LOS ANGELES WESTERNERS CORRAL
Wagon Tracks
J. GOODMAN

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The Joseph Wernett Cabin. Courtesy of the author.

Joseph Wernett: Homesteader in the Santa Monica Mountains

by Patty Young-Colman

2002 Student Essay Winner

The history of the United States is the history of an expanding people. Beginning with the first settlers who came to the eastern shores, the impulse to move west has always been an American characteristic. In 1862, this characteristic became public policy with the passage of the Homestead Act. The Act stated that any head of household over the age of twenty-one was eligible to receive title of up to one hundred sixty acres of public land for a small fee after five years of residence and improvements to the land. Thus, the Homestead Act provided the answer to those who argued that "all men have a natural right to a portion of the soil" and "that the public lands...should be granted in limited quantities, free of cost, to landless settlers." With the vast expanses of the West opened to all, settlers rushed to make claims on the most desirable land. But by the 1880's, the mid-west was crowded and 160 acres of

(Continued on page 3)

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EDITOR'S CORNER

As we read through these two student articles we were reminded again of the tremendous potential that exists within our young people. Both articles demonstrated detailed research and an excellent grasp of history. We hope that these two writers will continue to pursue their interest in history and possibly contribute other articles in the future.

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Photograph by Froy Tiscareño.

Eric Nelson gives Lynn Hodge his certificate and promotion to Associate Membership at the November 2002 meeting.

good land was difficult to come by. So, homesteaders were driven to the farthest edge of the American frontier: California.

While northern California filled up during the gold rush and ensuing years, southern California remained, in comparison, relatively unpopulated. In 1880, the population of Los Angeles stood at 11,0003 During the next decade, however, Los Angeles grew quickly as the railroad and land boom of the late 1880's brought in tourists, city planners, and thousands of people eager to reap the benefits of the warm climate and cheap land. As a result, by 1900 the population of Los Angeles increased dramatically to 102,479.

Many of these newcomers became the pioneers of Los Angeles that fill history books today. They settled in established communities, built railroads, founded banks, and created fortunes. But these are not the only pioneers worth knowing. No less than 2,000,000 Americans took advantage of the Homestead Act, and hundreds of them homesteaded on the fringes of Los Angeles, cultivating fields, raising livestock, and creating communities of their own These pioneers have been undeservingly left out of the Los Angeles and California history dialogue. Yet the impact that they made on the development of Los Angeles and their participation in a national historical phenomenon should not be ignored. The goal of this project is to learn more about these pioneers, demonstrate the potential for local homestead research and inspire other historians to reexamine this forgotten chapter in California history.

Before deciding what direction my research should take, I spoke to Steve Harris, the president of the Mountains Conservancy Fund (a non-profit organization that purchases land to prevent development). I explained my project to him and thought that perhaps he could offer me some advice. Mr. Harris was not only interested in my project; he shaped my entire focus. According to him, a man by the name of Ed Corey owns property in Calabasas on which an original homestead cabin still exists. Mr. Harris was kind enough to give me Mr. Corey's phone number.

I contacted Mr. Corey right away. He informed me that although he is a resident of Malibu, he owns property at the corner of Mulholland Highway and Stunt Road in Calabasas. He confirmed that he owns a cabin originally built by a homesteader, Joseph Wernett, who lived there with his brother and father. Mr. Corey has rented the cabin for years and tenants live in it now. Therefore, major structural changes have been made.

The cabin is nestled in a low valley just a few yards away from a creek. It stands in stark contrast to the palatial Mulholand estates that dot the hillsides. Although plumbing, carpet, electricity and other modern conveniences have been added, the outside of the cabin still retains much of its historical integrity. But Mr. Corey's information and the fact that the cabin looked old to my untrained eye was obviously not enough to connect a homesteader to it.

The first step in my research was to consult the Bureau of Land Management website. I conducted a land patent search using the name Joseph Wernett in Los Angeles County, which produced a land patent record and the legal land description that matched the township, range, and section of Mr. Corey's cabin. The issue date of Joseph Wernett's homestead is March 17, 1899. The search also unearthed the homestead patent records for George Wernett and John Wernett. George's patent was issued just one month after Joseph's, and was in the same section. John's patent was issued in 1915, and in an adjacent section (more on these men later). However, there was still no conclusive evidence the cabin that stands today belonged to Joseph Wernett. If in fact it did turn out to be the original homestead cabin, it would be an enormously valuable cultural resource and historic structure, possibly eligible for the national, state, or local register. For this reason the focus of my project was on finding Joseph Wernett.

The Bureau of Land Management state office in Sacramento and provided copies of all survey maps and field notes conducted for the township 1 south, range 17 west. If Joseph Wernett built a home on his home-

stead during the 1890's, it should be recorded in the surveys. I was ecstatic to find "Wernett's house" marked in the lower right corner of section 8 of an 1895 survey map. His house is accordingly mentioned in the survey notes as well. These were the oldest documents sent to me by the Bureau of Land Management.

Although I was pleased with these developments, more was needed about Joseph Wernett. A search of genealogical websites revealed a match. A Joseph Wernett was born in 1867 and died in 1943 in Los Angeles, convincing evidence this must be the man I was looking for since the birthdate seemed accurate and he had lived in Los Angeles County. Next, I searched the *Los Angeles Times* for a death notice to confirm this information. On September 24, 1943 a death notice for Joseph Wernett appeared in the *Times.* No other information was given, except for "Forest Lawn Mortuary in charge." Forest Lawn confirmed the birth and death date of Joseph Wernett and I thought that I had found my homesteader.

On October 23, I interviewed Ed Corey, present owner of the cabin, at his home in Malibu, hoping for more information about the life of Joseph Wernett. Mr. Corey is a gentleman in his eighties who lived in Calabasas over fifty years ago. According to him, Joseph Wernett came to California with his brother, sister and German immigrant father in the late 1800's. Mr. Corey told me that after Joseph passed away in the 1940's or 1950's, he cleaned out the cabin. When Mr. Corey purchased the property, he threw most everything away. Several years later, a man from the East Coast came to Mr. Corey inquiring about a painting that belonged to the Wernett family. When he explained that he threw it a way, the stranger was very upset because it (supposedly) was an original Rembrandt that Joseph's father had brought with him to this country! Mr. Corey also explained the difficulty that Joseph and his brother had in making a living in the remote hills. They scoured the Santa Monica Mountains looking for gold, frequented the Calabasas Saloon, and squandered what little they had.

Old farm equipment littered the yard of the cabin, which had belonged to Wernett. Most intriguing of all, is a cast iron stove that Mr. Corey salvaged from the cabin. The stove is engraved "Hank's Range and Stove Company-Rome, Georgia 1822." Although Mr. Corey could not offer additional information, my conversation with him was enlightening because I began to better understand Joseph Wernett.

My next step was to visit the Kathleen Beachy Memorial Library at Pierce College, which houses the Calabasas Historical Society's collection of books, photographs, and manuscripts. One of the most interesting things I found was a manuscript entitled "We Remember the Stunts of Stunt Ranch" published by the Historical Society in 1982. The Stunt family emigrated from England at the turn of the twentieth century and homesteaded just a mile away from Wernetts. In the manuscript, a man named Jack Wernett is quoted as saying, "the Wernetts were in Calabasas before the Stunts. Our family came here in 1880." Another source explained that "George Wernett and Joe Wernett were twins. We used to have several sets of twins here in the canyon. The Stunts and Wernettes were here a long time (notice the different spelling of Wernett)." In a manuscript entitled "Family History of Joe and Carrie Smith" written in 1981, a woman named Mae-Ellen Smith is referred to as "Wernett's step-daughter. " I also found a picture taken at the Las Virgenes School in 1935, and one of the children is labeled as "Tommy Wernett." On what appears to be a photocopy from a ledger book, the names "Joseph Wernett Jr." and "J. Wernett" are clearly visible. On the back of this page a former president of the Historical Society wrote, "early settlers of Calabasas, 1880's. From the Huntington Library." I contacted the Huntington Library about this document, but the archivist did not know what it could be. Before leaving the library, I asked the librarian if she knew of anyone who

Eucalyptus trees in the foreground of the Axel A. Ahlroth homestead next to the Wernett property. Courtesy of the author.

might have information on the Wernett family, and she told me that I should contact John Gensley. He and his wife were very active in the Historical Society and were long time residents of Calabasas.

I met Mr. Gensely and his daughter, Robin, at his home on Mulholand Drive, not far from the Wernett cabin. Mr. Gensley explained the history of his property. Axel A. Ahlroth homesteaded on the property in the early 1900's. According to the Bureau of Land Management records, the homestead patent was issued in 1908. After the death of his parents, Arthur Ahlroth inherited the land and sold it to Mr. Gensley in 1942. He and his family built the home in which Mr. Gensley lives today.

Robin took me on a hike in back of the house to see the homestead cabin ruins. On top of a hill with breathtaking views of the valley stand two eucalyptus trees (a non indigenous tree) that marked the front entrance to the home. The stone foundation of the cabin is visible, but has been significantly disturbed; weeds have overgrown much of it, and the stones have been displaced. There are however, two "sharpening stones" that lie at the north and south of the cabin.

Although Mr. Gensley did not know the Wernetts, it was extremely beneficial for me to visit this homestead site. It helped me picture what life would have been like a century ago for these homesteaders by standing on top of the hill with views of the whole valley. As neighbors, the Ahlroth family probably knew Joseph Wernett. Perhaps he visited the family here on this very spot that is now in ruins and covered with weeds.

My next step in the project was to search for Joseph Wernett in the census. Based on the land surveys sent to me from the Bureau of Land Management, it was apparent that Wernett was living on his homestead in 1895. Unfortunately, the 1890 census has been destroyed so my research began with the 1880 census. Several hours in the Geography Lab at CSUN going through the microfilm produced little. Although Los Angeles County was divided into townships for the census, the librarian informed me that there was no index for the townships or people's names. So, would I spend the rest of my life looking at microfilm?

I then visited the National Archives, Western Region in Laguna Niguel, which has an indexing system, of letter and number-coding called the Census Soundex. The codes are listed in the Census Book and organized by year and state. Each code refers

Photograph by Froy Tiscareño.

Patty Young-Colman. 2002 student essay winner.

you to microfilm reel. Each reel contains cards that list the head of household. Once you have found the right person, the exact microfilm reel, census volume, enumerator district, sheet, and line is listed. Joseph Wernett was not in the Los Angeles County Census of 1880, but I suspected that he was there in 1895, so the next step was to look in the 1900 census. Bingo! This census proved to be very illuminating.

I located Joseph Wernett living in the Calabasas Township in 1900, and coincidentally the names just above Wernett's entry are the Stunts, Joseph's neighbor to the east. Joseph Wernett is listed as the head of household, and living with him is a much younger brother, Frank. Their father was born in Germany and their mother in Indiana. Not surprisingly, Joseph described himself as a farmer. He could read and write, owned his own farm, and interestingly, was divorced. Joseph's date of birth was listed as 1852, which was surprising since I had earlier identified a Joseph Wernett that was born in 1867 and died in 1943. As I continued my work with the census, however, I discovered there was a second Joseph Wernett living in Los Angeles in 1900. This Joseph Wernett lived in downtown Los Angeles, was born in Illinois in 1867, and therefore must be the man who died in 1943 that I found in the *Los Angeles Times*. At first glance it may seem like an enormous coincidence to have two men with such similarities, but there was a very large German population in the 19th Century mid-west, and Wernett is a common German last name. However, more research is needed to determine if these men were related.

With concrete information about Joseph Wernett, I visited the Family History Center at the Mormon Temple in Los Angeles to try and trace his life even further. The Center has put the entire 1880 census on CD and it is extremely easy to use. Even though Joseph could not be placed at Calabasas in 1880, he possibly could be found living in the mid-west, but my search did not find him there. However, a national search revealed a Joseph Wernett, born in 1852, living in San Francisco in 1880. This Wernett was single, living in a boarding house and his occupation was "car conductor." Although the birthdate is correct, the information about his parents' birthplace is dif-

ferent from that of the 1900 census: the father born in France and the mother born in Germany. Is it possible that the enumerator simply made a mistake? Further research is necessary to identify this man as the Joseph Wernett of Calabasas. Although I suspect they are one in the same.

Joseph claimed to be divorced in 1900, yet he was single in 1880. Unfortunately, a search of the marriage records for San Francisco and Los Angeles Counties were of no avail. My next step was to find a date of death. Mr. Corey believed that Joseph died in the 1950's or 1940's. A search of both decades in the California death index did not help so, I decided to work back in time and found that Joseph Wernett passed away on September 15, 1931. Birth dates are not listed, but the age of the descendant is recorded. Joseph Wernett was 78 when he died, matching a date of birth of 1852, and Frank Wernett, his brother who was born in 1878 and was living with Joseph in 1900, died in 1937 at the age of 58. George Wernett also passed away in 1937 at the age of 64. This is undoubtedly the Georg Wernett who homesteaded in 1899 in the same section as Joseph, although it is strange that he was not enumerated in the 1900 census.

A review of the 1920 census, might give me a better idea of the relationships between all of these people and possible names of descendants. The 1920 census did, indeed, have a wealth of information about the Wernett family. George Wernett was married and had two children named George and Joseph. This could possibly explain why there is a "J. Wernett" and a "Joseph Wernett, Jr." listed in the Huntington Library ledger book. He might not have been a son, but a nephew of Joseph and living so close to his uncle, it would have been appropriate to call "Joseph Junior." Frank Wernett was also married and had children as well. In 1920, Joseph was enumerated in Frank's household while in the 1900 census, Joseph was listed as the head of household and Frank was living with him.

It was very rewarding to find concrete information about this homesteader after months of painstaking research. Joseph Wernett was born in Illinois in 1852, and sometime between 1880 and 1895 he settled in the hills of Calabasas; building a home for he and his brother. By 1920 there were several other family members living in the area. If the man in San Francisco in 1880 is the same person, then a possible scenario can be theorized. Perhaps Joseph, the eldest son of an immigrant family living in the mid-west, was sent to California to explore its possibilities and potential for the rest of the family. Perhaps he traveled throughout the state looking for just the right place to build his home. After living in San Francisco and earning enough money, probably he paid for the rest of his family to move west.

It would not have been an easy life for Joseph and his family. In the 1890's Calabasas was little more than a stagecoach stop, and life in the remote canyons above this tiny village would have been difficult. But according to the 1895 survey map and field notes, there were several families living in the hills above Calabasas who built houses and barns, cultivated fields, and raised families. These early homesteaders built a community, a community that deserves the attention of historians.

Suggested Readings

W. W. Robinson, *Land in California,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948), 168.

Leonard Pitt and Dale Pitt, *Los Angeles A to Z,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 576.

Gorton Carruth, *The Encyclopedia of American Facts and Dates,* (New York: Harper Collins Publishing, 1997), 270.

Virginia City, built on the eastern slope of Mt. Davidson (circa 1865). Courtesy of the Great Basin Gallery.

"She Had Nothing to Live For" Depression and Suicide on the Comstock Lode, 1859-1878

by Bryan Slaughter

2002 Student Essay Runner-up

The morning of August 17, 1872 was an ordinary day in Virginia City. Wind was swirling. Dust was spiraling. Carpenters were sawing, hammering and nailing. Organ grinders were grinding out music. Storekeepers were rolling merchandise in and out of crowded doorways. Piutes were scavenging. Chinese fruit vendors were trotting about with their fruit-baskets. Hurdy-gurdy girls were singing bawdy songs in bawdy dance-halls. Billstickers were posting flamboyant bills of auction, theaters, and new saloons. Newsboys were trumpeting city papers-the *Chronicle,* the *Enterprise,* the *Bulletin*-with the latest telegraphic news. Stages were dashing away with passengers from Carson City, Esmeralda, Pioche, and San Francisco. Back of the main streets stood the tremendous stacks of the hoisting works—grim and foreboding—drawing their sustenance from the enormous mammillae of Sun Mountain.

It was a commonplace but unforgettable tableau for Kate Thompson—a tall, fine looking woman of 21—and it was one she knew would never see again. Within a few hours, she would be dead; killed by her own hand. Kate directed her course towards C Street for several blocks, then took a left and walked into the drug store of D.P. Brown, North C Street, near Sutton Avenue. Stepping up to the counter, she requested a grain of morphine and half an ounce of laudanum. She stated in purchasing the drugs that she wanted the morphine for a friend who had the toothache very badly, and that she wanted the laudanum for herself, as she was at times unable to sleep. That was a lie.

She wanted to use it to rid herself of a life that had become all too unbearable. The druggist, sensing indecent intentions, took the precaution to dilute the laudanum before he gave it to her (a futile endeavor since she had already bought three ounces of laudanum from two other druggists that same morning). Then he said almost offhandedly, "I hope you do not intend to commit suicide, as did Downey," whose funeral procession had just passed. Kate bristled; her face reddened. She looked down, shuffled her feet and cleared her throat twice before she looked up again. Then she laughed and said that she thought any one was very foolish to make away with himself in that manner, with much more in the same style.

Kate paid for the drugs, then left the store and began walking back to the lodging-room on C street that she shared with another woman, Hattie Willis. She gave half of the laudanum to Hattie and took half for herself. Both women ingested overdoses, then joined hands to "cross the dark river."

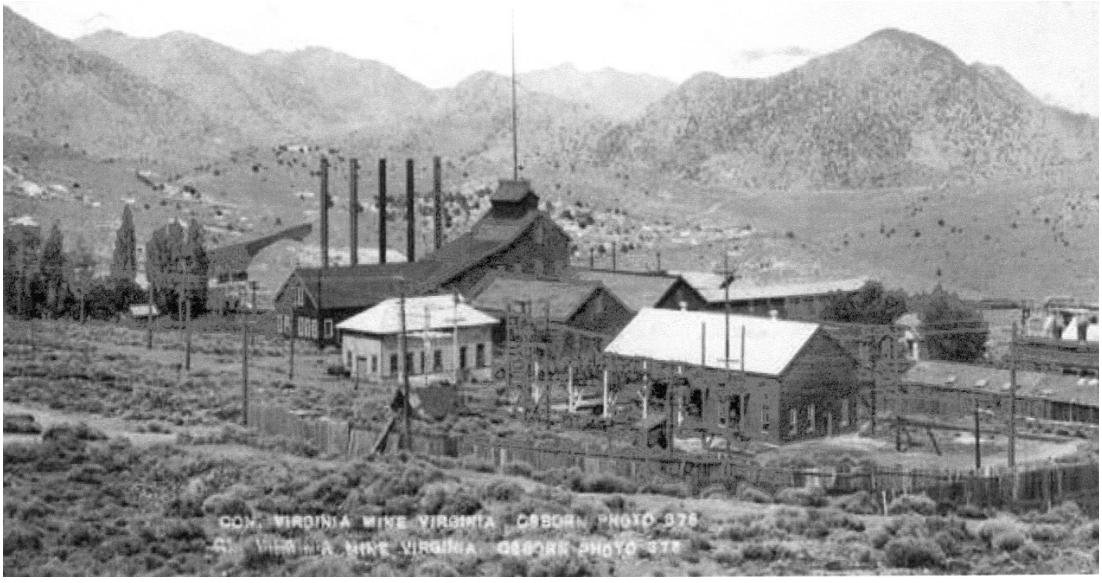
The deaths of Mrs. Thompson and Hattie Willis were not a shock to most people on the Comstock Lode (comprising the mining towns of Gold Hill, Silver City, and Virginia inia City), where the loss of life by suicide was so commonplace that it hardly caused a murmur of excitement. In the first 20 years of the Comstock (1859-1878), in fact, a reported ninety-pine people took their own lives—sixty men and thirty-nine women. Thirty-four killed themselves by gunshots, 4 by chloroform, 5 by hanging, 28 by opium or its derivatives (morphine and laudanum), 6 by cutting their throats, 22 by some type of poison-arsenic, nitric acid, oil of bitter almonds, chloral-hydrate, strychnine, rat poison, or prussic acid.

The ninety-nine suicides in the Comstock's first twenty years give it a suicide rate of 35 per 100,000, about five times the rate of suicide in the United States today. Why did the Comstock elicit such high levels of suicidal depression? This paper attempts to answer that question by examining the levels and causes of the suicides that took place in the boom years of Nevada's Comstock Lode, 1859-1878.

A great many Comstock women attempted or committed suicide out of some sort of domestic strife, such as a family squabbles, jealousy or unrequited love. In most cases, prostitutes—such as Katie Thompson and Hattie Willis—did so out of malaise or discontent brought on by their lifestyle. Most men did so due to financial embarrassment often caused by gambling or drinking. In the Comstock's first twenty years 21 suicides were reportedly caused by domestic strife, 18 suicides were caused by business embarrassment, 12 were attributed to "life disappointments," 8 by gambling, 2 from drunkenness, 5 to escape an illness, 8 to avoid arrest or prison, and for 17 no reason was given.

Comstock women who committed suicide often expressed a "weariness of living." In March of 1870 a woman committed suicide in a house on C Street, Virginia City, by taking an overdose of morphine. A note found in her room "shows rash act the result of discouragements and disappointments making her tired of life." In February of 1871 a Chinese woman named Ah Gone was found dead in her bed, in Lower Gold Hill from an overdose of opium. "She was a prostitute, and lived alone in a little shanty, opposite the Golden Eagle Hotel. Her friends say that she had grown tired of life." On the 24th of September, Nellie Davis, a prostitute, died of overdose of morphine. "She was 33 yrs old, and a native of Cornwall, England. She had a great horror of the life she had been compelled to lead, and said she would prefer death to going back."

Domestic strife also caused many people to take their own lives. On the 2nd of January 1872 a man was found in a cabin at the foot of the Geiger Grade who had come to death by poisoning himself. "He was despondent because he had quarreled with his wife."" On the 2nd of May 1876, Mrs. Lyman died at her home in the rear of the Andes hoisting works. "There is little doubt that she committed suicide," the *Territorial Enterprise* wrote. "A letter on her person by the Coroner makes it almost a certainty: 'He has done things that bring me—to my death, so I hope that God will reward him accord-



The Con Virginia Mine. A rich pocket of ore discovered in 1873 led to a "big bonanza" on the Comstock Lode. Courtesy of the Great Basin Art Gallery.

ing to his deeds. John Lyman has so many times threatened my life that I had to do this. I hope that this house, will be given to my two children.'" The Coroner's inquest ruled she had taken rat poison.

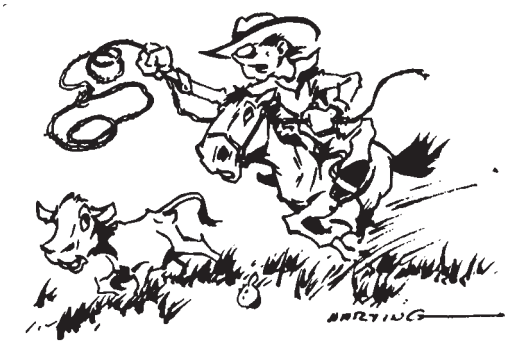
On the night of May 7, 1874 at No. 5 North D Street a woman named Carmen Julo was shot by Edward Gagner, who "after wounding the woman, placed his pistol against his head, just above the left ear and blew out his brains....She refused to have anything more to do with him when he suddenly arose and without a word fired upon her, then killing himself."'

The reasons the Comstock inspired such a wave of suicidal mania is debatable, but an examination of the particular suicides themselves is instructive. For one thing, the pervasive environment of gambling and drinking on the Comstock was very destructive, both financially and psychologically. Secondly, prostitution has always been a profession of high suicide rates. When Comstock prostitute Nellie Davis took her own life with an overdose of morphine in the spring of 1863, few were surprised. As the saying goes, "She had nothing to live for." This was true of most prostitutes, to whom sex was a business, stripped of warmth and devotion. And although some prostitutes did manage to form friendships that sustained them through crisis, their relationships more often seem to have been ones of rivalry, competition, and jealousy. Most faced lives of poverty, alcoholism, disease, violence, and drug addiction. It is no wonder that suicide was so attractive to so many. Thirdly, the volatile booms and bust cycles of the first twenty years of the Comstock could—make men paupers as abruptly as it had made them tycoons. A man who suddenly found himself in dire pecuniary difficulties, due to his mining stocks taking a sudden dive in value—which frequently occurred—often saw suicide as the only way out of the humiliation of financial distress.

Suggested Readings

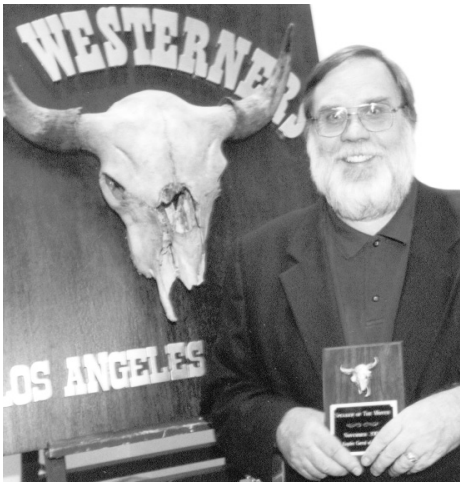
Roger Lane, *Violent Death in the City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

Roger McGrath, *Gunfighters, Highwaymen and Vigilantes* (New York: 1989).



THE MONTHLY ROUNDUP

NOVEMBER MEETING



Photograph by Froy Tiscareño.

November Meeting Speaker Jon Wilkman

Jon Wilkman, renowned motion picture director and producer, gave a stirring presentation on his forthcoming film project about the St. Francis Dam Disaster. Jon has spent over three decades working on a variety of high quality film projects, including the Walter Cronkite series, "Twentieth Century" and "21st Century." Since 1971, Wilkman Productions has been the dynamo behind several award winning HBO and PBS specials, including the critically acclaimed series, "Turning Points" and the "Los Angeles History Project." Mr. Wilkman has earned two Emmys and several honors for his extensive body of work, and taught nonfiction writing and film production at USC and Fordham University. Jon is a current director of the Historical Society of Southern California.

The St. Francis Dam collapsed in 1928, creating a 25-foot wave of water and debris that swept through the Santa Clarita Valley, killing hundreds, destroying farmland, roads, and townships. The disaster proved to be a monumental civil engineering failure and tarnished the reputation of William Mulholland, long considered the omnipotent voice of water and power in southern California. In addition, dark rumors surfaced of sabotage by those eager to bring retribution against Mulholland the DWP for the redirecting of northern California water from the California aqueduct.

Mr. Wilkman provided a special treat for corral members, presenting a 15 minute film clip of his work, which included interviews and original film footage never before seen by a popular audience. The Ventura Museum provided 16mm film from their special collections. The project also includes a 3 dimensional photo and computer generated recreation of the dam basin. The project utilizes 3 meter maps, satellite photography, and GPS data to authenticate his reproductions. Comments and analysis of the dam's structural integrity are provided by civil engineers, scientists, and historians.

Ironically, the St. Francis Dam gained little national attention, although the calamity was headline news in local papers. Mr. Wilkman provided several reasons for the lack of national focus. The city of Los Angeles quickly accepted full responsibility for the dam failure, which diminished any public recrimination and prolonged investigation. William Mulholland, to his credit, accepted personal responsibility for the dam failure. State and local officials were also involved in the construction of Hoover Dam, and they were eager to resolve property damage and liability claims in order to mitigate negative publicity over municipal construction projects. Jon noted the emergence of western urban history has provided new focus on the St. Francis Dam story, which makes this film project a timely effort in our understanding of water and urban growth in southern California.

DECEMBER MEETING

Photograph by Froy Tiscareño.

December Meeting Speaker Stephen Aron

The Lewis and Clark expedition was a watershed in America's past, bridging the continent's expanse, sparking a national sense of manifest destiny, and providing the impetus to eventually settle the far West. Stephen Aron brought Corral members closer to an understanding of the two men who led that expedition. Stephen teaches history at UCLA and is a director of the Autry Institute of the American West.

Professor Aron traced the most recent scholarship and attention paid to the Lewis and Clark expedition. He noted that in the past 30 years the epic journey has experienced a popular revival. The Lewis and Clark trail was opened in 1978. Film director Ken Burns created a PBS special on the expedition, while Gary Moulton and the University of Lincoln Nebraska edited a 13 volume edition of the journals. In addition, the late Stephen Ambrose earned a Pulitzer Prize for his popular tome, *Undaunted Courage, Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West.*

The Lewis and Clark expedition dismissed several myths about the western half of the continent. The expedition never found a Northwest Passage, a misguided belief that the continent included a waterway to the Pacific. Neither was the West a mirror image of the East. The journals revealed a western landscape replete with new Indian tribes, different wildlife, and a vast expanse that included formidable mountains, expansive prairies, and powerful rivers.

One of the most interesting aspects of Professor Aron's discussion involved the careers of Lewis and Clark following the Voyage of Discovery. Both men were active in Indian affairs in Missouri and Louisiana. Meriwether Lewis became governor of the Louisiana Territory, and acted as a moderating voice between the Shawnee and Delaware Indian tribes and the onrush of new settlers into the region. Lewis was depressed, in part, because of partisan political attacks over his stewardship as territorial governor, along with charges of inflated expenses for the Voyage of Discovery, when he committed suicide in 1809. Clark was deeply involved in Missouri politics. His attitude toward Native Americans policy ran somewhat counter to his actual life. He owned an Indian, York, who was never freed, and there were unfounded rumors that Clark fathered an Indian child. Yet, he ardently defended Native Americans from the encroachment of settlers onto their lands, and his support of the Indians may have contributed to his unsuccessful bid for the governorship in 1820.

In all, Professor Aron's incisive look at the life and times of Lewis and Clark suggested new possibilities in understanding these two great explorers.

Corral Chips

Corral member **MICHAEL PATRIS** has been busy working on his passion —the Mount Lowe Incline Railway. Mike hosted a reunion for the descendants of the incline railway builder, Thaddeus Lowe. This event, held in Philadelphia, proved to be the largest family reunion of Lowe family members since Mr. and Mrs. Thaddeus Lowe celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary at San Marino in 1905. Mike also for a smaller group to travel to Washington D.C. to view Lowe artifacts which are not on public display. These items are part of a collection that is shared by the Smithsonian Institute and the Library of Congress.

LOUIS BOURDET has been the editor for the Associated Historical Societies of Los Angeles County. He composes the calendar for the CCHS *California Historian,* and regularly contributes to the "Members Doings" column for that journal.

GLORIA RICCI LOTHROP has recently earned a number of deserved awards. The W.P. Whitsett Professor of California History at CSU Northridge received the Order of Merit Award from the Republic of Italy for her extensive research and writing about Italians in California and the West. Gloria also received the prestigious Tom Owen History Memorial Award from the Los Angeles Historical Society for her many contributions in the field of Los Angeles history.

WILLIAM S. WHITE has recently published a book on the role of Santa Catalina Island in World War II. His research deals with the Pacific West Coast training center at Avalon, and includes testimonials by island residents and military personnel trained at the base.

Active member **KEN PAULEY** spoke to the Southwest Museum on February 8th, 2003. He and wife Carol presented a brief preview of their forthcoming book: *San Fernando, Rey de España--A Pictorial History of the Mission in the Valley*. The following week (14th-16th) in Santa Cruz, Ca., Ken gave a talk to the California Mission Studies Association (CMSA). Second of a four part series on Weights and Measurements during California's Mission Period, Part II consists of AREA measurements as they were used in the New World, 1519 - 1834. Part I - LINEAR measurements may be read at the CMSA Web Site: ca-missions.org under Articles and Reports.

Directory Changes

New Members

Robert H. Briggs
1316 Rolling Hills Dr.
Fullerton, CA 92835

Kendal Cornwall
2435 W. 227th St. #7
Torrance, CA 90501

Michael E. Engh, S.J.
c/o The Jesuit Community
Loyola Marymount University
Los Angeles, CA 90045-0041

Gordon T. Hawkins
365 Toyon Rd.
P.O. Box 852
Sierra Madre, CA 91024

Scott Kratz
Autry Museum of Western Heritage
4700 Western Heritage Way
Los Angeles, CA 90027-1462

Howard Shorr
3003 NE 51st Ave.
Portland, OR 97213

The Mountain Man!

by Loren Wendt

I ain't always right, but this time I sure ain't wrong !
Old Ben had been up on "High Lonesome" just a mite too long
He had taken to jabberin' and actin' like a fool
Even started talkie' to Bertha, his old cantankerous mule

Mebbe it was cuz the beaver weren't commitin' suicide no more
They didn't jump into his traps and that was what made him sore
It got so dad-gummed tiresome he didn't know what to do
And it was still three weeks until the "Flatland Rendezvous "

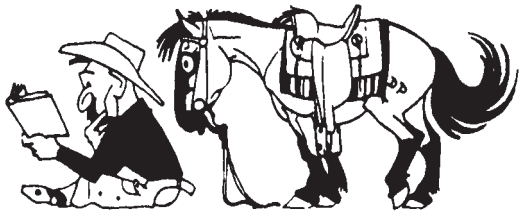
So he turned and said to Bertha (see what I mean !)
" Let's go back to camp. We'11 scrape some beav hides clean"
Well, there he was at camp just a-scrapin' hard away
When Bertha smelled that Injun smell and she began to bray

When Ben saw them a-comin' it just put him "over the top"
He started in a-jabberin' and he just wouldn't stop
The Indians couldn't believe it, they looked at him with awe
They couldn't kill a crazy man, the worst they ever saw

Well, they took his pelts, his Flintlock, and poor old Bertha, too
Now Old Ben was stuck and he didn't know what to do
So he started in a-follerin' the trail they'd left behind
He was hopin' for just one thing, one thing he knew that he must
find

Some old grizzled trapper said he saw him just the other day
But when he ran toward him he just seemed to fade away
Others claimed they saw him, even called him by his name
But they all agreed Old Ben would never be the same

Well, I ain't always right, but this time I ain't wrong
Old Ben had been up on "High Lonesome" more than a mite too long
He has quit his crazy jabberin' and actin' like a fool
He just keeps on a-searchin', searching for a gol-durn mule '



DOWN THE WESTERN BOOK TRAIL . . .

EL PUEBLO: *The Historic Heart of Los Angeles* by Jean Bruce Poole. Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute and the J. Paul Getty Museum, 2002. 132 pages, illustrations, map, bibliography, index. Softcover, $24.95. Available at bookstores.

There have been more than enough books written about Los Angeles to fill a good-sized bookcase. But only a few of them reach the exalted status of "classic" which Lawrence Clark Powell defines as a book that stands the test of time, written with style, vision, and mastery of subject. Jean Bruce Poole's magnificent new work approaches this lofty category and is destined, in this reviewer's opinion, to be near the head of the list of Los Angeles' classics. Simply stated, it is one of the dozen or so best books on the city's history.

Jean Bruce Poole is well qualified to write this history of the heart of old Los Angeles. She was senior curator and then historic museum director of El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument from 1977 until her retirement last year.

The book begins with the founding, by order of Carlos III, King of Spain, of *El Pueblo de la Reina de Los Angeles, sobre el Rio de la Porciuncula* - The Town of the Queen of Angeles, on the River Porciuncula —by forty-eight *pobladores* from Sinaloa and Sonora in 1781. The story of the growing community is richly detailed, from a small adobe pueblo to a dusty cow town after the coming of the *norteamericanos*, to a city of several thousand in which lumber and brick was fast surpassing adobe, and finally into the leading metropolis south of San Francisco. Los Angeles became a multi-cultural community with a Spanish-speaking majority joined by a growing number of Anglo-Americans, Frenchmen, Blacks, and Chinese, who did not live always in harmony. Lynchings were a common occurrence, and the "Chinese Massacre" of 1871 represents one of the darkest episodes in the city's history.

The author describes the buildings, some restored, others in the process of restoration, that make up this historic center of old Los Angeles. The Avila Adobe on Olvera Street, the oldest surviving structure in the city, and *La Iglesia deNuestra Senora La Reina de Los Angeles,* The Church of Our Lady the Queen of Angels, represent the Mexican Californio era. The Pico House, the city's first grand hotel, the Merced Theater, the Masonic Hall date from the 1860s and early '70s. Firehouse #1, the city's first fire station dating to 1884, has been restored as a museum. The Gamier Block, built by Frenchman Philippe Gamier in 1890, will someday house a Chinese-American cultural center. A more recent addition to the historic district in the Biscailuz Building, constructed in 1925-26, which now houses Instituto Cultural Mexicano. Across Alameda Street is Union Station, built in the years 1933 to 1939 and designed in a unique combination of Streamline Moderne and Mission Revival styles, and occupying the site of old Chinatown. The most visited part of El Pueblo historic district is Olvera Street, catering to tourists with a rich sampling of Los Angeles' Hispanic heritage.

Jean Bruce Poole recounts the story of all these places and the people of many cultures who lived and worked here. She describes the efforts to preserve and restore this heart of old Los Angeles, begun in the 1920s by Christine Sterling and continued in recent years by the Los Angeles Conservancy.

One of the most fascinating chapters deals with murals depicting social protest painted by left-wing Mexican artists in the depressed 1930s. One of the Mexican mural painters was David Alfaro Siqueiros who, with the help of several American artists,

created an 18 by 80 foot painting entitled "America Tropical" on the upper south wall of Italian Hall between Olvera Street and Main. The center piece of the mural depicts an Indian peon being crucified on a double cross, with what siqueiros termed an "American Imperialist Eagle" hovering above—a denunciation of the numerous U.S. interventions in Latin America during the early decades of the 20th century. The huge mural was lauded by some, but it shocked and displeased conservative civic leaders and the LAPD "Red Squad". Christine Sterling herself found the mural "anti-American". Siqueiros' stunning artwork was whitewashed during the Red scare. Ironically, the whitewashing, meant to hide the mural from public view, wound up protecting it from exposure to sun, wind, and rain. Years of weathering have gradually eroded the white overpaint, once again exposing parts of the mural to public view.

This superb volume, designed by Tevvy Balls, greatly enhanced with more than a hundred photographs and paintings in both full color and black and white, belongs on the shelf of every *aficionado* of *El Pueblo de Los Angeles* and our rich cultural diversity. In the words of Jean Bruce Poole, "El Pueblo today is much more than a historical site. It is also very much a place of living culture, whose heritage is remembered in the rituals of daily life and celebrated in festivals held throughout the year."

—John Robinson

A RIVER RUNNING WEST: *The Life of John Wesley Powell*, by Donald Worster. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. 673 pp. Maps, Illustrations, Notes, Bibliography, Index. Cloth, $35. Order from Oxford University Press, 198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016-4314 (212) 726-6000; www.oup.com

Almost half a century ago Wallace Stegner wrote *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian*, a biography of John Wesley Powell that rescued the man from obscurity and influenced subsequent scholarship on Western history, particularly environmental concerns. Donald Worster, with such books as *Rivers of Empire* and *Dust Bowl*, has already made his own contributions reappraising Western history. He now weighs in with a new biography of Powell that substantially reinterprets Powell's role in the shaping of our understanding of the arid West. He also delves much deeper into Powell's life than Stegner did, utilizing manuscript collections at the Huntington Library, Library of Congress, National Archives, Smithsonian Institution, and many other sources, in fact far beyond the depth and range Stegner used in his work.

Just how far Worster has gone beyond Stegner is evident in the first hundred pages of the book. Worster traces Powell's childhood, education, and service in the Civil War. This richly detailed section of the book reveals important insights into the shaping of Powell's character. Growing up on the frontier in a family that migrated from one state to another, Powell pursued an education at best from schools lacking in trained teachers and resources. He was indecisive about the schools he attended, dropping out of several colleges and never actually obtaining a degree, though later he received honorary ones. His Methodist background made him an abolitionist. When the Civil War came he joined the Union Army, and at Shiloh a bullet wound cost him his right arm below the elbow.

Powell early acquired an interest in geology that broadened into a commitment to science and the scientific method. He determined to explore the last remaining great unknown area of the continent, and to travel down the Colorado River. But Worster makes Powell less of a hero and more of a man in this adventure. Somewhat aloof from the men he hired for his two expeditions, Powell was called "the Major," and during his career he acted the role of officer and gentleman in relation to his staff at the Geological Survey and the Bureau of Ethnology. Worster argues that Powell was more than a hero of the West who ultimately

failed to convince the politicians of the West's limitations in water and agriculture. He sees Powell as a nationalist who believed in an industrial civilization that would bring progress and prosperity to America. Ironically, Powell believed this in an era of robber barons, political corruption, and a system of industrial labor that impoverished workers.

Worster offers a fascinating description of the scientific rivalries of the post-Civil War era, including the imperious attitudes of such men as Ferdinand Hayden and the preposterous claims of Samuel Adams. Powell also had to contend with a Congress that either did not understand the issues of climate and hydrography beyond the 100th meridian or else was caught up in the visions of such men as William Gilpin and Senator William Stewart. These men believed—often to their own financial benefit—that the West was a cornucopia of abundance waiting to be exploited.

Powell's view of Native Americans was also somewhat at variance with his contemporaries. Although he believed Indians were culturally inferior, he was not a racist; he thought they could successfully adopt the trappings of civilization if only government corruption could be stopped. When he took on the responsibility of heading both the Geological Survey and the Bureau of Ethnology, he stopped being an explorer and field researcher and became more of a bureaucrat, guiding his staff along general policy lines and then defending that policy from cost-cutting politicians. As he grew older he became more introspective and philosophical, but failing health and his long hurting Civil War wound and mental decline left his final work incomplete, unreadable, and, to critics, incoherent. Powell died an old man at age 68 in 1902, just months after Congress passed the National Reclamation Act.

For anyone who understands Powell from a reading of Stegner's biography or William Culp Darrah's *Powell of the Colorado* (1951), Worster's account of Powell will bring a modern sense of the complexities in Powell's life and thought. This is a "worts and all" biography, but the person who emerges from it earns respect for being human and therefore a man of accomplishment as well as shortcomings. The accomplishments far outweigh the shortcomings, for in Worster's final estimation, "we may well look back on Powell as a measure of where we have been and what we have lost" (p. 573).

--Abraham Hoffman

RAILROADS OF THE SANTA MARIA VALLEY: *Three Different Railroads - Three Different Gaunes*, by Hal Madson. Los Olivos: Olive Press Publications, 2001. xiii+184 pp. Maps, Photographs, Notes, Chronology, Appendix, Bibliography, Index. $40.00. Order from Hal Madson, PO 6512, Santa Maria, CA 93456. Include $3.20 tax and $5.00 s/h.

This handsomely produced, well illustrated book describes two regional railroads and one curiosity, the latter, a narrow-gauge line built to dispense feed to stack pens. One of the regional railroads, the Santa Maria Valley, is a standard gauge line built in 1912 to connect newly-developed oil fields with the Southern Pacific (now Union Pacific) at Guadalupe. The other was the three-foot gauge Pacific Coast that had been built south from San Luis Obispo in 1882.

The narrow gauge's role in the regional economy changed with time. At first, it carried valley agricultural products to San Luis Bay, where coastal shipping was then the only access to a larger market. Later the narrow gauge hauled locally-grown sugar beets to the new Union Sugar refinery at Betteravia and oil to tankers at San Luis Bay. Completion of the Southern Pacific's coast line eroded the narrow gauge's passenger traffic, but its freight business prospered, and the line posted its best years during and just after World War I. It was ultimately rendered obsolete not by the standard gauge track that duplicated some of its service, but by the automobile and the paved highway.

Meanwhile, the Santa Maria Valley had

gone into receivership in 1924, when the end of wartime contracts reduced its traffic. It was purchased by oil and real estate developer Captain G. Allan Hancock, whose colorful and accomplished career is sketched in an appendix to the book. Hancock upgraded the railroad beyond what its prospects seemingly warranted, and aggressively sought new markets; the railroad's best years were in the 1970s, but nowadays there are fewer shippers and business has slowed.

The narrow gauge line previously received close attention in Gerald Best's *Shins and Narrow Gauge Rails* (1964) and in Westcott and Johnson's *Pacific Coast Railway* (1998), and naturally Madson's book draws on these sources, though not uncritically. Little had been written previously about the Santa Maria Valley RR, and nothing at all about the feed lot; so this book makes a welcome contribution.

—A. C. W. Bethel

CALIFORNIA CRAZY AND BEYOND: *Roadside Vernacular Architecture,* by Jim Heimann. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2001. 180 pp. Illustrations, Notes, Bibliography. Paper, $18.95. Order from Chronicle Books, 85 Second Street, Sixth Floor, San Francisco, Ca. 94105 (415)537-4257.

The title is *California Crazy & Beyond, Roadside Vernacular Architecture,* but in truth, California is not crazy at all. Creative, more daring, and certainly illustrating the eye-catching genius of simpler, less sophisticated times, author Jim Heimann records in high-gloss, sepia tone colored photographs the restaurants, gas stations and many businesses that dotted the California and Southwest landscapes with magical architectural images that represented the product which was sold.

The Round House Café on North Virgil Avenue was a brick structure in the form of a train engine round house complete with half the locomotive exiting the building. Twin Barrels on Beverly Boulevard, (sandwiches supreme) featured two huge root beer barrels above the lunch counter. The Coffee Cup on Pico Boulevard was a ten-sided building replete with coffee cup and saucer on top. Of course the Brown Derby was a brown derby; The Chile Bowl a bowl; the Tail of the Pup a hot dog stand; the Dark Room a camera and photographic supplier; and the Wig Wam Motel in San Bernardino, individual teepee type rooms with ample parking space for the weary traveler.

The many roadside structures resurrects distant memories of amusing, sometimes ostentatious, but always pleasing images of a bye-gone era. For those raised in the southern California area *California Crazy* is an up-lifting and memory jogging experience. One should not miss the photos of early childhood eateries that are still serving meals today, such as Clifton's Cafeteria or Tam O'Shanter. Remeber the specialized service stations? The Umbrella Service Station on LaBrea or Bob's Airmail Service on Wilshire, whose pumps were shaded by a full size twin engine plane with Mobil's flying red Pegasus logo on the wings even, had uniformed attendants who checked your oil and cleaned your windows.

There is not much in today's architecture which measures up to the style of these past eye-catching fixtures. The original exterior of the Sampson Tire Works is still seen off the I-5 Freeway in the City of Commerce with its Assyrian palace decor and the Bull Dog Cafe was rebuilt inside the Peterson Automotive Museum in Los Angeles.

Our society has moved far past the stereotypes and degrading and racially insulting signs and images that grace the entrance of Mammy's Cupboard and the Coon Chicken Inn. Although plates, glasses and other black memorabilia from these restaurants are quite expensive as collectibles, the pictures tell much about social beliefs and white perceptions before 1950.

Hats of all styles, the animals of old MacDonalds Farm, fruits, food items and dairy products imaginatively created to catch the travelers eye and advertise a specialty product are outdated in our society

today. These rare images are captured for all in Heimann's photographic tour. It is an easy read, a nostalgic tug at the heart, and a great reminiscence of the years from World War I through the early 1950's. The architectural writings and histories are good but the pictures tell the story. A picture may be worth more than a thousand words.

—Gary Turner

CALIFORNIA DESPERADOES, *Stories of Early California Outlaws in Their Own Words*, by William B. Secrest. Illustrations, Notes. Clovis, CA.: Word Dancer Press, Inc., 2000. 257 pp. $15.95 cloth.

California Desperadoes provides a lively narrative of nearly a dozen outlaws from the Gold Rush period. Crime doesn't pay is the repetitive theme behind the rapscallion lives of these badmen. Despite their notoriety and fame, each outlaw is eventually tracked down by posses, imprisoned or hanged for their misdeeds. It is the stuff from which movies have been made and William B. Secrest vividly recounts the trail leading to the capture of these frontier outlaws.

Using contemporary newspaper accounts, Secrest pieces together the interviews and court testimony of witnesses and defendants alike. The reader meets James Stuart and the Australian ruffians known as the Sydney Ducks, who terrorized San Francisco in the infant years of statehood; encounters the piercing eyes of robber and murderer Charles Dorsey; traces the steps of migrant Jim Smith after his prison breakout from Marin Island, where the feared whipping post at San Quentin is located; and follows the criminal path of bandit Tiburcio Vasquez as he eludes sheriffs and posses across the state. Secrest's reliance on sensational journalism adds color to the stories of these legendary outlaws.

California Desperadoes is an engaging account of ruthless men of the West, but the book fails to satisfy on a deeper level. Secrest never does provide insight into the limits of frontier justice. The Gold Rush era was characterized by rapid settlement, cultural tensions, and a lack of institutional development, which directly contributed to lawlessness. Indeed, some desperadoes felt a life of crime was the only alternative to the prejudice of a flawed legal system and brutal imprisonment. This was partly the rationale of Tiburcio Vasquez and a few other notorious criminals highlighted in the book. Secrest dismisses those claims, or ignores them, and provides little insight into these outlaw personalities. Instead, they are presented as cartoon-styled, one dimensional characters, driven by greed and defeated by good.

The obvious limitations of *California Desperadoes* would not be so egregious except that more is expected of the author. Secrest has already tackled the law and order theme in previous works, which were better researched. A more thoughtful study of the outlaw profile would be useful in understanding this volatile period of western settlement. Yet this book works only on the level of entertainment, not historical scholarship.

California Desperadoes provides a series of disparate biographical sketches that assert a simple theme, better found in a John Wayne film or Lone Ranger episode of a similar genre.

—Ronald C. Woolsey

WOMAN WALKING AHEAD: *In Search of Catherine Weldon and Sitting Bull*, by Eileen Pollack. 360 pp. Notes, Bibliography, Index. Cloth, $29.95. Order from University of New Mexico Press, 1720 Lobos Blvd., NE, Albuquerque, N.M. 87131-1591 (505) 277-0853

Eileen Pollack is a member of the MFA faculty of the Department of English at the University of Michigan and because of a suggestion by a professor and a chance reading of Stanley Vestal's biography of Sitting Bull set off on a scholar's trek to find the mysterious white woman both mentioned. This journey takes on more than the stuff of history found in archival collections. She hasa felt need to witness the Sun Dance, hunt

down relatives of Sitting Bull and Catherine Weldon, root out places the actors lived, and interpret her dreams. This trek was part vision quest and part historian as detective, but it is all part of the massive problem of reconstructing the lives of women too often lost in the shadow of some "great man." In the end, we can recall Manfred's warning that "grief should be the instructor of the wise;/ Sorrrow is knowledge: they who know the most/ Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth,/ The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life." Byron, Manfred, ll. 9-12. Historians know this all too well and for Pollack the vision quest, scholar's trek, and detective's case becomes an obsession finally run to ground.

Weldon's life is a footnote to Sitting Bull's, but in Pollack's hands, her story becomes a life, her era alive, and her mind a part of our sensibilities. Obviously, biography and context are accepted parts of the historian's craft, but only a novelist can put words in an actor's mouth and know what she was thinking. Pollack uses transitional interdisciplinarity to put the reader in touch with what Weldon "felt"[132].

Weldon's life with the Lakota began in June 1889 when the widow Weldon traveled to the Standing Rock Reservation to help Sitting Bull lead his people in their quest to retain their lands. She became his secretary and a lobbyist for the American Indian cause. She failed as did the Sioux in retaining their great reservation. Leaving the reservation, Weldon returned with her son to join Sitting Bull on the Grand River. She warns him against the Ghost Dance, but fails to turn him from his chiefly mission. He dies for his people at the hands of his people, just as he had seen in a vision. Weldon returns East to die destitute in fire having lost her teenage son to lock jaw and her friend, Sitting Bull, to his tribal fate. Perhaps Manfred foretold Sitting Bull's dream.

Some of the insights of this book are profound. The press distorted Weldon's role, her relationship with Sitting Bull, and her character. Not surprisingly, women were blamed for whatever went wrong. Weldon was, after all, "a white woman from the east, who has more money than brains" according to the New York Tribune [139]. American Indians did not trust writers because they gave interviews and the writers wrote lies. Ina McNeil, one of Pollack's informants, told her the "truth" based on what she had been told by Indian relatives. When a white person lives among the Lakota, "it's as if she is looking in a window. A soundproof window." [171] The point of this is that Catherine Weldon's understanding of the Lakota could only be partial, through glass darkly. Obviously, Pollack had the same disability, but she pursues the "truth" to the point of camping among the white observers and Lakota participants in the Sun Dance, a mystic religious experience for the Indians. She endured nature, certainly not the nature of Wordsworth, Byron, Keats, or Thoreau, in the form of mosquitoes, grasshoppers, biting flies, and boredom to get close to Lakota culture. Yet Pollacks' view was limited because "I couldn't take notes, and my memory is blurred because I wasn't allowed to wear my glasses." [243] Closer still, she has dreams and visions foretelling the future. The dreams prove true even the death of Ina McNeil's son felled on a jet sky. The dream repeated itself. Reminding us that "And anyway history isn't really history until it's rewritten or at least until it repeats itself." Lawrence Ferlinghetti, A Far Rockaway of the Heart, #9, ll 30-33. Pollack, the Lakota, and Sitting Bull were united in the dream, the vision quest.

This is a very readable book and a worthwhile trek for the mind and the heart. You will meet profound Lakota characters, knowledgeable professionals at history societies, urban cabbies, cranky microfilm readers, and the public servants who enable our access to the stuff of history without the mosquitoes. Along the way, you will find Sitting Bull and Catherine Weldon.

—Gordon Morris Bakken