

BOOK REVIEWS

Constructing Lives at Mission San Francisco: Native Californians and Hispanic Colonists, 1776-1821. By Quincy D. Newell. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009. Bibliography, illustrations, index, and notes. x + 267 pp. \$39.95 cloth. \$30.00 paper.

Reviewed by Robert M. Senkewicz, Professor, Department of History, Santa Clara University.

Over the past few decades, those studying California before the American conquest have written accounts that foreground the actions and experiences of California's native peoples. Scholars from a variety of disciplines, employing a diverse array of conventional and unconventional sources, have greatly expanded our understanding of the fashion in which the overwhelming majority of people who lived there reacted to the incursion of European colonists, beginning with the founding of San Diego in 1769. Quincy D. Newell's study of the Native Californians who lived in and around the site of Mission San Francisco de Asís is an important and compelling addition to this literature.

Newell uses the copious sacramental registers compiled by generations of Franciscan missionaries as her primary source. Focusing on the notes and comments with which the missionaries annotated the records of the ecclesiastical rituals they regularly administered, she constructs a vivid picture of the ways native peoples strove mightily and creatively to preserve their traditional identities and beliefs in the midst of profound social and cultural changes.

The volume is effectively organized into a series of thematic chapters. Newell studies the ways native peoples functioned within the mission community. Some San Francisco Indians appear to have fully embraced Catholicism, and others appear to have fully rejected it. Most, however, lived in a kind of middle ground. While adapting on the surface to new forms of religion, family structure, labor, and agriculture, they actually grafted these new experiences onto their traditional beliefs and folkways.

Newell demonstrates the persistence of native forms in food preparation, architecture, domestic spatial arrangements, and many other aspects of California life. The fact that so many births and deaths took place away from the mission, for instance, indicates that even baptized Catholic Indians sought out their traditional rituals for these important occasions. Indians appear to have used the spaces available to them. For instance, neophytes sometimes chose godparents for those being baptized to re-create the traditional extended and lineal relationships that

were under siege by the missionaries' insistence upon the sanctity of the nuclear family. Native peoples were quite aware that the entire Spanish colonial enterprise needed their labor. Some, who either refused to enter the mission or who left it, were able to carve out roles for themselves as relatively independent laborers at the nearby presidio or at the pueblo of San José.

Hovering over all of this was the appalling demographic catastrophe that the children born at Mission San Francisco experienced. Newell demonstrates that the mean life expectancy for these native San Franciscans averaged 4.2 years during the entire existence of the mission. Indeed, from 1793 until 1821, "it never exceeded 2.0 years" (p. 167). This brutal fact makes the determination of the people at the mission to preserve their own heritage at once heroic and tragic. What must it have been like for the four wives of Uichase (1774-1831), who collectively bore ten children, none of whom reached the age of three? In recovering this story, and many more like it, Newell has performed a signal service. This book deserves to be in the library of anyone interested in the colonial history of California and the Southwest.

New England to Gold Rush California: The Journal of Alfred and Chastina W. Rix, 1849-1854. Edited with commentary by Lynn A. Bonfield. Norman, Oklahoma: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2011. Illustrations, photographs, index, and notes. 400 pp. \$45.00 cloth.

Reviewed by Dave Bush, Adjunct History Instructor, Shasta College.

"We, that is to say, Alfred Rix & Chastina Walbridge, are married – Therefore, according to custom & law the said Alfred Rix will retain his name and gain a wife, while the said Chastina Walbridge will lose hers [sic] and gain a husband – time and trial will determine whether one or both have got 'shaved' in the exchange" (p. 27). Thus begins a sometimes-humorous daily journal that offers a glimpse into a wide range of topics: the loving relationship of newlyweds, small-town New England life, the couple's views on major political issues, their separate decisions to travel to California, Chastina's journey west by way of Panama, burgeoning San Francisco, and gender roles among the mid-nineteenth century white middle class.

In 1972, Lynn Bonfield discovered the journal in the California Historical Society collection. Over the years, Bonfield researched the people and events mentioned in the journal and collected family letters and pictures, adding depth to the journal

entries. To make the journal easily comprehensible, Bonfield identifies each entry's author, divides the journal into chapters, adds detailed chapter introductions, and includes an epilogue based largely on family letters and histories. Bonfield has done a fantastic job creating an informative and enjoyable book from a mix of dry factual entries, personal reflections, and thoughtful observations. To make the journal easily comprehensible, Bonfield identifies each entry's author, divides the journal into chapters, adds detailed chapter introductions and explanatory footnotes, and includes an epilogue based largely on family letters and histories.

Alfred and Chastina met in Peacham, Vermont, when Alfred arrived in town to begin college preparatory classes at Peacham Academy in 1841. Alfred attended the University of Vermont, then returned to Peacham and became the Academy's principal (with significant teaching duties) prior to their marriage.

In Vermont, they recorded everything from the establishment of their first and second homes, visits with friends and neighbors, Sunday sermons (or their decision to sleep in), the birth of their first child, and the weather to a libel suit against a local merchant and troubles with a landlord. Alfred's entries often describe events outside the home: managing the school and teaching, fishing trips, becoming a lawyer, resigning as principal, his work establishing a local cooperative store, and involvement in local politics. Yet he does not exclude domestic life: Alfred regularly comments on Chastina's monthly period as a visit from the "old lady" while he considers the best time to have children (p. 72).

Soon after marrying, Chastina began teaching at the Academy, but as wife of the principal she was not paid. In her entries, she comments on her teaching experiences, her poor health, concern about Alfred's long work schedule, and local births and deaths. She regularly mentions her long days of housework as in this November 1850 entry, "Alfred read newspapers, & for my own self, did a large ironing & attended to other domestic business" (p. 170).

The pair also writes about larger issues of the day. They attend several temperance meetings, and issues around slavery are repeatedly referenced: the Wilmot Proviso, the Compromise of 1850, rumblings of secession, the Fugitive Slave Act, and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. After finishing Stowe's novel, Chastina writes, "It makes my heart bleed to think of the horrors attendant upon the abominable system of Slavery" (p. 274).

California plays a major role in the journal. At first there are sporadic mentions of friends and family heading to the gold fields, and then letters begin trickling back to Peacham; by 1851, Alfred has resolved to head west. With Alfred away, Chastina writes longingly of missing her husband, the hardships of living alone and caring for a baby, and yearning for Alfred's return. When Alfred sends word that he has left the gold mines without success and is working in San Francisco, he

asks Chastina to move to California. Surprised by the request, Chastina confides in the journal her significant concerns about moving west, but after much thought and planning, she and her baby make their way to California.

In San Francisco they fill their journal with city life: reports of duels, attending a ball, the first telegraph line to San Jose, and talk of a transcontinental railroad. With the birth of their second child, Chastina's life is increasingly confined to the home and house work: "it is nearly six weeks since I have been in the street, and I dont [sic] get time to read the papers, so we are likely to have rather a dry Journal" (p. 336). For his part, Alfred returns to teaching and then the law, eventually being elected a local judge. Over time the entries become shorter; in 1854, the journaling ends except for a final entry in 1857.

Anyone interested in daily mid-nineteenth century America life would enjoy reading this diary. For faculty, assigning several pages of the journal would offer students the opportunity to analyze a primary source document while reading an engaging text. Whether studied in whole or in part, no one reading the journal will be "shaved in the exchange."

Justinian Caire and Santa Cruz Island: The Rise and Fall of a California Dynasty. By Frederic Caire Chiles. Norman, Oklahoma: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2011. Bibliography, illustrations, index, and notes. 240 pp. \$27.96 cloth.

Reviewed by Frank P. Barajas, Associate Professor, History Program, California State University Channel Islands.

Frederic Caire Chiles' intriguing book is a story of immigrant parents that pursued the American dream of reinvention and the establishment of a legacy for their progeny. But the realization of this fantasy was a mixed bag of rewards and familial rancor. Justinian Caire and his wife Albina envisioned Santa Cruz Island as a demesne that would bond the families of their sons and daughters into the future. Instead, it divided the Caire siblings against each other. Ultimately, the National Park Service, in cooperation with the Nature Conservancy, gained control of the island. Although this focus on family conflict may not have been Chiles' intended thesis, it is this framework that dominates the book's narrative.

Justinian Caire was born in 1827 to a family of privilege in the French city of Briancon. After excelling in a liberal education, Justinian left school at the age of eighteen to partner with a cousin "to learn the world of business" (p. 22). Thus the Caire family's immigrant origins were not of the huddled masses that entered

the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During the California Gold Rush era, Justinian took advantage of the social and commercial capital of his family to found the Justinian Caire Company that, like many merchants of the time, mined the wealth of independent miners and sold heavier equipment and supplies to companies that would quickly dominate this industry.

The success of his company allowed Justinian the opportunity to cement his family's legacy in the realization of the California Dream. He partnered with San Francisco investors that purchased the island from William Barron in 1869. The Santa Cruz Island Company then lost the island in a financial scheme that nearly bankrupted the Justinian Caire Company. But Justinian persevered through the crisis and in the process acquired all the stock of the Santa Cruz Island Company, making the landmass his. To him, the property was much more than acquired real estate; it was a seigniorial possession that would secure his family's future.

Instead of securing family unity, however, the island fragmented the Caire clan. Whereas Justinian and Albina Caire imagined their children gratefully benefiting from the dividends of the Santa Cruz Island Company, their sons-in-law sought to liquidate the stock bequeathed to the Caire daughters: Amelie who married Pietro Carlo Rossi and Algae who married Goffredo Capuccio. Hence, after Justinian's death in 1897 at the age of 70, a bitter legal battle commenced that outlasted most of the plaintiffs as the matriarch Albina and her sons Arthur and Frederic fought to maintain control of the island up to 1937. But a transformed economy in California, coupled with recurrent droughts and floods and mounting legal expenses, served as the coup de grâce of this "California Dynasty."

In detailing this family saga, Chiles judiciously examines the legal dispute from the perspectives of the plaintiffs and defendants. For example, he details the Caire view toward the island as property to be passed onto future generations for their enjoyment; on the other hand the sons-in-law, their wives, and their offspring desired the immediate monetary rewards from the division and sale of the island. Chiles's description of the legal maneuverings of both sides is one of the more engaging aspects of the book and demonstrates how property can be more a burden than a prize.

Where the book falls short is in fully contextualizing this family narrative in the larger landscape of California's history as the subtitle promises: it is not clear what made the Caire family a dynasty in the Golden State. The "dynastic" nature of the family could have been explored more fully if Chiles had elaborated upon the Justinian Caire Company's economic importance in San Francisco during and after the Gold Rush. In relation to Santa Cruz Island, the author also had the opportunity to analyze the decline and transformation of the Californios in the Santa Barbara region. Instead, Mexican *vaqueros* (cowboys) are largely depicted as

bit players who rounded up and sheered sheep. As a result, this limited depiction of ethnic Mexicans restricts the larger narrative to an intergenerational family dispute over Justinian's will.

Historians interested in the history of Southern California's Channel Islands, of which Santa Cruz is the largest, will be able to glean from this work potential research projects regarding the role of Mexican laborers, fishing, and the federal government's acquisition of this archipelago. And hopefully the author will donate his archive of Caire diaries, records, memoirs, and journals to a research library so that scholars can investigate the larger historical questions subsumed into the background of this curious family tale.

The Color of America Has Changed: How Racial Diversity Shaped Civil Rights Reform in California, 1941-1978. By Mark Brilliant. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Index and notes. v + 364. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Arnolde De León, Professor, Department of History, Angelo State University, Texas.

In this enlightening tome, Mark Brilliant expands upon traditional studies on civil rights by moving the setting out of the South and westward to California. Between the start of World War II and 1978 (when the Supreme Court ruled on the Bakke case), California became the epicenter of judicial struggles involving Japanese Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Chinese Americans. Decisions made on these several cases, Brilliant informs us, influenced civil rights efforts throughout the rest of the nation.

The author structures the work chronologically, with chapters sequentially focused on different racial groups. Most appropriately, it begins with Japanese Americans, the victims of interment and land dispossession during World War II. Some of the plaintiffs found justice in *Oyama v. California* (1948), a case which involved an Issei man who had purchased land in the name of his Nisei son, Fred. The American-born Fred Oyama questioned the constitutionality of the Alien Land Law (1913) which prohibited aliens ineligible for citizenship from acquiring land in California. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that as a U.S. citizen, Fred Oyama was entitled to recover his dispossessed property (although foreign-born Japanese could not). Mexican Americans faced obstacles acquiring an adequate education amid a segregated school system, but in the case of *Méndez v. Westminster* (1947), the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in California sided with the aggrieved,

concurring that Mexican ancestry determined segregation (and not language problems, as school officials maintained). African Americans attacked covenants that prohibited home sales to blacks, and in *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948), the U.S. Supreme Court declared that such real estate restrictions violated the Fourteenth Amendment (while not a California case, the Golden State nonetheless honored the decision and dismissed all active suits on said restrictions).

As demonstrated in the above cases, each group saw its difficulties with mainstream society differently and chose to tackle the problem (or problems) most troublesome to them. Consequently, assembling a multi-racial coalition committed to the cause of civil rights proved challenging. The Democrats, who advocated most strenuously for these groups, could not please them all, and in obliging some – by enacting fair housing laws to protect African Americans, for example – simultaneously alienated many in their ranks as well as those minorities who felt abandoned on other fronts. While the civil rights movement in California ultimately lost its post-World War II momentum with Ronald Reagan's election in 1966, new issues of a multi-racial character surfaced due to problems created by court-mandated busing, by appeals for bilingual education, and by calls for special linguistic programs for Chinese Americans. The Supreme Court recognized the character of this multi-racial phenomenon in the *Bakke* case, acknowledging that racism was not the simple binary of black and white.

This work advances several useful considerations. For one, it suggests historians should more closely study the civil rights activism of other marginalized people (besides African Americans), for they also took up their own struggles, as shown by the California example. Further, it recommends modifying the meaning of white oppression, for as Brilliant indicates, groups viewed racism according to their particular experiences: it might mean housing discrimination to African Americans, school segregation based on ancestry to Mexican Americans, and the infringement on cultural rights to Chinese Americans. Also, it encourages scholars to rescue from anonymity other historical actors who undertook feats similar to those launched by the activists, lawyers, politicians, and reformers that Brilliant identifies. Scholars would do well to heed the conclusions in *The Color of America Has Changed* and consider their application to other states, such as Texas.

DOCUMENTARY

Finding God in the City of Angels. Directed by Jennifer Jessum, written by Simon Joseph. Los Angeles: Flying Limbs Inc. Productions and the Institute for Signifying Scriptures, Claremont Graduate University, 2009. 116 min. \$25 DVD.

Reviewed by Joshua Paddison, ACLS New Faculty Fellow, Departments of Religious Studies and American Studies, Indiana University.

The documentary film *Finding God in the City of Angels* celebrates the unparalleled religious diversity of Los Angeles. After watching it, however, I wished the filmmakers had set their sights higher, had striven not merely to celebrate that diversity but to analyze, historicize, or contextualize it. Certainly director Jennifer Jessum and writer Simon Joseph had the tools to do so – the film was produced by the Institute for Signifying Scriptures at Claremont Graduate University, which promotes the scholarly study of the “practices, representations, ideologies, and power dynamics” of holy texts. In its description of *Finding God in the City of Angels*, the Institute describes the film as highlighting how “scriptural traditions are made both to shape and secure and to undermine identities, positions, agency, and power.” Yet there is very little of this kind of explicit analysis in the film itself, which is earnest and uplifting rather than critical or argumentative.

Structurally, the film is a mosaic, compiled of dozens of short segments each focused on a specific tradition, sect, or movement. In each segment, interviews with practitioners are edited together with footage of worship practices, architecture, and material culture. The film’s first hour focuses on major world religions as expressed in Los Angeles: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Bahá’í. The second hour shifts to “alternative communities and new religious movements,” although I doubt many of the groups included would consider themselves “alternative” or “new.” Mormons, Scientologists, Goddess worshippers, Gnostics, Hare Krishnas, and members of Mata Amritanandamayi Center, Agape International Spiritual Center, Love at Work: The Exchange, and Self-Realization Fellowship make appearances. Atheists at the Center for Inquiry also receive attention.

As you would expect from such a long list of traditions, the filmmakers are only able to dedicate a few minutes to each group, resulting in a film that is wide but not deep. Although it is beautifully shot, with lush and vibrant colors, its overly celebratory tone and lack of analysis makes it unfit for use in most religious studies or history college classes. I can imagine it being useful in California high schools, where it might give students a first, sympathetic glimpse at the multicultural religious diversity that surrounds them.

Ultimately the film's greatest strength is its interviews, and the filmmakers deserve credit for winning the trust of so many different people and for capturing multiple memorable moments. These range from the member of the Self-Realization Fellowship who confesses he is striving to be "spiritually badass" to the evangelical Protestant pastor who, likely sensing the universalist thrust of the film project in which he was participating, declares, "It's very important for people to understand, there's a great difference between any [other] religion and Christianity." His statement is a reminder that many (if not most) religious Los Angelenos do not believe that all spiritual paths lead to the same place or that similarities among religions overshadow the differences, contra the message of this film.

BOOK NOTES

Clark Kerr's University of California: Leadership, Diversity, and Planning in Higher Education. By Cristina González. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2011. Bibliography and index. xvi + 254 pp. \$49.95 cloth. In *Clark Kerr's University of California*, Cristina González traces the development of the university president's concept of the "multiversity." The book explores issues such as organizational strategies and diversity in higher education while offering solutions to some of the challenges currently confronting American universities.

From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism. By Darren Dochuk. New York: W. W. Norton, 2011. Illustrations, map, notes, bibliography, and index. xxiv + 520 pp. \$35.00 cloth. \$18.95 paper. Dochuk's monograph examines the impact of Depression-era migrants on California politics. These "plain-folk" migrants from the Dust Bowl region helped provide the foundation for an evangelical movement that influenced Republican politicians such as Barry Goldwater, Richard Nixon, and Ronald Reagan.

Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California. By Donna Jean Murch. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, and index. xiv + 312 pp. \$22.95 paper. This book traces the roots of the Black Panther Party to the migration of African Americans to the San Francisco Bay Area, especially during the Second World War. Historian Murch then examines how Merritt College and other institutions of higher education radicalized students and allowed them to develop critiques of American political and economic life. These experiences provided a platform from which the members of the Black Panthers could challenge the approaches of mainstream civil rights organizations.

THE JOURNAL OF SAN DIEGO HISTORY

Making the San Fernando Valley: Rural Landscapes, Urban Development, and White Privilege. By Laura R. Barraclough. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. xii + 319 pp. \$24.95 paper. While the San Fernando Valley is part of the second largest city in the nation, it displays many features of rural life, including citrus groves, equestrian centers, and dirt roads. This volume argues that such elements of the environment represent not a lack of modern development but a conscious planning decision to create a landscape rich in meaning about white privilege.

Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol. By Kelly Lytle Hernández. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010. Illustrations, bibliography, notes, and index. xvi + 311 pp. \$55 cloth. \$21.95 paper. This narrative history of the Border Patrol traces the evolution of this agency from its humble beginnings in 1924 to the 1970s. Hernández draws on American as well as Mexican sources to develop an account that is transnational in its focus.

The Sleepy Lagoon Murder Case: Race Discrimination and Mexican-American Rights. By Mark A. Weitz. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010. Chronology, bibliographic essay, and index. viii + 203 pp. \$34.95 cloth. \$17.95 paper. Attorney and historian Mark Weitz investigates the causes and consequences of the famous 1942 Sleepy Lagoon murder case, in which seventeen Mexican American youth were convicted in a decision later overturned after Mexican American activists, Hollywood celebrities, and liberal attorneys (including Carey McWilliams) organized an appeal. Weitz explores the racial tensions of wartime Los Angeles as well as the legacies of the trial for the principles of defendants' rights.