

# THE INSTITUTE FOR HISTORICAL STUDY

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# NEWSLETTER

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## **Recommending a Book to Institute Members by Ellen Huppert**

Danielle Allen's 2015 book, *Our Declaration: A Reading of the Declaration of Independence in Defense of Equality*, is particularly relevant in this contentious presidential election year. While the author could not have foreseen the situation facing us today, in reading the book I found myself repeatedly reflecting on the contrast between the circumstances around the writing of the Declaration and conditions now.

Allen, now at Harvard University, has had a distinguished career as political theorist, writing about democracy in ancient Athens as well as about current issues. (She is a contributing columnist to the Washington Post.) This particular book arose from her experience teaching the Declaration to two very different student groups: one, undergraduates at the University of Chicago, and the second, adult students in evening classes in Chicago. Allen "realized for the first time in my own life that the Declaration makes a coherent philosophical argument. In particular, it makes an argument about political equality." Her book develops that point cogently and, to me, convincingly.

She promises the reader, as she did her students, that no additional information is needed to follow her close reading. She does supply a detailed account of the writing of the document as well as background on how the members of the Continental Congress came to the point of declaring independence of the British crown. Yet the book is not burdened by too much explanatory material, making it a delight to read.

In detailing how the Declaration came to be written, Allen makes it clear that while Thomas Jefferson was responsible for the preliminary draft, many other hands and minds played key roles in its development. Among others, John Adams of Massachusetts and Richard Henry Lee of Virginia had written arguments that were mirrored in Jefferson's draft. And others played a role in editing that draft. For example, members of the Continental Congress were responsible for references to God, which Jefferson had avoided. Allen argues that the text works equally well if one has a belief in God or not.

Perhaps the most important element in Allen's discussion is her dealing with the issue of what was meant by "all men are created equal." That phrase comes up most frequently in discussions of the Declaration, confronting the obvious inequalities of democratic practice when political participation was limited to property-holding white males while women, black slaves, and indigenous Indians were excluded. Allen admits that Jefferson as a slave-holder contradicts himself in supporting equality while actively dominating his own slaves.

"What are we to make of the fact that the signers, who formally declared a commitment to equality, also protected slavery and ruthlessly sought to deracinate, if not exterminate, Native Americans? If we apply the lessons of the Declaration to the signers themselves, don't we have to say that the words of the Declaration don't actually mean what they appear to mean? That the signers didn't mean equality for everyone, since they didn't practice it?"

In replying to her own question, Allen cites the founders of the Confederate States of America in 1860 who, unlike the signers of the original Declaration, "explicitly founded their nation on the principle that white and black people were not equal. Their actions—fighting to keep slavery alive—matched their words." Alexander Stephens, vice-president of the Confederacy, confirmed that the Declaration did mean that equality pertained to everyone, but the new nation would correct the error, fighting to support "the

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### **California and the West Group Tours El Presidio**

Seventeen of us followed **Peter Meyerhof** around the San Francisco Presidio Parade Grounds on the last Saturday of July. We spent from ten in the morning until two-thirty learning about the spectacular site from the time it was the location of Ohlone settlements and through its 219 years of military use, first by the Spanish, then the Mexicans, and finally the Americans.

Peter started us at the central flagpole (the tallest in San Francisco) at the southern end of the parade grounds, where a small group of Spanish soldiers had established a rudimentary fort (*presidio*) in 1776 to service Mission Dolores, founded the same year, three miles away. Since it was difficult to dry adobe bricks in the foggy summers, and since the original Presidio walls were required by royal decree to be three feet (one *vara*, 33-1/3 inches) thick, they used brush and trees for one of the walls. About 10 bronze cannons were soon purchased to be placed at a battery, Castillo de San Joaquin, where Fort Point is today. In 1815 the original Presidio was considerably enlarged.

In the mid-1830s General Vallejo took most of the soldiers and some of the cannons to Sonoma, which became the new most northern military base of Mexico. In June 1846 American settlers took control of both Sonoma and the Presidio with no resistance. The American Navy raised the American flag a few days later on the ninth, just in time for an English ship to spot it and decide it wasn't worth a fight. The Presidio was soon enlarged once more and a number of new buildings went up. In 1853 construction began on the coastal defenses at Fort Point. The Presidio was never put to the test during the Civil War.

In 1906 the Presidio became a temporary refuge for thousands of San Francisco earthquake

victims. In 1915 the post Commander, General Pershing, went to Texas as part of a campaign to capture Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa. While he was gone, his house burnt down, killing his wife and three daughters. A son survived. The flagpole was established as a memorial on the spot where the house once stood.

Soon after World War I, Crissy Field was established on the Presidio, becoming the first airfield on a military post in the West. During World War II, the Presidio became the center of operations for the Western Defense Command overseeing the defense of the entire Pacific Coast. The 1942 Executive Order 9066 ordering the internment of Japanese Americans was administered from the Presidio.

After the War, the property was considered for the United Nations Headquarters, but pressure was brought to bear by New York developers, who considered the UN as a positive enhancement and wanted it in New York City. For the next 50 years, the Sixth US Army was headquartered at the Presidio, serving during the Korean, Vietnam, and First Gulf wars. In 1994 the property was handed over to the National Park Service. The Presidio Trust, created by Congress in 1996, has made this new urban park financially self-sufficient by renting out buildings and other facilities while preserving its unique heritage in what has been designated a National Historic Landmark District.

Juliana Fernandez, representing the Trust's Archeology Lab, took us into the small dig area, where we stood in Pershing Square, opposite the Officers Club, and explained what we were seeing. We saw the differences in the various layers of walls, how they were built, and an area that once was the trash pit during the Mexican era, which can be expected to yield information about everyday life. She mentioned that at that time the floors of structures were composed of dirt and she showed us where the Mexicans

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installed brick piers to support wooden floor joists. She explained processes such as ground penetrating radar, and how the area is covered during the rainy season.

We were guided to the archeology lab, which, according to Juliana is a luxury not accorded most digs, which typically have labs off site. Three volunteers were working, meticulously sorting lumps of soil, rocks, and a few bits of pottery. Items found, even tiny pieces, are individually labeled. We were shown the equipment for separating out soils and Juliana explained that digs were done “by level” to make sure it is clear where each item is found. A multitude of gophers, however, are skewing results by dragging “treasures,” such as potsherds, through their tunnels.

Before going to lunch, we saw a 1780 adobe chapel wall, preserved inside the Officers Club. Unfortunately there wasn’t enough time to explore the new Presidio Heritage Gallery. Following lunch, our next stop was the nearby headquarters of the Society of California Pioneers. Gallery manager John Hogan gave us an introduction to the Society and their collections. Their “Great Hall” has a changing exhibit of paintings and artifacts, such as maps, Civil War-era tools, and a doctor’s bag, which included instructions for amputating a leg. At the request of Maria Sakovich, the archivist had located a 500-year-old traveling Russian religious triptych for our examination. We left with a large book of historic photographs of California towns, a gift from the Society.\*

By 2:30, fully stuffed with food and information, we were intent on getting home before we collapsed in exhaustion!

–Jody (*Judith*) Offer

\* *Points of Interest: California Views 1860-1870 (The Lawrence & Houseworth Albums)*. See more about the excursion on page 8.

### Writers Group

**Elizabethan Explorers and the Northwest Passage.** On July 10th, the Writers Group discussed **Charles Sullivan’s** essay, “Making History: Reconstructing the Elizabethan Quest for the ‘Northwest Passage,’” an examination of the westward maritime search for a short-cut trading route from England to Asia.

England’s transatlantic exploration accelerated during the 16th century, according to Sullivan, largely because of an economic crisis. Textile manufacturers had over-produced cloth made of sheep’s wool and desperately needed a new marketplace for their product. English merchants presumed that Asian countries would be worthy trading partners. So they encouraged explorers like Francis Drake, Walter Raleigh, Thomas Cavendish, and others to sail the Atlantic, search for an ice-free ship passage through the American continent, then land on the doorstep of the Asian marketplace.

Elizabethan explorers knew that in 1492, Christopher Columbus had discovered a huge land mass obstructing passage to Asia. But they didn’t know the shape and size of this island or continent. Still, they wanted to believe that a navigable waterway transected the virgin territory called America. So Elizabethan map-makers, merchants, and mariners developed the idea of a “Northwest Passage,” that is, a trans-American, oceanic gateway to Asia. The word “Northwest,” Sullivan explains, “is in reference to England. From England, America is generally westward; North America is northwestward. Also, there was thought to be a Northeastern Passage, which went to or through Russia.”

The Elizabethan explorers were ambitious and relentless. During the years 1577-80, Francis Drake sailed down the South American coast, through the Strait of Magellan and up the west coast as far north as California or beyond. He was the first Englishman to explore the Pacific

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Ocean. Thomas Cavendish duplicated Drake's circumnavigation of the globe (1586-88) and on a subsequent voyage died at sea. One of these two explorers might have created the "Point of Position," a large, mysterious diagram recently found on a mountainside in Oregon. The diagram includes mounds of small rocks and incisions in larger rocks, some entangled in tree roots and scattered across several acres. These markings are thought to be consistent with 16th-century English surveying techniques.

More than two thousand miles to the east, in Newport, Rhode Island, a rough stone tower of indeterminate age bewilders historians as much as the diagram in Oregon. Its windows seem randomly placed, but actually align for astronomical observations. Latitude-longitude coordinates, similar coastal locations, and significant activity in the 1580s imply a connection between the two mysterious artifacts. If Elizabethans did in fact know about them, possibly the goal was to calculate how long the Northwest Passage might be (when found) or to estimate the width of North America for purposes of future colonization by England.

Although Elizabethan explorers braved treacherous waters and unfamiliar, often dangerous territory, Sullivan explains, "they were not simply curious. They wanted to go where the money was. Many of them and their financial investors were obsessed with the idea of finding gold, whether in Spanish treasure galleons or goldmines, if not through trade."

Because Sullivan wants his essay to also be an oral presentation, writing group members suggested he audio record a rehearsal, then listen for proper pacing and enunciation. To help with timing, members said he should assume that one page of double-spaced text equals two minutes of speech. And lastly, members suggested he research the Elizabethan explorers from the standpoint of any available

information about the Native Americans who encountered them.

– *Elizabeth Nakahara*

On September 11, the Writers Group met to consider **Carol Sicherman's** article about a collection of postcards sent to Matylda Schiff Sicherman by her husband, Jacob Isak Sicherman, and other relatives in the years just before, during, and after World War I. The Sichermans were Carol's mother- and father-in-law, Galician Jews buffeted by the turbulent events of that time. Their brief, intimate notes open a window on a vanished world.

Carol had originally planned her essay as an introduction to a book she hoped to produce that would publish the postcards. But advised by a leading expert on the history of Galician Jewry, she reconsidered. She now plans to deposit the postcards in an appropriate archive and to publish the introduction as a stand-alone article in a scholarly journal. The article details Jacob and Matylda's marriage, their life together, and Jacob's experiences in the war. It discusses the cards themselves and the milieu in which they were produced.

The group found Carol's article to be very solid, providing significant insights into the world of the Hasidic Jews of Galicia, a land that at the time was a province of the Austrian half of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Between the World Wars it belonged to Poland, but now lies mostly in Ukraine. Suggestions were relatively minor. The group felt that Carol might give a bit more attention to the multiethnic character of the Habsburg Monarchy and discuss more fully the languages employed by the polyglot writers and reasons why they used them. The group felt that readers of the article might benefit from knowing more about the remarkable rapidity with which the cards were sent and received—they were the text messages of their day.

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The group decided not to meet in October, but Rob Robbins will e-mail the brief coda to his biography of Vladimir Dzhunkovskii for members' comments. We will convene again on November 13 to consider a chapter of Cathy Robbins' book on Calabria.

—*Rob Robbins*

### Play Readers Group

This summer we read Ernest Hemingway's only full-length play, *The Fifth Column*. The play was written by Hemingway in 1937 while he was covering the Spanish Civil War in Madrid for the North American Newspaper Alliance. A heavily revised version of the play was produced on Broadway early in 1940. Hemingway is reputed never to have seen it.

The Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939, a revolt against the democratically-elected government of the Spanish Republic, was an incredibly bloody conflict. The Nationalists, who opposed the Republican government, were predominantly Roman Catholics, members of the military and the upper classes. The Republicans included urban and rural workers as well as the educated middle class. Nationalists received aid from Nazi Germany and fascist Italy. Republican aid came primarily from the Soviet Union as well as from international volunteers from Europe and the United States. General Franco rose to prominence as leader of the Nationalists, who were victorious in 1939. The Republican government, along with many soldiers and civilians, fled to France. The horror of the war inspired many fine works of art and literature, notably those by George Orwell and Pablo Picasso.

The play is set in the Hotel Florida in Madrid, where Hemingway and other journalists had been living. The protagonist, Philip Rawlings, a tough fellow, a stand-in for the author, is portrayed as a dashing war correspondent who is also a spy for the far-left Republican forces. The

adventures described by Hemingway and attributed to Rawlings are inventions, but based on actual experiences and painfully realistic. We learn that the methods of the Republicans were as brutal as those of the Nationalists, including killings and torture. Martha Gellhorn, Hemingway's mistress, later his third wife, is portrayed in the play as Dorothy Bridges, a glamorous Vassar girl who becomes a journalist. She too is a resident in the same crowded Hotel Florida, as well as a patron at Chicote's bar.

The influence of the Spanish Civil War in the lead-up to World War II is not widely known today. A new book by Adam Hochschild, *Spain in our Hearts*, examines the experience of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and other American volunteers who fought on the side of the Republic in Spain. They were, by and large, older, often Communists; close to half were Jewish. They were not honored at home except by left-wing sympathizers.

We had some impassioned discussions after we completed the reading. We knew that Hemingway, although eventually sympathetic to the Republican cause, was never involved in any of the actions of the fictitious journalist Philip Rawlings, and that Martha Gellhorn, unlike the character Dorothy Bridges, had been a reporter on the front lines. Several of us remembered hearing, as children, of the war and its aftermath. Others recalled learning in history classes of the failure of the democracies to support the Spanish Republicans in the years prior to WW II. We all knew that Franco remained in power in Spain long after the demise of his supporters, Hitler and Mussolini.

The group moved on to a play about another early 20th century conflict, the 1916 Easter Rising in Ireland, which is the subject of Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars*. (The title is taken from the nationalist flag flown during and in the lead-up to the Rising, with the Big Dipper as a symbol that a free Ireland would

control its own destiny from the plough to the stars.) The author, originally named John Casey, was born into a lower middle class Irish Protestant family and lived his early life in great poverty. He became caught up in the cause of Irish nationalism, joining the Irish Citizen Army, a paramilitary arm of the Irish labor unions. He subsequently became disillusioned with the Irish Nationalist movement because its leaders put nationalist ideas before socialist ones. He admired the spirit of his fellow slum dwellers but regretted their not giving a socialist direction to the Irish cause.

O'Casey set the play in an area of tenements in Dublin. The first two acts, which take place in late 1915, introduce us to the residents of one of the slum dwellings. They serve as mouthpieces for different ideologies, including socialism, nationalism, and in one case, loyalty to Britain. The last two acts are set during the week of the Easter Rising in April 1916, brutally suppressed by the British, who deployed 16,000 troops and heavy artillery. Because combat took place in the densely-populated inner city, over half of the 450 deaths were civilian. The combat, however, remains in the background of O'Casey's play. We hear gunfire and explosions, but what we witness onstage are the occupants of the tenement, their squabbles, their growing anxiety, and their sacrifices.

*The Plough and the Stars* debuted at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin early in 1926. The play had a poor initial reception. Although the Rising did not have the support of the general population while it was happening, it was soon widely regarded as a noble cause, chiefly because fifteen of its leaders were summarily executed. The fact that O'Casey was not glorifying the Rising was not appreciated by the audience. Rioting ensued in the theatre and the run had to be canceled. In our discussion we commented on the larger significance of the Rising, which despite its failure remains a powerful emblem of Irish nationalism, and also on the later history of

the O'Casey play, which is now one of the most popular and frequently performed Irish dramas.

– *Edith Piness and Joanne Lafler*

**Welcome to new members Marilyn Geary and Phyllis Peet.** Marilyn is an oral historian and writer interested in immigration and regional California history. Through Circle of Life Stories, she helps individuals, families, and organizations preserve their past. She is the author of *Marin City Memories*, which is based on the oral histories of African Americans who migrated to the Bay Area during World War II to work in the shipyards. She is currently writing a biography of three Swiss-Italian brothers who migrated to California and Australia during the mid-1800s. We will meet Phyllis in the next newsletter.

**Dot Brovarney** is publishing a book this fall called *The Sweet Life: Cherry Stories from Butler Ranch*. Besides editing the collection of stories and photographs, she has provided historical context to the book about a cherry ranch in the hills west of Ukiah. At the center of *The Sweet Life* stand longtime owners George and Ella Butler, who through their u-pick orchard and a generosity of spirit created a unique sense of community in Mendocino County for over sixty years.

**Charles Sullivan** reports that the minigrant from the Institute enabled him to present his paper, "From Sea to Shining Sea: Measuring North America in the 16th Century," at the annual meeting of the Society for the History of Discoveries, held in Newport, Rhode Island on September 23. He writes: "Thanks to the Writers Group, I found ways to trim it down to a 20-minute presentation (plus questions and discussion); and thanks to Liz Thacker-Estrada and her staff at the Merced branch of the San Francisco Public Library, I included some relevant maps and other illustrations by means of PowerPoint. Of the two artifacts I talked

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about, one (old stone tower) happens to be situated just a couple of blocks away from the hotel where the meeting was held, but the other (remains of large survey on a mountainside in Oregon) is in a remote coastal location which I have not yet visited. It was suggested that I do so, and get more information from local sources to improve my paper for possible publication. Thanks also to Elizabeth Nakahara for summarizing my paper (the version that I brought to our Writers Group for comments and suggestions earlier this year) in this issue of the newsletter.

**Monika Trobits** notes that she will be teaching a course for San Francisco State University's OLLI (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute) program beginning in late October. "San Francisco Journeys" will be a combination of in-class lectures and walking tours exploring Union Square, the Great White Way of Market Street, a portion of Lake Merced, and the San Francisco of the 1850s and 1860s. These journeys will begin at 10 a.m. on most Thursdays from October 27 through December 8. For more information and to register: [www.ollisfsu.edu](http://www.ollisfsu.edu) or 415-817-4243.

Monika will also be leading a variety of other walking tours in San Francisco which are open to the public as well as to members of the sponsoring organizations: On Saturday afternoon, October 29, a three-hour walking tour of San Francisco's Presidio/Crissy Field/Fort Point for members of San Francisco State University's Alumni Association. Tour begins at 1 p.m. in front of the Officers' Club. During the first part of November: "Circling the Square" (Union Square), walking/hiking the "Bridge to the Beach" (Golden Gate Bridge to Ocean Beach), and walking/riding "San Francisco's Mid-City" for the Mechanics' Institute Library in connection with a conference that MIL is hosting for librarians from private libraries across the US. See <http://alumni.sfsu.edu/events> and [www.milibrary.org/events](http://www.milibrary.org/events) for details.

Recently **Thomas Snyder** described his book project: "a history of the navy's first hospital on the west coast, at Mare Island. I've done more than ten years' worth of research at the National Archives in DC and San Bruno. The spine of the narrative is the correspondence between hospital commanders and the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery ("BuMed"). I've transcribed over half a million words; only lately did I 'discover' photographing documents, but these, of course lack the ready searchability of text. The story runs from 1856 to 1957, when the hospital closed."

**Steve Levi** announced the availability of his recent Kindle book *The Hughes Codicil* on Amazon in the mystery and thriller category. He describes it as a "saga of five elderly people who need money for retirement and medical expenses. They use their combined 350 years of experience in banking and real estate to seize control of more than 120 lots in a six-block area in Las Vegas using money that does not exist." This work of fiction is based on Steve's research into matching up mortgage deeds with mortgage reconveyance documents and linking them to possible corruption. (More about this kind of investigation possibly in the next newsletter.)

**More about *El Presidio* from Rose Marie Cleese, Cornelia Levine, and Monika Trobits** "I grew up just a few blocks from the Presidio and I thought I knew it pretty well. I had no idea how much more I would learn about it last Saturday! Kudos to Peter. . . I actually might have found a photo in *Points of Interest* that has a partial view of my great-grandfather's store in Volcano taken in the 1860s!" — "The commentary by the spokesperson at the archaeological dig was smart and informative, as was the presentation at the lab which processes the finds, which range from man-made objects to seeds found at the digging site. It was great to watch the dedication of volunteers and

– *continued on page 11*

# INTO THE GOLD COUNTRY

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## Of Families, History, and Geology

Each summer or fall members of the California and the West Study Group gather to plan outings for the coming year. In 2015 they suggested that **Rose Marie Cleese** arrange an outing to Volcano and environs in the gold country. Her great-grandfather arrived there from Liguria in Italy in 1850 at the age of sixteen. His marriage in 1866 to another Ligurian produced seven children, including Angelo (1878), who later became San Francisco's mayor (1931-1944). Over the weekend of 23-26 September, several Institute members and guests of Rose Marie gathered to learn about families (mostly Italian), history, and geology in California's "Mother Lode." I attended (along with an Italian American friend) only Saturday's events.

I should have realized by the numerous e-mails from Rose Marie that the day and a half in Volcano, Sutter Creek, and Jackson in Amador County would be a superb excursion into the past. Not only did participants receive logistical details, but also a schedule of events, biographical sketches of local guides, and suggestions for preparatory reading and viewing. As we were to find out, history is practiced in the smallest of communities by dedicated and prolific *amateur* (in the old sense of that word—"lover, devoted friend, devotee, enthusiastic pursuer of an objective") historians. Through their research, writing, broadcasting, gathering of objects from the past, these individuals are making sure that later generations will appreciate the lives of their ancestors and tourists will come to understand who populated these once thriving towns.

Saturday's guides to Sutter Creek's mining history, to some of the earliest Italians buried in Jackson's Catholic cemetery, and to the once-booming-now-hamlet of Volcano are active historians. Ed Arata, whom we met over breakfast, "claims Italian ancestors who arrived

in Amador County in the 1850s. Generations later, and with much travel under his belt, Ed remains deeply rooted in Sutter Creek. Besides being a board member of the Amador County Historical Society, the Kennedy Mine Foundation, and the Amador Sawmill and Mining Association, Ed began the Sutter Creek Volunteer Fire Department's history program in 1995, which continues today."

Carolyn Fregulia is the author of *Italians of the Gold Country* and *Logging in the Central Sierra* (both Arcadia Publishing, 2007 and 2008) and "Amador County's 'go-to' person for anyone researching the area's early Italian arrivals. She is also executive director of Amador County Recreation Agency and is descended from Italian immigrant pioneers who arrived in Amador County in 1852. In fact, she owns and runs a large cattle ranch outside of Jackson that was started by those very ancestors. She also invited a childhood acquaintance of Rose Marie's from San Francisco, Carolyn Molfino Tanner, to talk about her great-grandmother, the colorful Marguerite Oneto Molfino. Like Fregulia, Carolyn Tanner still owns the land that her great-grandparents acquired over a century and a half ago.

We should all be so lucky to be conducting tours at age 85! Cedric Clute "is a recent arrival in Amador County, compared to Ed and Carolyn, having moved to Volcano from the Bay Area with his wife, Jan, in 1980, but he is no less an enthusiastic and knowledgeable history buff of all things Amador. For the past 35 years he has hosted a local radio program, 'Tales of the Mother Lode,' and recorded many oral histories; for ten years was the curator of the Amador County Museum. Born and raised in Marin County, Cedric was part of Earthquake McGoon's 'ensemble' in San Francisco for 20-plus years."

These knowledgeable guides described days long gone and communities transformed. One of



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my “ah-ha” moments occurred when Ed Arata talked about “mills and head frames” dominating the landscape in Sutter Creek. He confirmed my suspicions that noise also dominated the landscape, “their stamps pounding 24 hours a day.” Another moment was sitting in Volcano’s Masonic Lodge, illuminated only by kerosene light, as were all dark indoors at one time. Not only was the lighting dim compared to today but kerosene smells! In St. Patrick’s cemetery, the stark reality of the hazards of mining was evoked by the large, simple, low grave, outlined with flat stones and covered with rocks. Here lie many of the 47 miners who lost their lives in the county’s worst mining disaster in 1922. (The bodies of the Serbian miners are buried in the nearby St. Sava Orthodox Cemetery.) We had to use our imaginations when we accompanied Rose Marie to the actual spot of the Rossi family general store and home. It might still have been standing if it weren’t for a fire in 1890 that destroyed the structure in minutes. But with the aid of the large photograph Rose Marie carried, we could match the apple tree on the land with the tree in the picture.

I can’t claim a very deep interest in the history of mining, especially the technical aspects, and I nearly didn’t go to the newly created Miners’ Bend Park at one end of Sutter Creek’s Main Street. I had, though, found Ed Arata’s description of its creation by volunteers and support from the Sutter Creek Community Benefit Foundation inspiring—another example of historic preservation at the grass roots level. And his recounting of the acquisition of three “heroic size” sculptures of miners by American sculptor Louis DeMartino wonderfully serendipitous. When one local Amador County resident discovered the sculptures, discarded by Pacific Telephone from its company head-quarters in San Francisco and destined for a “scrap heap,” he told his real estate agent neighbor about his find. Eventually the latter managed to rescue the

three miners, sculpted in bronze, and temporarily housed them (for six years). When Miners’ Bend came along, they were the perfect addition to the collection of artifacts. Eventually they were placed along a faux stream, which actually taps into a flow from an underground spring that passes under Old Highway 49. The sculptures are indeed wonderful!

At this point in my narrative Rose Marie adds: “All those who attended the Amador County Museum tour on Friday raved about the talk given by the colorfully garbed and bearded Gary at the museum’s outdoor shed that houses small-scale working models of the hard rock mining structures that dotted Amador County’s hillsides. Beginning in the 1860s when placer mining petered out, deep quartz, or ‘hard rock,’ industrialized and commercial mining operations took over until the early 1940s. Besides cranking up the models, Gary gave one of the most illuminating and crystal-clear accounts of the whole process of the big mining operations that one is likely to get in the space of less than a hour.”

Cemeteries are fitting places to talk about the folk buried there. One often feels a connection to them and cherishes the act of remembering. Both Carolyn Fregulia and Carolyn Mulfino Tanner spoke primarily about the Italians in the history of the area, including one Angelo Noce who “invented” Columbus Day, a celebration of another Ligurian, from Genova, who transformed history. Both, of course, noted some of the women pioneers and the hardships of immigration and the all too frequent status of widowhood. But they also talked about resilience and opportunities. Faced with a marriage she did not want, the young Biggia left her village, made it to Genoa, and boarded a ship bound for New York. She intended to join her sister, who had gone to California with her new husband. On arrival, not knowing English, she pinned a small label on her dress: “Maria Quirollo, Secreta, Amador County, California,”

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and managed to find passage on a wagon train. Reunited with her sister, Biggia eventually married a man of her own choosing, Giuseppe Cuneo. Both sisters lived into old age. Also unhappy with the man selected to be her husband (her brother had contracted with him to pay her passage to California), Marguerita Oneto refused to marry the “ugly man with poor teeth.” She worked for five years to pay back her fare—cooking, laundering, and gardening—before marrying Simone Molfino, with whom she had eight children. On becoming a widow, she not only continued farming, but also was in a position to lend money to her compatriots who wanted to buy land. According to her descendent Carolyn Molfino Tanner, she carried out this “banking” business armed with a pistol when necessary! Eventually she was able to purchase buildings in Jackson which she leased out.

While the two Carolyns’ cemetery talks described the lives of some of the strong immigrant Italian women, the after-dinner talks at the St. George Hotel featured the lives of two well-known men in Volcano, one a native son who went on to become mayor of San Francisco, and the other a visitor who raised a significant amount of money here during the civil war for the U.S. Sanitary Commission, predecessor to the Red Cross. Both presentations were made by descendants of Angelo Rossi and Thomas Starr King. More about the once-booming settlement of Volcano and its inhabitants and visitors in the winter newsletter.

– *Maria Sakovich*

Others (Margaret Accornero Baker, Cornelia Levine, and Kathy O’Connor) also commented on the spirit of preservation we encountered: “It was good to see how people/places in Amador County are working hard to preserve their history and thereby offer a step-back-in-time setting which is relaxing—this must take a lot of effort. Maybe the Genoese descendants still

have a bit of the “wild west’ touch.” — “The efforts of the people up there to resurrect and preserve their past and culture is truly admirable.” — “I was really impressed with the use of archival sources and their all-volunteer efforts to preserve their town and county history.”

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employees.” — “As I looked down into the open trench I was thinking that about 240 years ago, other eyes were looking at the very same adobe bricks and other hands were working there. Those people could not have imagined the Presidio of the 21st century and how its focus has changed.”

### **Membership Committee**

The newly formed Membership Committee is looking to devise strategies to increase and maintain membership. If you are interested in helping us brainstorm, please contact Taryn Edwards: tedwards950@gmail.com.

### **San Francisco History Days**

San Francisco History Days, the hugely popular two-day history extravaganza at the Old Mint in San Francisco is happening again, and it is important that the Institute for Historical Study take part. If you are interested in helping to head a table to promote the Institute’s aims, programs, and membership benefits, please mark March 4 & 5, 2017 on your calendar and contact Taryn Edwards: tedwards950@gmail.com. (See also: <http://sfhistorydays.org/>) More information will follow shortly.

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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Summer's days are behind us. I hope they were sufficiently lazy. We now begin the fall escalation, accelerating toward the hectic orange and black of Halloween, the excitement of November's elections, and the joyous celebrations that mark the passing of yet another year. I wish you the best in all seasons.

As the September 15th deadline for minigrant applications approached, I became alarmed that I had received none. I hailed Ann Harlow to rattle your collective cages and extended the deadline until the end of the month. Eventually we got some. What does this mean? Are we all so prosperous that the prospect of \$500+ bucks doesn't tempt us? I hope that's the case, but I worry: Are we losing our research edge? One of the primary functions of our Institute was to encourage and support historical inquiry. The minigrants were a means to that end. I trust that our scholarly sap has not dried up and that this year's slowness in grant applications is a temporary aberration, not a harbinger of problems to come.

Which brings me to another pitch I'd like to make: the Writers Group. I've been a member since I joined the Institute almost a decade ago, and I can't tell you how much I have benefitted from the experience. The thoughtful comments, corrections, and suggestions that my fellow members made greatly improved the book I have been writing, and I learned much from reading and discussing their work. In my close-to-forty-years as a university professor, I never got, or gave, such valuable advice. (Perhaps we were just too busy or, more likely, held back, secretly awaiting our Clive James moment: "The work of my colleague had been panned in the AHR [American Historical Review], and I am glad.")

Unfortunately, the ranks of the Writers Group are thinning, and almost none of our new members, many of whom are working on books and articles, have come on board. I strongly urge all Institute members who are in the process of writing or even planning to set pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) to consider joining. You may not have something that is ready to be discussed by the group, but your participation in its meetings will help others and, I guarantee, will get your own thought processes moving.

– *Rob Robbins*

## NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Maria Sakovich

## COPY EDITOR

Ann Harlow

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great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery is his natural and moral condition. This, our new government, is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great....truth.”

In Allen’s view, freedom and equality are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, “only on the basis of equality can freedom be securely achieved.” From the first sentence: “...all men are created equal” to its concluding sentence in which the signers “...mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor” the Declaration rests freedom on equality. I encourage members of the Institute to read Allen’s book and to read the Declaration with her in order to recognize the value of this founding document.

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