Exploring the Golden State
A Readers’ Journey Through California History
Rough Course Schedule

- June 3: Discoveries
- June 10: Gilded Age Writers
- June 17: Progressive Era & After
- June 24: War and Postwar
JOSIAH ROYCE
CALIFORNIA
A Study of American Character
FOREWORD BY RONALD A. WELLS
THE LITERATURE OF CALIFORNIA
WRITINGS FROM THE GOLDEN STATE

EDITED BY
JACK HICKS • JAMES D. HOUSTON
MAXINE HONG KINGSTON • AL YOUNG
MANY Californias
LITERATURE FROM THE GOLDEN STATE
second edition
EDITED BY GERALD W. HASLAM
How Bret Harte “Invented” the Gold Rush
(at 608 Commercial Street?)
Harte is best remembered for his short stories featuring miners, gamblers, and other romantic figures of the California Gold Rush.
The Pantheon
Left to Right: Lotta Crabtree, Frank Norris, Luther Burbank, Robert Louis Stevenson, Mark Twain, Bret Harte, Hubert Howe Bancroft, Jack London
Jessie Benton Fremont
Literary Salon
Thomas Starr King
How do we know what we know?

- None of us experienced the Gold Rush
- The Gold Rush is a challenging subject to comprehend
- Vast, sprawling
Highly Recommended!

BRET HARTE'S
GOLD RUSH

"OUTCASTS OF POKER FLAT,"
"THE LUCK OF ROARING CAMP,"
"TENNESSEE'S PARTNER,"
AND OTHER FAVORITES

Introduction by Reuben H. Marcobin
Why Bret Harte Matters

- At the forefront of western American literature
- Led the turn away from Romanticism toward Realism
Why Bret Harte Matters

- Paved the way for other writers, including Mark Twain
- His eastern critics didn’t seem to grasp what he was up to
Why Bret Harte Matters

- Best-known works include:
  - “The Luck of Roaring Camp”
  - “The Outcasts of Poker Flat”
  - “Tennessee’s Partner”
Why Bret Harte Matters

- Started Gold Rush genre
- A major contributor, some say the creator, of the Western genre
The Golden Era, The Overland Monthly

- Mentor to other talents:
  - Twain, Charles Warren Stoddard, Ina Coolbrith, Ambrose Bierce
Harte’s Complicated Relationship with the Gold Rush

- Did the Gold Rush “make” Bret Harte?
- Or, did Bret Harte “make” the Gold Rush?
- Harte didn’t arrive in California until 1854
Minimal Time in the Diggings
Harte’s Complicated Relationship with the Gold Rush

- Publishing success came in 1868! (20 years after)
- He spent little time in the Mother Lode (days? weeks?)
- Early biographers bought into his myths
“How I Went to the Mines”
He invented many of the stock characters commonly associated with the western:

- The roguish outlaw
- The charming gambler
- The surly stagecoach driver
- The “fallen” but virtuous dance-hall girl
- The pretty, educated schoolmarm
During his years at the mint (1863-69) he conceptualized his Gold Rush "Iliad"

Published "The Luck of Roaring Camp" August 1868

Left the mint August 1869
Too many writers in the West, not enough readers

Harte understood that the success of western writers would depend upon their sale in the East
The Overland Monthly

- First year of publication, 1870
- Sold as many copies in the eastern United States as in the West
- Transported via the new transcontinental railroad
“Reversed the Path of the Sun”
(He Rose in the West and Set in the East)
Harte and the Imaginative Rendering of the American West
ALL THE GUTS AND GUSTO OF THE WEST

as it really was!

BENEDICT BOGEAUS presents

JOHN PAYNE
RONALD REAGAN
RHONDA FLEMING
COLEEN GRAY

in Bret Harte's

Tennessee's Partner

with
TONY CARUSO - MORRIS ANKRUM - ALLAN OWAN - MILTON KRAMS, S. D. BEAUCHAMP and GRAHAM BAKER & TEDDI SHERMAN - BENEDICT BOGEAUS

SUPERSCOPE

TECHNICOLORE
Questions?
Why Twain Matters to the West

- *Roughing It* (1872)
- Like Harte, established the "west"
- Observations on Virginia City, Sierras, the Mother Lode, San Francisco
- Jumping Frog story set in Angels Camp
Sam Clemens Arrives in Virginia City, 1861
“Mark Twain” Arrives in San Francisco, 1863

MARK TWAIN

100 YEARS AGO, IN 1864, SAMUEL CLEMENS LEFT THE TERRITORIAL ENTERPRISE, MOVING ON TO CALIFORNIA AND WORLD-WIDE FAME. HE WAS A REPORTER HERE IN 1863 WHEN HE FIRST USED THE NAME, MARK TWAIN. HE LATER DESCRIBED HIS COLORFUL ADVENTURES IN NEVADA IN “ROUGHING IT.”

NEVADA CENTENNIAL MARKER NO. 27
PLACED BY JAMES LENHOFF, 1964
EDITOR AND PUBLISHER TERRITORIAL ENTERPRISE
Highly Recommended!
Why Adah Isaacs Menken Matters
See Adah Menken ("naked"), tied to the back of a horse. Maguire’s Opera House, San Francisco.
Adah Isaacs Menken
Poet and Performer

- Enigmatic backstory
- Published widely
- Befriended writers
- Dramatic roles
- Sought literary fame
Menken: the Poet

- Keen intellect: fluent in French and Spanish
- Died of tuberculosis in Paris, age 33, in 1868
- Died just before Infelicia's publication (31 poems) 1868
Menken’s Poetry

- Remained in print well into the 20th century
- Only partial total
- She did not have access to her own work
Menken’s Poetry

- Scholars identified more Menken poems since the 1930s
- Researchers think there are more
Menken’s Poetry

- Very French
- Notable for its modernity
- Deeply personal
- Dramatic and self-aware
Adah Menken’s Poetry

- Explores male domination and its stifling of creative women
- Celebrates Judaism; women’s experiences
- Many poems are written in free verse and show the influence of Walt Whitman
Adah Menken

- When not on the stage, Menken spent much of her time with authors Bret Harte, Charles Warren Stoddard, Joaquin Miller
A DANGEROUS WOMAN

The Life, Loves, and Scandals of Adah Isaacs Menken, 1835-1868
America's Original Superstar

Michael Foster and Barbara Foster
Adah thought New York was too stilted, too smug, too proper to genuinely appreciate great art. She said: “I will go to the one place where the audience demands real art. I will go to San Francisco!”
John “Benicia Boy” Heenan

- Bare-knuckle prize fighter
- Only three formal fights in his entire career (0-2-1)
- Fought the first heavyweight championship, against British champ Tom Sayers
Maguire’s Opera House: $1,500 a week for 12 weeks

- “Miss Menken, stripped by her captors, will ride a fiery steed at furious gallop onto and across the stage and into the distance.”

- August 1863, Tom Maguire introduced Menken in the daring, sensational, unprecedented "Mazeppa"
Adah Menken

- San Francisco’s self-appointed moral policemen condemned Menken and Maguire as immoral

- A huge crowd of San Franciscans nonetheless turned out on opening night (including most of the scolds)
Menken and *Mazeppa*

- Despite condemnations from the pulpit (or perhaps *because* of them) *Mazeppa* sold out for its entire 12 week run.

- From the first night to the last, the audiences went wild during the “Naked Lady” scene.
“Audiences were shocked–scandalized–horrified–and delighted!”
Questions About Adah Menken?
Why Helen Hunt Jackson Matters

- Personal hero
- Plight of Indians: *Century of Dishonor*, 1881; *Ramona*, 1884
- America only now catching up to her
Ramona’s Influence

- Mission romance genre
- 300 English-language editions! (more in other languages)
- D.W. Griffith film version in 1910
- #1 hit song in 1928
Under American rule (from 1848 on), catastrophic loss of indigenous lives.

- 80 percent died, leaving just 30,000 in 1870.
- Half of those losses due not to disease, but to mass killings.
Demographic Collapse

1542: 300,000
1822: 100,000
1870: 30,000
1900: 15,000
Helen Hunt Jackson

*A Century of Dishonor*, 1881

- Like Harriet Beecher Stowe
- Documented attacks on Indians
Ramona

- “I am going to write a novel, in which will be set forth some Indian experiences in a way to move people’s hearts.”
- “People will read a novel when they will not read serious books”
Ramona, 1884

- Romance between a half-Indian girl raised by an aristocratic Spanish family and an Indian forced off his tribal lands by white settlers

- Dramatized mistreatment of California Indians
Critics & Readers Responded Positively

- Critics characterized *Ramona* as “unquestionably the best novel yet produced by an American woman”

- Characterized *Ramona*, along with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, as the two most ethical novels of the 19th century.
Ramona

- Loved for its romantic and picturesque aspects, not political content
- Readers captivated by the charming California setting
- It attracted tourists to California seeking locations mentioned in the book
Ramona

- Not appreciated as a brief for the Indians
- Jackson dismayed
- “Not one word for the Indians. I put my heart and soul in the book for them. It is a dead failure”
Ramona Endures

- 140 years later, 2 million copies sold
- More than 300 reprintings: never been out of print
RAMONA
A Story of the White Man's Injustice to the Indian

COPYRIGHT, 1910, BY
BIOGRAPH COMPANY
New York NY
Contents:
"SEÑORITA"
"UNDER THE REDWOOD TREE"
"BLESSED BE THE DAWNING"
(Sunrise Hymn)

Words and Music by
WILLIAM KERNELL
Questions About

Helen Hunt Jackson
Why Ina Coolbrith Matters

- Associate of Harte, Twain, Bierce, Joaquin Miller, Charles Stoddard
- Mentor to young Jack London, Isadora Duncan
Why Ina Coolbrith Matters

- Honorary Bohemian
- 1906 Earthquake
- One of the more remarkable backstories of *any* Californian
Born Josephine Smith, 1841

- Niece of Mormon founder Joseph Smith
- Father: Don Carlos Smith, brother of Joseph Smith
- Father died four months after her birth
Ina’s mother Agnes Coolbrith Smith (left) was then pressured into a marriage with her brother in law, Joseph Smith (right), in 1842, becoming his sixth or seventh wife.
Ina was both niece and stepdaughter to Joseph Smith!

In June 1844, Smith was killed by anti-Mormon mob.

Losing faith, fearful for her life, Agnes fled with Ina.
The Family Migrated to California

- At 10, Ina entered California on horseback, in front of a wagon train
- Led by famous African-American scout Jim Beckwourth
- Riding on his horse through “Beckwourth Pass,” past “Mount Coolbrith” (Ina reading)
Early Josephine Smith

- Wed in Los Angeles, age 17
- Fled deeply troubled marriage, age 20
- Fled to San Francisco, reinvented herself as “Ina Coolbrith”
Ina Reinvents Herself

- Formed the “Golden Gate Trinity” of *The Overland Monthly*
- Ina Coolbrith, Bret Harte, Charles Warren Stoddard
Ina Coolbrith: Poet

- Her poetry received positive notice from critics and established poets such as Twain & Bierce
- Held literary salons at her home on Russian Hill
Taking a Page From Jessie Fremont

- Ina’s literary salons introduced new writers to publishers
- Befriended poet Joaquin Miller; helped him gain global fame
Why Coolbrith Matters

- Prominent figure in the San Francisco literary community
- First California Poet Laureate, 1915
- First poet laureate of any American state
Ina Donna Coolbrith
Born: Nauvoo, Illinois, March 10th, 1841
Died: Oakland, California, Feb. 20th, 1929

First white child to enter California by Beckwourth Pass, in first covered wagon-train traveling that route, September 1862.

Thirty-two years a librarian, friend and counselor to three generations of California writers.

Inscribed on roll of honor, Native Daughters of the Golden West, June 11, 1915.

Given the honorary title “Loved Laurel-Crowned Poet of California,” April 21, 1919, by act of State Legislature, first poet-laureate in America.

Presented to the City of San Francisco, June 15, 1947 by the San Francisco Parlor, Native Daughters of the Golden West.
Questions about Ina Coolbrith?
Why the Stoic and Heroic
Robert Louis Stevenson Matters
No Writer has *Ever* Been More Characterized

Variously described by witnesses as intense, frail but charming, restless but limp and passionate, boyish but scruffy, keen but preoccupied, emaciated and hollow-eyed but attractive, a wraith, a tramp, a bag of bones, a coughing wretch, even an “insane stork”
Stevenson traveled the world in search of health and pure air, but his greatest journey turned out to be an interior one.
Why Robert Louis Stevenson Matters

- Only in California 11 months in 1879-80, age 29
- Seems to have left a big impression on him (he got married here)
- He also seems to have left a big impression on California
Stevenson and California

- *The Wrecker* (1892) a romantic description of San Francisco

- *Across the Plains* (1892) & *The Amateur Emigrant* (1894)

- *The Silverado Squatters* (1883) about Calistoga and Mt. St. Helena
Short Stories touching on California

- “The Old Pacific Capitol,” about Monterey
- “The New Pacific Capitol,” about San Francisco
- From Scotland to Silverado (1966)
1880: The Decisive Year of His Life

- San Francisco, Monterey
- He married in San Francisco, May 19, 1880
- Maturity as a writer
- Honeymooned on Mount Saint Helena
A Brief but Consequential Visit

- Stevenson lived on Nob Hill
- He was lonely and in poor health
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
Lodged at 606 Bush Street, December 1879 to March 1880, and there wrote essays, poems, autobiography and fiction.
Plaque placed by admirers of the author in cooperation with the California Historical Society
July 26, 1972
1879

Robert Louis Stevenson

In poor health, almost penniless and with his literary success still a few years away, Robert Louis Stevenson created a romantic view of Monterey and the surrounding area. His written and mental notes of the Monterey coastline were later used when he wrote "Treasure Island," "Kidnapped" and "The Old Pacific Capital."
STEVENSON HOUSE
House where Robert Louis Stevenson lived in the latter part of 1879.

Monterey History & Art Assn.
Stevenson House
(French Hotel) Monterey, CA
Stevenson and his new bride, Fanny Osbourne, spent summer 1880 honeymooning in an abandoned mining camp on Mount Saint Helena.
Robert Louis Stevenson State Park
Located in Sonoma, Lake and Napa counties
Robert Louis Stevenson

- The drafts Stevenson wrote on Mount St. Helena became pivotal
- Not only to his American-theme works, *The Amateur Emigrant* and *The Silverado Squatters*
- But also to many other future stories
The Silverado Squatters (1883), although barely noticed at the time of its publication, is a California classic, one of the most subtle descriptions of the beauty of the landscape, the charm of a life already past.
Questions About Stevenson?
Why Ambrose Bierce Matters

- Writer of immense talent, still widely read
- Skilled in multiple genres: war stories, horror stories, satire
- A "Writer’s Writer"
A Prolific and Versatile Writer

- One of the most influential journalists ever
- Brilliant, biting, satirist
- Pioneering writer of realist fiction
Why Ambrose Bierce Matters

- War stories influenced Stephen Crane, Hemingway, etc.
- Influential and feared cultural critic
“Bitter” Bierce

- Characterized as “Bitter Bierce” given the biting nature of his satire
- Best known for his short story “The Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” and his longer work, *The Devil's Dictionary*
Ambrose Bierce

- Came to San Francisco after distinguished & harrowing service in the Union Army
- Wounded (PTSD?)
- Traveled extensively, gathering material for nonfiction and fiction
More firsthand war experience than any other important 19th century writer

Extremely distinguished: 15 commendations for bravery

War writing refused to glorify war
Bierce in San Francisco

- Came to San Francisco 1866; took job at the U.S. Mint (608 Commercial)
- Hired by W.R. Hearst
- Skilled at multiple writing genres - fact, fiction and in between, often with California themes
Bierce in San Francisco

- Married Mary “Mollie” Day 1871
- Three children
- Tragic family life
- Separation 1888, divorced in 1905
Highly Recommended!

The Devil's Dictionary

Ambrose Bierce
With a New Introduction by Roy Morris, Jr.
The Dance of Death

by

William Herman

Author's Copy.