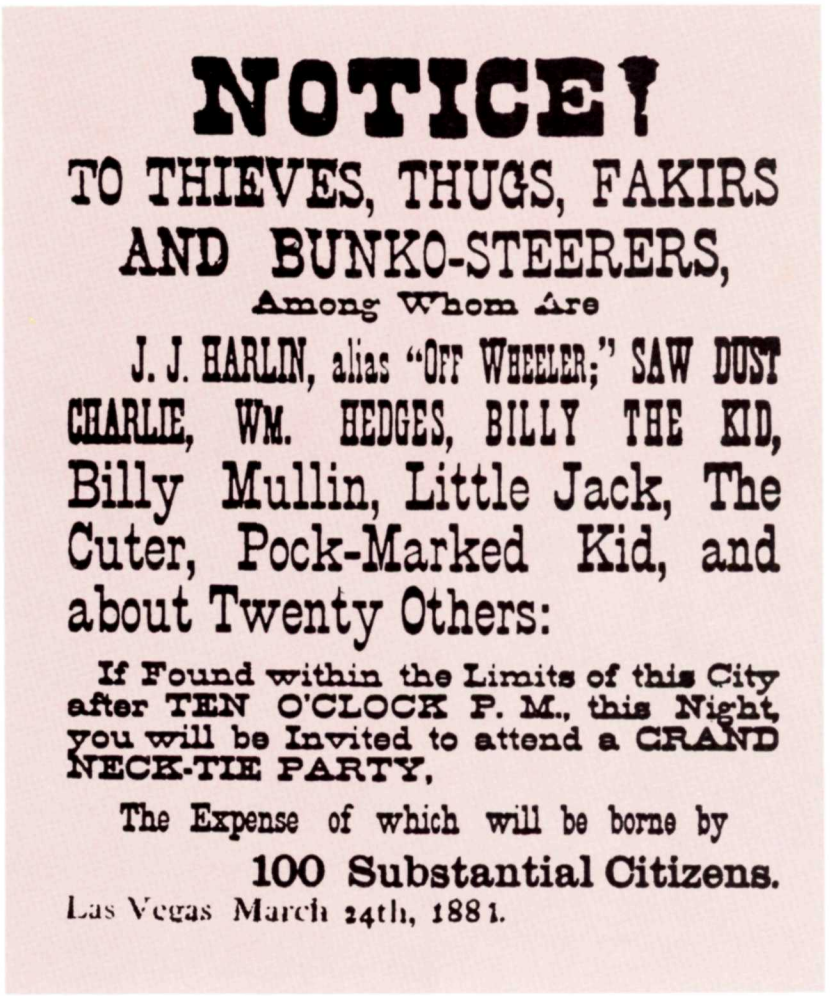
THE AMERICAN WEST



NOTICE!

TO THIEVES, THUGS, FAKIRS AND BUNKO-STEERERS,

Among Whom Are

J. J. HARLIN, alias "OFF WHEELER;" SAW DUST CHARLIE, WM. HEDGES, BILLY THE KID, Billy Mullin, Little Jack, The Cuter, Pock-Marked Kid, and about Twenty Others:

If Found within the Limits of this City after TEN O'CLOCK P. M., this Night, you will be Invited to attend a GRAND NECK-TIE PARTY,

The Expense of which will be borne by

100 Substantial Citizens.

Las Vegas March 24th, 1881.

Cover: Mandan chief Mato-Topé (Four Bears) posed in ceremonial regalia for this watercolor portrait by Swiss artist Karl Bodmer during the winter of 1833–34 when Bodmer, along with German Prince Alexander Philipp Maximilian, stayed at Fort Clark on the Upper Missouri. Some of Maximilian's observations on the Mandans and other Plains tribes, as well as additional Bodmer portraits, appear on pages 36–47.

Above: This notice, posted in 1881, attests not only to the abundance of undesirable characters in the Old West, but to the prevalence of nicknames. For a light-hearted pursuit of some of these aliases, turn to page 32.

COVER ILLUSTRATION FROM "PEOPLE OF THE FIRST MAN" PUBLISHED BY E. P. DUTTON & CO.
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When eight-year-old Dorothy Smith was jarred from her sleep on the morning of April 18, 1906, she awoke to a shattered world. Fleeing her family's San Francisco home, she, like the two children photographed above in a refugee camp, spent the first nights after the great 1906 earthquake out-of-doors. "I snuggled down in my makeshift bed on a city lot," she recalls, "shivering from excitement as well as the predawn chill. . . . This camping out would have been a lark under different circumstances." Dorothy Smith Geissinger's child's-eye view of her city, one of three articles on California earthquakes in this issue, begins on page 26.

THE AMERICAN WEST
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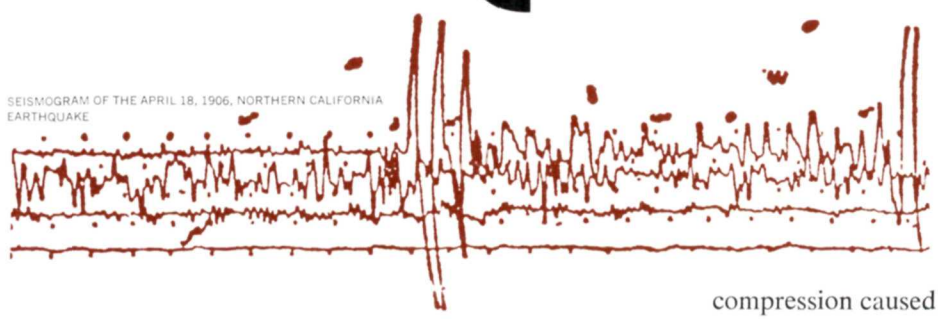
Giants in the Earth:

TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF CALIFORNIA EARTHQUAKES



SEISMOGRAM OF THE APRIL 18, 1906, NORTHERN CALIFORNIA EARTHQUAKE

by Larry L. Meyer

AN AMERICAN WEST without mountains would be as unthinkable as an Egypt without a Nile. The mostly north-south running, geologically young parallel ranges from the Rockies west simply have to be there or the American West would lose its essence, both topographic and mythic.

Much has been written about these mountains as determinants of climate and rainfall, soil depth and composition, flora and fauna. Anthropologists and sociologists have frequently identified them as molders of cultures. Others have pressed this determinism even further, into the province of poetry and myth, matching men to mountains, describing a breed of Westerner who has been variously and sometimes contradictorily characterized as bold, a braggart, religiously pious, bestially violent. In short, the ranges of the West have been shapers of history—no matter that the degree of shaping defies measurement.

But how and why were these mountains created in the first place? The West's earliest inhabitants could only have thought of them as godsent, a glorious whim of creation that awed and delighted the soul. The ever present towers on the land could be hallowed places where spirits dwelt, fearsome places where the enemy lived, bountiful in their season, beautiful in all seasons, never to be ignored.

Sophisticated later arrivals, the white men, tried to bring the matter down to earth. As explained in the geological canons of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, mountains were more or less random uplifts in an evolving earth. The planet was cooling from a molten state, from the outside in. With the attendant contraction, compression caused vertical movements in the earth's skin, and local chunks of outer crust squeezed upward.

Early in history, before geology was a science, it was noticed that where there were mountains there were also earthquakes. Not always, but often enough so that the two were commonly paired together. Why mountains and earthquakes seemed to share space was never adequately explained in the old geology. But a series of remarkable discoveries in the 1950s and 1960s literally turned man's conception of the earth ninety degrees, from a vertical to a horizontal orientation, giving earthquakes if not mountains a new profile and the both of them a common cause.

Plate tectonics is the brave new explanation of why the world is as it is, and why the American West is mountain country and earthquake country. The theory was born beneath the sea where astonished scientists found crustal rifts bordered by ridges that underlay the world's oceans like

the seams of a baseball. From these rifts molten magma from the earth's mantle continually rose and cooled, creating new crust. Astride these rifts the sea floor pulled apart under the force of tension and crawled a few centimeters a year away from the suboceanic crust factories, to be reclaimed by the hot mantle in mid-oceanic trenches or subduction zones at the margins of some oceans and continents.

In the 1960s this new knowledge was wed to the old and all-but-discredited theory of continental drift, which envisioned one supercontinent that mysteriously broke up between 135 and 200 million years ago to become the wandering continents of today. The number of crustal plates in this new view of a dynamic earth ranges from a low of six to a high of twenty, though about a dozen is the estimate of most geophysicists. If the plates are static or divergent in their movements, no great harm is done as far as man is concerned. But when they are on a collision course, the bumping and grinding trigger earthquakes, and the forces of compression raise mountains on the land.

The immense and restless Pacific plate is among the orneriest chunks of drifting lithosphere, in conflict almost everywhere it goes. In the far-western United States its adversary is the massive North American plate, which carries all but a fragment of the continent and much of the Atlantic Ocean as well. Confrontation is assured by the directions the two plates are moving: the Pacific is doing its best to shoulder its way northwest, while the North American slab is following the Turnerian imperative and heading west.

Professor Don B. Anderson of the California Institute of Technology, a distinguished geophysicist and an authority on the formation of the San Andreas Fault, theorizes that the two irresistible forces met between 25 and 30 million years ago, when the westering North American plate overrode a suboceanic crustal buildup known as the East Pacific Rise. The face of the West has been changing ever since. Most geophysicists share Anderson's belief that California's San Andreas Fault is the front line where this battle of push and shove is being fought. Southwest of the great rift, a third of California, which was once situated several hundreds of miles south of where it is today, has thickened through the eons of conflict and "risen" from the Pacific's depths. Northeast of the San Andreas, tectonic stresses have folded the thick continental crust into mountain ranges as the struggle goes on.

There's widespread agreement that plate conflict is responsible for the land deformations that extend east all the way to the Rockies, even if the precise nature of local crustal activity is still little understood. Supporting that conclusion is the seismic instability that characterizes so much of the mountainous West. One particular band of high seismic activity extends from the mountains of western Montana south to the Wyoming-Idaho border and down through west-central Utah. Several moderate-sized earthquakes have rattled this mountainous region, including a sharp tremor that triggered a landslide in Montana in August of 1959 which took twenty-eight lives. Western Washington is also prone to having the earth shake, and the troubled Cascade Range is a frequent source of rumbling. West-central Nevada is even more unstable, subject to severe shocks that have periodically wrenched a sparsely settled landscape.

And then there is California . . . Author Carey McWilliams has defined the Golden State as "the Great Exception." It is that. In the genuine uniqueness of its history. In the romantic aura that has clung to the place since the Europeans first found it and dressed it in legend. In the long-standing restlessness and hedonism of its peoples. Right down to its schizoid geology, it remains the great exception.

California is the most seismic of our states, besting even trembling Alaska for that dubious distinction. And within its more than 158,000 square miles of staggering geographical variety, the notorious San Andreas and its extended family of faults have not merely influenced history indirectly as mountain builders but have repeatedly been killers, bearers of an ancient terror not duplicated by any other natural calamity. In California, earthquakes have made history and are certain to continue making it.

This article is based in part on the author's research for California Quake, *scheduled for release early this year by the Sherbourne Press.*

WHEN BOURBON SPAIN belatedly decided to occupy Alta California, its primary motives were to protect its claim to that far country from the imagined encroachments of Russia and England and to reap a Christian harvest in heathen souls, not to seek the gold and silver and natural wonders that for more than two centuries had been associated with the California of legend. When the land and sea parties rendezvoused at San Diego in 1769, it is said that one of the first things Father of Missions Junípero Serra learned from the Indians was that there had recently been a severe earthquake "caused by the giant who moves in the earth," according to the fanciful explanation. If the Spaniards had any doubts about the truthfulness of the report, they were to be soon dispelled.

Gaspar de Portolá, the appointed governor of the Californias and the leader of the expeditionary force, had orders to locate the bay of Monterey, which had been praised as a fine natural harbor by early mariners. Portolá wasted little time in attending to business. In the summer of 1769 he left Serra and the sick in San Diego and headed north toward his accidental discovery of San Francisco Bay, accompanied by thirty-five soldiers, twenty-four retainers, and two priests. Their journey into a land unknown began uneventfully. The Indians they met were friendly, the pas-

turage was plentiful, and the country they traversed looked fertile and promising. Then, at one in the afternoon of July 28, 1769, as the Spaniards camped on the banks of a river not far from the Anaheim of today, the earth leaped under their feet—for about "half as long as an Ave Maria," according to Father Juan Crespi. An Indian who was visiting the newcomers was as alarmed as they and immediately began entreating the heavens for an end to it. In vain. Ten minutes later came another jolt, to be followed by two more that afternoon.

The shaken Spaniards called their river the Rio Jesús de los Temblores (though it would later acquire the gentler name Santa Ana) and the following day resumed their historic march north. Days of sharp aftershocks were to hound them all the way to the Los Angeles River.

Later geologists had no way of knowing the magnitude of the quake, but they were in agreement that it was a major one. For the Spaniards who experienced it, the unexpected welcome must have been sobering—and confirmation that California did, indeed, possess "natural wonders."

The Russian and English threats to a Spanish California never materialized, and missionization soon became the chief business in a pastoral outpost of empire. The mission was the civilizing unit, mission architecture the great gift of Spain to future Californians. Enduring is a word that is sometimes used to describe California's mission churches. But the fact is that those architecturally distinctive structures of unreinforced masonry did not endure on California's unsteady soil—not in their original forms, anyway.

Early mission records make frequent mention of temblors that kept padres and neophytes propping up and patching their fractured buildings. Yet for the first forty-three years of the Spanish occupation, earthquakes were nuisances, momentarily frightening to be sure, but events that could be lived with.

The year 1812 saw the United States at war with Great Britain a second time, redeeming a hard-won independence. But on the distant west coast across the continent, all remained peaceful for the first eleven months of the year. Then, as always without warning, was ushered in a period that the Spaniards were to call "El Año de los Temblores." December 8 fell on a Sunday that dawned warm and clear and still, without even the sea breeze that usually brushed the white walls of Mission San Juan Capistrano. The bells were rung, summoning the faithful to mass in the recently completed cruciform church that was the pride of master mason Isodoro Aguilar. The service was nearing its end, and about fifty Indians were assembled in the 90 by 180-foot church. Suddenly, accompanied by a rushing sound, the earth beneath them seemed to rise vertically, rotate horizontally. The massive stones in the thick arched dome vibrated, then came plummeting down. The priest at the altar escaped with his life, as did a handful of the Indians in the congregation. But some forty other worshipers were crushed and buried beneath the rubble. The tremor was felt from Santa Barbara to San Diego and most severely at Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, where the main altar spilled its burden of statues and the church bell tower toppled onto clerical quarters.

December 8 became December 21, and the earth shuddered again—this time northwest of the previous grief, near Santa Barbara, where the local church was battered beyond repair and several mission buildings were totally destroyed. At the Santa Barbara presidio, Commandante José Argüello was in a quandary: his stronghold was in ruins, yet the local Spaniards and Indians came to huddle with his soldiers for protection against an enemy that couldn't be fought. Worse, the earth wouldn't stop trembling and continued its anxious movements through the spring of 1813, terrifying one and all and opening up in the earth what the Spaniards described as "sulfur-spewing volcanoes."

The devastation was not confined to Santa Barbara. At San Buenaventura the mission was fractured and appeared to be sinking into the treacherous soil. At distant San Fernando the church was damaged, and Mission Santa Inés, near modern-day Solvang, had to be rebuilt. Finally, in the peaceful valley where Lompoc now basks in the sun, Mission La Purísima Concepción had many of its church buildings and Indian adobes destroyed. Mission records make no mention of casualties. But in 1960 a contractor excavating in Lompoc unearthed several skeletons buried beneath shards of red-tiled roofs, which were in turn buried under silt that had washed down atop the original mission site.

The "year of earthquakes" did pass, and the Spaniards rebuilt what nature had razed. But their days under the California sun were nonetheless numbered. In 1822 title to the land that intermittently trembled passed first to Mexico, then in 1848 to Anglo-Americans answering the call to Manifest Destiny.

LOS ANGELES in the 1850s was a scruffy little cow town in the business of selling beef to miners in the north, with a deserved reputation for lawlessness and violence. Order of a kind did come after 1854, when the federal government authorized a military post ostensibly for Indian control, but as much for Indian protection against rapacious whites moving into the south end of the Central Valley. Fort Tejon took adobe form not in Los Angeles; rather, it was situated some forty miles due north where the Tehachapi Mountains merge with Southern California's transverse ranges in a notorious geological badlands. Here the 650-mile-long San Andreas Fault departs from its normal northwest-southeast axis and jogs eastward—and into a dangerous bind.

Fort Tejon became home to the First Dragoons, a proud unit of horse soldiers that would later evolve into the First Cavalry Division, mechanized. The troopers in their sky-

blue uniforms trimmed with orange cord spent their busy days on endless patrols, in pursuit of rustlers and renegades, becoming accustomed to their picturesque mountain home.

The Friday morning of January 9, 1857, dawned clear and frosty but with a reveille sans bugle: at 0630 hours the earth heaved under the soldiers' bunks. Nothing unusual about that. Minor tremors had already become a familiar fact of camp life. Lt. Col. B. L. Beall, the base commander, was not among the early risers. But at 8:33 A.M. the earth surged from beneath his bed, and he leaped up and out the front door of his crumbling quarters, narrowly escaping a braining from falling plaster. Outside he reeled on the pitching earth and with his astonished men watched Fort Tejon in the process of disintegration: the quartermaster's storehouse, the hospital, the officers' quarters, the barracks —all thirteen of the buildings—either collapsing or being knocked askew.

Miraculously, Beall and his men came through the two-minute-long convulsion without a serious injury. From the surrounding area, however, incoming reports told of widespread suffering: a Mexican woman's skull had been crushed in the collapse of a ranch house; the nearby San Sebastian Indian Reservation had many injured; multitudes of fish in the mountain lakes had been cast upon the land to rot; great fissures had opened in the earth—one had entombed a cow, another had belched great clouds of dust into the sky, and still another had yawned open and then slammed shut again, creating a ridge ten feet wide and several feet high. It was as though the whole country was coming apart at the seams.

Most of Los Angeles was breakfasting that January morning, and it wasn't long after their tables had begun shimmying that they ran shrieking into the streets, to be joined by late risers, half-naked or in their night clothes. Witnesses claimed that the surface of the earth rolled as if it were a field of wheat beaten by the wind, and the Los Angeles River was seen to slosh from side to side and then jump its bed entirely. The town's buildings cracked, store shelves spilled their wares, and an aged man walking toward the Plaza Church pitched to earth, dead, apparently of heart failure.

That night Angelenos built bonfires in the streets as their buildings groaned through a series of strong aftershocks. Many agreed that they were lucky. Had the quake spent its force all at once instead of over a full two minutes, there might not have been a building standing, and the grave diggers would have been working for weeks.

The wonders wrought by the great earthquake extended far from Fort Tejon and Los Angeles. In El Monte men and horses were thrown down in their fields, in San Bernardino —where a terrible noise issued from the mountains to the north—well water turned white as milk. West of the epicenter, artesian wells in the Santa Clara Valley abruptly went dry while others bubbled to life. North, in the Central Valley, the Mokelumne River jumped its banks and the

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San Francisco has been rocked by great convulsions in the earth at least three times in its history. The damage shown in this old photograph resulted from an earthquake in October 1868.

CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Most heavily-hit town in the April 18, 1906, California earthquake was Santa Rosa, fifty miles north of San Francisco. As in the larger city, devastation from shocks was followed by fire. Santa Rosa is located some distance from the San Andreas fault, and the severe damage was blamed in large part on poorly constructed buildings.

CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Southern California is as much subject to earth tremors as is the northern half of the state. This view shows some of the wreckage in Santa Barbara's business district that resulted from the shocks of June 29, 1925.

Kern River was observed flowing upstream for awhile.

The so-called Fort Tejon quake was felt from Sacramento to Northern Mexico, and though there were no seismometers at the time, seismologists have, by extrapolation, estimated it as high as 8.3 on the Richter Scale, which would make it the greatest quake to have struck Southern California—perhaps all California—in historic times. Richter Scale magnitudes are assigned on the basis of the amplitude of shock waves recorded on seismographs. It is a logarithmic rather than arithmetic scale, meaning that every whole number increase represents a ten-fold jump in ground displacement. Thus, a reading of 6.0—the beginning of the "moderate" spread on the scale—is of 10 times greater magnitude than a 5.0 quake. A 7.0 reading (the bottom of the "major" or "severe" earthquake range) is 100 times the magnitude of a 5.0. And an 8.0, the base of the "great" or "giant" quake range, is 1,000 times greater in magnitude than a 5.0.

The Fort Tejon tremor, which left 225 miles of surface scar along the southern San Andreas Fault, is the first giant quake known to have struck California. That it took only two lives has been attributed to luck, the relative remoteness of the epicenter, and the sparseness of Southern California's population in 1857.

UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL

One of California's most severe earthquakes during recent years hit near Los Angeles on February 9, 1971, causing half a billion dollars in property losses and leaving more than fifty dead. Scientists haven't yet learned enough about earthquakes to accurately predict just when or where the next great California shock will occur—but that it will strike is a geologic certainty.

FAULTS ARE FRACTURES in the earth's crust along which opposing blocks of rock suddenly shift following long periods of mounting stress. Generally speaking, the bigger the fault, the greater the potential magnitude of the earthquake. The second of California's trio of giant killer quakes was not attributable to the great San Andreas, the logical choice for grand-scale mischief. Instead, it was the Owens Valley Fault, a longitudinal rift that underlays that string-bean valley on the starkly scenic backside of California's Sierra Nevada.

In 1872 the remote Owens Valley was miners' territory. A series of gold and silver strikes had brought them running, to light for a time in such boomtowns and camps as Independence, Lone Pine, Coso, Laws, Kearsarge, Chrysopolis, Cerro Gordo. Life at the valley diggings was true to the colorful stereotype of the Old West's mining days. Society had a strong masculine flavor. Men were optimistic and industrious. Men were disappointed and violent. There were Indian troubles. And there were mountains.

At 2:24 A.M. on the morning of March 26 the silence in the sleeping valley was broken by a tremendous roar that was likened to a massive, rapid-fire artillery barrage from the direction of the Sierra Nevada. A spasm in the earth raced eastward with the sound.

Although all the valley settlements were in for a severe shaking, it was Lone Pine that stood directly and ever so briefly in harm's way. Some of the town's 250-odd inhabitants died violently in their sleep, as every adobe and stone building came down in the shaking that was variously re-

ported to have lasted from one to three minutes. Before the first aftershock at 6:30 A.M., survivors were laying out the twenty-two dead in the blacksmith shop.

Lone Pine's tragedy got a salty summation in the doggerel of W. H. Creighton, which appeared in the *Inyo Independent* for April 6, 1872:

Yes, stranger; we had a leettle shake
Here, and all 'round Lone Pine;
'Peared to me as like old Phosphorus
Had charge of the helm for a time.
It warn't no common shock, you bet!
Not one of your wavy kind,
But licket-y-split and rattle-ty-bang,
Just which way it had a mind.
Houses throwed down? You'd best believe!
There warn't a 'dobe wall
Nor yet a stone one, more'n one foot high,
That didn't have to fall;
It throwed the bottoms clean from under,
And crumbled the walls to dust,
And them as was sleepen' twixt 'dobe walls
Was them as fared the wust.
Anyone killed? Why where you bin,
That you ain't heerd the news?
How women and young'ins and men lay dead
In ones and threes and twos?
You see, 'twas two o'clock at night,
And them as received their call
Never knowed what struck 'em, or if they did
They hadn't no time to squall! . . .
How did I get out? Well, stranger, now
You've got me there, I swear;
The hole I cum thro'—It couldn't be found,
And I reckon it wasn't there.
I only know that I'm here to-day,
Lookin' over this desolate sand,
And I only hope He'll deal kindly with them
As is gone to the unknown land.

The final death toll for the Owens Valley, twenty-seven, fails to indicate the power of the 1872 tremor. But the reported changes in the earth's features do. Numerous fissures rent the valley. Ponds and lakes disappeared, while others were miraculously born. The Owens River went abruptly dry for six hours where it bordered Independence, then resumed its flow, but along new channels in places. Landslides in the Sierra Nevada choked canyons with the detritus of broken rock, opening new avenues for cascading Sierra streams and altering the lay of the land. At Owens Lake, now dry but then up to ten miles wide and seventeen miles long, the waters reared in a perpendicular wall running lengthwise down its center. This seismic seiche (as freshwater "tidal waves" are properly called) then collapsed and spread well beyond the lake's old shoreline.

On the opposite, western side of the Sierra Nevada, John Muir, in residence in his beloved Yosemite Valley, was awakened by the temblor. Frightened and elated, he ran from his cabin into the moonlight, shouting, "A noble earthquake! A noble earthquake!" and he left us a memorable account of what followed, which reads in part:

"I feared that the sheer-fronted Sentinel Rock, towering above my cabin, would be shaken down, and I took shelter back of a large yellow pine, hoping it might protect me from at least the smaller outbounding boulders. For a minute or two the shocks became more and more violent—flashing horizontal thrusts mixed with a few twists and battering, explosive, upheaving jolts—as if Nature were wrecking her Yosemite temple, and getting ready to build a still better one. . . . The Eagle Rock on the south wall, about a half mile up the Valley, gave way and I saw it falling in thousands of the great boulders I had so long been studying, pouring to the Valley floor in a free curve luminous from friction, making a terribly sublime spectacle—an arc of glowing passionate fire, fifteen hundred feet span, as true in form and as serene in beauty as a rainbow in the midst of the stupendous, roaring rock-storm. The sound was so tremendously deep and broad and earnest, the whole earth like a living creature seemed at last to have found a voice and to be calling to her sister planets."

The Owens Valley quake was felt over some 640,000 square miles of the American West, leading twentieth-century seismologists to estimate its magnitude at a whopping 8.3, putting it on a par with the Fort Tejon shaker. And when all the after-the-fact surveys were done, it was found that relative to the Owens Valley floor, the granitic, geologically young Sierra Nevada had lurched as high as twenty-three vertical feet and slid laterally north to a maximum of eighteen feet—a classic spasm in the normally drawn-out process of mountain building.

THE LAST of California's great killer quakes is the most celebrated. Indeed, probably no natural disaster in U.S. history has been more written about than the events which began at 5:12 A.M. on April 18, 1906, in San Francisco, when the two locked walls of the northern San Andreas Fault broke free. The 8.25-magnitude giant quake rocked the city for more than a minute, leveling many of its structures, severing its vital water supply, and igniting fires that over the next three-plus days would consume most of the city. The catastrophe left San Francisco 4.7 square miles of charred ruins and took somewhere between 450 and 1,000 lives.

What is sometimes forgotten, however, is that the tragedy was not localized. The shearing action along the San Andreas extended some two hundred miles, from the Mendocino coast in the north to San Juan Bautista in the south, and death and destruction attended the horizontal earth displacement from top to bottom—and in some places at a

Continued on page 63


DENTISTS
TIVOLI
MISS
TIMIDITY
THE
ALTUR
HY?

Death and Rebirth of a City:

SAN FRANCISCO·1906

by Roger & Nancy Olmsted

MUHLMANN COLLECTION, SAN FRANCISCO MARITIME MUSEUM

WELLS FARGO BANK HISTORY ROOM

OPPOSITE: MARKET AND TURK STREETS, SAN FRANCISCO, PRIOR TO THE SAN FRANCISCO EARTHQUAKE

ABOVE: VIEW AT THE SAME LOCATION, FOLLOWING THE EARTHQUAKE AND FIRE

The Phoenix, the mythic bird that is reborn from its own ashes, was the civic emblem of San Francisco long before its destruction and revival in 1906. The city of tents and shacks had first burned on Christmas Eve in the soggy winter of 1849–50, and on five more occasions within the next two years the burgeoning metropolis of the West went up in smoke. In those times, views of the ruins were as common as scenes of the world of shipping in Yerba Buena Cove.

If in the spring of '06 it had been more than half a century since the fire demon had wasted the city, there was no complacency on the part of such knowledgeable observers as firemen and insurance underwriters, for San Francisco was as vulnerable to a general conflagration as had been Chicago or Baltimore. The fire department was considered one of the best in the world—but only because the risk was among the highest in the world. A city of closely-packed frame buildings, sometimes sheathed in brick, its few up-to-date "fireproof" structures in reality had no more than a fireproof frame and shell.

Fire chief Dennis Sullivan had for years sought to install a salt-water fire main system and to repair the emergency cisterns built beneath many of the downtown intersections back in the days when water mains were obviously inadequate to cope with a major conflagration. But between the sacred limitation on the tax rate and the pressing requirements of graft, contingency was dismissed as frivolity.

Thus, on April 17, 1906, the Pioneer Monument of the Native Sons, then at the corner of Turk and Market, presided over a metropolis that had long since lost the self-consciousness of the prototype of that bronze figure who had seen the rise of commerce and the birth of cities. Within days the passersby might find in him cause for reflection, if not inspiration.

Roger and **Nancy Olmsted** are free-lance writers living in Kentfield, California. A former editor of this magazine, Roger is coauthor (with T. H. Watkins) of the recently published book "Mirror of the Dream, an Illustrated History of San Francisco."

COLLECTION OF ROGER AND NANCY OLMSTED

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"It wasn't the 'quake that did the damage: it was the fire," is a leitmotif familiar to any San Franciscan old enough to have grown up among adults who were in their active years in 1906. The two roaring, rolling waves of shocks that struck between 5:12 and 5:14 a.m. on April 18 were a proper catastrophe in their own right, however. The 8.25 Richter Scale reading of the shake was only a fraction of the intensity of a couple of recent quakes around the world—which may give you some idea of what is possible come the inevitable Next Time—but fully a hundred times as strong as the 6.25 quake that will scare the wits out of you and nearly a thousand times stronger than a jolt capable of cracking plaster and windows.

Some 450 people were killed in the San Francisco disaster, most of them by collapsing buildings or as the result of being trapped and subsequently burned to death in the wreckage of such structures as the four-story Valencia Hotel. The worst of the early blazes—the "Ham & Eggs" fire—started at Hayes and Gough when a housewife calmed her nerves sufficiently to whip up breakfast on a stove with a broken flue. By midafternoon, hundreds of surrounding structures, including the collapsed apartment houses pictured on the opposite page, were gone.

South of the Slot (Market Street) a dozen fires broke out in the early morning of Wednesday, April 18—some as the result of broken flues, some from gas escaping from broken service pipes or mains. A district of flimsy workers' houses and flimsier industrial premises, the South of Market, from the sailors' boarding houses of Steuart Street to the "swing" into the Mission, went up like a torch. Here people sometimes had to run before the firestorm—though the characteristic street scene of San Francisco burning is that of a motley group interestedly observing a phenomenon of increasingly curious persistence.

At right, a morning scene at Fifth near Market; opposite, a while later with the south side of Market nearly gone, the Emporium and the Bancroft Building gutted, the Call tower burning, the flag still flying from the Palace Hotel—but not for long.

THIS PAGE: CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SAN FRANCISCO CITY AND COUNTY ART COMMISSION, COLLECTION OF HALL OF JUSTICE

From Russian Hill and Nob Hill, from Telegraph Hill and other vantage points the people gathered, not yet in refuge from the flames, but the better to view the spectacle. By early Wednesday afternoon the South of Market financial district fire had coalesced in a single front more than a mile long. The curtain of smoke rose with firestorm draft, an ever-changing backdrop of ominous hues behind the silhouetted ramparts of the most substantial parts of the downtown. Yellows and reds and purples twisted in endless combination and mixture with gray and brown and black billows. The moments of the earthquake had been a half-million private experiences; the days of fire were to be a collective drama, where everyone was at once actor and spectator.

Arnold Genthe, the great San Francisco photographer, took those first few hours as many did—he went out to look around. Turning his footsteps towards the Bohemian Club on lower Post Street, he was told that dynamiting was about to begin in an effort to halt the flames. At his studio on Sutter, he found his entrance barred by a militiaman. A sociable offer gained him access to a bottle of wine and a supply of film while the soldier belted down Genthe's whiskey.

Atop Russian Hill, Genthe caught one of the forever great images of catastrophe (opposite page). On the skyline are the Hall of Justice (left), Merchants' Exchange, and Mills Building (right). All these buildings, and hundreds of their inferiors, would be gone by nightfall.

In the photograph at right, the Spreckels Tower, home of the "Morning Call," is all but gutted. The fire crept to it from the south and west, the intense heat ignited window frames and other woodwork, and San Francisco's tallest building burned floor by floor from the top downward. The Appraiser's Building, the Post Office, and the Mint, manned by Federal employees who refused orders of police and militia and stayed to beat out vagrant flames, survived in the midst of blocks of destruction.

Although the heat generated in burning buildings melted huge I-beams and fused porcelain, the hurricane winds of the true firestorm generally were absent. In only one photograph have we seen a few wildly fleeing people scattered by wind-blown flamebursts—but then, perhaps not many photographers were hanging around the really hot spots.

BOTH PAGES: CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Wednesday the fire burned south of Market to Townsend Street and north of Market to Portsmouth Square and the Saint Francis Hotel. Thursday it swept out the Mission to Twentieth and over Nob and Russian hills to Van Ness Avenue. Friday it circled back across the North Beach district to the foot of Telegraph Hill and the waterfront. Saturday it rained and the red-hot ruins steamed.

Thousands of refugees streamed down Market Street to the shaken but unburned Ferry Building; others just clustered with odd belongings at the fringes of the 490 devastated blocks. Soon San Francisco would be the biggest camptown since the last gathering of the Golden Horde.

In those last days of April 1906, San Franciscans who were not so fortunate as to have friends or relatives in Berkeley or Oakland or other nearby undamaged communities, doubled up in the Western Addition or tented out in the shantytowns constructed—officially or unofficially—in the parks and other suitable vacant spaces. Above all, they learned to stand in line. The free lunch was upon them in an institutional form they had never anticipated as the Army and the Red Cross and other agencies doled out the provisions or prepared meals.

During the first days following the earthquake and fire, perhaps 300,000 slept out-of-doors—many for fear that another shock would demolish their unburnt dwellings. And at the outset of the recovery, indoor cooking was forbidden for fear of broken flue tiles. People moved back in and moved the cookstoves out to the sidewalk. But they still depended on rations, and as late as June 50,000 were still camping out. All kinds of mock-epics came from the period: our favorite is "Barriers Burned: A Rhyme of the San Francisco Breadline," by Charles Field:

THIS PAGE: SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

It ain't such a terrible long time ago
That Mrs. Van Bergen and me
Though livin' near by to each other, y' know,
Was strangers, for all ye could see,
For she had a grand house an' horses to drive,
An' a wee rented cottage was mine,
But now we need rations to keep us alive
An' we're standin' together in line.

An' Mrs. Van Bergen she greets me these days
With a smile an' a nod of the head;
"Ah, Mrs. McGinnis, how are you?" she says,
"An' do you like Government bread?"
She fetches a bag made of crockydile skin
An' I got a sack when we meet,
But the same kind of coffee an' crackers goes in,
An' it's all of it cooked in the street.

Sure, Mrs. Van Bergen is takin' it fine,
Ye'd think she was used to the food;
We're gettin' acquainted a-standin' in line,
An' it's doing the both of us good.
An' Mr. Van Bergen and Michael, my man,
(They've always been friendly, the men)
They're gettin' together and layin' a plan
For buildin' the city again!

CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

It is said that the first time a banker rushed to open his fireproof vault, all of the paper contents burst into flame–and that thereafter a vigilant "cooling off" period was observed. But of course the great banking story of the earthquake and fire is the decision of A. P. Giannini to reopen the Bank of Italy from a handcart before the embers had cooled, using $80,000 he had buried in his home together with deposits he could raise from those Italians on unburned Telegraph Hill who were wont to keep their cash in their mattress. The Bank of America, now the world's largest, took flight on the wings of the phoenix.

As can be seen below, the flags were flying from California Street skyscraper shells long before the cable cars were back in business. And the wreckage of City Hall, a monument to a quarter-century of boondoggling, was the locale of a favorite post-fire promenade. Among the "Class A" steel-frame-and-concrete buildings in San Francisco, only the monument that graft built just plain collapsed at the first shake. It is said that the walls were found packed with such inexpensive construction materials as newspapers . . .

CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MUHLMANN COLLECTION, SAN FRANCISCO MARITIME MUSEUM

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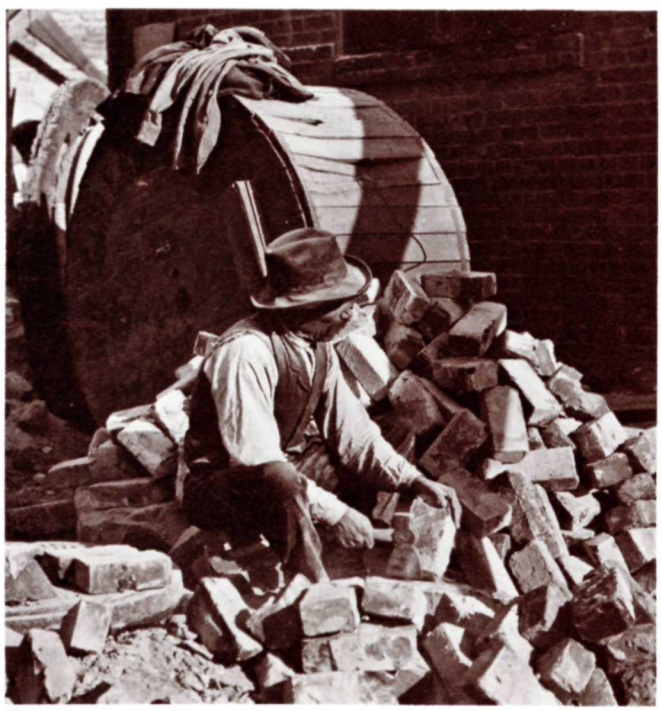

COLLECTION OF ROGER AND NANCY OLMSTED

As the new Palace Hotel rises in place of the bay-windowed wonder of Billy Ralston, dynamite brings down a relic of San Francisco's Gilded Age. Meanwhile, out on Van Ness Avenue, where most of the west side survived the fire, the Emporium, "Greatest store in the West," spreads out in a verandah-like addition to a Victorian mansion pending reconstruction of its Market Street temple.

Lumber—and more lumber—is everywhere as the steam schooners and three-and-four-mast schooners from the Northwest flood the biggest market since the Southern California boom of the 1880s. And brick: thousands of unskilled laborers clean up mountains of used brick, while the brickyards work round-the-clock. The former Lillian Remillard, heiress to five brickworks around the bay, was with her mother, looking for a Fifth Avenue mansion to serve as headquarters for her operatic studies, when the April 18 headlines hit the New York streets. She recalled to us a few years ago that her mother said, "Lillian, how lucky we are to be here!"

"You don't know how lucky we can be," this able young lady replied. "Pack for San Francisco—and get ready to make brick!"

COLLECTION OF DOROTHY SMITH GEISSINGER

In this 1906 family portrait, eight-year-old Dorothy Smith poses with Mama, Papa, and brother Lisle.

922 Oak Street

A Personal Remembrance of the San Francisco Earthquake

by Dorothy Geissinger

VIOLENTLY AWAKENED to a jerking, creaking world, I clung to the edges of my bed as it walked away from the wall. It was early morning on April 18, 1906, in San Francisco, California, and I was a frightened girl of eight.

My third-floor inside bedroom heaved and shook wildly. The timbers creaked and groaned with every movement. Objects in the room flew about. For a long time the room didn't stop shaking, nor did I. When at last it did stop, there were only a few seconds of complete silence before another noisy, terrifying tremor began. I looked up in fear at the reinforced skylight, my pride and joy when it rained, but now a potential danger should it shake loose and crash down upon me. Then I saw my twelve-year-old brother making his uncertain way toward me. Pale and just as puzzled as I, he sat on my bed and threw a protective arm over me. "What is it, Lisle?" I asked.

"It's a whale of an earthquake!" he answered. When the violence let up momentarily he said, "Come on, Dorothy!"

We made our way to the hall door. As we grasped the doorframe to keep on our feet, we heard Papa call, "Are you all right? Hold on till I get you!" We watched him zigzag his way toward us up the hall, which was adjacent to forty-five stairs straight down.

Papa's long white nightshirt flounced out from side to side as he slammed into the wall, then against the balustrade, as though he were skating. The humor of it briefly struck us. We giggled and somehow felt less tense. But

WELLS FARGO BANK HISTORY ROOM

"Men returned to their homes for hammers, nails, and blankets. Soon the pounding of hammer on nail resounded."

almost at once a thought sobered me: "If the balustrade should give way . . ."

My uncle burst from his front bedroom, calling out, "Is everyone all right?"

Papa told us firmly, "Give me your hands."

Mama called anxiously, "Are the children all right, Kingsley?"

"They're O K, Tiny."

"Thank the Lord!"

Papa guided us safely past the balustrade, and we joined Mama in the living room. There the upright piano had walked out to the middle. A gold double-eagle coin, slid underneath for safekeeping, now gleamed in the half-light. Our heavy plate-glass mirror, the edge of which normally rested along the full length of the mantle, had swung out from the wall, its weight now supported only by wire and nail. Bric-a-brac lay shattered below. Suddenly I looked up and gasped, then hastily stepped back. There, poised above the broken ceiling, showing through a gaping hole, and ready to fall at our feet or on our heads at the next quake, lay the bricks from our fallen chimney. Mama quickly took me out, saying, "Don't come into this room again. It's too dangerous."

At the door to the dining room I stopped short and drew a quick breath. The white cloth, bowl of sugar, and everything else were black with soot spewed from the stovepipe, which in its fall had cracked against the table edge.

Suddenly Mama shouted from the pantry doorway, "Oh! My *Lord!*"

I ran to her and was horrified to see the floor knee-deep in a rainbow of color: preserves, flour, apricots, peaches, tomatoes, sugar, and much to my dismay, Mama's prized "hotcha," a thick sauce of tomatoes, onions, hot and sweet peppers, spices, and vinegar. The whole bristled with broken glass. The sight as well as the odor nauseated me.

"Oh, Mama!" I sympathized. "All your work wasted. What a job to clean up this mess. Where would we start?"

She shrugged, then salvaged an orange for each of us and cautioned, "Don't use the water except that in the teakettle."

Lisle asked hopefully, "You mean I don't have to wash?"

Mama and I exchanged amused glances. "Boys!" I said derisively.

We hurriedly dressed while inspecting the damage. Mama calmly spread sheets on the floor and tossed in essential clothing. She tied the four corners securely. "Lisle, you go down below this window, and I'll drop them to you. Stay there till we come." Papa gathered blankets and pillows and threw down a mattress.

All this was done very quickly while the house continued to strain and creak from time to time. The shaking still upset my sense of balance. We hurried down the long flight of stairs, for once using the handrail, not at all as my long-legged brother did whenever the fire engines came thundering past ringing their bells. On those occasions he emulated their three splendid white horses by galloping down to the front door in five flying leaps, sounding his own "bells."

My uncle, his voice high with excitement, remarked, "I could see up Oak Street from my pillow through the bay

CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

"The Red Cross sent wagons . . . to distribute provisions. We children made it our business to meet the wagons."

window."

"Great Scott!" Papa said in disbelief. "That seems impossible!"

"I can hardly believe it myself," said my uncle, "but it's true! While our house zigged, others zagged—and there was the view."

I had never seen so many people on our corner before. Some were clad only in nightclothes, but most, to save their best clothes, were wearing Sunday suits or floor-length dresses, and all wore hats. I was shocked to see one woman nude except for a large plumed hat. Another woman wandered aimlessly past me carrying an empty bureau drawer. Papa hurried us around the corner to Lisle standing with the jetsam below our window, then across Scott Street to the vacant half-block. After unloading, Papa remarked, "We're lucky we can camp so close to home. It's three blocks to Golden Gate Park, and that will be crowded." Mama agreed.

Men quickly returned to their homes for hammers, nails, and more blankets. Soon the pounding of hammer on nail resounded as they fastened blankets to the tops of billboards, staked them to the ground, and hung blanket dividers between families. At last all had shelters, and the children were put to bed, not that in our fright we could sleep, but as a means of anchoring us. I snuggled down in my makeshift bed on the city lot, shivering from excitement as well as the predawn chill. What high adventure it was sleeping on the ground! This first camping out would have been a lark under different circumstances.

Voices from outside filtered through the blanket walls. "Fires have started all over south of Market Street! You can see them from the top of the hill!"

"Looks as though the janitors in the industrial district stoked and fired up at five o'clock as usual, just before the quake. Thank God it struck before *our* morning fires were lighted!"

"Amen to that!"

"That area toward the bay is mainly filled land. It would be a wonder if anything there is still standing. At least we are on solid ground."

Sleep was out of the question. "Papa, may I go up the hill to see?"

"Dorothy, I promise I'll take you after dark, when we can see the fires better."

My quick response was, "Oh! Goody!"

Lisle, being twelve and liberated, had already gone to the top. He told me, "Dorothy, just *wait* till you see it!"

Due to the flexible, well-constructed frame buildings prevalent in our area, as well as the solid ground on which they were built, there was little damage visible from the outside. No doubt all the brick chimneys were shaken down, but they fell on the roofs rather than on the sidewalks. I did see from the lot that the cupola and some gingerbread had fallen from our roof.

Papa brought out the necessary cooking utensils, found a few unbroken dishes, and salvaged what food he could. He returned to bring down the little sheet-iron heating stove. This he set up on the curb for all to use.

COLLECTION OF ROGER AND NANCY OLMSTED

"I recoiled at the sight of all downtown San Francisco now an inferno. And yet it fascinated me."

The sound of a horse clop-clopping sent me running to meet it. "They're bringing drinking water," I told everyone. Papa rolled and twisted newspapers for fuel and had a fire by the time it came. At last we had some hot drinks and breakfast.

A fire inspector called out, "Who lives at 922 Oak?"

Papa spoke up, "Here I am."

"Sir, I have inspected your flat. Don't move back in, but you may go in to get things you need. Stay out of the one room with the broken ceiling. And, of course, don't drink the water from the faucets." Papa thanked him.

The Red Cross sent wagons throughout the day to distribute provisions: milk for babies only, canned corned beef, bread, and bananas. Mama said, "We always have bananas right off the boats in this port." Usually they came by the wagonload, the hawker calling loudly against the wind, "Bananas, ten cents a dozen!" But these were free. We children made it our business to run to meet the wagons, learn what they carried, and spread the good word to parents and neighbors.

I asked, "Mama, don't we have to pay for the food?"

"No, dear. In times of disaster anywhere in the world, the Red Cross and other agencies provide food, clothing, and shelter."

We kids exchanged whatever bits of news we could overhear. In fact, word of mouth was the only means of communication that day, though before the quake there were daily papers and an occasional extra sold by newsboys running while calling out, "Wuxtry!"

TALES OF STRANGE HAPPENINGS came to my ears. One friend told me, "Soldiers from the Presidio have orders to shoot anyone seen looting."

Another added, "Some ghoul was seen cutting off a dead woman's finger to get her diamond ring when he couldn't slip it off." My blood froze, and involuntarily I tucked my fingers under my chin and shivered. "He was shot!" she finished.

I asked, "Did you hear about the man whose house collapsed, and he fell two stories to the basement still safe in his bed? How puzzled and frightened he must have been, and thankful, too!"

Papa came for me after dark. "Papa, why are all the men carrying brooms? What are they going to sweep?"

"Burning embers are falling, and we must knock them off our shelters and beat out the flames if the dry grass catches fire. Come on, Dorothy, let's go see the fires. It'll be safer to walk in the middle of the street."

Just before we reached the top to join the throng of spectators, I could hear the crackle and roar, and smell the smoke. The whole sky was flaming red. "Great Scott!" came in awe from Papa. Expecting to see separate fires, I recoiled at the sight of all downtown San Francisco now an inferno. And yet it fascinated me. With appalling speed the intense heat carried burning torches for what seemed like miles on high before they poured down as from a fountain upon the city. The roar threatened and frightened me. How often had I longed to run to a fire with my brother, but such unbecoming behavior was not for little girls.

BOTH PAGES: CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

"I saw a makeshift stove of brick topped by a washboiler with a line of hungry people waiting to be fed."

"Now," I said to myself, "here is my first fire, and I don't like what I see." The choking smoke, the intense heat, filled me with a strong, frenzied revulsion. Suddenly I turned and ran down the grassy hill of Alamo Square. The fire seemed to follow me, for the sky was brilliant even from below.

Again in my bed in the lot, I heard the low voices outside. Then Papa called in, "Dorothy, are you there?"

"Yes, Papa."

"Mr. Smith," someone told Papa, "the military rode by and ordered the evacuation of all disabled and old people and children. They'll be sent to relatives anywhere, transportation free. Only the able-bodied are allowed to stay to clear the streets." This would rule me out of any further adventure.

"Mama, where will you send us?" I asked.

"To your Uncle George's ranch in Sacramento Valley." Secretly I was pleased, recalling the good times I had had there last summer with my cousins.

Again Papa's voice came from outside: "More of us must keep watch tonight. How about two-hour shifts around the clock?"

"A good idea. These firebrands are falling on us too often for comfort." The low voices continued throughout the night as the men went about their work.

"Mama, how will we get to the Ferry Building?"

"There'll be a way," she reassured me.

She was right. The next morning our good friend Thomas Ownby, who had a carpenter shop just around the corner on Fell Street, appeared with his two-wheeled tool cart. "Kingsley, may I take the children to the ferry for you?" He lifted me and our valises onto the cart. With a backward glance I asked myself, "Will I ever see my home again?"

My brother helped balance the cart at the front while Mr. Ownby pushed, and together they lifted it over rubble and crevices in the brick or asphalt pavement. We stopped at 55 Webster for grandmother.

Along the way all was topsy-turvy. Frame buildings were leaning askew or had collapsed. Steel frames were left standing while brick walls had become rubble in the street. We were not alone on our trek. Evacuees converged toward the Ferry Building from every street, carrying treasures or necessities or utterly useless articles in their arms or loaded on their backs, and dragging or pushing anything they could save that had wheels or even casters. We all used the middle of the street when passable, as sidewalks were high with debris. With one hand on the cart to steady herself, grandmother trudged along without complaint like the true California pioneer that she was. Everyone's unwashed face was streaked with ashes and soot. We came to crevasses wide enough to swallow a horse and buggy or even a small house. I shuddered when I saw a team of horses, still harnessed to a wagon, lying dead. Some streets had sunk several feet, leaving streetcar tracks suspended high above. I knew the danger that lay in the live wires draped everywhere.

In brief glimpses I saw skeletons of big buildings against the flames, and once a makeshift stove of brick topped by a washboiler with a line of hungry people waiting to be fed. I wondered if their stew would taste of Fels-Naptha soap.

"We found that every side street swelled the flow of refugees as tributaries swell the volume of a river."

Over all was an eerie glow of flames reflected on a low ceiling of dense smoke. When we traveled on Market Street, we found that every side street swelled the flow of refugees, as tributaries swell the volume of a river. Fires raged on either side. The heat and smoke, the blasting done in hopes of making a firebreak, the policemen and soldiers with guns at the ready, the fear and confusion of the people—all were more than disquieting.

My apprehension and my constant watch of the broken terrain that lay below diverted my attention from much of the devastation, the fire, and mercifully, humanity in distress. Several times I asked, "Mr. Ownby, please may I walk, too?"

"Dorothy, it's far too dangerous for you," he always answered. Once we were on the filled land, in our cart without springs and on wheels without rubber, the ride became even rougher, shaking me until I thought I would come apart.

At last, the torturous ride was ended. It felt good to stand on my legs again. Before us was the Ferry tower, the familiar clock stopped at 5:13. The Ferry Building itself appeared surprisingly intact, though all around it was demolished. Mr. Ownby told us, "The Ferry Building was erected with heavy steel frame on large clusters of piles. Except for those deeply anchored piles, it would have fallen. There wouldn't have been a place for the ferry boats to dock and take on passengers, and then where would you be?" I tried to imagine such a dilemma. Our only escape from San Francisco would have been to the south.

"I'm leaving you in your grandmother's care now. Goodbye and good luck."

"Thank you very much for getting us here safely, Mr. Ownby. Goodbye!"

By now we could see that the asphalt pavement was undulated, and much of the facade had fallen. Inside, the marble walls were badly cracked. The floor was littered with fallen masonry. We stood in a long line waiting our turn to board. A buzz of excitement and wonder traveled toward us. "What is it?" Then the word reached us. "The captain of the ferry says that the magnitude of the quake was 8.25!"

All interest in "adventure" had been shaken out of my mind by the ride and the horrible sights. I was more than willing, even eager, to leave. Aboard the ferry at last, Lisle, watching his chance, slipped away to explore. Grandmother put a reassuring arm about me as a lady pressed a big apple into my hand. Safe at last, I fell asleep before I could finish my apple.

And so we left the holocaust and the ruins that were San Francisco.

Dorothy Geissinger—*asked by us to provide some autobiographical information—modestly asserts that "there is little to be said about me. Since 1960 I have been an active member of the International Geranium Society, contributing articles for its publication and assisting the editor. At present, I am working on a story of Sunrise City, Kenai Peninsula, Alaska, in 1898, when and where I was born. If someone would take over complete care of my garden I would have time to finish it."*

TRAILING THE ALIAS

by Waldo Koop

There was Antelope Jack and Camp-Kettle Billy
Albuquerque Alice and Hog-Eyed Nellie,
Canned Fruit Alex and Cacklin' Hank
Cross-Eyed Bob and Cock-Eyed Frank,
Dead-Lock Dave and Diamond Annie
Dynamite Dick and Pancake Fannie,
Jaybird Bob and Gunny Sack Bill
Jimmy-the-Duck and Pittsburgh Phil,
Three-Shooter Smith and Six-Shooter Jack
Pie Biter Baker and Montana Mack,
Three Mule Pete and Mountain Phil
Saw Dust Charley and Shoot-em-up Bill,
Eat-em-up Jake and Larrupy Dan
Peckerwood Pete and Pick-Handle Nan,
Packsaddle Jack and Rockin' Chair Emmy
Ice Box Murphy and Soda Water Jimmy,
Fly Speck Bill and Cemetery Sam
Frog-Mouth Annie and Molly B'Damn!

ALL THESE NAMES, but a sample from a roll call of hombres with handles, richly demonstrate that when it came to rechristening their fellows with new, colorful, and more fitting go-bys, the frontiersmen of the American West won the prize hands down.

Nicknames are found almost everywhere in the old West, sprinkled like spice through the pages of frontier literature; humorously sparkling in the news columns of cow town, railhead, and mining camp journals; and often indelibly inscribed in the dockets and records of the courts.

The nickname custom is also reflected in the fiction of the West—in the dime novels where Trapper Tom and Deadwood Dick attempt to raise the reader's hair. Alfred Henry Lewis peopled his popular Wolfville series with colorfully monikered characters. One example is typical: When a female arrival at his fictional town of Wolfville sets up as a laundress, "It floats over pretty soon that her name's Annie, an' as none of us wants to call her just 'Annie'—the same bein' too free a play —an' hearin' she lives a year or two at Benson, we concloods to call her Benson Annie, an' let it go at that."

There are other examples of the custom. James W. Steele, writing for *Kansas Magazine* in 1872, described it well:

"The Border is a field for the gathering together of all kinds and races. . . . But all are changed, at least in name. The German has become 'Dutch Bill' or 'Sam' or 'Jake;' the Irishman is 'Pat' or 'Paddy,' adding any further pseudonym which may designate that particular Irishman. The New Englander glorifies in the name of 'Yank;' and the Southerner answers with great alacrity to the name of 'Tennessee' or 'Kaintuck;' and sometimes to 'Pike' or 'Cracker.' This is rampant democracy made manifest. The real names of individuals are utterly unknown to companions who have known them for years. Any peculiarity of person or history produces its apt cognomen of recognition. The man who squints is 'Cockeye' for all time. The lame man is 'Limpey;' and the tall man 'Slim Dick.' The surprising feature of this frontier fashion is that these names are accepted and gloried in. Indeed, those which are born of some peculiarity of history are proudly borne. To be 'Buffalo Bill' or 'Fighting Bob' is to be famous."

In the same vein, Bret Harte, who peopled his California mining camps with moniker-bearing characters, wrote in his short story "Tennessee's Partner":

"At Sandy Bar in 1854 most men were christened anew. Sometimes these appellatives were derived from some distinctiveness of dress, as in the case of 'Dungaree Jack'; or from some peculiarity of habit, as shown in 'Saleratus Bill,' so called from an undue proportion of that chemical in his daily bread; or from some unlucky slip, as exhibited in 'The Iron Pirate,' a mild, inoffensive man who earned that baleful title by his unfortunate mispronunciation of the term 'iron pyrites.' Perhaps this was the beginning of a rude heraldry."

In 1873, W. E. Webb in *Buffalo Land* commented more cynically on the use of nicknames in the West:

"The whole western country bordering on the plains . . . is infested with numberless charlatans, blazing with all sorts of hunting and fighting titles, and ready at the rustle of greenbacks to act as guides through a land they know nothing about. . . . I have my doubts if one-third of these terribly named bullies could tell, on a pinch, where the north star is."

The nickname was also used as a convenient means of identification on the frontier. As early as 1860, the editor of a Colorado newspaper noted the plenitude of Smiths in the area and suggested that the local miners be more explicit in addressing their mail. He instructed the miners to individualize their correspondent as minutely as possible: "thus: Cross-Eyed John Smith from Posey County, Indiana."

The buffalo range around Dodge City had a similar problem, for it was overrun with Jones boys. These were soon rechristened Dirty-Face Jones, he of the powder-blackened face; Wrong Wheel Jones, who once got a bit confused between left- and right-hand wagon wheels; and Hell and High Water Jones, because that was his favorite byword. Near Dodge City was Give-a-Dam Jones, for the same reason.

W. E. Webb commented on the abundance of men named Bill in the vicinity of Hays, Kansas:

"One specialty of the plains that deserves mention . . . is its numerous Bills. Of these, we became acquainted . . . with the following distinct specimens: Wild Bill, Buffalo Bill, California Bill, Rattlesnake Bill, and Tiger Bill, the last named being, as one of our men remarked, the 'dangererest on 'em all.' We also heard of a Camanche [sic] Bill and an Apache Bill, but these celebrities it was not our fortune to meet."

Most of Webb's Bills can be more formally identified. His Wild Bill and Buffalo Bill were obviously Messrs. Hickok and Cody. California Bill was likely William Hodges, several times cited under both names in the columns of Hays's *Railway Advance*. Rattlesnake Bill is more elusive, although a sidekick of Hickok's, Peter Lanihan, is said to have been known as Rattlesnake Pete because of a snakeskin hatband which he affected. Tiger Bill remains otherwise anonymous; Apache Bill was probably William Seamans, known to be of that time and place. As for Camanche Bill, there was a William Porter known by that name on the plains, but he has not been associated with the Hays era in any definite way.

Identification of these monikered characters is a challenging problem. In attempting to sort legend from fact in order to get at the kernel of truth in the story of how this or that character came by his nickname, evidence of contemporary use of the nickname is most often the clarifying factor. Yet one problem is that in reminiscences, storytellers often apply the nickname anachronistically. For example, Charles E. Bassett, the first sheriff of Ford County, Kansas, is sometimes referred to as Senator Bassett. Yet in tracking down the source of that handle, it was discovered that only long after Bassett had abandoned the prairies to operate the Senate Saloon at Kansas City, did he obtain the sobriquet of Senator. And, of course, this explains why the nickname never turns up in contemporary accounts of his Dodge City exploits.

Jack Stilwell is sometimes referred to as Comanche Jack in tales of his heroic part in the Battle of Beecher's Island in 1868. Yet this is another anachronistic reference, for at the time of the battle he was known simply as Jack, although his given name was Simpson. By 1875, however, contemporary news accounts were referring to him as Wildcat Jack, and the earliest contemporary use of the name Comanche Jack is found in the late 1880s when Stilwell was serving as a deputy U.S. marshal and official hangman for the federal court at Wichita. The origin of neither of these nicknames has turned up.

In popular western literature, several versions of the origin of certain nicknames exist, as in the case of the name Bat, worn by the famous gunfighter William Barclay Masterson. One of the earlier versions is that Masterson won the name Bat because of his skill as a hunter: the name descended to him, as it were, from Baptiste Porrier, or Old Bat, whose fame as a mighty nimrod had spread across the Missouri River as far as the Spanish Peaks in Colorado. Ramon Adams in *Burs under the Saddle* discusses other false versions and dismisses them with a voice of authority, while adding a mistaken version of his own. "[One storyteller states that] Masterson was called Bat because of the black derby which he always wore. This is ridiculous. He was called Bat from the fact that he batted his enemies over the head with the walking cane he used after he was wounded at Mobeetie."

Adams fails to reveal the source for his version; he may have been relying upon Stanley Vestal, who had earlier told a similar story in his *Dodge City, Queen of the Cowtowns*. Yet because of the general reliability of these gentlemen, the walking-cane version, though false, will be a hard one to down.

To prove its falsity, we must look at contemporary use of the name Bat, keeping in mind that Masterson was wounded at Mobeetie in January of 1875, and his use of the cane came after that. If the walking-cane version is correct, the nickname Bat would not appear before 1875. Yet the diary of buffalo hunter Henry Raymond, written in 1872–73, contains numerous references to the Masterson brothers and calls our subject Bat and sometimes Bart.

Recognizing that such references shoot a big hole through the walking-cane version, I questioned Henry Raymond's daughter, who was well-acquainted with the Masterson family at their farm near Valley Center. I asked her exactly how William Barclay Masterson had acquired the nickname Bat and yet recall her somewhat indignant response: "Well, he may have been known as William Barclay to *some* people [referring

PRAIRIE DOG DAVE ALBUQUERQUE ALIC

SALERATUS BILL COMANCHE JACK DI RTY-FACE JONES LARRUPY DAN ICE BOX M

E HOG-EYED NELLIE DUNGAREE JACK TH REE MULE PETE CEMETERY SAM MOLLY

to Bat's biographers] but to his folks at home, he was known by his real name, Bartholomew."

And thus began the search for the genuine story behind the nickname. Several knowledgeable historians helped. First came Bat's will, which we found he had signed as William Barclay Masterson—a discovery that nearly caused one of my assistants to give up the search. But eventually census records turned up that listed the Masterson family in Illinois; then came a baptismal record from the parish of St. George in the province of Quebec, Canada, testifying that on "November 27th, 1853, we undersigned Priest, have baptized Bertholomiew, born yesterday of Thomas Masterson and Catherine McGurk of this parish."

So there it was! Bat came from "Bertholomiew." Apparently Bat, at some point, had decided that he liked the ring of William Barclay better than his christened name and without the watchful eye of Social Security, had changed over. Of course, all of this did spoil a whale of a good story, and for that, my apologies.

SOMETIMES NICKNAME ORIGINS are even more difficult to pin down than Bat Masterson's, and one must rely on what appears to make the most sense. In the case of Prairie Dog Dave Morrow, there are at least two versions of how the nickname came about. One must choose, but for that matter, both versions are good stories worth repeating.

The most popular is that Dave Morrow at Hays, Kansas, added to his buffalo-hunting income by catching prairie dogs and selling them to tourists at the depot. He first tried catching them by pouring barrels of water down their burrows to force the dogs to the surface. But water in that area was a bit scarce, and in trying to cut down his overhead, Dave developed the novel approach of upending a barrel of sand, of which there was plenty everywhere, over the burrow. The sand would run down the burrow, and the dogs would dig their way up into the barrel, beside which our subject was patiently waiting. Unfortunately no contemporary evidence of the practice, or of Dave's presence at Hays, has ever been found.

Another completely different version was told by George Bolds in James Horan's *Across the Cimarron*. According to Bolds, Morrow, then running a small cattle ranch near Dodge City, was caught out on the prairie by two highwaymen who tortured him in order to get him to reveal where some money received from a cattle sale was hidden. One of them whittled on Dave's ears with a big knife in this effort, but Dave somehow got away and hightailed it for Dodge.

"In the Long Branch Saloon that night someone mentioned that Dave, with his pointed, nicked ears, looked like a prairie dog, and the nickname stuck. That's the way most nicknames were born—they got the fancy of the boys in the saloon and no matter what you did or how much you threatened, there was no changing it."

Now that may be a better story than the first, and I'd like to believe it, but it doesn't stand the test of time, so to speak. George Bolds gave the impression that he was present at the Long Branch when Dave was tagged with the handle. Yet by George's own account, he did not come on the Dodge City scene until after 1878, and there is contemporary application of the handle to Morrow several years before that, when Morrow chased buffalo too far east in the Indian Territory and was arrested by U.S. authorities. The editor of the *Wichita Beacon* delighted in announcing in July of 1875:

"One of the prisoners brought up from the Territory on Sunday rejoices in a name that would make the heart of Ned Buntline leap with joy. It is none other than the classical one of Prairie Dog Dave, or the Phantom of Adobe Walls and the Terror of the Staked Plains. Prairie Dog Dave is an interesting specimen of humanity, bearing a strong resemblance between a coyote and the embodiment of all the crimes in the catalog."

So if George Bolds did, as he said, first arrive at Dodge City in 1878 or 1879, he could not have been present at the alleged rechristening of Dave Morrow, and his lack of firsthand knowledge in the matter makes one lean toward the first version, resulting from Morrow's dog-catching days.

Others also bore Dave Morrow's nickname. Prairie Dog Arnold, an old Montana hunter and cattleman, was said to have caught and sold the Montana crop of dogs, and Prairie Dog Jenkins, also a Montana cattleman, was reported in that area about 1880 along with a friend known as Dynamite Dick. One ex-buffalo hunter recalled that in 1879 he joined a gold-prospecting party in New Mexico headed by one Prairie Dog Dave, whose real name he never learned. This may have been Dodge City's Mr. Morrow, but if so, the circumstances suggest an unchronicled aspect of his career on the frontier.

Another westerner with an unusual nickname was the notorious James Jefferson Harlan—better known as the Off Wheeler. His violent career spanned a period of twenty years and ranged the entire frontier. In August of 1881, the *Tombstone Epitaph* reported on Harlan's actions in nearby Benson:

"Officers McComas and Earp arrived yesterday from Benson having in charge one Harlan, alias 'Off Wheeler,' and James McCarty, alias 'Bones,' charged with assault with intent to kill. The prisoners were taken before Judge Spicer who held them to bail in the sum of $3000 each to await examination. . . . The particulars of the affair, as near as we could learn them, were about as follows. Harlan has a weakness for strong drink and when under the influence is inclined to raise a row on all occasions and with all parties. Tuesday afternoon he was in one of his fighting moods and not being able to stir up a quarrel with the citizens, he hailed a passing Indian. The Indian of course did not understand what was said to him and kept quietly on his way. This indifference on the part of the Indian so offended the brutal 'Off Wheeler' that he rushed upon the red man and began striking at him with his pistol. The Indian escaped and ran away, whereupon Harlan began shooting. After being missed by several shots the Indian dropped in the grass, got out his gun and began shooting at the would-be murderer. About this time, 'Bones' came along and joined the 'Off Wheeler' in shooting at the Indian. Fortunately the Indian was not hit, and unfortunately 'Off Wheeler' and 'Bones' also escaped unhurt. Deputy Sheriff McComas secured the assistance of Morgan Earp and succeeded in arresting the offenders."

If the Off Wheeler was punished for the foregoing, it was a light sentence, for only four months later he was involved in a fracas at Lamy Junction. And over the years the Off Wheeler turned up in many a frontier town. In fact, it can be said that he was run out of some of the best towns in the West, as this account from the *Las Vegas* [New Mexico] *Optic* testifies:

"An Ash Fork, Arizona Territory special dispatch of date the 14th inst. has this in reference to a character well known in Las Vegas: J. J. Harlan, better known as Off Wheeler, attempted yesterday to kill a drunken cook by the name of Doc, in a saloon owned by Burt White. The citizens of the town became enraged at this and today presented him with a walking ticket at the point of fifty shotguns and Winchester rifles, after becoming satisfied as to his previous character as to working trains and holding up people. He is one of the bunco steerers known throughout New Mexico and especially around Lamy Junction, Wallace and Albuquerque. This is not the first time he has had his walking papers and he therefore takes his medicine like a man. . . . Citizens mean business here."

As to the origin of the Off Wheeler's nickname, Eddie Foy, in *Clowning Through Life* recalls the presence at Dodge City of an inseparable pair known as the Off Wheeler and his partner, the Nigh Wheeler. They were apparently named after the wheel mules in a six-mule team, for wheel mules, the pair closest to the wagon, were especially trained to work together and were seldom separated or shifted in the hitch. Unfortunately, though the Off Wheeler turns up again and again in the records of the West, the identity of his pal, the Nigh Wheeler, remains unknown.

Happily the lives of most monikered characters are not as violent as the Off Wheeler's. The real reward in trailing the alias comes in turning up, here and there, the delightful anecdotes that explain the origin of the handle. Take Catacorners Ketchum, who had a Bible-spouting partner who absconded with the pair's mining proceeds, leaving Ketchum sputtering, "If I ever ketch that sneak he'll get a Bible crammed down his throat, catacorners."

Or Old Forty, who got the name because the term was his byword. With him, everything was hot as forty or cold as forty, or it had rained like forty. Friends decided to memorialize his byword by giving him, one Christmas, a book entitled *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*. His ungrateful comment was, "I don't see what they wanted to give me that for, I've got as many as forty books at home now."

Among others named for their own bywords was a Barton County, Kansas, resident, Give-A-Dam Jones. One old-timer, in a typical Kansas tale, recalled and mimicked some of Jones's punctuated conversation:

"You know one of them little twisters we had last week in our part of the country done me a good turn. I just had time to plow a couple of rounds 'fore unhitchin' for the day, an' I left the plow stickin' in the ground—a little level patch betwixt some hills. An' in the mornin'—give-a-dam—one of them little hell-roarin' twisters didn't do a thing but grab that old plow and spun it round and round till the hull give-a-dam land I'd laid out was plowed up slick as if I'd done it myself. I don't give-a-dam if it'd turn another patch."

Finally, we have the story behind the nickname of a Polish miner at Butte, Montana, whose given name was Matt Konarsky. Miner Konarsky took up residence at a boarding house whose parlor contained a battered old piano. Every evening he would seat himself at the instrument and with calloused, stubby fingers, attempt to pick out a tune. Because of his Polish ancestry, fellow boarders dubbed him Tchaikovsky.

Now Konarsky suffered from a double hernia and wore under his clothing the old-fashioned rupture truss, which with its black rubber pads resembled nothing so much as a telephone operator's headset. One time when Konarsky was changing his clothing in the mine change room, a fellow miner, an Irishman (of course), spied the truss strapped across Konarsky's abdomen and shouted, "Well for the luv of Mike, would ye look at the tilliphones on Tchaikovsky!" From that time on, he was not Matt Konarsky, but Telephones Tchaikovsky.

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MURPHY OFF WHEELER HARLAN DYNAMI TE DICK TIGER BILL TELEPHONES TCHAI

Winter at Fort Clark

Maximilian and Bodmer among the tribes of the Upper Missouri, 1833-1834

edited by Davis Thomas and Karin Ronnefeldt

One of the most important records we have of life among the American Plains Indians is that obtained by German naturalist-ethnologist Alexander Philipp Maximilian, Prince of Wied-Neuwied, and Swiss artist Karl Bodmer during an expedition to the Upper Missouri River in the years 1833–34. Maximilian and Bodmer were privileged to see the West in all its pristine glory, before successive waves of settlers irrevocably altered the face of the land and, sadly, the way of life of its original inhabitants. At the time of Maximilian's expedition, vast herds of buffalo and other game still roamed the prairies, great flocks of fowl filled the skies during migratory seasons, and the Missouri itself flowed wild and unchecked by dams from the Rockies to the Mississippi. Although the Indians of the Upper Missouri had been in contact with fur trappers and traders since the first decade of the century, the intrusion of European culture had not yet effected dramatic changes in their social customs or religious beliefs, and dependence on trade goods had only just begun to modify their traditional creativity and craftsmanship.

Maximilian's 300,000-word account of his expedition, first published in Germany in 1839–42 and containing hand-colored aquatint engravings based on Bodmer's paintings, constitutes an unmatched record of early trans-Mississippi exploration that is generally considered to be second in importance only to the journals of Lewis and Clark, written some twenty years before. First published in an English-language translation in 1905, Maximilian's narrative has just reappeared in concise one-volume form accompanied (for the first time) by color reproductions of a number of Bodmer's magnificent original watercolors. An excerpt from this account, describing highlights from the expedition's five-month sojourn at Fort Clark on the west bank of the Missouri, appears on the following pages.

An outpost of the American Fur Company forty-five miles north of present-day Bismarck, North Dakota, Fort Clark had been built in the spring of 1831. Lewis and Clark had spent the winter of 1804–05 here in the vicinity of the Mandan villages, and from the earliest days of the fur trade there had been a post of some sort nearby. It was a strategic location. The Mandans and their upstream neighbors, the Minnetarees, were semi-agriculturists, the only tribes on the Upper Missouri to dwell in fixed villages that could offer support for a trading post.

Maximilian and Bodmer's stay at Fort Clark marked the high point of their contribution to American ethnology, and their words and images provide a fascinating view of the harsh realities of frontier life as well as the grandeur of a virgin West and the Indians who lived there. As will be seen in another article on pages 48–53 of this issue, Maximilian's expedition was just in time. Three years after his departure from Fort Clark, a deadly smallpox epidemic swept up the Missouri, permanently altering the balance of the Missouri tribes and, combined with other lethal imports of the whites—alcohol and gunpowder—effectively ending the great period of Plains Indian culture.

Maximilian's Narrative:

November 9-12, 1833

. . . As I had written to Mr. Mc Kenzie [*a leading figure in the American Fur Company*], requesting him to provide us with a winter residence at Fort Clark, in order more closely to study the Indian tribes in the neighbourhood . . . he had the kindness to give orders for completing a new building at Fort Clark, in which we were to reside.

This order unfortunately came too late, and it was necessary to finish the work in a hurry in the month of November, when the frost was very severe, particularly during the nights, so that our dwelling, being slightly built, afforded us but little protection from the cold. The large crevices in the wood which formed the walls, were plastered up with clay, but the frost soon cracked it, so that the bleak wind penetrated on all sides.

Some changes had taken place among the Indians in the vicinity of the fort. At the time of my first visit, in the summer of 1833, the Yanktonans had expressed a wish to make peace with the Mandans and Minnetarees, in which they did not succeed at that time, but accomplished it in September. Two hundred tents of those Sioux had then been pitched in the prairie behind the village; they remained there three or four days, and some traces of their camp still remained. There had been feasting and dances, and Fort Clark was crowded the whole day with Indians of the three tribes. At this time the prairie in the neighbourhood of the fort was desolate and deserted; part of the Indians had already gone to their winter villages in the forest; many, however, remained in the summer villages, and we had plenty of Indian visitors during the whole winter.

Unpleasant news was received from the United States. The cholera had again broken out at St. Louis, and carried off a great number of persons. It had been brought, by the steamboats, to the trading-posts on the lower Missouri. This dangerous disease had not penetrated to that part of the country where we were; but, as there was too much reason to apprehend that it might extend so far, Mr. Mc Kenzie had taken a physician with him to Fort Union.

Fresh scaffoldings for the dead were erected in the vicinity of Mih-Tutta-Hang-Kush [*the large Mandan village located just upstream of the fort*], several Indians having died of the whooping-cough; which was very prevalent. Every day we saw inhabitants of the summer villages removing, with much baggage, laden horses and dogs, to the winter villages. Among other things they carried the strange dresses belonging to the several bands, such as the buffalo heads of the band, Berock-Ochateh, and a live owl, which they keep as a fortune-teller. Other Indians dragged dead dogs by a strap, probably as a bait to catch wolves or foxes. We heard, in the villages, loud lamentations, and saw women working at the erection of a scaffold for a woman who had just died.

November 13

Early in the morning, several Indians arrived, who related, with much gravity, that in the preceding night they had observed an extraordinary number of falling stars, all moving in a westerly direction, which they said was a sign of war, or of a great mortality, and asked Mr. Kipp [*the agent at the fort*] what he thought of it. Many other Indians visited us, of whom several were in mourning, that is, rubbed over with white clay, and all of them spoke of the ominous phenomenon. They were much pleased with Mr. Bodmer's Indian drawings, and asked us many questions about their enemies, the Blackfeet. Among our most constant visitors were the distinguished chief, Mato-Topé (the four bears), and Sih-Chida (the yellow feather). The former came with his wife and a pretty little boy, to whom he had given the name of Mato-Berocka (the male bear). He brought his medicine drum, painted red and black, which he hung up in our room, and so afforded Mr. Bodmer an opportunity of making a drawing of it. Sih-Chida, a tall, stout young man, the son of a celebrated chief now dead, was an Indian who might be depended on, who became one of our best friends, and visited us almost daily. [*Sih-Chida's portrait appears on the opposite page.*] He was very polished in his manners, and possessed more delicacy of feeling than most of his countrymen. He never importuned us by asking for anything; as soon as dinner was served he withdrew, though he was not rich, and did not even possess a horse. He came almost every evening, when his favorite employment was drawing, for which he had some talent, though his figures were no better than those drawn by our little children.

November 23

Snow-storms, with a high west wind, had set in, and the country was covered with snow, and the Missouri froze for the first time, below the village of Mih-Tutta-Hang-Kush. It is remarkable that it was frozen on the very same day in the preceding year. We saw the Indian women, as soon as the river was covered with ice, break holes in it, to wash their heads and the upper parts of their bodies.

Mato-Topé had passed the evening with us, and, when

Sih-Chida (the yellow feather) became one of the Europeans' closest friends among the Mandans at Fort Clark and was in and out of their quarters all winter long. When he posed for this portrait, his attire included valuable strings of dentalium shells and an otter-skin shawl.

we went to bed, laid himself down before the fire, where he soon fell asleep. On the following morning he rose early, washed himself, but left his two buffalo skins lying carelessly on the floor, for us to gather them up, these Indians taking every opportunity to be waited on by the Whites.

November 24

I gave Mato-Topé a bear-claw necklace which he will complete for me. For this purpose I purchased an otter skin and blue glass beads at the Company store. In addition he received paint and paper from Mr. Bodmer in order to make a picture of one of his exploits for me. The old Addih-Hiddish (he who makes the path) sat with us the entire evening and smoked. His appearance was odd. [*See portrait on opposite page*]. He wore an old round hat, and his hair was wildly dishevelled. On his torso he wore an old vest. His arms were naked. This man is said to be a very good Indian.

November 25-26

. . . At this time Charbonneau [*Toussaint Charbonneau, interpreter for the Lewis and Clark expedition, now well into his seventies, but still working as a guide and trader*] came to invite us to a great medicine feast among the Minnetarees, an invitation which I gladly accepted . . . It was nearly nightfall [*on the 26th*] when we reached the Minnetaree village. . . . Between the huts, in the centre of the village, an elliptical space, forty paces or more in length, was enclosed in a fence, ten or twelve feet high, consisting of reeds and willow twigs inclining inwards. The spectators, especially the women, were seated: the men walked about, some of them handsomely dressed, others quite simply; children were seated around the fires, which they kept alive by throwing twigs of willow trees into them. Soon after Charbonneau had introduced us to this company, six elderly men advanced in a row from the opposite hut, and stopped for a moment at the entrance of the great medicine lodge. They had been chosen, by the young men, to represent buffalo bulls, for which they afterwards received presents. Each of them carried a long stick; at the top of which three or four black feathers were fastened; then, at regular intervals, the whole length of the stock was ornamented with small bunches of the hoofs of buffalo calves, and at the lower end of the stick were some bells. In their left hand they carried a battle-axe, or war club, and two of them had a stuffed skin which they called a badger, and used as a drum. They stood at the entrance, rattled their sticks incessantly, sang alternately, and imitated, with great perfection, the hoarse voice of the buffalo bull. They were followed by a tall man, who wore a cap, trimmed with fur, because he had been formerly scalped in a battle. He represented the director of the ceremony and the leader of the old bulls, behind whom he made his appearance. The bulls now entered the medicine lodge and took their seats near the fence, behind one of the fires.

Several young men were now employed in carrying round dishes of boiled maize and beans, which they placed before the guests. These were handed to each person successively, who passed them on after tasting a small quantity. Empty wooden dishes were frequently brought and placed at our feet, the reason which I could not, at first, comprehend, but soon learned from my neighbour, the Yellow Bear [*one of the principal chiefs of the Minnetarees*]. As soon as the provision bearer—a tall, handsome, very robust, and broad-shouldered man, wearing only his breech-cloth, ornamented at the back with long tufts of hair—came to take away one of these empty dishes, the old chief held his hands before his face, sang, and made a long speech, which seemed to me to be a prayer uttered in a low tone of voice, and then gave him the dish. These speeches contained good wishes for success in hunting the buffalo, and in war. They invoke the heavenly powers to favour the hunters and the warriors. In this manner two dishes were sometimes placed before us, and we also exerted ourselves in uttering good wishes in the English and German languages, which the Indians guessed from our motions, though they could not understand our words. If the speech was lengthy, they were especially gratified; the provision bearer stopped, listening very attentively, nodded his satisfaction, and passed his hand over our right arm from the shoulder to the wrist, and sometimes over both arms, and then again spoke a few words expressive of his thanks.

In this manner the ceremony of the repast lasted about an hour; every person present partook of it, and offered up their good wishes for a successful buffalo chase. Meantime, the young men, in the centre of the space, prepared the tobacco pipes, which they brought first to the old men and the visitors; they presented the mouthpiece of the pipe to us in succession, going from right to left: we each took a few whiffs, uttered, as before, a wish or prayer, and passed the pipe to our next neighbors. The pipe bearers often turned their pipes toward the cardinal points, and performed various superstitious manoeuvres with them.

The whole was extremely interesting. The great number of red men, in a variety of costumes, the singing, dancing, beating the drums, etc., while the lofty trees of the forest, illuminated by the fires, spread their branches against the

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Addih-Hiddish (he who makes the path), a Minnetaree chief who related the history of his tribe to Maximilian over a number of winter evenings, posed for his portrait after considerable persuasion. His tomahawk handle is ornamented with a scalp, stretched on a circular frame, as was the custom.

Mandeh-Pahchu (the beak of a bird of prey) was a warrior of the Mandan tribe. Bodmer painted him holding a large wooden flute, on which he played a "tender" melody for Maximilian.

dark sky, formed a *tout ensemble* so striking and original, that I much regretted the impracticability of taking a sketch of it on the spot.

When the ceremony had continued a couple of hours, the women began to act their part. A woman approached her husband, gave him her girdle and under garment, so that she had nothing on under her robe; she then went up to one of the most distinguished men, passed her hand over his arm, from the shoulder downwards, and then withdrew slowly from the lodge. The person so summoned follows her to a solitary place in the forest; he may then buy himself off by presents, which, however, few Indians do. This honour was offered to us, but we returned to the lodge, after having made a present, on which pipes were again handed to us. The fires already burnt dim, many Indians had retired, and we asked the old chief, whether we might be permitted to do the same? At first he refused, but then gave us leave.

December 15

[*Back at Fort Clark.*] On the preceding evening, we had a heavy fall of snow, which ceased when the wind veered a little to the north. At eight o'clock the mercury in Fahrenheit's thermometer was at 14°. The appearance of the prairie at this time was very remarkable, resembling the sea agitated by a terrible storm. The extensive surface of the snow was carried by the wind in a cloud; it was scarcely possible for the eye to bear the cold blast which drove the snow before it, and enveloped us in a dense cloud, above which the sky was clear, and the tops of the prairie hills were visible. We were, therefore, the more sensible of the enjoyment of our bright fire, seated about which we passed our time agreeably in various occupations.

December 28

As we had now no meat, our breakfast consisted of coffee and maize bread, and our dinner of maize bread and bean soup. Our people caught an Indian dog in the fort, intending to put him in a sledge, but he was so wild and unruly, bit and howled so furiously, that it was long before they could obtain the mastery. An *engagé* then knelt upon him to put on the harness, but when this was done he discovered that he had killed the poor dog. These dogs, if they are not broken in, are quite unfit for the sledge; when, however, they are accustomed to the work, they draw a sledge over the snow more easily than the best horses. If the snow is frozen, they run over it, where the horse sinks in, and they can hold out much longer. They can perform a journey of thirty miles in one day; and if they have rested an hour on the snow, and had some food, they are ready to set out again. A horse must have sufficient food, frequent rest, and a good watering place, and when it is once tired it cannot be induced to proceed. I have been assured by some persons that they have made long journeys, for eight successive days, with dogs, during which time the animals did not taste any food.

January 1-5, 1834

January set in with increasing cold, which at eight o'clock in the morning was 9° below zero Fahrenheit, and on the second at the same hour, 24° below zero. On the 3rd the mercury sank into the ball, and was frozen; it remained there on the 4th, but on the 5th it rose, and at eight in the morning was 9° below zero. During these cold days, some of our wood-cutters had their noses and cheeks frost-bitten. The horizon was hazy; the river smoked; neither man nor animal was to be seen; yet a party of Mandans, with their wives, were in the prairie hunting buffaloes, of which they killed forty. At night the cold was so intense, that we could not venture to put our hands from our bodies, lest they should be frozen. In the morning we could scarcely endure the severity of the weather, till we had a blazing fire, for the bleak northwest wind penetrated through all the seams of the building. Some Indians who visited us presented rather a novel appearance, having their hair, and even their eyelashes, covered with hoar frost and icicles. In our own room, the boots and shoes were frozen so hard in the morning, that we could scarcely put them on; ink, colours, and pencils were perfectly useless.

February 1

On this day news was received from Mih-Tutta-Hang-Kush, that three hostile Indians (Assiniboins), had been in the village during the night, for the purpose of shooting somebody, for in the morning the place where they had concealed themselves was discovered, from one of the party having left his knee-band behind. They had not been able to fire through the wall of the hut, and had retired at daybreak without attaining their object; traces were also found of some hostile Indians, who had come over the river.

February 3

In the afternoon news was received that the Minnetarees, who had gone in pursuit of the Assiniboins, had overtaken a small party, and killed a young man, whom they had found asleep, cruelly awakened with whips, and then murdered in cold blood. These Assiniboins are very

daring, and often approach the villages of the Mandans and Minnetarees, either singly or in small parties, and sometimes surprise individuals and shoot them.

Thus, some time ago, an Assiniboin suddenly fired at a number of young people who were standing near the palisades of the village, and killed one of them. The others raised an alarm, while the murderer took the scalp of the youth he had killed, fled down the steep bank of the river, where many persons were bathing, and made his escape through the very midst of all these people.

February 4

Early in the day a young Indian came, carrying fastened to a stick with a string the severed hand of the Assiniboin who had been killed yesterday. A group of children surrounded him. Sih-Sa [*a Mandan warrior who frequented the fort*] took this trophy of barbarism from him and carried it about with satisfaction. Charbonneau was absent again. This seventy-five-year-old man is always running after women.

March 7

The band of the Meniss-Ochata (dog band), from Ruhptare, danced in the medicine lodge at Mih-Tutta-Hang-Kush. Mr. Bodmer went to see the dance, and met Mato-Topé, who, however, puffed up by his dignity as a dog, would not notice him. Sih-Chida, who also belonged to this band, went into the lodge, where he discharged his gun. In the afternoon the band approached the fort, and we heard the sound of their war whistles at the gates. A crowd of spectators accompanied the seven or eight and twenty dogs, who were all dressed in their handsomest clothes. Some of them wore beautiful robes, or shirts of bighorn leather; others had shirts of red cloth; and some blue and red uniforms. Others, again, had the upper part of their body naked, with their martial deeds painted on the skin with reddish-brown colour. The four principal dogs wore an immense cap hanging down upon the shoulders, composed of raven's or magpie's feathers, finished at the tips with small white feathers [*see painting on opposite page*]. In the middle of this mass of feathers, the outspread tail of a wild turkey, or of a war eagle, was fixed. These four principal dogs wore round their neck a long slip of red cloth, which hung down over the shoulders, and reaching the calf of the leg, was tied in a knot in the middle of the back. These are the true dogs, who, when a piece of meat is thrown into the fire, are bound immediately to snatch it out and devour it raw.

Two other men wore similar colossal caps of yellow owl's feathers, with dark transverse stripes, and the rest had on their heads a thick tuft of raven's, magpie's, or owl's feathers, which is the badge of the band. All of them had the long war whistle suspended from their necks. In their left hand they carried their weapons—a gun, bow and arrows, or war club; and in their right hand the schischikue peculiar to their band.

Pehriska-Ruhpa (the two ravens), an eminent Minnetaree warrior, paid many visits to Fort Clark during the winter. Here he is portrayed as a member of the dog band. This painting is considered by many art historians to be the finest Indian portrait ever made.

The warriors formed a circle round a large drum, which was beaten by five ill-dressed men, who were seated on the ground. Besides these, there were two men, each beating a small drum like a tambourine. The dogs accompanied the rapid and violent beat of the drum by the whistle of their war whistles, in short, monotonous notes, and then suddenly began to dance. They dropped their robes on the ground, some dancing within the circle, with their bodies bent forward and leaping up and down with both feet placed close together. The other Indians danced without any order, with their faces turned to the outer circle, generally crowded together; while the war whistle, drum, and schischikue made a frightful din.

March 11

I felt the first symptoms of an indisposition, which daily increased, and soon obligated me to take to my bed. It began with a swelling in one knee, and soon extended to the whole leg, which assumed the colour of dark, extravasated blood. A violent fever succeeded, with great weakness, and, having neither medical advice nor suitable remedies, my situation became daily more helpless and distressing, as there was nobody who had any knowledge of this disorder. The other inhabitants of the fort were likewise indisposed, and our provisions were very bad and scanty. To economize our stock of coffee we were forced to make it wretchedly weak, and, for want of sugar or molasses, to sweeten it with honey, of which we had about twenty pounds. Our beverage was, generally speaking, the water from the river; and, as our supply of beans was very low, our diet consisted almost exclusively of maize boiled in water, which greatly weakened our digestion.

March 14

Pehriska-Ruhpa spent several days with us, in order to have his portrait taken in his dress of one of the chiefs of the dog band [*page 45*]. When the sitting was over, he always took off his ponderous feather cap, and rubbed it twice on each side of his head, a charm or precaution which he never neglected. He then seated himself with his friend, Mato-Topé, by the fire-side, when both took their pipes, the latter, however, always turning round first, and making everybody in the room sit down. During the

A leader of the Mandan buffalo bull society, whose dance Maximilian describes in his journal entry for April 9, posed for Bodmer wearing the ceremonial buffalo head. During the actual dance only one or two select warriors were allowed to wear the buffalo head; after receiving this privilege, Maximilian was told, such men never dared run from battle.

tedium of my confinement to bed, I was enlivened by the frequent visits of the Indians, and I never neglected to continue my journal, which, from fever and consequent weakness, was often very fatiguing.

April 9

Towards evening, nine men of the band of the buffalo bulls came to the fort to perform their dance, discharging their guns immediately on entering. Only one of them wore the entire buffalo head [*opposite page*]; the others had pieces of the skin of the forehead, a couple of fillets of red cloth, their shields decorated with the same material, and an appendage of feathers, intended to represent the bull's tail, hanging down their backs. They likewise carried long, elegantly ornamented banners in their hands. After dancing for a short time before us, they demanded presents. Besides the strange figures of this dance, Mr. Bodmer painted the chief, Mato-Topé, at full length, in his grandest dress. The vanity which is characteristic of the Indians induced this chief to stand stock-still for several days, so that his portrait [*reproduced on the cover of this issue*] succeeded admirably.

He wore on this occasion a handsome new shirt of bighorn leather, the large feather cap, and, in his hand, a long lance with scalps and feathers. He has been so often mentioned in my narrative, that I must here subjoin a few words respecting this eminent man, for he was fully entitled to this appellation, being not only a distinguished warrior, but possessing many fine and noble traits of character. In war he had always maintained a distinguished reputation; and on one occasion, with great personal danger he conducted to Fort Clark a numerous deputation of the Assiniboins, who had come to Mih-Tutta-Hang-Kush to conclude peace, while his countrymen, disregarding his proposals, kept firing upon the deputies. Mato-Topé after having in vain exerted himself to the utmost to prevent these hostilities, led his enemies, with slow steps, amidst the whistling balls and arrows of his countrymen, while he endeavored to find excuses for their culpable conduct. He had killed many enemies, among whom were five chiefs. He gave me a fac-simile of a representation of one of his exploits, painted by himself, of which he frequently gave me an account. He was, on that occasion, on foot, on a military expedition, with a few Mandans, when they encountered four Cheyennes, their most virulent foes, on horseback. The chief of the latter, seeing that their enemies were on foot, and that the combat would thereby be unequeal, dismounted, and the two parties attacked each other. The two chiefs fired, missed, threw away their guns, and seized their naked weapons; the Cheyenne, a tall, powerful man, drew his knife, while Mato-Topé, who was lighter and more agile, took his battle-axe. The former attempted to stab Mato-Topé, who laid hold of the blade of the knife, by which he, indeed, wounded his hand, but wrestled the weapon from his enemy, and stabbed him with it, on which the Cheyennes took to flight.

April 14

The people whom Mr. Mc Kenzie had promised to send to accompany me down the river to St. Louis, at length arrived from Fort Union. A main point now was my recovery, which was singularly rapid. At the beginning of April I was still in a hopeless condition, and so very ill, that the people who visited me did not think that my life would be prolonged beyond three or, at the most, four days. The cook of the fort, a Negro from St. Louis, one day expressed his opinion that my illness must be the scurvy, for he had once witnessed the great mortality among the garrison of the fort at Council Bluffs, when several hundred soldiers were carried off in a short time. He said that the symptoms were in both cases nearly similar; that, on that occasion, at the beginning of spring, they had gathered the green herbs in the prairie, especially the small white flowering *Allium reticulatum,* with which they had soon cured the sick. I was advised to make trial of this recipe, and the Indian children accordingly furnished me with an abundance of this plant and its bulbs: these were cut up small, like spinage, and I ate a quantity of them. On the fourth day the swelling of my leg had considerably subsided, and I gained strength daily.

April 18

At noon, the boat was loaded; and, after we had partaken of our frugal dinner at Fort Clark, we took a cordial farewell of Mr. Kipp, with whom we had passed so long a time in this remote place, and who had done everything for us that was possible in his circumscribed condition. Accompanied by the inhabitants of the fort, and many of our Indian friends, among whom was Mato-Topé and Pehriska-Ruhpa, all of whom shook hands at parting, we went on board our boat. The weather was favourable, though there was a strong wind from the south-west. Some cannonshots were fired by the fort as a farewell salute, and we glided rapidly down the beautiful stream of the Missouri.

Davis Thomas, *a former magazine editor, and his wife,* **Karin Ronnefeldt,** *have also coedited* Moon: Man's Greatest Adventure.

RED DEATH on the MISSOURI

SMALLPOX VICTIMS: SYMBOLS FROM AN INDIAN CALENDAR OF THE 1830'S

by K. C. Tessendorf

IT WAS A GALA OCCASION each spring in the 1830s and 1840s when the American Fur Company's annual upriver steamboat prepared to depart Saint Louis for the Missouri headwaters. A colorful group of passengers always assembled for the journey—fur traders, hunters, soldiers, Indians, a few missionaries, gamblers riding to the last urban outpost, perhaps a scientist or artist, and even European nobility on the primitive American Grand Tour. The crew, fatalistically aware of the toil, danger, and boredom of the long round-trip voyage, indulged in a dockside roaring drunk. Once haplessly aboard they would stage their ritual battle to choose the toughest boatman among them and award him the royal red sash as the trip's "King of the River."

At distant trading forts upriver the vessel's arrival was ardently awaited by trader and Indian alike for its cornucopia of supplies, luxuries, knickknacks, news, and outside contacts. But in the year 1837 this most joyous occasion would become a nightmare, for there was an unseen lethal stowaway aboard the steamboat *St. Peter's*—smallpox.

Our generation is, happily, only minimally aware of what smallpox is and was. We have all been preserved through immunization; fortunately so, for no cure for smallpox is yet known. In lands where prevention is lax, it has recently raged (16,000 smallpox deaths in India in 1973–74), its virulent contagion swift to assume epidemic proportions. Health authorities are making rapid progress against the disease, however, and are hopeful that it will very soon be completely eradicated around the world.

The disease has been traced as far back as the Fertile Crescent of antiquity: the mummy of Ramses V (1160 B.C.) bears its mark. Smallpox (as historically distinguished from the larger lesions of venereal eruptions) traveled into Central Europe with returning crusaders, entered the Iberian peninsula with the Saracens. So pandemic was it in Europe for centuries that scarcely a person rich or poor escaped the sickness. Queen Elizabeth I nearly succumbed at twenty-nine, became bald, one of the milder aftereffects, along with the usual facial scarring. The surviving breed of Caucasians inherited a chancy immunity to death through the pestilence.

In the New World the disease became an unwitting secret weapon of the Europeans as an otherworldly scourge upon the bodies of the natives. How did Cortés's tiny army overcome the populous and relatively sophisticated Aztec nation? Smallpox—the streets of Mexico City were layered with its victims when the Spaniards broke through the weakened defenses. The founding fathers in New England might have foundered except that a seaborne scourge had depopulated Massachusetts of its Indians a few years before. Ever onward into American history is carried the roll of smallpox epidemics, an astonishing and mortifying statistical compilation. To the susceptible Indians in every quarter, the Red Death was as American as firearms and firewater.

Little documentation exists for the origins of smallpox aboard the *St. Peter's;* whether it came aboard at Saint Louis or some point further along is not known. Tradition claims a disgruntled passenger denied passage deliberately placed infected clothing aboard. Above Fort Pierre, however, there is no doubt that it was on board, for by then there were several crew and passenger cases, with a potential for instant contagion wherever the steamboat held intercourse with the shore.

Three courses of action were available: the vessel could drop back and seek succor at the settlements; it could anchor in quarantine until the outbreak had run its course; it could continue upriver exercising prophylactic measures and warning away the tribes as much as possible. The latter choice was made for commercial reasons. The young master, Capt. Bernard Pratte, Jr., was the son of a company

"UNLOADING OF THE STEAMBOAT YELLOWSTONE": AQUATINT ENGRAVING

NORTHERN NATURAL GAS COMPANY COLLECTION, JOSLYN ART MUSEUM

Karl Bodmer made this view of the steamboat Yellowstone *during his voyage up the Missouri in 1833. Four years later another steamboat carried deadly smallpox upstream, destroying much of the Indian culture Bodmer had documented.*

owner and was probably most concerned with collecting the fur harvest on schedule and maintaining business as usual.

Fort Clark, the Mandan Indian post on the west bank of the Missouri in the center of present-day North Dakota, was the first to fall under the killing edge of the scourge, although honest action was initiated to keep the Mandans away. A semiauthentic tale tells of an Indian slipping aboard and snatching the blanket off the bed of a victim in thievery. Yet any face-to-face warning from the *St. Peter's,* except it be carried on by shouting at a distance, would be sufficient to spread the ambitious germ. This was not clearly understood even by the traders. And the Indians, not able to comprehend the danger and suspicious that the white man was denying them their goods, were not disposed to be cooperative.

Francis A. Chardon, a callous and pragmatic man, was in charge at Fort Clark. His client Mandans were an advanced tribe, though small in number. They had abandoned nomadic life for the settled village, sustained through a mixed agriculture and hunting economy. Always valuing trade contacts, they had befriended the white man from earliest times, had sheltered Lewis and Clark for a winter. But Chardon didn't like them. An overall negativism pervades the incomplete, laconic diary the trader maintained, which is our primary source on the smallpox epidemic among the Mandans in the summer and fall of 1837.

Chardon records the first fatality on July 14, about a month after the *St. Peter's* had called, and pestilential death came to be the rule thereafter. It spread to the Mandan periphery and infected other tribal contacts, including the Minnetarees, Gros Ventres, and Sioux. Yet the nearby Arikaras were initially spared: they had encountered the disease during a southern expedition some few years past, and their immunity was heightened. The Mandans were doubly exposed because of the habitual close contact of village life and their inability to flee because they were hemmed in by enemy tribes.

Day by day Chardon dryly records the toll and later its manic manifestations: "Thursday 31—A young Mandan that died 4 days ago, his wife having the disease also—killed her two children, one a fine Boy of eight years, and the other six, to complete the affair she hung herself." At second hand the Mandan's great friend, artist George Catlin, drew a poignant portrait: "They were necessarily inclosed within the piquets of their village, where the disease in a few days became so very malignant that death ensued in a few hours after its attacks; and so slight were their hopes . . . nearly half of them destroyed themselves with their knives, with their guns, and by dashing their brains out by leaping headforemost from a thirty foot ledge of rocks. . . . There was but one continual crying and howling and praying to the Great Spirit for his protection during the nights and days; and there being but few living, and those in too appalling despair, nobody thought of burying the dead, whose bodies,

"INTERIOR OF THE HUT OF A MANDAN CHIEF"; AQUATINT ENGRAVING

BOTH PAGES: NORTHERN NATURAL GAS COMPANY COLLECTION, JOSLYN ART MUSEUM

Before the 1837 smallpox epidemic ended all tribal life, the Mandans lived in comfortable lodges like this one drawn by Bodmer during his 1833–34 visit to Fort Clark.

whole families together, were left in horrid and loathsome piles in their own wigwams, with a few buffalo robes, &c. thrown over them, there to decay, and be devoured by their own dogs."

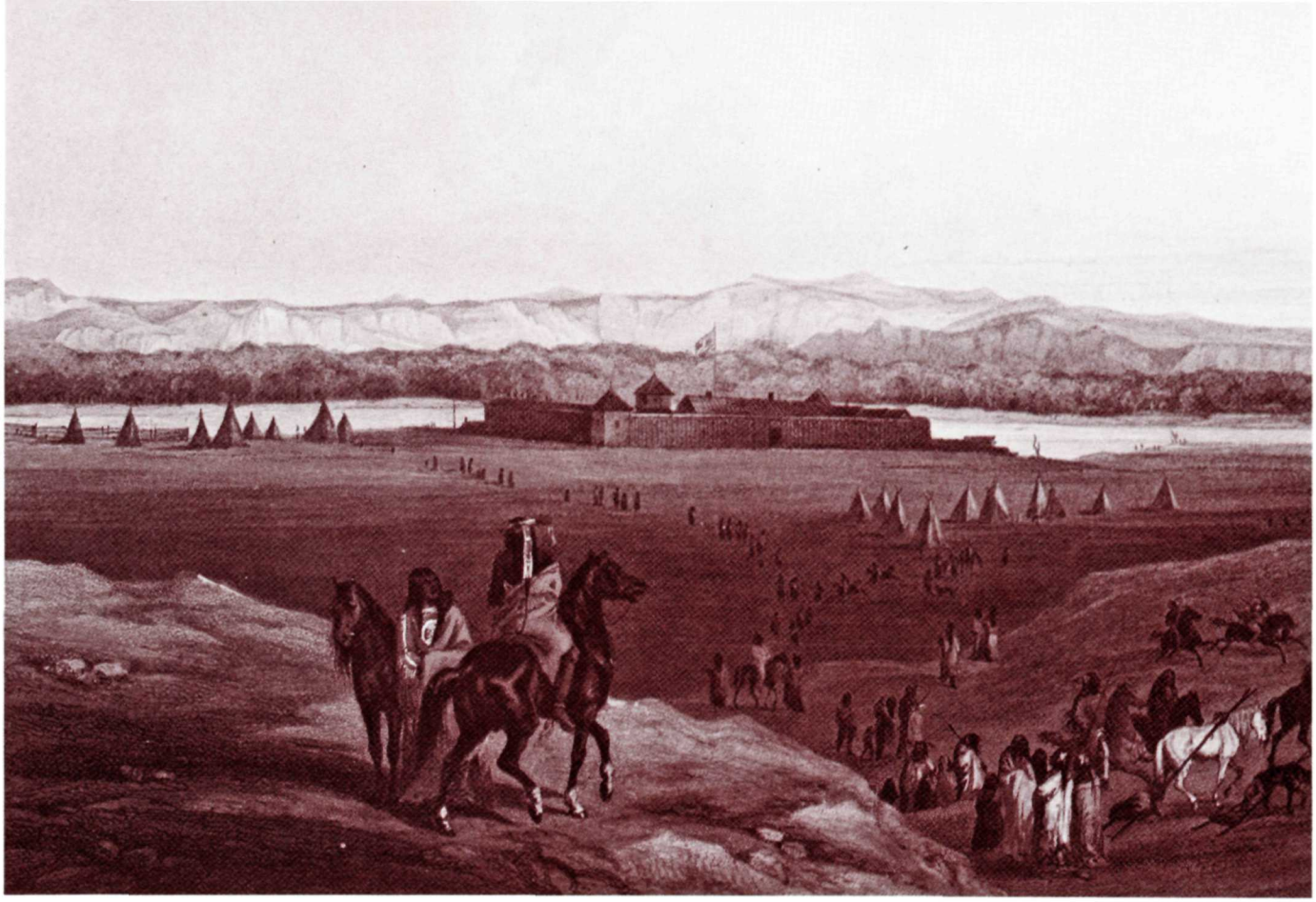
IN THE MONTH OF AUGUST the traders felt themselves besieged. Increasingly the Mandans rightly blamed them as the source of their disaster and wrongly for withholding the cure. (Preventive vaccine had been sparingly utilized in North America since 1800, but there was none on the Upper Missouri; post-diagnostic treatment was palliative and in *isolation,* but the latter concept was foreign to Indian practice or emotion.) The Indians thought the fort in league with the relatively healthy Arikaras, and indeed Chardon did defensively effect an alliance with that tribe in case the Mandans attacked. It didn't come to that, but several individuals threatened or attempted assassinations. Smallpox now raged within Fort Clark too; Chardon was severely stricken, and his two-year-old son died. The traders considered themselves fortunate to creep out by night to gather a few vegetables to garnish their coarse fare.

Then Four Bears (Mato-Topé), the impressive Mandan chief who had been painted by Catlin and Bodmer, himself took the disease along with his family. Before lying down to die he delivered a bitter malediction, which Chardon recorded: "Ever since I can remember, I have loved the Whites, I have lived with them ever since I was a boy, and . . . I have never Wronged a White Man, on the Contrary, I have always Protected them from the insults of others. . . . The 4 Bears never saw a White Man hungry, but what he gave him to eat, Drink, and a Buffaloe skin to sleep on. . . . I was always ready to die for them, Which they cannot deny. I have done every thing that a red Skin could do for them, and how they repaid it! . . . I do not fear *Death* my friends. You Know it, but to *die* with my face rotten, that even the Wolves will shrink with horror at seeing Me, and say to themselves, that is the 4 Bears the Friend of the Whites—. . . . Rise all together and Not leave one of them alive."

For lack of Mandans the epidemic ebbed in the fall; only about thirty individuals survived, and tribal culture ended. Chardon wrote off the Mandans thus: "Sept 19 . . . Number of deaths cannot be less than 800—What a bande of RASCALS has been used up"

Meanwhile the culprit *St. Peter's* mounted to its destination at Fort Union, the post of the Assiniboin tribe, and there discharged ashore its only currently virulent smallpox case—Jacob Halsey, the new trader-in-charge. Quarantine was ineffective, and the disease spread within the fort. The Indians, except for some squaws, were absent on the hunt.

Edwin Thompson Denig, a trader of scientific bent, attempted to clear up the sickness before their return by inoculating squaws and employees. This severe expedient



"FORT UNION, AT THE MOUTH OF THE YELLOWSTONE"; AQUATINT ENGRAVING

In this Bodmer illustration, Assiniboin Indians leave Fort Union after trading for steamboat goods. In 1837 they were warned away from this same fort because of smallpox there, but it struck them anyway.

—taken from a copy of Dr. Thomas's *Treatise On Domestic Medicine* (1822)—prescribed the direct introduction of live smallpox matter into healthy systems, who were then isolated since their cases would be as communicative as any. The inoculated seventeen were grievously stricken in their prison, but only three died, though there arose "such a stench in the fort it could be smelt at a distance of 300 yards."

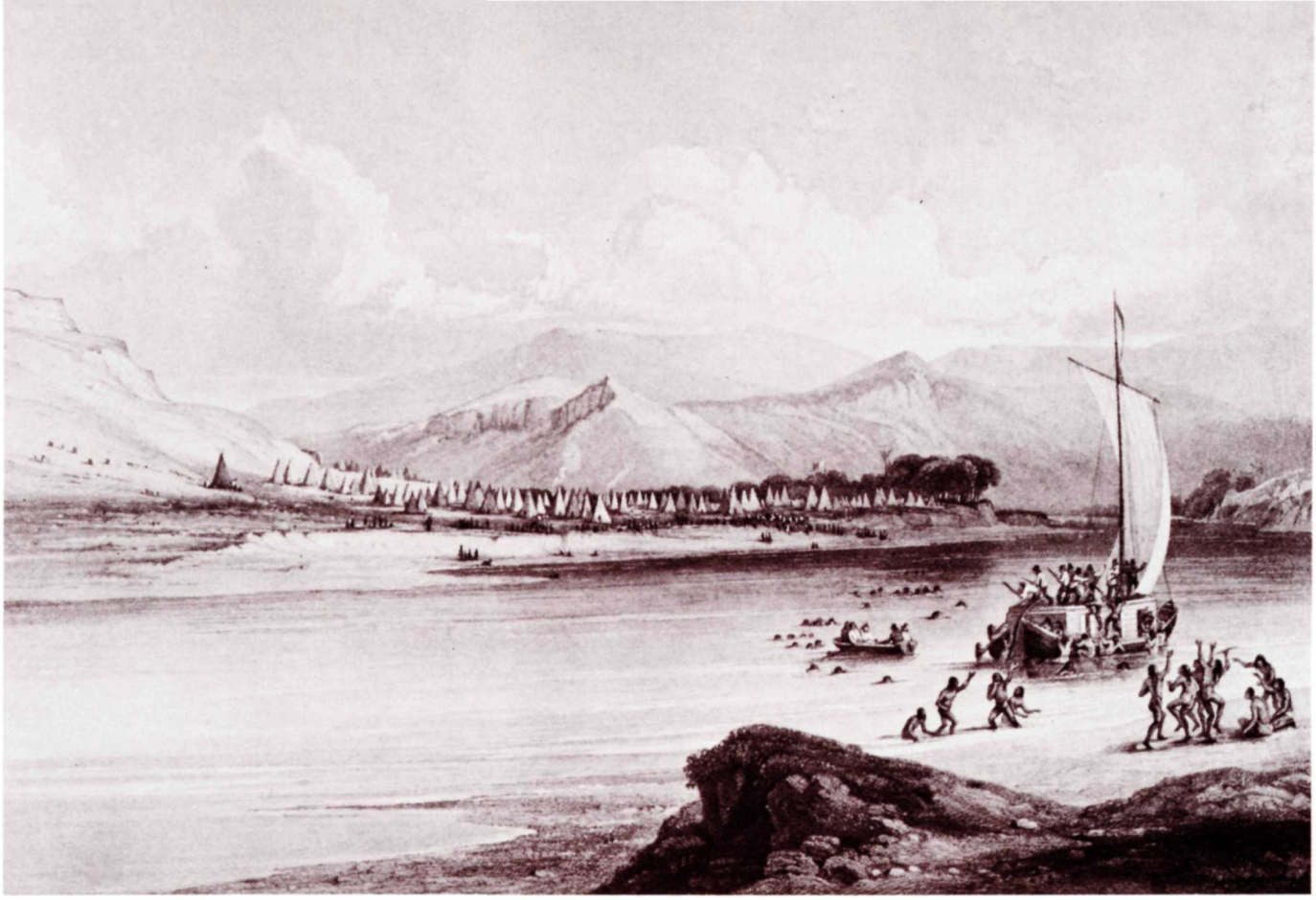
As incoming Assiniboin bands appeared on the bluff tops, an interpreter went out to warn them off. They, too, were suspicious of the white man's designs upon their trading goods and crowded closely against the fort, prowling and peering. Finally the expedient of holding aloft over the pickets the ravaged, scarlet body of a child in the eruptive stage instilled fear and prudence.

But it was too late; the pestilence seized upon the Assiniboin with deathly vigor. "The disease was very virulent," says Denig, "most of the Indians dying through delirium and hemorrhage from the mouth and ears before any spots appeared. Some killed themselves."

Panic-stricken riders galloped off in all directions, a few thereby escaping affliction but spreading the unseen germ across the high plains. Denig, an early ethnographer of the area, writes of the aftermath: "The result was that out of 1,000 lodges [reckoned at 4.5 persons per lodge] and upward of the Assiniboin then in existence but 400 lodges or less remained, and even these thinly peopled. Relationship by blood or adoption was nearly annihilated, all property lost or sacrificed, and a few very young and very old left to mourn the loss. Most of the principal men having died, it took years to recover from the shock . . . during the interim of 17 years but 100 lodges have accumulated."

At Fort Union the *St. Peter's* reached the head of its navigation and awaited the arrival of the fur-laden keelboats from the upriver forts of McKenzie (Blackfoot) and Cass (Crow). But the traders, seeing smallpox breaking out, made haste to escape back upriver with their cargoes of goods. Still, Alexander Harvey, resourceful trader from Fort McKenzie, soon found three smallpox cases, a half-Indian girl, a Blackfoot, and a white man, ablaze aboard his keelboat. He prudently halted at the mouth of the Judith River, about forty miles shy of the fort, sending word forward of his plight.

Major Alexander Culbertson, in charge at the fort, was disposed to quarantine the vessel where it was as long as necessary. The seasonal fur crop, the most important business objective, had been dispatched. But his client Blackfoot tribe, encamped en masse outside awaiting their goods so that they could be off on a summer's hunting and campaigning, would not countenance it. They did not believe in the subtle killer. They said they would go down themselves and forcibly bring up the keelboat. Having made a stern Pilate-like oration adjuring the Indians to remember his advice, Culbertson ordered the vessel up.



"CAMP OF THE GROS VENTRES OF THE PRAIRIES"; AQUATINT ENGRAVING

BOTH PAGES: NORTHERN NATURAL GAS COMPANY COLLECTION, JOSLYN ART MUSEUM

Keelboats like this one carried steamboat goods far up the Missouri, and in 1837 they spread smallpox as well. In Bodmer's picture the keelboat Flora *has halted near a Gros Ventre camp below Fort McKenzie.*

The impatient Indians were not dissuaded by the death of both the Blackfoot and the white man shortly after the boat arrived at Fort McKenzie. Having scooped up their goods, all departed within five days for their respective hunting grounds, and most for eternity. Smallpox spread through the fort personnel, including Culbertson; twenty-seven died, twenty-six of them squaws. Smallpox had also penetrated to Fort Cass, but the Crow were absent and stayed away; their historians had some notion of the scourge.

An eerie human vacuum surrounded Fort McKenzie as summer passed. No Blackfeet appeared for weeks. Major Culbertson at length set out to find them. At Three Forks on the Missouri he found a silent, stinking village. Hundreds of rotting corpses were strewn about. A contemporary commentator records: "It was like another Assyrian host that the Angel of Death had overwhelmed in a night. Two old women, too feeble to travel, were the sole living occupants of the village. All who had not died on the spot had fled in small bands here and there, frantic to escape the pestilence which pursued them at every turn, seizing its victims on the prairie, in the valley, among the mountains, dotting the country with their corrupting bodies, till thousands had perished."

The surviving Blackfeet did not overtly blame the white man. It is said that they recalled the trader's warning and that they believed it was retribution against an attack on the fort they were planning for the fall.

WHAT ABOUT the implication of germ warfare by the white man? Certainly not in the Missouri Valley in 1837—the Indian, whatever the trader's moral outlook, was an economic asset, the indispensable collector in the fur business as then constituted. Elsewhere? Yes, a documented instance at Fort Pitt in the 1760s, suspicion of it at Fort Dearborn circa 1812, and perhaps in other lands, too —the subject is shadowy. In the nineteenth-century West, threats of the plague were sometimes used as weapons against Indians; notably so in the case of James McDougall, a trader facing a Chinook attack at the mouth of the Columbia River in 1811. He told the chiefs: "You imagine that because we are so few you can easily kill us, but it is not so; or if you do you will only bring greater evils upon yourselves. The medicine of the white man dead is mightier than that of the red man living. . . . You know the smallpox. Listen: I am the smallpox chief. In this bottle I have it confined. All I have to do is to pull the cork, send it forth among you, and you are dead men. But this is for my enemies and not for my friends." The ruse worked well on this occasion; a similar ploy among the Pawnees is also recorded.

What did the white man do to combat smallpox among the Indians? Jenner's effective cowpox vaccination technique was introduced into America by Dr. Benjamin Waterhouse in 1798. The vaccine (cotton thread soaked repeatedly in eighth-day virus) was dispatched with Lewis

This handsome Blackfoot horseman was drawn by Bodmer near Fort McKenzie, where the Blackfeet came to trade. When smallpox struck them after their 1837 trading visit, entire villages were destroyed.

and Clark by President Jefferson to immunize and instruct Indian tribes they would encounter. Subsequent arm-to-arm inoculation could make a small batch go far cooperatively. But their vaccine proved sterile.

Small-scale Indian vaccination began in the East; it was federalized in 1832 by the Jackson Administration when $5,000 was appropriated. An admirable effort at vaccination was made in the lower Missouri Valley (below Fort Pierre) in the spring of 1838 by Indian agent Joshua Pilcher with federally appointed Dr. Prefontaine. They inoculated about 3,000 before exhausting their vaccine. Reservation vaccination proceeded apace until by the twentieth century the Indian might be more thoroughly immunized than his white neighbor.

But it was difficult to treat with, and treat, the sovereign prereservation tribes. They often refused vaccination until an epidemic had struck. And the white men on the scene were virtually helpless to care for smallpox victims, as we have seen. Sauna was a widely prescribed Indian treatment for illness, but it only hastened weakened smallpox victims to the grave. Indian-watcher Denig somewhat cynically laments: "Should the patient die the whites would be blamed for poisoning him, and should he live the Indian drummer or doctor will get both the credit and the pay."

The smallpox did not die with the frost on the Upper Missouri. In the winter, Pawnee warriors captured Mandan-infected Sioux. The Crows soon took advantage of the weakened Blackfeet and caught death. From the Pawnees the contagion winged southward: it afflicted the Osages, Kiowas, and Choctaws, and by the winter of 1839–40 was raging among the Comanche and Apache tribes.

It is very difficult to reach statistical conclusions in this matter. An estimate, perhaps the most accurate, of the 1837 toll among the six Missouri tribes—Mandans, Arikaras, Minatarees, Sioux, Assiniboins, and Blackfeet—is 17,000. This is an insignificant figure matched against the vast record of preceding and succeeding plagues. Indeed, the Mandan-Assiniboin-Crow tribes had been severely ravaged about 1800 by a Canadian-spawned epidemic. And the steamboat *Clara* in 1856 again carried virulent smallpox up the Missouri with widespread fatal consequences.

Indian authority Harold E. Driver arrives at his estimate of the pre-Columbian Amerindian population of what became the United States by increasing the nadir figure, 250,000 around 1890, by a multiple of ten. When disease joins firearms, firewater, and socio-economic disorientation at the inquest into our land's depopulation of over two million aboriginal peoples, smallpox must have a commanding voice.

K. C. Tessendorf *is a free-lance writer residing in Washington, D.C., where his access to federal libraries has been of assistance in writing a number of historical articles appearing in* Americas, Mankind, Natural History, Smithsonian, *and other magazines.*

Earthquakes and Gold

Working in cooperation with the National Park Service, Foothill College, California, geology students have spent three years creating a mile-long **Earthquake Trail** at **Point Reyes National Seashore.** Located on the epicenter of the 1906 earthquake that devastated San Francisco, twenty miles to the South, the self-guiding trail both marks the event and informs visitors about earthquakes and how to prepare for them. The trail was completed last September and includes among its features posts set directly on the San Andreas fault line for visibility, a series of signs telling the story of "plate tectonics," and a restored fence that was offset sixteen feet in 1906.

A 114-pound, **gold-filled boulder** valued at more than $350,000 was presented by Asarco Incorporated and the descendants of A. E. Reynolds to the **Denver Museum of Natural History** on November 10, 1976. The boulder, which contains the largest amount of gold ever found in a single specimen in Colorado (350 troy ounces), was discovered lying on a hillside in Summitville, Colorado in 1975 by bulldozer operator Robert Ellithorpe, who had stopped to aid a stalled truck when he spotted the rock.

The specimen is 21 inches from side to side, a foot thick, and 14 inches from top to base. "Among the many veinlets of gold in the boulder," museum curator Jack Murphy notes, "there is one that is one inch thick at its widest part. It goes through the entire mass for about 12 inches. There is more gold visible in that one vein alone than started most gold rushes in Colorado and other parts of the West in the 1840s and '50s."

America's last great gold rush will be commemorated at the new 13,271-acre **Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park,** authorized by Congress last year and signed into law on June 30 by President Gerald Ford. Klondike Park will be composed of three Alaska units—at Skagway and along the Chilkoot and White Pass trails—plus an interpretive center in Seattle, Washington, the starting point for thousands of adventurers who headed for the Klondike in 1897–98.

The park may become part of an international preserve involving both the United States and Canada. National Park Service planners are now working with Parks Canada, which is developing the Canadian portion of the Klondike Trail leading from the international border near Skagway, down the Yukon River to Dawson in the Yukon Territory, and to the nearby gold fields.

The core of the U.S. portion is at Skagway, where sixteen historic buildings will be acquired by the National Park Service with others being restored by the State of Alaska and private owners. The legislation that created the new park authorizes $5.8 million for development and $2.6 million for acquisition of land and buildings.

Restoration has now been completed at the **Old San Francisco Mint,** constructed between 1869–74 and considered one of the finest examples of federal classic architecture in the West. A survivor of the disastrous San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906, the structure was used for government coining operations until 1937, after which it served for thirty years as an office building for various federal agencies. During the 1960s the Old Mint became the center of controversy between groups seeking its demolition to make way for a high-rise development and those who successfully maintained that it should be preserved as an architectural, cultural, and historical landmark.

Extensive interior rehabilitation of the building began in 1972, and it opened the following year as a dual-purpose facility of the Bureau of the Mint. The basement vault area and a large portion of the first floor have been authentically restored to their 1874 appearance and serve as a Mint Museum open to the public. Among the many exhibits are a $1 million gold bar display and an 1869 press used by visitors to strike their own souvenir medals. The remainder of the interior has been modernized to serve the Mint's Special Coins and Medals Division and its computer operations.

Final work on the Old Mint's sandstone and granite exterior late last year restored the building to the same elegant appearance that it exhibited more than one hundred years ago, and marked the successful completion of the rehabilitation project.

"America," a collection of 150 documents relating to early American history, can be seen through January 30 at the **Amon Carter Museum of Western Art,** Fort Worth, Texas. Included is the original proclamation of the Louisiana Purchase, written and signed by Thomas Jefferson. Also at the Amon Carter, through February 13, is an exhibition of over 100 **Navajo pictorial weavings,** some dating from the 1880s.

"Frontier of Spain in North America," a collection of **Pacific Northwest artifacts** gathered by the eighteenth-century Malaspina Expedition and on loan from Spain, will be on exhibit through January 16 at the **Palace of Governors,** Santa Fe, New Mexico. Also in Santa Fe, **Southwest photographs by Ansel Adams** will be shown from February 6 at the **Museum of Fine Arts.**

The American Farm, a major photographic exhibition on the history of agriculture in the United States, will open simultaneously January 21 at the **Oakland Museum** and the Chicago **Museum of Science and Industry.** Four years in preparation, the show is sponsored by the California Historical Society. A book on the same theme will be released in the early spring.

The Cowboy in Myth and Reality

REVIEWED BY OWEN ULPH

THE COWBOY as myth is in poor condition in American popular culture," writes William W. Savage in the concluding essay of the Harris-Rainey collection, the most intellectually animated achievement among the titles listed above. "His rescue," Savage continues, "must come through efforts of intelligent people acting intelligently. Exploitation is a constant with which we must live, but it can perhaps be circumvented in the proper circumstances. We should do well, however, to consider the possibility that the cowboy image is already so debased through commercial exploitation that people who might otherwise deal with it maturely cannot get into the mood."

The Cowboy: Six-Shooters, Songs, and Sex edited by Charles W. Harris and Buck Rainey *(University of Oklahoma, Norman, 1976; 175 pp., intro., illus., index, $9.95 cloth, $3.95 paper).*

The Long Trail: How Cowboys & Longhorns Opened the West by Gardner Soule *(McGraw-Hill, New York, 1976; 355 pp., illus., biblio., index, $10.95).*

The Rawhide Years by Glenn R. Vernam *(Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1976; 239 pp., illus., maps, index, $7.95).*

Rodeo by Douglas Kent Hall *(Ballantine Books, New York, 1976; 159 pp., illus., $7.95 paper).*

$10 Horse, $40 Saddle: Cowboy Clothing, Arms, Tools and Horse Gear of the 1880's by Don Rickey, Jr. *(Old Army Press, Ft. Collins, Colo., 1976; 135 pp., intro., illus., biblio., $10.95).*

Savage threw a smooth loop, and his collaborators in the collection generally maintain the standards for which he appeals. A trace of "exploitation" is suggested by the title, but the volume originally appeared as a specialized issue of the *Red River Valley Historical Review,* and the individual articles are uncorrupted. The same cannot be said for some of the other works on the roster. Soule, Vernam, and Hall were obviously tapping an inveterate market, the elasticity of which bicentennial merchandising has momentarily increased.

The Long Trail and *The Rawhide Years* are surveys that rehash, pad, and embroider material about the cowboy that was hackneyed fifty years ago. Soule and Vernam display varied individual ingenuity in polishing worn leather, but their results are identical—further debasement of the cowboy image by a wanton glorification that honest cowhands would disclaim with a pungent reference to the excretory product of uncut male cattle. "The American cowboy seems to be something God created expressly for North America" is Vernam's overture to an extravagant eulogy that would have made even Pecos Bill blush. To toss the devil a bone, both books contain a war bag of information for the uninitiated and addicts who crave surfeit. Soule's fractured behemoth resembles a McGraw-Hill textbook, an almanac, a mail-order catalog, a Baedeker, and a telephone directory. It is strewn with isolated items of interest—especially when concerned with subjects other than cowboys. Vernam, in turn, "enriches" his account with high-gloss rhetoric and vagabond historical allusions that bedazzle the reader with the scope of the author's erudition.

Rodeo, by D. K. Hall, likewise confronts a topic that has received effective treatment—notably in Clifford P. Westermeier's *Man, Beast, Dust* (Denver, 1947). More important, as Savage stresses, the rodeo cowboy "is no cowboy at all. Rather he is a professional athlete, a performer, and he bears less relationship to a working cowboy than he does to a linebacker." Part of the rodeo's popularity derives from the cowboy myth, however, and through the mechanism of the "feedback loop" becomes another debasing factor. The last work linking rodeo with actual cowboys was Will James's *Flint Spears* (New York, 1938). *Rodeo* excels as an exercise in action-photography, accompanied by a competent libretto. Once the notion is dispelled that it concerns cowboys, it can be accepted as a documentary of contemporary urban anthropology. Besides—fans from the stands should love it.

This leaves little space to commend the modest, sober, solid vignette of Don Rickey. Although cowboy haberdashery and hardware have received a healthy share of previous attention, Rickey's work is definitive and leaves no margin for improvement. Dale Crawford's illustrations display unpretentious, appropriate craftsmanship. It should not be necessary to rehash this subject again. But someone will.

Owen Ulph *is both a rancher and a professor of history and humanities at Reed College.*

RECENT WESTERN BOOKS

100 Posters of Buffalo Bill's Wild West by Jack Rennert *(Darien House, New York, 1976; 112 pp., illus., intro., notes, $19.95 cloth, $8.95 paper).*

This large-format book of posters, seventy-two in color, shows the development of William F. Cody's Wild West Show from earliest days to the last farewell tour. Also included are a short biography of Cody, information about the lithographers, and notes about each poster.

Fodor's Old West edited by Eugene Fodor and Robert C. Fisher *(David McKay, New York, 1976; 504 pp., illus., maps, index, $12.95 cloth, $9.95 paper).*

Written for travelers interested in the West's visible heritage, this practical guidebook contains information about history-related sites, events, and activities.

Crying for a Vision: A Rosebud Sioux Trilogy, 1886–1976 with photographs by John A. Anderson, Eugene Buechel, S.J., and Don Doll, S.J. *(Morgan & Morgan, Dobbs Ferry, New York, 1976; 160 pp., illus., intro., $10.95 paper).*

In this moving portrait of the Brule Sioux Indians, pictures by three sensitive photographers depict reservation life from the late nineteenth century to the present.

Frontier Historian: The Life and Works of Edward Everett Dale edited by Arrell M. Gibson *(University of Oklahoma, 1975; 367 pp., $9.95).*

"At the age of twenty-six [Edward Everett Dale] faced squarely the question of whether to punch cattle or go to college," writes Arrell M. Gibson in one of three essays about Dale included in this book. The bulk of *Frontier Historian,* however, consists of writings by Dale, who eventually received his Ph.D. from Harvard and became chairman of the history department at the University of Oklahoma.

Seeds of Man by Woody Guthrie *(E. P. Dutton, New York, 1976; 401 pp., $11.95).*

Folksinger Woody Guthrie's pioneer grandfather once discovered a rich gold mine in the Big Bend country of the Rio Grande. Many years later, young Guthrie tried to find the same mine; this partly fictionalized book records his search.

Lewis and Clark's America *(Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, 1976; 2 vols., 192 pp., illus., map, notes, biblio., $10.00 paper).*

Based on an exhibition at the Seattle Art Museum, these two fine small volumes, slipcased together, recapture the America of Lewis and Clark. One includes paintings by such artists as Catlin, Bierstadt, Bodmer, Miller, Moran, and Russell; the other contains contemporary landscape photographs by Paul Macapia, accompanied by sketches and a journal by Mary Macapia.

Oregon's Golden Years by Miles F. Potter *(The Caxton Printers, Caldwell, Idaho, 1976; 181 pp., illus., maps, notes, biblio., index, $7.95 paper).*

Gold was discovered in Oregon in 1850–51, and the rush that followed brought thousands to the area. This book tells the story of the Oregon gold rush, illustrated by many old photographs.

Underfoot: An Everyday Guide to Exploring the American Past by David Weitzman *(Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1976; 192 pp., illus., biblio., index, $12.95).*

This engaging, well-designed and illustrated book tells the reader how to discover his roots. There are chapters on tape recording family history, and on using old photographs, genealogical records, graveyards, old glass, historic buildings, and the library as aids in finding out more about the past.

The Desert by Russell D. Butcher *(The Viking Press, New York, 1976; 128 pp., illus., maps, intro., biblio., $17.50).*

Russell Butcher uses words and sixty-nine fine color photographs to portray the six great deserts of the American West.

Carvalho, Portrait of a Forgotten American by Joan Sturhahn *(Richwood Publishing Company, Merrick, New York, 1976; 226 pp., illus., intro., appen., notes, biblio., $22.50).*

This short biography of Solomon Nunes Carvalho serves as an introduction to a fascinating pioneer photographer and artist who accompanied Frémont's Fifth Expedition, but it lacks the fleshing-out that Carvalho richly deserves to illustrate the wide scope of his many talents.

Seattle Past to Present by Roger Sale *(University of Washington, Seattle, 1976; 273 pp., illus., maps, notes, biblio., index, $12.95).*

Comprehensive, personal, and literate, this volume deals with modern Seattle as well as its interesting past.

Wolf That I Am: In Search of the Red Earth People by Fred McTaggart *(Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1976; 195 pp., biblio., $7.95).*

In 1971 a young doctoral candidate embarked on a study of the Mesquakie Indians of Iowa. As he heard their stories and legends, he found himself more profoundly affected than he had expected. This interesting book is the result of his encounter.

Indian Art of the Northwest Coast: A Dialogue on Craftsmanship and Aesthetics by Bill Holm and Bill Reid *(Institute for the Arts, Rice University, Houston, distributed by the University of Washington, Seattle, 1976; 263 pp., illus., intro., notes, $20.00).*

In this beautiful volume, Bill Holm, a specialist in Northwest Coast cultures and a dancer-singer-carver in Kwakiutl ceremonies; and Bill Reid, a carver in the tradition of his Haida ancestors, discuss over one hundred examples of Northwest Coast art. The book features 138 black and white photographs and 50 color plates.

A History of the Lewis and Clark Journals by Paul Russell Cutright *(University of Oklahoma, Norman, 1976; 311 pp., illus., map, appen., biblio., index, $17.50).*

The first complete account of the publishing history of the Lewis and Clark journals, this book also evaluates material written about the two explorers.

An Enduring Heritage: Historic Buildings of the San Francisco Peninsula by Dorothy F. Regnery *(Stanford University, Stanford, California, 1976; 124 pp., illus., map, biblio., index, $18.95).*

This book, inspired by a survey of historic buildings, describes many of the most interesting sites on the San Francisco Peninsula. Two hundred historic and contemporary photographs complete the picture.

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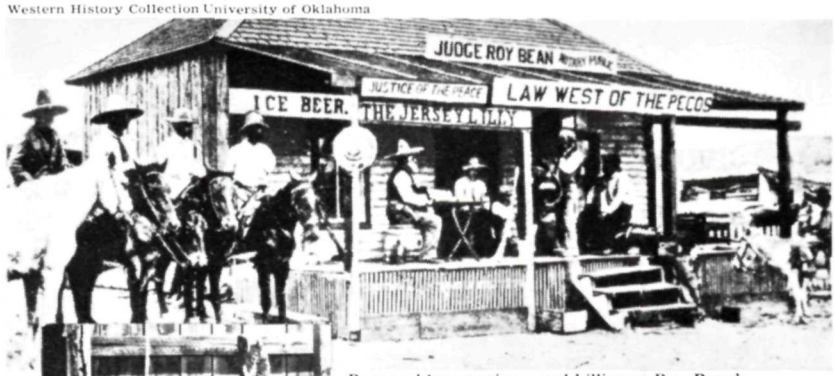

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Nine Years Among the Spokane Indians

REVIEWED BY LARRY WALDRON

MISSIONARIES are out of favor these days. The sympathy is with the Indians and not with those that brought them pestilence and damnation. But missionaries played an important role in the opening of the West—a role that Clifford M. Drury has been studying for over forty years.

Nine Years With the Spokane Indians: The Diary, 1838–1848, of Elkanah Walker by Clifford M. Drury *(Arthur H. Clark Company, Glendale, California, 1976; 547 pp., intro., illus., biblio., appen., $26.50).*

In 1928, as a minister with a doctorate in history, Drury was assigned as pastor to the First Presbyterian Church in Moscow, Idaho. During that time he heard Nez Percé Presbyterians singing hymns that had been translated into their Indian language by the Rev. Henry Harmon Spalding ninety years before. He was thrilled, and from that time on his interest in religion and history were combined to focus on one subject—the Protestant missionaries that were sent to the old Oregon Country, beginning in 1836, by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

The Boston-based American Board represented the Congregational and Presbyterian churches and was the organization that sent the missionaries to Hawaii who were later made famous in James Michener's novel *Hawaii.*

The first Oregon contingent, which arrived in 1836, consisted of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, Henry and Eliza Spalding, and William Gray. The Whitmans established their mission among the Cayuse Indians and the Spaldings among the Nez Percés. Mary and Elkanah Walker along with Myra and Cushing Eels came out in the 1838 reinforcement. The two couples started their mission at Tshimakain—twenty miles northwest of present-day Spokane—among the Spokane Indians.

Drury has written eleven volumes about the six couples and four mission sites that comprised the American Board effort in Oregon. Like the other volumes, *Nine Years With the Spokane Indians: The Diary of Elkanah Walker,* is thoroughly researched and accurate, with an unusually complete and useful index. Drury is a fine writer and places the Walker diary in perspective with introductory chapters and extensive footnotes.

Mary Walker's diary was published earlier by Drury in the second volume of *First White Women Over the Rockies.* Drury quotes from Mary Walker's diary extensively in the footnotes, and it makes an interesting point-counter-point from a time when no one quibbled about the two sexes thinking differently. Mary Walker comes through as being much wittier and more human than her husband.

Elkanah Walker's missionary efforts were a frustration; his charges were continually backsliding. He was particularly bothered by the Indian practice of "playing medicine," which he considered devil worship. If a member of the tribe lost his spirit it was necessary for a medicine man to return it or the individual would become sick and die. The spirit would return after a night of singing and dancing, but care had to be taken not to get the wrong spirit, especially one of a person already dead.

But the Spokanes weren't the only ones that became dispirited. Walker had continual problems with his health, complaining of headache, stomachache, and confused spells. Neither missionary nor Indian had the answer for the other.

Elkanah Walker didn't bring damnation to the Spokane Indians, but then he didn't bring salvation either. He did give them the Spokane Primer, the first publication in the Spokane language, and nine years of unrequited hope.

Pestilence, brought by emigrants, came to the Cayuse Indians to the south, who blamed and killed the Walkers' friends and coworkers, Marcus and Narcissa Whitman. The Whitmans' story is told in Drury's two-volume work *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the Opening of Old Oregon*—a book one might start with in reading about the American Board missionaries of old Oregon.

Larry Waldron *is park ranger-historian at Whitman Mission National Historic Site and a free-lance writer.*

The Old West on Film

REVIEWED BY JAMES K. FOLSOM

SOME WAG has remarked that inside every fat woman is a thin woman trying to get out. Books such as Jon Tuska's mammoth *The Filming of the West* emphasize the point, for it is not really so much one book as several smaller ones, all bound together by the common subject matter of Western film rather than by any compelling internal logic. Some of these thin books are inevitably better than others, and not all will be to every reader's taste. Least satisfying to this reviewer is the volume of anecdotal reminiscences concerning the personal lives of various Hollywood personalities, although individual chapters about the conflicts between actors, directors, and the front office are often excellent. More interesting is a slim volume dealing with the implications of motion-picture economics for the development of Western films, a subject which Tuska has exhaustively researched and to which he brings some extremely perceptive insights. Best of all, and worthy of separate publication, is a provocative and original short study of the aesthetics of film making.

The Filming of the West by Jon Tuska *(Doubleday & Company, Garden City, New York, 1976; 618 pp., intro., illus., appen., index, $14.95).*

Tom Mix Died for Your Sins by Darryl Ponicsan *(Delacorte Press, New York, 1975; 300 pp., illus., $8.95).*

The Filming of the West is organized around a discussion of one-hundred seminal Western films produced between 1903 and 1972. Tuska sees these as more significant than run-of-the-mill productions, although why he considers these films especially important never really becomes clear. Most reasonably knowledgeable film buffs will probably agree with Tuska's choices, which are by no means eccentric, but again the fatness of the book makes it extremely difficult for the reader to discover any rationale governing the inclusion of material. The result, perhaps inevitable in such an ambitious project, is that the book is virtually unreadable in any straightforward way. It is best approached through its excellent index, by looking up entries on specific topics, films, or personalities. *The Filming of the West* is an invaluable reference book. It is less successful as a narrative history of Western film and of the growth of the motion-picture industry.

Tuska dedicates his book to the memory of Tom Mix, the subject of Darryl Ponicsan's short fictional biography, *Tom Mix Died for Your Sins.* Ostensibly a novel based on the life of Tom Mix, the book is actually only very slightly fictionalized. Ponicsan's major imaginative contribution is his creation of a fictional character, Kid Bandera, supposedly a friend of Mix, who narrates the story. This device for telling the story has some great advantages as well as a number of drawbacks. Most serious among the latter is the temptation to present Mix as a figure of primarily anecdotal significance—buddy of Will Rogers, member of the 101 Wild West Show, cofounder of the Calgary Stampede, and so on. The principal advantage, of which Ponicsan makes good use, is that Kid Bandera can interact not only with Mix but with Mix's friends.

Much of the novel is told in terms of imaginary conversations Bandera holds with Mix's secretary, Teddy Eason, and with Stumpy, Mix's Black stable hand. Through these conversations, Ponicsan develops the interior life of his hero, about which the external record is silent.

Some of Ponicsan's ideas are controversial and may well be wrong. Kid Bandera, presumably speaking for the author, presents Teddy Eason as the one woman who was truly and selflessly in love with him, though her love was never returned. He attributes the decline in Mix's film popularity primarily to Mix's inability to make the transition from silent film to sound, a debatable assertion with which Jon Tuska at least disagrees. He also implies that Mix's death was probably a suicide caused by despondency. Perhaps Bandera's insights are incorrect, but they do offer a suggestive interpretation of a very complex and tragic figure. While Ponicsan's novel brings little new material about Mix to light, it does provide a good synthesis of what is already known and is a useful introduction to Mix's life.

James K. Folsom, *who is a professor of English at the University of Colorado, has written a number of books and articles dealing with Western literature and film.*

Fort Davis and the Texas Frontier: Paintings by Captain Arthur T. Lee, Eighth U.S. Infantry by W. Stephen Thomas *(Texas A&M University, College Station, and Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, Fort Worth, 1976; 109 pp., intro., illus., biblio., index, $20.00).*

REVIEWED BY WILLIAM GARDNER BELL

ARTHUR TRACY LEE is one of that handful of sensitive, cultured, and talented army officers who served on the American frontier and recorded their observations with pencil and brush for posterity. Not nearly so well known as Seth Eastman—perhaps the archetype of the group—Lee is now retrieved from relative obscurity by W. Stephen Thomas and the Amon Carter Museum in this monograph that sketches his life and reproduces his southwestern watercolors for the first time.

Lee had a varied career that involved him in the Winnebago removal in Wisconsin, the Seminole War in Florida, the Mexican War in its northern theater, and the Civil War as a Confederate prisoner and a casualty at Gettysburg. His public career culminated in his appointment as governor of the Soldiers' Home in Washington. In addition to his art works he authored a book of poems and ballads and a "reminiscence" of the Eighth Infantry Regiment.

The soldier-artist spent twelve mid-career years—1848–1860—in Texas, and it is the twenty-eight full-color southwestern sketches, including sixteen of the Fort Davis-Davis Mountains area, that form the nucleus of this book. Another thirty, mostly of the Upper Mississippi River region and strongly reminiscent of Eastman's work, are reproduced in black and white. The originals are in the collections of three Rochester, New York, institutions and the Kennedy Galleries in New York City.

The watercolors are actual-size reproductions of the originals. They are delicate and charming — on the whole perhaps more impressionistic than documentary, yet at the same time contemporary, authentic, and valuable. Although this monograph is titled and has been shaped to fit the regional interests of its institutional publisher through its concentration on corresponding experiences and works of the central figure, it nonetheless represents a substantive addition to the history of the frontier West.

William Gardner Bell *is with the U.S. Army Center of Military History.*

First Images of America: The Impact of the New World on the Old edited by Fredi Chiappelli, co-edited by Michael J. B. Allen and Robert L. Benson *(University of California, Berkeley, 1976; 957 pp., 2 vols., intro., illus., maps, charts, biblio., notes, index, $75.00).*

REVIEWED BY DON GREAME KELLEY

COLLABORATING under the auspices of the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies of the University of California, Los Angeles, fifty-six authors, in as many essays, tackle the obvious corollary—the mirror image?—of the greatest historical event of the millennium so far: the discovery of the New World. We inheritors of the Americas may now and then give thought to what we owe to the discoverers but are perhaps, owing to distance in space and time, less conscious of the obverse, the Old World's debt to the voyagers who changed their world utterly in a few decades.

Exploring, in his "Introduction: Renaissance and Discovery," the springs of "the Age of Discoveries," Charles Trinkaus remarks as "appropriate" to that age "man's desire to be everywhere." Western man had begun to project himself into his own past, to discover the antecedents and antiquity of his culture. He had begun to stretch the temporal and spatial bounds of his world, and was ready to reach for the full round of it.

Understanding and dealing with all the meanings, boons, and banes pursuant to finding and annexing a world's other half were to occupy generations of post-Renaissance peoples in both hemispheres. The complexities of coping with discovery's results are suggested by nine part-titles of *First Images:* "Angles of Perception: Myth and Literature"; "The Politics of Conflict"; "Governing the New World: Moral, Legal, and Theological Aspects"; "Images in the Arts"; "Books"; "Language"; "The New Geography"; "The Movement of People"; "Science and Trade." In an epilogue, Robert S. Lopez finds that "the impact of the New World on the Old emerges as a tangled pattern of understanding and misunderstanding, enjoying and loathing." To authoritarians of the time, "what a pity that the New World should be so blatantly new, so inconsistent with established knowledge and belief!" Yet, "happily [it] was a tangible, undeniable reality."

Don Greame Kelley *is the author of* Edge of a Continent: The Pacific Coast from Alaska to Baja.

Alexander Barclay, Mountain Man: A Narrative of his Career, 1810 to 1855; His Memorandum Diary, 1845 to 1850 by George P. Hammond *(Old West Publishing Company, Denver, 1976; 246 pp., intro., illus., maps, appen., notes, index, $17.50).*

REVIEWED BY WALTER BRIGGS

IN 1833, Alexander Barclay was discouraged with his profession as a London corsetier. At age twenty-three, the New World beckoned. He would devote the rest of his life to its distant climes.

Dr. George P. Hammond, the distinguished historian and director of the University of California's Bancroft Library, has woven the web of Barclay's life from personal letters and a terse, attenuated diary. "Sparse" though the latter is, comments Hammond, "it may well be the only such document available for this period and area"—1845 to 1850 in the Colorado-New Mexico region.

Barclay failed as a farmer in Canada, then learned bookkeeping in Saint Louis. This capability led to his fiscal superintendency of Bent's Fort from 1838–42. (Readers may recall a vignette of Barclay's seriocomic bargaining for a Cheyenne maiden's hand there that appeared in this reviewer's "Castle in the Desert" in the September/October 1976 issue of this magazine.)

Barclay eventually became involved in a ten-year liaison with a twice-married woman of Taos, one Teresita. They parted by mutual agreement, but still Barclay wrote, "A spirit of loneliness and desolation pervades my home."

Barclay tried to set himself up providing live buffalo for European zoos, but found no takers. He then became a trader of capitalism's geegaws for Indian-supplied beaver and bison pelts, hence one of the last of the fabled Mountain Men.

His crowning effort was to build Barclay's Fort—in patent imitation of the Bent establishment—at the New Mexico junction of the two Santa Fé Trails (Cimarron and Raton Pass) on the Mora River. But his crown turned to thorns when the U.S. Army, having seized New Mexico in 1846, planted the larger, more competitive Fort Union a few miles away.

His visions seemed larger than his talents. Nevertheless, a sort of frontier superiority is manifest in the literary legacy left to us by Barclay, who died at his fast-crumbling fort in 1855.

Walter Briggs *is author of* Without Noise of Arms *about Domínguez and Escalante.*

The Kingdom or Nothing: The Life of John Taylor, Militant Mormon by Samuel W. Taylor *(Macmillan, New York, 1976; 406 pp., intro., biblio., index, $15.00).*

REVIEWED BY WILLIAM P. MACKINNON

WITH THIS BOOK, Samuel Taylor has provided a relatively balanced account of early Mormon history, with heavy emphasis on a fallible Brigham Young as well as on John Taylor, Young's successor as L.D.S. Church president during 1877–1887, the peak period of Mormon persecution over the polygamy issue.

The Young-Taylor relationship was a fascinating blend of mutual antagonisms and tensions stemming from Taylor's early attempts to block Young's assumption of the L.D.S. presidency and Young's domineering style. However, with the crisis of federal military intervention in Utah during 1857–1858, the two leaders established a working relationship.

Although the orientation of *The Kingdom or Nothing* is distinctly pro-Taylor, it is not blindly so, despite the fact that author Samuel Taylor is one of his subject's many grandsons via a polygamous marriage. Accordingly, intertwined with a description of Taylor's strengths, we have glimpses of him lying repeatedly to non-Mormons while pursuing a personal commitment to plural marriage that appears to have exceeded mere adherence to religious principle. And Samuel Taylor provides us with a view of his grandfather as a leader whose inflexibility—especially on the polygamy issue—may not have served his flock entirely well.

Yet if Samuel Taylor is frank about John Taylor's shortcomings, he openly admires his administration of the presidency, viewing him as the ideal blend of Joseph Smith's warmth and spirituality and Brigham Young's practicality. On balance, Taylor sees his grandfather's prime contribution as the establishment of a more liberal and approachable administration. One wishes only that Samuel Taylor had discussed the three-year gap between John Taylor's death in 1887 and President Wilford Woodruff's 1890 abandonment of polygamy.

With *The Kingdom or Nothing,* Samuel Taylor has produced a fine, fascinating book, substantially better in quality and research than *Nightfall at Nauvoo,* his 1971 description of the Mormon experience in Illinois.

William P. MacKinnon *has written on Mormon and military affairs for this and other magazines.*

The Authentic Wild West: The Gunfighters by James D. Horan *(Crown Publishers, New York, 1976; 320 pp., intro., illus., biblio., notes, index, $12.95).*

REVIEWED BY KENT LADD STECKMESSER

HERE IS ANOTHER large and lavishly illustrated book about the ever fascinating man-with-a-gun. Horan, a well-known writer on the subject, marches seven of the "cowtown Lochinvars" before us. They range from such familiars as William Bonney and Wild Bill Hickok through Tom Horn, Ben Thompson, and John Wesley Hardin to the less-publicized Kid Curry and Harry Tracy. The objective, says Horan, is "conveying the authentic rather than mere debunking." Yet some debunking is inevitable. Ben Thompson, for example, was no folk hero. "A rather pudgy man in a top hat," he was given to drunken rages in which he fired at streetlights if no human targets were around.

The virtue of this book is that it makes many of the primary sources available for those lacking the time or the inclination to do the legwork themselves. A skeletal narrative laces together numerous excerpts from trial records, newspaper articles, government reports, and key biographies. This material is all well-selected and amply footnoted.

There are no startling revelations or interpretations, however. Billy the Kid, we learn, was somewhere between an idealized Robin Hood and a moronic executioner, while Wild Bill Hickok was one of the first media-created "heroes." All of the gunmen were egomaniacs who often scorned fair play. Horan summarizes each man's life, tries to distinguish fact from fiction, and gives his opinion on disputed points as well.

The photos are interesting, though some are not as "rare" as the captions frequently claim. The profusion of illustrations gives many of the pages a cluttered appearance, sometimes making it difficult for the reader to follow the written narrative.

In sum, the book is for browsing and for reference rather than for straight-through reading.

The Gunfighters is announced as being the first in a series, one that is apparently intended to compete with Time-Life's "Old West" offering.

Kent Ladd Steckmesser, *who teaches the history of the West at California State University at Los Angeles, is also the author of* The Western Hero in History and Legend.

EARTHQUAKES

(Continued from page 6)

considerable distance to the side of the rift. Eureka, Fort Bragg, and Sebastopol took a heavy battering. Two were killed in Tomales. At Point Reyes a locomotive and four commuter cars were knocked off their track and onto their sides in a field of poppies, though, miraculously, no one was injured.

There was no such luck in Santa Rosa, the Sonoma Valley community situated nineteen miles west of the San Andreas. There the combination of loose alluvial soil and poorly constructed buildings contributed to an ordeal by fire and more than fifty deaths, making its loss proportionately greater than even San Francisco's.

South of the city, San Francisco Peninsula towns were savaged, and at young Stanford University two died and fourteen buildings were knocked down. (That there weren't more fatalities was attributable to the fact that classes were not in session.) Death and destruction also visited such distant communities as Monterey, Salinas, and Hollister. But the greatest suffering centered around San Jose, then called by some "the prettiest city in California." Every building of brick or stone over two stories high was either leveled or made ready for the wrecking crews. Nineteen perished. A few miles from San Jose the earth delivered its cruelest blow when the four-story Agnews State Insane Asylum, housing more than a thousand inmates and staff, collapsed with a deafening roar. Rescuers dug 119 dead and dying out of the ruins, then spent days rounding up crazed survivors roaming the countryside.

The so-called San Francisco earthquake demonstrated, as no previous California tremor had, the vulnerability of urban civilization on the Pacific Slope. It also provided the young science of seismology with an enormous outdoor laboratory, and the subsequent study of the earth's altered face has led to major breakthroughs in our understanding of the most lethal of natural calamities, which by one estimate has taken nearly 75 million lives since human beings first appeared on this shuddering planet.

Since 1906 the Golden State has been spared a giant quake. But there have been others, ranking as moderate or severe, that have nevertheless been killers. Here, in capsule, are the more significant:

Santa Barbara, June 29, 1925, 6:42 A.M. Magnitude: 6.3. Main shock: sharp, about eighteen seconds in duration. Toll: thirteen dead, more than $6 million in property loss. Fault: believed to be the Mesa, a relatively small crustal fracture which practically underlies State Street, along which the greatest damage was confined.

Long Beach, March 10, 1933, 5:54 P.M. Magnitude: 6.3. Main shock: sharp, between ten and fifteen seconds long. Toll: 120 dead, more than $50 million in property loss. Fault: the Inglewood-Newport. Losses extended well beyond Long Beach and were high for soil affected.
the magnitude because of the uncompacted nature of the

Imperial Valley, May 18, 1940, 8:37 P.M. Magnitude: 7.1. Main shock: brief, but followed by strong aftershocks at 8:39 P.M. and 9:54 P.M. Toll: nine dead, more than $6 million in property loss. Fault: the Imperial, which revealed itself in a forty-five-mile-long tear in the earth's surface. The Imperial is one of several faults that constitute the southern extension of the San Andreas system, which stretches to the Gulf of California; land west of the rifts, including Baja California, is on the Pacific plate and slowly pivoting away from the continent.

Kern County, July 21, 1952, 4:52 A.M. Magnitude: 7.7. Main shock: a slow-roll, lasting forty-five seconds to a minute. Toll: fourteen dead, over $60 million in property loss. Fault: the White Wolf, little known at the time and believed quiescent; nearby towns of Tehachapi and Arvin all but destroyed.

San Fernando, February 9, 1971, 6:01 A.M. Magnitude: 6.6. Main shock: sharp, with both vertical and horizontal movement, lasting twenty seconds and longer in some places. Toll: fifty-eight dead, over $500 million in property loss. Fault: the San Fernando, which had not previously done much moving in historic times. Its nearness to heavily populated Los Angeles pointed up the destructive capacity of even a moderate quake in a modern urban area.

IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS geophysicists have made great strides in understanding the mechanisms of earthquakes, and it is generally thought that within the next ten years American scientists will be able to predict, with a fairly high degree of reliability and within fairly narrow tolerances, the time, location, and magnitude of tremors. Whether or not they will be able to give advance warning of the next giant quake remains a matter of some urgency to Californians who would prefer not to be party to such a history-making event. That "the giant who moves in the earth" will, in fact, move sooner or later is a geologic certainty. There are unhappy signs, however, that it will be sooner rather than later. The San Andreas Fault, the odds-on favorite for unleashing an eight-plus magnitude shock, has been storing strain energy since 1906 in Northern California. In Southern California the same has been building since 1857, and there's an ominous deformation of the Mojave Desert, popularly known as the Palmdale Bulge, that's been rising for sixteen years adjacent to the San Andreas's southern dogleg.

Separate loss estimates have been made for a giant quake striking the two regions. Down south, in Los Angeles and Orange counties alone, a U.S. Geological Survey study predicts that as many as 40,000 buildings will collapse or be severely damaged, between 3,000 and 12,000 people will die and up to 48,000 will be hospitalized, and damage done will range from $15 to $25 billion. In San Francisco a government-agency study estimates up to 100,000 dead, 500,000 injured, and $25 billion in property loss. The cost of living in California, where tectonic plates collide and mountains are made, may be very steep indeed.

Larry L. Meyer, *former editor of* Colorado *magazine and* Westways, *is author of* Shadow of a Continent *and the soon-to-be-released* California Quake, *plus many magazine articles.*

Membership in the Western History Association is open to anyone interested in the history and culture of the American West. Inquiries should be addressed to the Secretary, William D. Rowley, Department of History, University of Nevada, Reno, Nevada 89507. Membership is on a calendar-year basis and includes THE AMERICAN WEST and WESTERN HISTORICAL QUARTERLY. Annual dues are: Regular Member $16.00; Sustaining Member $30.00; Student Member & Emeritus Member $10.00 (includes only the WESTERN HISTORICAL QUARTERLY and Annual Conference material); Sponsoring Member $100.00 (Institution); Life Member $300.00, paid in a twelve-month period. Individuals or institutions not wishing to become members may subscribe directly to either THE AMERICAN WEST or the WESTERN HISTORICAL QUARTERLY at regular subscription rates.

The Western History Association's annual conference on the History of Western America will convene at the Portland Hilton, Portland, Oregon, on October 12–15, 1977.