LOS ANGELES WESTERNERS
Ye Branding Iron
CORRAL
J. GOODMAN

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California and the Maine Law, 1855

by Robert W. Blew

Sometimes, it seems man's favorite indoor hobby is attempting to cure the improper habits of his fellow man; the people of Gold Rush California did not prove to be immune to this activity. Granted, early American California furnished ample material against which the reformers could react. People accepted the fact that there was much drinking in California; although, some maintained there was a general approval of drunkenness.[1] Gambling was extremely common, houses of pleasure flourished, bull baiting and other violent activities marred the Sabbath, and Sunday was more of a day of roustering than of meditation. One participant painted a rather vivid picture of life in the gold camps:

> I have much to say upon California in respect to the habits, customs, and morals of the miners, which will be embraced in my next two letters. I am sorry to say that on the subject of morality and religion, the miners are losing principle. Cut loose from restraints of society, men's principles are put the the test, and where surrounding influence is their foundation, they fall like leaves before the autumn blast. Swearing is very prevalent, and drinking and drunkenness a prominent feature in the mines. Temperance men are disregardful of their solemn pledge, and Sons of Temperance of their secret oaths of abstinence. Yesterday in returning down the river, in a walk of ten miles, I was invited by acquaintances to drink brandy no less than three times. But I find it the easiest thing in the world to refuse. The reply, "I thank you, I never drink any liquor" delivered in an emphatic and decided tone, hardly ever fails to stop all importuning, besides administering a silent rebuke, and I often glory in the momentary confusion of the drinker.
>
> The amount drunk is perfectly astounding, appalling. The liquor sellers furnish tables and cards, and men sit down and play for drink. After one drink they must play another game, and the excitement of the play leads them on . . . Then they must have cigars, nuts, pickles, etc., etc., so that in the course of the day many will spend $5 or $6, and even more, at the bar. . . . Old Alcohol in his palmiest days had not more faithful, loving subject. So much liquor is drunk that there is not a road or bypath but what you see empty bottles every few yards.[2]

This is not an isolated description. Many journals of miners tell of the same conditions, newspapers almost daily contained articles

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The Branding Iron

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THE BRANDING IRON solicits aritcles of 1,500 words or less, dealing with every phase of the Old West. Contributions from members and friends welcomed.

Corral Chips

A.M. *Victor Plukas* gives a slide presentation on "L.A. 200" to the Santa Monica Bay Chapter of the National Society of Professional Engineers on January 21 . . . C.M. *Don Mullally* speaks to the San Fernando Valley Historical Society on "The History of Wine." *Dick Cunningham* is reelected to the presidency of the Society, and *Dwight Cushman* is vice president . . . C.M. *Gene Bear* is the auctioneer at the 6th annual Western art show for the American Indian and Cowboy Artists Western Art Exhibition at San Dimas. . . . The same Exhibition honors *Iron Eyes Cody* at its banquet with the AICA Man of the West Award, given annually to an American who has made a lasting contribution to the American way of life. . .

Martin Ridge publishes an update and revision of Ray Billington's *American History After 1865* and a new edition of Billington's *Westward Expansion*, along with *Bilingualism/Biculturalism: An American Dilemma.* In March Martin gives the William L. Davis, S.J. Lecture at Gonzaga University . . . Whomphoppers Restaurant at Universal Studios is the scene of a recent luncheon meeting of the Southern California members of the Western Writers of America. On hand are *Paul Bailey, Tony Lehman, Donald Duke,* and A.M. *Don Pflueger.* Also at the confab is C.M. *Midge Sherwood*, past-sheriff of the Huntington Corral . . . C.M. *Norman Neuerberg* is appointed curator of Spanish Colonial Art at the Southwest Museum. . .

Paul Bailey is featured "guru" at the Writer's Workshop of the National League of American Pen Women, held March 6 at the

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of drunkenness and disorderly conduct, editorials frequently appeared about the disregard of the Sabbath, and many petitions to the legislature called attention to the unruly conduct of the Californians.

To combat this moral decay, temperance groups formed almost as soon as the first rush of miners arrived.[3] Their influence became noticeable when city councils attempted to curb unbridled drinking by imposing high license fees on liquor sellers,[4] and, in San Francisco, a city ordinance, honored by disobedience, ordered drinking places closed on Sundays.[5]

Local efforts proved ineffective; in 1852, the temperance people began petitioning the Legislature to pass a state-wide prohibition law patterned after the Maine Liquor Act of 1850.[6] They failed to sway the Legislature, but, in 1854, in response to their greater power, the salons introduced a series of blue laws including one prohibiting alcohol.

One factor that influenced the legislature to act was the rapidly developing political strength of the temperance organizations. This potential political strength was manifested by the creation of numerous temperance divisions throughout the state; by 1854, at least ninety-two divisions had been founded.[7] In 1855, even Los Angeles, which apparently had been without any temperance organization, joined the fold. These organizations had always attempted to elect only temperance men to office. By 1854, there was enough support for temperance candidates that the other parties adopted resolutions to nominate only candidates who were "men of high moral character and known habits of temperance."[9] Even though they promised men of temperance as candidates, the Democratic and Native American parties did not pledge to support prohibition.

Some saw that another factor aiding the movement for prohibition was the hard times that had arrived after the first flush of prosperity. Although rather tongue in cheek, one commentator saw this as an element in

> The liquor habits of California, with or without free lunch, drew to that state eager missionaries of various temperance societies . . . Their success increased as hard times shook the state. Although poverty had driven many men to the free lunch, it had the opposite effect on numerous others, and drinkers without the price of a drink would listen to those who demanded they remember their eternal souls. Sometimes missionaries converted a whole town at once, and the people took the pledge en masse. This might be due to the evangelist's zeal, but more often to the sobering effects of some recent tragedy due to drunkenness. As a total population habit change, however, it rarely outlasted the missionary's visit to town. In 1853 the people of Mokelumne Hill took half the temperance pledge; they promised to consume nothing stronger than beer. In the evidence of good faith, the villagers drank a hundred and twenty gallon of beer that Sunday evening.[10]

The final factor influencing the drive for the Maine Law was a general feeling that temperance or prohibition would improve the moral condition of the state. The editor of the *Alta California,* a staunch supporter of temperance, stated: "We can not say enough for the good cause in which the Sons are engaged . . . But we can not resist saying that we anticipate nothing but good from this movement. Socially and morally, the spread of their principles and numbers will be a blessing."[11] The editor of the Los Angeles *Star* enthused, "it is gratifying to notice wherever the order is established, the gradual increase of social and moral reform." Speaking of the local division, he reported,

> the good it is doing is visible socially and morally . . . It gives us pleasure to proclaim the existence of this little bright spot in our midst which increases each week, throwing out its rays in every direction and scattering its benign influence into the various walks of life.[12]

When the various political elements coalesced, on January 9, 1855, Assemblyman Gaber announced to that house "he would introduce at an early date, a bill for an act to prohibit the manufacture, sale and use, as a beverage, of alcoholic or Intoxicating Liquor."[13] He introduced the bill (Assembly Bill 62) on January 23,[14] and it was referred to the Committee on Vice and Immorality.[15] After committee hearings, a special rule brought the bill to the floor on March 20,[16]

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where, after an attempt was made to have it resubmitted to committee to strike out unconstitutional provisions, it passed on March 26 by a vote of thirty-seven to sixteen.[17] An identical bill (Senate Bill 94) followed a similar pattern in the upper house.[18] However, some of the legislators had doubts about the wisdom of imposing prohibition on the inhabitants, and, on February 27, they introduced a bill to take the sense of the people on prohibition into the Assembly.[19] In the Senate, Bill 192, to do the same thing, was introduced. On April 30, Senate Bill 192 was substituted for AB 62 and SB 94 and passed;[20] the governor signed it into law on May 5.[21] This new bill provided that at the General Election of 1855, each voter would indicate support or opposition to a general prohibitionary law by writing in "Prohibitory Liquor Law — Yes or No." Other than requiring the Secretary of State to report a complete abstract of the vote to both houses, the act carried no binding provisions for further consideration of a prohibition law; however, it did state that if the majority failed to approve passage of a prohibitionary act none could be passed.[22]

While publicity for a Maine Law had started as early as 1852,[23] the prohibitionists, sensing success, intensified the campaign in 1854. Several newspapers, especially the *Alta California,* carried articles supporting the temperance position or advocating the Maine Law. Not only were supportive editorials printed, but news articles were slanted to expose the evils of drinking. Frequent articles about suicide under the influence of drink,[24] wife beating, drunk and disorderly conduct, and other crimes committed under the influence of drink peppered the *Alta California* and other newspapers less dedicated to the temperance movement. Most newspapers described drink as one of the prime causes of crime, and editorials often declaimed that where the Maine Law existed crime was curtailed.[25] However, the editor of the *Alta California* sometimes weakened in his damnation of the drunken. In one article about a young man arrested and convicted of drunk and disorderly conduct, he pondered the severity of the penalty and mused: "Truly such cases are rather objects of commiseration and charity than municipal severity."[26]

According to the temperance position, in addition to creating crime, intemperance ravished the human body; this was especially true in California. Several stories reported the dire effects of drink. One young lawyer, in six months, fell from a good practice in San Francisco to confinement in a lunatic asylum in the Sandwich Islands because "his mind had been entirely destroyed by the extravagant indulgence in intoxicating liquors."[27] According to the proponents of temperance, this rapid decline was not unusual.

> It is alleged, indeed, that men need more stimulus, and will endure it better, in our climate than elsewhere, and that to drink is not pernicious here. So it has seemed. Yet it is only seeming. In no country is drunkenness so deadly, and so rapid in its destruction as here. We see few habitual drunkards, because they go into their graves so quickly. No California drunkard has a lease of six months . . . Men are dying every day of delirium tremens. . . . It is our bane and curse if nothing else is.[28]

In addition to the horror tales, the press even tried logic. The editor of the *Alta California* found it inconsistent for the State to license drinking places then place a person in prison if found drunk.[29]

To help influence the Legislature and to show public support for prohibition, temperance workers submitted many petitions during the period the bill was under consideration, as they had previously.[30] Of the many of these still in the State Archives, the most impressive is one from San Francisco bearing over 12,000 signatures. One immediately suspects that the petitioners must have visited every bar and saloon in the city to obtain so many signatures. As a matter of fact, drinking places seemed to be a favorite location for collecting signatures on petitions promising temperance or requesting prohibition.

Not only were the horror and destructiveness stressed, but the journalists introduced racism into the campaign against liquor. In Los Angeles, several newspaper articles complained that even though the City Council had forbidden the sale of alcoholic beverages to them, "still the Indians get liquor the

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same as ever. Negro Alley [*sic*] is the principal resort of these Indians especially on the Sabbath, when the little money they have been able to get the rest of the week, is spent for liquor."[31] Not only did the Indian drink, but "a lawless, drunken, degraded set of thugs" mixed in with them.[32] While San Francisco did not have as large an Indian problem, many of its newspapers stressed the drunken Chileans and Peruvians, especially the lewd women who preyed on the miners.[33] In general, most attributed drunkenness to Europeans and other foreigners.[34]

The prohibitionists used the lectern as well as the press to carry their message. Local ministers and non-secular speakers performed to extol the virtues of temperance, and the organizations imported speakers from the East. The most famous and successful of the emigres was Miss Sarah Pellet, who was described as a "strong-minded lecturer of the fair sex."[35] Most viewers admitted "she is not bad looking, dresses in the Quaker style, has a fine voice and a great flow of language. Did I say flow? It is a perfect torrent."[36] Among her many converts was John Bidwell, reputed to be one of the largest distributors of liquor in the state at his Chico Ranch, who after meeting only once with this lady abolished his bar.[37] Not only did she carry the message to the mines as the first women to lecture in the region, she was also invited to deliver a temperance lecture to the State Assembly.[38] Miss Pellet recommended a more practical step than mere talking. She suggested that 5,000 pure, young New England ladies, who would be scrutinized by the New England Temperance Societies, be shipped here as wives for the miners.[39]

Interestingly, there seemed to be little organized opposition to the referendum. Evidence indicates the formation of only one Anti-Maine Law Club.[40] The few newspaper articles that opposed the law did not openly state that it should not pass, but rather they stressed the fact that it would be impossible to enforce.[41] A few individuals wrote letters to the editor complaining of the oppressive control of public morals. One correspondent complained that the State Legislature had:

> . . . promulgated the so called "Law of Temperance," that no European monarch would dare promulgate in their dominions. These are not the last *cause* of misfortune — the intolerant fanaticism of religious sects, insufficiency of law to protect persons and property, the abuse of that individual liberty of which America prides herself, but which is frequently manifested in the despotism of the majority over the minority.[42]

Others amended the bill so that it would not prohibit the production and imbibing of California wines.[43] Even the *Alta California* conceded on several occasions that the drinking of local wines would not only be temperate but healthy and good for the economy.[44]

In February 1855, the *Southern Californian* stated: "We like the effrontery of the member who proposed the Main [*sic*] Liquor Law, . . . It is hardly possible that he could have expected it to pass, and we are inclined to think that he was perpetrating a joke on the house."[45] To the surprise of many, the people strongly supported the measure. The generally accepted vote was 20,831 for and 26,695 against.[46] One should be skeptical of any exact count. Several counties, among them San Francisco, did not turn in an official tabulation; the tally from at least two counties did not include all precincts.[47] Nor did the newspapers give a complete tabulation of the votes on the temperance measure. Whatever the actual count, the success of the bill in the mining regions astonished many observers. One asked, "Would you believe that a majority for the Maine Liquor Law in this county? In a place where every store, hotel and saloon keeps liquor and everybody, nearly, drinks."[48]

An attempt to analyze the balloting uncovers very few voting patterns except that it failed in the cities and in regions with large Hispanic populations. The bill passed in the mining regions: 11,611 for and 11,231 against. In San Francisco, it failed by 2,185 votes;[49] in Sacramento, the vote was 1,493 for and 2,195 against. Even in the gold fields, in those areas where the miners were more centrally located, such as Mariposa, the vote was heavily against. In the southern counties, the mandate was overwhelmingly against prohibition. In Los Angeles, only seventy-five favored the proposition while 606 were

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opposed; in San Diego, six favored prohibition, but 122 opposed.[50] In the South only San Bernardino with its large Mormon population may have supported the proposition, but they failed to return an official count on the issue. The only other discernible pattern is in areas where there was a large majority for the Know Nothing party, there was heavy voting on the prohibitory measure. But even here there was no consistency in results, approximately one half of these counties supported prohibition while the other half opposed. Whichever stand they took, the majority for or against was large. One thing is obvious; in spite of the editorials, speeches, parades, and other expenditure of effort, the majority did not care one way or the other. Less than half of the men who cast a vote for the governor bothered to express an opinion on the Maine Law. Whether this was because it required a write-in vote or just lack of interest is impossible to determine. The *Alta California* posited that many men who were temperant but who could not support prohibition did not vote. The same article expressed satisfaction with the result since the law could not have been enforced if the people did not support it.[51] The article did not consider what may have happened if apathy had resulted in the referendum passing. Would we have had an unenforceable prohibition law? Neither did the editor consider how many rights and privileges have been lost by a failure to make a stand, nor did he ponder if the vote or lack thereof had any message for the future.

NOTES

[1]Katherine A. White, ed., *A Yankee Trader in the Gold Rush: The Letters of Franklin A. Bush* (Boston, 1930), pp. 68-9.

[2]J.S. Holliday, *The World Rushed In: The California Gold Rush Experience* (New York, 1981), pp. 363-4.

[3]The Washington Temperance Society of San Francisco was founded January 12, 1849. *Alta California,* January 25, 1849, p. 3, col. 4. Adna A. Hecox stated a previous society was founded in Soquel in 1848. C.V. Anthony, *Fifty Years of Methodism: A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church within the Bounds of California Annual Conference from 1847 to 1897* (San Francisco, 1901), p. 18. Disagreement also exists about the original Sons of Temperance division. Anthony, *Ibid.,* has it organized in March 1851, in Santa Cruz. Willi-Hanchett, "The Question of Religion and the Taming of California, 1849-1854," California Historical Society *Quarterly,* 32:1 (June 1953), p. 131, states it was founded in San Francisco in September 1850.

[4]*Southern Californian,* November 9, 1854, p. 2, col. 2, and November 23, 1854, p. 2, col. 2.

[5]*Alta California,* March 18, 1850, p. 2, col.2.

[6]*Ibid.,* March 18, 1850, p. 2, col. 2; Gilman M. Ostrander, *The Prohibition Movement in California, 1848-1933* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1957), p. 13.

[7]Sacramento *Daily Union,* December 8, 1854, p. 2, col. 3.

[8]Los Angeles *Star,* March 17, 1855, p. 2, col.2.

[9]Winfield J. Davis, *History of Political Conventions in California, 1849-1892* (Sacramento, 1893), pp. 41, 43.

[10]Elisabeth Margo, *Taming the Forty-Niner* (New York, 1955), p. 62.

[11]*Alta California,* October 28, 1854, p. 2, col. 2.

[12]*Star,* March 17, 1855, p. 2, col. 2.

[13]California. State Assembly, *Journal of the Sixth Session of the Assembly of the State of California* . . . (Sacramento, 1855), p. 86.

[14]*Ibid.,* p. 170.

[15]*Ibid.,* p. 178.

[16]*Ibid.,* p. 440.

[17]*Ibid.,* p. 542.

[18]California. State Senate, *Journal of the Sixth Session of the Senate of the State of California* . . . (Sacramento, 1855), p. 630.

[19]*Assembly Journal,* p. 359.

[20]*Senate Journal,* pp. 781-2.

[21]*Ibid.,* p. 831.

[22]California. Secretary of the State, *The Statutes Passed at the Sixth Session of the Legislature* . . . (Sacramento, 1855), p. 240.

[23]*Alta California,* October 27, 1852, p. 2, col. 2.

[24]*Ibid.,* January 1, 1855, p. 2, col. 6.

[25]*Ibid.,* June 16, 1855, p. 2, col. 2.

[26]*Ibid.,* May 1, 1855, p. 2, col. 5.

[27]*Ibid.,* April 10, 1854, p. 2, col. 2.

[28]J. A. Benton, *California Pilgrim: A Series of Lectures* (Sacramento, 1855), p. 54.

[29]*Alta California,* March 13, 1855, p. 2, col. 1.

[30]*Ibid.,* February 6, 1855, p. 2, col. 3.

[31]*Star,* January 4, 1855, p. 2, col. 1.

[32]*Southern Californian,* October 20, 1854, p. 2, col. 1.

[33]Frank Soule, John H. Gibon and James Nesbet, *The Annals of San Francisco* . . . (New York, 1855), p. 453.

[34]George M. Chadwill, *An Address Delivered before Morning Star Temple of Honor . . . on Friday, Evening, July 14, 1854* . . . (San Francisco, 1854), pp. 20-2.

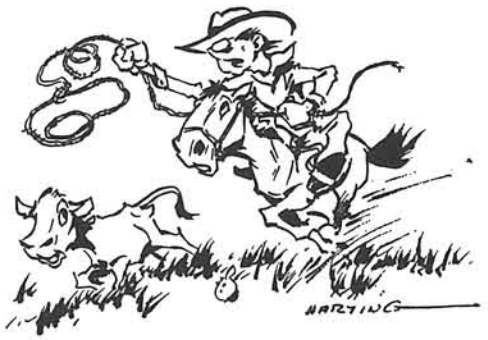
[35]*Daily Union,* October 27, 1854, p. 2, col. 2 and *Alta California,* September 23, 1854, p. 2, col. 1.

[36]White, *Yankee Trader,* p. 135.

[37]Rockwell D. Hunt, *John Bidwell: Prince of California Pioneers* (Caldwell, Idaho, 1942), pp. 322-3.

[38]*Assembly Journal,* p. 506.

[39]George C. Mansfield, *History of Butte County, California* (Los Angeles, 1918), pp. 96-7.
[40]Ostrander, *Prohibition Movement,* p. 16.
[41]*Southern Californian,* May 23, 1855, p. 2, col. 3, and *Alta California,* June 18, 1855, p. 2, col. 1.
[42]*El Clamor Publico,* July 17, 1855, p. 2, cols. 3-4.
[43]*Star,* April 7, 1855, p. 2, col. 3.
[44]*Alta California,* March 20, 1855, p. 2, col. 1.
[45]*Southern Californian,* February 22, 1855, p. 2, col. 1.
[46]Hanchett, "Religion and the Taming of California," p. 133. Ostander, *Prohibition Movement,* p. 20, states the vote was 27,414 against and 21,891 for.
[47]*Certification from the Secretary of State on Election Returns (1855),* November 3, 1855. State Archives.
[48]White, *Yankee Trader,* p. 152.
[49]Frank Soule, "Continuation of the Annals of San Francisco, August 13, 1855 to October 7, 1855," California Historical Society *Quarterly,* 16 (March 1937), p. 184.
[50]*Election Returns, 1855.*
[51]*Alta California,* September 25, 1855, p. 2, col. 1.



THE MONTHLY ROUNDUP

April Meeting

Australia's relationship with the California gold rush was the topic of Corral member Phil Nadler's presentation of "Ramblings on the Gold Rush and How Australia got the Bug from California." Both regions experienced earlier gold finds; Marshall's discovery in 1848 attracted argonauts from Australia and New Zealand. Some were POMEs (Prisoners Of Mother England), ex-prisoners and escaped convicts from Down Under. The Sydney Ducks, as the POMEs were called in California, committed more than their share of crimes. San Francisco formed a vigilance committee in 1851 and hanged four of the Ducks.

Many Australians in California remarked on the similarity of gold-bearing deposits to land forms back in Australia. Having gained mining experience, a number of them, led by E.H. Hargraves, returned Down Under and in April 1851 found gold in what became the

Frank Newton Photograph

From left: Deputy Sheriff Powell Greenland; Richard Crowe, President of Death Valley Forty-niners; Philip Nadler, speaker and Sheriff Bill Escherich at the April meeting.

Ophir mine and other locations. As a result of the gold rush, Australia's population grew from 400,000 to over a million in ten years, in a strike richer than the California find.

Nadler pointed out that Ballarat, Nevada, got its name from the gold strike in Australia. He credits California goldseekers with bringing representative democracy to Australia through a violent demonstration that resulted in acquittals for the American defendants and subsequent election of a legislature. Nadler's slides showed contemporary scenes of California and Australia gold rush country. The two rushes displayed remarkable similarities, in the independence of prospectors, the violence, and the wealth of both regions. The Corral found the photograph of the 630-pound nugget striking, a picture that elicited groans of envy from the audience.

May Meeting

Msgr. Francis J. Weber told interesting and humorous tales related to the world of Miniature Book Collecting and about how he found and purchased rare miniature books for his own personal collection.

He described a miniature book as not larger than three inches, ideally set by hand

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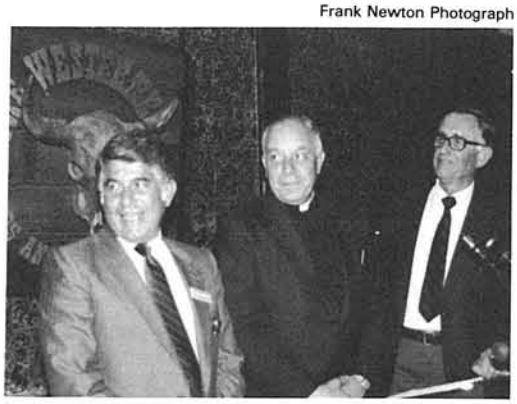
the same size, as opposed to the way many are done today, set large then reduced. He also pointed out that printing a miniature book is the supreme test for a printers ability to print the small pages without smearing

Frank Newton Photograph



From left: Deputy Sheriff Powell Greenland, Msgr. Francis J. Weber and Sheriff Bill Escherich at the May meeting.

the ink and that it is not easy to find a printer willing to attempt this task. A new and fascinating subject came to light when Msgr. Weber talked about "fore-edge painting" on miniature books. This type of painting is accomplished by fanning the tiny fore-edge pages of the book, separating them slightly, then holding them in place with a special clamp. The artist paints a picture on these edges and when the pages are released the painting disappears. A miniature book with a fore-edge painting is a rare treasure and eagerly sought after by avid miniature book collectors.

Msgr. Weber's miniature talk concluded with a lively session of questions and answers.

Corral Chips continued...

Showboat Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada. His speech at the League's luncheon described writers' problems and challenges in bringing a book from conception to publication, and was appropriately titled, "So You're Going to Write a Book?" Paul declares that the 150 news-hens and literary free-lancers asembled "were a passel of neat chicks." . . . *Ed Crigler,* tallyman for the John G. Neidhardt Corral of Westerners in Columbia, Missouri, reports that buffalo roast was featured, as usual, on the menu at the Corral's Christmas meeting . . . C.M. *David Kuhner,* science librarian at The Claremont Colleges, has assisted Time-Life Books of Alexandria, Virginia, in the production of "The Epic of Flight" series on aviation history . . . *Abe Hoffman* addresses a session of the California Council of the Social Studies, meeting in Los Angeles in March, on "U.S. History from West to East."

Dudley Gordon is prominently featured in the March 7 issue of the Santa Barbara *News-Press* which describes Lummis' colorful career and the attractions of his home, El Alisal, now the home of the Historical Society of Southern California . . . The Conference of California Historical Societies meeting at Visalia in February saw a number of representatives who are also Westerners. Members included CCHS Past President *Bill Burkhart,* CCHS Regional Vice President *Dwight Cushman,* C.M. *Joe Shebl,* CCHS Executive Secretary, and C.M. *Joe Doctor.* . .

Al Shumate recovering nicely from his recent surgery. . . *Henry Clifford*'s fabulous collection of Coins of the American West is auctioned in March by the Bowers & Ruddy Galleries. . . Sheriff *Bill Escherich* is installed as president of Los Angeles Beautiful. . .

George Sturtevant, Hugh Tolford, Paul Bailey, Ronald Dean Miller and *Richard Hoegh,* who, in spite of being exemplary Westerners, serve E Clampus Vitus as high dignitaries and humbugs, journeyed to Murphys to attend the 50th Grand Council of E.C.V. As usual this astute and sober gathering was convened over the Memorial Day holidays.

On April 16th, at the meeting of the Southern California Local History Council held in the Huntington Library, several Westerners were noted. *Martin Ridge,* Assoc. member, was the speaker and past president of the Council, *Bill Hendricks* attended along with Actives *Everett G. Hager, Wade Kittell, Ray Nicholson, Bob Scherrer, Walt Wheelock* and *Raymund F. Wood. Bill Lorenz,* Assoc. member and C.M.'s included *Bob Clark, Edwin Carpenter, Peg Cassidy, Mary Gormly, Bob Hattem, Emmy Ruud* and *Anna Marie Hager,* current president of the SCLHC.

Los Angeles: Its Two Great Real Estate Booms — In 1881 and 1981!

by Art Beeman

If one thinks the boom in Los Angeles real estate prices is flamboyant in 1980's outlandish sales dollar demands, believe me, it is not a new thing to the city of the Angels. In 1883 the Southern Pacific Railroad completed its southern route to the east and began touting Southern California as a new land of milk and honey where good land could be acquired for practically nothing. Its sales job was so well done that during the following year five thousand newcomers added to the local population of Los Angeles County, bringing its total number up to about eleven thousand! In 1885 the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railraod completed its line into Los Angeles and immediately the two juggernauts began competing with each other for the immigrant business to the best possible benefit of the newcomer by cutting travel fares to this wonderful land. Ten days after the Santa Fe set up stakes here it reduced its fare from the Mississippi to L.A. from $100 to $95 one way and from $150 to $140 round trip. The Southern Pacific cut their fare then to $125. Santa Fe dropped theirs to $85 one-way. Sixty dollars advertised the S.P. Fifty shouted the Santa Fe! The downward race to bring new land-buyers to Los Angeles raged on in a frenzied madness. At one point in time a person could buy a ticket to travel by rail from the Mississippi Valley to downtown Los Angeles for $15 . . . and for one week only, the fare was pegged at $5 a ticket! It was a circus-like ballyhoo come-on for the innocent suckers of that day but the crowds did come: first by hundreds and then by thousands — Los Angeles was being born.

Some came to settle, some to speculate, and some to invest but come they did to this paradise of sunshine and climate. Hotels and boarding houses soon filled to overflowing, tent-colonies sprang up overnight, and everyone wanted to buy land! The price of choice property in the "city" jumped from $100 a front foot to $200, then $300, to $400 in this new wave of prosperity of our town. Inspired city fathers, encouraged by this dollar activity diligently began to spruce up the town. New street lamps were put in, the main streets in town patched up and, as becoming a new metropolis of the West, the old horse-cars were taken off the dirt street called Broadway and more modern cable-cars were installed.

The excited populace elected the progressive Willie Workman as Mayor and the civic improvements rolled along. Main Street, Spring, Broadway and Hill Street were transformed from dusty roads to paved thoroughfares as the first order of civic betterment. The newcomers to the city were so impressed that they wrote back home telling of this wonderful place. Letters mailed in Los Angeles increased from 2,083 a month to 21,332. There was great demand for tradesmen, builders working day and night building both flimsy houses and grand mansions.

The populace had many reasons for coming to this new land: some to settle down, some to build up — but really the majority who arrived here came to make a quick fortune in real estate speculation. Everyone was selling land to everyone else, salesmen met each new train load of arrivals, rushing them off to new subdivisions before they had a chance to admire the scenery. Real Estate prices in general rose 300 per cent in two months! An acre of ground that had cost $50 was subdivided into instant lots selling for $300 apiece. Excited madness captured the city.

Angeleno natives sold land parcels for ten times what they had originally paid for them. Street-car conductors made more than their monthly salaries in a single day by

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selling strangers on the cars land that they themselves had just purchased. By the winter of 1886 the boom was in full blast. People who couldn't even write their own names were overnight real estate brokers, doing their transactions in the street. By 1884, L.A.'s population was 12,000 — thirty months later, the town had 100,000 permanent residents. Long lines of buyers stood waiting as long as 48 hours in front of real estate offices waiting for them to open for business so that they could partake of this great opportunity to own part and parcel of this great Los Angeles. No one was so poor that he couldn't buy at least *one* lot. So the madness went on!

The promoter's fastest way to riches lay in the "town-site" proposition of real estate sale. From Los Angeles to the San Bernardino county line, a distance of 36 miles, twenty five new "towns" were laid out. A man named Monroe started the town of MONROVIA. Another promoter founded the town of GLENDORA by naming it after his wife, and on the first opening day, auctioned off 300 lots. A group of Quakers from Indiana, Iowa and Illinois started the town of WHITTIER, selling four hundred thousand dollars worth of lots in only 3 days . . . One tract was called AZUSA, taking its name patriotically from the first and last letters of the alphabet and adding U.S.A. Other quickly laid-out towns in the local area were named ARCADIA, VERNON, SANTA ANA, TUSTIN, BEAUMONT, GLENDALE, BURBANK, OLEANDER, LORDSBURG, BUSY VISTA, BROAD ACRES, IVANHOE, NADEAU, SAN DIMAS, ONTARIO, OCEAN SPRAY —and dozens of others, which a look at today's map, will tell if they still exist or was just another real estate promotion get-rich-quick scheme. Lots of $150 each were advertised for selling in LONG BEACH. Much money was spent promoting the individual tracts, the prime attraction being for each, if they could swing it: a big brand-new wooden hotel to give the place a touch of class.

Promoters promised everything to attract the candidate buyer, picnics were held, brass bands were hired to parade the subdivisions and even stranded circuses were rejuvenated to exhibit their wild animals to attract tourists to this wonderful land. Lunches were free, entertainment was loud and continuous and beer, lemonade and ice water was dispensed to suit the tastes of the crowds. The banks lent money freely on 5-day notes at exorbitant rates to help fleece the visitors. It was a carnival of fiscal delight for the money-makers. Town sites were hastily and carelessly laid out with a wagon load of surveyor's stakes, signs, and lots of American flags and bunting. Land advertised as having "water privileges" was later found to be under water, or laid out in a dry creek bed. Enormous amounts of money changed hands. The assessment figures for Los Angeles County in 1887 rose from 32 million dollars to almost 63 million!

Then — in the summer of 1888 the boom burst! Banks stopped wildly lending money — the tide quickly turned: everybody who was buying now wanted to sell their holdings. "Paper millionaires" went immediately bankrupt, a dozen men committed suicide. Banks worked overtime foreclosing on mortgages, lawyers were swamped with new clients, and the jails were full to capacity . . . And the influx of population stopped. Anyone with cash now fled the area on the earliest train, fear and panic gripped Los Angeles. True, everything went wrong at once: the good-wonderful California climate next went on a rampage, bringing out the worst of the elements: floods, windstorms and excessive heat — and two earthquakes, the first felt locally in many years. The county assessment figures immediately dropped to $20 million. Since promoters, mostly amateurs, had bought up the farm lands, they had no interest or knowledge of farming, so most areas went into neglect and ruin. The big boom in Los Angeles of the 1800's was indeed over, with a bang. The great tourist hotels in Los Angeles' small satellite towns were empty and decaying fast through lack of care and maintenance. The exodus from Los Angeles was in full motion.

To bring a note of stabilized sanity to this depressing situation, the Santa Fe railway began a campaign that explained that all was not lost: Los Angeles was still the hub of a great future, the normal climate was here, the sunshine was here, the soil was here, everything to make the area a resounding success. What was needed was experienced business men, and steady, industrious, intel-

ligent dirt farmers — not a plaything for get-rich-quick speculators. Of course, the railroad also had in mind the transportation of produce on its lines, but in the panic of those times, their counsel was indeed a blessing and was just the right solution to what could have been a more terrible disaster if the panic had been allowed to run its course. Los Angeles citizens of wisdom and substance answered the call. Forty-nine year old Harrison Gray Otis, high-powered, emotional patriot from Ohio, who was editor of the weekly *Los Angeles Times,* led the action for civic betterment and founded the later world-famous Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. Publicity programs were hurriedly initiated to spread the word again of this wonderful land of Los Angeles — only now it was aimed at the good, true, hard-working, God-fearing American farmer.

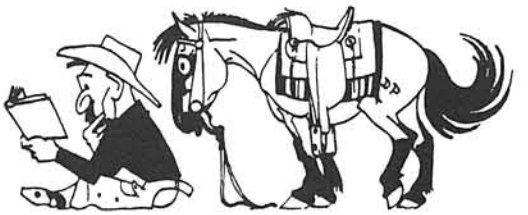
Led by the *L.A. Times,* local newspapers sent thousands of special editions to the people of the middle west extolling our true virtues and the opportunities L.A. presented. Actually, over a million booklets and pamphlets were printed here and distributed in the East. Exhibits of produce grown here were handsomely shown to the Easterners as to what truly could be grown here. The people did see the live exhibits, did read the tons of literature sent, and a slight movement of populace to Los Angeles, California, did thus begin. In 1890 the population of Los Angeles was 50,000; by 1900 it had risen to 102,000 again — and this time the people who came were a more serious and stabilized lot, and who had come to stay. It was then this second influx to this promised-land that made up the foundation of stability and hard work that built our Los Angeles into the big world-famous city that it is today. True, other minor booms since the 1800's until today have breathed life into the local economy and through its up and downs made the crucible of power stronger but prior to the 1880's Los Angeles was a potent force in need of being born. The boom described above was the midwife to our city-metropolis destiny.

The equally wild real estate boom of 1981 was in actuality the bigger-bloated boom-bust situation in Los Angeles that existed in this very city in 1888. We all know too well the details of today's real estate inflated prices to repeat any items here. We are again living atop a hissing steam boiler that is ready to blow. Stuff your ears and hold your hats, gentlemen . . . but while you're doing that and trying to remain sane, do take time to observe the very beautiful things that God gave us here in Los Angeles, Southern California. Where else on earth, indeed, could we improve our natural lot? Let us always indeed be thankful that we are here . . .

Corresponding Members Welcomed by Corral

The Los Angeles Corral of the Westerners extends a hearty welcome to the following new Corresponding Members:

Charles J. Wilt, West Covina
Ms. Linda DiBiase, Azusa
Russel D. Hartill, Canoga Park
William E. Lamb, Arcadia
Paul A. Dentzel, Northridge
Christopher E. Holabird, So. Pasadena



DOWN THE WESTERN BOOK TRAIL . . .

Visions or Villainy: Origins of the Owens Valley-Los Angeles Water Controversy by Abraham Hoffman. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1981.

Corral member Abraham Hoffman has injected a relatively novel element in the Los Angeles-Owens Valley water controversy —

Continued on Page Thirteen

Some Historical Objects

by Msgr. Francis Weber

In the spring of 1979, Thomas L. Scharf visited San Buenaventura Mission, where his attention was drawn to the treasures displayed in the Historical Museum. He subsequently described a number of "items of significant interest" for the readers of the *Southern California Quarterly.*

Unfortunately, Scharf overlooked some of the "sacramental" items which have particular pertinence as the Old Mission celebrates its bicentennial. For example, among the three chalices on display, each with its accompanying patens, the most treasured is the gold one used by Fray Junipero Serra for the first *Missa Cantata* at San Buenaventura Mission, which the *Presidente* celebrated on Easter Sunday, 1782.

There is a spoon attached to Fray Jose Senan's chalice. He used the vessel during the twenty-seven years of priestly service he gave to San Buenaventura Mission.

That historic chalice has the added distinction of being used for the first Mass offered in the present church, on September 10, 1809, by Father Jose Ignacio Maximo Arguello, California's proto priest. (Father Arguello was subsequently killed in an uprising of the Yaquis, thus winning a place on the Golden State's martyrology.)

The last of the trilogy of chalices is the silver one belonging to Fray Francisco Suner who came to the Old Mission in 1823, as the successor to Senan. Though blind for the last years of his life, the friar continued to offer Holy Mass each day with the assistance of an Indian neophyte.

Of the several ciboria used for reserving the Holy Eucharist, only one remains. Plain and unpretentious, it likely dates from fairly modern times. Accompanying the ciborium, but obviously made for a larger vessel, is a decorative cover which was used to indicate the presence of the consecrated species.

It was atop the onyx altar stone, with its sepulchre of unidentified relics, that the first Eucharistic Liturgy was celebrated at San Buenaventura Mission on March 31, 1782. Brought from Mexico City's Apostolic College of San Fernando, it was retained on one of the side altars until 1957.

Though probably of 19th century vintage, the brass tray, with its metallic cruet for wine (the one for water is missing) has long been associated with liturgical services at the ninth and last of Fray Junipero Serra's missionary outposts along *El Camino Real.*

There are two fairly old editions of the *Missale Romanum,* the earlier one bearing the date 1780 and the other 1808, the year prior to completion of the present church. The wooden bookstand appears to have been fashioned by a local Chumash craftsman.

The sanctuary lamp, with its reservoir of oil, enclosed the fire indicating reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. It was replaced by the present free-hanging, silver fixture in the mid 1880s.

The "miniature" aspergillum was presented to the Old Mission in the 1790s. The larger Holy Water receptacle and "sprinkler" was used for blessing the crops on the spring Rogation Days.

Extending by its three chains, the silver-plated thurible contained the hot charcoal on which incense was burned for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and other solemn services.

Four of the original candlesticks remain, each carved from richly-polychromed wood. Early photographs of the other metallic and wooden candlesticks adorning the altars indicate their presence at San Buenaventura Mission for many decades.

The attractively-carved tabernacle, with its door-scene of a golden chalice, formerly was affixed to the Shrine of Nuestra Senora

Page Twelve . . .

de Guadalupe. Very likely it is the work of a resident neophyte.

Among the other altar embellishments is a pair of ornate ceramic flower vases used for great feastdays at the Old Mission. The small monstrance, with its removable pyx, is a fine example of the classical colonial silver work. Fashioned at Tasco, it was used for Eucharistic exposition. Little is known about the other taller and less appealing ostensorium, except that it was used for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament until the early 1950s.

In October, 1978, Msgr. Alfredo Hernandez presented to the Historical Museum an ornamental silver monstrance, possibly Germanic in origin, which bears the baroque style, consisting of a silver sunburst overlaid with leaf, scroll and floral designs. The jewel rimmed case is flanked by two amorettes, one holding an anchor, the other a cross. The pedestal, chased with floral and leaf sways, is surmounted by an acanthus-trimmed and beaded coronet with cross. The twenty-two inch monstrance came from the estate of the Milton Holland.

BOOK TRAIL... continued

objectivity. This is not another study of the construction of the Los Angeles Aqueduct; rather, it confronts the question of corruption and fraud in the aqueduct's concept and building. Dr. Hoffman investigates the beginnings of the seemingly endless battle between the two areas and the motivations of the persons involved. The major question of the book is were the builders of the aqueduct and its Owens Valley opponents villains interested only in their personal gain, or were they far-sighted civic leaders attempting to gain the best for their community — either Los Angeles or the Owens Valley.

The book begins with a description of Los Angeles in 1905. The next section, to this reviewer one of the best parts of the book, is an overview of the Los Angeles water system from the earliest settlement until the early twentieth century. The facts were inescapable; Los Angeles needed to procure more water or cease growing as a city. In view of the Los Angeles booster atmosphere, only one answer was possible.

The study of the major figures involved, William Mulholland, Fred Eaton, and Joseph Barlow Lippencott among others leads to the conclusion that these men were progressive individuals who conducted themselves, in their own view, honorably. Some of the others involved, such as Harrison Gray Otis, do not come off as well. Many of the participants saw a chance to make a buck while helping Los Angeles and took it. On the other side, the Owens Valley leaders were also honorable men motivated by what they saw as the Valley's and their own best interests; however, some were motivated by personal pique as well as dishonesty. In the final judgment, there indeed was corruption, but its importance is overblown when balanced against the benefits achieved by the construction of the aqueduct. The irony of the entire controversy is that the controversy itself has overshadowed the accomplishments of the city builders.

As in any intelligent study, Dr. Hoffman introduced questions: what are the changing rights of the city versus the rural; what is the proper role of the federal government in the distribution of water resources; and what is the fine boundary between civic interest and personal gain. One can hope that Dr. Hoffman will continue his studies and explore the answers to these questions and do more work on the individuals involved, especially Mulholland and Lippencott.

Dr. Hoffman has created a valuable work which contributes to the study of the history of Los Angeles, contains implications for the entire west, and, as cities continue to grow, will help clarify the question of the rights of heavily populated regions versus the rights of rural areas.

Robert W. Blew

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Ramôn Eduardo Ruiz, *The Great Rebellion: Mexico 1905-1924.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1980. Pp. xii, 530. $24.95.

The Mexican Revolution of 1910 has been seen by many writers and in the public mind as the first significant social and economic Revolution of the twentieth century. Ramôn Ruíz disputes this traditional view, and his study, a synthesis based on both secondary and archival sources, offers a fresh interpretation of Mexico's great struggle. Ruíz argues that the events of 1910-1920 constituted a rebellion rather than a true social Revolution. The rebellion was carried out within a capitalistic framework, led by people who for the most part had little concern or desire for social change. The mainstream of the Mexican Revolution included a desire for updating the capitalist structure in Mexico, a structure rebel leaders fround stale under octogenerian Porfirio Díaz and his *cientificos*. The goals of the rebel leaders, Ruíz asserts, were quite modest, political rather than social or economic, and in most instances self-serving. Although Mexico was ripe for a major upheaval in the pattern of Bourbon France, the thirteen colonies, and czarist Russia, a revolution did not take place. Peasants and workers died in the cause of social justice, but it was a cause ironically spurned by the very leaders under whom they fought.

Of particular value in support of this viewpoint is the second section of Ruíz's book, in which the author presents profiles of the major leaders of the rebellion. Madero, Carranza, Obregón, and Villa are all shown to have been either middle- or upper-class in background or to hold middle-class values (as Villa did, despite his background of banditry). All owned *haciendas* and derived income from various business enterprises, and such emoluments continued during the revolutionary years. As representatives of the middle class, the leaders revolted against Díaz because Mexico was economically stagnating; few Mexicans were involved in major business enterprise, and major industry was dominated by foreign investment and control. Carranza and Obregón in particular wanted the country to get moving again, but reform beyond the political sphere hardly occupied their thoughts. Of the major leaders, only Zapata favored major social and economic changes, and the others viewed him as a dangerous radical. The middle leadership ranks of the rebel armies were filled with discontented professionals, including many underpaid teachers. Most leaders wanted their share of the pie and worked to get it in the most pragmatic way, conspicuously ignoring ideology as they did it. Carranza and Obregon maintained their influence through patronage awards to subordinates. Many rebels changed sides, some several times in an effort to stay with the winning team.

The fruits of the rebellion proved meager. Ruíz finds the reforms that were achieved to have been largely paper ones. He discounts heavily, perhaps too much so, the work of the Aguascalientes and Querétaro Conventions, particularly the latter, though he is certainly correct in noting the failure of Carranza and Obregón to implement key articles in the Constitution of 1917. The United States, under the influence of major corporate investors, put Mexico's rebel leaders under great pressure to mute any radical tendencies. This pressure culminated in Obregón's acceptance of the Bucareli Pact (Rúiz calls it a treaty) which some reformers considered a sellout of Mexican revolutionary goals. Labor and agrarian goals were co-opted by the politicians, graft dominated the political scene, and unlettered peasants killed each other with little understanding of why they were so led. Interestingly, the Catholic Church played a very inconsistent role in the rebellion. Although usually seen as on the side of the anti-revolutionists and conservative factions, the Church, as Ruiz notes, was faithfully supported by Zapata and his followers, making the Church question rather irrelevant and a mask "to camouflage the failure of the rebel leadership to come to grips with the issue of social reform."

Ruíz's book is lively and highly readable, if not controversial, but it is to be devoutly wished that Norton had employed a competent editor to eliminate repetitions and a proofreader to catch the many typographical errors. The punctuation in this book may be the most horrendous found in living memory, and someone at Norton — it is, after all, a major publishing firm — should have curtailed Ruíz's love affair with the word

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"exacerbate" which appears at least two or three times in every one of the book's 23 chapters as ills, plights, conflicts, situations, difficulties, dependencies, and restlessnesses are all exacerbated. Truly, a remarkable display, which is — well, exacerbating. But the editorial shortcomings should not dissuade anyone interested in the Mexican Revolution from enjoying the fascinating and persuasive interpretation offered by Ruíz.

—Abraham Hoffman

The World Rushed In by J.S. Holliday. 40 illustrations, 13 maps, bibliography, notes, index. Simon and Schuster, New York 1981, 559 pp. Paper over boards $16.95.

The late Ray Allen Billington, who read the mansucript for this book, said of it, "A unique book destined to take its place as a classic in our literature." That alone is enough to raise this book out of the ranks of being just another account of a diary kept by a fortyniner travelling by wagon train to California and there joining the many thousands who hoped to dig a fortune out of the ground. But there is a great deal more to recommend it.

First we have the impressive credentials of the author as a professional in the field of California history. After graduating from Yale University, Holliday spent the next thirty years as a graduate student at the University of California at Berkeley, Research Fellow at the Henry E. Huntington Library, Assistant Director of the Bancroft Library, Associate Professor of History at San Francisco State University, Director of the Oakland Museum, and Director of the California Historical Society.

Then we have the author's dedication to his subject. During the thirty years following his graduation from Yale, Holliday also worked on *The World Rushed In.* His research work can be called monumental. He researched literally hundreds of diaries, letters, newspapers, and secondary sources.

Then there is the book. Around the travel and mining experiences of a young farmer named William Swain, from northwest New York State, Holliday has produced the most complete book available on the California gold rush. There have been many books on the overland trail to California, and many books on the fortyniners' mining. Holliday covers these subjects, and two more that have not been covered before — the thoughts of the family members left at home and the return home of tens of thousands of disappointed gold seekers. He has laid out the book in a well planned way. Although there are endpaper maps of the whole cross-country trip, each chapter also contains a larger version of that piece of the map that illustrates what the chapter covers. In the beginning of each chapter Holliday supplies well researched background history. That is followed by entries from Swain's descriptive and meticulously kept diary. These are, in turn, followed by or sometimes replaced by letters that Swain wrote to his wife Sabrina, his older brother George, and occasionally to his mother. At the end of each of eleven of the thirteen chapters Holliday has a section that he entitles *Back Home,* in which he presents the letters that Sabrina and George wrote William. A fortunate aspect of the book is that each of the three Swains had a fine style of writing that supplements the author's lucid and interesting presentation of history.

William Swain's diary and letters home cover more of the gold rush than any other account — outfitting costs, traveling equipment, weather, illness, mail services, the disastrous entry into California by the north turning "Lassen cutoff," the hard work and meager rewards of mining, and the return home by ship and the Isthmus of Panama crossing. However, even his experience was only a part of the whole. So Holliday added one more facet to his book to give the reader the broadest and fullest account. He fleshes out Swain's diary and letters with excerpts from many other diaries and letters. These excerpts are bracketed so skillfully by the author that the writing flows smoothly on.

The book is truly a classic in its field. If someone were confined to reading only one book on the California gold rush, this is the book he should read.

Siegfried Demke

announcing the publication of

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