

BOOK REVIEWS

San Diego: California's Cornerstone, Rev. ed. By Iris Engstrand. San Diego, CA: Sunbelt Publications, 2016. Illustrations, bibliography, and index. 347 pp. \$19.95 paper.

Reviewed by Robert A. Kittle, author and independent historian.

San Diego's unique history as the birthplace of European civilization on the West Coast of North America is often overlooked, even by those who call San Diego home. Iris Engstrand's newly updated volume, *San Diego: California's Cornerstone*, admirably chronicles this neglected story from the migration of prehistoric Native Americans around 8,000 BC to the present day. To read this concise account is to gain a much better appreciation of San Diego's place in the broader American narrative. At the same time the new edition contains a significant correction to a long-standing error about the Spanish discovery of the area.

Longtime professor of history at the University of San Diego, Engstrand is an accomplished historian, author of twenty-five books, and recipient of many honors, including the prestigious Order of Isabel la Católica, awarded by King Juan Carlos for outstanding contributions to the history of Spain in the Americas. Thus she is in an exceptional position to rectify a conspicuous error in the historical record--namely, the nationality of navigator Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, the first European to explore the California coast. His arrival aboard the 200-ton galleon *San Salvador* in San Diego Bay on September 28, 1542, marked the beginning of Spain's sporadic occupation of the Pacific slope.

For centuries Portugal has claimed Cabrillo as a national hero, even though he sailed under the Spanish flag on his extensive voyages of discovery. San Diego's proud Portuguese community has long celebrated Cabrillo as one of its own, with annual festivals and reenactments of his landing near Ballast Point. The noble, 14-foot white stone statue of the explorer at the Cabrillo National Monument in Point Loma was sculpted by Portuguese artist João Charters de Almeida e Silva under Lisbon's authorization. When the image was dedicated in 1988, the Portuguese ambassador to the United States was in attendance. All of this perpetuated the false claim that Cabrillo was born in Portugal.

Never mind that many respected historians, including Engstrand, were skeptical. No one ever was able to say exactly where in Portugal the heroic conquistador was born, and several towns claimed to be his birthplace. The awkward fact was that, throughout his life, Cabrillo always signed his name the Spanish way, never the Portuguese version of João Rodrigues Cabrilho. He also was

married to a Spanish woman, Beatriz Sánchez de Ortega, who bore him two sons.

The myth finally was exposed in 2015 when a Canadian researcher, Wendy Kramer, uncovered contemporary documents in the Archivo General de Indias, the repository of Spanish records of the New World in Seville. While researching an unrelated matter, Kramer found a testament given by one Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo in a 1532 lawsuit. He declared under oath that he was born in what is now known as Palma del Río, a quaint town in the province of Córdoba, Spain. To her credit, Engstrand has faced this fact squarely in her revised history of San Diego, even though the local Portuguese community would like to maintain its long-standing position.

Under Engstrand's diligent research, many other colorful episodes in San Diego's history spring to life. They include the bloody nighttime assault by 600 Kumeyaay warriors on the San Diego Mission on November 5, 1775. The attack often is neglected today because it contradicts the misleading notion of harmonious mission life. But Franciscan Father Luís Jayme was brutally bludgeoned and stabbed to death by the Indians, and two other Spaniards died. A number of Kumeyaay were killed as well.

The reader also will learn how anarchist Emma Goldman was run out of town by vigilantes in 1912 after the City Council passed an unconstitutional ban on street-corner speeches. This brought an abrupt end to the local organizing activities of the revolutionary Industrial Workers of the World, the Wobblies. Then there is the unforgettable tale of Charles Mallory Hatfield, who in 1915 was hired by the city after he promised to make rain and end a drought. By sheer coincidence, a winter deluge of historic proportions washed out roads and bridges and caused the collapse of the Lower Otay Dam. Hatfield never collected his \$10,000 fee because the city attorney claimed the rainmaker was liable for the flood damages.

In her account of the modern era, the author is charitable to San Diego's elected leaders. The alleged bribery of three City Council members by a strip-club operator, Mayor Dick Murphy's resignation amid the crushing pension debt of city workers, and Mayor Bob Filner's resignation in disgrace over his sexual abuses are glossed over. In fact, Engstrand's view of San Diego remains downright boosterish throughout most of her volume, including her parting observation that the region thrives on "a solid basis in economic and educational progress, a viable and growing tourist industry, and a people proud of their cultural and intellectual achievements." In *San Diego: California's Cornerstone*, Engstrand introduces fresh scholarship while continuing to illuminate local history and arguing for the significance of San Diego in both California and United States history. Despite what some might view as a more sympathetic take on recent political history, the book remains a valuable reference for local and national historians alike.

From Mission to Microchip: A History of the California Labor Movement. By Fred B. Glass. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016. Notes, bibliography, and index. xvii + 524 pp. \$70 cloth, \$34.95 paper.

Reviewed by Daniel S. Elkin, Ph.D. Candidate in History, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

Fred B. Glass's timely history of the California labor movement is an ambitious attempt to synthesize the long tradition of workers' struggles in the Golden State. Beginning with the struggle of indigenous laborers against the mission system and stretching forward to the role of unions in California's most recent fights on state ballot initiatives, Glass covers a lot of ground. Some of these topics are well-traversed by scholarship but nowhere before have these narratives been stitched together to present a larger theme: the ongoing struggle of American workers amid ever-changing circumstances. While not always seamless, *From Mission to Microchip* accomplishes an important feat: it speaks to the uniqueness of the California experience.

More than any other state, California at any given moment is consistently a microcosm of larger national struggles. Michigan's history can speak to the challenges of industrial unionism, and Texas to the plight of the Latino field hand, and Massachusetts to the struggling worker in a service-based economy. But California can speak to all three at once, given the state's expansive and diverse economy. In this way Glass's work is instructive for labor historians and activists alike.

Glass begins by informing readers that he will be taking them into a submerged history where the "lives of and activities of working people have been neglected in the shadows cast by 'great men'...whose actions in the glare of media attention seem to bestow on them a sense of inevitability and destiny" (p. 7). In contrast, nothing seems destined for the workers that leap from Glass's pages. Instead their story is one of struggle and suffering and only occasional success.

Yet, when California workers were successful in their fights against capital it tended to foreshadow wider success on the national stage. This was particularly true during the "great upheaval" of the New Deal period. In May 1934 the San Francisco Longshoreman, tired of waiting out tedious negotiations mediated by the Roosevelt administration, called for a general strike. Over 40,000 maritime workers participated, shutting down the Port of San Francisco. These actions were not without sacrifice: the responses were violent and many workers were killed and hundreds injured, but it planted the seed of industrial unionism and cemented "the power of instantaneous rank and file action" (p. 249). At the national

level, such a display of solidarity and militancy powered the rise of the more radical Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), a coalition of unions which organized and advocated for a more robust welfare state.

While one of the better-known episodes in the book, the San Francisco General Strike proves the point of many of the narratives in Glass's work: California nurtured the flame of working class struggle throughout its existence. San Diego is not absent from this story. The Free Speech struggle of 1912 saw the organization of thousands of laborers and activists in the working-class Stingaree district to oppose city ordinances against soap-box orations. This threat to free speech brought together the highly radical Industrial Workers of the World, the moderate American Federation of Labor, and moderate liberal reformers. Worthy of note is that the movement also threatened to initiate the first collaboration between workers across international boundaries in North America: many Mexican IWW members participated in the Free Speech Movement. Threatened by the prospect of working-class solidarity, the booster-clique leadership of San Diego, headed by sugar magnate John D. Spreckels, saw to the violent repression of the movement.

From Mission to Microchip proves timely mainly because its final chapters present themselves as a how-to guide for workers seeking to organize against capital in the modern period. At a time when labor and collective rights are in retreat across the nation, California serves as a counter-example. Democrats have moved away from meaningful relationships with organized labor at the national level, but in California, workers refused to be relegated to the sidelines and in the 2012 ballot initiatives defeated not only Republican efforts but also the efforts of neoliberal Democrats. This, combined with the success of voter mobilization efforts by unions in Nevada in 2016, proves Glass's larger point that California both nurtures and expands the tradition of multiracial worker-led democracy. Though the struggles ahead are many, Glass leaves readers predisposed to this cause with an optimistic view of the future.

On the whole, Glass offers an impressive narrative that not only exemplifies stories of workers' struggles but also provides an interesting timeline of capitalism's changing nature over time (from industrialism to post-industrialism). This book was written for those sympathetic towards the struggle of labor but it remains valuable and accessible to general readers as well as educators seeking to expand their coverage of California history. For professional labor historians and scholars of the West, *From Mission to Microchip* proves to be a powerful synthesis that deserves a place on the bookshelf.

WAXIE: An American Family Business Success Story. Edited by Donald H. Harrison. WAXIE's Enterprises, Inc., 2016. Illustrations, photos, maps, and index. 458 pp.

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

Chances are if you live in the western United States you have heard of, if not used, WAXIE products. Less well known may be the company's history and local connection to San Diego, the town where Morris and Harry Wax created the nation's largest family-owned janitorial supply company. And what better way to celebrate the company's 70th anniversary than to retell the WAXIE story through the narrative of the people who made it happen? This story unfolds, the cover informs us, "as told by the owners, managers, employees, vendors, customers, and friends of WAXIE to writer Donald H. Harrison." Harrison, a local San Diego journalist and historian, captures the WAXIE story in a highly readable 458-page showpiece. He and the WAXIE company have assembled a visually impressive and historically interesting collection of colorful photos, vignettes, and lively personal accounts that tell the inspirational narrative of American family and business success. The book consists of four parts, each highlighting a unique aspect of the WAXIE story while revealing much about San Diego's history.

Part One introduces the reader to the Wax family, illuminating both their personal histories and the broader histories of the United States and San Diego. The saga begins with Itzig Wachs (Isaac Wax), who immigrated to Boston, via Liverpool, England, from his native Ukraine in 1904. He came at a time when many Jews fleeing war and pogroms in eastern Europe filled American cities. Circumstances meant he came alone, but intending to stay, he sent for his wife Sadie once settled. In the tried and true mold of chain migration the couple made their way to a cousin's home in Salt Lake City in 1914 where Isaac scratched out a living as a peddler and merchant. Upon Isaac's death in 1962 Sadie moved to San Diego to be with her two sons, and died four years later. Each successive chapter in Part One recounts the histories of Isaac and Sadie's two sons, Harry and Morris, and grandsons Charles and David. Their lives tell the story not just of WAXIE, but of four men growing up in San Diego among the broader currents of American history. Both sons, for example, served in the Second World War, Morris in the Army and Harry in the Navy Seabees. It was enlistment in the Navy that first brought Harry to San Diego and, not surprisingly, in later years WAXIE has become a significant booster for the military in town.

In Parts Two and Three, Harrison traces the history of the company from its San

Diego beginnings in 1945 to the 70th Anniversary and spotlights the personalities who brought development and growth to WAXIE's regional branches. Harry Wax purchased San Diego Janitor & Chemical in 1945, leasing 2,000 square feet at 10th and B for \$2,500. Morris, recipient of a Bronze Star while serving in Europe under General George Patton, soon joined his brother. Skeptical at first about the potential for a middling janitorial supply company, he nonetheless threw in his lot with a cash contribution and set to work with his brother. Harrison shows how since that time WAXIE has grown to its present status of the nation's largest family-owned janitorial supply company. This growth of course includes many regional branches and Harrison highlights eight. Salt Lake City is one example. The dominant janitorial/sanitation supply company in the region belonged to another Jewish family, the Lovingers. WAXIE acquired Lovinger Janitorial Supply in 1982 when the latter encountered financial difficulty. Although this move was risky, as it was WAXIE's first non-contiguous regional branch expansion, the company's talented employees were able to make it a success. It is a fitting closure to Isaac's story.

Part Four, "Past and Future", looks back at WAXIE through the years with an eye toward the future. This includes a useful eleven-page annotated timeline of events spanning 100 years from Harry Wax's birth in 1906 to 2015. Need to know what WAXIE was about in, say, 1994? A quick flip of the page and you will learn that they installed voice mail and purchased land in Kearny Mesa for future expansion of San Diego headquarters. Looking ahead, the final two chapters examine recent corporate developments, growth strategies, and special events, including the 70th Anniversary sales meeting aboard USS *Midway*. With over 20 pages of color photographs celebrating WAXIE's employees, there is plenty here for everyone to feel good about.

The WAXIE story is one worth knowing and Harrison, along with the members of the WAXIE company, retell it in a visually pleasing, insightful, and entertaining way.

All the Wild That Remains: Edward Abbey, Wallace Stegner, and the American West. By David Gessner. New York: W. W. Norton, 2015. Photographs, notes, and index. 354 pp. \$26.95 cloth, \$16.95 paper.

Reviewed by Theodore A. Strathman, Lecturer, Department of History, California State University San Marcos.

At first glance Wallace Stegner and Edward Abbey seem polar opposites: the former a staid and stable literary giant who settled in at Stanford University in 1945 and stayed there until his retirement in 1971; the latter a peripatetic, anarchistic gadfly, a part-time park ranger who gained a cult following through writing that could be brash, juvenile, and chauvinistic yet profoundly beautiful. Stegner won a Pulitzer Prize, had a reputation as a workaholic, and was a faithful husband to his wife of sixty years. Abbey's literary career was slow to take off, his work was often dismissed by "serious" critics, and he was a notorious womanizer who married five times. What unites the two, according to David Gessner's fine book, is their clear-eyed, almost prophetic vision of the American West. *All the Wild That Remains* combines biography with travel writing to argue that in an age of climate change and continuing environmental degradation, Stegner and Abbey continue to hold relevance in their warnings about the fragility of the West.

Gessner meditates on the legacy of the two writers by leading the reader through a series of encounters with people and places connected to them. At the same time, Gessner, now a resident of North Carolina, returns to those locations that shaped his understanding of the West. It is in these passages that Gessner's skill as a nature writer is evident. But it is also here that his argument about Stegner and Abbey is driven home: his own travels show him a region struggling with the effects of drought, wildfires, and the persistence of extractive industries. The two authors, Gessner maintains, would hardly be surprised by the environmental crises confronting the West. Stegner's novels and non-fiction frequently challenged long-standing myths of the West as a place of individualism where personal fortune was just over the next hill, in the next land rush, or in the next oil boom. Building on a theme from his friend and mentor Bernard De Voto, Stegner described a region whose aridity and hostile landscapes destroyed many "boomers" (like Stegner's own father) but whose environments could be destroyed in turn by those eager to exploit its resources. What the West demanded, Stegner maintained, was a respect for the land itself, a recognition of its limits, and human communities based on cooperation rather than individualism. Abbey, meanwhile, railed against those who saw in the West only saleable commodities. The real value of the West was its beauty, its wildness, and the opportunity it afforded for

freedom: wilderness, Abbey insisted, was an essential antidote for civilization, a place where the individual could escape the artifices of culture and the state.

Gessner makes no effort to disguise his admiration for the two writers, but his book successfully avoids hero-worship. This is especially the case with Abbey, whose desire to provoke has left a somewhat difficult legacy, especially for those on the political left. His views on women were hardly enlightened, he favored the right to bear arms, and he defended immigration control in terms that exploited racial stereotypes pertaining to Mexicans. Gessner grapples with the question of how to define the politics of each of these writers, and at the heart of this discussion is a remark from the writer Terry Tempest Williams, who claimed that Abbey, the bearded, bushy-haired nonconformist, was the conservative, while the buttoned-down Stegner was the radical. Gessner does not quite seem to find a satisfactory answer to this riddle, but this is more because of the elusiveness of the terms themselves than because of any failure on Gessner's part. Still, though, students of history may wish for more exploration of the terrain of mid-century conservatism, liberalism, and radicalism. After all, the Sierra Club and many labor organizations, groups usually associated with post-World War II liberalism, favored immigration restriction in the decades before the 1980s.

All the Wild That Remains will appeal to those interested in the literature of the West, but it should be read as well by anyone who cares about the environment of the region. It is rich in anecdotes and insights. A particularly interesting example of the latter is Gessner's discussion of the post-9/11 fate of monkeywrenching. Much of Abbey's popularity comes from *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, his rollicking novel of four eco-saboteurs who disrupt the engines of development and fantasize about blowing up Glen Canyon Dam. As Gessner points out, such actions may have seemed romantic and heroic when the novel was published in 1975, but now they are viewed (especially by federal authorities) as domestic terrorism. Stegner's brand of environmental advocacy, as reflected in his "Wilderness Letter," for example, is probably more practical, Gessner asserts. But there is still a place for Abbey. Gessner argues that his symbolic resistance, his refusal to conform, and his defense of personal freedom (even if what Abbey did with that freedom may rub some the wrong way) were perhaps never more appropriate and necessary than in our own age of government surveillance and wilderness under siege.

BOOK NOTES

Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law, and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco. By Clare Sears. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. x + 202 pp. \$79.95 cloth, \$22.95 paper. Clare Sears's *Arresting Dress* examines how cross-dressing laws in San Francisco (the earliest of which the Board of Supervisors passed during the Civil War) not only punished "transgressive" behavior but helped create norms pertaining to gender.

Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farmworker Movement. By Lori A. Flores. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016. Map, illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. 304 pp. \$45 cloth. The Salinas Valley is linked most famously to the struggle for farmworkers' rights as a result of the tragic 1963 bus accident that cost the lives of fifty eight farmworkers and contributed to the termination of the Bracero Program. This monograph explores the role of the valley in the farmworker movement and how ethnic Mexicans of varying nationality and residency status – from the U.S.-born to guest workers to undocumented laborers – organized in both the Bracero Era and afterwards.

How to Read the American West: A Field Guide. By William Wyckoff. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014. Maps, illustrations, chronology, and index. xvi + 384 pp. \$44.95 paper. Geographer and photographer William Wyckoff invites readers to explore new ways of seeing the landscapes of the West. While the book is presented as a field guide, unlike a standard guide book it is organized by theme rather than region, encouraging us to recognize recurring patterns across western landscapes.

Juan Bautista de Anza: The King's Governor in New Mexico. By Carlos R. Herrera. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. xii + 308 pp. \$29.95 cloth. While students of California history are familiar with Anza's overland expedition from Mexico to San Francisco, less well-known is his time as governor of New Mexico. This biography of Anza covers the entire span of his life, from his childhood in Sonora to his ten-year service in New Mexico during which much of his effort was concentrated on defending the colony from hostile Indians and enacting a series of administrative reforms.

Sounds of the New Deal: The Federal Music Project in the West. By Peter Gough. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. xviii + 259 pp. \$50 cloth. Peter Gough's book investigates a little-known

New Deal program that aimed to provide work relief for unemployed musicians. Gough argues that the program's catering to local audiences' tastes in the West helped increased appreciation for a variety of musical forms, from Hispanic and African American traditions to folk music often tinged with Popular Front politics.

Woody Guthrie: L.A. 1937 to 1941. Edited by Darryl Holter and William Deverell. Los Angeles: Angel City Press, 2015. Illustrations. 208 pp. \$40 cloth. The outgrowth of a 2012 conference celebrating the centennial of Guthrie's birth, this volume includes twelve essays about the singer-songwriter. In addition, the book contains song lyrics and cartoons written by Guthrie himself. These materials tell the story not only of Guthrie's rising fame in Depression-era California but also of the radicalizing effect of his time in Los Angeles, as he met figures from the political left and developed a songwriting voice that championed the marginalized and underprivileged.