



The Many Lives of the Three Godfathers

By Abraham Hoffman

Editor's Note - This article was originally presented to the Los Angeles Corral in December 2010.

The Three Godfathers is a Christmas story with a Western setting. Most Western fans are familiar with the 1948 version, *3 Godfathers*, that starred John Wayne and was directed by John Ford. It may come as a surprise to learn that there have been no less than six versions of the story, including the 1974 TV movie.

The old adage, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" doesn't apply much to the motion picture industry. Book titles are changed, characters are added and deleted, and sometimes the ending is different from the book. Peter Bernard Kyne's novella *The Three Godfathers* has experienced all of these changes. First published in 1913, the 95-page book has become a minor Christmas classic, a facsimile reprint edition in paperback easily available today. The son of a rancher, Peter Kyne was born in San Francisco in 1880, served in the U.S. Army during the Spanish-American War, and subsequently decided to become a writer. His stories were about ranchers, lumberjacks, and sailors as well as cowboys and outlaws. His novels and short stories found an enthusiastic audience, and he became a regular contributor to the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, and *Cosmopolitan*. Bret Harte may have been an influence on Kyne, for Harte's short story "The Luck of

Roaring Camp," written in 1868, dealt with a prostitute who gave birth in a mining camp, and the prospectors adopted the baby.

In 1909 Kyne wrote a short story, "Broncho Billy and the Baby," and sold it to the *Saturday Evening Post*. The story caught the eye of Max Aronson, better known as Gilbert M. Anderson, a movie pioneer who had played the passenger murdered by the bandits in the 1903 film *The Great Train Robbery*. Anderson, co-founder of the Essanay movie studio, offered to buy the screen rights to the Broncho Billy character, and Kyne accepted fifty dollars as payment. Anderson went on to film hundreds of Broncho Billy movies, including a film based on Kyne's short story. The film dealt with an outlaw who finds a baby girl in the Mojave Desert. The baby is the daughter of the sheriff who is pursuing the outlaw. Enduring terrible hardships, the outlaw returns the baby to the sheriff's home, and dies at the end of the movie. It should be noted that the Broncho Billy films have nothing in common with each other aside from the title character. Broncho Billy dies, lives, gets married, is an outlaw, a sheriff—each film is unique except for Billy himself.

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Editor's Corner . . .

In this edition of the Branding Iron there are fully three articles I think you'll enjoy. First, Abe Hoffman tells us about a minor Christmas story entitled "The Three Godfathers," which began life as a short novel by Peter Bernard Kyne. Abe shows us the many iterations that this has gone through and how it is still with us today. Next, our esteemed Sheriff Joe Cavallo gives us a rare insight into a personal moment shared by John Muir and a longtime friend through some surviving, hastily hand-written correspondence. Finally, there is an interesting and I believe pertinent piece by a non-Westerner, Dr. Ronald Limbaugh. He delves into the varying views of local historians versus academic historians and makes some excellent points. The article is reproduced here by permission of Dr. Limbaugh.

There are also two other articles about the doings around the LA Westerners' Corral. First, Larry Boerio recaps the trip to Mt. Wilson and the "behind-the-scenes" tour that Westerners got from Dave Jurasevich, the Deputy Director of Operations. Then, Abe Hoffman recounts the six (count 'em, SIX) awards that LA Westerners received from the Westerners International meeting in Tucson. Congratulations to all who made LA Westerners what it is today - one of the premiere corrals in the country!

As always, please feel free to contact me regarding ideas for articles. I'm always looking for material to put in the Branding Iron. Luckily, several of you have come forward already and I appreciate it - but there's always room for more! Please consider putting something together that you think may interest the greater Corral as a whole.

Happy Trails!

Steve Lech
rivcokid@gmail.com

Meanwhile, Peter Kyne decided to revise his short story and expanded it into a novel. The *Saturday Evening Post* serialized it, and the book, the first of many Kyne novels, came out in 1913. In the years to come many Kyne novels and stories would be adapted for the movies, among them the *Cappy Ricks* series, and short stories too numerous to mention. None, however, would prove as durable as *The Three Godfathers*. Kyne began the story with four outlaws holding up the Wickenburg, Arizona National Bank. Please note that on the third page of the story Kyne refers to “the fair state of Arizona.” Unlike his contemporary Clarence E. Mulford, author of the Hopalong Cassidy books, Kyne set his story in the contemporary West. Arizona became a state in 1912, with the novel being published a year later. There were few paved roads in the Western states, and the idea that bank robbers escaped on horseback from a dusty Arizona town was perfectly plausible for the time. However, while four outlaws committed the crime, only three got away. A bystander shot and killed one, who tumbled off his horse, unnamed and unmourned, taking with him the gunny-sack with the loot from the bank.

Kyne knew his Western geography well. The surviving outlaws, one of them wounded with a bullet lodged in his left shoulder, headed west for the Colorado River and California. They stopped to water their horses at Granite Point. When they reached the river and found a boat, they shot their exhausted horses and crossed the river, landing near Bill Williams Mountain. They put stones in the boat to sink it, their plan evidently to throw the posse off their trail by getting rid of the horses and leaving no evidence they had crossed into California. With their canteens filled, and with a supply of food to last them for six days, they started hiking in the direction of the Santa Fe railroad tracks. Their goal was a mining camp at Old Woman Mountain, a place called New Jerusalem. Lacking blankets, they traveled at night, replenishing their canteens at Mojave Tanks and continuing on to Malapai Springs. The next water-hole was Terrapin Tanks where they planned to rest for several days before going on to the railroad.

Up to this point Kyne had not identified the three outlaws. He first referred to them as the Worst Bad Man, the Wounded Bad Man, and the Youngest Bad Man. Through their conversations their names are revealed to the reader. Tom Gibbons is the Worst Bad Man; Bill Kearny, the Wounded Bad Man; and Bob Sangster, age 22 and committing his first crime, the Youngest Bad Man. When they arrive at Terrapin Tanks they are shocked to find that a tenderfoot had dynamited the tanks to clean them out, destroying the water supply. The tenderfoot then apparently wandered off into the desert, leaving a covered wagon in which his wife was about to give birth. The horses are also gone. As best they can, the men aid the woman in childbirth. Knowing she is dying, the woman—we never learn her name—asks each man, “Will you save my baby?” Each man promises to do so and to act as the baby’s godfathers. She names the baby Robert William Thomas Sangster, and then dies.

The rest of the novel follows the outlaws as they struggle across the Mojave Desert towards New Jerusalem. The covered wagon supplies include swaddling clothes, a Bible, and *Doctor Meecham on Caring for the Baby*, a guidebook that initially seems more important than the Bible. They find a bottle of olive oil and follow the book’s instructions on how to bathe the baby. The supplies include six cans of condensed milk to feed the infant.

In his innocence Bob asks what is a godfather. Bill tells him, “A godfather, Bob, is a sort of reserve parent. When a kid is baptized there’s a godfather and a godmother present, an’ for an’ on behalf of the kid they promise the preacher, just the same as the kid would if he could only talk, to renounce the devil and all his work.” Bob says, “all I got to say is that us three’re a lovely bunch o’ godfathers.”

At that point Bob reads from the Gospel according to St. Matthew, and Tom tries his best to make sense of it, but finds it more practical to “heat some of this airtight milk and feed our godson before we leave.”

As they continue their journey through the desert, Tom and Bill realize they may

not survive the trek, and determine that Bob, too young for an outlaw career, should be the one to survive and get the baby to New Jerusalem. They estimate that Bob would arrive there on December 25—Christmas morning. Bill's shoulder wound infected by blood poisoning, Bill Kearny is the first outlaw to die. Tom Gibbons carries the baby until his strength gives out. Bob, the last outlaw, discards, food, the Bible, and Doctor Meecham's book, so that only the baby remains his burden and responsibility. Coyotes show up, and Bob shoots at them to drive them away. He finds a water-hole, but it's dry. The last of the water, which he has saved for the baby and mixed with the last can of condensed milk, is offered to the infant. Thirst overwhelms Bob to the point of delirium. Hallucinations try to persuade him to abandon the baby. Incredibly, he finds an old burro—surely a sign from Heaven. The packsaddle on the burro has a can of tomatoes, giving Bob some renewed energy. He puts the baby in the packsaddle and plods along, pushing the burro to its limit. At the crest of a hill the burro can go no further, but New Jerusalem is only a few hundred yards away.

Kyne describes the penultimate scene: "Bob Sangster's tongue hung from his mouth, long and black and withered, like the tongue of a dead beef, as he stood there on the outskirts of New Jerusalem and thought of everything. Bill Kearny had been right. It was a Christmas baby. It would pull through all right. He drew the baby to him until their faces were very close, so close that a little hand crept up and closed tightly over the godfather's nose."

Bob then staggers into the town, "a battered, bleeding, raving wreck of a man, who hugged a bundle to his great breast, reeled into New Jerusalem." Here Kyne provides an ambiguous ending to the story. Bob stops in front of what Kyne calls a hurdy-gurdy, a 1913 use of the term for a kind of musical instrument, but that I take to mean a dance hall or a saloon. He hears a melodeon, a reed organ, playing, and a woman, labeled by Kyne as a Mary Magdalen, singing the song "Jerusalem." Bob enters, approaches

the woman, and hands the baby to her. We may assume that Bob dies, but Kyne leaves us with only an assumption.

Three years later, in June 1916, the first film version based on the novel was released. It starred Harry Carey as Bob Sangster, George Berrell as Tim (not Tom) Gibbons, and Frank Lanning as Bill Kearny. Joe Rickson played a fourth outlaw, Rusty Connors. Kyne received story credit, but the scenario, written by Harvey Gates, included a front story and details not found in the novel. In this version Bob has a love interest, Ruby Merrill, known as "the Mojave Lily," a dance hall hostess who had gone out West after suffering a nervous breakdown working in an orange packing factory. Bob wants to forget his earlier career as a convicted horse thief, but three former fellow convicts persuade him to rob the Wells Fargo Bank. One outlaw is killed and Bob, Bill, and Tim flee into the Mojave Desert where they help the dying woman and promise to be the baby's godfathers. Bill and Tim die, but Bob manages to get to the town. He and the sheriff, Pete Cushing, go back to the desert to retrieve the stolen money. The sheriff finds a Bible and learns from its inscriptions that it belonged to the dead woman who happened to be the sheriff's sister. So the baby is his nephew. He gives some of the reward money to Bob and Ruby, staking them to a happy life and a happy ending for the movie. This brief synopsis probably demonstrates the screenwriter's effort to fix something that wasn't broken. Sources do indicate that Kyne had a hand in working on the script, and he seems to have taken it for granted that the adaptations of his writings would include plot and character changes. That is, such revisions were all right as long as he was paid.

The second version of the three godfathers story, titled *Marked Men*, came out in 1919, directed by John Ford and with story credit for Kyne and writer credit to H. Tipton Steck. Curiously, this version starred Harry Carey again, but his character's name was Cheyenne Harry, a role enacted by Carey in more than twenty films, many of them also directed by Ford. Joe Harris

played Tom Gibbons, but no Bill Kearny was in the film. Ted Brooks played Tony Garcia, the first time a Mexican would be one of the godfathers. Ruby Merrill again was the love interest for Harry, and the sheriff is Pete Cushing, suggesting some borrowing not from Kyne but from the 1916 film. Of interest is the actress who played Ruby in this film—Winifred Westover, who married William S. Hart in 1921.

The Internet Movie Data Base seems to have erred in attributing the 1921 film *Action*, directed by John Ford, to Kyne's novel. Harvey Gates was again the writer, but a second story, "The Mascotte of the Three Star," was credited to J. Allen Duan. In any event, the synopsis for this film tells a story that has no resemblance at all to Kyne's book. None of the character names from the novel are attached to the movie's characters. The only reason I can think of about this is that by 1921 Kyne had written quite a number of short stories that were adapted for the movies, and his name had become something of a brand name in promoting a motion picture. It was not unusual for a studio to buy a property and use only the title or, in this case, to credit a popular writer for promotional purposes. Kyne, who had a record of squandering his money on poor investments, apparently went along with the practice.

In 1929 Universal Studio brought out the first sound "talkie" version of *The Three Godfathers*, crediting Kyne's novel but under the story supervision of veteran screenwriter C. Gardner Sullivan. It's my considered opinion that this is the best of the three sound film versions of the story. This time around, it was titled *Hell's Heroes*. Tim Reed did the adaptation and dialogue, returning to the original characters and focusing tightly on the ordeal of the men in the desert. William Wyler directed this version. However, the order of the badmen changed. Charles Bickford was Bob Sangster, this time around a hardened criminal instead of the Youngest Bad Man. Fred Kohler, an underrated character actor known mainly for playing villains, did a fine job as William "Wild Bill" Kearney [sic], and Raymond Hatton, later a fixture in B Western films, was Thomas "Barbwire" Tom

Gibbons, now the Wounded Bad Man. A fourth outlaw, Jose, was played by Joe de la Cruz. Bickford comes to the town of New Jerusalem several days early, to check on the bank. He visits a saloon where he has struck up an acquaintance with Carmelita, a dance hall girl and, by implication, a prostitute. The sheriff, who also hangs out in the saloon, has a habit of dropping things on the floor so in bending down to pick up the item, he can look up Carmelita's dress while she dances. The audience gets some early hints that this is not going to be a movie for the faint-hearted.

During the robbery Wild Bill and Barbwire shoot and kill the teller as he goes for a hidden pistol, then argue about who gets the credit for the shot that killed the man. As the outlaws race out of town following the robbery, Jose is killed and Barbwire is wounded. Soon after reaching the desert, the outlaws lose their horses in a sandstorm. As they plod through the barren desert, they find the covered wagon and the woman inside it. Sangster's first impulse is to rape the woman, promising the others, "You can have her later." But he is shocked to find that she is about to give birth. Meanwhile, Bill and Barbwire discover that the water-hole has been destroyed. They do as best they can to help the woman in childbirth, but she is dying. The woman elicits the promise from the outlaws to be the baby's godfathers, Bob reluctantly agreeing only because his friends make the promise.

The woman tells the outlaws she is Mrs. Frank Edwards, and her husband is the bank teller in New Jerusalem. The film does not make clear who the fool was who dynamited the water tanks and wandered off to die in the desert. Bill and Barbwire now argue over who gets the credit for firing the shot that missed the teller! After burying Mrs. Edwards, the outlaws face the fact that to save the baby they must return to New Jerusalem and likely arrest, trial, conviction, and execution. Aware of the price to be paid, but mindful of their vows, the men face the rigors of desert heat and lack of water to get the baby to New Jerusalem.

Barbwire, his wound festering, is the first to die, but in this version his friends sadly

leave him under a cross-shaped Joshua tree when he can go no further. As Bob and Bill move on, they hear a gunshot: Barbwire took the quick way out. Low on water, Bill leaves his share while Bob sleeps, and he goes off into the desert and death. Bob, reluctant and, at first, even hostile to the baby, takes up the burden. As he walks, he gradually sheds what is no longer necessary—rifle, gunbelt, blanket, and the only share of the money taken from the bank, as most of it was in Jose’s possession when he was killed.

On the way out from New Jerusalem the outlaws had passed a water-hole with a sign stating the water was full of arsenic. Now, horribly thirsty, Bob arrives at this water-hole on his return to New Jerusalem. Bob realizes he will not make it back to the town without water. He calculates that if he drinks the poisoned water, it will be an hour before it takes effect, just enough time for him to reach the town. So he drinks it. As he staggers down the street, the town seems deserted. Bob hears music—not a melodeon from a dance hall, but coming from the church as the choir sings Christmas hymns. In a twist on the original story, Bob dies on the floor of a church, not a saloon, but the baby is safe.

Except for the ending and a few other minor details, this film version is unsentimental. The outlaws are really bad men, career criminals, yet faithful friends. No one hogs the water; they sacrifice themselves so the baby might live. The photography in this film is stunning; the Mojave Desert is shown as a stark and dangerous place, and to travel through it is to walk through Hell. When the outlaws ride into town, the trail dust flakes off their clothing like talcum powder. Throughout the film the men’s shirts are soaked with sweat and dirt. The contrast between their original evil intentions and their ultimate redemption stands out. The three godfathers are multidimensional figures, not stereotypes.

Just seven years later, in 1936, MGM, a film studio not noted for making Westerns, acquired the story rights to bring out a second sound film, titled *Three Godfathers*. In this version, names were again changed and numerous embellishments were added to the

original story. Chester Morris, later the star of a series of Boston Blackie movies, played Bob Sangster as a hardened criminal who had to leave New Jerusalem two years earlier. Also left behind was Molly, the respectable girl he loved, and Blackie Winters, his booty call dance hall girl. Morris played Bob as a chronic liar, a ladies’ man, and a cynical, ruthless killer. Lewis Stone, the future Judge Hardy in the Andy Hardy films, played James “Doc” Underwood, also known as the Wounded Bad Man, giving an outstanding performance as a weary, reflective, educated man who for reasons never stated has wasted his life as a criminal. Walter Brennan is Sam “Gus” Barton, as uneducated as Doc is literate, providing limited comic relief. The supporting cast included Sidney Toler, a future Charlie Chan, as a gun-toting dentist; Robert Livingston as Frank Benson, the bank teller now engaged to Molly; and Leonid Kinskey as a barfly (he would work at Rick’s in the film *Casablanca*). Joseph Marievsky played the fourth bandit, Pedro, in this version.

The 1936 version is overloaded with way too much front-end story. The outlaws arrive and that evening attend a community church social where Bob tries unsuccessfully to hook up with Molly and settles for the booty call. In fact, the bank holdup doesn’t take place until a third of the film—29 of 82 minutes—have passed. With Christmas a few days away, Frank Benson dresses up as Santa Claus. To make his costume more rotund he sticks a heavy bank ledger into his belt, an act that saves his life, as Bob, in the course of the holdup, shoots him in cold blood. As the outlaws race out of town, the dentist, working on a patient on the sidewalk outside his office, interrupts his work to coolly shoot Pedro and wound Doc as the outlaws ride past. This act closely follows the novel in which a bystander, peeved that outlaws would rob a bank where he had \$3.17 on deposit, kills one of the outlaws. In this version, the surviving outlaws each have a bag of money.

As with the other versions, the outlaws come across the covered wagon with the dying woman. But there’s a surprise here.

In this version, the baby is already born, and he looks to be between six and eight months old! The dying woman identifies herself as Mrs. George Marshall, waiting for her husband to return with water. The outlaws already know that Marshall is dead because they found his body out in the desert. Mrs. Marshall doesn't ask them to be godfathers; she dies before any promises are made. Doc and Gus are willing to take care of the baby, but Bob will have none of it. They still have their horses, and Bob intends to take his share of the money and leave his companions. The outlaws then discover that their horses, and the horses that had pulled the wagon, are all dead from drinking at a poisoned water-hole. Doc and Gus decide to return to New Jerusalem and face the justice that awaits them. Bob very reluctantly goes with them.

Doc, the Wounded Bad Man, carries the baby until he can no longer do so. Bob and Gus leave him, and after going some distance they hear a gunshot as Doc ends his life. Earlier, Doc made out a will for the illiterate Gus. Knowing that there isn't enough water for two men and the baby, Gus leaves the will by the sleeping Bob and goes off into the desert and death. When Bob awakens, he reads the note. Doc did not write a will; the note says that in reading it, Bob will know that Gus is dead, and he urges Bob to carry on the responsibility of bringing the baby back to New Jerusalem.

To put it mildly, Bob is totally lacking in parenting skills. At one point he is about to drink a can of condensed milk until even he realizes this would be a cowardly and morally reprehensible act. Bob yells at the baby, curses him, threatens to leave him, yet carries him in the blistering heat. One by one he sheds what he no longer needs, including his double-holster six-guns, and finally the bank loot. At last he reaches a water-hole, only to find a sign warning the water is poisoned. As in the 1929 version, Bob drinks the poisoned water, gaining enough strength to make it over the last few miles to town. Bob staggers into the church where a Christmas service is being held. Molly is there, as is Frank, saved by the bank ledger. Bob gives the baby to Molly, then dies. Molly ends the

film by saying a few kind words about the man she once (and maybe still) loved and the sacrifice he made to rescue the baby, though apparently no one knows who the baby is or how Bob found him.

The last half of the 1936 version is clearly superior to the earlier part that took much too long to get to the bank robbery. Again, the Mojave Desert photography is excellent, and even the studio-shot scenes blend in well with location footage. Lewis Stone's portrayal of Doc is the best acting in the film, and the desert scenes do much to mitigate the rather clumsy additions to the plot.

The version most familiar to audiences today is *3 Godfathers* (Ford replaced the word "three" with the number), the 1948 film directed by John Ford and starring John Wayne. Ford intended the film as a tribute to his old friend Harry Carey, who had recently died of cancer. He had actor Cliff Lyons dress in the same style of clothes favored by Carey and mounted on Carey's last horse, Sunny. In this brief scene following the title credits, Lyons rides the horse to the crest of a hill, pushes his hat back, "and leans back with his right hand on Sunny's rump," as Harry Carey, Jr., recalled. The message on the screen read, "TO THE MEMORY OF HARRY CAREY, BRIGHT STAR OF THE EARLY WESTERN SKY." John Wayne recalled that when Carey's widow, Olive Carey, saw this tribute, "She just wept buckets. We all did."

It will be remembered that Carey starred in two silent-film versions of the Kyne novel, and Ford had directed Carey in *Marked Men*, the 1919 version. The new version was the first to be shot in Technicolor. It is also the one that is most unabashedly sentimental. The *Bad Men* aren't all that bad, presenting a problem in the script. If the *Bad Men* aren't so bad, their experience of redemption becomes much less consequential than the roles played by Charles Bickford and Chester Morris who traveled a much longer and harsher road to New Jerusalem.

Nevertheless, in many ways this film is fun to watch, especially for fans of Ford's "stock company" of actors. John Wayne starred as Robert Marmaduke Hightower. It might be assumed that "Sangster" sounded

too much to Ford like “gangster,” but according to Harry Carey Jr., Ford named the character after Slim Hightower, a stuntman and old friend. The noted Mexican actor Pedro Armendariz, fully bilingual and with a feature role in Ford’s previous film, *Fort Apache*, played Pedro Roca Fuerte, a character not in the original novel. In casting Harry Carey Jr. as Bill Kearney, alias the Abilene Kid, Ford listed the screen credit as “introducing Harry Carey Jr.,” even though the young actor had already appeared in five films.

Supporting cast members included Ward Bond as Sheriff Perley “Buck” Sweet; Mildred Natwick as the Mother; and Jane Darwell as a rather raunchy old woman. Anyone who sees a John Ford film will recognize familiar faces whose names may not be well known. Oldtimers included Hank Worden, Jack Pennick, and Mae Marsh, whose career began early in the silent film era. Ben Johnson had a small role as a member of the posse, and Dorothy Ford (apparently no relation to John) was a young girl.

Ford considerably sanitized the 1948 version from earlier ones and the novel itself. There is no fourth bandit killed during the holdup; no bank employee is murdered as in the two previous sound versions. The Abilene Kid started out rustling cattle, but this would be his first bank robbery. The Kid is unfailingly polite to his elders, thanking the sheriff’s wife profusely and sincerely for her offering coffee to what she sees as a trio of dusty travelers. Harry Carey, Jr., planned on playing the role as a juvenile delinquent, but Ford quickly shot that down. Sheriff Sweet is polite but somewhat suspicious, especially after noting their reaction when he puts on his vest and they see his badge. Unlike the novel where the Wickenburg National Bank was robbed, the setting here is the fictional town of Welcome, Arizona. Location shooting was done in Lone Pine and Death Valley, where Harry Carey, Jr. reports that the filming was done in intense heat.

Following the robbery, the outlaws race out of town, fleeing the hail of bullets, one of which wounds the Abilene Kid. In this version, and unlike all earlier versions,

much attention is given to the pursuing posse, including a sequence in which the sheriff and his men take a train to outflank the fugitives. Ford injected comedic scenes where Hank Worden vainly tries to get a stubborn pack mule onto the train. When the outlaws arrive at Terrapin Tanks, they find out that a tenderfoot had blown up the water-hole. The sheriff and his posse arrive later and mistakenly believe that it was the outlaws who blew up the tanks. Such a cruel act endangers the lives of future desert travelers on finding water there. This might have happened in the 1930 and 1936 versions, as Charles Bickford and Chester Morris seemed ruthless enough to do such a thing. But the audience knows that our three likeable outlaws would never stoop so low as to destroy a water hole.

Although Ford restored some of the elements omitted in the 1936 version, such as the bathing of the baby following Doctor Meecham’s instructions, and finding the burro, the 1948 film departs drastically from the way the novel ends. Bob Hightower, the last surviving outlaw, stumbles into a saloon at New Jerusalem, returning to Kyne’s original story, but he doesn’t die. Bob surrenders to the sheriff, returns to the town of Welcome, and receives a minimum sentence. As it turns out, the baby’s mother was the sister of Sheriff Sweet’s wife. Bob will return from prison in a year to a welcoming community—after all, it’s Welcome, Arizona—and raise his godson. He will have the help of the young girl he met when he first rode into town to rob the bank—the banker’s daughter!

Over-sentimentalized and with the basic story’s hard edges all rubbed off, the film is wholesome but not particularly thought-provoking entertainment. There is sacrifice, but the three outlaws are such nice people that it’s hard to see them as needing redemption. The parable is there, but it lacks the punch of the novel or the *Hell’s Heroes* version. Not a bad film, but not in the same league as Ford’s earlier *My Darling Clementine* or his later *The Searchers*.

The final film version of *The Three Godfathers* was a TV movie, *The Godchild*, which credited Kyne’s book but changed

many of the plot elements. Instead of three outlaws robbing a bank, it's three Union soldiers, played by Jack Palance, Jack Warden, and Keith Carradine. They escape from a Confederate prisoner of war camp during the Civil War and head west into a desert area where they are pursued not only by the Confederate army but by hostile Apaches. The men encounter the covered wagon, the dying woman, and the newborn baby. They promise to take the baby to safety, and each man dies in the attempt. Writing in *All Movie Guide*, reviewer Hal Erickson commented, "The *Godchild* is fine as TV movies go; the only question is, why this story once again?"

The most recent incarnation of *The Three Godfathers* was on the television series *Walker, Texas Ranger*, in the episode "A Ranger Christmas," airing December 21, 1996. Unfortunately, no synopsis of the episode is available, and the writing credits do not include Peter B. Kyne. The source for this information was Wikipedia's article on Kyne, and beyond that I have not been able to verify the degree of fidelity, if any, the TV program paid to Kyne's original story.

As a footnote to this account, there is the interesting film directed by John Ford in 1926, *Three Bad Men*, based on the novel *Over the Border* by Herman Whitaker. Set in the year 1877, the story involves three outlaws, more con men than hardened felons, who assist a young girl whose father was murdered by horse thieves. The outlaws encourage the budding romance between the girl and a cowboy, played by George O'Brien, who appeared in many of Ford's films. They engage in a running gunfight

and, in their attempt to aid the young lovers, each one sacrifices his life. While the film has nothing to do with babies born in the desert or Christmas, the similarity of three men sacrificing their lives to help others live, plus the fact that Ford had already directed one version of *Three Godfathers* and would direct another one, suggests that Ford was certainly aware that the stories carried similar themes.

In conclusion, Peter B. Kyne's *The Three Godfathers* seems to have had as many as six or seven lives, almost as many as the proverbial cat. But like kittens, they have come in many different colors. Kyne told a simple story of redemption, sinners who find a higher purpose in their lives than they had imagined possible. Subsequent screenplay writers have tweaked the plot, changing names or switching personalities of the characters around; adding new characters and subtracting old ones, and vice versa; giving the story a dark view of life or lighting it up with humor and love interest; and overall, ignoring the advice that if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

In the end, Kyne wrote a story with a Christmas theme, a parable on the Three Wise Men, none of whom were outlaws, unless they stole the myrrh, frankincense, and gold. His tale sent the message that a sinner could find redemption, a message that has found renewed interest for almost a century. And what better time to remember Kyne's story than in the Christmas season, when it's peace on earth and good will toward men, except in the mall parking lot where you could get killed in an argument over a parking space.



John Muir -- A Thoughtful Moment, 1911

by Joseph Cavallo

Los Angeles. April 16, 1911. Dear Miss Conger, I received your letter on the evening of the day I dined with you after it was nine days old. Had I received it in due time I should have known you expected me to stay some time after your other guests had taken leave. Anyhow I greatly enjoyed my visit short as it was. I only regret missing seeing you today.

With all good wishes

Faithfully yours, John Muir¹

The above is the entire contents of a completely handwritten letter penned and signed by the great John Muir. It obviously was a quickly-written note sent in a hurry but with purpose. The letter is not one of his great writings but it does show a thoughtful moment.

John Muir is known for many things - his numerous books and influential writings, his adventures in nature, his early and relentless work for conservation and preservation of Western forests, his counseling of Presidents and Congressmen, the establishment of Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks, his founding of the Sierra Club, and the many hiking trails and mountain peaks named for him. He had a tough political side and also a physical stamina that rivaled the strongest men when it came to hiking and mountain climbing. Yet he had a gentle and kind side too. He was considerate to his friends and apparently would even go out of his way to secure their friendship.

So, who is "Miss Conger," the recipient of the above letter? She was Louise N. Conger, or Lulu, a 36-year-old woman of a prominent Pasadena family. Her father was Dr. O. H. Conger who was a classmate of Muir's at the University of Wisconsin.² Her parents had come to Pasadena in 1874, and Louise became the second child to be born in Pasadena.³ In 1911, on the date of this letter,

Louise and her mother, L. T. W. Conger, were living together in the Conger family house at 506 N. Raymond Ave. in Pasadena.⁴ The Conger family had been longtime friends with Muir. (Only five years older than Muir, Dr. Conger had died in 1892).

Mrs. L. T. W. Conger was also named Louise. She is referenced in histories of Pasadena and the San Gabriel Valley.⁵ When Muir first visited Southern California in 1875⁶ and hiked up Eaton Canyon to Mount Wilson, she was the one who supplied him with three loaves of bread and a half pound of tea as his food supply and fed him when he returned starving.⁷ He in turn gave her tiger lilies which she planted in her backyard, a gesture recounted in Pasadena histories referencing John Muir.

On February 24, 1952, the aging "Miss Conger" wrote of this 1911 encounter with John Muir.⁸ She explained that she and her mother wanted to have a luncheon for him with just them. But later, three friends, with whom she had visited Yosemite, had expressed an interest in meeting John Muir.

On Thursday, March 30, 1911, Lulu Conger wrote a reminder letter to Muir apparently repeating the invitation to luncheon at their house on April 9th, and letting him know that three additional people would also be present. She expressed hope that he would have a longer visit with just the two of them after the additional guests had departed.⁹

On Sunday, April 9, 1911, the Congers have a luncheon with John Muir. He enjoyed their company and the guests were delighted to meet him. Apparently the luncheon was brief and Muir did not stay long after the guests left. He returned to his home at 325 Adams Street in Los Angeles¹⁰ and later received the March 30 letter.

On April 16, 1911, before leaving for San Francisco,¹¹ Muir traveled back up to Pasadena to revisit the Congers but unfortunately they were not at home. He then went to the Los Angeles train station for the train to San Francisco. There he apparently penned the above note, telling them he visited their home and offering an apology for not understanding that the Congers had wanted him to stay longer after their luncheon. Muir obviously dashed this letter off quickly because he was not at his typewriter and he was en route to San Francisco by train. As an aside, the letter paper Muir used was high quality, Old Hampshire Bond, advertised during the period as "The Stationary of a Gentleman."

John Muir wanted his good friends Mrs. Conger and her daughter Lulu to know that in spite of his very busy schedule, he was not avoiding them, and that even a detail like recognizing that they wanted a longer visit with him would not go unnoticed. He wanted to express his appreciation for their friendship. He went out of his way to see them again, making an additional trip from Los Angeles to Pasadena in an attempt to spend more time with them.

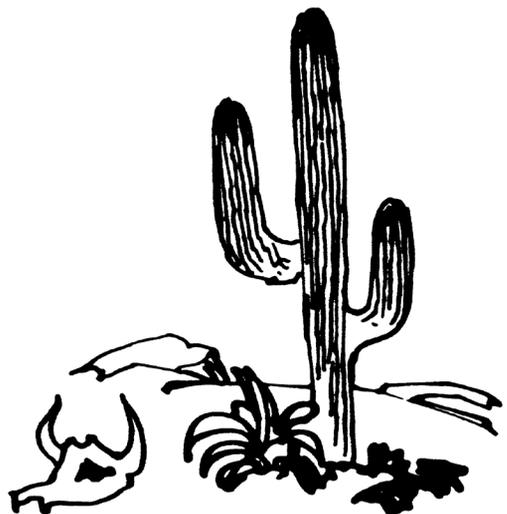
In her 1952 remembrance of the events of 1911, Miss Conger said "I shall never forget his kindly eyes." She also said she was sorry they were not at home when Muir came to visit them afterwards. But over the many passing years, she said how much she prized this personal note he wrote to them.¹²

One can visit Pasadena and walk along Raymond Avenue where the former Conger house still stands, where the old train line ran a block away on Fair Oaks Avenue, and where John Muir would have walked. Seeing this letter and understanding its background reveal a more personal aspect of his humanity, a thoughtful moment of concern for his friends.



Footnotes and references

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2. *Carew, Harold D., History of Pasadena and the San Gabriel Valley California, S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, Vol. 1, 1930, pp. 428-429.*
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9. *Conger, Louise (Lulu). Letter, March 30 [1911], Ibid.*
10. *Muir, John. Letter to his daughter Helen, April 15, 1911, University of the Pacific Library, Holt Atherton Special Collections, John Muir Papers.*
11. *Muir, John. Letter to his daughter Helen, April 15, 1911, Ibid.*
12. *Conger, Louise (Lulu). Letter, February 25, 1952. Ibid*



Local History: What's Wrong and What's Right

By Ronald Limbaugh, Ph.D.

Editor's note: Dr. Ronald Limbaugh is an Emeritus Professor of History at the University of the Pacific. His interesting and timely article originally appeared in the California Historian publication of the Conference of California Historical Societies. It is reprinted here by permission of the author.

For years academic historians at many prestigious universities studiously avoided what was once pejoratively labeled "local history." Regional or area studies seemed too provincial, too narrowly focused, too filled with petty details of unimportant events, to merit the attention of the "big wheels" of history. Much of this disdain arose out of the decline of Turnerian thinking, starting in the late 1930s and reaching a crescendo during the "consensus school" of historiography in the postwar era.

Frederick Jackson Turner, a late-19th century historian whose study of cheap lands and their influence on the process of American westward expansion was based on regional and local historical research, profoundly influenced the study and writing of American history for the next half-century. As Turner's influence waned, so did the emphasis on American studies at the local level, at least for many institutions of higher learning.

By the mid-20th century, the "big wheels" of academic history were those who looked for great synthesizing events, the profound forces of change that explain fundamental ideas about people and cultures over time. Men like Arnold Toynbee and Oswald Spengler, both of whom were noted for sweeping generalizations about the rise and decline of empires and the organic development of civilization, influenced the history academy and left a profound impact on how it was written.

During that period, local history was largely abandoned by professionals and left to untutored amateurs who often were unable to handle the responsibility of synthesizing local history. They made little effort

to view local events from broad perspectives or draw important conclusions from narrowly focused data. Most local history was written as local chronology, disconnected from the broader stream of people, places and events, without impact beyond a specific region. Many local historians resembled a very legalistic-minded U.S. senator, who, as a witty academic once said, "can see the knot hole in a barn door but can't see the door." Crane Brinton, a respected professional, summed up the case against local history in these words: "In the past we have absorbed too many facts and have thought about them too little."

In recent decades, however, local history has gained new respect and recognition. The impact of the 1960s — that disturbing era of social foment and political upheaval — turned the historian's world upside down. Instead of exclusively looking at the world from the top down from ivory towers, more and more academics began to turn the telescope around, to view history "from the bottom up." Looking at change over time from down near the grass roots, where "real people" live, gave a new dimension to history. Even though the social turbulence of the 1960s threatened to undermine the very foundations of society, in the arena where history was debated and written there were some significant and constructive side effects. As people and organizations began to renew the search for meaningful lives, and as communities began to redefine their roles in society, local history became a valuable tool, an instrument for social and intellectual progress. For at its very core, the social unrest of that decade was a reaction against an alienated, impersonal, dehumanized, tech-

nological, bureaucratic society. Local history thus became part of a focused effort to redefine the role of individuals and minorities in American life.

Does this mean that local history is now simply a tool for the special interests — the minorities, the poor, the Third World, the environmentalists, the young radicals who attack conventional values and old traditions? Certainly history has sometimes been used for political purposes, to reinforce preconceived notions instead of trying to “tell it like it is,” or was. But manipulating history — whether deliberately or just unconsciously — is nothing new. Back in the 18th century, Voltaire scoffed at history and thought it was nothing “but a pack of tricks we play on the dead.” A century later he could have cited Leland Stanford’s example. Stanford commissioned a painting to commemorate the completion of the transcontinental railroad, but told the artist to leave out the liquor bottles and ladies of ill repute so as not to mar the dignity of the occasion. Unfortunately for the great railroad magnate, photographers were present to tell the real story, and those photos have been vital in protecting the past from the mythmakers.

Preserving the raw material of history is one of the most important roles of local historical societies and libraries, for without documentation, history can truly become, as iconoclast John Dos Passos once said, “a mass invention, the daydream of a race.” There is nothing wrong with daydreams, so long as the dreamer does not lose track of reality. That is why historians must have access to newspapers, court records, family papers, estate appraisals, school records and all the other documents which provide clues to the real past, not just the figments of someone’s imagination. Without those clues, historians would remain as uncertain as the eastern tourist who reportedly arrived in the Mother Lode one day and gazed for a moment at the two huge tailings wheels still standing, part of the tramline that carried mine waste away from the Kennedy Mine in Jackson. Turning to a friend he, remarked, “You know that must have been quite a wagon when they had all four of them.”

Assuming we have adequate raw materials for good research and writing, focusing on local communities has been crucial for reinterpreting the past and correcting popular misconceptions. For example, a few decades ago, conventional views about the process of approving the American Constitution were drastically revised after historians carefully analyzed county records of the original 13 states. Regional research has also corrected distorted views about the role of minorities on the American frontier. We know now, for example, that at least a quarter of western cowboys were Mexican or Negro — despite those old nostalgic lily-white B-westerns you can still catch on late night television.

Local history, written about specific places and people, is also important because it brings us down to earth, away from the abstract, and reveals the lives of ordinary folk who were the real shapers of history in a democratic society. There is a story — perhaps apocryphal — about Abe Lincoln that illustrates the point. One day an aide, remarking on a famous intellectual of the day, said: “It may be doubted whether any man of our generation has plunged more deeply into the sacred fountain of learning.” To which the president replied: “Yes, or come up drier.” For too long, national history was geared to a “great man” approach that neglected the lives of the vast bulk of denizens who make up society and mold its destiny. In the post-modern world where complexity is the norm and stress the common denominator regardless of country, wealth or status, understanding history means recognizing the impact of everyday lives on the “global village.”

Finally, local history is important because it helps build community pride and respect. In an age characterized by the disintegration of family and community, local history can give us a common focus, a sense of direction to our lives and communities. Some time ago in one of my classes, I asked a young Armenian girl, who had never talked about the family’s past with her parents, to write a term paper on Armenian history using her own family as an example. The project was a great revelation to her, one that not only elevated her self-respect but brought

the family closer together. It also turned out to be a darned good paper — imaginative, creative, readable and indeed profound, for it used one Fresno example as a case study for analyzing the entire Armenian-American experience. This was local history at its best.

In an introductory essay in the *Harvard Guide to American History*, an old but still useful reference tool, the editors challenged young historians to: “Bring all your knowledge of life to bear on everything that you write. Never let yourself bog down in pedantry and detail. Bring history, the most humane and noble form of letters, back to the proud position she once held; knowing that your words, if they be read and remembered, will enter into the stream of life, and perhaps move men to thought and action centuries hence, as do those of Thucydides after more than 2,000 years.”

To me the message is clear. Regardless of whether the subject is the Peloponnesian Wars or the Fresno Armenians, no matter if you are a trained professional or a gifted amateur, if you write history, make it meaningful by telling us not only what happened but why. Flesh out bare skeletons with real people living real lives. Record not just events but explain their context and significance. Give the story perspective, depth as well as breadth. Finally, tell the story in simple, direct, literate prose. Thucydides did all this, and his words are still very readable today. His model is well worth remembering, for after all, Thucydides was writing about a regional event in a specific time and place. You might say he was writing local history.



En Route to Desert Center for Beans, circa 1935
Photo courtesy Steve Lech

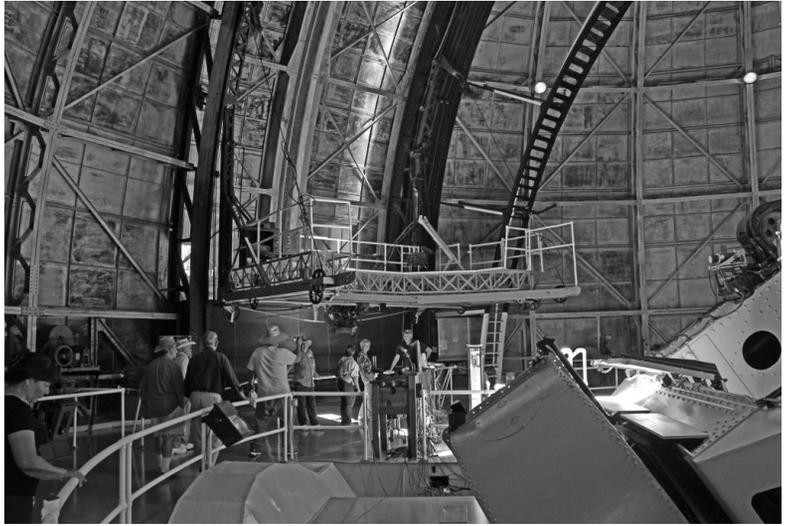
Los Angeles Westerners Do History With The Stars!

by Larry L. Boerio, Deputy Sheriff

On Saturday, August 17, 2013, twenty-five Corral members and guests toured the historic Mount Wilson Observatory (MWO), birthplace of modern astronomy, where some of the most significant scientific discoveries of the 20th Century took place. Mt. Wilson contains what were at one time the largest telescopes in the world. These telescopes, still in use, were vital to unlocking fundamental secrets of the universe by scientists at MWO in the first half of the twentieth century. This half-day trip was another exclusive Corral *Special Outing* focused on experiencing history in "3-D".

Our private tour was led by Dave Jurasevich, Deputy Director of Operations at MWO, who was our speaker at the monthly *Roundup* just three days earlier. As Dave told us at the beginning of the tour, "you are going to see things that others don't get to see, because I have *all* the keys." He was right!

After arriving at MWO, situated at 5,712' elevation, we first enjoyed the scenic beauty of the pine forest and the spectacular views overlooking Pasadena and downtown Los Angeles west to the ocean. Our tour began with a walk to the 150' solar tower. On our way we saw a view of the historic Mount Wilson Toll Road (original trail built by Benjamin D. Wilson) used to bring the original equipment to Mount Wilson in 1904. Inside the solar tower, we were introduced to Steve Padilla, who has been observing the sun and sketching sunspots for scientific study



Westerners inside dome of 100" reflecting telescope. Impressive!

for nearly forty years at Mount Wilson. Steve graciously showed us the observer's area and its equipment. He also demonstrated how he spots and records the sunspots by hand-drawing them. The technique has not changed with sun spot activity records back to 1917. The *Los Angeles Times*, in its October 28, 2013 edition, highlighted Mr. Padilla and his work at Mount Wilson in its feature front-page article for the day.

We learned about George Ellery Hale, the founder of MWO, who discovered solar vortices as well as the systemic changing magnetic polarities of sun spots, (now known as the Hale-Nicholson Law). We then proceeded to the 60" reflecting telescope. Built in 1908, it was the largest reflecting telescope in the world at that time. Using the 60" scope in 1918, Harlow Shapley determined that our solar system was not the center of the Milky Way as was always thought. He calculated that it is 25,000 light years from the center of the galaxy on a spiral arm. We then proceeded to the 100"

reflecting telescope, completed in 1917. Edwin Hubble used this instrument to make two monumental discoveries: 1) the Milky Way is not the only galaxy in the universe, and 2) the universe is expanding, which Albert Einstein originally refused to believe. In addition to the telescope, its dome, and all the control systems, we saw the wooden chair in which Hubble sat for his historic observations. After all of this intellectual stimulation, Dave opened up the dome to the sky and later allowed us to go outside on a catwalk that is attached to the dome. There we all took a 360 degree ride as the dome rotated around to all the fabulous views from this mountain site. We then visited the site where Albert Michelson measured the speed of light in 1926.

As if this was not enough, Dave had more in store for us! We visited the Monastery that Hale built for scientists to live in while they studied at MWO. It was interesting that Hale

gave himself a very small bedroom, just like the others. The Monastery contained his personal office where Dave showed us some very rare and significant scientific books that Hale used in his studies. In addition to visiting the dining room, where many a world-famous scientist took their meals, we had the opportunity to sit in the Monastery's study where Albert Einstein once lectured to a select group of scientists. The chair in which he sat is known as "Einstein's Chair;" and Dee Dee Ruhlow sat in it without realizing that she was the lucky one out of the entire group! Pictures were a popping!

I wish to thank Dave Jurasevich for a fabulous tour and for offering us his many insights. Additionally, I must mention Jim Macklin, who heroically filled in for me to arrange registration of all participants and coordinated trip specifics with the Observatory. Additional pictures of this great event may be found on our website at www.lawesterners.org.



Steve Padilla, inside observation room of 150' solar tower, explains how he observes and records sunspots.



Westerners inside Monastery study where Einstein lectured. Dee Dee Ruholow in Einstein's chair.



100" reflecting telescope that was used to discover the expansion of the universe. Now that's history.

All photos courtesy of Larry Boerio

*Westerners take a ride
on rotating dome for
100" reflecting telescope.
Beautiful!*



Down the Western Book Trail . . .

American Indians and the Mass Media, edited by Meta G Carstaarphen and John P. Sanchez. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012. 270 pp. Illustrations, Tables, Notes, Bibliography, Index. Paper, \$24.95 - Reviewed by Jerry Selmer.

This book is a compilation of academic articles covering the treatment of Native American Indians by the media over the years. The various authors generally write in thesis style, that is to say, that each one appears as though it was prepared to satisfy a university graduate thesis review panel. While this approach is quite scholarly, it does tend to lose the impact of its message by drowning in the verbiage of academe.

I am not suggesting that the language is out of touch with general American English, but I do believe that if the intent is to inform, a more straightforward use of the language is called for. Also, I must criticize the typography. For those of us who are now in our elder years, and whose eyes are not what they once were, a somewhat larger typeface would have been helpful. I did not need a magnifying glass, but it came close.

As to the content: Probably most of us realize that the characterization of aboriginal people in this country by the majority and its media is filled with images of superficiality and largely uninformed and derogatory stereotyping which persists even to this day.

The book is divided into four parts: Historical Analyses; Contemporary Viewpoints; Mediated Images and Social Expectation; and Interior Views and Authentic Voices. In each section, various authors explore specific situations, almost all of which reflect badly on American Indians. We have all seen it – the cartoonish images, the use of names for some sports teams, the characterizations in movies, TV, books, etc. For example, while some sports teams use merely the name of a tribe, some go even further with cartoon-like mascot depictions, “tomahawk chop” gestures, “war whoops,” etc. A team calling itself the “Squaws” uses

a word which most Indians find akin to the word “whore.” Calling a team the “Redskins” would be the same as the “N” word to an African-American. Yet it goes on.

In the late 1800’s, during the Indian Wars, almost all American Indians were characterized in the media as “savages.” The image persisted for decades. Most Americans believed “the Indian question” would be solved because all would be killed off. Therefore the savage imagery was appropriate. After all, General Sheridan said: “The only good Indian is a dead Indian.” The matter of their total annihilation was a foregone conclusion at that time, thus giving rise to a number of museums around the country specifically built to display a culture which was about to disappear. (Doesn’t “the Indian question” sound similar to “the Jewish question” in pre-World War II Europe?)

As fate would have it, those pesky Indians were not all killed off, despite the best efforts of white settlers and the U. S. Army. Well, since they are still with us, let us see what else we can do. The media picked up on all of this and the 20th century saw a flood of films, advertising and books which characterized the Indian as lazy, savage, noble (but rather stupid), friendly, untrustworthy, bloodthirsty, drunk, etc. In films it was best if he was portrayed by a white man.

The book really has some valuable information in it and has a strong message to tell. I just wish the writing style had been such that it would attract a wider audience.

He Rode with Butch and Sundance: The Story of Harvey “Kid Curry” Logan, by Mark T. Smokov. Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2012. 440 pp. Map, Illustrations, Notes, Bibliography, Index. Cloth, \$29.95 – reviewed by William R. Paschong

Harvey Logan, alias Kid Curry (1867-1904), is not well known today outside the circle of western law and order aficionados.

The present book's title acknowledges this, tying him to his better known colleagues Butch and Sundance. Yet in 1901, William Pinkerton described Logan as "undoubtedly the most desperate murderer, train robber and outlaw in the United States.

Raised in Iowa and Missouri, a teenage Logan and his older brother Hank headed west to become cowboys. By the late 1880s they had established a horse breaking ranch in northern Montana, where they went by the name Curry. The brothers generally enjoyed a good reputation. (The Autry Museum has a Colt revolver given by Kid Curry to a fellow cowboy who kept it because "I admired him a lot"). But by 1894 Hank had died of disease and Kid Curry killed a personal enemy in a saloon brawl. He hit the owl hoot trail, starting as a rustler in Wyoming's Hole-in-the-Wall country, then, like other Wild Bunch outlaws, graduating to bank and train robbery.

By the 1890's, train robberies were numerous in the American West. Between 1890 and 1899, 261 train robberies, in which 86 people were killed, were committed. Kid Curry was involved in four, perhaps five, train robberies. The substantial take from one in Montana in the summer of 1901 led ultimately to his arrest. Sheets of unsigned banknotes, shipped from the U. S. Treasury to a bank in Montana, were traced across the country. Kid Curry was arrested near Knoxville, Tennessee, where he was eventually tried and convicted of counterfeiting (some of the banknotes bore forged signatures). Facing twenty years at hard labor, he effected an astonishing escape from the Knox County jail in June 1903.

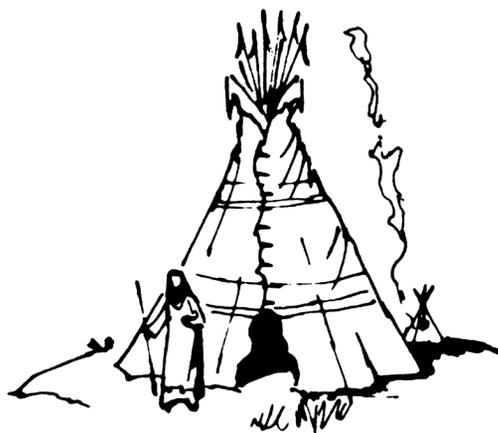
A year later three men robbed a train in central Colorado. Pursuit of the robbers ended in a gun battle in which one outlaw was so seriously wounded that he committed suicide. Though there has never been total agreement, the dead outlaw was ultimately identified as Harvey Logan.

Most books about western outlaws are the work of grassroots historians, and their work has improved enormously over the last thirty years. Sources are cited and often subjected to critical analysis. Writers like

John Boessenecker and Robert De Arment are published, as is the present author, by university presses.

Given the fact that western outlaws have not left behind substantial archives of correspondence and diaries, researchers must rely on newspaper accounts, often contradictory, and, as in this book, surviving files of the Pinkerton Detective Agency. This being the reality, Smokov's biography of Kid Curry is probably the best we can expect to have. His analysis of the identity of the dead train robber who committed suicide in Colorado in 1904 is excellent (he concludes it was Kid Curry) and he supplies a chapter on the survival myths.

For decades, writers have attributed nine killings to Kid Curry. Smokov rightly questions this and deals with each supposed killing in the body of the narrative. But a concluding chapter, reviewing the killings, would have been helpful. An area map of the west is included with locations of crimes and hideouts. Although the author provides geographical descriptions of the routes taken by posses pursuing the train robbers after each crime, detailed maps are crucial to follow the narrative, but there are none. Ah well, the brutal economics of 21st century publishing.



Monthly Roundup . . .



July 2013

Gabriel Gutierrez

Dr. Gabriel Gutierrez is an educator, author, professor, speaker, and is the son of long-time community activists. He has published in the fields of California history, Chicano history, environmental racism and critical media studies. This year he was granted a summer research fellowship through the Los Angeles Corral of Westerners and the Autry National Center. In July 2013, he presented an excellent talk exploring the processes and consequences of the “repressive inclusion” of Southern California Indians from the last stages of the Spanish colonial period to the onset of United States industrialization. He poignantly explained how Southern California Indian vaqueros were conscripted into the Spanish military as auxiliary troops and gave particular attention to the emergence of labor contracting and consumerism among these Indians at Henry Dalton’s Rancho Azusa, as well as to an assessment of the rise of criminalization of Southern California Indian cultural practices and behavior. The investigation was further assisted by the study of numerous photos and images. Dr. Gutierrez showed how while such images preserve our “Spanish past,” they also told a narrative of the Indians cultural demise in the name of

industrial and commercial progress. The title of the presentation was “California Indians on Rancho Azusa: Labor, Consumption, and Historical Agency” and focused on the era 1818-1870s. The Los Angeles Corral of Westerners promotes such academic studies as part of its ongoing work. By Joseph Cavallo.



August 2013

Dave Jurasevich

At the Wednesday meeting August 14, 2013, Dave Jurasevich presented the talk “Mount Wilson Observatory – Past, Present and Future” and on the following Saturday, conducted a special tour of the historic observatory. Dave is the Deputy Director of Operations for the Mount Wilson Observatory. In his talk he took us on a journey back in time, and we relived the storied history of this great American institution. Then literally, at Mount Wilson, we walked in the footsteps of the world’s finest astronomers to learn how they deciphered the code of the Heavens, and marveled in their discoveries. Besides the history, he explained the different pieces of equipment and during the tour showed them to us. He used photos in his talk to explain the history of Mount Wilson and see famous scientists like Hubble, Hale and Einstein there. It was here at Mount Wilson that the great astronomer Edwin Hubble established the cornerstones of modern cosmology by unlocking the secrets of an expanding Universe, paving the way for our understanding of the Big Bang and ultimate fate of the Cosmos. Fueling the economic

engine of scientific enterprise in Southern California, the Mount Wilson Observatory and its founder, George Ellery Hale, were the motivating forces that transformed the San Gabriel Valley into a major center of technological achievement, spawning institutions such as the California Institute of Technology, NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and a host of other science-based organizations found here today. By Joseph Cavallo.



September 2013

David Kipen

History and the study of it is not just an assembly of facts and dates. History is the study of previous eras, it is about people just like us living in the past. Besides facts, sometimes fiction can be used to capture the feeling of a place and an era. David Kipen delighted us at the Los Angeles Corral of Westerners September meeting with a view to Los Angeles history not just from the point of view from the factual WPA Guide but using legendary fiction author Raymond Chandler's noir writing as well. The focus of the talk was Los Angeles Union Station. David weaved together and compared the story of Los Angeles in the 1930s and beyond, using work by Chandler and other authors as well. Mr. Kipen has a major acquaintance with the Works Progress Administration guides and was invited to write introductions to the UC Press's current reissues of some of the WPA guides, like the one about Los Angeles. Two descriptions of the publicly-funded masterpiece, the Union Passenger Terminal or

Union Station, completed in 1939, emerge and frame the pivotal years in LA between 1939 and 1958. Bookended by these admiring but modest accounts, the first in the WPA guide, the second in Raymond Chandler's novel *Playback*, David forms a picture of LA and her on-again, off-again, literally back-on-again love affair with travel by train. I came away from this talk, hungry to relive the pre-war years of Los Angeles that afterward I immediately obtained a copy of Chandler's masterpiece of Los Angeles *The Big Sleep* which David also mentioned. Although this hardboiled novel is a complex story of double cross, death, and a tough detective, the Los Angeles described is historical. Visiting Union Station now, I find in David's own words that "I breathe that ludicrously perfumed air" of Los Angeles history. By Joseph Cavallo.

Photos by Steve Crise



Los Angeles Corral Scores Six Awards from Westerners International

At the annual conference of the Western History Association meeting in Tucson, Arizona, in October 2013, the Los Angeles Corral received six awards from Westerners International. The awards included:



*Abe Hoffman accepts a
Philip A. Danielson Best Program Award*

*The Heads-Up Award for the Best Senior Corral (second year in a row!)

*First Place, Fred Olds Cowboy Poetry Award, to Tim Heflin

*Second Place, Fred Olds Cowboy Poetry Award, to Jerry Selmer

*Second Place, Philip A. Danielson Award for Best Program, to Abe Hoffman

*Second Place, Philip A. Danielson Award for Best Program, to Phil Brigandi (Abe and Phil tied for this award)

*Second Place, Coke Award for Best Article, to Richard Dillon and Brian Dillon

Technically, Richard Dillon is a member of the San Francisco Corral, but his son and co-author Brian is a member of the Los Angeles Corral.

Gordon Bakken, Tim Heflin, and Abe Hoffman attended the conference and accepted the awards. The Corral won praise for its accomplishments from Westerners International Chairman Kent McGinnis and President Rodney Goddard.

*Tim Heflin accepts his First Place
Fred Olds Best Cowboy Poetry award
(Both photos by Kent McInnis)*





Corral Chips

Loren Wendt

CURRENTLY WORKING ON: Loren is continuing to write poetry and refining his magic.

NEEDS INFORMATION ON/FOR: Would like to hear from any Westerners who may be interested in his collection of western magazines, including True West, Frontier Times, and others. Some of these date back over 40 years!

RECENT PRESENTATIONS: He has written several articles for the Tombstone Epitaph, the Branding Iron, and others. In addition, many other articles have appeared in The Kansas Cowboy (where Loren is member #1159, known as the "Kansas Kid").

OTHER: Loren was born in Woodbine, KS and moved to Ontario, CA in 1941. He and his wife Betty were married in 1947 and they have 2 sons, 5 grandchildren, and 2 great-granddaughters. Loren worked for the Southern California Gas Company from 1947 to 1984 when he retired as District Manager for the Covina area. Since that time, he has held many other positions, some paid, some volunteer. He has also been named the "Honorary Mayor of Wrightwood!"

Sid Gally

CURRENTLY WORKING ON: Many things related to the greater Pasadena area. Sid is a volunteer at the Pasadena Museum of History and a columnist for the Pasadena Star-News.

NEEDS INFORMATION ON/FOR: His column entitled "Past on Parade," which appears in the Pasadena Star-News. Sid is always seeking out information (documents, photos, etc.) on the history of Pasadena

RECENT PRESENTATIONS: He has done presentations on Professor Thaddeus Lowe and his Civil War ballooning adventures, gas manufacturing, and of course the mountain railway. In addition, Sid has developed a talk on five famous Pasadena residents and their role in the development of Santa Catalina Island and a talk on ten unusual women he's discovered in his research in the area. The talk on Pasadena residents and their role in Santa Catalina Island has been given to the Westerners.

Abe Hoffman

CURRENTLY WORKING ON: A book entitled *From Dead Sea to Environmental Treasure: A History of Mono Lake*, to be published by the University of New Mexico Press.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS: "Mining in California's Mono Basin Region," which was published in the California Territorial Quarterly for Fall, 2012.

RECENT PRESENTATIONS: A talk entitled "Boyle Heights Memories," given to the Los Angeles City Historical Society on February 22, 2013.



The Bracebridge Dinner

by Phil Brigandi

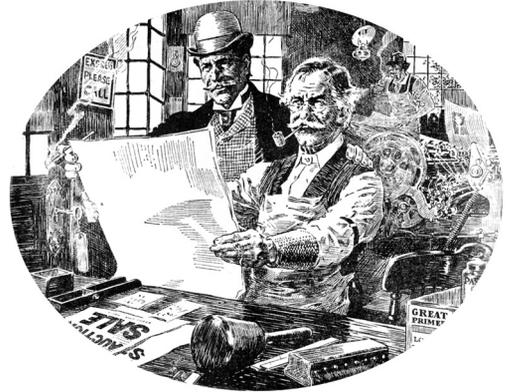
In 1926, the cornerstone was laid for a new luxury hotel right in the heart of Yosemite Valley, which was planned as the finest achievement of the historic Curry Company. Though still nameless when construction began, by opening day, July 14, 1927, the new hotel had been dubbed "The Ahwahnee."

Later that same year, Don Tresidder, president of the Curry Co., approached Garnet Holme about creating a special Christmas show to compliment their new hotel.

English-born Garnet Holme (1873-1929) was already well known as a playwright, producer, and director. He had started *The Mountain Play* on Mt. Tamalpais in 1913, and did outdoor plays all up and down California in the 'teens and '20s. His most successful production, the annual Ramona Pageant in Hemet, celebrated its 90th anniversary in 2013. He had also worked in Yosemite Valley, producing summertime pageants there for the National Park Service.

Casting about for an idea, Holme recalled Washington Irving's description of a huge Christmas feast given at Bracebridge Hall in Yorkshire, England in the early 1800s. Squire Bracebridge wanted to keep alive England's early Christmas traditions, and his dinners harkened back to the 16th century. Using Irving's story as a basis, Holme fashioned a show that was part drama, part music, part comedy, and part dinner – all presented in period style. The show was presented twice that first Christmas season of 1927, on Christmas Eve and again on New Years Eve. "Had a wonderful Christmas show in the new Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite," Holme wrote to a friend. "Much snow," he added.

Holme directed two more performances there during the 1928 Christmas season before his untimely death in February 1929. After his death, Tresidder asked photographer Ansel Adams, along with Jeanette Spencer, to take over the production. Adams re-worked the script, and directed the show until 1972. It remains a holiday tradition in the valley.



FROM OUR FILES

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The Corral's menu was more diverse in those days. At the July meeting at the home of former Sheriff Hank Clifford, barbecued buffalo steaks were served. In August, the Corral met at the Southwest Museum's Casa Adobe, and had "delectable antelope steaks, marinated in wine and smothered in mushrooms." Former Sheriff Carl Dentzel then gave a talk on "Russia's Challenging Role in Stimulating the Development of Western America."

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"Professor Paul Horton of the University of New Mexico ... spoke to the Corral on the life and legend of Davy Crockett" at our August meeting.

"Two respected historian members of the Los Angeles Corral, Doyce Nunis and Abe Hoffman, were appointed to the Advisory Board of the Los Angeles History Project."

The papers of longtime member Paul Bailey have been donated to the Utah State Historical Society.

