WESTERNERS
LOS ANGELES CORRAL
The Branding Iron
J. GOODMAN

SPRING 2020 LOS ANGELES CORRAL NUMBER 298

Figure 1: The Los Angeles Times *building the morning after the bombing, October 1, 1910. Public domain internet photo.*

The *Los Angeles Times* Bombing and the McNamara Trial

Aaron Tate

At one o'clock in the morning of October 1, 1910 a dynamite explosion ripped apart the *Los Angeles Times* building at the corner of Broadway and First Street (Figure 1). Unfortunately, the building was not unoccupied at that late hour—many staff were still working furiously into the night to put out the morning's scoop on the Vanderbilt Cup auto race in New York.[1] The blast killed some outright, but the majority of the victims were trapped by rubble and died in the ensuing fire that engulfed the building. All told, twenty-one people perished, and around one hundred were injured.[2]

The survivors of the blast rushed to the

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The Branding Iron

Los Angeles Corral of The Westerners

Published Quarterly

Winter - Spring – Summer – Fall

For subscription information: Los Angeles Corral of The Westerners, P. O. Box 1891, San Gabriel, CA 91778
www.lawesterners.org

The Branding Iron is always seeking articles of up to around 20 pages dealing with every phase of the history of the Old West and California. Contributions from both members and friends are always welcome.

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Editor's Corner . . .

Greetings, from quarantine! Although the Westerners may not be meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Spring 2020 *Branding Iron* still marches on to the presses and into your mailboxes!

To make your shelter-in-place a little more engaging, enjoy our explosive lead article about the *Los Angeles Times* bombing of 1910, contributed by Aaron Tate. This is our second lead article penned by a youth fellow, and it is adaptated from Aaron's undergraduate history research at Cal State Northridge. Next, Brian D. Dillon offers a topical reflection on the history of pandemics, and A.C.W. Bethel rounds out the articles with an investigation of refrigerator rail car history.

If you missed our single pre-lockdown spring roundup, fellow Alan Griffin can fill you in on the details. Finally, if you're itching for some reading material, check out some new Western books reviewed by Brian D. Dillon and Mark Hall-Patton.

It is always a pleasure to put your passion for history to print. Thank you to all of our contributors who make it happen!

Happy Trails!

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Times auxiliary plant to put out an emergency extra edition. Before the dust had settled, the editors announced to the city, the nation, and the world that the explosion was not a tragic accident, but an act of murder. They had even already identified their culprit: the labor unions, and the chief suspect among them was the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers, led by the Irish-American brothers James B. and John J. McNamara (Figure 2).

Unions around the country closed ranks to defend the McNamaras. However, as evidence of sabotage mounted, the unions turned public opinion against themselves as they continued to defend the indefensible. Perhaps they could have taken a middle position to defend the cause of labor and condemn radical acts of bombing, but their failure to do so played right into the hands of the *Los Angeles Times*. Ultimately, the unions proved themselves to be their own worst enemies, and they were the final, uncounted casualties of the *Times* office blast.[3]

Labor Conflict in Los Angeles

Los Angeles was at the epicenter of labor conflict in California at the beginning of the twentieth century. Unions had already won major victories in San Francisco, turning it into a "closed shop" city—that is, where employers agreed to only hire union men. California's rapidly growing second-largest city would be a tougher nut to crack, as employers mounted a counter-offensive to keep Los Angeles an "open shop" town where hiring was not restricted to union members. The city's loudest free market crusader was the combative Harrison Gray Otis, former brigadier general of volunteers in the Spanish-American War and now the publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*, who dedicated his newspaper to helping "[fight] the battle of every employer who claims the right to manage his own business in his own way."[4]

Scroogelike, "General" Otis saw unions as parasites who only wanted more of his money. However, he did not limit his distaste of union labor to broadsides shot out from his presses. Ironically, Otis helped found an "anti-union" of his own, the Merchants and Manufacturers Association, a group dedicated to keeping Los Angeles an "open shop" town by any means necessary. They were not above using the same crude force they accused labor of practicing: "whenever a contractor, merchant or firm hired a unionist, the employer was verbally browbeaten and even physically terrorized into line."[5] By 1910, the *Times* and the M&M had fortified Los Angeles against labor unionism, but the unions were yet not out of the fight. This time, they would be bringing reinforcements.

The International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers—henceforth referred to here as the Iron Workers Union—was one of the largest and most militant labor organizations in the United States. In addition to common instruments of labor activism like the strike and boycott, the Iron Workers Union had also conducted a secret nationwide campaign of industrial sabotage. Starting in 1906, and going through 1911, the union bombed over 100 structures built by nonunion labor.[6] Since most of these attacks had occurred in the dead of night, none had yet resulted in a loss of life. While the Iron Workers Union were willing to destroy capitalist property, they did not condone terroristic murder.

Although the death toll was exceptional, the explosion at the *Los Angeles Times* headquarters still appeared to fit the pattern of bombings against high-profile anti-union businesses. It also did not escape notice that James B. and John J. McNamara, important Iron Workers Union representatives, had visited Los Angeles around the time of the blast. These suspicions and Otis' paranoia were enough for the *Times*, despite lacking any concrete evidence, to lay the blame squarely on the unions. The article from October 1, 1910 read as if the perpetrators had already confessed: "The Times [sic] building was destroyed this morning by the enemies of industrial freedom."[7] A union-sponsored investigation countered that "the *Times* had not been dynamited at all; that, instead... there had been a gas explosion."[8] However, most investigations agreed with the *Times'* assessment that the explosion was caused by

Figure 2: *Portraits of James W. McNamara (left) and his brother John J. McNamara on the front page of* The Washington Times*, April 25, 1911. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

dynamite. This was supported by the discovery of several other unexploded bombs that day at the homes of General Otis and Felix J. Zeehandelaar, the secretary of the Merchants and Manufacturers Association.[9]

The Arrests

The city of Los Angeles hired Detective William J. Burns to investigate the explosion and catch the bombers. He and others from his agency collected evidence in California and across the country over the next six months. This led to the arrest of James B. McNamara and a suspected accomplice, Ortie McManigal, in Detroit. The detectives told the men they were being arrested for an unrelated, lesser crime to get them to come along quietly. James and Ortie's arrests were also kept a secret so as to not tip off John McNamara and allow him to escape.[10] Shortly after this, John J. McNamara, the secretary-treasurer of the Iron Workers Union, was likewise arrested during a union board meeting in Indianapolis. He was rushed to an extradition hearing where he was denied access to a lawyer, then extradited to California.[11] During a search of the Iron Workers Union's headquarters, a suspicious box was found in the basement (Figure 3). A custodian recalled that J.J. McNamara asked if he could store the box there, which he said contained old papers. Its true contents were no less than one hundred pounds of dynamite.[12]

The reporting of the *Los Angeles Times* ground the metaphorical axe against the

McNamaras and unions. Having lost friends and coworkers to a terrible accident, it would have been more surprising if the *Times'* reporters had not been biased. While their anger was justifiable, the *Times* abandoned all pretense of objectivity and exploited the tragic death of their friends and coworkers to press the attack on the unions. Upon the capture of the alleged culprits, the *Times'* April 23, 1911 issue published statements certain of the guilt of McManigal and the McNamaras: "Arrests by Burns Men in Indianapolis, Detroit, and Chicago Mark Turning of Blackest Page in History of Organized Labor—Higher-Ups Plainly Responsible for Two Unionite Explosions in Los Angeles."[16] There was no room for nuance at the *Los Angeles Times*. Men had been arrested, so they were assumed to be guilty, further reinforcing the *Times'* view that all unions were an evil menace. Any doubts were eliminated when it was revealed that James McNamara had tried to bribe the detectives taking him and Ortie McManigal back to Chicago.[13]

While these union infractions were being blown up, legal mistakes were being glossed over. John McNamara's arrest had been unorthodox: he was arrested during an Iron Workers Union executive board meeting, taken to a quick trial where he was denied access to a lawyer, and extradited to California. The *Times'* position was that the detectives and police had done everything by the book to get John McNaramara out of Indiana as fast as they did, and only acknowledged that he "plead[ed] in Police Court to be given time to procure an attorney to represent him…his request was denied."[14] However, everything was not by the book: "Indiana law required the court to give the defendant an opportunity to employ counsel, McNamara was given no such consideration."[15]

On the other side of the country, the *New York Times* coverage of the bombing was much more professional than that of the *Los Angeles Times*, avoiding its hysteria and naked biases. On the day after the blast, the *New York Times* withheld judgement and did not yell at its readers like its California counterpart, announcing: "Mayor Alexander, the City Council, the City Attorney, Chief of Police, and other municipal officers, meeting in executive session with the officials of various local union labor councils today, mutually agreed to call off the scheduled union labor parade which was to have been held in the city next Monday."[16] No histrionics, just plain simple facts, as the news should be. The *New York Times* even gave the unions a space in their paper to present their side of the story—an unthinkable move for the *Los Angeles Times*. Before the McNamara arrests, when there was no publicly-known evidence to suggest labor union involvement, the *New York Times* published this union statement:

> The *Los Angeles Times* has for many years been a bitter, unrelenting, and unreasoning enemy of trade unionism and it is characteristic of the *Times* management that immediately after the explosion which wrecked its plant and without awaiting any investigation as to the cause of the catastrophe it should charge the disaster to the trade unions as was done by the *Times's* assistant general manager.[17]

Reporting by the *London Times* was similarly reserved. Perhaps their distance from the drama motivated them to compensate with extra attention to accuracy. They reported neutrally: "J.B. McNamara, and… Ortie McManigal...were apprehended in Detroit; their portmanteaus are said to have contained many clockwork bombs similar to the one found at the home of General Otis."[18]

Opposite of the *Los Angeles Times*, the unions stood by their men. *The Bridgemen's Magazine* was the monthly newsletter of the Iron Workers Union, to which the McNamara brothers were high-level members. After the bombing of the *Times*, an editorial in the *Indianapolis Star* said that unions had no right to assume that a union man was not the culprit. *The Bridgemen's Magazine* retorted with their own fiery editorial that accused employers of being responsible for creating a situation that would lead to extreme measures like bombing. Additionally, laborers would not need to throw actual bombs, for "[l]abor need[ed] only the eternal bombs

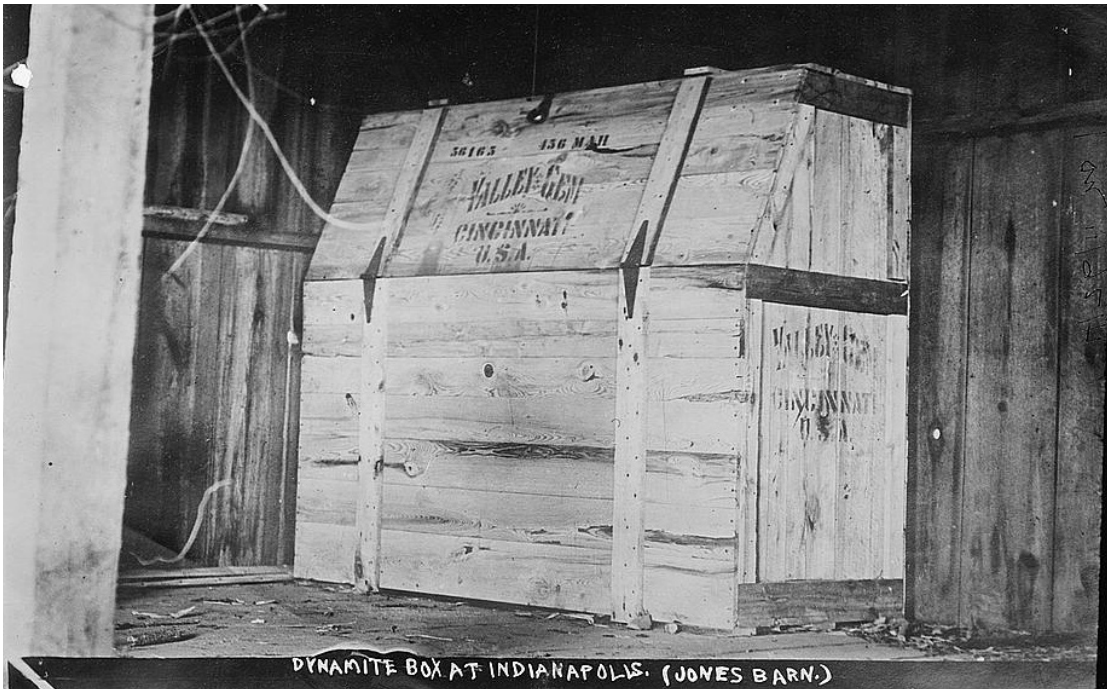

Figure 3: *Incriminating evidence—a crate of dynamite—discovered in the Iron Workers Union headquarters in Indianapolis, IN, following the arrest of John McNamara. Public domain internet image.*

of Truth."[19] Of course, the average member of the Iron Workers Union would not have known that the secretary treasurer of their union was throwing more than "bombs of Truth," and had been for some time.

When John McNamara was arrested in April of 1911, the May issue of *Bridgemen's* carried two articles about the outrage of McNamara's arrest and extradition to California. One was written by an unnamed union member who compared McNamara's arrest to the infamous 1856 *Dred Scott v. Sandford* case that denied freedom to a Southern slave brought to Northern free territory. Although labor unions faced great struggles for fair wages and working conditions in the early twentieth century, their difficulties were in no way comparable to those that had been faced by American slaves, and such hyperbolic comparisons only diminished the credibility of union rhetoric. The anonymous author went further with this questionable metaphor, comparing the fight of labor unions to the fight that the Union had against the Confederacy, declaring, "The rights of man is labor's Sumter."[20] While less inappropriate than the slavery comparison, painting labor's enemies to historical villains was still not an intelligent line of attack. By connoting business with whip-cracking Confederate slavocrats, much like how talentless politicians today may compare their opponents to Hitler, this union author broadcasted his lack of original arguments and showed that he shouldn't be taken seriously.

The second article in that May 1911 issue was a much more intelligent statement made by the American Federation of Labor President Samuel Gompers. He made salient points about the unorthodox arrest of John McNamara, stating, "I am astonished beyond measure that the authorities in Indiana would permit a man to be taken out of the State in such a secret, underhand manner without giving the accused, while still within the jurisdiction of Indiana, the opportunity of being heard in his own defense."[21] The fact that McNamara was not given a chance to defend himself was a bad move on the part of the detectives and the courts in Indianapolis. If they were so sure that McNamara was guilty, there should not have been a problem

Figure 4: *Political cartoon from* Puck *magazine, December 27, 1911. A cannon labeled "violence," stocked with shells labeled "murder" and "dynamiting," backfires on the McNamara brothers, Samuel Gompers, and other union leaders. Public domain internet image.*

letting him hire a lawyer to defend himself, since the facts of the case would have shown him to be guilty. The fact that the authorities rushed McNamara out of the state as fast as they could suggested to Gompers that they did not have enough evidence to convict him. Gompers wrote again in the September 1911 issue of *The Bridgemen's Magazine* that pleaded for money for the McNamaras' defense fund. In it, he expressed the belief of the organized labor movement that the McNamaras were innocent and the people who "kidnapped" the McNamaras from Indianapolis would be prosecuted.[22]

The Trial and War of Words

The McNamaras' trial started on October 11, but jury selection proved to be a difficult initial hurdle. For two months, attorney for the defense, Clarence Darrow, and District Attorney John D. Fredericks for the prosecution, were hard at work looking for potential jurors. After a break for Thanksgiving, the case resumed on December 1. The monotony of jury selection was broken, when, in a shocking turn of events, the McNamaras changed their pleas to guilty.[23]

The plea deal had been brokered by muckraking journalist Lincoln Steffens. He had come back from Europe expressly to see the McNamara brothers in jail and to convince them to confess so that he could present their story in the press as a tale of social injustice.[24] Their confessions made and the deal set, the McNamaras were ready to be sentenced on December 5, 1911. James B. McNamara, for having set the bomb that blew up the *Times*, received life in prison. John J. McNamara, who had been complicit in the plot and had set the bomb that had blown up the Llewellyn Iron Works on December 25, 1910, received fifteen years.[25]

The *Los Angeles Times'* anti-union obsession had calmed down somewhat by October 1911, so the article announcing the beginning of the trial was, for the most part, unbiased. The only thing in the article that had a slight tinge of the ire that the *Times* usually reserved for unions was a dig at the all-but-failed

defense fund: "According to authoritative information, the $7,000,000 defense fund that labor-union officials proclaimed would be raised for the McNamaras, has been practically forgotten by the rank and file of the unions. Frantic efforts have been made to raise the money…but everywhere refusal has been encountered."[26] So, not only were the unions unable to raise the money that they said they were going to, any attempts to do so were met with refusal. The article did not seem to consider that, perhaps, the union men were in jobs where their employer was not paying them enough to cover their living expenses and also contribute to the defense fund of the McNamaras.

After the McNamaras changed their pleas from "not guilty" to "guilty" in open court, the *Los Angeles Times'* returned to their trademark anti-union smugness. Their report of the plea deal compared James McNamara to a coyote and the lawyers for the defense as if they could barely keep their heads up from the weight of the shame they must feel at having to defend dynamiters. They then pressed the initiative to weigh in on local politics. At the bottom of the first page of the same article, the *Times* called upon the people of Los Angeles to vote against Job Harriman, who was the frontrunner candidate in the upcoming mayoral election: "This is a signal to the patriotic men and women of our city to make his [Harriman's] defeat all the more overwhelming."[27] Because Harriman was a card-carrying socialist, supported union labor, and had defended the McNamaras, he was assumed to be unfit for public office. Many voters agreed, and the backlash against the McNamara confessions gave the mayoral election of 1911 to the incumbent, conservative Democrat George Alexander.

Since the McNamaras had said from the beginning that they were innocent of the charges, their confessions came as a terrible shock to their many supporters. This feeling was summed up well by American Federation of Labor founder Samuel Gompers, in a candid interview to the *New York Times* on December 2, 1911: "The McNamaras have betrayed labor….We have been imposed upon in that affair cruelly, for there has been no doubt in my mind that the accused men were innocent of the charges. In this I was backed not alone by my opinion but by the assurance of the two accused men." [28] The faith that Mr. Gompers had in his fellow unionists was touching, but not very wise.

Labor advocates' disjointed and defensive attempts to change the narrative only dug themselves into a deeper hole in the eyes of the public. *The Bridgemen's* December 1911 issue had been about to go to press when the McNamaras changed their pleas from not guilty to guilty. The only reaction in that issue was a muted editor's note.[29] In the next issue, Iron Workers Union president Frank M. Ryan acknowledged that the McNamara brothers had pleaded guilty, but that he was not upset with them. Ryan believed that, even if the McNamaras were guilty, this was the natural byproduct of a union-hating society: "You are fully aware that these selfish employers shirk their responsibility as to the injured and dependent relatives of our dead brothers….These wholly unfair and un-American methods and those who continue to advocate and enforce them are, in my opinion responsible for the actions of men driven to despair."[30] In other words, it was not the McNamaras' fault for blowing up the *Los Angeles Times*, but rather that of the *Times* itself and its anti-union owner. By failing to condemn the actions of men who, inadvertently or not, killed innocent people, Ryan appeared insensitive to the suffering of the victims' families. Whatever sympathies many Americans may have had for union labor's struggle against poor pay and conditions evaporated because of Ryan's implicit endorsement of terrorist acts.

Socialist Party leader Eugene Debs added more fuel to the fire by escalating Ryan's logic one step further, beyond what mainstream labor advocates were comfortable with. In an article for the *International Socialist Review*, he excoriated the American Federation of Labor's belated attempts to distance themselves from McNamara as class treason:

> This article is inspired by the report I have just read in a morning paper of a two days' conference held in Washington

by the "McNamara Ways and Means Committee of the American Federation of Labor," and telling of the cowardly and contemptible action of that body, with Samuel Gompers presiding over it, in denouncing the McNamara brothers and exonerating themselves; and not only this, but "expressing the satisfaction of organized labor that the culprits have been commensurately punished for their crime"; and all of this abject sycophancy to curry favor with the capitalist class.[31]

Debs urged no retreat and no compromise. His article decried the pernicious double standard over the use of violence that punished the poor but excused the rich: "Do the capitalists ever rave and tear their hair over killings committed by them, or their mercenaries, in their interests and for their profit?" Debs reference to killing was literal, and not concerned with the Marxist theory of capitalist "passive violence" via the perpetuation of workers' poverty. He accused "General" Harrison Gray Otis of bombing the *Los Angeles Times* himself, to justify his assault on union rights, "[b]ut even if Otis and his union-wrecking pals were totally innocent of any direct connection with the crime, it would still be the fruit of their own mad policy and the responsibility for it [would] finally lodge upon their own heads."[32] Debs' wild accusations and willingness to excuse violence were widely seen as irresponsible and dangerous for potentially inviting further attacks by workers that—according to Debs' logic—could not be held accountable.

Countering this perspective was former president Theodore Roosevelt, who wrote an article for *The Outlook*, "Murder is Murder." Roosevelt's argument was as simple as his title: "If the explosion was not an accident, but the deliberate act of any man or men, it was an outrage of dastardly iniquity, for it was one of those crimes in which the murderer, in order to gratify his spite against an individual, not merely wrecks that individual's property, but with callous indifference takes the lives of scores of innocent people."[33] Roosevelt condemned anyone who committed murder or broke the law, be they union or management, Republican or Democrat, because no one was above the law. Roosevelt's convictions were noble, but a little too idealistic. As Debs pointed out, the law did not apply to everyone equally, particularly those with money and connections.

Realizing the shortcomings of his previous article, Roosevelt penned a follow-up editorial for the December 1911 issue of *The Outlook*. In it, he explained: "In that article I set forth what certainly seems the sufficiently obvious doctrine that heinous crime should be treated purely as crime without regard to the political, social, or business affiliations of the criminal; a doctrine which, however obvious in theory, our country sorely needs to have put into active practice."[34] Unfortunately, Roosevelt's call for society-wide commitment to the equal execution of the law did not actually say how it should be put into practice. He only urged citizens, particularly wage laborers, to make sure that their leaders were held to the same moral standard that Roosevelt set in the article. Roosevelt also condemned anyone who tried to justify what the McNamaras had done:

> Certain apologists of these men have made themselves conspicuous by asserting that these depraved criminals, who have on their seared souls the murder of so many innocent persons—*all of them laboring people, by the way*—are "victims"…who should receive sympathy because they were acting…on behalf of their class.…It is precisely the kind of plea sometimes advanced on behalf of a crooked man of great wealth caught bribing a legislature—that he has to do it to protect his business.[35]

Roosevelt's anger was palpable and justifiable. Whatever their grievances, the McNamaras had resorted to violence, fully aware of the risk that someone could be killed in the blast. For Roosevelt, there was no excuse for such action and he could not understand why any sane person would want to defend murderers.

The articles by Debs and Roosevelt were a microcosm of the journalism surrounding

the McNamara case. On one side was Debs, who represented publications like *The Bridgemen's Magazine* that portrayed the McNamaras as tragic martyrs. On the other, Roosevelt typified the *Los Angeles Times* type of journalism. That is, loud, brash and utterly sure of the righteousness of their position.

Conclusion

In the short term, the McNamaras' bombing of the *Los Angeles Times* only entrenched labor and capital's hatred of each other. The partisan positions of the *Los Angeles Times* and *The Bridgemen's Magazine* did not change anyone's opinion, for people who read either publication had already made up their minds. The bias shown in the *Los Angeles Times* and other newspapers against labor unions illustrated the difficulties that unions had in becoming legitimate in the eyes of the general non-union public.

On the other hand, the uncritical, defensive posture of *The Bridgemen's Magazine* revealed how unions—historically marginalized by society—recoiled from any attack and closed ranks to protect their own. Ironically, the more effort they put into defending their cause, the more damage they inflicted on themselves. Despite overwhelming evidence of the McNamaras' guilt, the Iron Workers Union and labor unionists across the country stood by them. Had the unions disavowed the McNamaras after dynamite had been discovered in the Iron Workers Union headquarters, the McNamaras might have been punished for their crimes as individuals instead of as proxies for labor unionism as a whole. And if so, perhaps the public would have viewed labor unions more reasonably as organizations that wouldn't tolerate violent members. Samuel Gompers made a belated attempt to that effect after the McNamara confession, stating "[l]abor is represented by organizations and not by the acts of individuals."[36] But by this point, the damage was done. Many people feared the unions and associated them with radical militants, whether or not they had any socialist or anarchist connections. Los Angeles solidified as a stronghold of "open shop" hiring, and organized labor in Southern California would not recover until the Great Depression. Unions around the country also suffered from the fallout of the McNamara trial.

Although the *Times* bombing and McNamara trial struck a serious blow at labor *unions*, there was a silver lining for *labor*. According to historian Herbert Shapiro, the aftermath of the McNamara trial "evoked increased responsiveness to the demands of organized labor…but it also heightened fears of militant radicalism."[37] The *Times* bombing shed light on serious issues festering between labor, management, and the public. Progress would be slow, and not without further setbacks as business owners continued to react in knee-jerk fashion against real or perceived labor militancy, such as during the massacre at Ludlow, Colorado, in 1914. The issue wasn't yet resolved, but with World War I on the horizon, the labor force would be more important than ever.

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3. Foner, 1980: 29-30.
4. Berges, 1984: 20.
5. Ibid.
6. Adamic, 1931: 141.
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10. *Los Angeles Times*, 1911a.
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1911b April 23: "Dynamiters Store Found."
1911c October 11: "Alleged Dynamiters Before Court Today."
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Pandemics, Past and Present

Brian Dervin Dillon

As I write this, all Westerners International and Los Angeles Corral events have been canceled as safety precautions to slow the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Beginning in March 2020, elected officials in America and abroad responded to the Coronavirus threat in a variety of ways, from careful, cautious, preventative advice, through idiotic, off-the-cuff remarks rooted in medical/historical ignorance, all the way to panicked utterances reminiscent of headless chickens running in ever-tighter circles. Although you might not conclude it from the news nor from governmental updates, there is, unfortunately, absolutely *nothing new* about the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic.

Only dimly remembered is the great Spanish Influenza pandemic, usually mislabeled "of 1918" because that was its year of greatest mortality in Europe and on the American East Coast. But the flu did not reach its peak in California until early in the following year, 1919. West Coast precautions, similar to those we are practicing now, and taken in response to the shocking mortality of preceding months back East, resulted in a much lower death rate out West. My grandmother and my three uncles, all self-quarantined alongside hundreds of other army wives and army brats at the San Francisco Presidio, all survived the Spanish Flu.

More legendary than strictly historical now are recollections of the great European pandemics, the London Plague of 1665-1666, which killed an estimated 15% of the population of England's capital city, and the Black Death of 1347 and later years. Black Death, probably bubonic plague, swept across all of Europe, killing between one- and two-thirds of the population, between 25 and 50 million people. Even more shocking precedents to the present-day Coronavirus pandemic exist, mostly unfamiliar to modern Americans.

Ethnohistoric epidemiology is a field of study developed at the University of California, Berkeley, by an Olympian group of interdisciplinary scholars. S.F. Cook from Physiology, A.L. Kroeber from Anthropology, Woodrow Borah from History, and Karl Sauer from Geography studied and published on the great New World pandemics for decades, beginning in the 1930s.

They revealed that the worst mortality of historic times was in Southern Mexico and Northern Central America during the first 50 years after the Spanish Conquest. Between 1521 and 1570, roughly two human generations, 90% mortality resulted from introduced diseases of European, Asian, and African origin. Spaniards contracted many new diseases in China, the Philippines, and the West Coast of Africa, added them to old European ones like bubonic plague, then passed more than a dozen on to American Indian populations with no immunity to any of them. A macabre saying still remembered from five centuries ago was that: "The mere breath of a Spaniard could kill any Indian." An estimated 10 to 20 million died, nine out of every ten people. Were an equivalent death rate applied to the present-day United States, where approximately 331 million people live, *everybody* outside of California, in all the other 49 states would be *dead.*

Another 300 years after the Mexican/Central American mass mortality, beginning around 1820, the same thing happened in the Hawaiian Islands. During the span of two human generations, approximately 65% of all Native Hawaiians, with no resistance to new diseases brought by Yankee missionaries and sailors ashore from whaling ships, died. From a total population estimated sometimes as low as only 80,000, as many as 50,000 died, including members of the Hawaiian Royal family. My wife's grandfather worked for Queen Emma beginning around 1869 while she was in mourning for both her husband the dead King and her son the dead Prince.

Much closer to home, the same thing happened yet again in California. This time diseases were introduced by Hudson's Bay Company fur trappers and traders invading from the north between 1827 and 1833.

Malaria, smallpox, measles, and other new ailments destroyed the Indian populations of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys and the Sierra Nevada Foothills.

Gabriel Moraga, the greatest of all Mexican-period explorers of California, ventured to some of the Sierran streams in the years immediately following this horrific die-off. Moraga found Indian village after village where everybody was dead. Thousands of unburied dead were still lying on the ground, because nobody was left alive to bury them. So many skeletons were on mile after mile of riverbank that he named one of these rivers *Calaveras*—Skull River, from which the modern California County, of later "Jumping Frog" fame, took its name. In some places, there was 100% mortality from these new diseases from which the Indians had no immunity. Twenty years prior to the California Gold Rush, as many as 100,000 died in this epidemic. When my great-great-grandfather prospected Sierran streams for gold in 1850, many places, densely-populated only a generation before, were totally depopulated.

Leaving recent history for the present, carefree, mask-free revelers frolic on Southern California beaches and angry mask-free protesters swarm the steps of state capitols while, simultaneously, at least a thousand Americans still die of the Coronavirus each and every day. The national Coronavirus pandemic death toll presently stands at approximately 100,000—around 42,000 *more* than those KIA during a dozen years of war in Vietnam, the next-most catastrophic mass mortality of recent American history. Military cemeteries across the country are full of young men who believed, "It could *never* happen to me, only to the other guy," and this fatal attitude unfortunately also extends right now to too many potential Coronavirus victims and non-symptomatic carriers.

Some Americans complain about self-quarantine and the various kinds of lock-down required by different levels of government as "unfair," even "un-American." These are probably the same people who slept through high school history classes in the back row, now inaccurately classed as "adults." Nowhere is the old saying that *those who do not know their history are doomed to repeat it* more true than in the context of pandemics. Nowhere at the present time are the stakes higher: incautious, ignorance-driven actions can be a self-inflicted death sentence.

Canceling mass gatherings, self-quarantine, and sheltering at home are absolutely the right things to do. They are, perhaps, the only ways we can slow the spread of this new disease, only the most recent one of a great many mankind has faced over the centuries, for which there is still no known cure. With even minimal historic perspective, pandemic past is always prologue.

Coming Soon!

Want some more reading material during lockdown? You can help the *Branding Iron* by contributing to not one, but *two* special themed issues planned for later this year.

The Summer 2020 issue, to be published in September, is our "Detroit Iron" special. Share your stories about old American hot rods and rustbuckets, road trips, car poetry, and all things *auto*-Americana! To be considered for publication, please submit by August 15th.

Our Fall 2020 installment, scheduled for December, will be the *Branding Iron's* 300th issue. This will also be on the cusp of the Los Angeles Corral's 75th anniversary in 2021. It is only appropriate that we celebrate this occasion by swapping memories of our time in the Corral in this commemorative edition. Articles about the history of the Corral are especially welcome. Please submit by November 15th for consideration.

For both themed issues, please observe a minimum article length of a half page. Illustrations are welcome and encouraged.

For submissions and inquiries, please contact *Branding Iron* editor John Dillon at John.Dervin.Dillon@gmail.com. Thank you all, and Happy Trails!

Edwin Tobias Earl and the Refrigerator Car

A. C. W. Bethel

Shipping Perishables by Rail

Ventilated box cars to ship perishable goods were already in use before the Civil War. These used slatted doors and openings in their sides and ends to circulate air through their cargoes. They kept perishables cool in mild weather, but hot weather called for insulation and ice.

The iced refrigerator car came into commercial use after the Civil War. Despite promising innovations that would have remedied its chronic shortcomings, it remained unchanged in basic form until the adoption of mechanical refrigeration in the 1950s. Until the 1930s most refrigerator cars had wood bodies with ice bunkers at each end fed from hatches in the roof. Thick insulation and ice bunkers reduced the interior space available for cargo.

Railroads didn't own very many refrigerator cars themselves. They were expensive to build and often sat idle, because the fruit and vegetable harvests were seasonal. Because they usually traveled longer distances than box cars, they yielded good revenue when they were in use, but it was hard to find refrigerated cargoes for the return trip. Railroads wanted cars that could carry general cargoes, but refrigerator cars were too specialized. They could carry cargoes that didn't require refrigeration, but shippers often refused them because their smaller capacity made them less economical to rent.[1]

While meat packers quickly saw the advantage of shipping dressed meat rather than live animals, railroads saw this innovation as a threat to their large investment in stock cars and stockyards. They bought refrigerator cars reluctantly and charged higher rents for them. The meat packers responded by building and operating cars of their own. By 1900 they controlled eighty percent of the 68,500 refrigerator cars nationally. Armour, the biggest by a wide margin, had 12,000. They rented these cars out to other shippers, including west coast vegetable and fruit forwarders.[2]

Edwin Tobias Earl's Fruit Forwarding Companies

California vegetable and fruit growers were remote from the wholesale markets in midwestern and eastern cities. Freight forwarders packed, shipped and marketed their products, either by purchasing directly from the growers or taking on consignments. In the first case, the freight forwarder paid the grower and assumed the risk of damaged goods and volatile prices; in the second, the grower received the market price minus commission and expenses, but carried the risk.[3]

Beginning in 1876 at Lodi, California, Edwin Tobias Earl (1858-1919)—he was not yet twenty years old—began building a business of packing, shipping, and marketing California fruit to eastern markets. In 1886, Earl relocated to Los Angeles. He now shipped oranges from Riverside and Santa Ana on the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fé Railway's (ATSF) newly-completed line to Chicago.[4] Becoming a major shipper, Earl incorporated the Earl Fruit Company in 1887 "to dry, pack, and handle fruit." Capital stock was $100,000, most of which Earl held himself.[5]

The California Fruit Transportation Company (CFT) began shipping to Chicago in 1888, and by 1890 rostered 625 refrigerator cars. Earl tried to work with the CFT, but in 1892, the CFT refused to give him a discount, so he went to Armour and contracted to rent 1,000 cars at $8.33 monthly each. This enabled him to undercut the CFT and get contracts to ship fruit.[6] To control the costs and availability of refrigerator cars, in 1892 Earl organized the Continental Fruit Express (CFX), which owned or leased at least 1,500 cars in 1900.[7] Perhaps because some shippers refused to use CFX cars, thinking that this would enrich a competitor, Earl emphasized that there was no financial or managerial connection between his two companies. He said that CFX cars were used nationwide on many lines on a mileage basis, and that the

Figure 1: *Edwin Tobias Earl, c. 1895. Photo courtesy of the Historical Los Angeles website page, "Wilshire Boulevard When it Was Residential."*

Earl Fruit Company frequently shipped in Armour and ATSF cars.[8]

The Ventilator-Refrigerator Car

Because of the different temperatures that his refrigerator cars encountered during a winter trip to Chicago, Earl wanted a combination ventilator-refrigerator car that could duct ambient air through the cargo when temperatures were mild, then be closed up tight to retain heat when outside air was freezing cold. In hot weather, the cars could be iced as usual. In 1893 Earl obtained a patent for a folding framework that could be attached to refrigerator car ice-hatch covers in order to create screened air ducts. This was not a new idea: screened car-top air ducts had been included on ventilated, non-insulated box cars to keep perishables cool in mild weather since before the Civil War. On refrigerator cars, ice hatches were frequently left open for the same purpose,[9] but Earl noted that "…the ventilation provided by these open ice-holes, the doors of which were thrown back upon the roof of the car, was not perfect, as there was nothing to catch the air and deflect it and direct it into the car." Earl worried, too, that a workman might carelessly step into an open hatch.[10]

Earl Sells his Companies

In 1901, Earl sold the CFX and the Earl Fruit Company to A. Ogden Armour for a reported $2.5 million and "retired from active business."[11] He used his wealth to help shape the emerging Progressive movement in Los Angeles, for which purpose he purchased the *Los Angeles Evening Express* and hired energetic journalist Edward Dickson to edit it.[12] He also invested in Southern California oil and real estate developments.

Historical Errors Corrected

In his otherwise well-researched book, *The Fruits of Natural Advantage*, Professor Steven Stoll writes:

> Another firm, the Earl Fruit Company, began as a subsidiary of the Armour Packing Company of Chicago. The only companies that owned refrigerated railroad cars at the time were meat packers like Armour and Swift, and when they sold beef to California, they needed some commodity to fill their cars on the return trip. In order to assemble a large variety and quantity of fruit for this purpose, Armour established the Earl Fruit Company, managed by Edwin T. Earl.[13]

The only source that Stoll cites here is a 1983 oral history interview of Robert Di Giorgio, a member of the famous Di Giorgio family whose vast agricultural conglomerate bought the Earl Fruit Company from Armour in 1911. That was the year in which Robert Di Giorgio was born, so he was recollecting only what he had heard. The interviewer quotes Di Giorgio:

The Earl Fruit Company was headed up by a man named E. T. Earl from Sacramento who owned a small piece of it and who was the manager of the company for the Armour family."[14]

The interviewer doesn't offer any further explanation here, and what Di Giorgio says contradicts other sources available at the time. In 1900, the year before he sold his businesses to Armour, the *Los Angeles Times* reported Earl's testimony before the Interstate Commerce Commission as follows:

> In answer to questions, he stated that he was president of both the Earl Fruit Company and the Continental Fruit Express; that he owned 90 per cent of the stock of the express company and about 45 per cent of the stock in the fruit packing company. At one time he had owned abut 90 per cent of the Earl Fruit Company's stock and had held a majority until the spring of 1893.[15]

If this sworn testimony is true, then Armour didn't already own the Earl Fruit Company in 1900. Moreover, if Armour *had* already owned it, then Earl could not possibly have sold it to Armour for $2.5 million the next year. Di Giorgio may have been confused because when the Di Giorgios purchased the Earl Fruit Company from Armour in 1911, it *was* an Armour subsidiary: Earl had sold it to Armour ten years prior.

Armour may have seen buying the Earl Fruit Company as an opportunity to get into the lucrative California fruit trade, but the idea that Armour wanted fruit shipments as return cargoes for dressed beef shipped to California seems unlikely. California already had its own vigorous ranching and meat-packing industry. By the 1890s Henry Miller and Charles Lux controlled about a million acres of rangeland in California and more in Nevada and eastern Oregon. They ran about a million head of cattle and grazed more than 100,000 sheep. They slaughtered and dressed animals at San Francisco's "Butchertown" on Islais Creek, the largest meat processing center west of Chicago's Union Stockyards.

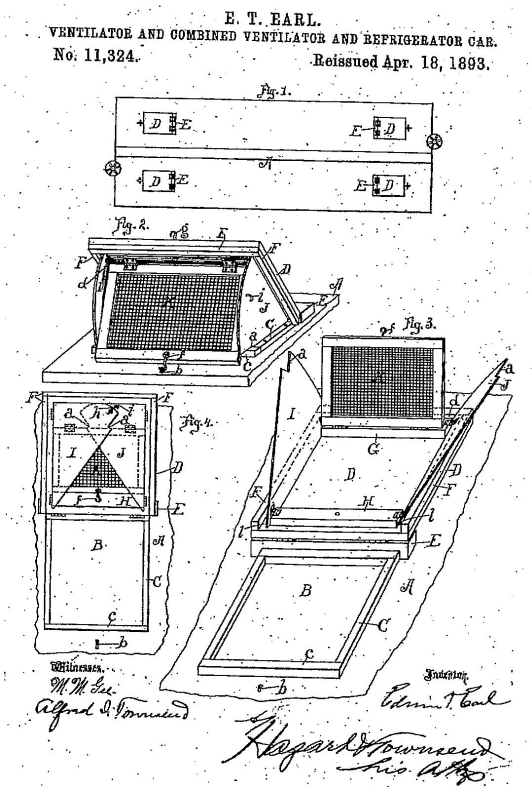

Figure 2: *Edwin Tobias Earl's patented refrigerator car ventilator. From patent application.*

Miller and Lux's San Francisco Bay area market grew from a combined 83,332 cattle, sheep, and hogs in 1883 to 988,357 in 1912. It is hard to see how dressed meat shipped 2,500 miles from Chicago could have competed with them.[16]

Other historical accounts are farther off the mark. In an informal history of Wilshire Boulevard, journalist Ralph Hancock wrote:

> …the Earl Fruit Company, forerunner of the big Sunkist combine, soon became the largest fruit packing and shipping concern in California. For its owner, Edwin T. Earl, had finally perfected and invented, in 1890, the first successful combination ventilator-refrigerator car for the transportation of perishable fruits. Since that time the Earl Fruit Car has been accepted and adopted as the perfect vehicle for transporting perishable fruits and produce throughout the country. In time the demand for the car

> became so great that he developed its manufacture and ownership as a distinctive business, known as the Continental Fruit Express (CFX), the cars of which for half a century have operated on every railroad in the nation.[17]

What Hancock says is full of errors:

> The Earl Fruit Company was not the forerunner of Sunkist. The Sunkist trade name was adopted by the California Fruit Growers Exchange, a marketing cooperative created in 1905 to improve and standardize the orange industry and control marketing and pricing in order to eliminate dependence on middlemen such as the Earl Fruit Company.[18]

In 1891 Earl tested one of the 150 refrigerator cars he had recently ordered. These used Wickes-patent galvanized iron latticework ice bunkers, which supposedly cooled the cargo better. Wickes ice bunkers were also used by various refrigerator car operators such as Merchants Despatch Line, and perhaps 10,000 Wickes cars were in service in 1898. Earl was pleased with the cars: "Mr. Earl believes that he will now be able to put fruit of all kinds down in the East at the hottest season of the year."[19]

Earl did not invent the Wickes system, and there is no evidence that other car lines were adopting his patented ventilating system,[20] a technology designed to function in temperate and cold climates, not hot.[21] The Wickes system used air-duct ventilation under the floor, but it did not use Earl's patent.[22] Railroad historian John H. White's *Great Yellow Fleet* never mentions Earl's ventilating system, though he does provide detailed drawings and photos to illustrate a similar ventilator that was part of the Bohn Syphon System that was patented in 1899.[23]

Testifying before the Interstate Commerce Commission in 1900, Earl claimed to have about 500 new cars in addition to 1,500 built earlier. This is not a large fleet in comparison to the 68,500 cars then in use nationally. Absurd or not, the idea that Earl invented the first successful refrigerator car persists. In his enjoyable and profusely illustrated history of Wilshire Boulevard, Kevin Roderick includes Hancock among his references, and perhaps influenced by him, simplifies and strengthens what Hancock said:

> …Edwin Tobias Earl had become rich after inventing the refrigerated railroad car that made it possible for Southern California citrus growers to ship fresh oranges and lemons to the East.[24]

In contrast to Hancock and Roderick, White rejects the idea of a single inventor of the railroad refrigerator car:

> I have tried to present the history of all the early pioneers of the refrigerator car for I believe the car to be an American innovation. No one individual can be singled out for any special honor and it is clear, as with most technical history, that a great many individuals were involved. …It became obvious that certain ideas occurred to various inventors at different times and places and that many plans, like overhead ice bunkers, were periodically re-invented. Most improvements in design and performance were a result of refinement rather than radical changes.[25]

Coda

No one can research everything. We historians all have to draw on incomplete past records and the work of other historians, and it's easy to go wrong. Stoll thought that Earl Fruit had been created as a subsidiary of Armour because Di Giorgio said it had, probably because his family bought Earl Fruit from Armour in 1911. Stoll relied on a scholarly oral history for this. An error unchecked but respected is still an error. But we also know better than to accept a source uncritically. Roderick says that Earl invented the refrigerator car and made the California fruit industry possible, and he probably concluded this by simplifying what Hancock said. It doesn't take much effort to show he's wrong.

But it's easy to be too quick to criticize past historians. Ventilated box cars and iced

refrigerator cars were designed on different principles, so the idea of a ventilated refrigerator car initially seems absurd, like the idea of combining a blimp with a tank. But surprisingly, it's true: White's book has photos of refrigerator cars with "ventilator-refrigerator" stenciled on their sides and vents propping their hatches up, along with mechanical drawings and a discussion of the car's folding ice bunkers as part of the patent. This puts Earl's patent into a larger context: he invented a device for ventilating a refrigerator car, but he wasn't the only one, and he didn't revolutionize the refrigerator car industry.

Since we are historians, not ideologues, correcting errors like these brings exhilaration, not disillusionment.

Endnotes

1. White, 1986: 11-17.
2. Meat packers formed a refrigerator car trust that controlled 80% of the meat and vegetable traffic. The trust used its position to impose high tariffs on small shippers until the Interstate Commerce Commission and the Justice Department intervened. Armour began selling its refrigerator cars in 1920, as did other meat packing companies. The cars were then acquired by specialized companies such as the Fruit Growers Express, Merchants Despatch and Pacific Fruit Express. Many of these companies were wholly owned by individual railroads or by groups of them, though separately managed. White, 1986: 17-20.
3. Stoll, 1998: 64-74, 208, n. 18.
4. Spitzzeri, 2019.
5. *Los Angeles Herald*, 1887.
6. Packing Houses of Santa Clara County, 2017.
7. For a sketch of Earl's business career, see Spitzzeri, 2019. Spitzzeri reproduces in facsimile a February 16, 1889 *Los Angeles Herald* account of an interview with Earl in which he discusses competition and pricing for California fruit in the Chicago market. The CFX fleet estimate is from White, 1986: table, 16; 163.
8. *Los Angeles Times*, 1900: I-6.
9. White, 1986: 25-27.
10. Earl said, "So far as I am aware the first use of the ice-holes of a car to transform a refrigerator car into a ventilated car was made by me in February, 1886, by throwing the outside ice hole doors back upon the roof." Earl, 1893.
11. *Los Angeles Times*, 1901: 8. Armour continued to operate the Earl Fruit Company under its original name, but absorbed CFX.
12. For more about the role of Earl and his editor, Edward Dickson, in California's emerging Progressive movement, see Mowry, 1963, and Olin Jr., 1968.
13. Stoll, 1998: 60.
14. The assertion that Armour created the Earl Fruit Company to generate a backhaul for refrigerator cars is from Di Giorgio and Di Giorgio, 1986: 5-6.
15. *Los Angeles Times*, 1900: I-6.
16. Igler, 2001: 142-43, 150.
    Beck and Haase, 1974: maps 69, 70.
17. Hancock, 1949: 117.
18. Hart, 1987: 74.
    Stoll, 1998: 74-78.
19. *Los Angeles Times*, 1891: 3.
20. Someone else did use it: Earl successfully sued for patent infringement, which was affirmed on appeal. *Graham v. Earl*, 1897.
21. Some insulated box, ventilator, and refrigerator cars included provision for kerosene or charcoal heaters. White, 1986: 25, 30, 145.
22. White, 1986: 37-40.
23. White, 1986: 69, 72, 81.
24. Roderick, 2005: 35.
25. White, 1986: 6.

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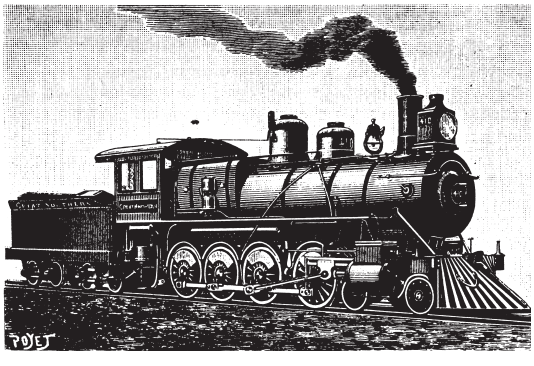

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Errata

The *Branding Iron* would like to issue a correction to the portrait of Phil Brigandi on page 18 of the Winter 2020 issue, number 297. The picture of Phil was supplied by Paul Rippens for the tribute, but it was originally taken by Steve Crise at the 2016 70th anniversary celebration. Thanks to Paul Rippens, for clarifying.

Monthly Roundup . . .

March 2020

Bruce Merritt

Given that we are all members (or fellows) of a historical society, interest was high in March when Bruce Merritt came to the Corral to explain the founding of another society, albeit one with a bit of a different bent than our own. The Society of Colonial Wars in the State of California was founded in Los Angeles in November of 1895 by Col. Holdridge Ozro Collins and U.S. Attorney George Jules Denis. The Society of Colonial Wars already existed in New York at the time of the founding of the California chapter, when a few enthusiastic newcomers sought to bring what was quickly becoming a national tradition out West to legitimize themselves and their city as truly American. Though the current state of the Society of Colonial Wars bears little resemblance to its configuration at founding, we Westerners were treated to a bit of the colorful history of its early members, and a glimpse into the motivations behind its origins.

The Society of Colonial Wars in California sprang up in Los Angeles during what Mr. Merritt termed "the Golden Age of lineage societies." This "Golden Age" came about in the latter half of the nineteenth century as three forces that had been growing within America converged to spur a flurry of society foundings. Patriotism was growing as Civil War wounds healed, anti-immigration sentiments prevailed as more now came from China and Eastern Europe, and Anglophilia was in vogue amongst the upper crust due to the glamour of some very high-profile marriages between American elites and British nobles. Societies spread like wildfire as people sought to not only rub elbows with the elites, but to preserve an American culture which they felt was being threatened.

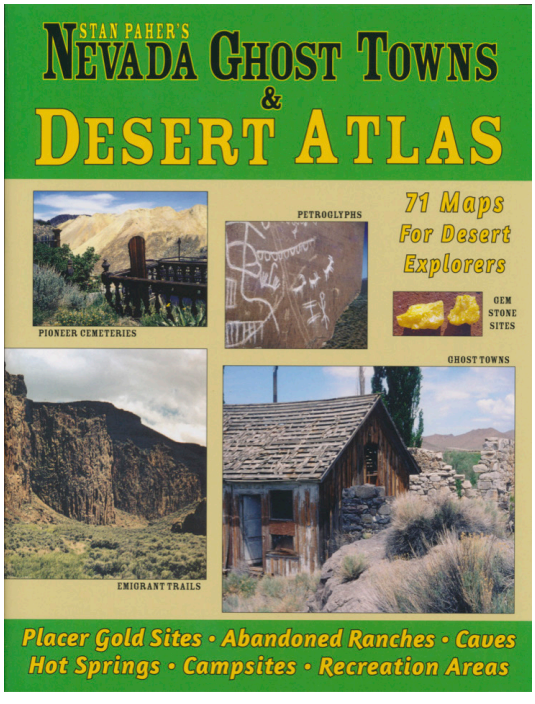
The group which responded to these forces in Los Angeles—Colonel Collins and associates—were about as diverse in background as a bunch of wealthy, middle-aged white men could be in 1895. There were former Confederates alongside Unionists, a Republican U.S. Attorney and one from the Democrats, as well as judges, politicians, speculators, and even a reverend for good measure. Among the men who came together to found the Society of Colonial Wars in the State of California, you'll find names like Otis, Huntington, and Rindge. Less remembered are the likes of Motley Flint, who was shot dead in court for his involvement in a ponzi scheme, or Reverend Alexander Merwin, who built schools and churches for the Latino communities of Southern California. This early society was chock-full of characters.

Today, the society bears little resemblance to its early form. It has become more focused on historical preservation, while dropping the anti-immigration and elitist attitudes which colored its early days. Though still male-only, the society now has several, lecture-focused, co-ed, public events each year. Mr. Merritt indicated that there is talk amongst the Society of Colonial Wars about incorporating more Spanish colonial history into their future efforts. If not, we Westerners will be there to pick up the slack!

— Alan Griffin

Down the Western Book Trail . . .

NEVADA GHOST TOWNS & DESERT ATLAS (Tenth, Revised Edition) by Stan Paher, photos by Nell Murbarger, maps by Paul Cirac, Nevada Publications, Reno, NV. Hardbound with dust jacket, 208 pages, 71 full-color maps, 530 photographic illustrations: $39.95. Paperback edition $32.50.



When the world was young, long before Hippies, Yuppies, and Millennials, there were Hot-Rodders. During the Eisenhower and Kennedy years, the Hot-Rodder's Mecca was Nevada. From all over the American West, we came to the Silver State to see what our souped-up, low-buck vehicles "could do." Nevada was our promised land: no speed limit, limitless stretches of two-lane blacktop through beautiful desert flatlands, few residents and no cops with their ticket books out. And when not tearing up the road, we weren't gambling, since what little money we teenaged speed-demons had went for Offenhouser and Iskanderian speed parts.

So instead of hitting the slots, sixty years ago we poked around old, abandoned mines and sagebrush-strewn ghost towns. At night, we slept out under the stars, next to our Studebaker Golden Hawks and '29 Roadsters on '32 rails. Nevada remains full of these silent sentinels of the recent past (no, not *hot rods*—ghost towns) and you can still visit them free of charge. The best way to find these lingering remnants of the late 19th and early 20th century high-tide of get-rich-quick settlements that bloomed then so rapidly died is by opening Stan Paher's *Nevada Ghost Towns & Desert Atlas.*

As a Los Angeles Corral member and proud Nevada resident, Paher has written the indispensible guide both for the tenderfoot exploring Nevada's scenic and historic riches for the very first time and the grizzled old septuagenarian revisiting the triumphal locations of his now-distant youth. The full-color maps by Paul Cirac cannot be improved upon and set the standard for all such interpretive cartographic renderings. Each map shows improved roads, 4WD-accessible dirt tracks, and the precise locations of the historic attractions more fully described in the accompanying text and photographs. Coverage does not stop at the state line, but spills over just enough into eastern California and western Arizona to not leave any explorer "high and dry." A useful "travel and desert safety hints" section follows the descriptive text; this should be read by all who do not consider themselves *bona fide* desert rats long before they head for the sagebrush.

Today, when aging Hot-Rodders get too claustrophobic in Phoenix, San José, or Los Angeles, we still head for the wide-open spaces of Nevada, and we take Paher's book with us. Most of us now drive a little slower, in vehicles with much higher clearance than our old road-rockets had, and we stop much more often to poke around our old friends, the abandoned mines and mining towns sprinkled across the length and breadth of Nevada. And, for those folk who live in those little states east of the Big Muddy, too far away to easily get to the Silver State, Paher's

most recent (10th edition) of his classic *Nevada Ghost Towns & Desert Atlas* is the next best thing to actually being there. Its hundreds of wonderful photographs by Nell Murbarger (1909-1991), the pre-eminent documentary photographer of old Nevada, bring each ghost town to life. The maps alone are worth the very reasonable purchase price of this encyclopedic work. Don't head for the Silver State without it! Highly recommended.

— Brian Dervin Dillon

LOS ANGELES IN THE 1930s: The WPA Guide to the City of Angels, Federal Writers Project, Works Progress Administrator, new introduction by David Kipen, 2011, University of California Press, $24.95

SAN FRANCISCO IN THE 1930s: The WPA Guide to the City by the Bay, Federal Writers Project, Works Progress Administration, new introduction by David Kipen, 2011, University of California Press, $24.95

The Works Progress Administration left many signs of its productions during the 1930s and early 1940s which continue to influence America today. Though made up of a wide variety of programs, the Federal Writer's Project portion brought forth a wide variety of publications, many of which are still the best in their areas. Published in short runs, many are quite hard to find today, but for any researcher, they are worth a place on the shelf.

Not the least of their efforts was the production of the remarkable American Guide Series between 1937 and 1942. Guides to each state, as well as a number of communities and other areas, were published through this federal make-work effort. All 48 states at the time were eventually represented, with cities ranging from MacGregor, Iowa, to Erie, Pennsylvania, and geographical regions from the Berkshire Hills of Massachusetts and Connecticut to the Arrowhead Country of Minnesota.

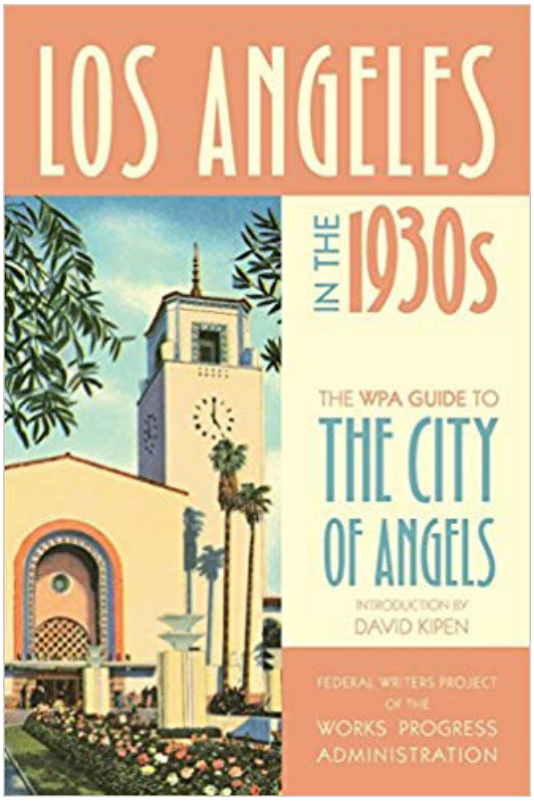
The books strove for a completeness which would probably never be seen today, as authors were assigned everything from historic sites to the history of the arts in the various locations. All of this information was then built around a guidebook format, which allowed users to build tours or trips around the books. The final products continue to prove valuable to researchers and writers of today.

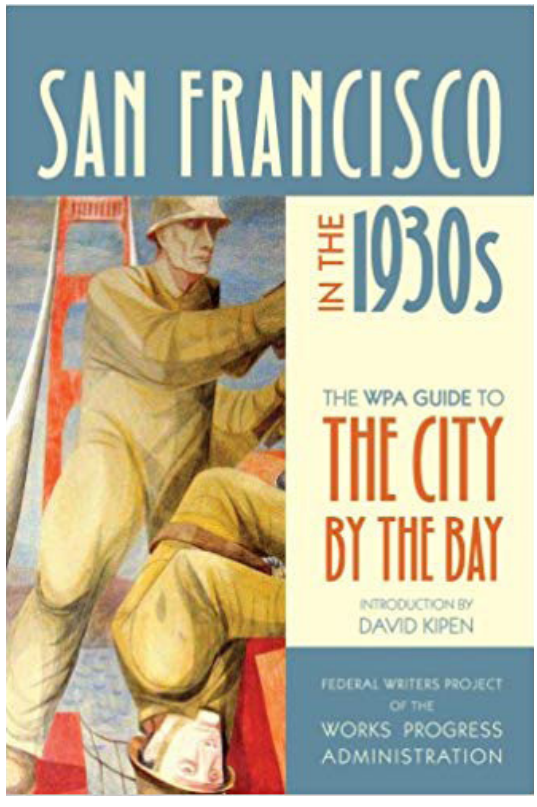
In 2011, the University of California Press reprinted the Los Angeles and San Francisco guides. With new introductions by David Kipen, who headed up the effort to get them reprinted, these volumes are now available in paperback. They provide a fascinating view of the two cities at the end of the 1930s, a period when there was hope locally, although worry on the horizon because of a fellow with an odd moustache who was starting a war in Europe.

The Los Angeles and San Francisco volumes were not the only California guides produced. San Diego and Santa Barbara also merited guides, as did the Monterey Peninsula and Death Valley. Other cities and areas throughout the country also rated volumes during the original writing, but most are long out of print and only available on the used book market.

By bringing the Los Angeles and San Francisco volumes back into print, the U.C. Press has brought the amazing wealth of information packed into the volumes back into easy access. These books provide an invaluable snapshot of the cities at the time of their writing. Because the authors tried for completeness, they produced books with historical value for any researcher into the twentieth century history of these towns.

I personally have used the American Guide Series volumes when writing monographs and articles on local and regional history. Their information, while dated, is amazingly accurate for the time, and often provides a look at details lost today. In the Los Angeles volume, for example, Kipen notes in his introduction that a reference to directions to a Hooverville are included in the book. Lost today, these 1930s encampments are a part of the efforts of Americans





to survive the Great Depression, and the idea of being directed to such a site today would be nearly unthinkable.

These books also predate the efforts to cleanse historical information for fear that non-professionals might take advantage of it. Towns, resorts, sites, and points of interest are all identified and directions given so that the traveler of the period can find them. With changes in roads and highways in the ensuing 70+ years, you might have some difficulty finding the sites, but at least you have a start.

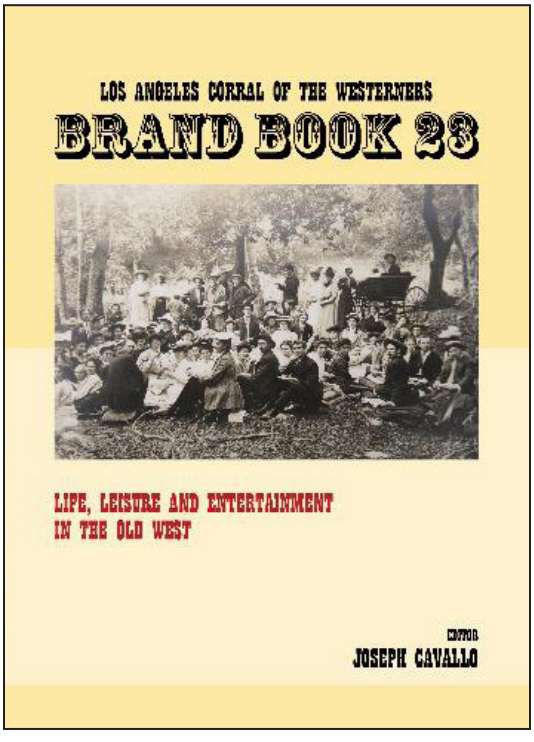
However, these are much more than just guide books. They were conceived as introductions to the overall history, culture, communities, celebrations, architecture, and life of the areas they covered. The Los Angeles volume includes, for example, a short history of radio stations in the Los Angeles area. What other guide book could you open to find KNX, KHJ, KFI, and many others; their origins; which national networks eventually absorbed them; and other details of Los Angeles radio history.

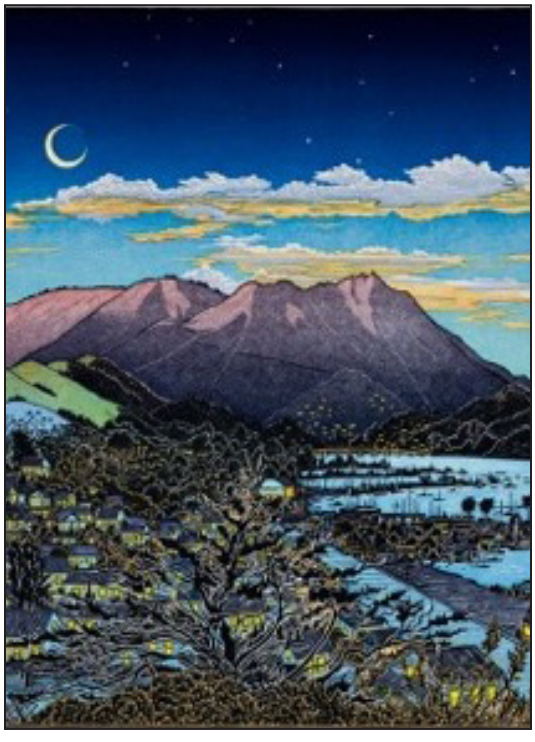
Included with the arts are interesting short reviews of the authors and artists of note in both San Francisco and Los Angeles. While there is a section on movie-making in the Los Angeles volume, the artists section of the San Francisco volume is significantly longer, reflecting the difference in the editorial supervisors for each volume. While in retrospect, we may see many others who should have been included, for those who are, the reviews are mainly accurate and a good short introduction.

Kipen's introductions tend toward the breathless tradition, but place the volumes in their literary historical period. The photo reproductions are problematic in some instances, as these are direct reproductions of the original volumes, but all in all these are a significant addition to any historian's or interested reader's bookshelf. If you don't have the originals, or don't want to throw an original copy into your vehicle when you are out traveling, these are fine copies to use.

— Mark Hall-Patton

Los Angeles Corral of the Westerners Brand Books:





BB 23 Still Available!

BB 24 Coming Soon!

Brand Book 23, edited by Joseph Cavallo, is entitled ***Life, Leisure and Entertainment in the Old West.*** It contains ten outstanding chapters, all by leading authors from the Los Angeles Corral. Price for Los Angeles Corral Members: $40. Please send orders, including your own return mailing address, to: PO Box 1891, San Gabriel, CA 91778, checks payable to *Westerners, Los Angeles Corral*, including a shipping charge of $5 for the first copy and $2 for each additional copy for USA mailings. Questions? Please call BB 23 Editor Joseph Cavallo at (626) 372-5126 to reserve your copy.

Brand Book 24, edited by Brian Dervin Dillon, is entitled ***Aloha, Amigos! The Richard H. Dillon Memorial Volume.*** Dick Dillon (1924-2016) was a world-famous western historian, librarian, teacher, and public speaker. He was the author of dozens of prize-winning full-length books, hundreds of articles, and more than a thousand book reviews. A 4th generation Californian and WWII WIA combat veteran, Dick Dillon was a member of the Los Angeles and the San Francisco Corrals and became Westerners International Living Legend No. 46 in 2003. ***Aloha Amigos*** incorporates a biography of RHD, culture-historical studies and paeans by his friends and admirers, and a comprehensive bibliography of his published works. Contributors from four different WI corrals include Will Bagley, Peter Blodgett, John Boessenecker, Matthew Boxt, Phil Brigandi, Robert Chandler, David Dary, James Delgado, Brian Dervin Dillon, Lynn Downey, Abraham Hoffman, Gary Kurutz, Valerie Sherer Mathes, James Shuttleworth, and Francis J. Weber. Foreword by Kevin Starr, cover art by Tommy Killion. Publication anticipated for the Fall of 2020. Please contact BB 24 Editor Brian D. Dillon (briandervindillon@gmail.com) for more information.