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Glimpses of a Different World

Nineteenth Century Chinese Trade Paintings from the Sutro Orientalia Collection

Not long after the Sutro Library found a permanent home in the two top floors of the J. Paul Leonard Library at San Francisco State University Library in August of 2012, a number of long dormant treasures were brought back to light. Among them was a set of eleven albums that had been stored in inconspicuous drawers simply labeled Orientalia Collection. Each of the albums consisted of ten to twelve colorful gouache paintings roughly measuring twenty-by-thirty centimeters that were mounted on sheets of paper and top-bound in silk-clad red front and back covers.

To date, not much is known about the origin and history of the items in Adolph Sutro’s Orientalia Collection other than what is recorded in a short article from the San Francisco Call that appeared in 1885. “In 1882,” the article begins, “Mr. Sutro started for Europe, via Japan and China, with the intention of making a beginning [of his library]. While in Japan and China, and later, while in India, Mr. Sutro bought Oriental works of great value, [and] wherever he found a manuscript he bought it and had it shipped to this port [of San Francisco].” While the Orientalia Collection is comprised for the most part of nineteenth century Japanese calligraphy, paintings, and exquisite wood-block prints,1 the images contained in said drawers are of Chinese origin and belong to a category of paintings that is usually referred to as “trade-paintings” as these images were produced and traded in the treaty ports of China throughout the 19th century. Typically depicting scenes of Chinese daily life, Chinese fauna and flora, or Chinese officialdom, these colorful images were produced in large numbers in numerous workshops in Canton and later also in other port cities in China. Easy to transport because of their relatively small size and inexpensive to purchase, they became a popular souvenir for tourists and merchants involved in the China trade, as well as sought-after items for botanists and zoologists who prized them for the realism with which they depicted Chinese plant and animal life (image 2).

With his intention of building a world-class research library that would chronicle the growth and development of civilizations through time and that was to focus especially on natural and physical sciences and technology, it is not surprising that Adolph Sutro would have been captivated by these paintings. He subsequently purchased a large number of images that depict various Chinese crafts, such as silk-making or the production of rice and tea (image 3), scenes from Chinese opera and folk religion, or glimpses of daily life. Long neglected by art historians and collectors since these paintings were not part of the elite art produced and consumed by the Chinese literati class, interest in trade-paintings...
Noble woman in ceremonial attire and servant girl holding a ruyi 如意 scepter that is used as religious talisman or a symbol for good fortune.
has resurfaced in recent years as the historical, sociological, anthropological, and artistic value of these popular images has been reevaluated. Several European and American museums — such as the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Ethnographic Museum in Hamburg, Germany, to name just a few — have since catalogued their holdings and curated special exhibitions. The Sutro Library’s exquisite collection consisting of a total of approximately 120 sheets in excellent condition depicting both highly representative as well as extremely rare examples of this genre of painting is destined to take its place among the main collections in the U.S.

While trade-paintings are now usually associated with the height of the Euro-American China trade — that is the period of the decades preceding the first Opium War of 1839-42 and the years until the end of the nineteenth century — and believed to have been produced almost exclusively for export, the genre itself, which is also referred to as pith painting for the mate-

Orioles (黄鶯) & black capped kingfishers (黑頭翡翠)
rial onto which the extremely bright and rich gouache paints that were used for these paintings were applied, has been known to Europeans since as early as the sixteenth century when Portuguese traders first brought examples of these paintings to Europe. Pith paper, which Europeans had first mistook to be a kind of parchment and later mislabeled as “rice-paper,” is an ivory-white material that is produced by cutting into thin sheets the spongy cellular tissue from the inside of the stems of a tall shrub known as *tongcao* (*通草*) to the Chinese or *Tetrapanax papyrifera* to Western botanists and that is native to the island of Taiwan. Pith paper, the texture of which somewhat resembles that of styrofoam, has a translucent character that made it suitable for back painting. Application of gouache and watercolors resulted in almost three-dimensional effects owing to the cellular comb-structure of the pith. Paint applied in thick layers that filled the hollows of the cells and sat on the surface resulted in raised lines. Extremely rich and vibrant pigments were used to fill the black contours of human or animal fig-
ures while white lead pigment paste was usually applied from the back to enhance the intensity of color (images 4 a & b). While the kind of images found on nineteenth century trade-paintings like the ones in the Sutro Orientalia Collection have a long tradition in popular Chinese non-elite painting, there is no doubt that the growing demand for these paintings among foreigners in the port cities of Canton and Hong Kong, and later Shanghai and Xiamen, as souvenirs or mirrors of certain aspects of Chinese culture in an age prior to the invention of photography gave rise to a sizable industry specializing in such paintings. This further explains why large numbers of them have survived in Western collections, but are rarely seen in Chinese museums.

Even though we have no exact record of Sutro’s itinerary in East Asia, it is highly likely that he would have followed in the footsteps of other American or European travelers at the time and taken a steamer to
Hong Kong, and from there a lighter vessel up the Pearl River Delta to Canton. While Canton had lost its unique position as the only port in which trade with foreigners could be conducted following China’s defeat in the Opium Wars and, as a result, several treaty ports had been opened to foreign trade, the city retained its importance as a hub for the tea and opium trade well into the late nineteenth century. Furthermore, since Canton had for decades been the main center for the production of and trade in manufactured export articles such as porcelain, furniture, embroidered silk, and paintings, visitors who wished to purchase such items still ventured to Canton, even if similar items could also be purchased in Hong Kong and other port cities. While the Canton Sutro might have visited had changed considerably since the Opium Wars — the main difference being that the Thirteen Factories or Co-hong (公行) that had been the dedicated space for foreign merchants and their Chinese middlemen had burned down in 1856 and most merchant activity had relocated to Shamian Island and other parts of the city — Sutro still would have found dozens of artist studios specializing in the production of pith paintings. Only a few decades prior, in the 1830s and 40s, visitors recorded as many as thirty such shops, which frequently were visited by curious Western travelers.

Like most of the examples of gouache trade-paintings held in collections in Europe and the U.S., the paintings in the
Scene from a Chinese opera performance.

Detail of Mandarins and helpers during ritual ceremony. Note the repetitive nature of dress, stature and facial features. Mandarins are grade 6 officials as indicated by the square buzī 補子 insignia with white egret (鷺), symbolizing a virtuous, uncrupt official.
A woman playing flute. Detail of an interior.
Sutro Library are not signed. Studios producing them were known by the name of a master who in turn employed dozens of skilled artisans assisting in their production. Sometimes sheets or albums would carry a stamp indicating the studio’s name and address in Chinese and English, such as “Youqua Painter, old Street No 34.” Youqua was a well-known export artist active between the 1840s and 1880s who, like many other artists working in the treaty ports, also painted in oil, a technique that had been adopted by Chinese artists to satisfy demand by Western patrons who wished to have their portraits or images of their commercial premises in China or their vessels painted in oil. Almost all of the names of the better-known export painters ended in the syllable “qua,” which was a phonetic appropriation of the Cantonese pronunciation of the Chinese character “呱” (pronounced gua in standard Mandarin) that was bestowed upon some of the influential Chinese merchants in Canton who had gained tremendous wealth and status through their dealings with foreign merchants. A visit to the studio of Lamqua, another well-known Canton artist, was recorded in the travelogue of a French visitor to Canton in the 1840s. “Here it is,” Charles La Vollée writes, “that are painted those little silk-covered albums which . . . contain representations of animals, flowers, landscapes, the different manufacturing processes, the costumes of mandarins, the various kinds of punishments, etc.” The Sutro Library, in addition to all the above, further boasts examples of scenes from Chinese opera and the interior of houses and private gardens (image 5 a & b).

Interestingly, La Vollée also shed light on how so many of these images could be produced at such low cost — back-calculations based on Canton customs registers from the mid-nineteenth century put the price of a well-executed sheet at no more than fifteen to twenty dollars in today’s currency. “Lam-qua then introduced us into . . . a sort of workshop,” he writes, where “twenty youths [were] copying drawings upon great rolls of paper . . . or upon that fine pith.” Production, he writes, “is purely a mechanical operation, in which the system of division of labour is faithfully practiced. One painter makes trees all his life, another figures; this one draws feet and hands, that one houses . . .’’ His observation mirrors the findings of Lothar Ledderose, who argues that throughout Chinese history, art works of all kinds were produced using modular techniques that made it possible to mass-produce even items of extremely high artistic quality. Painters of religious art in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, for example, used stencils to establish rough outlines of motifs, which gave them firm compositional frameworks within which to operate. Ifan Williams further believes
“Cherishing the written words brings good karma” (惜字善報). Consequently, “Top scholar comes first in exam” (狀元及第).
that contours sometimes were applied to the pith using crude forms of offset or by tracing or hack-painting contours that were then colored in by artisans. In this way, studios could also borrow motifs from each other, all of which explain why facial features, human postures or dress design appear highly schematic or even repetitive (image 6). Accordingly, most of the scenes depicted on the paintings in the Sutro collection are standard topics that can also be found in other collections.

An interesting exception is an album containing a total of twelve sheets that explore popular beliefs about karmic retribution. Each painting is divided into three parts. While the top frame depicts the carrying out of a sin or a good deed, the middle part then shows a trial overseen by King Yama, ruler of the underworld, while the bottom part shows the resulting karmic retribution. Through the blending of Buddhist ideas about the afterlife with folk interpretations of Confucian moral philosophy and local religious practices, these horizontal triptychs illustrate how the Canton studios at times drew on popular beliefs or local folk art for their motives. It is likely that images such as these might not have been produced exclusively for export, but would also have found a local market as these triptychs provided tangible and entertaining religious and moral guidance for a population that was still largely illiterate. At the same time, their composition and topic material show similarities to popular woodblock prints used over centuries for the dissemination of religious and moral instruction.

One particularly gruesome example found in the Sutro collections shows a butcher shop. The butcher's first image shows an armed robbery and murder in the top frame. In the middle image, King Yama, his judge, and an ox-headed guardian of hell watch on as the sinners are sawed in half, a punishment from one of the eight layers of the Chinese hell. The final image shows a butcher store in which the sinners, reborn as pigs, await the butcher knife (image 7). Another image warns of the lack of filial piety. In the first image, a feasting couple is oblivious of an old parent. This misconduct is admonished in the underworld where a helper holds up a sign with the characters “忤逆” (wuni, un-filial behavior) (image 8). The final image shows a woman begging. Another triptych, on the other hand, illustrates the blessings that can derive from virtuous conduct. A man is seen burning snippets of sacred paper at a temple. His conduct leads the judges to announce that “cherishing the written words brings good karma” (xizi shangbao惜字善報). The final scene shows a successful scholar who has come first in the national civil service exams. How appropriate an image to have found its way into the collection of Adolph Sutro, a man who had resolved not only to “cherish the written word,” but also to use his wealth for the benefit of the people of San Francisco and to “collect a library, a library for reference . . . which shall compare with any in the world.” King Yama would have been full of praise, as are all of us who delight in the treasures of the Sutro Collection.

2. Trade paintings were largely absent from Chinese museums, probably because they were long thought to have been produced exclusively for export and associated with the period of Western imperialism in China. Today, the Guangzhou (Canton) Museum is home to a major collection, the foundation for which was laid in the form of a major donation by collector Mr. Ifan Williams in 2000. Ching M. B. & Cheng K. (eds), Views from the West: Collection of Nineteenth Century Pith Paper Watercolours Donated by Mr. Ifan Williams to the City of Guangzhou (Guangzhou: Guangzhou Museum, 2001).

3. Unlike the images that were produced in the treaty ports and sold mainly to foreign merchants and tourists in the nineteenth century, these earlier examples of paintings on pith also are believed to have enjoyed a huge popularity among the general Chinese public. Wappenschmidt, Friederike. “Bunte leuchtende Bilder der chinesischen Volkskunst – Malerei auf Seide, Papier, Markpapier udn hinter Glas” in Salmen, Brigitte (ed.). Chinesische Bilder: Volkskunst – Inspiration fur den ‘Blaue Reiter’ (Murnau: Schlossmuseum Murnau, 2007), p. 8.

4. Pith paper, which was widely produced in south and south-west China, has also been used for the production of toys, artificial flowers, and butterflies and is still sold as Chinese medicine to make a diuretic infusion today. Traditionally done by hand using an extremely sharp blade, the cutting of pith produces sheets of varying thickness, typically between 0.25-0.5 mms, depending on the skill of the craftsman and the intended use of the sheet. Typically measuring about 25 by 30 cms, the sheets are used for painting without any further processing. Nesbitt, Mark, Ruth Prosser, Ifan Williams, “Rice-Paper Plant – Tetrapanax Papyrifer: The Gauze of the Gods and its products,” Curtis’s Botanical Magazine 2010 vol. 27 (1): pp. 71–92.


In his captivating historical novel The River of Smoke (London: Picador, 2012), Amitav Gosh explores the lives of the foreign merchants and their Chinese counterparts, the so-called Co-hong, the Canton guild of merchants authorized to conduct trade with foreigners prior to the first Opium War, as well as the local Chinese painting scene.

6. Crossman, Carl L. The Decorative Arts of the China Trade. Paintings, Furnishings and Exotic Curiosities (Antique Collectors’ Club, Woodbridge, 1991), p. 201. Accounts of visits to these studios abound. The American Osmond Tiffany, for example, recorded his visit to the studio of the famous painter Lamqua in 1844 in his The Canton Chinese, Or The American's Sojourn In The Celestial Empire (Boston and Cambridge: Monroe and Co.), p. 84.

7. For an image of such a stamp, see Crossman, p. 201.

8. Jiang Yinghe. Qingdai yanghua yu Guangzhou kouan (Western-style paintings of the Qing Dynasty and the Port of Canton) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), pp. 131–2. One of these, the merchant Howqua 浩官 (1769–1843) and leader of the Co-hong is thought to have at one point in his life been the richest man in the world.


An old women is visited by cranes (鶴), symbolizing longevity.
It has long been believed that Adolph Sutro’s collection of books consisted of items from the Colegio de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. However, recent findings at the Sutro Library have uncovered a wealth of seventeenth century books also pertaining to this wondrous collection. The Mexicana collection, including the Colegio de Santa Cruz ensemble, was acquired by Adolph Sutro in 1889 when he purchased the entire stock of the Libreria Abadiano for an undisclosed sum. The Abadiano bookstore was the longest established bookstore in Mexico City at the time, having thousands of volumes regarding Mexican history, philosophy, religion, literature, and politics.¹

The Colegio de Santa Cruz, although in operation since 1533, was officially estab-
lished and inaugurated in 1536 by Bishop Juan de Zumárraga and Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza. Zumárraga was the first bishop and first archbishop of Mexico, often known as a protector and defender of Indians. Mendoza brought peace and stability to Mexico during his fifteen years of governing, the longest term of any viceroy. Both founded the colegio in Mexico City with a fundamental purpose of educating prestigious families of the Aztec ruling class, specifically to be ordained for religious service. The colegio was described as being a small and temporary adobe building with study rooms and dormitories adjacent to the church of Santiago. “On 24 November 1536, Zumárraga reported to the crown that the colegio was meeting with success, detailing its cession to the monarchy, thus placing it under direct royal patronage as the Colegio Imperial de Santa Cruz.”

Six days later, the crown was petitioned for aid in construction of a permanent building. In 1538, funding was provided for development of a two-story stone building. The upper story was used to house the library and offices while the bottom floor consisted of rooms for general use.

“This Colegio de Tlatelolco counted among its faculty the most distinguished Franciscan scholars of the time. Bernardino de Sahagún, Andrés de Olmos, and Juan de Gaona were three of the more important ones.” Sahagún is well known for his compilation of *Historia general de las cosas de la Nueva España*, especially its final twelve books, the *Florentine Codex*. This complete manuscript, consisting of 2,400 pages and illustrated by 1,846 drawings, contains bilingual text in both Nahuatl and Spanish. Olmos was a Franciscan priest and famous grammarian, best known for his writings on the Nahuatl language. Gaona, was a Franciscan friar and was well known for his work titled *Colloquios de la paz, y tranquilidad Christiana en lengua mexicana*. Both students and teachers at the colegio were well respected for their trilingual skills in Latin, Spanish, and Nahuatl.

The original function of the colegio changed when the Mexican provincial church council of 1555 “prohibited Indians, mestizos, and mulattos, together with descendants of Moors, Jews, and others sentenced by the Holy Office, from entering the clergy.” Taking on a new role as a colegio for research in native culture and linguistics, the Colegio de Santa Cruz received various aid and support which allowed it to continue as a center for higher learning until 1571. By the end of this year, loss of financial support, the control of books, and censorship, restricted activities of the colegio. By the mid-seventeenth century, the colegio had been neglected, abandoned, and in ruins. Its holdings were transferred to the convent of Santiago Tlatelolco “where it remained until 1834 when, after being severely damaged by troops from Guanajuato who used the books as mattresses, it was incorporated into the great library of the convent of San Francisco.”

The portion of the Sutro Library Mexicana collection pertaining to the Colegio de Santa Cruz and the Convento de Santiago was previously identified by Sutro’s Honorary Curator of Mexicana, the late Dr. W. Michael Mathes. Mathes examined the Abadiano purchase at Sutro and, in addition to identifying a few books inscribed by Zumárraga, also located various vel-
Decades of research by Mathes resulted in his monograph and bibliography of the Tlatelolco holdings. Listed in Mathes’s 1985 publication titled *The Americas' First Academic Library: Santa Cruz De Tlatelolco*, are titles of books dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The seventeenth century Tlatelolco books from the Colegio de Santa Cruz were previously thought to have been lost or sold off. However, a recent discovery by Sutro’s librarians has helped to identify 450-500 additional volumes, primarily pertaining to the seventeenth century and all with identifying fire-marks or brands. Identification of these books has been made possible due to the availability of proper shelving and storage; a necessity not met prior to the collection being housed at its new and permanent location at the J. Paul Leonard-Sutro Library.

Although the entire collection has not yet been cataloged, we are working to identify and catalog the materials as part of this collection. In addition, recent searches have suggested that the Sutro Library may possibly be housing a few books from the Colegio de San Buenaventura. This colegio was a convent and seminary for Franciscans, established in 1661 and also of Tlatelolco. However, confirmation cannot yet be established until additional research has been concluded. Identification and processing of these precious books is a slow process but well worth the time necessary to help treasure and preserve this collection for generations to come. We are enthusiastic to bring attention to a collection of great historical significance to scholars.
ENDNOTES


4. Aguilar-Moreno, 268.


7. Mathes, The Americas’ First, 43.


10. Rebecca M. Seaman, Conflict in the early Americas: an encyclopedia of the Spanish Empire’s Aztec, Incan, and Mayan conquests (Santa Barbara, Cal: ABC-CLIO, 2013), 335.

One of the many great theology books belonging to the Colegio de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco Collection is D. Dionysii Carthusiani Operum Minorum (1532). Sutro Library’s volume 2 of this title is signed by the colegio’s distinguished faculty member, Franciscan friar Juan de Gaona.

This illustration displays the captivating exterior of the former Colegio de Santiago de Tlatelolco. Holdings from the Colegio de Santa Cruz were transferred to the Convento de Santiago in the mid-seventeenth century.
The Job Plenty of 1950s California

And Its End

By Michael S. Bernick

Editor’s Note

Michael S. Bernick served as Director of the State of California’s labor department, the Employment Development Department (EDD) from 1999 to 2004. Following this, he joined the law firm of Sedgwick in San Francisco. He is a practitioner and theorist of job training and employment strategies. He grew up in the Los Angeles area and received a degree from Harvard University and a juris doctorate from the University of California. He has written extensively on job training over the decades and is a fellow of the Milken Institute. Several years ago, Mr. Bernick generously donated his papers to the State Library.
The conventional narrative of 1950s employment in California is one of both job abundance and job security. To a great extent that narrative is accurate. In California, the 1950s was a decade when the unemployment rate was regularly below 5%, and payroll job growth occurred at a faster rate than any time since. It was also a time when large private and public institutions dominated the state’s employment landscape, offering job stability.

Yet, employment in 1950s California was more than the large institution/“organization man” model and included a good deal of self-employment and entrepreneurship. Additionally, though the state leadership in the 1950s saw job growth and job stability as the future, both the growth and the stability were in decline within the next two decades.

EMPLOYMENT DATA FROM THE 1950S: LOW UNEMPLOYMENT RATES AND HIGH PAYROLL JOB GROWTH

The unemployment rates for California during the 1950s are shown in Chart 1, prepared by California Employment Development Department analyst, Mr. Brandon Hooker. Unemployment stood at 9.9% in January 1950, but then declined rapidly in 1950 to 5% by January 1951. Over the next seven years the rate stayed below 5% nearly the entire period, and below 4% for nearly two years, from May 1955 through February 1957.

Chart 2, also prepared by Mr. Hooker, shows the California payroll job growth during the 1950s. Payroll job numbers jumped from 3.4 million jobs in January 1951 to over 4.5 million by the end of 1957—the largest seven-year percentage gain the state has experienced in the postwar period.

The payroll job growth was not limited to one or two sectors. The California economy of the 1950s saw the expansion of the state’s blue-collar manufacturing and construction sectors and also the growth of the white-collar financial and business services, education and health care, and transportation, trade, and utilities. Between January 1950 and December 1959, manufacturing climbed sharply from 666,800 jobs to 1,321,500 job; construction from 193,200 jobs to 309,100 jobs; trade from 741,800 jobs to 1,123,200 jobs; and services from 400,100 jobs to 700,300 jobs.

EMPLOYMENT LANDSCAPE OF THE 1950S DOMINATED BY MAJOR EMPLOYERS

Accompanying this job growth of the 1950s was the rise of the major private sector and public sector employers: the major banks and financial institutions, retailers, aerospace and defense contractors, and agribusiness giants. These employers, dominant in their fields nationwide and worldwide, could offer an employment that was ongoing, not project-based or contingent, and that was usually full-time, with benefits.

In aerospace and defense, for example, employment was driven by the rapid job growth of such major employers as Lockheed, Hughes, Rockwell, and Douglas. The first photo is of the parts division of the Douglas Aircraft plant in Long Beach, employing thousands of workers. In Holy Land, a history of the Southern California community of Lakewood in the 1950s, D. J. Waldie describes many of his neighbors who work at this plant. Douglas Aircraft provides its workers not only full-time employment, but also pays for its workers to attend community college and public university classes, and provides scholarships for their children.

Waldie further describes how his father finds steady, secure employment in another major employment entity of this
What Californians of the 1950s saw as the future instead proved to be a brief window in history that closed within two decades.

decade: the rapidly growing governmental and quasi-governmental organization. One of these is the Southern California Gas Company, which employs his father for thirty years designing pipelines. His father spends his entire work life with the Gas Company.

The second photo is of an office pool in the 1950s. It could be one of a number of the large sector insurance, banking, finance, or shipping companies of the time. In *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance, 1950–1963*, California historian Kevin Starr describes the confident private sector enterprises growing in California during the 1950s and early 1960s, fueling the state’s middle class with both stable white-collar jobs and blue-collar jobs.

We can see the stable employment and confidence in the period literature and entertainment in programing produced by television and motion picture writers in Los Angeles. Though little of Ward Cleaver’s work life is depicted in the six seasons of *Leave It to Beaver* (1957–1963), he and neighbor Fred Rutherford are said to be employed in secure positions with the local branch of a national trust company. So too other adults on television during this period are in secure white collar positions. The father in *Fathers Knows Best*, for instance, was an insurance agent, while the father in *My Three Sons* was an aeronautical engineer.

**SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE 1950S**

Though stable employment with a large company is often the employment associated with 1950s California, there also was a good deal of self-employment and entrepreneurship. Such entrepreneurship included not only the high profile entrepreneurship in Silicon Valley or Hollywood, but also the hundreds of thousands of new enterprises started each year in the state.

In the summer of 2014, I set out to learn more about the employment of adults on the block I grew up on in Los Angeles: the 8400 block of Fourth Street between Orlando and La Cienega in the Fairfax District. My father worked for a single employer during the 1950s and indeed for his entire career, and I expected to find similar employment patterns among most of the other adults on the block. Instead, the majority during this period were either self-employed or in small businesses.

I was able to obtain employment information on nine adults. Eight of the nine were men. The adult women on the block generally were not then in the paid work world, though they would be by the 1960s. It is evident from the list that follows that among the nine adults only two were employed throughout the 1950s in a long-term employment situation with a single, large employer. The rest were self-employed or in small businesses.

1. **Johnny Baird**: A former boxer who fought under the name “Kid Baird,” he was self-employed through the 1950s as a produce/meat middleman.

2. **Sidney Davison**: A college graduate from New York who came to Los Angeles in 1930, he was for the next two decades a Communist Party organizer who sometimes operated under the name “Sidney Martin.” After the party declined in the late 1940s and early 1950s, he found employment for a few years in the early 1950s in a meat packing factory, and in 1955, purchased and subsequently operated a laundromat in Venice. In the 1960s, he became chief purchasing agent of a company producing aluminum sliding doors in North Hollywood.

3. **Manny Stevens**: Studio musician and trumpet teacher.

4. **Mr. Sherman**: Plumber.

5. **Isidore “Blackie” Samuels**: Bar owner.

6. **Polia Pillin**: A ceramicist who worked out of her garage and was the only woman in this group. She was not well known in the 1950s but achieved fame in later decades, and her pottery and other art continue to sell today.

7. **Mr. Zycher**: The shipping manager for...
a clothing wholesaler in the 1950s, he would move from the block in the late 1950s and start his own small retail business.

8. Herb Siegel: A printer; one of the two adults with long-term employment. He worked for one employer, Reynolds and Reynolds, for over thirty-five years before retiring.

9. Sol Bernick: A faculty member at the University of Southern California (USC), he was the second of the two adults with one employer staying at USC from 1949 to 1986.

I don’t suggest that this block was a cross sample of 1950s Los Angeles, as its adult population was heavily Jewish, mainly second generation immigrants. Yet, its diversity of employment was repeated in other neighborhoods throughout Los Angeles and throughout the state. Employment with major institutions was more widespread in this decade than subsequent decades, but by no means all encompassing.

THE CONFIDENCE OF THE 1950S IN CONTINUED JOB GROWTH AND THE SUBSEQUENT END OF THIS GROWTH

Finally, it is important to note the extent to which projections of California employment going forward from the 1950s were incorrect. Government officials and business leaders in 1950s were nearly uniform in regarding the job growth of the decade as continuing unabated into the future. The California economy was seen, as was the American economy, as moving into a stage of economic progress that would eliminate the unemployment and employment instability of the period prior to World War II.

By the 1970s, though, both the job abundance and the job stability prevalent in 1950s California were in decline. Job stability, in particular, has declined steadily to the present. What Californians of the 1950s saw as the future instead proved to be a brief window in history that closed within two decades.

A proper discussion of the end of the 1950s job prosperity is beyond the scope of this essay. But a few words might be said about the economic and social forces that came together to disrupt the job world in California and that are continuing their influences: globalization, technology, the decline of private sector unions, and the changing work culture.

At the center is globalization. The post-war economic dominance of major industries in California, as well as throughout the United States, was built in good part on the devastation of the European and Asian economies in World War II. By the 1970s, Europe and Asia had rebuilt, and California’s large employers found themselves in global competition. In the 1970s and 1980s, this competition most impacted California’s heavy manufacturing firms. But by the next decade, global competition extended to firms in finance, business services, accounting, information technology, and even education. The confident large business enterprises of the 1950s described by historian Kevin Starr found themselves by the 1990s forced to restructure, to cut costs, to find new ways of operating.

A part of the new operating model involved substituting full-time, ongoing employment relationships with employment that was contingent, project-based, and/or part-time. The private staffing industry surged in growth. Nationwide, there were only around 20,000 employees in the staffing industry in 1956. By the early 1970s, the number was at 200,000, and the growth accelerated during the next two decades to 1 million employees by 1990 and 2.7 million employees by 2000.

Similarly, independent contracting surged from the 1980s forward. In 1995, 8.3 million workers were identified by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics as independent contractors. By 2005 that number had jumped to 10.3 million and by 2013 to an estimated more than 12 million workers.

Even greater than the growth of staffing and independent contracting has been the growth in part-time employment, especially in the past decade and especially among workers who would prefer full-time work. In October 2012, 27.2 million workers were counted as employed, but only working part-time, that is from one to thirty-four hours per week. Of these workers, 18.9 million told government researchers that they were not seeking full-time work (i.e., adults caring for younger children or older parents, college students, older workers). However, 8.3 million of these workers were “involuntary part-time” workers, who did seek full-time work, but were unable to find it. This number had grown from the 3.9 “involuntary part-time” workers in April 2006.

The job world of 1950s California should not be overly romanticized. Even when unemployment was running below 4%, many workers were outside the job mainstream, either unemployed for long periods, or bouncing between jobs.

Yet, for the majority of workers, the 1950s and even the 1960s was a different job world than the present one. The changes, when they came, were the result not of local and state policies, but of economic forces far beyond our state’s borders.

ENDNOTES

3. Most of us in our youth know little about the employment of adults in our neighborhood. When I started my research I had only a vague idea of the occupations or work histories of the adults on my block. But I was able to find three of my former neighbors, all current Californians, who helped with research: Asa Baird, a retired winemaker in the Napa Valley; Peter Davison, a composer in Santa Monica; and Jeff Siegel, a prominent horse racing analyst for the Los Angeles Times and other publications, living in Duarte.
Recently I was reminded of my years of involvement with California Library Literacy Services, initially the California Literacy Campaign (CLC), and realized we set all of this in place some thirty years ago. I had the honor of being engaged during the first ten years watching its establishment and growth. This reminder came as I was browsing through the new UCLA Library website and found myself linking through to UC’s eScholarship website. Of course, one searches on one’s own name and I found a document that was new to me. It was a deposit in UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations: a historical study of literacy services in California.1 I was captivated to read it from cover to cover and memories and thoughts came rushing back.

When as state librarian, I began in 1980 my travels around California. Some thought it was a passing fancy and that we should not be investing public money in such a program. But my beliefs in library literacy had deep roots. They began when I was director of the Lake Oswego Public Library and an elderly lady approached me and asked if she could use library space to tutor adults in reading. I watched and observed. She was making a huge difference, and the people who came to see her wanted privacy; they were concerned someone would find out they couldn’t read. I watched as each of them began to discover the riches of a public library. They read to their children and became READERS.

When as state librarian, I began my travels around California, I would stalk the towns and cities listening to people, asking where the public library was located, and gathering my thoughts around how libraries were going to have to change in California after the passage of Proposition 13. They would have to better relate to their communities and everyone who lived in them. Those new to the U.S. and to California were one segment of this concern — and public libraries were not serving them well. The others were the hidden non-readers who had no reason to use the library at all. While some could see the advantage of having their children go to the library, they had no value in it for themselves. Ms. Chamberlain who authored the study I found on UC’s scholarship website well documents...
the establishment and growth of library literacy services in California and I won’t repeat that here.²

As I reflected on what I might say some thirty years later, I remembered the tenth anniversary celebration we held in Millbrae. The gathering brought together many from across the state—librarians, learners, tutors, and officials. It was a glorious evening—the banquet elegant and exciting. I would award Enrique Ramirez his high school diploma. But, the whole evening I wondered why renowned book artist Joe D’Ambrosio was there. He sat at a table near the front. As the evening progressed, I was called to the stage one more time and presented with a book Joe had made especially for me—a one-of-a-kind, *Honoring Gary E. Strong, California State Librarian,* March 20, 1994. California Literacy Campaign 1984-1994. (See picture on p. 22).

Inside a printed page recorded:

This book is presented to Gary E. Strong with love, admiration and respect from the staff, libraries and adult new readers of the California Literacy Campaign in appreciation of the vision, courage and spirit which you have shown in creating and sustaining this campaign through the past ten years.

Because of you, Gary, thousands of adults in California who could not read now can! Public libraries throughout our state are now seen as centers of literacy for all people. Thank you, Gary. Without you this would never have been possible. You have truly been our guiding light.

I believe the foreword is also worth sharing here:

In 1983, Gary Strong had a vision of a more literate California. In his vision, he saw California public libraries as playing a major role. He saw libraries as serving not just the educated elite of this state but meeting the literacy needs of every individual in every community. But, in order to do this, those people not using libraries because of an inability to read, needed to be taught the fundamentals of reading and writing.

Gary made the very difficult decision to commit federal LSCA Title I funds to initiating an adult literacy campaign which would eventually change the way librarians view services to their communities. This decision was the beginning of the California Literacy Campaign (CLC). The CLC is now funded by state monies and on a continuing basis. 27 public libraries initially decided to take that first step to providing direct literacy instruction in a library setting. This number was to grow until a decade later, 93 libraries were part of the campaign. Five years after the start of the campaign, a family literacy component named Families for Literacy was added. Together, the adult and family literacy services were to serve thousands of Californians each year.

The California Literacy Campaign has helped thousands of adults and families change their lives. It has brought new users, both learners and their tutors, into the library and has positioned libraries as catalysts for change in their communities. Libraries involved in literacy have become more pro-active in their services and have developed a new identity within the constructs of the educational community.

The success of the California Literacy Campaign is, in a large measure, due to the dedication and courage of Gary Strong. He has encountered and overcome many obstacles. He has never wavered from his determination to bring California public libraries into the 21st century by providing adult and family literacy services. Gary has guided us all on a new, enlightened, empowering path.

The rest of the book blew me away! Bound together were personal handwritten (a very few typed) messages on handmade paper from all over the state. I have never shared these messages, except with my wife Carolyn. We sat in bed that night and read each one. In this way, I want to share some of the content, some of the passion, and some of the belief we shared together.

Here in Alhambra we have only just begun our Literacy Program and already we have found a new enthusiasm, a new vitality—and many new friends to support the cause of libraries!

When I interviewed candidates for the literacy coordinator position, I asked what reading meant to them. “Joy” was often mentioned and that joy has been brought to adult learners and their families by a dedicated group of volunteer tutors in the Alpine County Literacy program.

Though the Adult Literacy Program of Beaumont Library District is one of the newest in the CLC, you have an observable, measurable impact here . . . . People know here that reading and writing can be fun and they envision a brighter future because of your dream to make the library an education center for all citizens.

Our aspiration for many years . . . every adult learner who begins to read because of a literacy program such as ours gives credence to the public library’s role in the lifelong learning process. (*Burbank Public Library*)

The Butte County Adult Reading and Families for Literacy programs have positively impacted their participants’ lives in very heartwarming ways. Recently one
of our students wrote a letter to the editor of the local newspaper expressing his gratitude for the program and what has allowed him to attain. . . . And then there are the children. Their delight in receiving attractive books of their very own is near palpable. The books, in conjunction with the attention, games, and learning projects provided by family story-time, create a beacon of hope for a future which includes the joys of reading and learning.

When I think about the many activities and programs I have been involved with during my career, establishing the Carlsbad City Library Adult Learning Program stands out as one of the best and most meaningful decisions I have ever made.

Thank you for: Giving libraries the opportunity to be more than warehouses of books, but rather sources of information, learning and empowerment and your missionary zeal for expanding the potential of the library as an institution, the librarian as a professional, and the library user as an individual. (City of Commerce)

In our community, our program is the only source of literacy tutoring for adults with less than a sixth grade reading level. (Hemet)

We are proud of our beautiful library. More importantly, we are proud of the fact that it has now become accessible to hundreds of former non-readers who would never have dreamed of entering a library before. Our literacy program has quite literally changed their lives. (City of Huntington Beach)

The Lake County Library appreciates your support of literacy. It is very rewarding to see the difference literacy has made to so many students. . . . P.S.: It is gratifying to see the excitement on the faces of the children in our new Families program.

Keep fighting! . . . There’s no alternative to a public library.
— LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY

As librarians working with avid and demanding readers, we don’t always think of those with poor reading skills or no reading skills. Nurturing these future readers and promoting the cause of literacy is critical to the future of our libraries and the State of California. (Mariposa County)

Listening to a fifty year old man recount the joy he experienced in reading store signs in downtown Willits reminds me how valuable the library’s literacy program is in Mendocino County.

Without readers our libraries will die and our communities will wither. The California Literacy Campaign gives us the tools and incentive to make a difference. (Monterey County Free Libraries)

I’ll never forget a thirty year old man who gave a testimonial at a recent tutor & student recognition ceremony. He said that he had sneaked through school without learning to read, but because of the LAMP Program he tried out, read, and got a small part in “Othello” at Cal State L.A. last summer. Most of all, it has meant close connections to people whose lives we have touched, and who have touched us with their humanity and their dreams. (National City Public Library)

The life-transforming effects of acquired literacy have touched our library staff and communities in profound ways.
— RIVERSIDE CITY-COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Because of your commitment to literacy in California the following things happened in Newport Beach – 1. Todd read a bedtime story to his son. 2. Hildi read a novel for the first time, at age 45. 3. Dave wrote a letter to his grandchildren. 4. Art wrote a letter to his mother. 5. Subin passed her driver’s test. 7. Chris started a new business. 8. Kelly found a better job.

Even more importantly perhaps, the library has changed and enlarged its vision of its mission by embracing this new type of service and a new group of patrons. (Redwood City Library)

You are right. Public libraries must be a part of the solution to this major social ill.
— SACRAMENTO PUBLIC LIBRARY

The San Jose Public Library is very proud of its Partners in Reading program. It is one of the most important—and enjoyable—things we do. We have been able to change the lives of hundreds and hundreds of people.

In the autumn of 1984, I was in Richmond, CA, attending an organizational workshop for the pilot program which ultimately became the California Literacy Campaign. I definitely did not know what I was getting myself into. What a grand, life-changing adventure it has been and continues to be. Your courage and leadership have brought “light” into thousands of lives, and publicized clearly the tragedies of illiteracy. (San Luis Obispo City-County Library)

You are a man of remarkable vision and a willingness to work. At the New Reader’s Conference in Oakland, you sat in one of my workshops, your cotton shirt rolled up to the elbows, as you shared with learners. Later that day you moved all of us with your speech. It’s easy to dream. It’s another
thing to shape abstraction into concrete reality. We've done it. You've done it, and in the process hundreds of lives have been transformed .... (San Mateo Project Read)

Some of the most gratifying moments of my 25 years in California libraries have been those times when I witnessed the almost magical transformation in the lives of the learners who participated in the programs you so vigorously championed. (Santa Ana Public Library)

There is no greater measure of success than the joy of a father reading to his child for the first time or the pride of a woman who passed her driving test. Our days are filled with hope & celebration as we witness these miracles. (Santa Monica Public Library)

The Library has unique resources that offer the adult learner a wide range of support and learning opportunities creating a wholeness of experience not found elsewhere. (Santa Clara County Library)

At the White House Conference, when I felt so overwhelmed, you came to me and said, “You need a hug, don’t you?” The concern you showed me at that time is the same caring and support I’ve watched you give the Literacy program. (An adult learner)

Remember how difficult it was getting librarians to understand that literacy programs belonged in libraries? Well ... you fought the war valiantly and won! (Past President of the California Library Association)

You are one of the real champions of justice in America. God bless you, dear friend! (Jonathan Kozol)

I am sure the whole purpose of this book is so I can have one more opportunity to say: I was wrong; you were so right. There is a need and a place for literacy training in Alameda County? Thanks for your vision. (Alameda County)

I have been waiting all my long library life for another Jim Gillis to lay hands on the State Library. Now, it is you who have reincarnated that great library leader. (Lawrence Clark Powell)

I remember, Gary, that your first comment about launching a public library literacy statewide program was: “I’ve been waiting for this!” And you gave it all the energetic leadership it had to have to succeed. (Carmela Ruby)

You have brought to so many Californians the precious gift, pleasure and achievement of skill in reading, the basis for nearly every other achievement. (Carma Leigh)

As interviewers traveling the state for our great book project Literate America Emerging I discovered the enabling principle guiding your life and work—respect—for the ideas, the dignity, the experiences & the potential of each and every person. You hear and understand and respect us, and we in turn continue to gain from the experience. (Barbara Prete)

I came for six months and have stayed for more than ten years! I cannot imagine a more fulfilling professional life than these years have provided. ... You have had an uncanny sense, Gary, of what was needed to engage public libraries in service to the people of their communities. I am very fortunate to have been a part of the process. (Al Bennett)

Your work as California State Librarian has changed the face of literacy throughout this state. Only you could have brought the other state agencies together and led them so well. Your commitment to new readers and other underserved peoples has changed the lives of thousands . . . . You have been an inspiration to so many, including me. A leader, an innovator, a mentor, a friend—you’ve been all these things and so much more. No one could have done what you have in such a diverse and large state. You made it seem so easy, but I know it wasn’t. (Carole Talan)

There were many, many more messages such as these as well as message of a personal nature that remain for me to read. These, however, I feel share the heart and soul of what was accomplished in bringing the CLC through birth, infancy, and pre-adolescence. It would be for others to continue the charge over the next twenty years as I would leave for Queens Borough Public Library in New York City later in 1994. There I encouraged our six adult learning centers and rich ESL program reaching thousands of immigrants and native born in Queens. Leaving for UCLA Library in 2003, I found new crops to cultivate in students in California’s largest university. With more than forty-five percent of incoming freshman as first generation American college students, that wonderful staff would create information literacy programs that would mature into peer-to-peer tutoring and inquiry laboratories again housed in the heart of the campus—the library!

Over these some fifty years of librarianship now, I continue to have the firm belief that we are the greatest profession. Only as librarians are we free to teach, protect heritage, nurture justice, preserve culture, and empower people. Empowering us all is the heart of the democracy!  

ENDNOTES


2. The thesis contains an extensive bibliography and documentation. Most of my articles and speeches are referenced. I will not repeat them here.
THE FOURTH ANNUAL ARCHIVES CRAWL

The California History Section of the State Library participated in the fourth annual Sacramento Archives Crawl. Held on Saturday, October 11 at the Library’s 900 N Street building, over 560 people visited the Library. The Foundation has contributed annually to this event as a sponsor. This year’s theme was “Having Fun in the Sacramento Region and Beyond.” In addition to the State Library, three other institutions served as hosts: the Sacramento Room of the Public Library, the Center for Sacramento History, and the California State Archives. Each host institution provided display space for libraries and archives outside of downtown Sacramento. This year, the Library hosted the Placer County Archives and Research Center, University of California at Davis Special Collections, and California State University Chico Special Collections. Each of these had a table to display materials and to answer questions from the many visitors.

Staff members from the California History Section led by Supervising Librarian Kathy Correia participated by creating special exhibits, answering questions, and handing out literature about the Library and the Foundation. Gary Kurutz and Marta Knight from the Foundation also were on hand to promote the Library’s amazing services and collections and to display Foundation publications. Each Archives Crawl visitor received a “passport” to be stamped at each of the host institutions. The “passport” featured images from each collection and included the logos of the sponsors including the Foundation.

The following is a summary of the table themes enjoyed by the hundreds of enthusiastic visitors. Many children came and were introduced to the excitement of California history by their parents. It was so rewarding for participants to see the items up close and to interact with the staff as well as enjoy the general ambiance of the California History Room.

Karen Paige
“California as a Wonderland:” on display were books, periodicals, pamphlets, maps, photos, and more featuring the phrase “Wonderland” which has been used for over 100 years to promote California and its varied resources.

Michael Dolgushkin
“California Music”: on display were concert and music posters, books, photos, and sheet music spanning the years 1890–2013.

Marianne Leach
“Fun before the iPad and iPhone”: on display were photographs and photograph albums showing recreation opportunities in California, including car camping, tenting, hiking, fishing, and more spanning the years 1890’s–1950.

Elena Smith
“Fine dining fun in California”: on display were restaurant napkins, coasters, menus as well as photographs spanning the years 1891–1970s.

Kathy Correia
“Sports fun in California”: on display were team posters of the Sacramento Kings, Sacramento Gold Miners, Sacramento Monarchs; baseball and basket-
ball pennants; ticket stubs from football, basketball and hockey games; programs from roller derby and baseball games and more.

Gary Kurutz

“Library treasures”: on display in the J. S. Holliday Rare Materials Reading Room were Victorian papier-mâché bindings; volumes with fore-edge paintings; Audubon’s double elephant folios of *The Birds of America*; the Nuremberg Chronicle (1493); Gold Rush daguerreotypes; James Marshall’s map and drawing of the gold discovery site; a map showing California as an island, and the first newspaper carried across the continent by the Pony Express in 1860.

Outside the California History Room Library photographers Vincent Beiderbecke and Matt Bartok set up a large screen TV and gave ten-minute 3D slide-show presentations of historical California photographs throughout the day. This was an extremely popular activity and lots of interested patrons donned 3D glasses and viewed the exhibit.

While all these activities transpired, the librarians were ably supported by California History Section staff members Kira Healey, Sharon Stewart, and Kelisha Skoglund. Kira and Keli cheerfully staffed the passport stamping station, kept statistics, gave directions, and triaged innumerable questions about the activities of the day, the collections, and the Archives Crawl in general. Sharon staffed the 1st floor rotunda, greeted entering guests, distributed Library pamphlets, and provided relief support for Kurutz in the Rare Materials Reading Room and the librarians at their table displays. JoAnn Fujiwaka, who is funded by the Foundation to process archival collections, also assisted with fill-in support at table displays when staff needed a break. James Crudup of the Library’s Business Services Office provided essential assistance with setup and breakdown of tables and chairs for visiting institutions, unlocked and locked doors, set up the elevator to let patrons up to the 2nd floor and provided general support in the event of any pending building issues.

Dan Flanagan of the Library’s Preservation Office provided invaluable service by helping to set up the displays, create signs, and much more.

The “Crawl” lasted from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At the end of the day, the staff was tired but elated by the turnout and enthusiasm generated by the hundreds of “crawlers.” All the visitors were grateful for the experience and for the chance to learn about their California State Library.

SUTRO LIBRARY’S PHOTOGRAPHS ON DISPLAY AT THE PRESIDIO OFFICERS’ CLUB HERITAGE GALLERY

By Diana Kohnke

In 1989, the Presidio of San Francisco was closed as an active military installation and transferred to the National Park Service in 1994. Through the bipartisan efforts of individuals like Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi and Secretary of State George P. Shultz, Congress created the Presidio Trust to oversee the development of the Presidio as a public space and as a cultural destination. To this end, the Presidio Trust renovated the Officers’ Club to incorporate exhibitions, programing, lectures, and classrooms which are designed to support the California State curriculum for students in kindergarten through high school. The Presidio Officers’ Club is now open to the public and admission is free.

In collaboration with librarians, archivists, and other administrators from the Presidio Trust, the Sutro Library lent items from its C. Tucker Beckett Collection. Beckett, a Presidio officer and amateur photographer, captured amazing images of the Mexican Punitive Expedition. This campaign, in which the United States sent troops into Mexico in 1916 to capture and kill Pancho Villa, was significant in that it was last time the U.S. Cavalry rode into battle and the first time the 1st Aero Squadron engaged in military action. The loaned items from the C. Tucker Beckett Collection are now on exhibition at the Presidio Officers’ Club in the Presidio Heritage Gallery.

As a result of our cooperation with the Presidio Heritage Trust, staff from the Sutro Library was invited to attend the Grand Reopening of the Presidio Officers’ Club and the ribbon cutting ceremony which took place on September 23, 2014. Supervising Librarian Haleh Motiey and I were lucky enough to get the attention of Nancy Pelosi and she graciously agreed to join us in a photograph at the ceremony. When we mentioned that we worked for the California State Library, Congresswoman Pelosi remarked that one of her first governmental appointments was to the San Francisco Library Commission.

EDITOR’S NOTE

*Diana Kohnke is a reference librarian and curator of exhibits at the Sutro Library.*
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Ms. Margaret Walsh, Greenbrae
In Honor of Sedi Sami
Ms. Margaret Walsh, Greenbrae
In Honor of Ronnie Sanders
Ima J. Salie, Gardnerville, NV

C AliFornia History
American Bungalow Magazine, Sierra Madre
Russell and Elizabeth Austin, Sacramento
Rose Marie Beebe, San Jose
Mr. James R. Blaine, Vacaville
Blue and Gold Fleet, San Francisco
The Bookery, Placerville
California Assessors’ Association, Sacramento
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