

BOOK REVIEWS

Junípero Serra : California's Founding Father. By Steven W. Hackel. New York: Hill and Wang, 2013. Maps, photographs, notes, and index. 325 pp. \$27.00 cloth.

Journey to the Sun: Junípero Serra's Dream and the Founding of California. By Gregory Orfalea. New York: Scribner, 2014. Maps, photographs, notes, and index. 465 pp. \$30.00 cloth.

Reviewed by Robert M. Senkewicz, Professor, Department of History, Santa Clara University.

The year 2013 marked the 300th anniversary of the birth of Father Junípero Serra, OFM. Both of these books were occasioned by that anniversary, and both offer important insights into the life of this early California missionary.

Steven W. Hackel's biography builds upon the research he has been conducting for a number of years. It shares the strengths of Hackel's earlier work, *Children of Coyote, Missionaries of St. Francis*, in that it rests upon deep archival research in repositories in the United States, Mexico, and Spain, and pays special attention to the experiences of the indigenous peoples of the Americas. The book begins with a brief chapter summarizing the history of Serra's home island of Mallorca. It then moves chronologically through Serra's youth in Petra and his career as a Franciscan student and professor in Palma. Serra moved to the New World in 1749 and Hackel follows his experiences in the Sierra Gorda (1750-1758). Serra then resided at the Colegio de San Fernando in Mexico City and during that time also preached a series of domestic missions in various regions of New Spain (1758-1767). Serra entered Baja California in 1768 and Hackel details his term as president of the Alta California missions (1769-1784).

This volume is especially strong on the social context of Serra's missionary activities. Hackel's chapter on the Sierra Gorda is especially fine, since he perceptively and persuasively places the Sierra Gorda missions within the context of the colonization of New Spain, changing ideas in Spain and Mexico City about the proper scope of missionary activity, including conflicts among missionaries, settlers, and soldiers over access to Indian labor. Hackel argues that the missionary attempt to congregate the indigenous Pame inhabitants so that they could practice European-style agriculture was only a marginal success. He also maintains that missionization did not have a lasting effect upon the local culture.

Hackel's treatment of Serra's experiences in Alta California constitute by far

the best short account of his time in that region. Hackel argues that Serra expected much in Alta California. He thought that the region represented “a promised land” that offered “‘poor’ and ‘naked’ peoples who could be remade according to Catholic teachings.” (p. 162). Hackel analyzes Serra’s founding of various missions, his incessant quarrels with every military commander the government sent to Alta California, and his ambivalent relationship with the native peoples. He thought that they were ready for evangelization, yet their responses to his efforts often frustrated his expectations.

The volume is especially strong on social issues, but perhaps less so on the religious context and ideas that formed the backbone of Serra’s own perception of himself and his missions. Indeed, Hackel at times tends to treat the Franciscans in a one-dimensional fashion, saying that the Franciscan intellectual tradition was “a system that put the highest value on intellectual conformity” (p. 41). He characterizes the Colegio de San Fernando as “an insular community of ardent and almost desperate believers.” These descriptions underplay the tremendous vitality and diversity that had been present in the Franciscan missionary efforts in the New World since the sixteenth century and mask the individual manner in which Serra was able to articulate his missionary activity. Also, Serra as a man tends to be less present towards the end of the volume than he was in the beginning. On the very last page of the book, Hackel writes that Serra was “bereft of an individual self” (p. 242), which might lead one to wonder why so many biographies have been written about him.

In contrast, Gregory Orfalea’s volume focuses almost exclusively on Serra’s “individual self.” While Hackel’s approach is solidly historical, Orfalea’s approach is more speculative and literary. Indeed, the two books are almost mirror images of each other. Orfalea focuses on Serra as an individual and tries to enter into Serra’s mind and heart. He quotes, for instance, almost in its entirety, Serra’s first extant letter, written to the parish priest of his home town of Petra after he himself had already left Mallorca. He encouraged the priest to try to console his parents, who were very disappointed that he was leaving his home island forever and would never see them again.

In Orfalea’s reading, Serra was profoundly influenced by the more open and tolerant form of Christianity represented by Francis of Assisi, Bonaventure, and Mallorcan missionary Ramón Lull. This gave him a respect for different ways of approaching the divine. As a missionary, it meant that he was very interested in creating a form of Christianity that would reflect both Spanish and indigenous cultures. Orfalea believes that Serra was able to move significantly in this direction during his labors in the Sierra Gorda and that this approach characterized his evangelization efforts in Alta California. Orfalea also argues that the indigenous

cultures also affected Serra himself. He maintains, for instance, that Serra, during his early years in Alta California, was “disoriented by the lack of ordered time and news.” (p. 215).

Orfalea is not an uncritical admirer of Serra. For instance, even though he acknowledges that flogging was a standard form of punishment in the Spanish Empire during the eighteenth century, he does not excuse Serra’s approval of this method of disciplining what he regarded as recalcitrant Indians. He acknowledges that Serra could be plagued by a “nagging perfectionism” that could sour his relationships with his fellow missionaries and others (p. 201), and by a “zeal” that “trumped his sizable brain.” (p. 236).

While Orfalea’s tight focus on Serra as a man gives the book an overarching unity, the volume as it is conceived inevitably suffers from the chronological and thematic distribution of Serra’s extant writings that have survived. The overwhelming majority of Serra’s correspondence comes from only the last quarter of his life, while he was in Alta California. And, as Hackel noted, many of Serra’s Alta California writings are bureaucratic reports, which do not touch very significantly on matters of spirituality or values. Accordingly, Orfalea admits, “I have taken some liberties in reconstructing Serra’s thoughts and feelings.” (p. 367). Given the kind of book he wanted to write, this was inevitable. But too often the result is that Orfalea, as a twenty-first-century writer, projects twenty-first-century concerns onto Serra. Thus Serra is presented as aware of things that we take for granted, such as the ambiguities of Spanish colonialism and the intrinsic value of indigenous cultures. Unfortunately, there is very little in Serra’s writing to support such an interpretation. Serra definitely comes alive in these pages, and there are many important contributions in this volume. But I fear that, too often, the Serra who lives in these pages is a Serra of our time, not of his own.

Hackel’s volume sets a new scholarly standard and should be read by anyone interested in the early history of California. Orfalea’s volume offers some excellent insights into the manner in which different understandings of religion helped shape that early history.

Curious Unions: Mexican American Workers and Resistance in Oxnard, California, 1898-1961. By Frank P. Barajas. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012. Bibliography, illustrations, index, and notes. xiv + 355 pp. \$50.00 cloth.

Reviewed by Andrea S. Johnson, Visiting Lecturer, Department of History, California State University, Fresno.

Frank Barajas, professor of history at California State University, Channel Islands, and scholar of Southern California history, has provided readers with an enjoyable, easy-to-absorb narrative that discusses the rise of labor movements and resistance in the Mexican American community of Oxnard, California.

The major strength of this work is Barajas's ability to place this resistance in the context of Oxnard's multi-racial labor force. Even though his focus is on Mexican American workers, Barajas does not neglect the role of Chinese, Japanese, East Indian, and *bracero* workers. Instead, as Barajas explains, these multi-ethnic efforts are often what comprised such "curious unions," as Mexican American workers in Oxnard often allied with other groups while trying to make gains for labor. In addition, in explaining the interactions of white and minority groups, Barajas is able to discern ways in which the white population of Oxnard was not homogenous.

A second strength of this work is the way in which the author reconstructs life in Oxnard, particularly in Chapters 2 and 3. Using a variety of sources such as fire maps, newspaper accounts, oral histories, and census records, Barajas is able to re-create the town, explaining the rise of neighborhoods, housing styles, entertainment districts, and the role of churches, schools, and athletic opportunities (particularly baseball and boxing) in the community. Through these descriptions, Barajas convinces the reader that his subjects managed to create identities that were both ethnic and American through an Americanization process which occasionally meant that the workers were able to demand changes from the political leadership in Oxnard. In later chapters, Barajas continues to examine changes in the town, even explaining generational differences among workers. This last argument is particularly compelling in the author's discussion of the zoot-suit conflicts of the World War II era. Barajas shows that the older generation was more likely to disapprove of zoot-suits, while the younger generation was more likely to embrace the style as a protest method.

The author is also to be commended for his work in the last chapter, which explains the roles of the Community Service Organization and Cesar Chavez in worker resistance. This period of Chavez's work is often passed over by scholars who are typically eager to write instead about the grape or lettuce strikes. Barajas does well in providing not only an explanation of Chavez's work, but also an argument that the workers in Oxnard were able to contribute successfully to the end of the *bracero* program. From this chapter and the preceding one, the reader gains an understanding of the ways the existing *bracero* population influenced the Mexican American community. While scholars have long understood the economic impact of the *bracero* program on domestic workers, Barajas is able to touch on identity formation and how the existence of a *bracero* community,

somewhat removed both physically and culturally from the Mexican American one, forced permanent residents in Oxnard to embrace an identity that was both Mexican and American.

The major weakness of the book is the first chapter, which is somewhat distracting for the reader, as Barajas attempts to recount the entire early economic history of the Oxnard region. Some of this work, such as the section on the Chumash, although interesting, is not tied into the broader story. While Barajas describes Chumash intermarriages and the tendency of outsiders to mistake the Chumash for Mexicans, the reader is still left with many questions about the connection of Chumash culture to that of the workers in the era under study. The information on the *Californios* is similarly disconnected, seemingly relevant mostly in terms of their development of large farms and ranches and the legal challenges to their possession of the land. What seems to be missing from this section is the economic history not of the landowners and merchants, but of those in early California who were of Mexican heritage but who were not labeled *Californios* and whose labor was often co-opted by others. This history would have provided the reader with a better picture of the long-term change over time for the working class in the region. Throughout the rest of the work, the reader would have also been better served with more frequent examinations of trends in the state as a whole. For instance, while Barajas acknowledges that there were other strikes in the state in 1933, the local sugar beet strike seems relatively disconnected from those labor actions, which were significant.

These minor criticisms aside, the book is worth reading for those interested in labor history, Chicano history, or the history of the Ventura County region.

Sol Price: Retail Revolutionary and Social Innovator. By Robert E. Price. San Diego: San Diego History Center, 2012. Foreword, photographs, and index. 223 pp. \$19.95 cloth.

Reviewed by William Deverell, Professor of History, University of Southern California and Director, Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West.

Robert Price has written an insightful and often touching biography of his father, an entrepreneur of remarkable talent and impact. Born in 1916, Solomon "Sol" Price came to California from New York as a teenager just before the Great Depression. He studied philosophy at the University of Southern California and graduated from the USC law school in 1938. Price then practiced law in San Diego and quickly established a reputation as an attorney with a commitment to charitable and pro bono work, especially for Jewish clients and institutions. Robert Price traces his father's early career with appropriate reference to names, dates, and events, and he notes as well that Sol Price sought out and benefitted from superb mentoring by more senior attorneys and members of the legal profession. Such mentoring, coupled with Price's obvious intellectual talents and drive, helped make the young attorney successful and widely respected. He rose in legal and political circles, and his ties to the Democratic Party grew up and out from Southern California across the state and the nation.

In the mid-1950s, Price and his partners started FedMart in San Diego. A not-for-profit retail corporation, built on warehoused commodities and memberships, FedMart was the sister to the for-profit Loma Supply Corporation. The idea had been borrowed from Fedco, a non-profit membership store for federal workers (which had turned down Price's idea of partnership). FedMart took off. It is hard today to understand just how innovative the membership/warehouse retail idea (coupled with the non-profit and for-profit partnership) was at the time. And that's entirely due to Price's success at expanding the model through FedMart stores, on to Price Club twenty years later, and from there to other enterprises that kept true to the membership and warehouse model. What had begun as an experiment in the immediate aftermath of World War II had, by the end of the century, become a retail staple that had expanded well beyond the boundaries of not only California but of the United States. Price invented and then perfected the model.

Price kept to simple business maxims, and his vision and ideas were often copied (most famously and most successfully by the Walton family through Walmart and its retail progeny). He insisted on strict attention to customer service, he negotiated business deals with vigor, he compensated employees well, and

his life was marked by civic and community service ideals and philanthropy.

Robert Price has done more here than offer a business school case study of remarkable success. He has carefully portrayed his father's life in stories and pictures, and, in so doing, has illuminated more than a half century of business opportunity and acumen intricately coupled with civic awareness and altruism.

Genesis of the Salk Institute: The Epic of Its Founders. By Suzanne Bourgeois. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013. Bibliography, photographs, index, and notes. xxxiv + 230 pp. \$49.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Rodolfo J. Alaniz, Doctoral Candidate, History, University of California, San Diego.

During the 1960s, a group of renowned scientists gathered in La Jolla, California, to create an institute for biological research. The gathering was inspired by Jonas Salk, the developer of the polio vaccine, and his vision for a premier site for science. The institute would conduct pure research on the biological and ethical problems besieging humanity. Its vision was bold and no small task--even given Salk's renown. It was a vision born of a generation of great people shaped by the terrors and triumphs of World War II. Suzanne Bourgeois provides something similar to an autobiographical, institutional account of the conception, birth, and trials of the Salk Institute.

The author has a distinct advantage when it comes to the writing of this book. Bourgeois was a scientific researcher at the Salk Institute from an early stage. That "insider perspective" lends a distinctly warm and personal style to the author's narrative. Early in the book, she provides a number of biographical sketches to explain the major players involved with the Salk Institute. These biographies are rooted in the founding members' experiences during World War II. Many of the founding scientist's lives were altered by wartime circumstances. For example, Francis Crick changed his graduate research topic because the apparatus he needed to complete his project was destroyed by German explosives (p. xxxii). Bourgeois's sources include remembered accounts balanced with substantial archival research. The miniature biographies demonstrate a deep knowledge of each scientist's quirks and some of the interpersonal conflicts that developed at the Institute. The personalities involved with the Salk Institute's founding were larger than life, in most cases. Their trials and conflicts were no less grand; the author was right to use the word "epic" in her subtitle.

Telling the story of a large network of individuals is a difficult task. Bourgeois

manages to follow an astounding number of scientists, though the large cast of subjects can be a little disorienting to a reader unfamiliar with the history of biology. Still, the author's connection to the subject allows her to give a complex and insightful account of the Institute's early years.

The book is not only an insightful science drama; it is also an invaluable primary source document for future historians, containing as it does the reflections of a witness of and participant in the early years of the Institute. At times, the author's personal feelings about the actors surface, though she acknowledges that her account of events may be somewhat biased. Yet the supplementing of archival research with Bourgeois's own reminiscences results in a more intimate rendering of the Institute's early years than would otherwise have been possible. The rich narrative often left me feeling as though I was having a cup of coffee with the author as I was given a first-hand recollection of the Institute. Another advantage of Bourgeois's own involvement in the history she relates is her ability to cover periods of the Institute's history that have been relatively unexplored and have fewer archival records, such as the delicate period between the 1960 vote of the San Diego citizenry to give land to the Salk Institute and the erecting of the physical building itself. After the gift of land, the Salk Fellows moved to San Diego but had no laboratory to occupy. This period was characterized by intense conflict, a frantic search for money, and institutional politics. Bourgeois also provides a history of the tense, divided years under Frederic de Hoffmann, a director of the Salk Institute who ordered the destruction of his administrative records upon his departure (p. 179).

The historian of science will also find a rare gem in Bourgeois's account: a vision of science "before major support of medical research by [United States] government agencies became available" (p. 5). The Salk Institute, much like the Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard that inspired the Salk Institute's structure, represented an alternative to the federal funding model that many scientists are familiar with today. The era following World War II saw a shift in government support for scientific research. The author captures the story of how the Salk group envisioned supporting science for the betterment of humanity during this era and the changes and challenges that helped shape science funding in the twenty-first century.

Genesis of the Salk Institute, overall, is a well-researched, personal account of the Salk Institute's founding. Bourgeois has written the inspiring story of scientists that had incredible goals; one scientist had even sought to eliminate a terrible disease from the world and succeeded. Bourgeois recounts their tale, the Institute they were bold enough to imagine, and the sequence of events that gave us the Institute sitting upon the La Jolla bluffs today.

BOOK NOTES

California Cuisine and Just Food. By Sally K. Fairfax, Louise Nelson Dyble, Greig Tor Guthey, Lauren Gwin, Monica Moore, and Jennifer Sokolove. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012. Illustrations, tables, notes, bibliography, and index. 376 pp. \$45 cloth. \$25 paper. In *California Cuisine and Just Food*, the authors (a collection of academics and activists) come together to examine the social justice issues that have informed many of the innovations in San Francisco Bay Area cuisine. The book charts the evolution of food democracy – a term that suggests concerns about sustainability, the rights of laborers in the agricultural and food production industries, and the affordability of quality food – while noting some of the challenges that lay ahead for its advocates.

Church and State in the City: Catholics and Politics in Twentieth-Century San Francisco. By William Issel. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013. Illustrations, map, notes, and index. x + 325 pp. \$29.95 paper. William Issel's book examines the influence of the Catholic Church in San Francisco, suggesting that the city's Catholic population, through its involvement in the labor movement, civil rights reform, and other social issues, played a significant role in the development of the city's progressive political tradition.

The Colorado Doctrine: Water Rights, Corporations, and Distributive Justice on the American Frontier. By David Schorr. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012. Illustrations, notes, and index. xiv + 235 pp. \$65 cloth. David Schorr of Tel Aviv University explores the emergence of the Colorado Doctrine in water rights. He argues that the miners, farmers, and attorneys who developed this doctrine (also known as prior appropriation) viewed it as a way to check the power of large-scale landowners, who threatened to monopolize traditional riparian water rights by virtue of their control of the land through which streams and rivers flowed.

Creating an Orange Utopia: Eliza Lovell Tibbets and the Birth of California's Citrus Industry. By Patricia Ortlieb and Peter Economy. West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation Press, 2011. 136 pp. \$12.95 paper. Eliza Lovell Tibbets is commonly acknowledged as a founding figure in the California citrus industry; Carey McWilliams and later scholars have noted her planting of the first two Washington navel orange trees in Riverside in the 1870s. Tibbets's scion, Patricia Ortlieb, examines her great-great-grandmother's journey from her Midwestern roots, through her involvement in various branches of nineteenth-century social reform, and to the fruition of her life's work in Riverside.

THE JOURNAL OF SAN DIEGO HISTORY

Overdrive: L.A. Constructs the Future, 1940-1990. Edited by Wim de Wit and Christopher James Alexander. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013. Foreword, drawings, photographs, and index. 320 pp. \$59.95 cloth. This volume, based on a 2013 exhibit at the J. Paul Getty Center, explores architectural trends in Los Angeles during a half-century in which the region emerged as a leading site of modernist design. Fifteen essays by leading scholars including Becky Nicolaides, Philip Ethington, and William Deverell are followed by a collection of sketches, photographs, and plans of iconic structures.

Pablo Tac, Indigenous Scholar: Writing on Luiseño Language and Colonial History, c.1840. Lisbeth Haas with art by James Luna. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011. Foreword, illustrations, and index. 288 pp. \$49.95 cloth. Historians of the California missions know Pablo Tac as the Christian Luiseño author of one of the only primary source documents written by an indigenous Californian. Lisbeth Haas has performed the invaluable work of presenting Tac's entire manuscript, completed when he was in Rome studying for the priesthood, which contains fascinating accounts of early Spanish-indigenous encounters, life at Mission San Luis Rey, and pre- as well as post-contact Luiseño spirituality.

Coast to Crest and Beyond: Across San Diego County by car along the San Dieguito River. By Wolf Berger. San Diego: University of California and Scripps Institution of Oceanography, 2013. Color Maps, Photographs, Tables, Appendices, References and Guidebooks, Index, 146 pp. \$12.95 paper. An excellent guide to the fauna and flora of the San Dieguito River Valley featuring the geology of the area, lakes along the way, and descriptions with illustrations of birds and plants from the Pacific Coast to Volcan Mountain.