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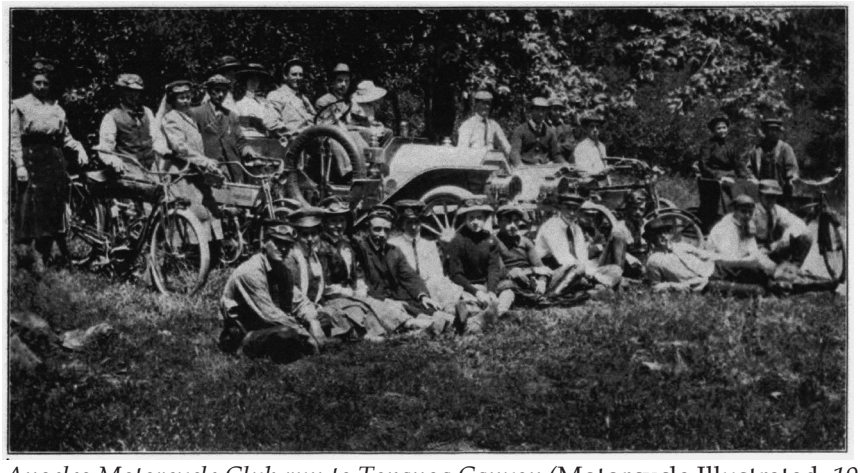
The Rise of the Gasoline Cowboys

A Glimpse of Early Southern California Motorcycle Sports and Recreation

Paul F. Clark



*Los Angeles Motorcycle Club run to Topanga Canyon (*Motorcycle Illustrated*, 1910)*

The summer of 1905 saw a farmer and his team of horses traveling a rural road south of San Jose, California, with a heavily-loaded wagon. At some point, a growing rumble distracted his thoughts. The horses probably perked their ears at the same time. Suddenly, three motorcyclists appeared speeding right toward the farmer. The horses became badly frightened. The confronted rancher strained to prevent a runaway situation and in the process damaged his rig. While the motorcyclists offered amends, the enraged farmer simply bellowed at them calling them "devil chasers." Riding on in their quest for a record speed time between Los Angeles and San Francisco, the three Southland motorcyclists found the county

(*Continued on Page 3*)

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The Branding Iron is always seeking articles of 2,500 words or less dealing with every phase of the history of the Old West and California. Contributions from both members and friends are always welcome.

Editor's Corner . . .

Welcome to the Summer, 2014 edition of the Branding Iron. Once again, we have three articles that add to the great body of research that this group does. First, Paul Clark tells us about the "Gasoline Cowboys" - those who pioneered in the arena of motorcycle riding and exploration here in Southern California. Paul relates many of the trials and tribulations that these early "devil riders" endured as they tried to bring acceptance to their hobby. Next, Glenna Dunning (who must not be doing anything besides research and writing since this is her second major article in a row) tells us about some of California's steamboat history and how that aspect of California's oft-forgotten history had a major impact in the early days of statehood. Finally, Abe Hoffman writes at length about a new take on California history, namely relating it through the use of competing viewpoints. Abe's article is much more than a simple book review, telling us of the unique way in which the authors tell California's history.

There are also pictures and a recap of this year's Fandango, held at the John Rains house in Cucamonga on June 14. Be sure to take a look at the pictures and see if anyone you know seems to be hot on the case!

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
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sheriff waiting for them in the next town. There, the sheriff seized their machines and abruptly ended their adventure.[1]

These so-called devil-chasing motorcyclists, or "gasoline cowboys,"[2] introduced something very newfangled on the roadways at the dawn of the Twentieth Century – a kind of technological future shock. Victorian-era prejudice toward motorized vehicles is well known, illustrated by a 1901 story about a man being apprehended and fined while "riding a motorcycle through the public streets of Pasadena at a record smashing gait." The *Los Angeles Times* reporter could not resist moralizing, "This is the first arrest made upon this charge, but it will not be the last, if owners of automobiles, motorcycles and other horseless vehicles do not mend their ways."[3] Alas, now in the Twenty-first Century, we still morn the failure of many such vehicle owners to mend their ways!

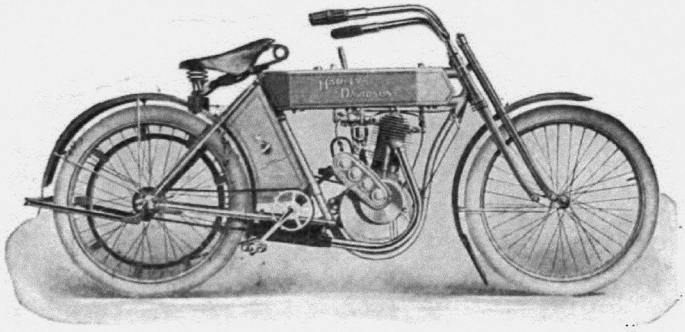
The present-day historian has shown an unfortunate lack of attention to the "gasoline cowboys," as well as their compatriots driving "other horseless vehicles." The impact of motorsports on society finds ample documentation by mounds of popular literature and journalism. With this mass of material available, a historian's groundbreaking study of auto track racing in 2009 found it easy to confine his writing "strictly to automobiles," but nonetheless he felt the need to remonstrate "there is an even larger gap in scholarly literature regarding motorcycle, boat, or air racing." The writer of this article co-authored in 1978 a study for the Federal government, rather dryly entitled *A History of Recreation in the California Desert*, where motorcycles bore a key element of examination. Upon taking up this subject again over 35 years later, he cannot claim to have easily turned up much in the way of formal academic publications. Esoteric perhaps, motorcycle sport and recreation attracts hundreds of thousands of users, even more fans, and much in the way of media attention, all demonstrating without a doubt a major impact on American culture. Focusing on the early history of motorcycle sports and recreation in Southern California from roughly the 1900s until the 1920s, this article offers a small contribution toward analyzing the activities and adventures of the rambunctious "gasoline cowboys."[4]

The Butler Petrol Cycle, a three-wheeled contraption of English manufacture in 1888, became the first marketable motorcycle propelled by a petroleum-based internal combustion engine. Motorcycles evolved quickly over the next twelve years in both Europe and America. The British Triumph Motorcycle brand began commercial production in 1898 and by 1903 had made over 500 machines. In America, the Indian Motorcycle Company, originally called the Hendee Manufacturing Company, started operation in 1901, followed by the iconic Harley-Davidson a few years later. Before the outbreak of the First World War, the classic bright red-colored Indian motorcycle grabbed the greatest market share, with thousands assembled annually. The industry reflected a diversity of small producers. In 1909, *Motorcycle Illustrated* magazine published a count of 100 American and foreign motorcycle manufacturers. For the individual, the costs of purchasing a quality motorcycle ranged from $200 to $350 per bike.[5]

Southern California's mild climate encouraged motorcycle travel. Such vehicles could navigate the largely unimproved roadways then existing with speed and ease. The region found a ready market for the emerging industry, including not only manufacturers, but also dealers and event promoters. Most motorcycles were operated for ordinary work-a-day uses. But public interest in recreational motorcycle activities by participants, avid fans and sports writers soon appeared. The *Los Angeles Times* wrote about motorcycle sporting activities by at least 1900. In 1910, *Motorcycle Illustrated* estimated that the Los Angeles vicinity counted more than 3,000 motorcycles with an estimated 1,500 "carrying [license] numbers showing that the owners reside within the city limits." San Diego could boast of about 200 motorcycles. Only a relatively small percentage of motorcyclists displayed enthusiasm enough to participate

Eight years ago the designers of

The HARLEY-DAVIDSON



STARTLED THE MOTORCYCLE WORLD by marketing a motorcycle equipped with a slow speed engine. Today the slow speed motor is

Recognized as Standard

The 1910 **HARLEY-DAVIDSON** is just as far ahead as ever, and embodies more points of **real merit** than any other motorcycle on earth.

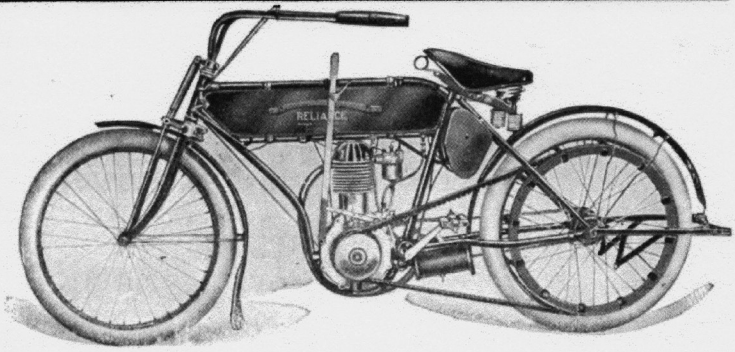
Harley-Davidson Motor Co., Milwaukee, Wis.

*(Top) – Harley Davidson motorcycle advertisement (*Motorcycle Illustrated*, 1910)*

*(Bottom) – Reliance Motorcycle Company advertisement (*Motorcycle Illustrated*, 1910)*

Here Is What You Have Been Looking For

A motorcycle with a neat, compact two speed and free engine pulley, that is simplicity itself in construction, positive in its action, whether in



high, low or free engine position. **THINK OF IT!** Start engine on stand **ANYWHERE,** on the steepest hill or deepest sand, and then by just pushing forward a lever **YOU ARE OFF.** 5 to 1 on high, 9 to 1 on low.

WE WILL EXHIBIT AT THE CHICAGO SHOW

Model C as above, complete with the two speed pulley, $225.
Write for complete specifications of this and our 4½ H.P. Single and 7 H.P. Twin.

RELIANCE MOTORCYCLE CO., 444 Main St. **Owego, N.Y., Tioga Co.**

Member Motorcycle Manufacturers' Association.

in recreational exploits; nonetheless these pursuits were avidly watched, even celebrated.[6]

Casual motorcycle activity in Southern California probably began about the same time as the formation of motorcycle clubs in the early 1900s. Organized groups grew quickly around the United States and Canada, with Southern California leading in many ways. Clubs provided members a support group as well as a friendly social environment, and often sought to enforce some behavior norms both light-hearted and also serious. The Indian Motorcycle Club was among the earliest Southland group. Reported to contain thirty members in 1904, the club conducted long-range touring events, including from Los Angeles to San Diego, during which they turned out "in Indian costume" producing "quite a sensation wherever they have been." The troop received newspaper praise as "well-behaved boys." Talk of a more comprehensive Los Angeles association surfaced in a 1905 *Times* story which noted discussions among motorcyclists to form a community club. "At present there are several hundred motorcycles owned and ridden in the city [Los Angeles]." The organizers stated the club would promote good roads and would work with auto and bicycle groups seeking to accomplish this end.[7]

The Los Angeles Motorcycle Club formally organized in June 1906 and soon found itself acclaimed as among the largest and best-organized club in the United States, if not the world. The first meeting saw forty riders at the city's YMCA and elected E. D. Hiller president, with C. H. Day as vice-president, Victor Schott as financial secretary and L. H. Morrison as captain. The club's first action called on members to close their mufflers inside city limits as noise "furnishes the chief objection to the motorcycle." By late 1908, the group counted 165 members and rented a clubhouse at 2205 San Pedro Street in Los Angeles. A Pasadena Motorcycle Club formed by 1909, containing 26 members, and by the following year, other clubs had sprung up in San Diego, Riverside, and Santa Ana.[8]

Early motorcyclists generally restricted their bikes to existing roads and trails, owing to a combination of smooth tires, heavy machines, and a reluctance to risk mechanical breakdown in remote areas. Despite these constraints, local Southern California motorcycle clubs soon began to sponsor wide-ranging competitive events which principally fell into three categories: hill climbs, established race track runs, and long-range endurance runs.

Hill climbs were among the earliest events, where motorcycle jockeys sought to prove the power of their machines and the prowess of themselves as riders. Seeking to ascend grades of between thirty and often over seventy percent, early hill climbs occurred in a number of locations. A favorite for the Inland Empire riders was Box Springs grade near Riverside, which attracted competitors and spectators often around holidays. Downtown Los Angeles saw one hill climb in 1906 billed as the "most severe yet undertaken by a motorcycle." It was held at West Second Street between Hill to Olive Streets, with two of the three riders achieving the hillcrest. Starting around

Clem and Langford, Harley-Davidson Riders Who Won First and Second Places in Redlands (Cal.) Hill Climb.

*CG#5 – Winning riders from Redlands area hill climb (*Motorcycle Illustrated, *1910)*

1915, motorcycle climbs at "Capistrano Hill" near San Juan Capistrano eventually captured impressive attendance; by the 1920s, "thousands of automobiles" carried fans to witness "the gasoline Alpine boys perform their stunts."[9]

Motorcycle promoters soon entered the field, often involved with local bike dealers and sales outlets, and oversaw the construction of established tracks. Several commercial speedways existed in the Los Angeles area containing mainly circular tracks or saucer rings. The tracks brought thousands of fans to view their favorite riders, including "Dare-Devil" Paul J. Derkum [CG#1] and "Cannon Ball" Erwin G. Baker. Derkum, living up to his nick-name, walked away with injuries at the Ascot Park racetrack early in his career after being thrown fifty feet due to a skid that ended when he collided with another motorcycle. He later recalled, "that was where I learned about dirt tracks from the ground up." He afterwards branched into event promotions and building his own facilities.[10]

*Paul Derkum, early motorcycle racer and later promoter (*Motorcycle Illustrated*, 1910)*

Endurance runs were among the most popular events, drawing both broad participation by riders and substantial press coverage. The Los Angeles Motorcycle Club conducted several of these events. Launching their first endurance run in the summer of 1906, the *Times* described the event as covering 140 miles from Los Angeles to San Bernardino and back. The day run involved 47 members plus two ladies riding in side cars. Published rules admonished that "contestant will be required to arrive in each town designated [along the route] at a time prescribed by the committee, one minute either way prevents a perfect score. No repairs shall be made anywhere but on the road. Each contestant will be provided with a map of the route and a number. A lunch station will be designated and a time prescribed for arriving and departure." In 1909, the Pasadena Motorcycle Club conducted a similar event where rules required an average pace of 20 miles per hour; despite this precaution, four speeding members were arrested in San Bernardino. The *Times* pictured and described a motorcycle run in 1912 to the Venice beach community with an estimated attendance of 1000 motorcycles; the procession lined the road, two abreast, stretching three miles.[11]

The single or small group motorcycle adventurer should not be forgotten. The best documented of these was the freelance correspondent, John Edwin Hogg, who wrote for the *Los Angeles Times* and *Touring Topics*, among others. Two of his journeys found notice in 1919 with articles in the *Times*. For one trip, lurid headlines highlighted a body discovered in the desert, where Hogg reported "returning to Los Angeles from a two weeks' trip by motorcycle through Death Valley" finding a skeleton "on the burned-out floor of the valley." The skeleton was thought to be a recently missing prospector. Hogg completed a job exploring and taking photographs "to be used by the Tonopah and Tidewater System and the Death Valley Railroad in opening this region to tourist travel. He traveled approximately 800 miles on a light-weight motorcycle, the first machine of this type that ever traversed Death Valley." Hogg went on another adventure to the summit of San Antonio Peak, or "Old Baldy," riding a Harley-Davidson "Sport Model" with a friend in a side car. Hogg navigated "up almost trackless and nearly perpendicular burro trails," claiming no previous ascent had been "accomplished other than by mountaineers on foot and with burros." He reported no mechanical difficulties. A party of amazed mountain climbers heard the motorbike approaching,

but thought it was the noise of an airplane until the cycle appeared.[12]

Whatever they were called, "gasoline cowboys," "benzene bike" riders, or even "devil chasers," motorcyclists in Southern California were crisscrossing the country for basic transportation, sports, and recreation, from the earliest of times. Soon after the start of the Twentieth Century, the motorcycle materialized in nearly all parts of the region. Our "gasoline cowboys" began with an undeniable social strike against them, but many riders made their best efforts combating the "bad image." Organizing very early into clubs, seeking news coverage of important events, and coordinating sometimes with the manufacturing and commercial sectors, they heralded the start of the modern era. They helped replace the "horse and buggy" with motor vehicles, which in turn, changed culture and behavior throughout America. More systematic chronicles regarding the development of motor sports – and motorcycles in particular – are merited. Time will certainly bring more, as well as uncovering other stories to be sung about the "gasoline cowboys."

Endnotes:

1. A report in the *Los Angeles Times*, August 3, 1905, serves as basis for this anecdote.
2. The tag "gasoline cowboys" is a personal invention, however, the *Los Angeles Times* did employ terms as "gasoline-eaters" (March 20, 1906), "benzene bikes" (June 15, 1906), and "gasoline rodeo" (September 28, 1925).
3. *Los Angeles Times,* December 24, 1901; while the article was headlined, "To Much Speed," it failed to specify the offending velocity.
4. Daniel J. Simone, *Racing, Region, and the Environment: A History of American Motorsports*, Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Florida, 2009, p. 10. Paul F. Clark and Eric J. Redd, *A History of Recreation in the California Desert*, (Fullerton: Oral History Program, 1978), prepared for the Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management, California Desert Plan. The author welcomes corrections and suggestions for further research. Environmental impacts and serious law-breaking aspects of some within this subculture are not addressed herein; while acknowledging the problems, these issues manifested themselves in the future.
5. *Motorcycle Illustrated*, Vol. 3, November 15, 1908 and Vol. 4, August 1, 1909; Internet information sources, including Wikipedia, supplied some of the background information. In the early days, the Indian manufacturer used "Motocycle" in their name.
6. *Motorcycle Illustrated*, Vol. 5, January 1, 1910 and March 15, 1910.
7. *History of Recreation in the California Desert*, p. 30. The *Los Angeles Times*, June 12, 1904, reported that the New York Motorcycle Club officially disapproved "leather clothing" for motorcycle wear, regulating that garb to the "hired men." Scottish tweed coats and "ordinary knickerbocker" pants or "long trousers to be worn with leather leggings" were deemed acceptable. See also, *Los Angeles Times*, July 19, 1904 and April 12, 1905.
8. *Los Angeles Times*, June 22, 1906, describes the formation of the Los Angeles Motorcycle Club; see also, *Motorcycle Illustrated*, Vol. 3, November 15, 1908, and Vol. 4, November 1, 1909 and various issues in Vol. 5. While the Los Angeles club kept exclusively male only membership, a "ladies auxiliary" functioned with them per the *Times*, March 19, 1911.
9. *Los Angeles Times*, December 20, 1905, March 20, 1906, February 8, 1924 and December 4, 1927. *Motorcycle Illustrated*, Vol. 4, December 15, 1909, reported a hill climb at Redlands where one of the scramblers was thrown and broke a leg.
10. *Motorcycle Illustrated*, Vol. 5, January 1, 1910 and *Los Angeles Times*, April 27, 1919 and December 16, 1923.
11. *Los Angeles Times*, June 15, 1906, July 7, 1906 and August 19, 1912; *Motorcycle Illustrated*, Vol. 4, November 1, 1909.
12. *Los Angeles Times*, July 13, 1919 and December 25, 1919.

California Steamboats 'Round The Bend!

by Glenna Dunning

"The moment we were underway I began to prowl about the great steamer and fill myself with joy. She was as clean and as dainty as a drawing-room; when I looked down her long, gilded saloon, it was like gazing through a splendid tunnel …glittering with no end of prism-fringed chandeliers….I had never felt so fine before."
Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*

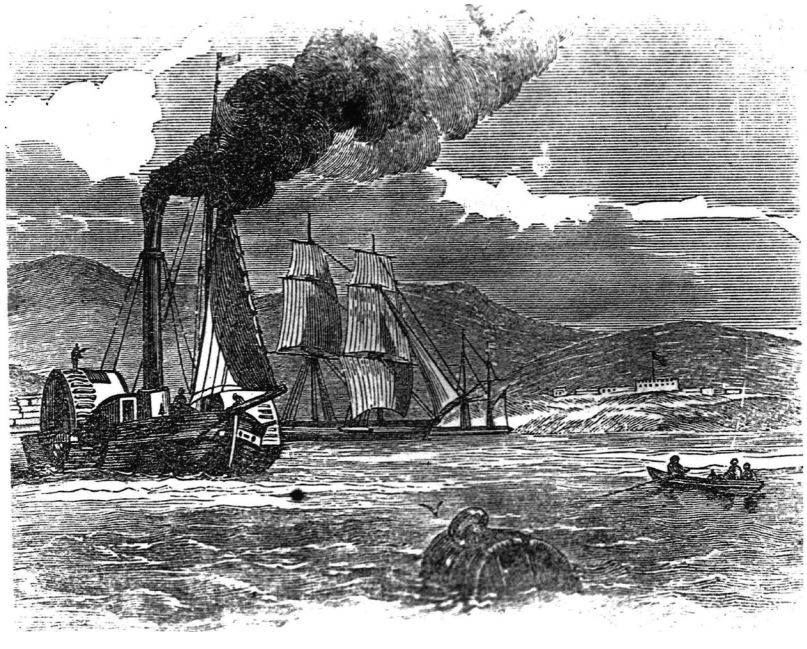
Imagine, if you will, that you're standing on a hill overlooking San Francisco in 1864. Enjoying the view next to you is Samuel Clemens who, before the Civil War, had been a steamboat pilot working the Mississippi River between St. Louis and New Orleans. He left that profession behind him when he came West and began his writing career under the pseudonym "Mark Twain," but he might have experienced some degree of nostalgia when he looked out over San Francisco Bay, crowded with steamboats. Perhaps he recognized the *Antelope*, the *Julia*, or the elegant *Chrysopolis* among the throng of boats loading supplies and hopeful passengers on their way to the gold fields.

Before the era of California's steamboats, even before the discovery of gold in 1848, sailing ships had provided a convenient way to move people and goods from the Pacific Ocean to Sacramento, a 125-mile journey along inland bays and rivers typically taking several days to complete. John Sutter, for example, sailed up the Sacramento River from San Francisco on the *Isabella*, landing near his Fort on August 12, 1839, a trip that took three days.

California's steamboat history began on October 14, 1847 when the Russian bark *Naslednich* arrived in San Francisco from Alaska, carrying in her hold sections of the *Sitka*, a sidewheeler steamboat. The *Sitka*,

only thirty-seven feet long and nine feet wide, was reassembled and delivered to her new owner, William Leidesdorff, a wealthy San Francisco merchant and financier. Hoping to demonstrate the advantage of steam over sail, Leidesdorff dispatched the underpowered *Sitka* upriver to Sacramento. She managed to complete the trip but it took six days and seven hours, twice as long as the *Isabella*. Good-humored locals quickly organized a race from Sacramento to Benicia between the *Sitka* and a team of oxen; within days, the *Daily Alta California* gleefully reported that she arrived second. In February 1848, *Sitka* sank in San Francisco Bay but was raised, stripped of her engines, and converted into the schooner *Rainbow*. Even though *Sitka* may not have met Leidesdorff's expections, she is nevertheless notable as the vessel that introduced steam navigation to California. Soon the *Lady Washington*, the first steamboat sent from the Eastern United States, arrived in the hold of a sailing ship. Reconstructed at Sutter's Embarcadero in Sacramento, she was launched on August 9, 1848. A flat-bottomed sternwheeler, *Lady Washington* was the first riverboat to navigate the American River, ascending to the Feather River and eventually reaching Red Bluff. She, and the smaller steamer *Aetna,* subsequently made regular runs on the American River, stopping for passengers and cargo at towns and farms along the way, fulfilling the promise of the *Sitka*.

Steamboats began to replace sailing vessels on inland waterways because they offered increased dependability, more cargo space, and improved speed. Beginning in 1849, business quickly expanded when thousands of hopeful "Forty-Niners" arrived in San Francisco, anxious to travel onward to the goldfields. In the absence of any widespread rail system or dependable roads, California's system of natural waterways



An 1847 illustration of the Sitka belching smoke and working her way through San Francisco Bay. Even assisted by a jib sail Sitka was not a fast ship, fortunately for the rowboat in her path and for the individual standing on top of the paddlewheel housing. Her career as a steamboat was short and by 1848 she was refitted as a schooner.

(Courtesy of the California History Section, California State Library)

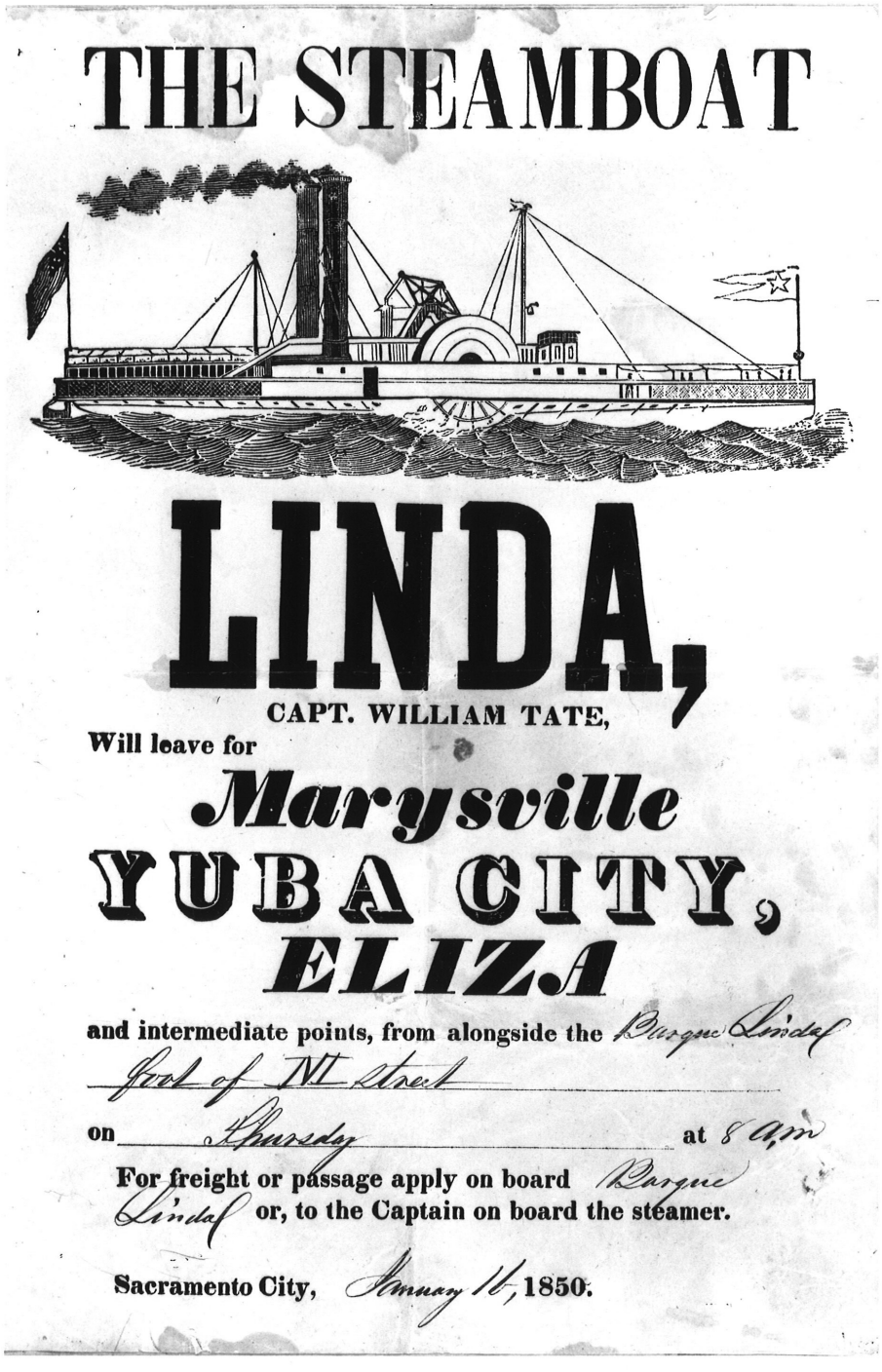
(Previous page) - The last of California's great steamboats, the "million dollar boats" Delta Queen (above) and her twin, the Delta King, operated on the Sacramento River between Sacramento and San Francisco from 1927 to 1940. (Courtesy of the California History Section, California State Library)

and the riverboats that used them offered a ready answer, one that would-be miners were eager to embrace. On May 20, 1849, the *San Francisco Star* observed that steamboats "have plied without cessation between this place and New Helvetia [Sacramento] …. stowed with human beings led by the love of filthy lucre to the gold mines of the north." A week later, the *Star* reported that the sidewheeler *Sacramento*, "a first-class craft, left here thronged with passengers for the gold mines—a motley assemblage, composed of lawyers, merchants, grocers, carpenters, and cooks, all possessed with the desire of becoming suddenly rich." The *Sacramento* was the first steamboat to advertise regularly scheduled runs in the Bay area but she soon had competition from the *Mint* which, by October 1849, also provided regular trips with passengers and freight between Sacramento and San Francisco. A month later, the *John A. Sutter* succeeded in navigating the San Joaquin River when she carried passengers to Stockton. The *Commodore Jones* ascended the Napa River in 1849 and, on May 8, 1850, the *Jack Hays* traveled north on the Sacramento River and reached Redding, forty-five miles from gold strikes at Trinity Diggings.

Map of the primary waterways of central and northern California. The extensive system, branching north and south from San Francisco, comprised almost 800 miles of bays and navigable rivers. This map, drawn by the author, is not to scale. (Author's collection)

In fact, steamboats could journey almost 800 miles through the heart of California by navigating the state's extensive system of rivers and bays. They could travel 399 miles south from San Francisco to Sycamore Point (near Fresno) on the San Joaquin River, and 395-miles north from San Francisco to Red Bluff via the Sacramento River. During times of high water, it was even possible to push on to Redding but, since the river usually was not deep enough to sustain riverboat traffic that far north on a regular basis, Red Bluff remained, for all practical purposes, the head of navigation on the Sacramento River.

By the end of 1850, twenty-eight



This broadside, from January 11, 1850, advertises a journey by the small steamboat Linda from "Sacramento City" to Marysville, Yuba City, and Eliza, a small township settled by pioneers from Maine. In December 1849, the steamboat delivered passengers and cargo to a site south of Marysville which was soon organized into a community called "Linda," a tribute from her former passengers. (Courtesy of the California History Section, California State Library)

steamers were working the Sacramento, American, San Joaquin and Feather rivers and their owner/operators struck it rich carrying miners toward the gold fields, then returning with bullion and gold dust destined for San Francisco, the state's banking center. Following the footsteps of Sacramento merchants like Collis P. Huntington and Mark Hopkins, who made fortunes selling over-priced supplies to miners, some steamboat captains were able to earn large amounts of money transporting those miners and supplies. For example, it took the *John A. Sutter* only a few months to earn $300,000 in profits, and the elegant *Wilson G. Hunt*, built in New York as a Coney Island excursion steamboat, came to California where she cleared $1,000,000 in one year's operation. Such success guaranteed competition and soon San Francisco's wharves were clogged with sternwheelers and sidewheelers, all jostling for business, some advertising themselves as "the finest steamer on the river … just completely overhauled and absolutely safe."

Where did all of these steamboats come from? Originally, some large sidewheelers arrived in San Francisco from the East Coast, having sailed around South America to California. These included the *Antelope*, a former Long Island Sound excursion steamer; the Boston Steam Packet Line's *Commodore Preble* and *General Warren*; and the Bangor Line's *W. J. Pease* which labored as far as Montevideo where her boilers blew and she was abandoned. The *Senator*, originally constructed for travel between Boston and New Brunswick, left New York on March 10, 1849 and arrived in San Francisco seven months later, but one of the most interesting vessels was the palatial *New World*. Built in New York in 1850, she was about to be seized by creditors before her maiden voyage but, just as the local sheriff boarded to serve papers, the *New World*'s vigilant captain and crew suddenly pulled away from the dock and headed for the open ocean. Once outside New York City's jurisdiction, a longboat returned the sheriff safely to New York and the *New World* proceeded to San Francisco where she arrived three months later. The public responded to this "nervy" vessel and the popular *New World* worked the Sacramento River until she was broken up in 1870.

Smaller steamboats, like the *Sitka*, could not manage an ocean journey and arrived dismantled in the holds of sailing vessels, to be reassembled later. The Sutter Iron Works of San Francisco was one of several shipyards which employed experienced shipwrights and engineers solely for the purpose of rebuilding steamboats which had been sent in "knockdown form" from the East coast. Soon local shipyards like Littleton & Company at Rincon Point began building their own vessels and in 1853 Littleton launched the 120-ton *Shasta,* thought to be the first steamboat built entirely in California. Her designers understood the challenges of river navigation and designed the *Shasta* to draw only eighteen-inches of water which allowed her to move through shallow river channels without running aground.

California steamboat designs usually resembled riverboats found in the Eastern states, graceful craft with lean hulls capable of cutting easily through the water. Nevertheless, local designs incorporated some alterations: hulls were designed with a shallow draft; most were constructed as sternwheelers rather than as sidewheelers, which allowed the placement of two or three rudders in front of the paddlewheel, thereby improving maneuverability through narrow waterways; and most designs called for one smokestack rather than two, possibly to allow unimpeded passage through narrow channels lined with large overhanging trees. Some consideration was eventually made for passenger comfort as evidenced by the packet *Tulare*, the first California-built riverboat to provide cabins, a welcome improvement for deck passengers, hardy souls who previously provided "their own blankets and curled up wherever they were the least likely to be stepped on during the night."

Almost all early riverboats used wood as fuel. The Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers especially were lined with sycamore, river oak, and cottonwood, ready sources of

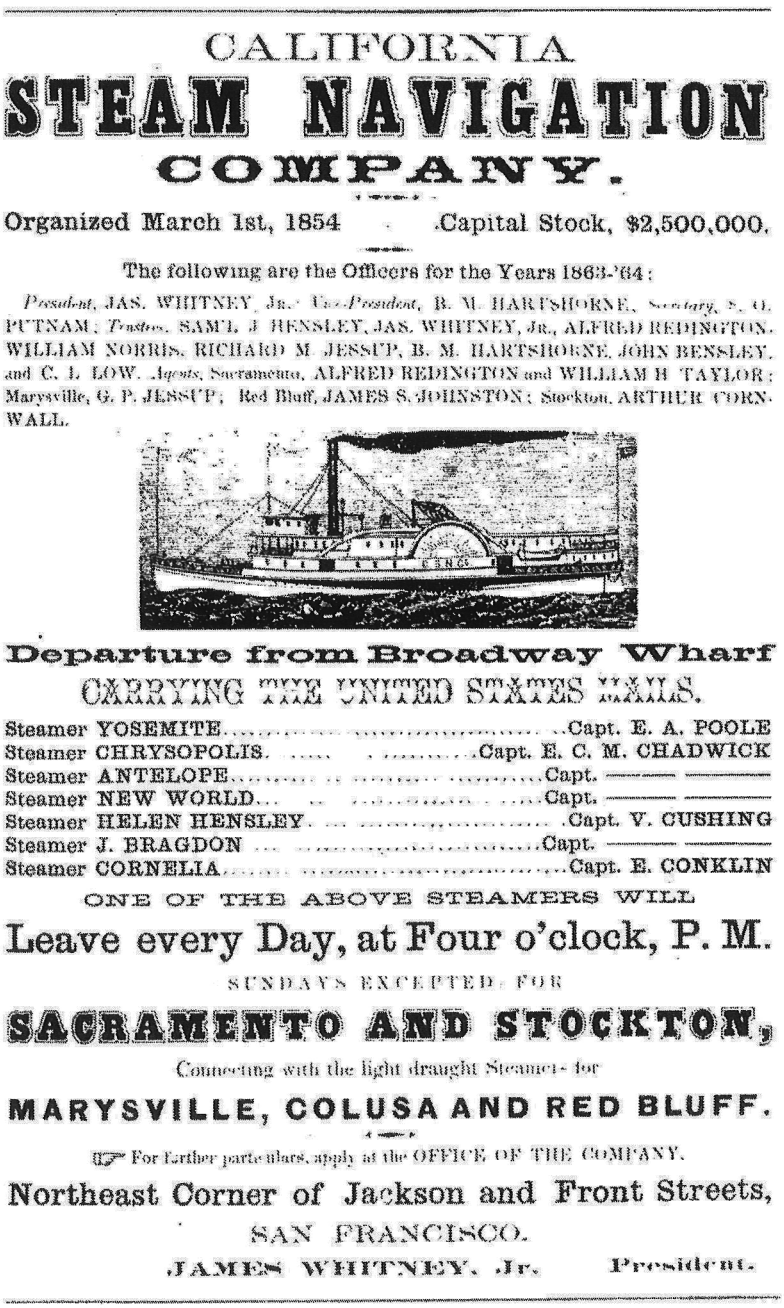
fuel for vessels with prodigious appetites for wood; extant records from the *Dover* indicate that she burned about one cord (128 cubic feet) of wood an hour. A few vessels burned coal excavated from a mine on nearby Mount Diablo. The coal was poor quality but it was cheap, an advantage for steamboats like the *Apache* or the *Modoc* which were documented to have consumed twenty-two tons of coal for one 250-mile roundtrip between San Francisco and Sacramento. Initially, the use of oil as fuel was not widespread; in fact, it had been viewed with suspicion since the oil-burning *Julia* exploded in 1888. But by 1900 oil was more widely accepted as fuel and most steamboats were refitted to burn oil.

All of these design elements, and the use of readily-available fuel, contributed to the booming business of constructing steamboats. During the 1850s a "veritable mob" of steamboats were on California's waterways and it often got so crowded at docks that steamboats had to tie up alongside others, forcing passengers to walk across other vessels to reach shore or to board. Published steamer schedules listed over 103 riverboats routinely arriving in Sacramento: eleven were on the San Francisco route; three to Knights' Landing; two to Red Bluff; one to Chico; one to Colusa; one to Princeton; one to Cache Creek, and three steamers to Marysville. Cut-throat competition among steamboats effectively ended the lucrative era of overnight fortunes and passenger fares from San Francisco to Sacramento tumbled to a dollar, then to fifty cents, and soon to a dime; some companies even offered to carry passengers for free, no doubt confident that they could cover their largess with receipts from the bar. But any lowering of tariff by one boat was immediately met, and beaten, by a dozen others.

Something had to be done before the river traffic economy imploded, leading to financial ruin. In March 1854 several riverboat owners and small companies agreed to pool their resources and form the California Steam Navigation Company in San Francisco. It went public, selling shares at $1000 each, ultimately accumulating $2,000,000 in capital. The Company then purchased and operated almost all riverboats on the Sacramento River including the *Yosemite, Chrysopolis, Antelope, Paul Pry, Cornelia,* and *Julia*, as well as "light draught steamers" for the Marysville, Colusa, and Red Bluff traffic. By securing the majority of inland waterway traffic, the California Steam Navigation Company creating a monopoly which stabilized prices. By 1855 tariffs were fixed at $12 per person from San Francisco to Marysville, $10 San Francisco to Sacramento, and $8 San Francisco to Stockton; freight charges were also standardized through the monopoly, bringing much needed stability to California businesses.

The California Steam Navigation Company also improved safety on the waterways when it developed reliable and detailed navigational charts for local waterways. In 1863 the Company hired J. A. Crocker to sound the Sacramento River and he spent weeks aboard the U. S. Revenue Cutter *Lawrence* taking careful measurements of the width and depth of the river. He compiled his findings and the Company printed charts which indicated not only soundings but also important land features visible from the river including houses, barns, large trees, and the occasional outhouse. The importance of reliable charts along the Sacramento River is underscored by the fact that there were 318 separate compass headings in the 125-mile route between Sacramento and San Francisco. Nevertheless, some pilots still used their ingenuity to find shortcuts. During times of flooding, for example, it was reported that high water levels allowed "wheat-field navigation" wherein a resourceful and daring pilot would use his knowledge of surrounding farmland topography and characteristics to "jump" a river channel and churn across a farmer's flooded wheat field or asparagus bog, creating an impromptu shortcut between rivers. A vivid image to be sure and though this author hoped to confirm the story with additional sources or photographs, none were found.

Additional efforts to improve safety on waterways included ongoing attempts to control steamboat racing. Prior to 1855, most riverboats were independently owned by



CALIFORNIA

STEAM NAVIGATION

COMPANY.

Organized March 1st, 1854 Capital Stock, $2,500,000.

The following are the Officers for the Years 1863-'64:

President, JAS. WHITNEY, Jr.; *Vice-President*, B. M. HARTSHORNE; *Secretary*, S. O. PUTNAM; *Trustees*, SAM'L J. HENSLEY, JAS. WHITNEY, Jr., ALFRED REDINGTON, WILLIAM NORRIS, RICHARD M. JESSUP, B. M. HARTSHORNE, JOHN HENSLEY, and C. L. LOW. *Agents*, Sacramento, ALFRED REDINGTON and WILLIAM H. TAYLOR; Marysville, G. P. JESSUP; Red Bluff, JAMES S. JOHNSTON; Stockton, ARTHUR CORNWALL.

Departure from Broadway Wharf

CARRYING THE UNITED STATES MAILS.

Steamer YOSEMITE.....Capt. E. A. POOLE
Steamer CHRYSOPOLIS.....Capt. E. C. M. CHADWICK
Steamer ANTELOPE.....Capt. ——— ———
Steamer NEW WORLD.....Capt. ——— ———
Steamer HELEN HENSLEY.....Capt. V. CUSHING
Steamer J. BRAGDON.....Capt. ——— ———
Steamer CORNELIA.....Capt. E. CONKLIN

ONE OF THE ABOVE STEAMERS WILL

Leave every Day, at Four o'clock, P. M.

SUNDAYS EXCEPTED, FOR

SACRAMENTO AND STOCKTON,

Connecting with the light draught Steamers for

MARYSVILLE, COLUSA AND RED BLUFF.

☞ For further particulars, apply at the OFFICE OF THE COMPANY,

Northeast Corner of Jackson and Front Streets,

SAN FRANCISCO.

JAMES WHITNEY, Jr. President.

In this 1863 advertisment, the California Steam Navigation Company lists seven steamboats scheduled to depart from San Francisco's Broadway Wharf 'every Day, at Four o'clock, P.M., Sundays excepted ...'
(from Wikipedia Commons; public domain)

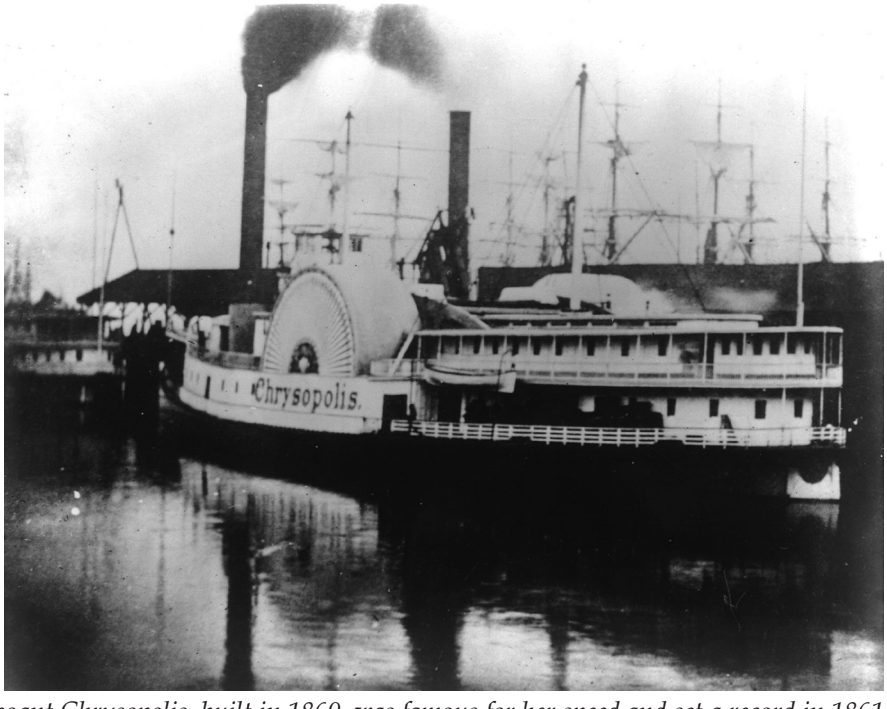
their captains, men who were exceptionally skilled at reading the rivers and memorizing the locations of sandbars, snags, and shifting channels. Some of them also indulged in the dangerous sport of steamboat racing, even while transporting passengers. Disasters during impromptu races sometimes occurred when boilers exploded from excessive steam pressure, resulting in death among passengers and crew. Public protest was loud and prolonged, and the *Stockton Times* fumed that "enough of our race have been already murdered by steamboat racing." But illegal racing was then, as now, a difficult activity to regulate. Financial stakes and personal pride often overwhelmed common sense and, lacking centralized authority to govern river traffic, punishments usually were little more than a slap on the wrist. A frequent inside joke was that, should a captain be caught racing, he was fined five demerits but if he lost the race he was fined ten.

Tactics became so underhanded that deliberate rammings might occur if a rival was favored in a race; it was not uncommon for one steamer to shove another out of the way, performing a "pit maneuver" that pushed the lead vessel sideways or even onto a riverbank. It was once reported that, early in a race between *Goliah* and *New World*, passions were running

so high that a shootout occurred between the rowdy crew and passengers of the rival steamers. The *Goliah* had been lurking in Suisun Bay for the purpose of ramming her rival as she passed by, but she was outmaneuvered and a flurry of pistol shots was unleashed as the two vessels drew apart. Only minor harm was done and the *New World* arriving safely in Sacramento, well ahead of her opponent. After the excitement died down, Company administrators not only slapped illegal racing with stringent regulations and fines, but also required that all river captains be licensed and be held to account for their actions. The *Stockton Times* responded that "there was a great feeling of relief when the control of traffic passed into the hands of the Company, with whom this danger was not to be tolerated."

Even as these regulations were taking effect, river navigation began to encounter a much more destructive problem than steamboat racing. Beginning as early as 1853, sludge consisting of mud and debris, originating in the gold-bearing foothills to the East, moved down mountain creeks and streams into navigable rivers of Central California. This was the legacy of hydraulic mining, a type of mining wherein powerful jets of water were aimed at hillsides in order to blast away layers of soil and gravel, thus uncovering any gold deposits that might be hidden there. An enormous volume of water was needed to wash away mountains and the runoff carried tons of mud and debris into the tributaries of the Sacramento, American, and Feather rivers with the result that formerly clear and deep rivers were transformed into shallow, muddy streams. As riverbeds rose, navigation was made difficult or impossible and commerce for numerous communities along these rivers declined or disappeared. It even was feared that the San Francisco Bay was in danger of shoaling.

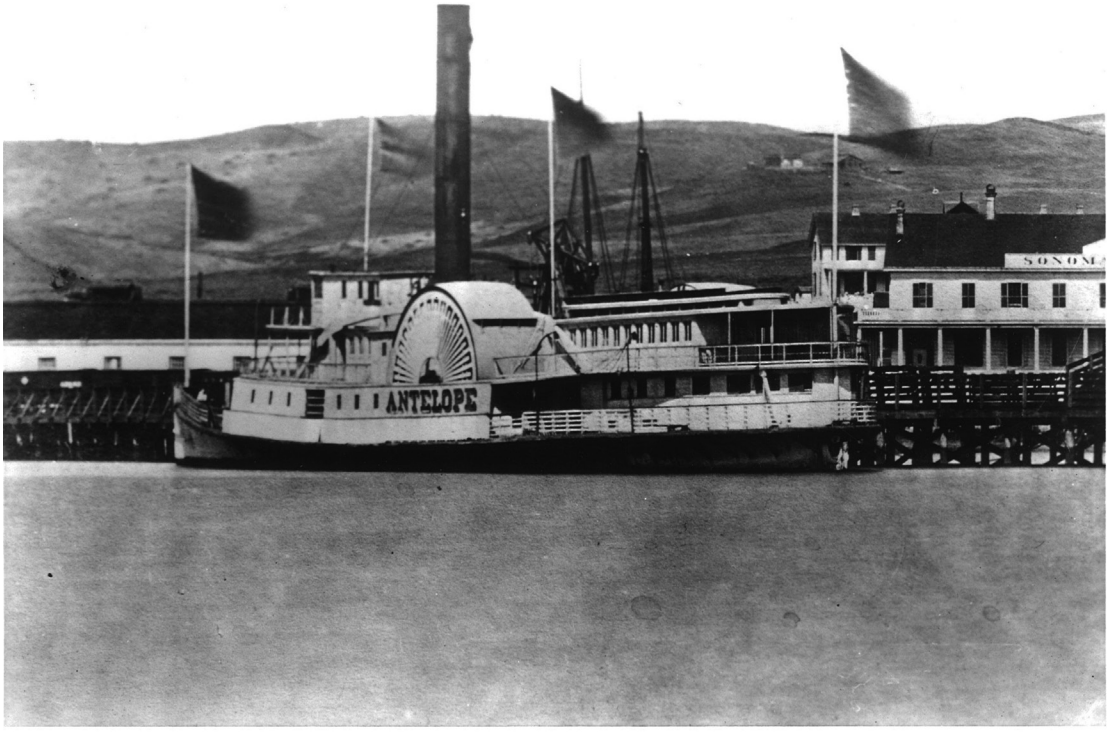
A study made in 1880 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers concluded that over 39,000 acres of farm land had been flooded, buried under hydraulic mining debris, a



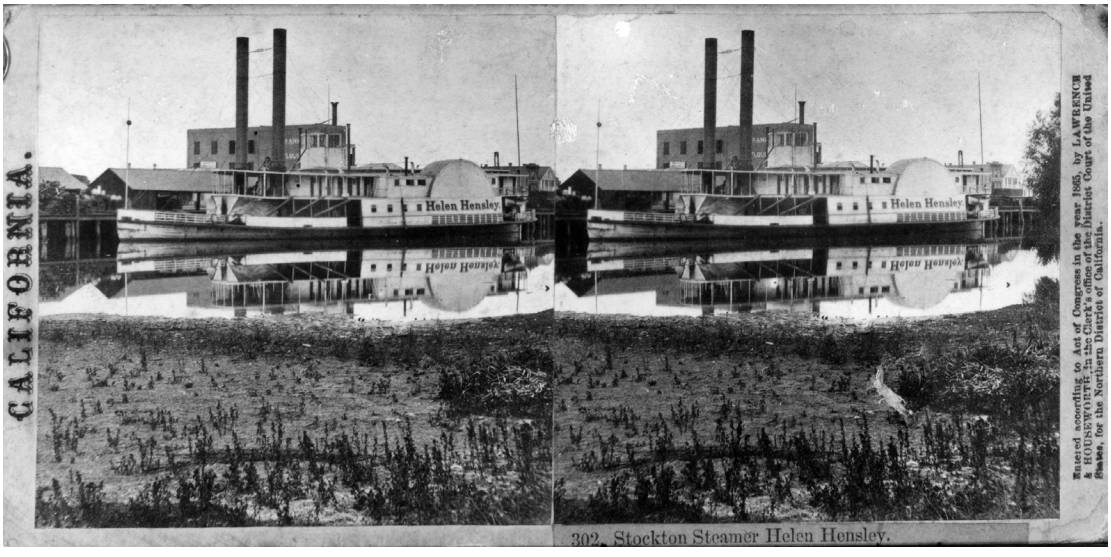
The elegant Chrysopolis, built in 1860, was famous for her speed and set a record in 1861 that still stands: racing from Sacramento to San Francisco in 5 hours and 19 minutes, at an estimated 19.8 knots (almost 23 mph)! In 1875 the beloved "Crissie" was converted into the double-ended ferry Oakland and she operated dependably in that role until she burned at her mooring in 1940. (Courtesy of the California History Section, California State Library

long-term disaster for the state's agricultural economy. During the 1880s, lawsuits against various mining companies were filed and, eventually, Judge Lorenzo Sawyer ruled in favor of the "anti-debris" faction, a coalition of farmers, steamboat companies, and river-based businesses. Federal laws and injunctions halted most hydraulic mining operations, and as late as 1893, northern counties such as Glenn, Colusa, and Tehama waited in vain for the revival of river traffic along the upper Sacramento. A comprehensive flood control plan was put in place and navigation in the Sacramento River slowly improved, but it was not until 1935 that the California Debris Commission could report that the bed of the Sacramento River (as sounded at the city of Sacramento) had regained its original elevation and was again navigable to large vessels.

On May 10, 1869, the Transcontinental Railroad was completed. Even with the growing influence of, and competition from, railroads, an important part of steamboat business continued to be the passenger trade, even transporting those rail passengers who had arrived at Sacramento (terminus of the transcontinental route) to San Francisco. The Central Pacific Railroad expanded its influence when it purchased the California Steam Navigation Company in late 1869 and began operating a line of steamboats. It commissioned the construction of the sidewheeler *Amado*r, and the *Apache* and *Modoc* which operated as "feeder lines" for the railroad. In 1885 the Central Pacific was taken over by the Southern Pacific Railroad which continued to operate riverboats until 1930 when it got out of that particular business.



The Antelope docked in front of the Sonoma House Hotel in Donohue's Landing on the Petaluma River in Sonoma County. Constructed on the East Coast in 1847, she operated as a Long Island excursion steamer until 1850 when she traveled around South America to California. For many years she carried passengers and freight, as well as gold dust and bullion from Sacramento to San Francisco for Wells Fargo, earning her the nickname "Gold Boat." On April 13, 1860, the Antelope participated in history when she carried the inaugural Pony Express mail delivery (including horse and rider) from Sacramento to San Francisco. (Courtesy of the California History Section, California State Library)



A stereographic view of the sidewheeler Helen Hensley, taking on cargo in Stockton. Launched on January 9, 1854, she served less than two weeks when, on January 19, one of her boilers exploded, killing two passengers. She was repaired and continued to serve on the San Joaquin River for almost thirty years until she was abandoned in 1883.
(Courtesy of the Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection)

The Sacramento Valley, always an important agricultural center, continued to use steamboats to transport wheat, timber, wool, grain, produce, and meat to both the Bay Area and nearby valley communities. Competing with the railroads, the California Transportation Company (organized in 1875) and the Sacramento Transportation Company (organized in 1882) operated several steamers to carry grain and produce along the Sacramento River and San Joaquin rivers. It was a profitable enterprise since steamboats could easily pull over to a riverbank to load and unload cargo anywhere there was a farm or town; the *Modoc* was recorded to have made 30 stops during a single one-way trip along the Sacramento River.

In the first decade of the 20th century, eleven companies were still operating steamboats along the Sacramento River but the transportation business began to change once again as automobiles and trucks, using the expanding system of publicly funded roads and bridges, captured a growing share of business from riverboats. In an effort to recapture a portion of the passenger and freight traffic between Sacramento and San Francisco, the California Transportation Company developed a plan in 1924 to build two luxury steamboats which would reflect the opulent heritage of American riverboats and offer passengers the finest in overnight river transportation.

In a repeat of earlier times, the engines and steel hulls of these new vessels were constructed elsewhere (Denny & Brothers shipyard in Glasgow, Scotland), then dismantled and shipped to the California Navigation and Improvement Company shipyard in Stockton, where workers reassembled the pieces as if working on a giant jigsaw puzzle. When the *Delta King* and *Delta Queen* were launched in 1927, total expenses for *each* vessel exceeded more than $1,000,000 (by comparison, a smaller sternwheeler, the 1923 *Cape Girardeau*, was built in Ohio for $65,000) and the Company boasted that their "million dollar boats, [were] the most expensive packets ever built." Lavishly appointed, the sisters were very popular and overnight runs between San Francisco and Sacramento, booked well in advance, generated steady profits through the Jazz Age. But with the beginning of the Great Depression, they began losing money. Fewer people were willing to

spend money on steamboat trips, and the construction of bridges in the Bay Area and continuing increase in automobile and truck transportation placed an impossible financial challenge on river traffic, a competition the steamboats could not hope to win.

In 1932 the remaining steamboat companies were consolidated into the River Lines which became the main operator of steamboats on the river, but the weak economy and land transportation effectively ended the golden age of steamboats. Most steamboat lines folded and the formerly lucrative Stockton passenger trade ended when the *J. D. Peters* made her last run on Christmas day, 1932. The *Delta King* and the *Delta Queen* hung on for a few more years but ultimately were driven out of service in 1940 with the inauguration of a new highway linking Sacramento with San Francisco. The *Petaluma*, the last paddlewheel steamboat in California, continued to provide limited service on the upper San Pablo Bay but, on August 24, 1950, she docked in her namesake city for the final time and closed her logbook, thus ending more than a century of steamboat service for passengers and freight in California.

Extant shipping records indicate that at least 280 sternwheelers and sidewheelers traveled the inland waters of California between 1847 and 1950. Toward the end of this period, many vessels (often in poor condition) sank, some were converted into ferries or barges, others were simply broken up. A few, like the *Navajo* and the *Delta King*, were dragged on shore to serve as landlocked housing for laborers, but others were simply anchored in some forgotten backwater and left to rot. A few lucky ships were sold to new owners and moved out of California. The old *Yosemite*, for example, was sent under her own power through the Panama Canal and around the shoulder of Brazil to Montevideo where she served as a ferry. Three sister steamers, the *Golden Age*, *Golden Poppy*, and *Golden Shore* were sold to Puget Sound interests where they also worked as ferries, and the *Delta Queen*, boxed up like a large crate, was towed through the Panama Canal and up the Mississippi River where she began a new career cruising America's rivers.

As of this date, only one California riverboats remains afloat and she is the *Delta King*, rescued from her landlocked status in Canada. Refloated and towed back to California, she was refurbished and now is permanently moored as a hotel in Old Sacramento. This gives anyone interested in the glory days of "steamboating" an opportunity to explore a beautiful "river liner," admire stained glass windows in the dining room, or stay overnight in one of forty-four staterooms. Even though the *Delta King* doesn't go anywhere, you and your imagination can get a sense of what it was like to travel along the Sacramento River on an historic steamboat … perhaps you will imagine that Mark Twain is standing next to you on the Texas Deck, delighting in all that you can see!

A postcard of the Delta King plying the Sacramento River after 1932 when she was operated by the River Lines Company. She is now a floating hotel in Old Sacramento. (Author's collection)

Down the Western Book Trail . . .

WEST FROM SALT LAKE: Diaries from the Central Overland Trail, edited by Jesse G. Petersen. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012. 328 pp. Maps, Bibliography, Index. Hardbound, $34.95. Reviewed by Lynn G. Hodge.

In late September 2001 I took a trip through the Great Basin in central Nevada to Salt Lake City. I followed U.S. 50, "the loneliest road in America." This route followed the Pony Express Trail. One of the towns I was interested in visiting was Austin. At one time had was the largest community in Nevada. The town today is almost a ghost town with most structures still in existence. Every business on Main Street has a for sale sign. One could imagine those signs saying, "last one out of town shut off the lights." My interest in this town centered on the sister of my great-grandfather Hodge; she had lived and died there. I located her grave as well as her twelve-year-old daughter—the first child born in Austin.

One of the two primary routes for travelers destined for California was called the Southern route which followed the Mormon corridor of small communities from Salt Lake City to Cedar City, then on to Las Vegas and San Bernardino. This route was preferred b y companies that had started out late and wanted to avoid the fate of the Donner-Reed party in the Sierras. It was on this trail on September 11, 1857, that the West's most tragic episode occurred when a group of Mormons slaughtered 120 men, woman, and children of the Fancher wagon train in what is referred to as "the Mountain Meadows Massacre." The most used route to California was the Salt Lake cutoff or California Trail that headed into southern Idaho before turning south into the Great Basin following the Humboldt River and the Hastings Cutoff to Genoa—the first community in Nevada settled by the Mormons.

In 1857 General Albert Sidney Johnston led a contingent of the U.S. Army to the Utah Territory to subdue a perceived Mormon rebellion. Travelers heading to California desired to shorten the distance. A contingent of soldiers explored an alternative route from Camp Floyd in the town of Fairfield, Utah, where two of my great-great-grandfathers had resided. It would cut off 400 miles from the existing route. This new trail would be known as the Central Overland Trail. The book under review details journals of pioneers who elected this option and their deviations from it in an attempt to shorten distance, time, and potential hazards. Travel was predicated on the availability of water more so than perceived hostilities from Indians.

I commend the editor on his inclusion of nine maps as a group preceding Chapter One in lieu of distributing them throughout the text. It permits the reader to relate tomaps of adjacent sections and the alternatives the travelers may have selected. Having already traversed these locations, I could appreciate the hardships to which they were exposed. This is not a book about disaffected Mormons trying to extricate themselves from the Kingdom. It is 28 diaries, nine from women. I recommend this book on traveling conditions of 150 years ago. Then follow it up by taking the trip yourself through this inhospitable arid desert to have a better appreciation of what they endured.

AMERICAN HEATHENS: Religion, Race, and Reconstruction in California, by Joshua Paddison. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012. 270 pp. Illustrations, Notes, Bibliography, Index. Cloth, $44.95. Reviewed by Froylan Tiscareno.

The present work is the product of Joshua Paddison's Ph.D. dissertation at UCLA adapted to book form. It reveals meticulous scholarship focusing on the role played by civil but mainly religious institutions on the question of whether ethnic minorities—especially Chinese—could be integrated into the fabric of American society in the years following the Civil War. The title of the book suggests the main emphasis of the approach to this question. "American Heathens" was the prevalent perception of the white Christian majority in considering the adaptability of not just Chinese but native Indian and recently freed black people.

The author records the arguments that called for assimilation as well as those that would cut off these minorities from participation in the country's vital economic and political life. Despite the passage of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, full citizenship was slow in coming to the affected minorities. The final blow was passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. As its name implies, it targeted Chinese, prohibiting their immigration for ten years.

Paddison cites several religious newspapers to support his assertions about the low esteem in which the Chinese were held. The epithets "heathen," "barbarian," and "idol worshiper" were often printed in articles that put down the Chinese. But the trend was not limited to religious (mainly Protestant) organizations. Political parties also got into the act. Both Republicans and Democrats took part in the debates, also branding blacks and women as unworthy of citizenship. Even Catholics did not escape the attacks by Protestant churches; "popish" threats were often cited in religious articles.

In summary, this book attempts to inform the reader about prevailing attitudes in segments of the American public about the bias and intolerance towards certain ethnic groups—focusing primarily on the Chinese—and is recommended to anyone who is curious about this country's history of racism. Extensive notes and bibliography are appended to the text.

Western History Association 2014 Conference
Newport Beach CA—October 15-18, 2014

On behalf of the Western History Association, my Local Arrangements co-chair Janet Fireman and I would like to invite our friends in the Los Angeles Corral of the Westerners to join us in Newport Beach this October for the 54th annual WHA conference. Attendees will not only be able to partake of panel sessions such as "Western Images in a Wider World" (sponsored by Westerners International), "Rediscovering Ramona," and "Is There a Los Angeles School of Western History?" but also tours to San Luis Rey and Pala, Crystal Cove State Park and "Surf City" (Huntington Beach). Anyone with a passion for western history is welcome to join us (attendees do NOT have to be WHA members); further information about the full array of panel sessions, tours, receptions and other conference social events and accommodations may be found at our website: http://westernhistoryassociation.wildapricot.org/event-697688 which is maintained by the WHA Executive Director John Heaton, professor of history at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. And if any members of the LA Corral would like to inquire about opportunities to volunteer for the Local Arrangements Committee, they would be welcome to contact Janet Fireman and me at jfireman@nhm.org and pblodgett@huntington.org to express their interest and discuss their availability.

Peter J. Blodgett, Huntington Library pblodgett@huntington.org

Monthly Roundup . . .

July 2014

Kiara Maria Vigil

The Los Angeles Corral's 2014 Autry Fellow, Kiara Maria Vigil, an Assistant Professor of American Studies at Amherst College in Amherst, Massachusetts, presented a program titled North American Indian Intellectuals.

Vigil is currently completing research for her first book, *North American Indian Intellectuals and the American Imagination, 1880-1930*, now under contract with Cambridge University Press.

Her presentation focused on Luther Standing Bear's career as a writer, film actor, and political activist living in Los Angeles in the 1930s, particularly examining the intersection between reform and performance.

She also discussed the archival materials and other resources available at the Autry National Center that speak to the lives and cultural work of Native Americans in Southern California from the 1930s onward.

Her time at the Autry has enabled her to research her next book-length project tentatively entitled *Natives in Transit: Indian Entertainment, Urban Life, and Activism*, which builds on a study of Indian actors beginning with the 1930's.

August 2014

Geraldine Knatz

Geraldine Knatz retired as the Executive Director of the Port of Los Angeles in February 2014 after eight years as its CEO. Prior to that, Dr. Knatz was Managing Director of the Port of Long Beach. She has an undergrad degree in Zoology from Rutgers, and both a masters in Environmental Engineering and doctorate in biological science from USC, and currently teaches the Practice of Policy and Engineering at USC.

Dr. Knatz explained that over a hundred years ago, there were islands in San Pedro Bay known as Rattlesnake Island and Deadman's Island and three distinct residential communities: East San Pedro, Terminal (sometimes called Terminal Beach), and Brighton Beach.

Many residents were part of the Bohemian culture that developed in Los Angeles. These people were generally squatters who lived a precarious existence. When the Terminal Land Company began promoting Terminal Island as a resort destination, wealthy Los Angeles residents were building summer "cottages" right at the edge of the surf. Today there is one large industrialized land mass known as Terminal Island, home to container terminals and rail facilitates that service the goods movement industry across the nation.

You can read more about the history of Terminal Island in an upcoming book co-authored by Geraldine Knatz and Naomi Hirahata entitled *Terminal Island, Lost Communities of Los Angeles Harbor*.

FROM OUR FILES

60 Years Ago
#26 September 1954

On June 17, the LA Corral met at Casa Adobe for a dinner of enchiladas and frijoles, followed by a presentation by Art Woodward entitlted "The Custer Battlefield Today." Art's guest was Hugh Shick, a survivor of the investigation.

On August 7, the Corral met at Hank Clifford's Arroyo Seco Saloon in Pasadena where Clifford barbequed buffalo steaks provided by the US Bureau of Land Management's Wichita Wildlife Refuge. Afterward, John Hilton played his guitar and sang old songs before W. W. Robinson began a talk on the Rancho San Pascual.

50 Years Ago
#70 September 1964

In June, the corral traveled to Temecula for a barbecue at Horace Parker's restored Hotel Temecula. Dr. Parker spoke on early travelers on the Southern Emigrant Trail, which passed through the old cattle town. Many members stayed the night, camping on the grounds.

In August, Carl Dentzel hosted a dinner at the Southwest Museum's Casa de Adobe, with music native provided by his future wife, Elizabeth Waldo.

25 Years Ago
#177 Fall 1989

In September, member Earl Nation spoke on "medical quackery in American history, treading the narrow line that exists between fraud and fantasy."

Rendezvous 1989 was held at the home of member Al Miller, with Robert Scherrer, Dutch Holland, and Henry Welcome as honored guests. "Libations were generously poured … and no one fell into the pool." The auctions (live and silent) raised some $3,500 for the corral coffers.

Competing California History Textbooks

By Abraham Hoffman

Since the 1880s, California has been an attractive subject for historians who have attempted to record the state's development, challenges, and events that make the Golden State so fascinating. Hubert Howe Bancroft, Zoeth Skinner Eldredge, T. H. Hittell, and others pioneered in writing the history of the state in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Since World War II, academic historians—professors at universities and colleges—including Robert Glass Cleland, John W. Caughey, Andrew Rolle, Walton Bean and James Rawls, and Richard B. Rice, William A. Bullough, and Richard J. Orsi—have written textbook histories for college students. The state's history has also attracted writers of works intended for non-academic readers; among the authors are David Lavender, Ralph Roske, Robert Kirsch and William S. Murphy, W. H. Hutchinson, and Robert J. Chandler (this list is indicative, not definitive).

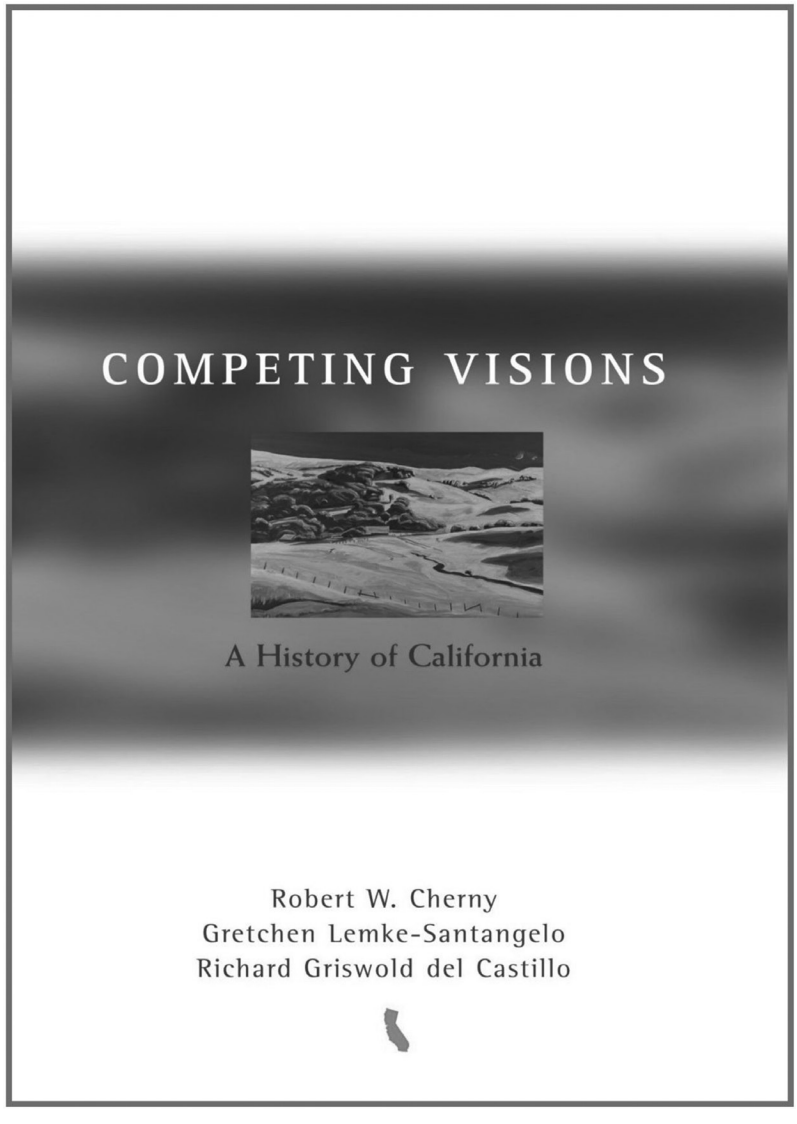
Some of the textbooks may well overwhelm the students taking a California history course. Rolle's textbook runs to 39 chapters; the Bean and Rawls textbook to 36 chapters. Many colleges list California history as a one-semester course, making reading assignments of two to three chapters a week in these books a rather intimidating obstacle for some students. A textbook scaled down in number of chapters, but making them longer than a textbook with many short chapters, could possibly create an impression for students that the book is more usable.

Such a textbook, and the latest to enter the field for college students, is *Competing Visions: A History of California*, by Robert W. Cherny, Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, and Richard Griswold del Castillo, with Cherny the principal author. Each generation sees its own history through the eyes of the authors writing at the time; some scholars succeed in revising their work in new editions, as seen in the numerous editions of the Rolle and Bean and Rawls textbooks, still very much in print, that update and revise earlier interpretations. *Competing Visions*, first published in 2005, is now in its second edition, which is the work under discussion in this essay. Unlike other textbooks, Cherny's work has thirteen chapters and therefore fits in well with a semester course. The final chapter, incidentally, carries events down to 2012 and deals with Governor Jerry Brown's governorship to date.

The authors use "Competing Visions" as a narrative theme: Democrats v. Republicans, liberals v. conservatives, environmentalists v. developers, traditionalists v. counterculture, reformers v. corruption. However, the major theme that permeates this book deals with bigotry and racism against minorities—Asians, Blacks, Hispanics, Indians, lesbians, and gays. Any student unfamiliar with the state's history will be stunned by the almost constant bigotry that prevailed for more than a century after statehood. The authors forthrightly state that California became a leader in the nation's economy, influential in national

politics, and innovative in its promotion of modern technology; but they don't flinch from recording the decimation of Native Californians, pressure for exclusion of Chinese immigrants, endorsement of segregation, popular support for sending Japanese Americans to concentration camps during World War II, and approving initiatives discriminating against minorities in such issues as fair housing and immigration. Most recent example of elective bigotry in action: Proposition 8 banning gay marriage, still in the courts at this writing as to its constitutionality. This book makes a powerful statement concerning these harsh realities that will certainly capture and engage the attention of its intended readers.

Southern Californians, however, may question an apparent emphasis on the northern part of the state. The authors discuss or mention the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 and the Loma Prieta quake in 1989 but omit Owens Valley 1872, Long Beach 1933, San Fernando 1971, Northridge 1994, and other major seismic events. Attention is given to John C. Fremont, but Edward F. Beale, whose contributions to California history were less controversial but more significant, goes unmentioned. Joaquin Murrieta, a legendary figure, makes his appearance, but the notorious Tiburcio Vasquez, whose career has been fully documented, is ignored. So are the controversies regarding the Salton Sea. Likewise, there is no mention of banker Isaias W Hellman, founder of Wells Fargo Bank; or Benito Wilson, a major 19th-century figure in southern California and the grandfather of General George S. Patton, Jr. Even Joshua Norton, San Francisco's most famous eccentric, and southern California entrepreneur and chronicler



Harris Newmark, go unmentioned. Evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson gets a paragraph, but no mention is made of her famous disappearance and the scandal that followed. Architect Richard Neutra is overlooked. "Suggested Readings" are offered at the end of each chapter but in many cases there's plenty of white space there that could have been used to include more books.

Some errors sneaked in that should be uprooted for a third edition. These include *Mendez v. Westminster*, decided by the State Supreme Court, not the U. S. Supreme Court (p. 251). The writers attribute Job Harriman's defeat in the 1911 Los Angeles mayor's race to newly enfranchised women voters, but make no mention of Harriman as a defense lawyer for the McNamara brothers in the *Los Angeles Times* 1910 bombing. Historians note that voters turned against Harriman when the brothers pled guilty, undoing Harriman's strong defense of them.

To state that "Japanese planes and ships had attacked…Pearl Harbor" (p. 264) suggests that Japanese warships were directly involved, but they were far out at sea; the planes came from aircraft carriers. Apart from a few midget submarines, no Japanese battleships, cruisers, or destroyers directly attacked Hawaii. The authors state that the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), an agency of the Department of Justice, led the raid on Mexicans at the Los Angeles Plaza in 1931; but the Immigration Service, an agency of the Department of Labor, was transferred to the Department of Justice and renamed in 1940—nine years later.

These errors, minor for the most part, should be cleaned out for the third edition—an edition that might take greater note of the southern part of the state as well. These caveats aside, *Competing Visions* offers students, especially at the community colleges, an interesting and challenging introduction to the state's history. Baby boomers will also be impressed by the changes in interpreting the state's past since they took a course in California history in the 1960s and 1970s.

LA Corral of Westerners Fandango

June 14, 2014

Whodunnit?

At June's Fandango, "The Hangin' Judge" Gary Turner finally got around to resolving the 1862 murder of John Rains. And none too soon.

Rains, owner of the 13,000 acre Rancho Cucamonga, was ambushed, lassoed, shot, stabbed, dismembered and left in the bushes 152 years ago near the present-day intersection of Arrow Highway & South Walnut Avenue in San Dimas.

The Fandango's goal—solve that crime.

Suspects

Prime suspects included 1) Merced Rains, widow, 2) Robert Carlisle, brother-in-law, 3) Cave Couts, fired Indian agent, 4) Cuervo Reyes, rancho employee, 5) Manuel Cerradel, alleged hit man, 6) Tomas Bustamante, bandit, and 7) Ramon Carillo, fired ranch employee.

Each of eight tables of picnickers at the Fandango sent a representative to argue their case before Judge Turner and the assembled crowd.

After appropriate consideration, Judge Turner ruled that Table 5, represented by Phil Brigandi had the best briefs (a non-sartorial reference). Judge Turner presented this outstanding legal team with a "pretty good bottle of wine" for their achievement.

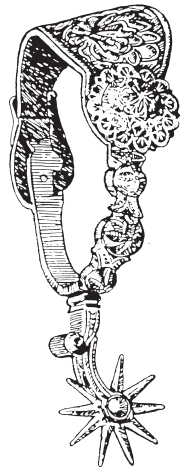
Behind the Scenes

Contributing to this memorable event were:

- Rains House docent Pam Strunk who conducted tours
- Deputy Sheriff Pete Fries who ran the registration desk, logging in 61 attendees
- Factotum Extraordinaire Paul Rippens who provided cowboy music for the day
- History Professor Bill "Lickskillet" King who summarized the sordid events of the John Rains murder.
- Cowboy Tim Heflin who trucked all the way in from Kennedy Meadows to run the bar and regale patrons with friendly conversation
- "The Hangin' Judge" Gary Turner's whose well-tied nooses contributed to good behavior by attendees and whose ruling resolved the case
- Auctioneer Eric Nelson whose "prix fixe" book sale and art auction raised enough money to keep the event in the black, despite the lower ticket prices
- Sheriff Larry Boerio who ran from pillar to post pushing buttons on a high-tech camera

Thank you to all the Westerners who participated and enjoyed an afternoon of fun, fellowship, and history . . . and who helped decide who murdered John Rains. Finally.

Case closed.



Corral Chips

Michele Zack

CURRENTLY WORKING ON: An update of her ethnography of a Southeast Asian hill tribe, the Lisu, that was originally written in the late 1990s. University Press of Colorado will publish the updated version. She will be going very far west - to Thailand, China, and Burma - to do research during the summer of 2014. Expected publication date late 2015.

NEEDS INFORMATION ON/FOR: If anyone has photographic material of the Lisu, especially living in Burma, China, or Laos, please contact Michele.

RECENT PRESENTATIONS: In April, 2014, she presented a paper at the Society of Architectural Historians annual meeting in Austin, Texas. The panel she was on was "Westward Exhalations" and the paper was about the not fully-accounted for legacy of health seekers, particularly educated, middle and upper income ones, who came west and how important they were in forming cultural identity in Southern California. The focus was on civic responses to illness, and compared Altadena and Sierra Madre's very different approaches to sick people and their achievements in the community.

RECENT AWARDS: Michele was named Altadena Citizen of the Year for 2013.

Glenna Dunning

CURRENTLY WORKING ON: A presentation to the Santa Barbara Westerners (in January 2015), entitled "Where in the World is Santa Barbara?" Based on my own antique map collection, shows advancement in discovery and cartography of North America, and identification of Santa Barbara on maps. Begins with my earliest map, 1560, through 1800s.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS: "Los Angeles' China City." (BI 274). Submitted another article for BI on California's steamboats (1847-1940).

Steve Lech

NEEDS INFORMATION ON/FOR: Would like to get any information on **George Law**, the former writer for the Los Angeles Times, Touring Topics, Westways, etc. Is there a collection of his articles? Do his papers reside anywhere? Any leads would be greatly appreciated: rivcokid@gmail.com.