

BOOK REVIEWS

Father Junípero's Confessor. By Nick Taylor. Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 2013. Map. 288 pp. \$16.00 paper.

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

In the history of California there are few figures as important—or as controversial—as Junípero Serra. The man who played a pivotal role in the creation of the mission system has elicited strong emotions over the years. Some have seen Serra as a well-intentioned agent of civilization for the natives while others have viewed Serra as a man guilty of nothing less than genocide. As always, the truth is far more complicated, and Nick Taylor's novel captures many of the idiosyncrasies in Serra's character without demonizing the Franciscan missionary.

The celebration of Junípero Serra's three hundredth birthday in 2013 led to renewed focus on the history of Spanish California, and Taylor's novel is timely. Unlike other biographical treatments, Taylor relates the story of Serra and the missions from the fictional perspective of Fray Francisco Palóu. Palóu, it should be recalled, not only accompanied Serra on part of his journey to California, but also wrote two works on the history of the missions and on the life of Serra that are still read by scholars of New Spain.

In Taylor's novel, however, Palóu has considerable reservations regarding the character of Junípero Serra, which is in contrast to the accounts left by Palóu in the historical record. Through the voice of Palóu, for example, Taylor takes the reader through several episodes of Serra's gruesome self-flagellation, which makes for a gripping, if at times disturbing, read. Taylor also speculates on the rivalry between Palóu and Fray Juan Crespí, the other Franciscan confidant of Serra in California.

Taylor is at his best when describing some of the tensions between the natives and the missionaries at the Carmel mission, as well as when Taylor depicts the social and family life of the natives of California. In crafting his fictional narrative, Taylor creates a plot that injects very human emotions of jealousy, ambition, and longing into the characters of Serra, Palóu, and Crespí.

Father Junípero's Confessor is not a work of history—there are no footnotes, nor does the author explain to the reader how he used historical sources to create his story. While some scholars may dislike the novel's literary licenses, *Confessor* is a reminder to historians that carefully constructed stories and characters can pique the interest of the general reader in ways not often accomplished by academic

writing. This novel, for example, could be used in the classroom as a starting point for discussing the culture of the Franciscan missionaries and its relationship to Native Americans. As a work of literature, *Father Junípero's Confessor* will likely keep alive public fascination with the man who is often seen as the Founder of California.

A Squatter's Republic: Land and the Politics of Monopoly in California, 1850-1900. By Tamara Venit Shelton. Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2013. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. viii + 277 pp. \$45.00 cloth.

Reviewed by Robert D. Miller, Lecturer, Department of History, California State University San Marcos.

Tamara Venit Shelton's *A Squatter's Republic* examines the changing discourses challenging monopoly in California—a center of anti-monopolist activity—from 1850 to 1900. For much of the nineteenth century, reformers condemned land monopolies for creating an artificial scarcity of land and restricting opportunities for Americans to become small freeholders. In Gold Rush California, white Americans employed these anti-monopolist arguments to challenge Mexican land grants by defending the squatter's right to preemption as an essential component of the American republic. Debates about land tenure broadened to encompass the conflict between slavery and free labor during the 1850s, culminating in the Republican Party's passage of the Homestead Act of 1862. However, rather than providing homes for all aspiring yeoman farmers, Republican policies accelerated the industrialization of the nation, requiring anti-monopolist supporters to reframe their critiques. Henry George was one such figure whose writings linked land monopolies with emerging industrial monopolies while castigating Chinese immigrants as an unassimilable menace to white laborers' existence. Anti-monopolist arguments gradually eschewed discussions of property rights as land ownership proved increasingly irrelevant to permanent wage workers. By the last two decades of the nineteenth century, reformers recognized competition and the valorization of small producers inhibited the efficient management of critical industries, particularly the often-maligned railroads. Rejecting the nationalization of monopolistic corporations sought by the People's Party, anti-monopolists, such as Senator Stephen White, promoted "targeted government intervention" to regulate monopolies to mitigate their worst abuses while preserving their economic efficiencies (p. 166).

Shelton's *A Squatter's Republic* brings nuance to discussions of anti-monopolism, particularly the conflicts between speculators and squatters in Sacramento following the discovery of gold in California. Though earlier scholars and the squatters themselves cast the conflict as a struggle between ordinary Americans and a propertied elite, Shelton demonstrates that the distinction between speculators and squatters "was one of scale of wealth, with clear differences only at the extremes" (p. 26). Many of the speculators held assets that were comparable in value to the property held by squatters. As the median value of squatters' properties in Sacramento was \$1,050, Shelton contends that many squatters hoped to acquire additional land to further increase their wealth. Shelton's linkage of squatters to the fear of Confederate plots in California is also illuminating. She examines a conflict between Antonio Chabolla and squatters who denied the legitimacy of his Mexican land grant at Rancho Yerba Buena. Even though squatters drew upon existing denunciations of land monopoly, the outbreak of the Civil War, combined with the fear of Confederate subversion in California, compelled the squatters to emphasize their loyalty to refute any hint of secessionist sympathy. In emphasizing the capacity of anti-monopolists to adapt to the modern world, Shelton echoes Charles Postel's *The Populist Vision* by demonstrating that anti-monopolists did not remain wedded to an anachronistic agrarian world view.

Though Shelton effectively reveals the complexity of anti-monopolism within California, there are opportunities for further analysis. Shelton's contention that "Indian land tenure did not seem like much of a threat to squatters" minimizes white Californians' attempts to control Native labor and land during the early 1850s (p. 14). For example, California's legislature instructed the state's Congressional delegation to oppose ratification of the eighteen treaties negotiated with the state's Native inhabitants between 1851 and 1852. The United States Senate acquiesced by rejecting all eighteen treaties as Californians believed these posed a threat to the state's agricultural and mining interests. Evaluating the extent to which anti-monopolism permeated Californians' efforts to defeat these treaties merits analysis. Furthermore, anti-monopolist concerns about the dangers posed by non-white labor--represented by the Chinese, slaves, and free African Americans--raise further questions about the state's support for the 1850 Act for the Government and Protection of Indians, which sanctioned the indenture of Indian children and the punishment of Indians identified as vagrants. Finally, while Shelton provides a detailed analysis of the anti-Chinese writings of Henry George, considering the ways in which antimonopolist thought shaped the California constitution of 1879 could prove rewarding. On the whole, however, Shelton makes a commendable effort in emphasizing the ongoing importance of anti-land monopolism in Gilded Age California.

THE JOURNAL OF SAN DIEGO HISTORY

Empire on Display: San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915. By Sarah J. Moore. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, 2013. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. xii + 240 pp. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewed by William Issel, Professor of History emeritus, San Francisco State University and Visiting Professor of History, Mills College.

Sarah J. Moore, Professor of Art History at the University of Arizona, Tucson, offers a critical account of the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition (PPIE). She alleges that its attractions and its booster publicity operated in support of a racist, sexist, imperialist patriotic nationalism, with the implication that the PPIE was a project of questionable moral content due to its being “a manifestation of the United States’ imperial prowess and revitalized national manliness” (p. 4). In her view, the (male) planners, designers, and managers of the Exposition were informed by “Social Darwinian logic” (p. 14). As a consequence, fairgoers were treated to a variety of experiences that “served a pedagogical function and offered geographical evidence of America having fulfilled its promise of Manifest Destiny” (p. 9).

Like a number of previously published, similarly critical, accounts of the PPIE and other world’s fairs of the era, beginning with several of the essays in Burton Benedict’s edited volume of 1983, *The Anthropology of World’s Fairs*, Moore deploys cultural studies-inspired textual criticism techniques to make a close reading of everything from the speeches of the day to the design of the buildings, the layout of the exhibitions, and the content of posters and post cards. The book begins with three chapters that set the stage for her discussion of the PPIE.

The first chapter revisits the Turner thesis about the end of the frontier and the 1898 Spanish American War, the second chapter covers the origins and development of the Panama Canal and the rhetoric that accompanied its planning and building, and chapter three retells the story of the city of San Francisco’s recovery from the disastrous earthquake and fire of 1906. In these chapters, Moore applies cultural studies scholarship to the booster rhetoric of the time to argue that since American culture was a racist, sexist, and imperialist phenomenon, the nation’s technological advances, infrastructure projects, and programs for recovery from natural disaster were all morally tainted. The following three chapters represent the PPIE to have been a schoolhouse for socialization into celebratory Americanism: “a palimpsest, dense and layered, on which is inscribed multiple narratives—geographic, ideological, historical, political, imagined, and desired—of progress, civilization, and manliness as they were refracted through the contemporary lens of Social Darwinism” (p. 197).

Moore is not the first to interpret the PPIE in a post-realist fashion that makes use of the various tropes of cultural studies criticism, but her book is the most thorough recounting along such lines since the now out-of-print Burton Benedict work of 1983. Skeptical readers will look in vain for actual evidence that the fair's attractions were in fact experienced as "pedagogical" exercises, and that the displays and activities the fairgoers flocked to succeeded in inculcating the values and viewpoints that Moore attributes to them. Readers sympathetic with her brand of critique will no doubt nod in agreement with the assertions about America's moral and ethical shortcomings that are a central theme of the book. All readers will appreciate the 49 black-and-white illustrations and the 15 color plates. The book is attractively designed and, except for some minor errors (such as writing that James Duval Phelan's last name was "Duval" (p. 77)) it is marked by careful scholarship throughout.

Regionalists on the Left: Radical Voices from the American West. Edited by Michael C. Steiner. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. 416 pp. \$39.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Rich Schultz, lecturer, Department of Liberal Studies, California State University San Marcos.

Societal bouts of fear and anxiety, growing socioeconomic inequality, and environmental collapse could—and *should*—generate calls for a reevaluation of the systems and habits that have led to such failures. The Great Depression and the Dust Bowl provided the backdrop for novelists, journalists, artists, and academics who pressed egalitarian themes and took on these very problems in their work. Many of the most devastating results of the "dirty thirties" played out in the American West, where regionalist activists fused their work with the images they were witnessing in their parts of the country. As is detailed in the fifteen essays contained in *Regionalists on the Left: Radical Voices from the American West*, the results of this work are still with us: classics of twentieth-century American literature, purposeful art, and new critical histories about not only the American West, but also about the United States and its role in the world. The book is edited by Michael Steiner, who argues in his introduction that these important regionalist voices, their "egalitarian dreams," and their "devotion to environmental, economic, and racial justice can inspire us today" (p. 16). This inspiration seems timely in the wake of the most recent financial debacle that

turned countless American homeowners “upside down,” and at a time when many political leaders and media pundits continue to insist that the evidence is lacking on global warming.

The book’s chapters read like evaluations of the life and work of a somewhat small circle of friends and colleagues, if not merely like-minded activists. Some contributed essays to “little magazines” that promoted left-wing socialist and communist principles. Many of these activists were members of the Communist Party, or at least flirted with that organization and its ideals. A number, including writers Meridel Le Sueur from Minnesota, California novelist John Sanford, and the Texas legend J. Frank Dobie, were among those hounded – if not blacklisted —as a result of the work of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Authors in the volume make a unified case that it was the context of the regionalist work of these individuals—their ability to wrap their social critique in spatial and temporal terms specific to their part of the country – that gives their work relevance today.

In his analysis of novelist Mari Sandoz, Robert Dorman contends that she saw her interpretations of Nebraska history as a “microcosm of the universal” (p. 97). This is a theme we see played out in a number of the essays. For example, Bryna Campbell points to the painter Joe Jones, who challenged the notion of a harmonized telling of American history by depicting race and class discrimination that was both specific to his native Missouri and seen as untouchable in national historical narratives. He taught an Unemployed Art class to a largely African-American student body and encouraged his students to protest a decision to shut the class down for being subversive. All of this at the very courthouse where the Dred Scott case played out and in the broader context of efforts to end segregation nationally (p. 69-74).

In her chapter, Shirley Leckie Reed offers a brilliant account of the life and work of Oklahoma historian Angie Debo. Debo compiled a stinging and informed history of the deceit and trickery behind the white grab of Native American lands in her part of the country, a story not previously told with such precision. Not only was she turned down for promotions and positions because she was a woman, but her work was rebuked by an “old boys club” (that included her one-time mentor) for, among other reasons, indicting some prominent business and political families in that shameful part of the state’s history. Leckie Reed concludes that “as a regionalist historian,” Debo “viewed US Indian policy as America’s ‘real imperialism’” and believed that understanding regional histories like those found in Oklahoma were essential to promoting a more just American foreign policy abroad (p. 178).

José Limón’s comparison of the works of Dobie and Américo Paredes in Texas offers an intriguing platform from which to consider transborder and transnational

tellings of the American story. Limón argues that these two regionalists “could not make common cause to articulate a bilingual, bicultural progressive Texas” to challenge “capitalist and racist domination” (p. 201). “For the most part,” he concludes, “in Texas we remain neither friends nor strangers” – a contemporary challenge to both egalitarian-minded Texans, and to those concerned about matters of discrimination and discord along linguistic, cultural, and racial lines nationally (p. 201).

Regional tellings of American history contribute to a more complex – and more interesting – notion of what the United States is, and what it represents. Steiner acknowledges in his introduction that there exists a camp that attacks the regionalist approach for leaning toward the simplistic, and for not fostering radical ideas. This collection suggests otherwise. With drought, environmental destruction, deregulation, and an increasing gap between the wealthy and the impoverished today, the words of Carey McWilliams are indeed worth echoing: “bang tables, shout, and raise hell” (p. 367).

The Atlas of California: Mapping the Challenges of a New Era. By Richard A. Walker and Suresh K. Lodha. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013. Photographs, illustrations, maps, charts, notes, bibliography, and index. 128 pp. \$24.95 paper.

Reviewed by Greig Tor Guthey, Associate Professor of Public Policy and Planning, Department of Liberal Studies, California State University San Marcos.

UC Press’s new *Atlas of California* both characterizes the state in the post-Great Recession period and provides an overview of a number of significant historical and contemporary issues. There are standard maps that you might find in a good textbook on California, such as the map of contemporary Native Californians. But then there are sections where readers will not find a single map such as those covering government finances, taxes, and sexual orientation.

This is not an ordinary atlas, and the authors make no bones about it. Richard Walker is an emeritus professor of geography at UC Berkeley where he regularly taught courses on California with an ample dose of social criticism (full disclosure: this reviewer was once a TA in his course); Lodha is a UC Santa Cruz professor of computer science whose interest lies in using spatial data for social change. No atlas, they explain, comes free of bias. But they refreshingly take the usual biases one step further so that their facts inspire social change.

Their call to action begins in the introduction and is carried throughout the volume's ten chapters. Eight chapters cover substantive themes through which the authors present the state's current challenges by means of historically-based commentary, maps, and charts. The thematic chapters are: "Land & People," "Politics, Governance & Power," "Economy & Industry," "Urban Areas," "Water & Energy," "Environment," "Health & Education," and finally, "Inequality & Social Divides." The last two chapters provide a conclusion about the challenges facing the state and an appendix concerning the problem of finding and mapping accurate data about the state.

The introduction proves a fascinating beginning to an atlas bent on pulling the veil back on the California Dream and related myths. The authors argue that any understanding of the state has to begin with the hard-nosed realities of its political economy rather than Hollywood gloss or Gold Rush glitter. California is a favored place not because "anything is possible," as one version of the dream has it, but because of a particularly well-endowed natural resource base, an abundance of skilled and unskilled labor, industrial and economic innovation, and good government. Combined with an (historically at least) easily accessible opportunity structure, these four cornerstones along with the hard work of ordinary people have generated wave upon wave of economic growth and prosperity across 164 years of state history.

As the authors point out, the state's economic growth made it particularly open to immigration while also accentuating racial and ethnic divisions. California is a giant experiment in multicultural democracy that reflects and may presage larger national patterns. It's also a state largely still politically controlled by white voters even though minorities make up the majority. And political decisions about limiting educational access, property taxes, and civil rights now threaten the continuation of the state's past success. These are just a few of many contradictions the authors identify and map.

There are so many issues covered in the atlas that it is not possible to cover each one in this short review—but I'll mention two more. The chapter on cities provides an introduction to the significance of California cities—two of the nation's largest cities are contained in California. The authors characterize these cities (The Bay Area and Greater Los Angeles) and focus on the most recent housing bubble and transportation. We are left with a picture of California as a mostly urban state—95% of the population lives in cities—riven by debt and linked by one of the world's greatest road systems.

Next, California, as many scholars have pointed out, is exceptional in many realms. This atlas walks this line as well. The state has the largest road system in the nation. Its democracy is complicated by more frequent use of the initiative

than any other state. It contains among the highest levels of biodiversity on the planet. And, it faces comparably enormous problems with poverty, educational access, pollution, and climate change among others. Time will tell how California weathers these various challenges.

While we await the outcome, this atlas provides readers with the orientation to understand the state's underlying crosscurrents. I found the combination of maps and commentary on the state's geography provides a concise, accessible, and thought-provoking analysis of the complexities and contradictions of California. I am already using it with my undergraduates and I think serious students of California will find the atlas a welcome addition to their understanding of the state.

BOOK NOTES

After the Grizzly: Endangered Species and the Politics of Place in California. By Peter S. Alagona. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, and index. viii + 323 pp. \$34.95 cloth. By making a federal commitment to the protection of animals, the Endangered Species Act of 1973 involved the national government in the preservation of habitat. Peter Alagona investigates how the ensuing struggles over place played out in California by presenting four main case studies: the California condor, the Mojave Desert tortoise, the San Joaquin kit fox, and the Delta smelt.

Freedom's Frontier: California and the Struggle over Unfree Labor, Emancipation, and Reconstruction. By Stacey L. Smith. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013. Illustrations, tables, notes, bibliography, and index. xv + 324 pp. \$39.95 cloth. Stacey Smith of Oregon State University examines various forms of unfree labor in California—from indentured Native Americans to Chinese “coolies”—in the period from the gold rush to the 1870s. *Freedom's Frontier* demonstrates how heavily California relied on such forms of labor and explores the ways discourse about unfree labor in the state connected to a larger national conversation that shaped politics in the antebellum, Civil War, and Reconstruction eras.

Go West, Young Women! The Rise of Early Hollywood. By Hilary A. Hallett. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013. Illustrations, notes, filmography, and index. x + 314 pp. \$29.95 paper. This book analyzes the role of women in the Hollywood film industry in the formative decades of the 1910s and 1920s. Not only did women make up a major share of early motion-picture audiences; they also found work as actresses, publicists, directors, and journalists. Hilary Hallett

thus notes how the film industry was a critical factor not only in the emergence of new gender roles and expectations associated with the “New Woman,” but also in the creation of a “feminized” Los Angeles economy.

Herbert Eugene Bolton: Historian of the American Borderlands. By Albert L. Hurtado. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012. Illustrations, afterword, notes, bibliography, and index. xvi + 370 pp. \$39.95 cloth. Herbert Eugene Bolton, a student of Frederick Jackson Turner, developed the concept of the Borderlands that would—and that continues to—shape historical scholarship on the Mexican North and American Southwest. Albert Hurtado’s biography illuminates Bolton’s life and career while exploring his legacy, both intellectual (as in his call for a less provincial, more transnational approach to American history) and institutional (as in his contributions to the Bancroft and Huntington Libraries).

The House on Lemon Street: Japanese Pioneers and the American Dream. By Mark Howland Rawitsch. Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2012. Photographs, glossary, notes, bibliography, and index. xiii + 388 pp. \$29.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper. This monograph traces the history of the Harada family, who settled in Riverside and whose 1915 purchase of a home in a white neighborhood triggered the first court action involving California’s 1913 Alien Land Law. While the Haradas won their case (because the family patriarch had purchased the home in the names of his three American-born children), they continued to confront anti-Japanese sentiment, and Rawitsch provides an account of the family’s struggles during the interwar period and the trauma of interment.

Upton Sinclair: California Socialist, Celebrity Intellectual. By Lauren Coodley. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2013. Illustrations, map, appendices, notes, and index. xvii + 237 pp. \$28.95 cloth. Coodley’s biography of writer and socialist Upton Sinclair, one of several published within the last decade, pays particular attention to California’s influence on his political activism while also sketching a man whose outlook on social causes from temperance to birth control was shaped by his feminist convictions.