BOOK REVIEWS


Reviewed by Vladimir Guerrero, Independent Scholar, Davis, CA.

When a perceptive, meticulous, and highly educated narrator bears witness to a significant period or event, researchers can inherit a rich description of a time and place in history. Such is the case of Pedro Font, an intellectual friar more suited to the cloister than the rigors of missionary life on New Spain’s northern frontier. And such is the journal Font kept during 1775-1776 as chaplain of an expedition led by Juan Bautista de Anza from Sonora to the Bay of San Francisco. Font’s legacy is a time-capsule of the day-to-day life of the expedition, the route followed, the terrain and tribes encountered, the leadership (both Spanish and indigenous), as well as of the men, women, and children migrating to establish one of the first European settlements in Alta California. And the journal, drafted in the field and carefully reworked after his return to Sonora, is a narrative of conflicting personalities and contrasting societies captured by a rigorous observer and polished by the hand of a master storyteller.

Despite of the eighteenth-century language and occasional touches of pedantic erudition, Font’s journal in Spanish, and Brown’s English version, can be read and enjoyed by today’s reader as an epic story of the frontier. But for researchers interested in the period it is much more. It is an indispensable source of material on the Spanish era and on the Spanish-indigenous relationship far from the metropolis. It is also the story of the origins and migration of the people known as the Californios.

As part of their duties, frontier commanders and chaplains were required to keep journals of the daily progress and events of an expedition. These narratives typically consisted of short factual entries on the route and duration of travel, weather conditions, morale of the troops, availability of water and forage, condition of the animals, and so forth. Multiple reports provided the authorities with better information than a single observer because some would be lost in transit and some were so poorly written as to be of limited value. Font’s scholarly grammar and immaculate penmanship made his journal the exception. His writing reflected his powers of observation and mastery of expression. Surpassing the requirements he kept a journal that, in addition to the facts, included a personal element by describing the leaders, soldiers, and families in transit. Upon returning to Sonora
this draft journal was Font’s source material for his official report and for an extensive narrative whose intended audience was undetermined.

Font’s official report, the short journal, was published in a bilingual Spanish-English edition in 1913. The long final version, a “literary monument” according to Brown, was published in English in 1930. But the extensive field text, buried in the archives of the Franciscan order in Rome, first came to light as part of a compilation of early California material published in 1998. It was this work that led Brown to study the original manuscripts which included extensive inter-linear and marginal entries by their author. Comparing the raw material with the final versions would reveal the author’s creative process and a far more complete picture of the expedition, the period, and the frontier society than the official documents.

To effect the comparison, Brown used the field text with “the multitude of additions, corrections and deletions that the author worked through” as the base, and superimposed on it the changes from the final versions (p. 71). The product was a composite (and repetitive) document, color coded according to source. These almost 400 pages of meticulous scholarship were combined into a “unified translation of … Font’s various versions of his account” which, accompanied by an excellent introduction and comprehensive footnotes, resulted in the present work (p. 71).

Brown’s edition of Font’s journal is now the definitive work on this period of late eighteenth-century Sonora and the pre-American Southwest--an extremely readable composite narrative that can be enjoyed by an interested layman or the most demanding historian.


Reviewed by Arnoldo De León, Professor, Department of History, Angelo State University.

This work aims to accomplish at least three goals: to determine how Hispanic settlers and Indians fleshed out their respective identities during the mission era; to discover the self-perceptions held by pre-1848 California inhabitants; and to explain how scholars have viewed identity in borderlands history. In pursuing these objectives, the editor divided the collection into four parts, with
the first three sections focusing on the numerous ways various players expressed their identity or how they perceived themselves as products of the California environment. The fourth section situates these issues of identity within the larger field of Borderlands studies.

The various groups within California defined themselves and others in different and dynamic ways. Junípero Serra, for one, considered himself a product of Iberia and sought to shape Indian neophytes under his care into becoming Spanish and Christian beings. But not all missionaries viewed their charges as did Serra. A second generation (1790s-early 1800s) administered to the missions as Church representatives working with people they considered able to manage daily affairs. Indians adopted their own identity. In her study on Pablo Tac, Lisbeth Haas notes that despite Tac’s European education and scholarly accomplishments, his upbringing in California trumped European influences, for his writings reveal his identification with the tribe to which he belonged. He felt more of a Luiseño than a Spaniard. In the mission complex, different Indian groups acquired divergent identities, as in the case of choristers who achieved an elite status and thus differentiated themselves from the greater neophyte population.

Meanwhile, the native Californios (i.e., the Spanish/Mexican population) of Alta California during the 1830s, forged a self-conceptualization of their own. Californios rejected political leaders assigned to the region by the central government in Mexico. They identified themselves as “white, cultured, and civilized” and characterized the arriving appointees as “dark-skinned, uncivilized, and criminal” (p. 142). Indeed, many of the Californios had (since the colonial era) regarded themselves as “Spaniards.” DNA evidence, argue John R. Johnson and Joseph G. Lorenz in their contribution to the book, bears out their makeup as mestizos, yet as “gente de razón” (“people of reason”) these mixed-bloods identified themselves as Spaniards.

Part Four on historiography explains how the academic community has treated the subject of identity over time. Driven by a desire to see Spain receive due credit for founding pioneer settlements in North America and the need to acquire financial support from the Native Sons of the Golden West (which granted fellowship monies), the noted historian Herbert E. Bolton viewed California history as one of Spanish splendor before the 1840s and then of Anglo American progress in the wake of the War with Mexico and the 1849 gold rush. Identity, finds David J. Weber, did not attract borderlands scholars until about the 1970s. Recent scholarship depicts it as changing according to circumstances and as a social construction wherein historical subjects personalize themselves vis-à-vis others. A survey of the scholarship on the Far North (written by Spanish authors from circa the sixteenth to the nineteenth century) finds a correlation between
historical topics and an author’s professional or ethnic identity. Naval officers wrote about naval expeditions or sea battles, for example, and members of religious orders concentrated on the missions.

In the Introduction editor Steven W. Hackel notifies readers that the investigation of identity in borderlands studies has recent origins. The collection, therefore, serves as a contribution to these new interests, especially as they apply to Spanish/Mexican California. It is useful for the insights the essays offer, the different perspectives they give on their respective topic, as well as the cross-section of subjects they cover: Indians, missionaries, soldiers, and settlers.


Reviewed by David Miller, Adjunct Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of San Diego.

Whereas most Americans are familiar with the triumphant narrative of American immigration history embodied in New York’s Ellis Island, few are aware of the West Coast point of entry for twentieth-century immigrants, San Francisco’s Angel Island Immigration Station. And while some declare it the “Ellis Island of the West,” historians Erika Lee and Judy Yung argue that it was in fact very different than its eastern counterpart. Angel Island sat at a global crossroads and served as the point of entry for immigrants from numerous countries. This makes it the ideal subject of not just a history of Asian or Western immigration, but of the entirety of United States immigration history. Lee and Yung argue that Angel Island’s history is about the “ongoing struggle to define what it means to be an American” and is, at its heart, American history (pp. 21, xx).

The Introduction and first chapter establish the context of Asian immigration, especially how it differed from European immigration in terms of exclusion and naturalization. By 1882, federal law prohibited entry to most Chinese immigrants and completely banned naturalization. This necessitated the construction of a physical place to allow immigration officials to oversee the execution of these laws. This is where Angel Island diverged from Ellis Island.

Lee and Yung note at least three important differences between the two that all revolve around the central fact that Ellis Island processed primarily European immigrants while Angel Island’s main population were Asian. The first difference
was one of exclusion versus restriction. Angel Island was designed to keep particular immigrant groups out while Ellis Island served more as a processing center facilitating entry into America. After its 1910 opening in the wake of the Chinese Exclusion Act, officials at Angel Island regulated and managed the new exclusion laws where the burden on the immigrant was to demonstrate they had a legal right to enter the country. The second difference involved a prohibition to naturalization as opposed to a facilitation of the naturalization process. Once through Angel Island, Asian immigrants at various times could not become citizens, a fate spared Ellis Island’s European population. And third, as a result of these differences, the length of stay varied greatly from weeks and months on Angel Island to hours or days on Ellis Island. As a consequence, Angel Island can be understood as a detention center characterized as much by human tragedy as by resilience. Held the longest, it was the Chinese for example who found solace and catharsis by etching expressive poetry on the facility’s walls.

The book continues topically with each chapter detailing the experience of different immigrant groups: the Chinese, Japanese, South Asian, Korean, Russian and Jewish, Mexican, and Filipino. Each group arrived among different national and international contexts and their experience proceeded accordingly. For example, a major theme of Asian immigration, in particular the Chinese, was the role of the government (local, state, and federal) in creating and enforcing laws restricting entry, declaring many Asian groups “Aliens Ineligible for Citizenship,” and then limiting their rights. That new label “alien” had profound consequences not just for the immigrants at the time, but for the entirety of U.S. immigration policy. The effort to restrict Chinese immigration required the federal government to create a national immigration bureaucratic apparatus that invented the modern and politically charged concept of “illegal alien.”

Comparative analysis of the seven immigrant groups leads Lee and Yung to conclude that three factors defined the immigration process: race/nationality, gender, and class. These three factors could be a source of privilege or disadvantage for an immigrant. Of course, often times these categories merged, as in the case of female Chinese immigrants who endured the burden of proving they were not prostitutes, a long standing racial assumption about the Chinese based in part on previous and existing labor and marriage policies discouraging Chinese female immigration. Or in the case of Japanese men, the 1907 Gentlemen’s Agreement ensured that American officials would whisk the Japanese upper class through the process.

Fortunately for the reader, a potentially dry and tedious bureaucratic history comes to life through the richly detailed lived experiences of those processed at Angel Island. The authors resuscitate immigrant voices, place them at the center
of the narrative, and allow them to tell their own stories. The book concludes with an interesting social and cultural history of the facility itself, detailing how the abandoned (it closed in 1940) and dilapidated structures became a museum and place of historical memory through the work of local activists.

Today Angel Island sits in the middle of San Francisco Bay and its state park is a popular day trip for hikers, bicyclists, and the occasional curious visitor. But as Lee and Yung remind us in this definitive history, Angel Island is more than a collection of buildings from our nation’s past, it is the physical place where American immigration policy played out in the lives and on the bodies of thousands of immigrants for thirty years in a way radically different than the celebratory national narrative embodied by the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. Accurately remembered, Lee and Yung tell us, this history raises an intriguing question: How can the United States be both “an inclusive nation of immigrants and an exclusive gatekeeping nation?” (p. 6). This is a question worth contemplating, and scholars of immigration, undergraduates, and lay audiences will find much food for thought in this book.


Reviewed by Ryan Jordan, Lecturer, Department of History, University of San Diego.

In *Changing and Remaining*, Stephen Cox tells the history of All Saints’ Episcopal Parish in Hillcrest. It is the oldest church in that neighborhood (from 1912), and the parish itself dates back to 1896 as a mission of St. Paul’s Parish. The Episcopalians take pride in being the oldest Protestant denomination in San Diego, and while much attention has been paid to the largest (and oldest) Episcopal parish, St. Paul’s, the parish of All Saints’ Church in Hillcrest also has a colorful history. Cox, a professor of literature at UC San Diego, details this history by meticulously reconstructing each rector’s tenure from church minutes, interviews, and archived correspondence.

The first parish church was erected amidst shrubs and vacant dirt streets. Over the years, the community survived indebtedness, competition from other churches, and squabbles among parishioners, rectors, and the vestry. The church also survived city efforts to tear down part of the church so as to widen Sixth
Avenue (the coming of the 163 freeway seems to have prevented this from ever occurring). Although the church has been in Hillcrest for over 100 years, most of those who have attended the church have come from out of the area – including congregants from as far away as Alpine, where several parishioners and at least one of the associate rectors lived. Without outside donations and other support, the parish would not have survived as it has. The book also details the architectural changes to the parish church through the years. This discussion makes the book of significant interest for students of San Diego’s material culture.

Theologically All Saints embraced Anglo-Catholicism more or less from its creation as a parish. Although it was theologically conservative, Cox maintains the parish was socially more moderate than others. Nonetheless, the parish for many years resisted the dominant liberalism of the American Episcopal Church. This is all the more interesting given the church’s location. While the neighborhood around All Saints became associated with the gay community and political progressivism by the late twentieth century, the parish was not supportive of female ordination or of modifications to the Book of Common Prayer.

One of the more dynamic and successful rectors, Paul Satrang, remained outspoken in his distaste for secular humanism and existentialism in the modern Episcopal church. Satrang’s successor upon his retirement in 1985, Steven McClaskey, seemed to go even further than Satrang in denouncing secular elements in late 20th century America. McClaskey actually removed his family from Hillcrest to Scripps Ranch – a telling example of what he thought of the neighborhood around All Saints. Even for a church that had never relied completely on Hillcrest for parishioners, this aloofness did not come without a cost: membership consistently declined in the years after 1990. Following McClaskey’s departure in 2002, the church has attempted to become a larger presence in its neighborhood through outreach efforts, realizing the need to minister to the people in its own backyard in order to stave off further contraction. Professor Cox ends his book with this note of optimism as the Episcopal Church remains engaged with changing definitions of church community both in the San Diego area and the nation at large.

Reviewed by Rich Schultz, Lecturer, Department of History & Political Science, San Diego City College.

It is no secret that in today’s consumer-driven times, the efforts of advertisers and marketers are unceremoniously yanking the Cinco de Mayo holiday from its rich historical roots. The complexities of history are often inconvenient for the profit motive, and stand in the way of attempts to position a beer or salty snack as the best choice for what one writer from Business Insider Magazine labeled as “America’s Favorite Mexican Drinking Day.” Of course, the risk of a narrative that pitches the Cinco de Mayo as an excuse to imbibe is that it strips the event of its deeper cultural significance. Fortunately, David Hayes-Bautista has assembled a meaningful exploration of the origins of this unique annual tradition of commemorating the Mexican military defeat of French forces in the Battle of Puebla on May 5, 1862. The key to understanding the celebration, he argues, is recognizing that both the United States and Mexico were simultaneously involved in bloody conflicts that threatened to tear each country apart.

The French intervention in Mexico, aimed at collecting debts and rebuilding a lost colonial presence in the Americas, came about in part because of the collapse of the American political order following the 1860 election of Abraham Lincoln. The French sought to exploit the division in American society and render meaningless the Monroe Doctrine by asserting claims in Mexico. Cutting deals with and making promises to the Confederacy was part of that strategy. For Mexicans in California, living on lands recently brought into the American fold as a result of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the French military campaign threatened the existence of the nation with which they still identified strongly. At the same time, the Confederate menace prompted ethnic Mexicans and the wider Spanish-speaking community – Latinos – to defend the Union side in the Civil War. In the process, these Latinos pointed to the Mexican victory at Puebla as a way to champion “the very American values of freedom and democracy” (p. 175). To rally behind the heroes of Puebla was to defend freedom, and by extension, the Union.

Hayes-Bautista is efficient in describing the conditions under which Latinos struggled in 1850s California. State legislators spun a web of codified discrimination – the Foreign Miners’ Tax and the “Greaser Act,” among others laws – to create a new political, economic, and social order. These new laws supported racism and anti-Mexican sentiment on the street. In this tense atmosphere, Latinos
monitored Mexico’s war with the French by way of newspaper accounts. These same newspapers carried the latest updates from Civil War battlefields. Here was a moment for Latinos both to demonstrate their public loyalty to the Union, and to celebrate their pride as *mexicanos* and/or their solidarity as Spanish-speakers in an increasingly Anglophone California. Public displays of celebration for the Cinco de Mayo amounted to loyalty, resistance, and Latino unity.

Analysis of Spanish-language newspapers is at the center of Hayes-Bautista’s work, and he uses these sources masterfully. Through bulletins from local social clubs, the *juntas patrióticas* (patriotic assemblies), we see the beginnings of the parades, speeches, songs, and 21-gun salutes to mark the Battle of Puebla. The juntas raised funds for the war effort in Mexico, defended the legal rights of Latinos in the United States, and provided relief for impoverished members of their local communities. Most important for Hayes-Bautista, the juntas developed a “summoning power” through the Cinco de Mayo ceremonies they planned, promoted, and staged in the early 1860s (p. 130-131). Shaping a public memory through the Cinco de Mayo festivities allowed the juntas to “harness the collective efforts of the Latino community towards specific ends” (p. 178). The men and women who organized Cinco de Mayo programs were always mindful to fly both the Mexican and American flags at their events. Speakers at the first Cinco de Mayo celebration, held a year after the battle itself, and five months after the Emancipation Proclamation took effect, referred to both the French invasion and to the importance of staying loyal to the Union cause. These Latino leaders were well aware of the threat of a Franco-Confederate alliance.

It is a testament to Hayes-Bautista’s prose that he leaves us wanting more about the developments he mentions briefly at the end of his book: the ways the Cinco de Mayo tradition evolved in the years following the capitulation of the French in 1867. How did Latinos mark the event through contradictory rounds of guest worker programs and forced deportations in the mid-twentieth century? How was the Cinco de Mayo put to new uses during the height of the Chicano movement in the 1960s and 1970s? Following NAFTA, how and why did corporations try to harness the energies of the Cinco de Mayo for their own profit? How has the Cinco de Mayo holiday served to build bridges between Latinos and the rest of American society? Whether those questions are taken up in greater detail by Hayes-Bautista or by subsequent scholars, he has with this book established a high standard for launching the conversation while providing an important contribution to the canons of American and Latino social and cultural history.

Reviewed by Jim Miller, Professor, Department of English, San Diego City College.

“Los Angeles is filled with ghosts,” we are told in the introduction to Laura Pulido, Laura Barraclough, and Wendy Chang’s A People’s Guide to Los Angeles, ghosts “not only of people, but also of places and buildings and ordinary and extraordinary moments and events that once filled them” (p. 4). And in the process of chasing those ghosts, the authors create a tool for what they call “alternative tourism” by giving us a guidebook that serves as a “political disruption of the way Los Angeles is commonly known and experienced.” If traditional guidebooks “contribute to inequality in places like Los Angeles by directing tourist and investment dollars towards some places and not others” and subsequently reinforcing an “individualist and masculinist” view of history, their guide aims to refocus our attention “on those people and places that are systematically left off the map” (p. 5).

After a brief but insightful discussion of the political significance of “rereading vernacular landscapes,” Pulido, Barraclough, and Chang outline their criteria for their selection process, informing the reader that to make it into A People’s Guide to Los Angeles, a place could not have already been designated as historically significant, could not be an established institution, and had to help them illustrate a diversity of geography, historical eras, etc. Their stated goal in proceeding in this fashion is “to inspire tourists, residents, and activists to seek out these places in order to reimagine themselves, their histories, their communities, and their ambitions for the world” (p. 13).

The rest of the book is divided into geographic sectors including North Los Angeles, the Greater Eastside and San Gabriel Valley, South Los Angeles, the Harbor and South Bay, the Westside, and the San Fernando Valley. These sections are followed by a series of “thematic tours” such as “Radical People of Color Movements of the Sixties and Seventies Tour” and the “Economic Restructuring and Globalization Tour.” The text itself is divided into brief numbered sections that give pithy descriptions of why particular sites are of interest, whether that be the parking lot that was the former home of the Black Panther Party in South Los Angeles, the former site of the General Motors plant in the San Fernando Valley, or a private home in the Eastside that is a “residential discrimination site.”

Interestingly the authors also pick existing places like “the California Club”
in downtown LA as landmarks of past with existing exclusionary practices and power brokering. Places like those and the currently restrictive park in San Marino make for interesting interrogations with the world as it is now. These stand side by side in the collection with the ghosts of old community papers and activist headquarters as well as the home of the occasional progressive writer.

Every site is noted by street address with directions if necessary and the entire book is generously illustrated with contemporary and historic photographs as well as sketches and graphics. Included along with the descriptions of the individual sites are “personal reflections” by various activists and community members commenting on everything from being a beach park ranger to participating in the Civil Rights Movement. The authors also include “nearby sites of interest,” “favorite neighborhood restaurants,” and selected readings to help users of the guide learn more about the sites. It is a rich, full, and fascinating alternative tour of Los Angeles that is sure to hold something of interest for just about anyone who is curious about the subterranean history and hidden current life of the city.

In my own work on San Diego, Los Angeles, and Oakland, I too have chased my share of ghosts. Hence I had great admiration for the authors’ significant accomplishment in putting together this guidebook. That said, perhaps it was a mistake to omit already recognized historical sites rather than reinterpreting them. This could have provided for an even richer dialogue between the booster history of the city and its unrecognized ghosts. The book is also very light on cultural and literary Los Angeles and the sections on the West side and the San Fernando Valley are considerably weaker than the rest of the book. One might also wish for a slightly less politically specific series of themed tours. As someone who has guided similar expeditions in San Diego, it helps to mix it up a little and provide more unexpected juxtapositions and contrasts of experience.

Still, all things considered, A People’s Guide to Los Angeles is a groundbreaking and important project. Anyone interested in getting a full picture of the cityscape of Los Angeles should read this book and begin the rewarding work of reimagining the way we remember and the way we live. It would be a good model for someone to pick up and apply to the back of the postcard that is San Diego.
BOOK NOTES


*Grave Matters: Excavating California’s Buried Past.* By Tony Platt. Berkeley, CA: Heyday, 2011. Maps, illustrations, bibliography, notes, and index. xv + 237 pp. $18.95 paper. Tony Platt contributes to ongoing debates surrounding the disinterment of indigenous graves by focusing on the experiences of the Yurok people of northwestern California. Since the 1970s the Yuroks have attempted to protect indigenous interests in the face of archaeologists’ and anthropologists’ desire to excavate Indian remains.

*Pregnancy, Motherhood, and Choice in 20th Century Arizona.* By Mary S. Melcher. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012. Photographs, tables, bibliography, notes, and index. xii + 250 pp. $50.00 cloth. Public historian Mary Melcher investigates issues of childbirth, abortion, birth control, and infant mortality over the course of the last century. She explores topics such as the challenges posed by poverty and the lack of access to health care in the largely rural society of early-twentieth century Arizona and includes a chapter on Margaret Sanger’s efforts in the state’s birth control movement.

*The Southern Emigrant Trail through Riverside County.* By Anne J. Miller. Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2012. Maps, photographs, appendices, notes, and index. vi + 100 pp. $34.95 paper. The Southern Emigrant Trail, a route into California based on Indian trails and the routes of missionaries and trappers, was pioneered by Kit Carson during the Mexican War and subsequently used by the Mormon Battalion and Gold Rush emigrants. Miller’s book provides an in-depth description of the portion of the trail in Riverside County, featuring maps, photographs, and anecdotes relating historical events that occurred along the route.
Thirty Explosive Years in Los Angeles County. By John Anson Ford. Introduction by Michael Adamson. San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 2010 (reprint). Chart, map, photographs, and index. x1 + 232 pp. $29.95 paper. John Anson Ford served as a Los Angeles County Supervisor during a period of remarkable economic and population growth from the 1930s to the 1950s. His 1961 memoir, reprinted by the Huntington Library, chronicles Ford’s efforts to cope with the bureaucratic, environmental, and social problems that accompanied this growth. In addition to a new introduction by Michael Adamson, this volume features a listing of the John Anson Ford papers held at the Huntington Library.


UPCOMING EXHIBITION
Opening April 5, 2013

BOTTLED & KEGGED
SAN DIEGO'S
Craft Brew Culture

Bottled & Kegged, the History Center’s upcoming featured exhibition, will educate visitors about the region’s brewing history and provide context for how San Diego is making history in the craft brewing world.

Exhibit features:
• historic retrospective of San Diego’s brewing past and what the future holds
• brewing science
• interactive brewing, hop, and flavor stations
• educational programming for all ages
• 21 and over “History Happy Hours” with beers brewed specifically for these events

Related events include:
• Taste of San Diego Craft Brews
  February 16, 2013
• Makers of San Diego History Gala
  April 27, 2013

For more information visit sandiegohistory.org