was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for the valor he showed that Sunday morning in Hawaii. It also includes pictures with his father, who eventually retired as a Navy Captain. In addition to this scrapbook, the staff at the CHA assembled and printed copies of a faux World War Two-era newspaper that guests can take with them from this exhibit that gives extra details about the displayed items.

In the exhibit room dedicated to the Hotel Del Coronado, there is a video kiosk with interviews from Japanese Americans who lived through the events of World War Two. This kiosk was generously loaned to the Coronado World War Two exhibit by the Japanese American Citizens League and adds a much needed human face to complement the wistful pieces hanging on the walls or sitting out on small tables. The items on display at the Coronado Historical Association's Visitor Center succeed at transporting its guests back to a time of scrap metal drives, civil defense planning, and USO events. It does so modestly and quickly in an exhibit space that only numbers a few hundred square feet, and it does so in a way that is both understated and thoughtful.

BOOK NOTES

California Women and Politics: From the Gold Rush to the Great Depression. Edited by Robert W. Cherny, Mary Ann Irwin, and Ann Marie Wilson. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011. Illustrations, tables, notes, and index. xviii + 404 pp. \$40.00 paper. Fourteen essays cover a wide range of women's political activism, including conservation, the settlement house movement, labor organization, and anti-vice campaigns. The contributors also incorporate the voices of middle-class reformers, *californianas*, union members, and members of the upper class to suggest the diversity of interests and actors in women's activism.

Empires, Nations, and Families: A History of the North American West, 1800–1860. By Anne F. Hyde. *History of the American West Series.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011. Bibliography, illustrations, maps, notes, and index. xv + 628 pp. \$45.00 cloth. Focusing on family connections, this book examines how Native, European, and American participants in the fur trade laid the groundwork for the American conquest of the West.

The Fall and Rise of the Wetlands of California's Great Central Valley. By Philip Garone. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011. Bibliography, illustrations, maps, appendix, notes, and index. xvi + 422 pp. \$45 cloth. This environmental history of the wetlands of the Central Valley covers such topics as the importance of these wetlands for migratory birds, Native American interactions with the valley's environments, the great irrigation and flood control projects of the twentieth century, and the growing awareness of threats facing the area's wildlife. The book concludes with an epilogue that considers the impact of global climate change on the future of the valley's wetlands.

Kids of the Black Hole: Punk Rock in Postsuburban California. By Dewar MacLeod. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010. Bibliography, illustrations, notes, and index. \$19.95 paper. 240 pp. *Kids of the Black Hole* traces the rise of punk rock in the Los Angeles area in the late 1970s. Historian Dewar MacLeod argues that the political and social landscapes, as well as the physical sprawl of Southern California, helped shape a punk rock subculture that differed from that of other punk epicenters like New York.

THE JOURNAL OF SAN DIEGO HISTORY

Organized Agriculture and the Labor Movement before the UFW: Puerto Rico, Hawai'i, California. By Dionicio Nodín Valdés. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011. Bibliography, illustrations, maps, glossary, notes, and index. vii + 313 pp. \$55.00 cloth. Valdés's work explores farm labor organization in three places that shared a history of conquest by the United States. He argues that the nineteenth-century experience of conquest formed a critical backdrop against which farm workers organized their campaigns.

Women Writers of the American West, 1833–1927. By Nina Baym. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011. Bibliography, index. 371 pp. \$40.00 cloth. Nina Baym, a professor of literature at the University of Illinois, surveys a range of fiction and nonfiction writing spanning nearly a century. The book features three thematic chapters as well as nine chapters dealing with specific regions of the West.