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Illustrations / Photos: Pages 2-19, California History Section and California State Capitol Museum; pages 20-27 San Francisco State University and California History Section; pages 28-31 California History Section; pages 32-35 California History Section, Information Technology Bureau, and Braille and Talking Book Library.

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“California Invites the World”

The 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition

By John E. Allen
February 2015 ushered in a major milestone for California and the city of San Francisco, as the centenary of when the Golden State played host to one of the great world’s fairs. When it opened on February 20, 1915, the Panama-Pacific International Exposition (P.P.I.E.) would be the first world’s fair to be held on the Pacific shore. This grand fair would truly live up to its official promotional slogan of “California Invites the World.” In the ten months it operated, nearly twenty-five million people flocked from all over the world to see this wondrous creation and all the marvels it contained.

The 1915 Exposition was the greatest fair ever held in California. The San Francisco world’s fair overlapped the Panama-California Exposition (P.C.E.) which was held in San Diego. Both fairs celebrated the opening of the engineering marvel of the Panama Canal a year earlier. One of the greatest engineering feats in human history, the fifty-mile Panama Canal, took ten years to construct. Completed in 1914, it shortened the distance between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans by over 8,000 miles and forty-six days.

The P.P.I.E. was also staged to bring national attention to San Francisco’s recovery after the devastating earthquake and fire that leveled the city in 1906. Even before the disaster, San Franciscans called for a redesign of the city’s chaotic layout along the orderly lines of the “City Beautiful” movement. Noted architect and urban designer Daniel Burnham was commissioned in 1905 to draw up plans for this major urban project. He proclaimed, “San Francisco of the future will be the most beautiful city of the continent.”

In the end however, the grandiose “Burnham Plan” was abandoned as being too unrealistic. Plans for a new civic...
ARGUMENT WEEK

As early as 1904, Californians began making plans for celebrating the completion of the Panama Canal. San Francisco, however, had many contenders for hosting the prestigious event, principal among them, New Orleans. San Diego, as has been mentioned, also put forward an unsuccessful bid for holding the fair. As a result of this competition, an intense lobbying of local and national politicians was required to get the support that was necessary for gaining the right to hold the exposition.

For San Francisco the final decision for determining the location of the world’s fair lay in the hands of Congress. During what was known as the “argument week” (October 1910), congressmen were inundated with over two million pieces of mail petitioning them to favor one city over another. In the end, San Francisco was able to gain the votes in Congress and secure itself as the location for the P.P.I.E. President William H. Taft signed a joint resolution on February 15, 1911 designating San Francisco the “Exposition City.” Before very long other California and West Coast cities were also allowed to advertise the P.P.I.E. on their postal cancelations. Over 540 million pieces of mail were sent out by the San Francisco Post Office with a special cancelation.

Presidents William Howard Taft and Woodrow Wilson were both instrumental in carrying forward the massive project. Taft

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EDITOR’S NOTE

John Allen is a historian at the State Capitol Museum and a history professor at American River College. Mr. Allen curated “California Invites the World: The 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exhibition” as well as past exhibits on the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and birds-eye views of California. The author would like to thank the California State Capitol Museum exhibit team and the wonderful staff at the State Library for making this exhibit a reality. This collaborative effort, which combines the resources of the two institutions, has made possible past exhibits. The ongoing partnership will also make possible such future exhibits on California and the Second World War, the maps of California and treasures from the State Library’s collection. Special thanks are also in order to private lenders, Jay Stevens and Library Foundation board member Tom Vinson who generously donated items from their own collections.
took part in the groundbreaking ceremony in 1911, while Wilson, who was unable to attend the fair, officially opened the P.P.I.E. Government played a pivotal role in the exposition. Without the coordinated efforts of national, state, and local leaders, the fair would never have taken place. Between 1904 and 1915, three of California’s governors took an active role in moving the project forward. The California State Legislature passed laws and resolutions to aid in the promotion and support of the P.P.I.E. Even the wording of the 1879 State Constitution was changed so as to allow for raising a special tax to help provide $5 million for the exposition.

San Francisco’s newly elected mayor and later governor of California, James Rolph, Jr., worked tirelessly to make the fair a reality. As the “World’s Fair Mayor,” Rolph helped to successfully rally the voter’s support for a $5 million bond measure to support the construction of the P.P.I.E. Crucial to Mayor Rolph’s plans were building up the city’s infrastructure, such as water supply, street car lines, and a new civic center.

FOUR MILLION DOLLAR MEETING
The P.P.I.E. was both a public and private enterprise and the product of many years of planning and effort. Tens of millions of dollars were raised by state and local governments and the private sector. Because the fair did not receive any federal money, private fundraising was critical to the success of the P.P.I.E. The full participation of the business community would be essential if plans for the fair were to go forward.

On August 28, 1910, San Francisco and California boosters came together for the “four million dollar meeting.” Within less than two hours, they had pledged $4,089,000 in support of the fair. Soon more money followed from California counties, corporations, companies, and benefactors, until more than $20 million was raised.

The exposition was intended to be a money-making venture. This was the top priority that shaped the planning for the fair. Many well-known companies from the Golden State, some still even in business today, contributed to the funding for the P.P.I.E. Because many earlier expositions had ended in financial failure, special consultants were brought in, who made important recommendations to assure the financial success of the fair. They called for attracting enough visitors projecting ticket sales, licensing, creating exhibition...
and vendor fees, and establishing rental revenues and various surcharges.

In planning for the exposition, nothing was left to chance. Every single detail was attended to by the Panama-Pacific Exposition Company, the private corporation established in 1910 to operate the fair. San Francisco businessman Charles C. Moore was the president of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition Company and the public face of the exposition. He tirelessly oversaw the construction of the P.P.I.E., directed the fair’s various departments, and managed the daily operation of the fair.

THE EXPOSITION CITY
The P.P.I.E. was an instant city that was constructed within less than two years. All construction would have to begin from the ground up. Over 1.3 million cubic yards of sand and mud was pumped from the bay to fill in the grounds and eleven miles of water pipes laid just to bring water to the fairgrounds. A million square feet of roads needed to be constructed and seventy-five acres of specially landscaped trees, flowers, and lawns. The volume of building materials used was staggering: over eighty million board feet of lumber; 869,000 feet of piling; nearly a million square feet of glass; 372,000 feet of phone and electrical cable; and 130,000 linear feet of water mains and 130,000 linear feet of sewer lines. Just alone, the 435 feet high “Tower of Jewels,” the highest building at the P.P.I.E., required 3.4 million cubic feet of concrete; 1.5 million feet of timber; and 1,400 tons of steel. The 595 days of construction prior to the fair’s opening required over two million man hours and a payroll of $7.5 million. After twenty months of construction, the “Exposition City” was ready to open on February 20, 1915.

The exposition covered 635 acres and was over two miles in length. The Federal
government turned over parts of the Presidio and Fort Mason for use by the corporation that operated the P.P.I.E. “The Dream City” was subdivided into three main sections: (1) the Central Group—the eleven main exhibition palaces centered round the “Court of the Universe”; (2) the Eastern Group—the nearby sixty-five acre amusement park called “The Zone”; and (3) the Western Group—the twenty-eight state and twenty-one foreign pavilions, a race track, and livestock area. The exposition grounds were laid out on a new innovative “court plan” with five major courtyards, intersecting avenues, and numerous reflecting pools and fountains. On the north side of the fair, an esplanade stretched along the edge of San Francisco Bay.

The P.P.I.E. was a vast undertaking not only in its construction, but also in its day-to-day operation. It was also a city within a city, complete with its own police and fire departments, hospitals, hotels, power plants, post offices, telephone exchanges, sewer and water systems. The fair had thousands of employees to staff and maintain its various departments, exhibitions, grounds and operations. The “Exposition Terminal Railroad” handled the huge volume of people and materials needed to be processed on a daily basis. When completed, “The Exposition City” came with its own docking facilities, railroad yards, power grid, water systems, and other infrastructure projects. The meticulous planning that went into every detail was, in the end, responsible for the fair’s great success.

THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY

The P.P.I.E. was the last of the great beaux-arts expositions. It served as the grand showcase for the “Four Wonderful Arts”: landscape gardening, architecture, sculpture, and color. Principal among these creative expressions were the many splendid...
buildings that were constructed only for the ten month run of the fair. Major architectural firms like McKim, Mead and White were responsible for the overall design of the P.P.I.E. Individual architects designed specific buildings, such as noted California architects Bernard Maybeck, the designer of the Palace of Fine Arts, and Julia Morgan the first women to be licensed as a California architect and who designed the Y.W.C.A. Building at the fair. She would later go on to design Hearst Castle. The exposition was also an open-air art museum. It was filled with over 1,500 “plastic creations” or sculptures and hundreds of paintings by some of the world’s leading artists.

The P.P.I.E. broke with many earlier fair traditions such as employing new color schemes, indirect lighting systems, and planning for the fair operations to make a profit. No longer were the planners content to just create another “white city” that characterized past fairs, but instead employed a wide range of colors. The colors for all the buildings, lamp poles, park benches, gardens, and even sand for the paths had to be coordinated. Jules Guerin, the chief of color, created a palette of soft Mediterranean colors that was strictly adhered to for the overall color scheme of the fair. Guerin summed up his approach, “In coloring a vast city of this kind, I treated it as I would a canvas for a picture.”

The 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition was the very first world’s fair to use indirect illumination. Gone were unsightly strings of incandescent light bulbs used at previous fairs. This revolutionary form of outdoor lighting high-
lighted one of the new, never before seen features at world fairs. William D’Arcy Ryan, the chief of illumination, deployed hundreds of hidden flood lights that created a “living film of light.” The “fireless fair” was illuminated by 370 electric search lights, 500 projectors, and 300 lamps.

GETTING TO THE P.P.I.E.
Transportation would be central to the success of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. Millions of visitors were able to attend the exposition by the new street car lines of the SF Muni system, railroad and ferryboat lines, or new roads for automobiles. American and Canadian railroad companies created special trains to bring visitors to the fair. They advertised travel along major northern, central, and southern routes. Foreign and American shipping companies also advertised sea travel to and from San Francisco, often via the Panama Canal.

The recently completed transcontinental Lincoln Highway and newly built roads in California allowed for travel to both the San Francisco and San Diego fairs. The P.P.I.E. was the first world’s fair to have parking lots for automobiles. Then, once at the fair, visitors were faced with the daunting reality of miles of avenues and roads. Many chose to ride either one of the many tour buses, “Electriquette” cars, or a miniature train.

Displays of aerial flight were also a prominent feature at the P.P.I.E. It had only been eleven years earlier that humans had begun to fly. Even by 1915, aerial flight was still an exciting novelty for many. Art Smith was the darling of the crowds at the
fair. The boyish aviator thrilled visitors on a daily basis with his dare-devil acrobatics. (CSFL Bulletin no. 107 featured a story about this fearless aviator.)

HELPING TO CHANGE ATTITUDES
The promoters of the P.P.I.E. faced numerous challenges, including the widespread anti-Asian sentiments prevalent along the West Coast. Californians, in particular, defined power in the Pacific in terms of race. China and Japan met with particular resistance. The Japanese were perceived by many as posing a direct threat to American interests. Politicians called for “white solidarity” in the face of the “yellow peril.”

The P.P.I.E. officials did everything within their power to counter these popular prejudices so that they could make the fair as welcoming as possible for participating foreign nations. They, more than anyone else, understood how important Asian participation in the fair would be for future U.S. trade.

THE GREAT WAR AND THE P.P.I.E.
The 1915 Exposition opened six months after the outbreak of World War I. For the exposition promoters, the timing of the fair could not have been worse. Despite the outbreak of the war, the fair leaders went forward with their plans, and many nations remained committed to exhibiting at the P.P.I.E. Against this grim backdrop, the fair offered those nations which took part the opportunity to offer a positive alternative to the destruction that had engulfed the world.
The American military had a prominent role in the P.P.I.E. Beginning with the site itself, the U.S. Army donated land for the P.P.I.E. from parts of both Fort Mason and the Presidio. Units from the Army, the Navy, and the Marine Corps frequently took part in the fair’s events and festivities. Units from the Army, the Navy, and the Marine Corps also went through many military exercises and drills. These often included mock battles, demonstrations of equipment, and performances by military bands. A company of Marines operated a battery of forty-eight search lights, or “Scintillators,” which put on a nightly display of colored lights. Also, all uniformed US servicemen were allowed to visit the fair free of charge.

The USS Oregon, a battleship built in 1896 at San Francisco, became an iconic symbol of the P.P.I.E. After its completion in 1914, the Oregon was the first US warship to pass through the Panama Canal. Afterwards, the “Bulldog of the Navy” would be anchored off the exposition marina for the length of the Fair, often in the company of other warships.

The USS Jason, a Navy collier, also played an important role during the fair and the First World War. The Jason was dispatched on a special mission to deliver toys to children in war torn Europe while re-coaling US warships. Since the US had not yet entered the war, the USS Jason could sail under the conditions of neutrality into the ports of these belligerent countries. The USS Jason
brought back exhibition materials for the fair from many of the warring nations of Europe. When she arrived in San Francisco with her precious cargo in April of 1915, the fair honored her crew for their service by holding a special “Jason Day” celebration.

Many of the international participants who originally planned to take part in the P.P.I.E. were engaged against one another in “the Great War,” and so withdrew from taking part in the exposition. Germany and Great Britain were among them. Other countries went forward with their plans. Among the warring nations at the fair were Australia and New Zealand, whose troops were fighting against Ottoman Turkey at Gallipoli, as well as China and Japan. Against the grim backdrop of the First World War, the fair also offered many of the warring nations the opportunity to display the latest in military technology, which sadly would be used during the war to kill millions. Numerous groups which took part in the P.P.I.E. called for the end to the conflict or hoped that the fair would offer the world a positive alternative to the collective destruction. California’s unfortunate timing would be repeated again when the state hosted yet another world’s fair: the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition at the start of World War II.

Women were responsible for much of the content and programs for the fair. They took a keen interest in many social issues of the day: the welfare of children and families; the position of women in society and the workplace; and education and welfare reform. Also, hundreds of women were employed at the P.P.I.E. or took part in many of the programs at the P.P.I.E. Millions of women and girls visited the P.P.I.E. Many of the products on display at the exposition were specifically directed at and marketed towards women.

Women also made major artistic contributions to the fair, including noted California architect Julia Morgan, and several women sculptors and painters, like Edith Burroughs and Mary Cassatt, who had pieces prominently displayed throughout the exposition.
S. and P. I. Jacoby composed this march song in 1914 and dedicated it to “the ladies and gentlemen who are striving to make the P.P.I.E. the greatest in history.” California playing a harp and held aloft by a bouquet of poppies with the Tower of Jewels in the background provided a most inviting image.

To celebrate the exposition, the Broadway Music Company of New York published this sheet music enhanced by this eye-catching cover of elegantly dressed visitors to the exposition. It is a wonderful document of high society fashion.

Music and Literature at the P.P.I.E.

Music was a central part of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. The visiting New York Metropolitan Opera House Conductor Max Bendix observed, “Music seems made for the Exposition city.” Hundreds of performances took place over the ten-month run. From daily organ recitals to dance bands, from children’s choruses to folk dance performances, from marching bands to symphonic concerts, there was always music in the air. Famous orchestras, such as the Boston Symphony and Metropolitan Opera Orchestra gave stirring performances. Famed artists, such as John Philip Sousa, the “March King,” and French composer Camille Saint-Saëns, not only conducted concerts, but also wrote special pieces to be performed at the P.P.I.E.

Noted literary figures, including many California authors, wrote about the P.P.I.E. These included Gertrude Atherton, Mary Austin, Edmund Wilson, and George Sterling among others. Maybe one of the least expected literary contributors was Laura

of Samoa, Guam, Hawaii, and the Philippines. A number of Latin American countries participated in the P.P.I.E. Hispanics also visited the P.P.I.E. Numerous ceremonies and pageants were held celebrating California’s Spanish heritage. Native Americans often faced stereotypical treatment during the P.P.I.E., but some Indians were allowed to present a more positive portrayal of their culture and traditions. One such Native American was Ishi, the last surviving member of his California tribe, the Yana.
A Maxwell race car pauses on the exposition grounds. In the background, the Tower of Jewels nears completion. Cardinell-Vincent Co. photograph.
There was so much to see and do, almost too much, at the P.P.I.E.

One visitor who thought so was Laura Ingalls Wilder who said, “One simply gets satiated with beauty. There is so much beauty that it is overwhelming.”

Ingalls Wilder, who wrote many glowing accounts of her visit. Also, numerous books, publications, and magazine articles were produced covering various aspects of the exposition.

A HALF MODERN WORLD
The timing of the 1915 Exposition presented planners with some special and unique challenges for establishing guidelines for exhibits. This “half modern” era as historian Marvin Brienes calls it, was a transitional period between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The operators wanted to only exhibit what they considered to be modern items which represented products and inventions no more than ten years old. As one observer, George Perry, put it, “The Panama-Pacific International Exposition will go down in history as one of the most potent educational influences of the century.”

There was so much to see and do, almost too much, at the P.P.I.E. One visitor who thought so was Laura Ingalls Wilder who said, “One simply gets satiated with beauty. There is so much beauty that it is overwhelming.” To take in everything the fair had to offer could take days if not weeks for many visitors. The vast array of goods and products on display along eleven miles of aisles, were not solely exhibited for commercial reasons. Educational, informational, and scientific exhibits were also an important feature of the fair. In addition to the 70,000 exhibits and displays, there were also over 800 scheduled congresses, conferences, and conventions held at the P.P.I.E. that drew tens of thousands of participants.

FOOD FOR THE FAIR
What would a fair be without fair food? Restaurants and food stands were to be found throughout both the exhibit area and the amusement park. Food is a major part of any fair or exposition, and with the advertising slogan, “The Food Products to All the World,” the P.P.I.E. was no exception. Restaurants not only served meals to their patrons for more formal occasions, but also casual meals and snacks. Menus offered hungry visitors a wide variety of cuisines and fast food items as well. Prices ranged from $1.50 for a Chinese meal to 10 cents for Turkish coffee; an omelet for 30 cents and a sandwich for 15 cents.

Equally important to the P.P.I.E., were the hundreds of exhibits and displays that showcased various nations and state’s food products, not the least of which were California’s own impressive displays. Many manufacturers, including some that are still in business today, presented lavish displays of their products. The Golden State used the fair as an important opportunity to highlight the rich bounty of its farms and ranches. This included the budding California wine industry, which took the opportunity to present its growing viticulture tradition to the rest of the country. Many of the exhibits also displayed hundreds of examples of agricultural produce and food products. They all offered hungry visitors menus of tasty new products and treats. Recipe books and pamphlets helped to advertise many of these different product lines.

SOUVENIRS AND AWARDS
What would a fair be without souvenirs, keepsakes, and mementos? The operators of the P.P.I.E. and its various vendors provided the public with a wide range of products which had to be all officially licensed for sale at the fair. And one of the most unique souvenirs was the “Novagem.” These jewel-like crystals were hung from a spectacular structure named in their honor, the “Tower of Jewels.” As one advertisement put it,

“Oh! Tower of Jewels
so wondrously bright
Thy Novagems sparkling
by day and by night
Flashing their fame
o’er the land and the sea
Jewel City – 1915 – P.P.I.E.”

This 435-foot-high tower was the tallest building at the P.P.I.E. The 102,000 “Novagems” which hung from it, shimmered and sparkled in the sunlight and blazed in a brilliant kaleidoscope of colors at night when illuminated from below by fifty-four floodlights. The multifaceted glass “Novagems” were backed with special miniature mirrors to help reflect the light back through them and came in seven different colors and sizes. The specially patented crystals were manufactured in Bohemia at a cost of $60,527.

The P.P.I.E. had a whole department dedicated to awarding and issuing prize medals in gold, silver, and bronze. The San Francisco branch of the US Mint also set up a fully functioning operation at the fair that struck special commemorative coins for the public. Many of the exposition’s sculptors would also be responsible for engraving both medals for the P.P.I.E. and US coins: Robert Aitken (1915 P.P.I.E. commemorative gold 50 dollar); James
Fraser (1913 Buffalo nickel); and Adolph Weinman (1916 Mercury dime).

Photography played a major part in the exposition. San Francisco companies like Cardinell-Vincent and H. S. Crocker obtained exclusive rights to professionally photograph the fair. Visitors had to buy a permit to take their own photos while at the P.P.I.E. or pay photographers to make portrait picture postcards. Likewise, photographs, albums, and stereo-cards were supplied by licensed photographers.

The amazing, yet largely untapped, Cardinell-Vincent Company collection at the State Library documents in intimate detail and on a day-by-day basis the entire run of the P.P.I.E. It should be noted that Foundation board member Mead Kibbey generously donated this stunning archive of glass-plate negatives to the Library.

AN ANTI-EXPOSITION

The sixty-five-acre “Joy Zone” provided millions of visitors with fun-filled entertainment during the course of the fair under the slogan “Ten Million Dollars of Fun.” The carnival-like atmosphere of the Zone was in stark contrast to the stately grandeur of the P.P.I.E. While many of the 300 concessions were very popular and widely visited, others were less prof-
itable and had to close early. Often at times, the Zone and the exposition had an uneasy existence together. The most impressive of the many amusement rides was the 285-foot-high “Aeroscope.” It was designed by Joseph Strauss, the builder of the future Golden Gate Bridge.

For some, the mile-long amusement park was seen as some sort of opposite to the fair, or an “anti-exposition.” Numerous controversies arose over the Zone and its exhibits. Some were seen as being too frivolous, especially given the background of the carnage of the First World War. Some women’s groups, were deeply troubled by exhibits they considered injurious for young visitors. Along a similar vein, many women who had just won the right to vote in 1911, took particular offense at a statue called “Panama Pankaline Imogene Equal Rights.” After many protests, the unflattering statue was eventually renamed “Little Eva.” Likewise, the San Francisco Chinese community was incensed by the debasing portrayals of Chinese in one exhibit and forced the vendors to change its content.

KIDS AND THE P.P.I.E.
Millions of children visited and took part in the 1915 P.P.I.E. Daily events included
The most impressive of the many amusement rides was the 285-foot-high “Aeroscope.” It was designed by Joseph Strauss, the builder of the future Golden Gate Bridge.
Some elements of the fair, however, did survive. A few buildings were spared and hauled away for reuse. An attempt was made to save the massive California Pavilion and turn it into a teacher training college, but this ended in failure. The French Legion of Honor Pavilion was later re-created and made into one of San Francisco’s premier art museums. In the end, the magnificent domed Palace of Fine Arts was the only surviving structure to remain standing. The land on which the P.P.I.E. had been constructed was cleared, filled in, and then sold off for new-home construction. The unstable “made earth” on which these homes were built would later be the underlying cause for major destruction in the Marina District during the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake.

THE OTHER EXPOSITION
“The purpose of the Panama-California Exposition is to illustrate the progress and possibility of the human race, not only for the exposition, but for a permanent contribution to the world’s progress.”

(Florence Christman)

The 1915–16 Panama-California Exposition (P.C.E.) was held in San Diego and overlapped with the 1915 San Francisco, Panama-Pacific International Exposition. Both San Diego and San Francisco competed to become the site for the world’s fair. After San Diego failed to be designated as the world’s fair in 1911, its promoters went ahead with holding a separate exposition.

Under the slogan, “The Land Divided – The World United – San Diego the First Port of Call,” the city’s boosters launched their grand enterprise. The San Diego fair would be the result of five years of intensive planning, fund raising, and construction. One of the unique features about the San Diego exposition was that it broke with exposition tradition regarding permanent structures.

On December 31, 1914, President Woodrow Wilson opened the P.C.E. The San Diego Union proudly proclaimed, “This [Panama-California Exposition] is not an Exposition, it is the expression of an idea.” Because of its success, the fair’s run was extended an extra three months into 1916. It was visited by over 3.7 million fairgoers. Nearly every country from Latin America was represented at the fair and most of the hemisphere’s Indian tribes were represented at a World Congress.

The “Magic City’s” scenic vistas, magnificent architecture, and many exhibits rivaled those of the San Francisco fair. The Spanish San Diego Exposition covered more than 400 acres. The many buildings on the fairgrounds covered 145 acres, and open spaces covered another 300 more. Over two million plants were to be found in its rich botanical gardens. Unlike the P.P.I.E., much of the San Diego exposition was intended to be left standing after its closing. The previous practice at major expositions had been to level all of their buildings after a fair was finished. This was happily not the case as many of the San Diego fair’s buildings were erected to be permanent structures.

Current day Balboa Park is home to some spectacular examples of Spanish Mission Revival architecture, which includes the California State Building, the Fine Arts Building, the Cabrillo Bridge, and the Casa del Prado. The former Panama-California Exposition fairgrounds also served as the location for the later 1935–6 California Pacific International Exposition. Today, San Diego is justly proud of these architectural wonders; with many of them on the National Register of Historical Places.

The Panama-Pacific International Exposition is probably one of the best documented world’s fairs in American history, and the literature on it is vast. No history of the Exposition can begin without consulting Frank Morton Todd’s massive five volume compendium, The Story of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, published in 1921.

FURTHER READING

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Brechin, Gray. Imperial San Francisco. 1999.
Rydell, Howard. All the World’s A Fair. 1984.

Found in the State Library’s extensive vertical files is this post exposition permit issued to M. J. Ferguson dated January 4, 1916. Ferguson at the time served as the Deputy State Librarian of California. No doubt other State Library staff visited the PPIE.
Siméon Pélenc’s San Francisco Metamorphosis

By Meredith Eliassen

Genius is ageless; it cannot create unless it is.1 Siméon Pélenc (1873–1935) appeared to be a man of contradictions: he was a teetotaling Frenchman, a pacifist whose nervous temperament severed important relationships; a fearless asthmatic who braved construction sites until the end of his career; and a rich baritone who would go days without uttering a word. In one area he never wavered: art was his religion; therefore, in his studio he found sacred ground. An unpublished manuscript by Pélenc’s second wife Helen that is part of the J. Paul Leonard Library’s Historic Collections at San Francisco State University sheds light on this enigmatic artist whose career coincided with an art movement promoting naturalism and realism in the arts – verismo. Pélenc railed against brutal realism in the theater and in the fine arts throughout his career. He began to work as a professional artist at the age of twenty years and within a decade his career reached its height in France. A vast array of Pélenc’s work housed in the Leonard Library’s Fine Art Collection and the California History Section of the State Library attests to a career of experimentation, mastery, reversals, and ultimately, a modern sensibility of spiritual vision and expression.

Meredith Eliassen is the curator of University Archives and Historic Collections and the Frank V. de Bellis Collection at the J. Paul Leonard Library at San Francisco State University. Researching Siméon Pélenc’s career and perspective on the decorative arts reignited her love of design, and she has recently returned to the drawing board.
"For all of these paintings comprise recognizable objects, they are none the less strictly non-representative. They are devoid of the slightest preoccupation with illusion or realism in any degree. They are what the average spectator calls 'futuristic.'" —IRVING F. MORROW, 1925


Pélenc was the son of David Pélenc, a French railway worker from Arphy, a small village in Cévennes in a Huguenot stronghold. Siméon, the eldest of four sons, was born in Cannes on April 6, 1873. As a Meridional, he loved the water and learned to navigate boats by the stars in the sky. Pélenc became immersed in the artistic traditions of southern France, but as a youth, he also studied fresco painting with Angelo de Signori of Verona. Pélenc was educated at the University of Aix-en-Provence and School of Beaux-Arts in Marseille and became known for seascapes and murals while in France. His first wife Emily Sara, nine years his junior, worked as a music director in casinos in Monte Carlo. A fall from a scaffold made Pélenc reassess his life.

One who does not know himself to the end of his tears, has not lived.

Siméon and Emily sailed from Bordeaux and arrived in New York City in late 1915. They settled in San Francisco in 1916. Out of work and with limited English language skills, Pélenc struggled. He typically wore a long black ulster with a collar and cuffs trimmed with Persian lamb with a cap to match, giving him the appearance of a Russian. Fearing that he might be a Bolshevik, the police frequently searched him for letters or clues that he might be a spy. One day they discovered him sketching on military grounds along the waterfront, searched and roughed him up before asking him questions that he could not understand in order to answer, then hauled him off to jail. An interpreter arriving the next day quickly got Pélenc cleared and released. His earliest mural in San Francisco was completed in 1916 for the living room of Fred S. Moody’s home, located at 1948 Pacific Avenue.

Pélenc taught French to journalists in the Chronicle Building. Emily returned to Europe where she fell in love with another man, informing Pélenc by post.
Pélenc’s metamorphosis emerged with friendships with architects that had been immersed in French traditions. After a serious stroke that limited his ability to communicate, Pelenc took solace in daily excursions to the Golden Gate to chronicle in charcoal or pencil construction on a new bridge designed by his dear friend Morrow. This is one of many original drawings donated by Mrs. Pelenc to the California State Library.
Pélenc was awarded a divorce in 1919, and destroyed all evidence of her, and married stenographer Helen Bordeaux (1879-1963) two years later.8 Said to be the only active fresco painter in the United States in the 1920s, Pélenc was among fifty artists in his day who tried to revitalize fresco painting around the world.9 Pélenc divorced himself from French compatriots, spent Sundays studying English at Telegraph Hill, and subsequently lost favor in San Francisco’s French Colony.10

**A MODERN PAINTER WHO WANTED TO BE AN ARCHITECT**11

According to Helen Pélenc, Siméon was, “compelled to paint, and with it came his humor and enthusiasm that was as fresh as a boy.”12 He worked with architects Irving F. Morrow (1884–1952) and William I. Garren, and structural engineer Henry D. Dewell on the San Mateo Theatre (constructed and opened in 1925). Morrow, remembered as the consulting architect for the Golden Gate Bridge, was fluent in the French language. Pélenc developed color selection for walls, organ grills, and the wooden ceiling featuring random multicolored striations.13 Morrow characterized Pélenc’s panels as “futuristic,” in essence “abstract . . . . alive with an almost startling brilliance of color.” Pélenc’s sketches were, “almost disconcertingly novel in form,” Morrow said. The team had to adapt a more “eclectic” style to coordinate with the “exuberant fancy of Mr. Pélenc’s designs.”14

Pélenc maintained a studio located on the top floor of a historic three-story brick building located at 728 Montgomery Street shared with etchers, photographers, and an art school. Studios had no heat or private restrooms; his was 200 x 60 feet with two large windows slanting diagonally east and west. Rent was $15.00 per month; the wealthy owners H. & W. Pierce were Christian Scientists who did not keep accounts as to whether artists paid or not. Three long flights of stairs lead to Pélenc’s light-filled studio. Artists left doors open, including Pélenc’s neighbor, an English mariner-turned-mediocre artist who offered nude figure-drawing classes to attract students.15 Independent by nature, Pélenc had an amazing power to see and portray qualities beyond the real and was able to blend modern design and older classical forms in sgraffito work.16

**THE GREAT DEPRESSION BRINGS REVERSALS**

Within San Francisco’s art community, Pélenc was recognized as an extraordinarily talented but naive resource that could be exploited. The Stock Market Crash left Pélenc nearly penniless when contracts adding up to more than $25,000...
were cancelled. He and Helen gave up their apartment and transformed the studio into an agreeable domicile. A balcony used as a storage area was converted into Helen’s bedroom. Meals were meager, and they installed a small pot-bellied copper stove for cooking and heat. Pélenc’s couch-bed was rolled out under the skylights to protect him from the midnight air “whizzing in from the courtyard.” Not a sound sleeper, he gazed up at the night sky through the skylight.

Perhaps Pélenc’s greatest contradiction was that his art reflected modernity, while circumstances created brutal realism in his personal life. Pélenc observed, “In the theater everything in action is put on the same place. . . . Your seat is fixed so that you cannot turn it, and you are obliged to look at the stage.” Pélenc’s widow observed that genius seldom included stories of power, but rather stories of drudgery, of perseverance, and of patience; it was analogous to fresco painting in that one must learn certain laws and bring himself into harmony with those laws. Pélenc’s 200-foot fresco painting for the proscenium arch in the auditorium at the Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo Junior High School in Vallejo became the largest of its kind in California consisting of seven large panels in an imposing triptych. This project was completed without a formal contract, because the contractor knew that Pélenc was not yet a United States citizen and that he could be exploited without recourse or retaliation. Pélenc paid for labor and supplies out of his own funds, and made no profit on this venture that ended in a disastrous lawsuit with the contractor. Helen wrote, “Pélenc never had power to retaliate when finally he pursued the policy of a laissez-faire situation instead of accomplishment for such an important achievement.”

Pélenc resented naturalism’s brutality: “A scene representing a meat market with real meat, — a quarter of real beef, so odorous that spectators nearly fainted . . . .” In life, nothing is fixed. An affluent

“We know that evolution in art is permanent and cannot be suppressed. It has invaded all expressions in our contemporary life, and the stage, of course, could not fail to follow. The theater is the most effective means of education. Everything in action is put on the same place. Your seat is fixed so that you cannot turn it, and you are obliged to look at the stage.” —SIMEON PÉLENC, 1934.

French student decided that he wanted to study art. The arrangement made in 1929 was to have daily lessons between 7:00 and 10:00 a.m. for fifty dollars per month.24 Two years later, the student became dissatisfied after having gone to all of Pélenc’s friends and asked for lessons, only to be refused. One day the student stormed out of the session in a violent rage, and the following day, he returned telling Pélenc he started taking figure-drawing classes next-door with the Englishman. The shock of this betrayal led to Pélenc’s first stroke.25

Pélenc is credited with introducing Italian sgraffiti techniques to California.26 He worked with architect James W. Plachek on Berkeley Public Library’s Central Branch to create an art moderne zigzag structure featuring pseudo-Mayan-Egyptian design motifs. Never having been to the Yucatán Peninsula, the San Francisco City Librarian Robert Rea (1877–1958) personally assisted Pélenc with research. Pélenc engaged architect pals Morrow and Henry H. Gutterson (1884–1954) in a conversation on applying Mayan art and culture to modern design.27 Plachek described Pélenc’s sculpture for pylon tops as “fantastic thought in a rhythm of curves and straight lines to give a modern expression to an old art.”28 His decorative sgraffiti represented generations ascending the steps toward light and knowledge, which was depicted as rays of silver breaking through dark clouds symbolizing ignorance. Panels along Kittredge Street and Shattuck Avenue in Berkeley allegorically illustrated the treasure of knowledge found in books suggesting the purpose of the building.

Pélenc’s metamorphosis from an impressionist of Seurat’s pointillism to an innovator of futuristic modern decorative painting emerged out of hardship and intimate betrayals that led to personal spiritual revelation. Pélenc suffered a major stroke while working on what would be his final project: six panels in sgraffiti fresco painting in a Chinese motif for the Chung Mei – Chinese Home for Boys in El Cerrito, California. The contractor Coburn & Company delayed work until Pélenc could complete it. Doctors made it clear that he did not have time and suggested that he surrender his studio for more comfortable accommodations. Pélenc refused. Helen observed that after being dismissed from the French Hospital, Pélenc was “just a shadow of his former mischievous self. . . .” He avoided “friends and acquaintances but he never missed his daily visits to the Golden Gate Bridge.”29 He insisted that poverty was a blessing to an artist although he regretted pulling his wife into it. He died in his studio with Helen by his side on July 6, 1935.30 Coburn & Company’s payment was enough to cover Pélenc’s funeral expenses.

ENDNOTES


4 Helen includes a story of Pélenc at moments of retrospection, Pélenc, 1961: 12.

5 Ibid.


10 Pélenc, 1961:16 and 17.

11 Pélenc, 1961: 56.

12 Pélenc, 1961: 42.

13 Edward Gordon Craig asserted that symbolism was the root of all art in his On the Art of the Theatre (London: William Heinemann, 1925): 293.


15 Pélenc, 1961: 26 and 37.

16 The word, “Fresco” comes from an Italian word meaning “wet” or “damp” and the fresco painter does not paint his picture on the wall, it is meant to adorn; he makes it become part of the wall, in the same manner in which nature makes marble — by adding mineral pigments to the plaster while it is still wet. Pélenc learned ancient techniques from Paul A. Baudouin author of La Fresque: sa technique - ses applications (Paris: Librairie Centrale des Beaux-Arts, 1914) in Siméon Pélenc, “The Revival of an Ancient Art,” Architect and Engineer 88:1 (Jan 1927): 84-92.


18 Pélenc, 1961: 38, 66 and 86.


20 Pélenc, 1961: 89.

21 An article about the junior high school prominently featured Pélenc’s massive series of frescoes without giving him any credit, Elmer L. Cave, “Vallejo has Outstanding Junior High School Building,” Architect and Engineer 116: 2 (February 1934): 17. Pélenc, 1961: 38 and 84.

22 Pélenc, 1961: 84

23 Pélenc, 1934. Inspired English stage designer Gordon Craig (1872–1966) and Swiss theatre theorist Adolphe Appia (1862-1928), who promoted less elaborate, non-representational scenery and more dramatic use of atmospheric lighting. Craig observed that Realism represents Nature as a “counterfeit of Truth, Beauty. . .and is a vulgar means of expression bestowed upon the blind.” Craig, 1925: 286–8.

24 Pélenc, 1961: 36.


When giving tours of the restored Library and Courts Building, I often end the visit in the Library’s stately conference room on the fifth floor. I ask everyone to look up at the vaulted ceiling as I identify the four portraits that grace its corners. After pointing to John Sutter, H. H. Bancroft, Bret Harte, and William Keith, visitors often ask me who made that selection. My answer is Eudora Garoutte, the first head of the Library’s California History Department. That fact and having seen a striking 1890s studio photograph of Garoutte attired in a La Belle Epoque style dress and wearing a head-turning hat have always intrigued me. I wanted to know more about this fetching woman and her considerable impact on California history. She was the first in a series of talented California History Department heads including Caroline Wenzel, Alan Ottley, Kenneth Pettit, Richard Terry, and Kathleen Correia.

Born in 1864 in Woodland, California, on a large stock ranch, Mary Eudora Garoutte (who never used her first name) was descended from early California pioneers and naturally developed a strong interest in the state’s formative years. Garoutte attended Hesperian College in Woodland and taught in the area’s elemen-

**EDITOR’S NOTE**

Gary F. Kurutz is the Foundation’s executive director and curator emeritus of special collections at the California State Library.
tary schools. This teacher’s life took a dramatic change when James L. Gillis became state librarian of California on April 1, 1899. A great visionary, Gillis wanted to open up the State Library collections for public use. Up until his tenure, the State Library remained the exclusive domain of state elected officials and their staffs. Moving quickly, Gillis hired Garoutte exactly one month later and assigned her the task of pulling together and building up the Library’s resources on California history.

With her pioneer Woodland roots, Garoutte relished this opportunity. Directing the California History Department, as it was originally called, she established several programs that form the foundation of today’s California History Section. When Gillis hired the former teacher, the State Library was located in the apse portion of the State Capitol building between the Senate and Assembly chambers. With its rounded east façade, the structure featured strikingly beautiful reading rooms. In 1903, Gillis proudly opened the State Library to the public and researchers could now delve into the Library’s rich collections and tap into the expertise of staff members like Garoutte.

Garoutte realized that the resources on California history consisted of a wide variety of material ranging from rare books documenting early explorers to a menu from a San Francisco restaurant. In particular, the Library offered large holdings of California newspapers and periodicals stretching back to August 15, 1846, the start date of the state’s first newspaper the Californian. With literally thousands of volumes, providing access to these titles represented a stiff challenge. In the days before microfilm and electronic resources, staff lugged heavy volumes to the reading room and researchers plowed through them page by page looking for needed articles. To facilitate this searching, Garoutte developed a card index with citations to people, places, and events. In addition to newspapers, the index included periodicals, city and county histories, manuscripts, and a variety of other sources. Called the California Information File, it is still heavily consulted and it still stands as one of the great research tools saving librarians and their patrons quantities of time. For many researchers, it was the primary reason to visit the State Library. To illustrate, the week before Garoutte retired in July 1933, the famed San Francisco author Gertrude Atherton came to the Library to use this index to gain background information for a new novel. By the time Garoutte departed, her creation consisted of over 2,500,000 entries. The California History Section still continues this indexing tradition, but now it is done electronically, and this data base is available online.

In addition to this monumental index, Garoutte devised other resource-building strategies. Knowing that California was populated by descendants of pioneers and gifted authors, artists, musicians, and state officials, she sent out 3 x 5 inch biographical cards to these individuals. It must have taken countless hours to track down these notable people. Thankfully, thousands responded by sending back the cards filled in with full name, date and place of birth, name of spouse, date of arrival in California (if applicable), and major accomplishments such as books written, etc. Cards were received by the likes of Samuel Clemens, H. H. Bancroft, Mary Austin, Jack London, Luther Burbank, Alice Eastwood, Carleton Watkins, John Muir, and Maynard Dixon. Many of these individuals also sent in photographs, letters, and books that they authored. In turn, the California Department supplemented these cards with biographical files. Over the years, staff under Garoutte’s direction typed obituaries from newspapers, biographies from county and city histories, and listed articles by or about the subject. Just as interesting is the correspondence between Library staff and some of these individuals. In this way, the Library acquired fascinating letters from noteworthy Californians. These files have proven to be a boon for researchers. Just to illustrate, my chief resource for this brief sketch is the Garoutte biographical information file in the California History Section.

In her anonymous report for the 1906 inaugural year of the State Library’s quarterly journal, News Notes of California Libraries, Garoutte beautifully summarized the rationale not only for her department but also the need for all public libraries to collect local history:

Every library, no matter how small, should have its local historical department, pervaded by a home atmosphere and fostered by an abundance of family pride. It should be a place where the family records, portraits, and household goods can be collected and preserved for the benefit and enjoyment of the family circle and the delectation of the interested stranger.

The California History Department, of the State Library is trying to do for the State what each local library should do for its own locality. It is our endeavor to secure all books historical and descriptive of California.
This dedicated and talented librarian made numerous trips to acquire valuable material for the Library. Under her skilled and imaginative direction, letters and diaries, photographs, maps, commercial records, pioneer account books, theater programs, posters, and ephemeral items of all kinds poured into the State Library. In short, as she put it, “any and everything that will give a day by day picture of the life of the State.” The California Department grew to become one of the nation’s foremost resources for state and local history. Found in her biographical information file is an undated seven-page typed report she wrote describing an acquisition and goodwill trip. It beautifully illustrates her diplomacy and ability to open doors and to gain the confidence of noteworthy Californians. The narrative starts in San Diego and works its way north. For example, while in San Diego she persuaded Moses S. Prime to donate his Gold Rush journals and the 1849 “Log of the Barque La Grange, Belonging to the Salem and California Mining and Trading Expedition.” It is fascinating to note that the La Grange was later tied up at the Sacramento Embarcadero and converted into a jail. While in Los Angeles, she met with Mrs. George A. Johnson, a niece of two Alta California governors Juan Bautista Alvarado and Pio Pico when California was under Mexican rule. Obviously impressed by Garoutte’s knowledge and charming manner, Mrs. Johnson donated a superb oil painting of Governor Pico, several photographs, and other documents. In this fascinating report, Garoutte told of how she met with pioneer families, solicited materials from them, and gave advice as to where to place their letters and photographs. She also worked with local libraries in each place she visited urging them to preserve the history of their area.

As part of her professional duties, Garoutte participated in many library association meetings, community groups, and frequently gave talks on California history.
and the magnificent resources under her charge. She was also a popular speaker at the California Library Association’s annual meeting. As part of her speaking and day-to-day duties, she contributed a quarterly report for inclusion in the aforementioned News Notes of California Libraries. Her reports told of new acquisitions, titles being indexed, exhibits, and the addition of biographical cards. Concerning the latter, she wrote short biographies of several of the more interesting pioneers. It is fascinating to read through her quarterly summaries and to see the myriad of activities she and her staff undertook. In addition, she wrote for News Notes a then very useful “Study Outline of California History.” Because of its value, the State Library published her handy guide to the key books of California history as a separate publication in 1920.4

Naturally, a person of this depth and passion attracted the leading scholars of her day to the State Library. One can only imagine her beaming smile welcoming the likes of the great Western map and Gold Rush historian Carl I. Wheat or that notable historian of the High Sierra Francis P. Farquhar. One letter in her biographical letter file from Wheat dated November 1, 1932, illustrates the respect she had for Wheat and her importance, several articles appeared in the Sacramento and San Francisco newspapers with this bittersweet news. Although it was not stated anywhere, perhaps the Great Depression influenced her decision. The Sacramento Bee, in announcing her retirement in its July 10, 1933 issue not only praised her singular contribution but also revealed how she was going to spend her golden years. The Bee reporter wrote, “Miss Eudora Garoutte is preparing today to visit the historically romantic places she has glorified as head of the California department of the state library.” The State Library and the library community feted her at a dinner party hosted by State Librarian Mabel Gillis. A highlight of the evening was a presentation to Garoutte of one of the great landmark books of California history, The Santa Fe Trail, the Journal and Drawings of H. M. T. Powell. Designed and printed by the famous Grabhorn Press of San Francisco in 1931, the elegant folio volume included a special page inscribed by four distinguished California historians: Carl I. Wheat, Francis P. Farquhar, Douglas S. Watson, and George D. Lyman and printer Edwin Grabhorn.

With Garoutte’s retirement, Mabel Gillis appointed Caroline Wenzel as head of the California History Department. Wenzel had worked under Garoutte for ten years and went on to provide illustrious leadership for twenty-two years.

Our library heroine died on January 8, 1943 in Alameda and was buried at the Woodland Cemetery. Fortunately, she left to the State Library many of her books including that very special copy of The Santa Fe Trail. Wenzel in praising her mentor wrote, “Miss Garoutte’s unbounded love and enthusiasm for her chosen work, combined with her charm and graciousness of manner, endeared her to all.” Every day researchers visiting the California History Room still benefit from the farsighted leadership, passion, and imagination of this daughter of Woodland.5

ENDNOTES
1. Founded in 1861, Hesperian College closed its doors in 1896. Its property became the first site of Woodland High School. The college’s endowments and some of its faculty transferred to the Berkeley Bible Seminary and later to Chapman University in Orange, California.

2. The California Information File was placed on microfiche in the 1980s and is available at many libraries. The computerized version known as California Information File II contains over 60,000 references.


DONALD HAGERTY, the State Library’s ever generous benefactor and secretary of the California State Library Foundation Board of Directors, donated his magnificent Maynard Dixon collection to the Foundation. Hagerty is well known for his incredible research into the life of the noted California and Western artist Maynard Dixon (1875–1946). Over the years, Hagerty has written award-winning books on Dixon, produced exhibit catalogs, curated exhibits, and written entries for numerous auction catalogs on Western art. In evaluating the collection, one expert wrote, “The Hagerty Collection of material by and about Maynard Dixon is unequalled in any other public or private collection.” It superbly complements the State Library’s Dixon collection housed in the California History Section. The Library is famous in Dixon circles for the two murals that grace the Library and Courts Building and the oil on canvas painting Allegory that hangs in the office of the State Librarian of California.

The next issue of the Bulletin will have a fuller appreciation of this extraordinary gift. Briefly, it consists of fourteen three-ring binders of over 950 items including original manuscripts, ephemera, exhibit catalogs, menus designed by Dixon, letters of condolence upon his death, and magazine articles. The gift also contains a collection of books illustrated by the artist, of which many are very rare; a complete collection of copies of Dixon correspondence from 1897–1946; three posters; a unique Ansel Adams photo portrait of Dixon printed by the great photographer for Dixon and never reprinted or reproduced; a unique color photo portrait of Dixon by his wife, Edith Hamlin; and a cup and saucer decorated with Dixon’s designs from Pappa Coppa’s famous San Francisco restaurant. An absolutely breath-taking artifact donated by Hagerty is the original “Churro” Navajo weaving blanket that appears in his iconic 1902 Sunset Magazine poster, “Navajo Indian from Life.”

FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBER
MEAD KIBBHEY GIVES MASTERFUL TALK

Historian and photographer Mead B. Kibbey celebrated his ninety-third birthday by giving a dazzling slide show on Central Pacific Railroad photographer Alfred A. Hart who made a brilliant series of stereographs documenting the construction of the railroad in the 1860s. Given at our regular Foundation-sponsored “Night at the State Library,” Kibbey’s reputation as both a scholar and entertaining speaker attracted an overflow audience. He did not disappoint. His highly informative talk was peppered with humor and terrific anecdotes about his own experiences tramping through the High Sierra in the footsteps of Hart.

What added even more amazement to his talk was that instead of PowerPoint or Keynote slides, he used actual glass lantern slides that the president of the Southern Pacific Railroad gave to him in 1962 for a talk presented to the Sacramento Rotary Club. The positive glass slides were made sometime in the 1890s from Hart’s negatives. While Kibbey spoke, Foundation photographer Matt Bartok dexterously operated the antique lantern slide projector that dates from about 1910. In addition, State Library photographer Vincent Beiderbecke video recorded the talk. This video gives the Library a permanent record of this memorable evening. Active with many organizations in Sacramento, Kibbey has been asked when he will give the talk again. We are hopeful that another “Night at the State Library” will feature our illustrious Foundation board member and Library benefactor.

Last year, Mead Kibbey gave to the State Library his complete collection of original Hart stereographs of building the railroad. This is the only complete set in institutional or private hands, and his gift was featured in Issue 108 of the Bulletin. Kibbey still keeps the lantern slides as he receives numerous requests to give talks about the monumental work of Hart. In 1984, the Foundation published Kibbey’s masterful book, The Railroad Photographs of Alfred A. Hart, Artist.

GARY E. STRONG CREATES A LISTING OF BULLETIN ARTICLES

Founding Executive Director of the California State Library Foundation Gary E. Strong, surprised us by sending two copies of an incredibly gratifying bibliography he wrote, “Discovering the Treasures within the California State Library Foundation Bulletin, 1982–2014.” Strong served as state librarian of California from 1980 to 1994 and recently retired as university librarian at UCLA. He has been a generous benefactor of the Foundation through gifts of collections and funds, and he set in motion many of the programs that the Foundation does including the publication of the Bulletin. In addition, he has contributed many articles to our periodical.

Upon retiring from UCLA in 2012, Strong and his wife, Carolyn, moved to the family farm outside of Potlatch, Idaho. In his introduction, this wonderful “bibiogen” summed up how this publication came to be:

As I was unpacking my book collection following our move to Idaho, I realized that I now had time to look at each issue of the Bulletin and once again enjoy what I found. That initial curiosity has resulted in this listing. In some small way I hope it pays tribute to the commitment and contribution to the history of California, but most to the belief in the collections of the California State Library and its role as the oldest “public” library in the West.

Already, this terrific work of reference has been most useful in assembling the contents of this issue.
NEWS FROM THE BRAILLE AND TALKING BOOK LIBRARY
By Sandra Swafford

Three guide dogs, ten BTBL patrons (one by telephone), and three BTBL staff members gathered around a big table on Saturday, February 7, 2015 for the third meeting of the Braille and Talking Book Library’s User Advisory Council (BUAC). The group was organized in 2014 to provide suggestions for the improvement of BTBL’s services and to help reach out to potential patrons. The committee’s first two meetings were largely involved with getting organized: electing officers and exchanging ideas about how the officers might do their jobs. At this third meeting, no time was wasted getting down to business addressing specific issues.

Much of the morning — including a working lunch — was taken up with a discussion of outreach. Apparently, there are a surprising number of people who might use the services of BTBL but don’t know they are available. How could committee members best reach out to likely patrons, especially school children, the elderly, wounded veterans, dyslexics, people unable to hold books or others with print disabilities? What kinds of activities would be most likely to produce the greatest return for energies expended? Since each of the above named populations might require a somewhat different approach, a subcommittee was formed to assemble an “outreach kit” containing ideas and materials from which a selection of informational items appropriate to a particular population could be chosen.

The afternoon began with a discussion of technical matters relating to computer access and to difficulties with, or improvements to, BTBL services in general. One area where the committee saw an opportunity for improvement was the BARD site. When fully spelled out BARD stands for National Library Service Braille and Audio Reading Download site. There are patrons who want to use the site, but aren’t sure of the spelling of an author’s name or exact title of a book. To remedy the problem, a suggestion was made to create a “sounds like” feature on the downloading site.

Another area in which the committee focused its attention was the “digital audio book player.” A member said she had a client who needed a Spanish translation of the instructions for operating the digital playback machine. Mike Marlin, BTBL manager, explained that there is a way to set the machine to play the instructions in Spanish. This was news to several committee members and led to a discussion of the various ways people learn. For example, could there be a video for the print disabled or partially sighted users showing how to operate the machine? The verbal explanations on videos are sufficient to clarify some points even for the totally blind. A member of the BUAC who is completely blind noted that videos, if done properly, were still a big help to her for learning such things.

Then the discussion came back to outreach. Should the committee consider offering special recognition, for example, for people who have listened to an amazingly large number of recorded books, or for patrons who are 100 years or older and are still using the service? Publicizing a recognition event would be a way to inform readers not only about the event but about BTBL as well. A subcommittee was formed to explore possibilities.

Members of the BUAC group are lively and enthusiastic, bringing with them a variety of life and work experiences. Currently, they are serving staggered terms of from one to three years so that new members can be added gradually. Sacramento and the Bay Area are well represented, but it is hoped that members from both the northern and southern parts of the region covered by BTBL can soon be recruited. New recruits will bring fresh insights and their own good ideas for solving problems. For those who would like more information, please go to the BTBL web page at www.btbl.ca.gov. Look for the section headed “Getting Involved!” and click the link to the “BTBL User Advisory Council” or call the main BTBL phone number 888-952-5666 and leave a message.

EDITOR’S NOTE
Sandra Swafford is a Foundation board member and long-time volunteer at BTBL.
**EDITOR'S NOTE**

Kristine Klein is the State Library’s Senior Information Analyst and Information Security Officer. She works in the Information Technology Bureau.

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**GOLDEN POPPIES AND SCARLET MONKEYS:
AN EXHIBITION CELEBRATING CALIFORNIA WILDFLOWERS**

“California, with her wonderfully varied climate and topography, has a flora correspondingly rich and varied, probably not surpassed by any region of like area in the Northern Hemisphere.”

—Mary Elizabeth Parsons, author of *The Wild Flowers of California*

“Golden Poppies and Scarlet Monkeys,” the current exhibit in the Rotunda of the Library & Courts II Building, celebrates California wildflowers with a “bouquet” of original watercolors, prints, volumes of pressed flowers, rare books, fine press publications, and ephemera. On display for the late winter and early spring months, the exhibition calls attention to the many ways in which the wondrous bounty of the state’s wildflowers have been portrayed since first observed and described by European explorers. The exhibit will be up until mid-May.

While paying homage to the state’s official flower, the golden poppy, the exhibit gives us the opportunity to show off two little-known collections in the California History Section of original watercolor paintings by wildflower artists A. R. Valentien (1862–1925) and Cornelia Cunningham (1852–1915). In addition, the exhibit features the famous linoleum block portfolio of colored wildflower prints created by the great California book artist Henry Evans in 1980, and the equally rare *Selected Shoe Plants of Southern California* (1992) by Charles L. Leland and designed and printed by Vance Gerry of the Weather Bird Press.

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In early 2014, Debra Deanne Olson contacted the California State Library to see if we would be interested in a number of letters, photos, and ephemera relating to her grandfather, former Governor Culbert Levy Olson. He was the first Democrat elected to the office of Governor of California in the twentieth century and served in that role from 1939–1943. Ms. Olson wished to highlight and promote the work of her grandfather as well as the contributions he made to California. During our many conversations, Ms. Olson and I agreed to create an online archive of the former governor’s items that would be part of his profile in the Governors’ Gallery website (http://www.governors.library.ca.gov).

Ms. Olson sent a large box that included family photos, letters, receipts, booklets and a number of other items, which library staff set upon digitizing. In addition to the items she sent, the Library plans to digitize items from, related to, or about Governor Olson from our collections as well as items from the State Archives.

To celebrate the start of the Olson online archive, Ms. Olson agreed to give a presentation on the life of her grandfather. The event was held on January 22, 2015 in the elegant Room 500 of the Stanley Mosk Library and Courts Building. Her presentation, “Governor Olson, Past, Present and Future,” provided a fascinating look into this little-known governor’s time in office.

The audience learned, among many other intriguing facts, that Governor Olson appointed the first Latino and African American judges in California. In addition, he appointed the first woman on a state’s Court of Appeal. He presented a plan for universal healthcare in 1939. The plan was called Olsoncare.

The staff at the California State Library has started to build Olson’s online archive with the goal of access being available near the end of the year. We hope that this will just be the start of building online archives for our state’s governors.

Special thanks to Olena Bilyk, Vincent Beiderbecke, Matt Bartok, and Deborah Lynch of the State Library; Rebecca Wendt and Jeff Crawford of the State Archives, and to the California State Library Foundation for its help and support with this project.

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