

The WHA Newsletter: Special Sesquicentennial Issue!

Marking the Birth of Frederick Jackson Turner, the Start of the Civil War, and the Admission of Nevada and Colorado as Territories.



Fall 2011

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The WHA Newsletter is a semi-annual publication of the Western History Association

Oakland Conference Kicks Off a New Era

by Aaron Bashirian

The October 13th-16th, 2011, meeting marked the Semi-Centennial Celebration of the Western History Association. This conference in Oakland resonated with a mood of optimistic reflection—reflection on how this organization began and has defined itself over the past half-century, and reflection on where the next 50 years will take us.

Conference highlights included an exciting speech delivered by our esteemed president Quintard Taylor at the Presidential Luncheon. His speech, “Facing the Urban Frontier: African American History in the Reshaping of the 20th Century American West” was the first ever WHA presentation to be broadcast on television. It aired No-

vember, 23rd on C-SPAN 3 and can still be viewed in [C-SPAN's Video Library](#).

The opening reception at the Oakland Museum of California featured a discussion entitled, “Fifty Years: Reflections on the Past and Future of Western History,” where distinguished scholars—William Cronon, Richard White and Patricia Limerick—provided a rich and insightful exchange that celebrated the contributions of previous western history scholarship and challenged the premise of what western history is, what it has become, and what it should be in the future. Like



Quintard Taylor delivers the Presidential Address (Photo Courtesy of John Stamm, IV, Ph.D.)

President Taylor’s Address, this event was recorded for C-SPAN 3.

California-historian Kevin Starr was the guest speaker of this year’s award banquet. He entertained audience



Featured speakers William Cronon, Patricia Limerick, and Richard White (Photo Courtesy of John Stamm, IV, Ph.D.)

members with autobiographical anecdotes, observations, and contemplations.

Local history was the subject of two tours made available to conference attendees. The Black Panther Legacy Tour, hosted by a member of the Black Panthers, David Hilliard. He offered a gritty and personal look at the dramatic birth of this organization. It was a rare

privilege to learn history from someone who helped make it. The Berkeley-Bancroft Walking Tour gave participants the opportunity to visit sites important to Berkeley's Free Speech Movement of the 60's as well as visit the Bancroft Library's interesting exhibits, artifacts, and manuscript and pictorial processing area.

The conference ended symbolically with the awarding of the ceremonial pelting knife to our new president, Albert L. Hurtado of the University of Oklahoma. He now has the honor of guiding our organization into the next half century.

Aaron Bashirian is a Graduate Research Assistant with the WHA.



The WHA congratulates and welcomes its new president, Albert L. Hurtado of the University of Oklahoma.

Snapshots of Oakland



Kevin Starr speaking at the awards banquet



The Opening Reception held at the Oakland Museum of California



Pekka Hämäläinen accepts the Bolton-Cutter award

Cowboy Mike and Bruce Glasrud



Oakland on the Bay

All Quiet on the Turner Front by Stephen Aron

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Frederick Jackson Turner, 1861-1932

Fifty years ago, the Western History Association was born. The year of the organization's establishment, 1961, coincided with the one hundredth anniversary of Frederick Jackson Turner's birth. That concurrence was appropriate. More than any individual, Turner had fathered the field, and his writings still cast a very long shadow at the time of the WHA's founding.

Fifty years later, Turner's shadow appears much less impressive. The pages of the *Western Historical Quarterly* once filled with articles about the frontier thesis now more typically relegate Turner's work to the end of footnote trails, if even there. For many, this silence regarding Turner reflects a belated declaration of independence and affirms the maturation of the field of western history. Certainly, Turner's declining influence has not diminished

the import of scholarship about the frontier and West. Yet the golden anniversary of the Western History Association and the sesquicentennial of Turner's birth find the field of western history struggling to regain the sense of common purpose and special mission that Turner bequeathed to it.¹

The current calm on the Turner front stands in sharp contrast with the clamor in previous decades. Very soon after he published his 1893 essay on "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," Turner's interpretation came under attack. By 1961, most historians outside of western history had rejected the frontier as *the* explanation for American development. For their part, western historians had disputed this or that component of Turner's argument. But for the most part, they had held their fire where it threatened to fatally wound the core of the frontier thesis. By the time the Western History Association celebrated its twenty-fifth birthday, however, these restraints had given way. In the years leading up to the centennial of the publication of Turner's seminal piece, self-proclaimed "new western historians" mounted a spirited assault against Turner's frontier thesis. That prompted a diverse group of defenders, if not of Turner, then of the frontier, to join the battle.

From the late 1980s through the first half of the 1990s, the fray, often characterized as pitting "place versus process," played out in the *Western Historical Quarterly*, other academic journals, and even spilled over into general newspapers and magazines. Promoters of place repudiated Turner's notion of a shifting frontier in favor of an exclusively regional approach; proponents of process insisted that the opening of frontiers across the continent, defined by the patterns of cross-cultural exchanges that ensued, remained a crucial feature of western history.

A quarter century after the family spat between old and new western histories flared, discussions of place versus process have largely disappeared. In retrospect (and I say this as a contributor to the din), it is hard to discern what the racket was all about. On reflection, many realized that the choice between place and process rested on what David Hackett Fischer has described as the "fallacy of the false dichotomy." Accordingly, most stopped fighting about what a new western history should be and started writing books and articles that would be the newest western history.

And write they have, with an impact that stretches far beyond the boundaries of the field. As one (admittedly



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¹ I have reviewed at greater length the directions of recent scholarship and the state of western history in "Frontiers, Borderlands, Wests," in Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr, eds., *American History Now* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press for the American Historical Association, 2011), 261-284.

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imperfect) measure of the broad reach, consider the recipients of the discipline's most prestigious prizes. Although the jurors for the Pulitzer Prize have retained their eastern biases, the best of the West has much impressed those selecting the Bancroft and Beveridge prizes. Since 2000, books that focus on some portion of the region between the Mississippi and the Pacific have won six Bancrofts and four Beveridges. Add to this books that explore frontier relations in other parts of North America and the Bancroft number swells to nine.²

None of these prize-winning volumes about the frontier and West suffers for being utterly unconcerned about the legacy of Frederick Jackson Turner or the merits of place and process. The escape from stale debates has allowed the authors of these books to tackle topics that have special resonance to the American frontier and West, but are by no means limited

to these realms. Thus do the Bancroft and Beveridge winners, along with so much other recent scholarship, offer fresh insights about how to write histories across borders and oceans, how to explore cultural intersections from multiple perspectives, how to elevate non-human factors, and how to navigate between the local and the global.

And yet, while histories of the frontier and West are hot, the field of western history and the Western History Association are not. The association's fiftieth finds the organization in a midlife funk. Part of the gloom owes to the collapse of the academic job market. Bad across the board, the employment prospects for western historians appear even worse. The discontent in the ranks traces as well to divisions within the Western History Association, principally about its commitment to diversity. Related to these concerns and going beyond them is the sense that

western history no longer offers a vision behind which to unify. Superb and innovative scholarship about the frontier and West obviously continues to be produced, but where it fits or how it fits in the larger home that western history once provided is not so clear.

All of which makes it essential that we treat the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Western History Association and the one hundredth fiftieth birthday of Frederick Jackson Turner not as an occasion to celebrate (given the prevailing mood that seems unlikely). Instead, let us take it as an opportunity to debate anew where the field of western history has been, where it is, and, most important, where it should go. Such contemplations need not rehash the place versus process disputes of the end of the last century. After all, the scholarship of the new century has raised its own set of questions and requires its own new frame.

² Books about the history of the West that have won the Bancroft or Beveridge Prize (or both) since 2000 are: Thomas Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War* (Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 2008); James Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2002); Linda Gordon, *Dorothea Lange: A Life Beyond Limits* (New York : W.W. Norton & Company, 2009); Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 1999); Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008); Margaret Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln, NE : University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Karl Jacoby, *Shadows at Dawn: A Borderlands Massacre and the Violence of History* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008); Susan Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000); Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Louis Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America: William Cody and the Wild West Show* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005). Adding "frontier" titles would expand the list to include Allan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002); James Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the American Frontier* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999); Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007).

For example, back in the 1980s and 1990s, regionalists argued frequently about where to locate the eastern boundary of the West, but they tended to accept as fixed the placement of northern, southern, and western borders. This, though, was before studies of “the Pacific world” opened the North American West to its west. It was also before histories of “borderlands” made contingent and fluid the northern and southern boundaries of

the region and nation, and, indeed, made all borders subject to crossing. In fact, over the last decade, borderlands has supplanted frontier as the favorite construct of western historians. But the success of borderlands has made it into something of a catch-all concept, and in its various and vague usages it invites criticism on some of the same grounds that were used by those who wished to banish the frontier.

Space here does not permit a fuller explication of the directions taken by recent scholarship and how these enliven and reframe western history. We can hope that the debates they spark should disturb the peace that has lately prevailed in the pages of the *Western Historical Quarterly*. And by reminding us of what really matters, these fights about western history could restore some peace to the Western History Association.

More Than Just a Prize: The Civil War and the West

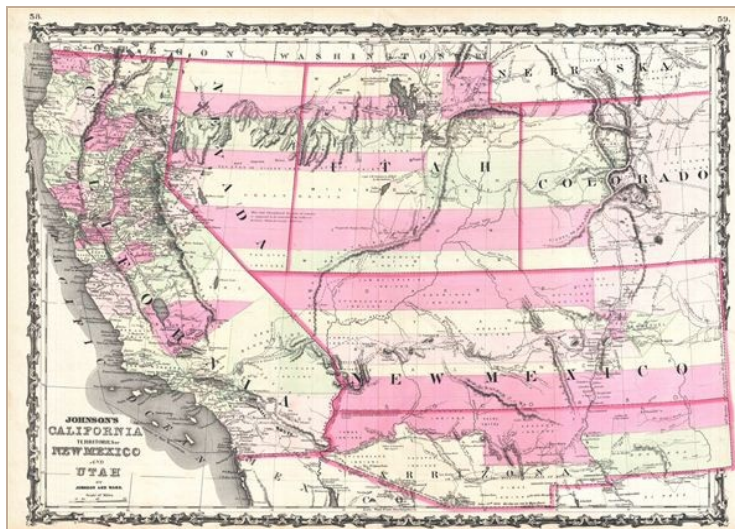
by Adam Arenson

When it comes to the causes, conduct, and consequences of the Civil War, western history gets a little soft in the middle.

The question of slavery’s expansion into the West gets its due, of course. The annexation of Texas, the acquisition of Oregon, and the conquest of northern Mexico that doubled the size of the country between 1845 and 1848, ground any discussion of Manifest Destiny. Even in Civil War courses, the overland trails and the gold rush get a cameo to introduce the unsatisfying Compromise of 1850 and the fighting along the Kansas-Missouri border. Similarly, the age of the cowboys, the completion of the transcontinental railroad lines, and the participation of Civil War veterans, black and white, in the conquest

and containment of the American Indian nations, highlight postwar histories—the best of which, like the work of Elliott West and Heather Cox Richardson, explain how the incorporation of the West was intimately linked with Reconstruction.¹

Western historians have emphasized the importance of the unfulfilled citizenship promises to Spanish-speaking Americans in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo; the varieties of unfree labor present throughout the West; and the exodus of free African Ameri-



Alvin Jewett Johnson’s 1863 map of California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico and the new Confederate state of “Arizona.” Courtesy of Geographicus Rare Antique Maps, www.geographicus.com

¹ Elliott West, “Reconstructing Race.” *Western Historical Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 7-26, and Heather Cox Richardson, *West from Appomattox: The Reconstruction of America after the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).



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cans from San Francisco to Victoria, British Columbia in 1858 to escape the reach of the *Dred Scott* decision. They have linked the granting of suffrage to the women of Wyoming Territory in 1869 with the debate and interpretation of equal rights under the Reconstruction Amendments. And some might remember to say the war did not end at Appomattox, but after the last pitched battle at Palmito Ranch, near the Texas-Mexico border, on May 12 and 13, 1865; after the surrender of the last of the Confederate generals, Cherokee leader Stand Watie on June 23, 1865, and after the flight of many western Confederate officers into Mexico.

But when it comes to offering a western perspective on the events between Fort Sumter and Appomattox, there can be a deafening silence.² Some western-history textbooks just skip the war years. Others focus, understandably, on the creation of new federal territories in the West (as discussed elsewhere in this newsletter) that caused the intensification of Army attacks on Native American nations - including new onslaughts against the Shoshone, Snake, Navajo, Apache, and Paiute peoples.

Yet western history has a lot to offer Civil War history. When Civil War historians talk about the war's western theater, they mean the battles in Kentucky, Tennessee,

and Mississippi. Their Trans-Mississippi describes battles in Arkansas, Texas, and the crucial (if often overlooked) Sibley Campaign, where Confederate troops first celebrated in Mesilla - the capital of the newly seceded Confederate Arizona - before they hastily retreated after strategic blunders in battles with Colorado and California Union troops in Glorieta Pass, near Santa Fe. And the extensive set of Civil War fortifications along the Pacific Coast—for example, Drum Barracks which stands along the water in Los Angeles and was the largest U.S. Army installation west of St. Louis—receive a dismissive footnote.

Indeed, the Civil War-western connection may be in our origins. The founding of the Western History Association coincided with the federally sponsored Civil War Centennial - an outpouring of both public enthusiasm for reen-

acting the war's battles and scholarly interest in preserving and exploring the war's history at all levels. One of the organization's old-timers might be able to say if the Centennial provided an impetus to organize out west, with a similar blend of popular enthusiasm and scholarly interest.

In either case, the Civil War sesquicentennial/WHA semi-centennial moment can motivate us to integrate Civil War and western history traditions. To choose only the most prominent example, think how important it is to link the experience of John Chivington's Colorado troops at Glorieta Pass to the Sand Creek massacre: These men had recently returned from seizing Confederate supply trains in order to stave off an enemy invasion when they acted with similar determination against the Cheyenne and Arapaho



The last extant Civil War Era wooden building at Drum Barracks in Wilmington, California, now holds a Civil War Museum.

² Some exceptions provide the examples mentioned in this essay. See Glenna Matthews, *The Golden State in the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling Over the Memory of Sand Creek* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012); Clarissa W Confer, *The Cherokee Nation in the Civil War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007); Rebecca Brooks Edwards, *Angels in the Machinery: Gender in American Party Politics from the Civil War to the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); and correspondence with Lorraine McConaghy at the Seattle Museum of History & Industry.

women and children—to horrific effect.

Civil War battles of the West do not compare to the massive military encounters in the East, but there are still plenty of sites important to the war's fight. Ralph Jones of the Oklahoma Historical Society recently used an American Battlefield Protection Program grant from the National Park Service to create a wonderful four-state sesquicentennial touring map to lead enthusiasts through graveyards, battle sites, and history museums in the corners of Arkansas, Kansas, Oklahoma and Missouri, while the Show-Me State has been touting how the state holds the third-largest number of Civil War battle sites, after Virginia and Tennessee.³

Small, quirky skirmishes throughout the West reveal how locals integrated the Civil War into their lives. For example, longtime rivals from Montana to Texas to southern California to Oklahoma took the call to secession as an opportunity to align local squabbles with the national divide. In particular, many Spanish-speaking Americans debated and divided over how to use the Civil War to their advantage; and the Cherokee Nation split over the war—a decision that brought both sides to mutual ruin.

Even thousands of miles from the battlefields, the issues at stake were the same. In Montana, Confederate sympathizers named a town after Varina Davis, while women in Washington Territory resisted the Union by baking a Stars and Bars cake. Meanwhile, union-

ists made sure to do what they could to support the Union cause. Oregon's U.S. Senator Edward Baker organized a "California Regiment" in Philadelphia before dying in one of the war's first major engagements; and the Unitarian minister Thomas Starr King died from exhaustion after traveling up and down the Pacific Coast to raise money and collect supplies for the Union's sanitary commissions.

In my book on St. Louis as the center of a three-sided Civil War, I include advocates of the North, South and West equally. I consider Abraham Lincoln, Jefferson Davis and Stephen A. Douglas as westerners, men born on the perceived frontiers of the nation in the early nineteenth century. In the 1850s, their respective strategies for settling

the newly acquired western lands differed—free-labor for Lincoln; slavery's expansion for Davis; and the hope that integrating western territory through the development of the railroad would end the importance of the slavery question for Douglas. But all three understood the fate of slavery (and perhaps the nation) would rest on the solutions found in the West.

So western historians should not think of the Civil War sesquicentennial as something happening back east. Lots of local and regional stories that emphasize the connections between the political, cultural, and military aspects of the Civil War Era and the development of the American West. They deserve to be researched and taught, now more than ever.

**COL. E. D. BAKER'S
CALIFORNIA
REGIMENT.**

A RENDEZVOUS
For the enrollment of a
COMPANY OF PICKED MEN
WILL BE OPENED ON
Monday, August 12, 1861,
AT THE HOUSE OF HENRY WEBBING,
PASSYUNK ROAD
OPPOSITE QUEEN STREET.

This Company will leave for the Seat of War in two weeks, or sooner, if fall.

JOSEPH C. TITTERMARY, Captain.

Philadelphia, August 10, 1861.

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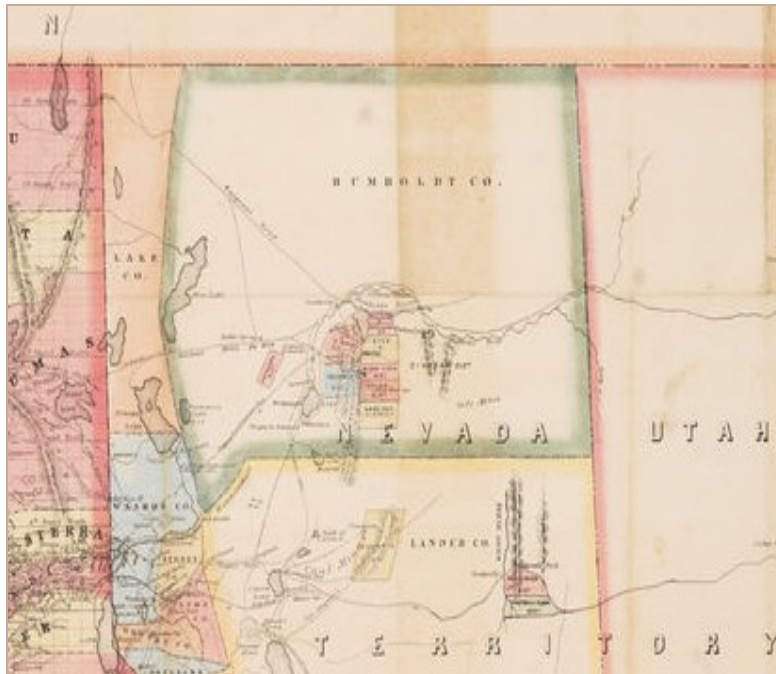
Senator Edward Baker of Oregon organized a "California Regiment" in Philadelphia and New York in the first months of the war.

³ The map will soon be available on the Oklahoma Civil War Sesquicentennial website.



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Admission of Nevada Territory by Michael S. Green



Nevada Territory in 1863, from Doolittle's map of California
 Courtesy of Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.,
RareMaps.com

While the U.S. commemorates the Civil War's sesquicentennial, Nevada marks the 150th anniversary of becoming a territory on March 2, 1861. The connection is appropriate. Just as the state calls itself "battle born" in honor of winning statehood in 1864, its creation as a territory was tied to the issues related to the Civil War—issues that would resonate in the future.

When discussing Nevada's links to the Civil War era, historians have concentrated mainly on its ties—sometimes intimate, sometimes dubious—to the political and economic factors contributing to the Union's victory and less on

how its territorial status mattered to the eventual state and the country. A favorite myth associated with Nevada statehood is that Abraham Lincoln supported it to obtain the wealth the Comstock Lode generated to finance the war effort. In fact, the Union already had access to that wealth—Nevada was a federal territory after all. Scholars have debated whether Lincoln supported statehood for Nevada in a quest for its electoral votes in his difficult reelection campaign in 1864 without proving their conclusions convincingly. However, while Nevada was not in the eye of the pre-Civil War

storm, it certainly was on the periphery.¹

After present-day Nevada became part of the U.S. following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ending the Mexican-American War, the area became caught up in the Compromise of 1850. Most scholars emphasize the "impending crisis," the cast of characters (Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, John Calhoun, William Seward, and Stephen Douglas, among others), and northern efforts to ease southern intransigence—or a western

element of the controversy stemming from the Texas-New Mexico boundary dispute. Lost at times is the West's vital role in the debate and Nevada's significance in that process. Compromise probably would have been unnecessary without the discovery of gold in California. This led to settlement in the eastern Sierra Nevada foothills by miners headed to and from the gold fields, by Mormons who built a trading post to profit from them, and by ranchers who saw an opportunity to profit from all concerned. The compromise created two new territories: Utah, which also included

¹ Earl S. Pomeroy, "Lincoln, the Thirteenth Amendment, and the Admission of Nevada," *Pacific Historical Review*, 12:4 (December 1943), 362-68; Michael Vorenberg, *Final Freedom: The Civil War, the Abolition of Slavery, and the Thirteenth Amendment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 180-81, n. 19; Michael S. Green, "Abraham Lincoln, Nevada, and the Law of Unintended Consequences," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, LII:2 (Fall 2009), 85-108.

most of today's Nevada, and New Mexico, which also encompassed Arizona and what is now Clark County—the greater Las Vegas area.²

While the country battled throughout the 1850s over whether slavery would spread into new territories, western Utah territory's residents struggled for power. The presence of Mormons meant that their efforts would prove inseparable from national events. At the time, Mormons were unpopular enough to be part of the Republican Party's first national platform in 1856 in which their religion joined slavery as one of the "twin relics of barbarism." When Mormons asserted their power over this portion of Utah territory, miners and ranchers resented the idea of that church's members governing them. When Mormons ignored this area, residents then resented the absence of governance. In an effort to establish a palatable government, these residents asked to be added to California and petitioned several times for territorial status, but Congress declined to act.³ Apparently California was already big enough.

A combination of factors finally prompted the action

western Utah residents sought. The discovery of the Comstock Lode attracted thousands of miners to western Utah territory and doubled the population in that region. This made necessary the kind of local government that Utah territory did not provide. Lincoln's election on November 6, 1860, prompted secession, with seven southern states departing before his inauguration on March 4. Republicans effectively took control of Congress and passed legislation creating Nebraska, Colorado, Dakota, and Nevada territories on March 2nd without a word about the status of slavery in these new territories. This was for a logical reason. Lincoln's ascent to the presidency meant a Republican would appoint territorial officials and set policy-- Republican, antislavery policy.

In Nevada's case, this is what happened. For the office of territorial governor, Lincoln chose James W. Nye, a New York Republican with an anti-slavery record and ties to Secretary of State Seward. Nye's territorial secretary, Orion Clemens, had worked in the law office of Attorney General Edward

Bates and also inspired Clemens's younger brother Samuel to move to Nevada. Nye worked to assure that Nevada would be a Republican territory and, eventually, a Republican state.

After arriving in July, Nye organized the territorial government and a meeting of a territorial legislature. He chose Carson City as the capital and lawmakers ratified his decision. After some negotiations, mining attorney William M. Stewart—who had friends and investments in Carson City—reached agreement with other legislators to keep the capital there in exchange for setting up enough nearby counties to create local government jobs for them.⁴



Governor James W. Nye

² See especially Merrill D. Peterson, *The Great Triumvirate: Webster, Clay, and Calhoun* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Holman Hamilton, *Prologue to Conflict: The Conflict and Compromise of 1850* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1964); and Mark J. Stegmaier, *Texas, New Mexico, and the Compromise of 1850: Boundary Dispute and Sectional Crisis* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1996).

³ Sally S. Zanjani, *Devils Will Reign: How Nevada Began* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2007); Russell R. Elliott and William D. Rowley, *History of Nevada* (Second edition, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 69-89.

⁴ David Alan Johnson, *Founding the Far West: California, Oregon, and Nevada, 1840-1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 71-97; Michael S. Green, "Diehard or Swing Man: Senator James W. Nye and the Impeachment and Trial of Andrew Johnson," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, XXIX:3 (Fall 1986), 175-91.

As governor, Nye encouraged the legislature to pass several laws to govern Nevada's approximately 16,000 residents (according to the census he ordered upon arriving). "The consequences attendant upon the almost universal habit or practice of carrying concealed or deadly weapons by the citizens of this Territory lead me to recommend that some law be passed making it a penal offense to carry them, fully believing that human life will be much safer by prohibiting the use than by tolerating it," Nye warned. Nye also urged the legislature to limit liquor sales to minors and "persons of known intemperate habits," and to ban its sale on Sundays. The legislature did accept Nye's recommendation to regulate Sabbath behavior.⁵

The legislature heeded another of Nye's suggestions. "I particularly recommend that you pass laws to prevent gambling. Of all the seductive vices extant, I regard that of gambling as the worst," he warned. "It holds out allurements hard to be resisted. It captivates and ensnares the young, blunts all the moral sensibilities and ends in utter ruin." Accordingly, anyone caught running a game of chance faced two years in prison, a \$500 fine,

or both. For the next seventy years, Nevada would go back and forth on the legality of gambling before famously passing a law in 1931 that made it legal; and so it remains.⁶

While Nye moralized about vice, he also took a stand on race. The legislature passed measures he did not suggest, such as bans on African Americans marrying whites, voting, or testifying in court. Nye pushed to repeal the latter measure. "It is urged by many that in permitting persons of color to testify we elevate them in the scale of humanity, and make them nearer the equals of the white man. Admitting such an assumption to be true, it furnishes no argument against its propriety." Nye's efforts failed, underscoring his complaint to his friend Seward that the legislature was "behind the Spirit of the Age."⁷

Nye's ultimate goal was to make Nevada a state and himself a U.S. senator. In this he succeeded. Again, though, just as with the formation of the Nevada territory, the events of the Civil War made this possible. Lincoln wanted electoral votes for his reelection; Republicans sought support for their Reconstruction policies; and, as Rep-

resentative James Ashley put it in explaining his support for bills to create several new states, including Nevada, he had hopes of "negating ... the idea of State rights." Nevada's constitution favored these aims because it acknowledged federal supremacy, ceded unclaimed land to the federal government, and supported the abolition of slavery.⁸

In the end, Nevada would never be the paragon of morality or equality Nye clearly wanted it to be. The gambling and alcohol he opposed became key components of the future state's economy, and his first message foreshadowed the state's dichotomy between conservatism and libertarianism. Nearly a century after Nye criticized the legislature for its treatment of African Americans, Nevada, and especially Las Vegas, became known as the "Mississippi of the West" for their racism and segregation. Yet Nevada became a territory and a state as part of the fight against the spread of slavery. Its origins 150 years ago were bound with the war that made it, indeed, battle-born.

⁵ *Journal of the Council of the First Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Nevada* (San Francisco: Commercial Steam Printing, 1862), 14-27; Myron F. Angel, ed., *History of Nevada, with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Its Prominent Men and Pioneers* (Oakland: Thompson and West, 1881), 75-86.

⁶ *Journal*, 14-27.

⁷ Andrew J. Marsh, *Letters from Nevada Territory, 1861-1862* (Carson City: Legislative Counsel Bureau, 1972), 441-42; Elmer R. Rusco, "Good Time Coming?" *Black Nevadans in the Nineteenth Century* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1975), 21-28.

⁸ *Congressional Globe*, 39 Congress, 1 Session (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1866), May 3, 1866, 2372-73. See also John B. Reid and Ronald M. James, eds., *Uncovering Nevada's Past: A Primary Source History of the Silver State* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004), 28-30.

Reconstituting the Center of the United States: The Creation of Colorado Territory in 1861

by Tom I. Romero II and Susan Schulten

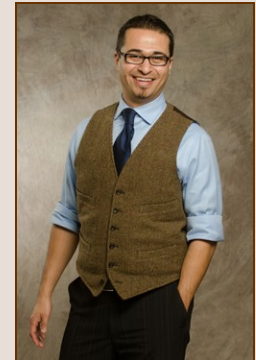
This year marks the sesquicentennial of both the secession crisis and the creation of the Colorado Territory. We tend to think about these developments as geographically and historically distinct. Most histories of the sectional crisis mention the organization of new western territories as minor events which pale next to the high stakes political drama engulfing the eastern half of the United States. Similarly, histories of the Colorado Territory generally

emphasize mineral rushes, conflicts with Native Americans, and the peculiarities of frontier politics as key influences over its organization.

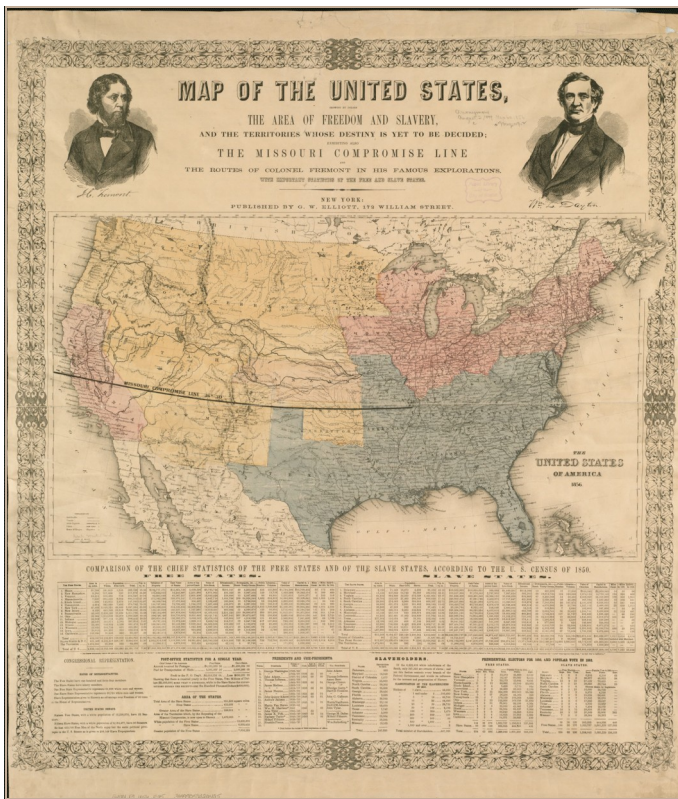
Yet the political crisis that gave rise to the creation of Colorado Territory in 1861 was fought first and foremost over the *future* of slavery, which in the 1850s largely meant the American interior. The Kansas-Nebraska Act introduced the potential to bring slavery to the region,

and had a seismic effect on the two political parties. In its aftermath, disaffected Democrats and Whigs came together to form the Republican Party in 1854, dedicated to halting the spread of slavery into the west. In 1856 the Republicans mounted their first candidate in the western explorer John Fremont, and at the same time the American interior—which had for decades been labeled the Great American Desert—began to be reimagined as the great pastoral region. What was once Permanent Indian Territory gradually came to be envisioned as potential farmland, just as the sectional crisis reached a fever pitch.

We sometimes forget that it was this interior region of Kansas that occupied not just the geographical center of the nation, but also the center of its political battles. Kansas symbolized not only the darkest fears of the Republican Party, but also its greatest hopes. The accompanying campaign poster (disguised as a map) reveals the importance of Kansas on the eve of the secession crisis. The list of Census figures draws attention to the quantifiable measures of northern superiority: literacy rates, superior resources, and transportation networks. Yet, just as salient were the fears of Republicans—and northerners generally—that the future of the West was controlled by slave-owners. As a campaigner for



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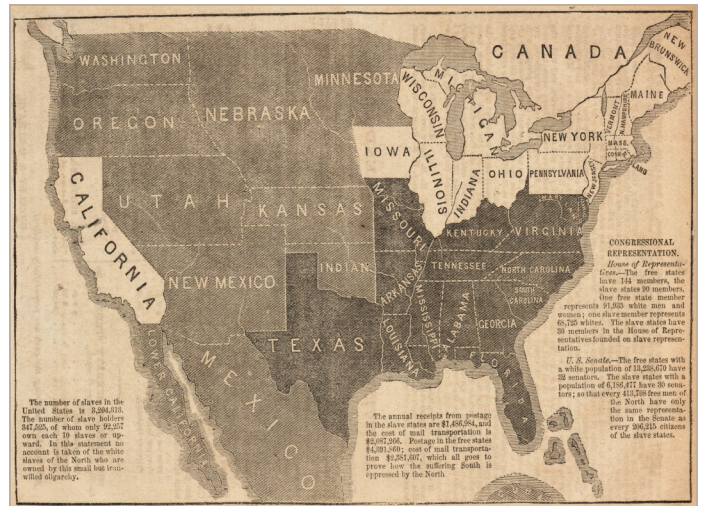
“Map of the United States , showing by colors the area of freedom and slavery, and the territories whose destiny is yet to be decided; exhibiting also the Missouri Compromise Line and the routes of Colonel Fremont in his famous explorations. With important statistics of free and slave states. (New York: Published by G.W. Elliott, 173 William Street, 1856).” Courtesy of the Leventhal Map Center, Boston Public Library.



Susan Schulten is a history professor at the University of Denver, and the author of *The Geographical Imagination in America, 1880-1950*, and the forthcoming *Mapping the Nation: History and Cartography in Nineteenth-Century America*, both with the University of Chicago Press. In 2010 she was awarded a Guggenheim fellowship for her research on thematic mapping in American history.

John Fremont's presidential bid in 1856, John Jay drew the second map to demonstrate just how high the stakes were in the election. In the following year, the *Dred Scott v. Sanford* decision complicated the status of the west further. As the furor over Kansas abated, Chief Justice Taney determined that slaves could not be barred from any Federal territory. With the discovery of gold in 1858, thousands of young men streamed into what was then the western edge of Kansas. This created pressure to administer this new population, and several attempts were made in 1858 and 1859 to organize the region into a territory. Yet nobody in Congress wanted to spark another "bleeding Kansas," and each attempt to organize a new territory failed or died in Congressional committee. The *Dred Scott* decision left a dubious legacy for the West that was best left undisturbed, and untested.

The definition of citizenship in the interior West had already been complicated by the war between the United States and Mexico a decade earlier. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the Mexican American War in 1848. By ceding 529,017 square miles to the United States for \$15 million, the Mexican government re-centered the meaning of the "interior West" in the United States. It also complicated the question of racial citizenship raised by the *Dred Scott* decision. To be sure, seventy-five thousand Spanish-speaking inhabitants in the region—many in what was the Territory of New Mexico—became American citizens,



"Freedom and Slavery, and the Coveted Territories," in "The Border Ruffian Code in Kansas" (c. 1856). Courtesy of the Henry Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

and under the treaty, they were guaranteed their civil and political rights.

The land and property rights of these Mexican-American citizens, however, remained an open question, particularly the status of those who settled as early as 1851 on the Vigil & St. Vrain Grant, the Conejos Grant, and Beaubien & Miranda Grant, and the Sangre de Cristo Grant tucked in and between the Sangre de Cristo and San Juan Mountains. The largest of these grants, the Sangre de Cristo, was owned by Carlos Beaubien, a naturalized Mexican citizen of French Canadian descent, who had risen to political and social prominence in New Mexican society. In 1850 Beaubien began efforts to populate the grant land. He offered single men 50 varas of land and married men 100 varas of land. The land was divided into long narrow strips to conform to the region's natural topography. All strips touched both a river and the resource-rich mountain land, which pro-

vided settlers with the resources to survive the harsh climate conditions of the San Luis Valley.

In addition to individual varas strips, Beaubien also granted settlers communal use-rights to the mountain lands, which they would eventually name "La Sierra." Settlers could use La Sierra's resources—grazing lands, timber, and plants and animals on the mountain. Once settled, San Luis residents began shaping a devoutly Catholic community based on communal principles regarding resource use. In 1852, community leaders claimed the earliest water rights in what would become the territory of Colorado. Prefiguring what would become known as the doctrine of prior appropriation in American law, San Luis' settlers built an intricate acequia irrigation system, which relied on snow melt from the mountains to irrigate their lowland farms. These conflicts over water law would surge once Colorado was organized into a territory.

Ironically, the conflict over slavery initially prevented the organization of the Colorado Territory, but the secession crisis ultimately broke that logjam. When the sectional crisis prompted seven states to leave the Union in the winter of 1860-1861, Republicans were able to reap the dividends of a smaller legislature that they could now dominate, and one of their first acts was to admit Kansas as a state, and in turn, to create a series of territories: Dakota, Nevada, and Colorado. In one of his last acts as President, James Buchanan signed these territories into law, but left Lincoln to staff them with his own appointees.

The creation of the Colorado Territory was a function of the political crisis in the east and the territorial ambitions of the federal government and the gold rush in the newly ex-

panded West. Carved out of Kansas, New Mexico, Utah, and Nebraska territories, its organization literally reflected a new American center that would be increasingly evident nearly 150 years later. From its inception, Colorado's history has reflected bitter disputes over currency inflation, political representation, water diversion, and conservation. Ideological differences between city dwellers and rural residents have driven conflicts over such issues as land and resource use, sexual orientation, and religious freedom. Cultural and social differences concerning property, political autonomy, and ideology among people of color and Whites have catalyzed intense debate over the procedural and substantive meaning of civil rights.

Situated at the center of the Rocky Mountains, resting in

the margins of the Great Plains and at the periphery of the southwestern deserts, the complex origins of the Territory remind us that the salient and central issues of today—acidic partisan divides, aggressive foreign wars, aridity, land use, resource development, and conflicts over the multiple meanings of the color line—were part of the nation's DNA in 1861. In moving from a territory to a state in 1876, Colorado's "centennial" status reflected more accurately than the eastern colonies of 1776 or the reconstructed Southern and Northern States of 1876 the state of the nation that would emerge. Forged out of the confluence of the three great regions that formed the American West, Colorado as early as 1861 would be a hub for all of the hopes, dysfunctions, and aspirations that would characterize the modern United States.

WHA and NAHA TAH Host Dr. Donald Fixico at Northern Arizona University

By Leisl Carr Childers

On November 5, 2011, NAHA TAH (Northern Arizona History Academy-Teaching American History) and the WHA were proud to feature Dr. Donald Fixico, WHA member, Distinguished Foundation Professor of History, and Affiliate Faculty of American Indian Studies at Arizona State University, as part of the second class of the Teaching American History grant. Fixico is a Native scholar from Oklahoma and is Shawnee, Sac & Fox, Muscogee Creek and Seminole. He is a policy historian and ethnohistorian whose work, including ten books on subjects

ranging from termination policy to Native American education, focuses on American Indians, oral history, and the U.S. West. He has also consulted on more than 20 film documentaries featuring Native American history. In 2000, President Clinton appointed him to the Advisory Council of the National Endowment for the Humanities and in 2006, the Organization of American Historians awarded him a short-term residency position to give lectures in Japan.

Fixico's lecture, "The American Indian Mind in a Modern World," discussed the impor-

tance of moving beyond a linear, progressive mode of thinking. Fixico explained that Native Americans, simi-



Dr. Donald Fixico



Leisl Carr Childers is a visiting assistant professor at Northern Arizona University where she teaches courses and organizes workshops for the Teaching American History grant that services K-12 teachers throughout Northern Arizona. She has worked as the Assistant Director for the Nevada Test Site Oral History Project (NTSOHP) Archive at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and as a contract researcher and guest curator at the Autry National Center. Her work on the NTSOHP was foundational for her dissertation, "The Size of the Risk: An Environmental History of the Great Basin," which explores the cultural and environmental factors behind the Great Basin's wildly divergent public land development. While in residence at the Autry on a summer fellowship in 2008, she curated an exhibit on Gene Autry's rodeo business that the ProRodeo Hall of Fame displayed at the 50th anniversary of the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas. Her research on rodeo is featured in the Winter 2008 issue of the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*.



lar to many other cultures throughout the world, emphasize more than human-to-human relationships. In Native American thought, the world pivots around a set of relationships Fixico termed a "natural democracy" in which human-to-human relationships comprise only one set of interconnections. Animals, plants, the physical world, and the metaphysical world share relationships with humans and each other. In this multi-dimensional worldview, Native Americans have created a different set of values that emphasize cultivating and maintaining these relationships. Fixico also described the circular nature of Native thought in which seasonal cycles and concentric rings of family and community surround and buffer the individual from isolation. He also discussed the "natural dichotomies" in Native thought where oppositional forces such as light and dark, man and woman, right and left, provide balance to the Native world. Keeping these forces in balance in practice is critical to the Native American worldview. Fixico ended

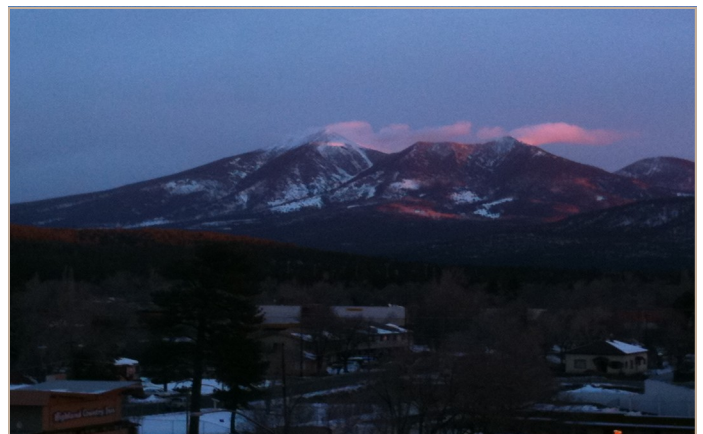
his lecture with a brief discussion of the influence of important Native American scholars, such as Dee Brown, Vine Deloria, Jr., and N. Scott Momaday, who brought a Native perspective to the study of United States History. For Fixico, these scholars are important role models for educated Native Americans

and have helped influence American Indian education by refocusing the historical narrative on the perspective of Native peoples and their experiences as part of the nation's history.

Fixico also joined cohort teachers at the Museum of Northern Arizona (MNA) for two tours that featured special aspects of the institution's collections. Dr. Ted Neff, principle investigative archaeologist on the Grand Canyon Geoaerchological Project and curator of the Grand Archaeology special exhibition, talked to teachers about the genesis of his project and the ways in which archaeological

evidence demonstrates different worldviews. Neff explained that the increased erosion patterns in the Grand Canyon threatened to wash away key sites that revealed important information about the lives of ancient peoples who lived along the Colorado River. The exhibition focused on the nine sites Neff and his colleagues excavated and produced different stories about the people who lived and died in the region. Most of these early people, Neff explained, were nomadic, although for about two hundred years, some groups did engage in agricultural practices along the river. He discussed the logic of the construction of their dwellings, pointing out that while today we would build homes facing the river to frame a scenic view, these early peoples built dwellings with entrances facing away from the river, usually along a northwest-southeast axis. The artifacts they left ranged from pottery shards to beads and woven animal fetishes. Neff ended the tour with a look at how the exhibition teaches students the practices and principles of archeology through simulated excavations in a sandbox.

After the Grand Archeology



View of the San Francisco Peaks from Flagstaff

exhibition tour, docents Cecelia Lodico and Bob Tallarovic divided the group into two groups and led them through the museum's permanent galleries highlighting important aspects of its collections. Of particular note were the interactive components, such as a spear and atlatl, the docents used to illustrate the hunting practices of ancient peoples on the Colorado Plateau. They offered key explanations of early American architecture, providing information about why grain storage was usually at the top of the cliff dwellings, sheltered from threats of bad weather and invasion. The docents also discussed the importance of katsinas in Hopi culture and the meaning of the Hopi mural in the Kiva Room. Artists Michael Kabotie and Delbridge Honanie's modern mural depicts the physical and metaphysical journey of the

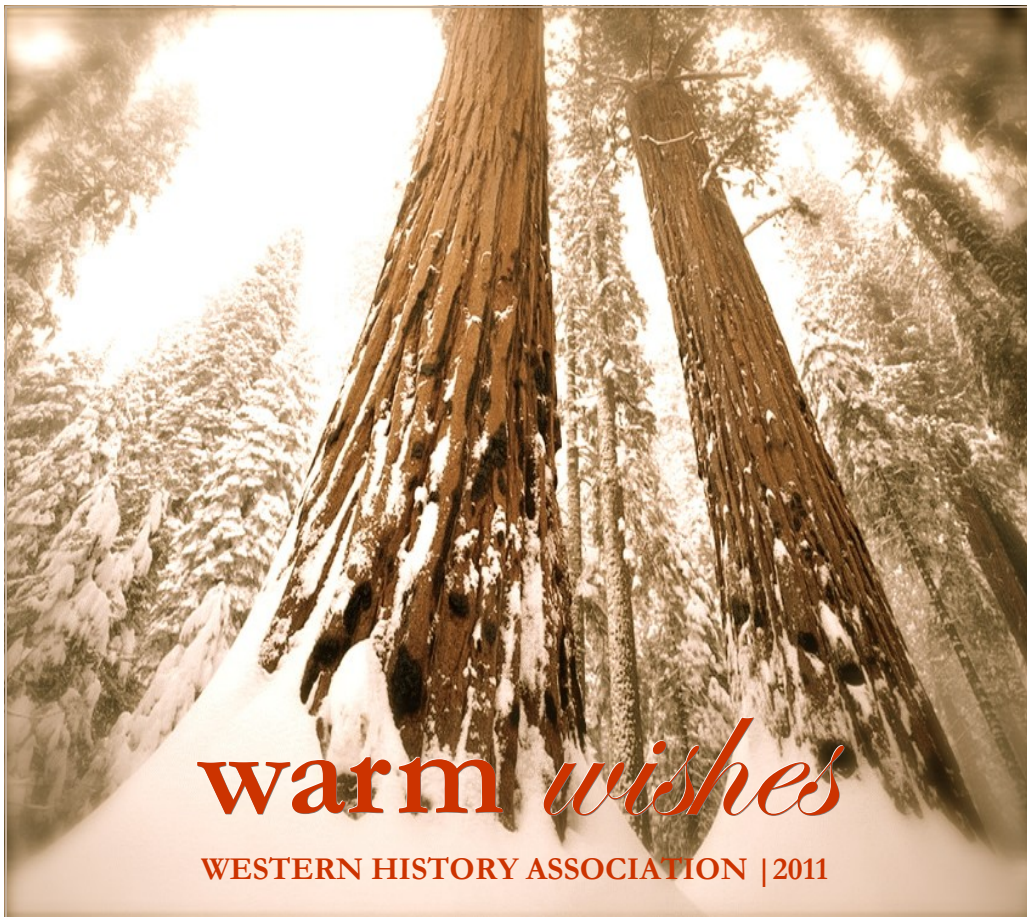
Hopi tribe from their emergence through the computer age. The mural and other features of the museum's permanent galleries provide images and objects that help teachers better understand the different worldviews Native tribes have and the importance of presenting these perspectives as part of the historical narrative. Fixico's lecture and the tours at MNA were part of the grant's second graduate course, "From Colonies to the Nation State," designed to improve cohort teachers' knowledge of early American history. A major focus of this course was the experiences of Native peoples during colonization along the eastern seaboard and in the Southwest. Teachers analyzed key works by Alan Taylor, Ned Blackhawk, and William Cronon. In addition, teachers read Fixico's book *The American Indian Mind in a Linear*



World: American Indian Studies and Traditional Knowledge (2003) in preparation for the talk. The spring graduate course, "Transforming the Moving West," will continue to focus on the experiences of Native Americans as it examines the transformation of the American West via federal programs designed to increase land development.

Did you know...

Sherry Smith, past WHA President (2009), won the Berkshire Conference Article Prize for the best essay on any topic published by a woman. The article, "Reconciliation and Restitution in the American West," was based on her presidential address and was published by the *Western Historical Quarterly*.



warm wishes

WESTERN HISTORY ASSOCIATION | 2011

Award of Merit

Darlis Miller

Honorary Life Membership

Patty Limerick

University of Colorado, Boulder

Huntington Library-Western History Association-Martin Ridge Fellowship

Amy Jin Johnson

Brown University

Bert M. Fireman Award

Bob Reinhardt

“Drowned Towns in the Cold War West: Small Communities and Federal Water Projects,” *Western Historical Quarterly* (Summer 2011).

Sara Jackson Graduate Student Award

Alfred Flores

University of California, Los Angeles

2010 Indian Student Conference Scholarship

Maurice Crandall

University of New Mexico

Alessandra La Rocca Link

University of New Mexico

2011 Trennert-Iverson Graduate Student Conference Scholarship

Aaron Margolis

University of Texas at El Paso

Walter Rundell Graduate Student Award

Saara Kekki

University of Finland

Charles Redd Center Teaching Western History Award

Bianca Wilson Cole

Julie Haddix

Jonathan Koop

Jared McBrady

Arrington-Prucha Prize

Dave Hall

“A Crossroads for Mormon Women: Amy Brown Lyman, J. Reuben Clark, and the Decline of Organized Women’s Activism in the Relief Society,” *Journal of Mormon History* (2010)

Ray Allen Billington Prize

Stacey Smith

“Remaking Slavery in a Free State: Masters and Slaves in Gold Rush California,” *Pacific Historical Review* (February, 2011).

Bolton-Cutter Award

Pekka Hämäläinen

“The Politics of Grass: European Expansion, Ecological Change, and Indigenous Power in the Borderlands,”
William and Mary Quarterly (April, 2010).

Arrell M. Gibson Award

Khal Schneider

“Making Indian Land in the Allotment Era: Northern California's Indian Rancherias” *Western Historical Quarterly*
(Winter, 2010).

Jensen-Miller Award

Jennifer Thigpen

“‘You Have Been Very Thoughtful Today’: The Significance of Gratitude and Reciprocity in Missionary-Hawaiian Gift Exchange,” *Pacific Historical Review* (November, 2010).

Michael P. Malone Award

David Prior

“Civilization, Republic, Nation: Contested Keywords, Northern Republicans, and the Forgotten Reconstruction of Mormon Utah,” *Civil War History* (2010).

Oscar O. Winther Award

Alexandra Koelle

“Pedaling on the Periphery: The African American Twenty-fifth Infantry Bicycle Corps and the Roads of American Expansion,” *Western Historical Quarterly* (Autumn, 2010).

Autry Public History Prize

Ferndale Museum

Letters Home

Joan Paterson Kerr Award

Carol Clark

Charles Deas and 1840s America (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009).

W. Turrentine Jackson Award

John Troutman

Indian Blues: American Indians and the Politics of Music, 1879-1934 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009).

Hal K. Rothman Award

Marsha Weisiger

Dreaming of Sheep in Navajo Country (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011).

Robert M. Utley Award

William Chalfant

Hancock's War: Conflict on the Southern Plains (Norman: Arthur H. Clarke Company, 2010).

Caughey-Western History Association Prize

Erika Lee and Judy Yung

Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

2013 Call For Papers



2013 Call For Papers

53rd Annual Conference of the Western History Association

9-12 October 2013, Tucson, Arizona

VITAL SIGNS: EARTH, POWER, LIVES

No region of the world has been more important than the West of North America in encouraging historians to take an environmental perspective on the past. Today that perspective has become global in scale and significance, and it is time to bring it back home for reassessing ourselves. The 2013 program committee invites proposals on the theme of checking the “vital signs,” those indicators of health and illness that societies as well as individuals need. They include such measures of well being as energy supplies and consumption, ecological and cultural diversity, the distribution of wealth and power, the ups and downs of climate, and the resilience of ecosystems and human communities.

Once sought for its therapeutic promise, the West is experienced with death as well as life. Think of border migrants expiring in the desert, species lost to urban sprawl, or gunfights over contested animals. At the same time westerners have enjoyed inspiring vistas, productive soils, and outdoor recreation of uncommon quality. For the program we encourage you to address such issues, along with eco-justice, forests and fisheries, dams and suburban malls. Their scope may stretch across national borders or oceans, linking resources to producers and consumers and creating empires. Proposals for interdisciplinary panels (including at least one participant from a field other than history) are especially welcome.

The program committee strongly encourages full panel submissions and will consider single papers only when they can be reasonably matched with other panels or papers. When submitting an entire session or panel, include a brief abstract (250 words) that outlines the purpose of the session. Your designated contact person should submit the proposal. Each paper proposal, whether individual or part of a session, should include a one-paragraph abstract and a one-page c.v., with address, phone, and email for each participant. Indicate equipment needs, if any. The committee assumes that all listed individuals have agreed to participate. Electronic submissions are required and should be sent, with supporting materials, as a single document (PDF) to wha2013call@gmail.com.

SUBMISSIONS SHOULD BE SENT BY SEPTEMBER 1, 2012. The 2013 Program Committee Co-chairs are Kathleen Brosnan, University of Houston, and Douglas Cazaux Sackman, University of Puget Sound.

For more information on the WHA's 53rd Annual Conference, visit www.westernhistoryassociation.org

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ANNUAL WHA CONFERENCE

**Boundary Markers and Border
Crossers:**

Finding the West and Westerners

DENVER, COLORADO

October 4-7, 2012

