The Civil War, Then and Now: Musings on the Sesquicentennial
by Ron Hatzenbuehler
Idaho State University

What’s wrong with this picture?

Editor’s note: The year 2011 marked the sesquicentennial of the outbreak of the American Civil War (1861). Later in 2012, the Idaho Humanities Council, in partnership with the Cecil D. Andrus Center for Public Policy at Boise State University, will offer a five-meeting reading and discussion series in Boise over the course of five weeks that explores the topic “Making Sense of the American Civil War,” funded in part by a generous grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. One of the series’ key components will be an in-depth examination of the material that Wyoming’s Historical and Cultural Heritage Commission (in cooperation with the Idaho Humanities Council) will supply all books free of charge to participants who will commit to participate in the entire series (watch later in 2012 for details on HBC’s website on how to sign up). The HBC series in Boise will be part of the Sesqui; in commemoration of the sesquicentennial, we asked Dr. Ron Hatzenbuehler, Professor of History and Associate Dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Idaho State University, to reflect on the meaning of the war for Americans today. The following was inspired by a talk Ron gave to Chapter AA, PEO Sisterhood in Idaho Falls in the summer of 2011. He thanks Idaho Falls resident Sharon Price for the invitation to speak, and gratefully acknowledges contributions to the content of the article from Professor William C. Hine of South Carolina State University and from retired Pocatello attorney Billy Currier (formerly of North Carolina).

The sesquicentennial of the Civil War provides an opportunity to reflect on the consequences for the nation’s history. The war meant different things for its combatants; arguably, its meanings divide Americans today no less than when the war began in April 1861.

For those who supported the United States, the Civil War confirmed the validity of three propositions. First, it reinforced the belief that the nation’s affairs were in a good position and getting better, because the war in essence was a conflict over the economic growth in the years leading to the war—embracing scientific advances in agriculture that renewed the soil’s fertility; diversification of agriculture in order to meet the needs of an increasingly urbanized population; urbanization that stimulated the need for new building technologies, transportation, and employment possibilities; and increased immigration.

The war itself and its immediate aftermath confirmed the wisdom of these values with three landmark pieces of legislation—the Homestead Act, the Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862, and the Pacific Railroad Acts of 1862 and 1864. The Homestead Act ensured that western lands would be settled by the rise of political parties dedicated to getting voters to the polls. The war itself and its immediate aftermath confirmed the wisdom of these values with three landmark pieces of legislation—the Homestead Act, the Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862, and the Pacific Railroad Acts of 1862 and 1864. The Homestead Act ensured that western lands would be settled by the rise of political parties dedicated to getting voters to the polls. Although women were excluded from voting, they did participate in these democratizing influences.

The Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 highlighted the experiences of women as a key component of every project I’ve undertaken. It is what most defines us as a people.

I don’t take much twisting of a story to turn it into a parable. So, I suddenly began considering myself an expert! I thought about my work as an historian in different ways. I realized that work has been a key component of every project I’ve undertaken. It doesn’t mean I’m lost, and I’ve tried to turn it into a story about work. I thought about three characters I had come to know through research, and how their stories helped me contemplate the role of work in our lives.

The Yellow River road builder John Mullan. One hundred and fifty years ago, one of Mullan’s crew set out on a winter expedition, lured by the promise of a stipend—the lure of money for work—if he delivered thousands; there seemed to be a continuous bone yard wherever you went. Mullan, in winter camp just outside of Missoula, dutifully made daily weather recordings until one night when the temperature got somewhere south of minus 40 degrees. He knew it was colder than that, but that was when the thermometer broke.

Despite the piled snow and the joint-numbing temperature, Schafft ventured out. He was a literate man, but understated. Here is what he wrote of that trip: “Altogether it was not a very pleasant situation. Unpleasant indeed. The first day into his trek, Schafft slipped through ice into a small slough, wetting his feet. He continued on. That night, he did all the right things: built a fire, dried his clothes, and he as said, felt warm. But by morning, he was shivering. Taking a rest on his journey, he discovered that both feet were frozen solid up to his ankle.

The Civil War, Then and Now: What’s wrong with this picture?
Quite a Year for Story
By Rick Artinger

In the past winter, the Idaho Humanities Council supported Rexburg’s citywide reading of Thornton Wilder’s Bridge of St. Luis Rey, which featured a host of lectures and complimentary community activities. This spring the IHC is the main supporter of the Ada County Library’s “Treasure Valley Reads” program, encouraging all in the valley to read Mark Twain’s classic Adventures of Tom Sawyer.

In Idaho’s panhandle this spring, the IHC is behind the “North Idaho Reads” community reading program of Ray Bradbury’s Fahrenheit 451 in 11 libraries in three counties. In Lewiston, Moscow, and several Washington border towns, the IHC is supporting an “Everybody Reads” program built around author Jim Lynch’s novel Brother Songs.

In preparation for the IHC’s 2012 summer teacher institute, some teachers are starting to immerse themselves in My Antonia, The Professor’s House, Death Comes for the Archbishop, and other works by Willa Cather.

On April 5, the IHC will bring to Idaho Falls master storyteller Rick Bragg to read the poignant memoir All Over but the Shoutin’ and other books.

On October 12, the IHC will bring to Coeur d’Alene short story master Anthony Doerr, and the buzz is on to read Memory Wall, The Shell Collector, and Doerr’s other prize-winning works.

Katherine Aiken, Dean of the College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Idaho, was elected Chair of the 19-member Board of Directors of the Idaho Humanities Council at the Council’s fall meeting. Aiken replaces Jeff Fox, Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer at the College of Southern Idaho. Fox has served as a member of the IHC board since the fall of 2007.

First elected to the IHC Board in 2006, Aiken is an accomplished scholar of history and has participated in many IHC-related projects over her career at the University of Idaho, including several IHC summer teacher institutes, many grant projects, the library discussion program “Let’s Talk About It,” and many other programs. She holds an M.A. degree in history from the University of Oregon and a Ph.D. in history from Washington State University.

Aiken has taught at the University of Idaho since 1984. Her areas of interest include 20th Century United States history, social and cultural history, and women and labor. She is the author of numerous articles, and her books include Idaho’s Banker Hill: The Rise and Fall of an American Mining Company, 1885-1981 (University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), and Idaho: The Enduring Promise, with Kevin Marsh and Laura Woodworth-Ney (Cheyenne Publishing, 2009). Her book Harnessing the Power of Motherhood: The National Florence Crittenden Mission, 1883-1925 (University of Tennessee Press, 1998) was nominated for the Berkshire Women’s Historical Award.

Two new members elected to Idaho Humanities Council board

The Board of Directors of the Idaho Humanities Council has elected two faculty members from Boise State University and the College of Idaho to its 19-member board. The new members will serve three-year terms and attend their first meeting in February 2012.

Beret Norman (Boise) is Associate Professor of German at Boise State University. She holds M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Germanic Languages and Literatures from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Her major research fields include literature and film of the German Democratic Republic (1949-1989) and re-unified Germany, 20th century German and Austrian drama, 20th century German poetry, and 21st century literature.

Susan Schaper (Caldwell) is Associate Professor of English at the College of Idaho in Caldwell. She holds an M.A. from Washington State University and a Ph.D. in literature from Indiana University. She teaches modern British literature, seminars on the American West, and Native American fiction. Her other areas of specialization include Victorian studies, with particular interests in ghost stories, children’s literature, and regionalism. She also serves as the College of Idaho’s Honors Fellowships coordinator.

The IHC board is comprised of Academic, Public, and At-Large members representing all regions of the state (N, SW, and SE). Four members are appointed by the governor. Terms are three years, renewable once. Several members rotate off the board each fall, as 19 new members and new electees are appointed. The IHC board will fill several vacancies in the fall of 2012.

The Idaho Humanities Council’s mission is to “deepen understanding of human experience by connecting people with ideas.” The board meets three times a year to award grants for public humanities programs throughout Idaho, and to plan special projects and programs to promote greater public understanding of literature, history, cultural anthropology, law, and other humanities disciplines.

For more information, visit www.idahohumanities.org or call 208-345-5346.

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Idaho Humanities Council, a nonprofit organization, receives funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities and from other foundations, corporations, and individuals. IHC’s mission is to increase the awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the humanities in Idaho. It accomplishes this through educational projects for the general public and various target audiences. The Council plans and conducts projects on its own and in concert with other organizations such as universities, colleges, libraries, civic clubs, professional associations, historical societies and museums, and other cultural, educational, and community entities. IHC also provides grant support for humanities projects throughout Idaho.

Opinions expressed in Idaho Humanities do not necessarily reflect views of the Idaho Humanities Council or the National Endowment for the Humanities.

MISSION STATEMENT
The mission of the Idaho Humanities Council is to deepen understanding of human experience by connecting people with ideas.
Smithsonian exhibit on Work to visit Burley, Twin Falls, and Bonners Ferry through June

The Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition, The Way We Worked will visit Burley, Twin Falls and Bonners Ferry February through June of 2012. Adapted from an original exhibition developed by the National Archives, the exhibit explores how work became such a central element in the growth of our country, and the role work played as a driver of cultural diversity of the American workforce. The exhibition draws from the Archives' rich collections to reveal how workers sometimes found themselves in the wilderness, on the streets of our communities, and the needs that our jobs fulfill. Our work takes on a variety of forms, and as communities. Whether you live in “Steel Town, USA” or wear a uniform each day, work opens a window on the past and provides a perspective on my own family history. I enjoyed my mother’s stories, but I realized family stories sometimes feature controversy or uncomfortable subjects. Anna’s story also led me to contemplate the significance of women as workers, and children in the workforce, and to understand that while work can bring pride, it can also stifle pride and lead to anger and dissatisfaction.

I met Ed Ferrell on a fish barge as I traveled down the Snake River researching a book about dams along the Lower Snake (River of Life: Channel of Death: Fish and Dams on the Lower Snake, Confluence Press, 1995). Ed was tending the small salmon smolts as they made their way through Bonneville Dam when I dropped into the river so they had a better chance of surviving to the ocean than if they had to navigate through eight dams on their own. A lifetime Corps of Engineers employee, Ed had volunteered to help tend the fish during a time when budget cuts prevented the Corps from hiring seasonal help.

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Civil War

(Continued from Page 1)

increased the ethnic diversity of residents in urban areas. Because the great majority of these Irish immigrants were Catholic, religious dissension increased in the North. Protestants had been long accustomed to being a majority in a throughout the nation, but they now had to defend the truth of their beliefs in the face not only of increasing numbers of Catholics but also the emergence of new denominations stemming from what historians call the Second Great Awakening of religious enthusiasm. Some of these new religions were also Millenialist, meaning that the members believed that the end of the Second Coming was near. Out of this religious upheaval came a renewed questioning by groups of people that long ago. But the work world he exited is vastly different. We can contemplate: what has happened to unions, and how we do not understand its continuity. Otherwise, it is just a curiosity, something that happened “back then.” I get confused when I hear someone say, “I don’t read history. We need to live for the future.” To me, history is something like the experience of an astronomer viewing through a telescope the brilliant light of a star that burned itself out millions of years ago. In present time, that astronomer is viewing the past.

History is our foundation, and exhibits like “The Way We Worked” enable us to contemplate the past and make connections to it. And so, despite my original reservation about this assignment, by chasing the lure of a paycheck, I have become a convert to work history. Each year, the Idaho Humanities Council brings a different Smithsonian exhibit to six Idaho communities. No other state humanities council supports so many of these outstanding exhibits. I truly commend the IHC, and I’m pleased to be a part of the show this year.

Keith Petersen is Associate Director of the Idaho State Historical Society and serves as Idaho’s State Historian, based in Moscow. He’s the author of a half-dozen books exploring the history of Idaho and the Pacific Northwest.

WORK

(Continued from Page 3)

“The Second Coming was near. (Continued from Page 3)

...the grandchildren now engage. One hundred years ago, when my grandfather farmed in North Dakota, 40 percent of Americans worked in agriculture; 2 percent do today. Sixty years ago, when I was born, 30 percent of my town worked in managerial, clerical and sales jobs; 70 percent do today.

I think how amazed my grandfather would be today if he glanced at the Yellow Pages. Well, actually he would first be shocked to learn that probably none of his great-grandchildren even use anything as pedestrian as a book called the Yellow Pages.

But I imagine my grandfather trying to discern the occupations associated with the following headings:

Advertising-electronic; Asbestos Abatement; Body Piercing; Call Centers; Cellular and Wireless Phones; Compact Discs; Data Storage; Document Destruction.

He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword; Our God is marching on….

CIVIL WAR

(Continued from Page 1)

Morale and social evils, including slavery. Behavioral changes in order to purge the nation of this sin. But cultivating cotton was. (As long as there were other crops, men were not required to report to a boss; one could live in the style to which their ancestors had grown accustomed.)

The myth that members of the gentry class in Virginia span in the 18th century that they were the descendants of British aristocrats carried over into the 1800s. As two hundred years of single-minded devotion to growing tobacco for export took a huge toll on soil in the Old Dominion, Virginians took their slaves or sold them to regions where growing tobacco was not profitable, but cultivating cotton was. (As long as there were regions in which slavery existed, older Southern states could breed slaves for newer regions.) In Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas, these emigrés built houses in the style of the mansions of their parents and grandparents, intermarried in order to maintain the size of their plantations, and tried to live in the style to which their ancestors had grown accustomed in the pre-Revolutionary era.

This emphasis on underpinning the position of the privileged class extended to new state constitutions that Southerners wrote in the 1820s and 1830s, and Southern politics remained far less democratic than in northern states. White male voters in South Carolina, for example, did not elect governors or presidential electors until after the Civil War. The state legislature—dominated by cotton and rice planters—performed those tasks. The primary purpose of these constitutional changes was to strengthen protections for slavery and for slave owners, especially in the wake of Nat Turner’s Rebellion in 1831. Then, John C. Calhoun’s arguments in the debates of Congress that it believed to be unconstitutional spawned a corresponding emphasis on states’ rights to counter tyrannous majority rule.

As this situation unfolded, Southerners recreated the myth that their antebellum world was characterized by civility and grace based on the best aspects of Old World culture. Margaret Mitchell’s epic novel...
Society has completely redesigned its exhibits, engaged the early January.

of an Idaho museum. Idaho Humanities Historical Society, and the Idaho Heritage Lemhi County Historical Society receives Elsensohn Award William Faulkner in "defeat" as a badge of honor, encapsulated in a ruthless enemy intent on pillage and human suffering.

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popularized the view that the Southerners' prior world entered the region due to constricted opportunities. pluralism never materialized. Few immigrants.

that religious enthusiasm in the North occurred within the Awakening impacted the two regions relates to the fact that among the states it is the only one to have been an independent nation. The Lone Star flag is displayed only on the rear of automobiles. Doing so allows license plates bearing the Confederate flag to be placed on the front of the car. That emblem—most commonly known as the "Stars and Bars"—beams multiple meanings. To many, it means family, love of place, endurance, and the will to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles. For others, it symbolizes slavery and intolerance.

In the last twenty years the Civil War has been refought in several Southern states through disputes over whether the Confederate emblem. If Texans trade the Lone Star license plate, but they serve as backdrop for the independent nation. Stars appear on the controversial Confederate emblem.

that among the states it is the only one to have been an independent nation. Stars appear on the controversial Confederate emblem. If Texans trade the Lone Star license plate, but they serve as backdrop for the independent nation. Stars appear on the controversial Confederate emblem.

Texas, in that order). Further evidence of Southern tax burdens in the nation (Tennessee, Alabama, and the eleven Confederate states have the lowest overall poverty. When he became president in 1932, Franklin Roosevelt needed the South's assistance to other states (e.g., Tennessee and Alabama) frequently clustered under the ideology of states' rights to gain political participation to male former slaves.

and physical intimidation of African Americans by reintroducing white supremacy through segregation and physical intimidation, African American emancipatory rhetoric throughout the region. This perpetuated itself until the 1950s, when African Americans once again asserted their right to equal opportunity, eventually buttressed by the Supreme Court, presidents from both parties, and the U.S. Congress. Civil rights legislation over the past half century has dramatically altered life in the South. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 ended segregation in public facilities, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 ushered in a black political voting bloc that brought hundreds of black office holders into state and local offices. Oral History Ross Barnett and George Wallace of a generation ago—not to mention Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee of 150 years ago—would be astonished that Barack Obama carried the states of Virginia and North Carolina and Charleston County, South Carolina, in 2008.

in summary, for Southerners the Civil War reinforced an emphasis on the past, led to poverty. When he became president in 1932, Franklin Roosevelt needed the South's assistance to other states (e.g., Tennessee and Alabama) frequently clustered under the ideology of states' rights to gain political participation to male former slaves.

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the latter half of the 20th century. But times change, and arguments abound today that the South—not the North—drives American society. Franklin Roosevelt needed the South's electoral votes to become president, and he needed them to keep the region to recover economically in order to get the nation out of the Great Depression. A first step in this recovery involved the creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority which brought affordable electricity to the Deep South and—thereby—an entry into economic development. The need for year-round military bases during WWII and the expanded military needs brought on by the Cold War extended this economic boom by bringing federal spending into numerous military bases in Southern states. The Cold War extended this trend as did the "race for space," due to NASA's decision to locate its primary headquarters at Cape Canaveral, Florida, and Houston, Texas. Then, the expansion of air-conditioning following WWII produced what has been called "the landslide South" as Northern and Midwestern companies moved their plants south to take advantage of lower electrical costs, inexpensive labor, and year-round productivity because it is cheaper to cool buildings in the summer than it is to heat them in the winter. In the warmest states, and southern cities, the battle in the Idaho Legislature last session over legislation to nullify national laws. Irreconcilable Southern extremists feed on such issues to perpetuate interest in "the Lost Cause."

A seemingly less important issue relates to the fact that the confederate states in the South have the lowest number of electoral votes to become president, and he needed for the latter half of the 20th century. But times change, and arguments abound today that the South—not the North—drives American society. Franklin Roosevelt needed the South's electoral votes to become president, and he needed them to keep the region to recover economically in order to get the nation out of the Great Depression. A first step in this recovery involved the creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority which brought affordable electricity to the Deep South and—thereby—an entry into economic development. The need for year-round military bases during WWII and the expanded military needs brought on by the Cold War extended this economic boom by bringing federal spending into numerous military

Ron Hatzenbuehler is the author of several books, including "I Tremble for My Country": Thomas Jefferson and the South (University of Florida, 2009). He is a longtime member of the Idaho Humanities Council Speakers Bureau.

Lemhi County Historical Society receives Elsensohn Award T he Lemhi County Historical Society in Salmon is the 2011 recipient of the "Sister Alfreda Elsensohn Award," a $10,000 award of pooled resources of the Idaho Humanities Council Board Member Ed Marohn (Idaho Falls), Idaho State Historical Society Director Janet Gallimore (Boise) and Trustee Tom Blevins (Boise), both of the Lemhi County Historical Society; Trust Director Katherine Kirk (Boise) attended the award ceremony in Salmon in early January.

In the past few years, the Lemhi County Historical Society has completely redesigned its exhibits, engaged the community with numerous annual public events, and provided professional assistance to other communities in the area. The award is in recognition of the museum's outstanding service.

The award is named after Sister Alfreda Elsensohn, who founded the Historical Museum of Bonner County, St. Gertrude in the 1930's. Sister Alfreda sought to collect, preserve, and interpret artifacts from Idaho County and the surrounding area to better educate the general public. It was her vision of Idaho museums as exciting, interactive, interpretive, and educational institutions that the Award seeks to recognize by honoring one outstanding Idaho museum each year. Recipients of the award are leaders in the field of Idaho museums that will move to a higher level of professionalism.

The Idaho Humanities Council encourages public awareness and understanding of history, and other humanities disciplines," noted IHC Board member Ed Marohn. "The Lemhi County Historical Society has for years led public discussions of the humanities that greatly aid in this effort."

Previous recipients of the Elsensohn Award include Bonner County Historical Museum in Sandpoint (2008), South Bannock County Historical Center in Lava Hot Springs (2009), and the Historical Museum of the State of Idaho in Cottonwood (2010).
The IHC awarded $92,404 in grants to organizations and individuals at its recent board meeting in Boise. Thirty-one awards include 24 grants for public humanities programs, four Research Fellowships, and three Teacher Incentive Grants. The grants were supported in part by funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities and IHC’s Endowment for Humanities Education. The following projects were funded:

Public Program Grants:
The Idaho Writers Guild, Boise, received $5,000 to support a Writers and Readers Rendezvous in Boise, May 3-5, 2012. The festival will bring writers and readers together for a weekend of panel discussions, readings, and lectures. Doug Copsey is the project director.

The Museum of Idaho, Idaho Falls, was awarded $5,000 to help fund the traveling exhibition Tunakhamun: “Wonderful Things,” from the Pharaoh’s Tomb. Scheduled to run from June 15-November 30, 2012, the exhibition will explore features replicas of original artifacts. The exhibit tour will be complemented with speakers discussing the art, history, theology, and culture of ancient Egypt. The museum will offer school tours and educational materials for teachers. David Pennock is the project director.

Lewis-Clark State College, Lewiston, received $2,000 to help support its local Speakers Bureau, providing speakers on a variety of historical topics to local schools and libraries, regional festivals, and other non-profit organizations. Speakers frequently perform as historical characters and engage audiences in discussions about the history of the area. The project director is Jack Peasley.

The Human Rights Education Institute, Coeur d’Alene, was awarded two grants, one for $2,000 for a project titled Peace Lives Here: A Challenge for the 21st Century, which will explore Mahatma Gandhi’s “eight social sins” and how they relate to life today. The second grant, receiving $2,000, will support a spring 2012 presentation by “Living Voices,” an educational company of performers based in Seattle that provides an entertaining and engaging way for K-12 students to learn about human rights and human rights. Their multi-media presentations will explore the Holocaust, the Civil Rights Movement, Japanese internment, and other historical issues. Heather Keen is the project director.

KWSI FM/Voice of the Coeur d’Alenes, Plummer, received $5,000 for their Language Preservation Project. The pilot project will develop printed materials for online streaming and interactive web activities to accompany broadcast of Coeur d’Alene language lessons. The project director is Sarah Freeburg.

Idaho Shakespeare Festival, Boise, received $5,000 to help support its Shakespearean educational outreach program. The 2012 season will take a condensed production of Much Ado to students and teachers throughout Idaho. The performance, online study guides, and educational workshops allow students the opportunity to explore themes and issues of the play in more depth and learn about the conventions of Elizabethan theater and the language and poetry of Shakespeare. The project director is Christine Zimowsky.

Idaho State University, Pocatello, was awarded $2,000 to help fund a public keynote address by medieval historian and Shakespeare commentator Antonette d’Ipaolesley at the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association Conference in Pocatello in April of 2012. The conference theme is “Categorizing the Medieval and Renaissance Worlds.” Healey will address the ways in which modern technology can be used to study the language and mentality of an early culture, specifically that of Anglo-Saxon England. ISU Professor Thomas Klein is the project director.

Idaho State University, Pocatello, was awarded $1,500 to help support a semester-long interdisciplinary series of presentations titled “War in Society.” Activities included an exhibit, lectures, and a panel discussion that addressed the theme of war and society. The project director was Linda Lewrok.

The Anderson Center, Idaho State University, Pocatello, received $2,000 to assist in bringing performance poet Andrea Gibson to Pocatello in recognition of National Poetry Month this coming April. Gibson is the winner of several national and regional performance poetry competitions. Rebecca Morrow is the project director.

Idaho Public Television, Boise, was awarded $12,500 to help support statewide broadcast of Season 24 of The American Experience, one of television’s longest-running and most-watched American history documentary series. The proposed new program lineup for this season includes biographies of President Bill Clinton, Western legend Billy the Kid, Olympic champion Jesse Owens, a film about the Grand Coulee Dam, a new documentary on Custer’s Last Stand, and the story of a unique American cultural group, the Amish. Cindy Lunte is the project director.

Boise State University, Boise, received $2,000 to help support a series of three public presentations between January and April of 2012 that explore the theme of “The Idea of Nature: 1660-1860.” The series will examine Anglo-American ideas of nature through an interdisciplinary lens. Keynote presenters include College of Idaho English Professor Rochelle Johnson speaking on “The Metaphor of Progress: American Landscape Painting,” University of Northern British Columbia Professor Kevin Hutchins on “William Blake’s Environmental Poetics,” and a third speaker to be announced. The project director is Samantha Harvey.

The Idaho Latino Scholarship Foundation, Boise, received $2,000 to assist with an evening of Latino corrido music at the Nampa Civic Center in June of 2012. This concert will bring together students and Seattle-based corrido teacher Juan Manuel Barco for a performance of corridos that were written in workshops designed to teach the art form. It will feature corridos, a traditional form of folk music in Mexico that was used to convey news of the day and communicate incidents in history through song, written by Idaho students.

The project director is Ana Maria Schachtell.

Boise Art Museum, Boise, was awarded $2,500 to bring Robert Wittman, founder of the FBI’s Art Crime Team, to Boise. Author of How I went Undercover to Rescue the World’s Stolen Treasures (Crown, 2010), Wittman explored art and antiques fraud. His presentation helped inspire the Museum of the American West Art Center’s 55th anniversary. Melanie Fales was the project director.

Lewis-Clark State College, Lewiston, received $3,000 to support the fifth year of a two-year project called “Chinese Remembering,” which highlights the influence and contributions of the Chinese to the history of Idaho and the Inland Northwest. The project director is Patricia Keith.

Ketchum-Sun Valley Ski and Heritage Museum, Ketchum, was awarded $2,000 for an exhibit on the architecture of the Sun Valley Lodge as envisioned by Gilbert Stanley Underwood. It will include blueprints of the lodge and a collection of sketches of Underwood’s vision for the lodge in June 1936 and closing in mid-February 2012, the exhibit will be accompanied by a lecture about Underwood’s architecture, placing it in historical context, and nothing its importance to architecture in the West. Megan Murphy Lengyl is the project director.

Burley Public Library, Burley, received $1,100 to develop a photography exhibit on local work history to complement the Smithsonian traveling exhibit “The Way We Worked”, which explores the meaning of work in the past, present and future. The library will host the exhibit February 4-March 17, 2012. The program will teach photography, gather photos about contemporary work, and combine these with historical work-related photos for the local exhibit. The project director is Valerie Bame.

Ada Community Library, Boise, received $4,500 to help support the Boise area “Read Me,” program, a community-wide reading project for Ada and Canyon Counties in 2012. The community is reading The Adventures of Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain. Presenters Doug Copsey and Anne Powers, author of the NY Times Bestseller Mark Twain: A Life, Twain Chautauquan Brad Roghaar from the University of Oregon, and the Inland Northwest’s own Brad Roghaar, author of Oregon’s Cowboy, will lead the discussion. The project director is Ana Maria Schachtell.

The Historical Museum at St. Gertrude, in Ketchum, received $2,000 to help support the fifth year of a two-year project called “Chinese Remembering,” which highlights the influence and contributions of the Chinese to the history of Idaho and the Inland Northwest. The project director is Catherine Fehrer-Ellston.

Boise State University, Boise, was awarded $4,000 to help support the Second Annual Latin American Arts Festival, April 21-28, 2012. This week-long festival is coordinated by a joint effort between
Boise State University and the Mexican Consulate in Boise, offering the general public a chance to better understand Latino culture. Presenters will include Cuban-born poet Orlando Gonzalez-Esteve, who will lecture on Cuban literature and politics; Mexican novelist Jerónimo Solares; Peruvian novelist Mario Bellatin; and Mexican-American arts promoter and communication strategist Salvador Acevedo, of San Francisco, who will speak on organizations building bridges to the Latino community. Clay Morgan and Mac Test are the project directors.

The University of Idaho, Moscow, received $4,900 for two seminars for social studies teachers in Idaho that focus on “Landmark Supreme Court Decisions in US History.” The “We the People” curriculum, developed by the national Center for Civic Education, will be one of the primary pedagogical tools employed during the seminars. The seminars will be conducted by David Gray Adler, Director of the University of Idaho James A. and Louise McClure Center for Public Policy Research. Designed to promote civic education, the first seminar was held in Boise on February 2-4, 2012, and examined several landmark rulings delivered by the Supreme Court that have shaped American culture and its constitutional development. A shortened one-day seminar will be held in Coeur d’Alene in the spring. The project director is David Adler.

Teton Valley Museum Foundation, Tetonia, received $954 to develop interpretive signage for their museum displays exploring early Teton Valley settlers, including the progression of agriculture and local culture. Kay Fullmer is the project director.

The City of Caldwell received a $1,000 Planning Grant to bring together for a meeting four experts in restoration and museum interpretation to help develop a plan to restore and preserve the Van Shroyer Ranch, an outdoor agricultural museum of log cabins, railroad cars, and displays of historic agricultural equipment.

Research Fellowships:

Steven Maughan, Department of History, The College of Idaho, Caldwell, was awarded $3,500 for a research project titled Anglo-Catholicism, Religious Communities, Foreign Missions and the Debate over Indigenization, 1855-72. Maughan will conduct research in key British archives, in order to examine the impact of nineteenth-century Anglo-Catholicism on British Christian foreign missions and the British Empire.

Jacqueline O’Conner, Department of English, Boise State University, Pocatello, was awarded $3,500 to help complete the authorized biography of literary critic and public intellectual Stanley Fish. The fellowship will support travel for research, and interviews with prominent scholars, literary critics, and faculty and students of Fish.

Gary Olson, English Department, Idaho State University, Pocatello, received $3,500 to support research to complete a book entitled Consuming the Americas, which will explore the nonfiction classic about the West, the universal significance of cutting-edge modernist art forms. The institute will explore O’Keeffe, and other artists elevated “regionalism” by Cather, Austin, and Meridian, was awarded $850 to help provide materials for her students to study primary sources and artifacts associated with activities in their study of American and Idaho history. Ultimately, students will create a presentation for National History Day in Idaho.

Garden City Library Foundation, Garden City, received $1,000 for continued support of its “Bells for Books” bilingual program. The grant will bring bilingual books to the attention of families of English language learners. Over 6,000 patrons used the bilingual books in 2011, and this grant will help to increase the holdings.

Tami Williams, Malad Middle School, Malad City, received $500 to support a project to bring published authors to her school to encourage students to write original stories. Student books will be bound and shared with parents at a public event.

The Next Deadline for IHC Grants: The next deadline for Idaho Humanities Council grant proposals is September 15, 2012. IHC strongly recommends that prospective applicants contact staff to discuss their project ideas before writing their proposals. Applicants also are strongly encouraged to submit a rough draft of their proposal for staff critique several weeks prior to the deadline. Grant guidelines and online application instructions, as well as information about IHC grants and activities, are available on IHC’s website at www.idahohumanities.org or by calling 208-345-5346.

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Teaching the Works of Willa Cather

Willa Cather set two of her other widely read novels, O Pioneers! and My Ántonia, in the American Southwest when she visited New Mexico, and the experiences she had there re-informed her students to study primary sources and artifacts associated with activities in their study of American and Idaho history. Ultimately, students will create a presentation for National History Day in Idaho.

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Idaho teachers of all grades and disciplines are invited to apply to attend the Idaho Humanities Council’s 2012 weekend summer teacher institute titled “Visionary Landscapes: Willa Cather and the Search for Place in the West,” scheduled for July 22-27, at the College of Idaho in Caldwell. Successful applicants will receive lodging and meals, texts, and the opportunity for optional college credits. Those traveling more than 250 miles one way may be eligible for a modest travel stipend. Community college faculty members also are eligible to apply.

The deadline for applications is April 1.

Supported by the IHC’s Endowment for Humanities Education and the National Endowment for the Humanities, the interdisciplinary teacher institute will explore three novels by Willa Cather (1873-1947) — primarily My Antonia, Death Comes for the Archbishop, and The Professor’s House — in order to examine the affinity for bare landscapes for the inspiration that fueled her writing, and the experiences that shape personal truth. Likewise, artist Georgia O’Keeffe turned to the Southwest and its bone-bare landscapes for the inspiration that fueled her paintings to become some of the iconic works of 20th century art.

The institute will explore as well the affinity for home and belonging that has characterized the American experience of place both on the frontier and in modern urban landscapes. It will examine how geography, history, and climate shaped character, and fueled creative works in ways that were new to modern literature and art.

Scholars involved so far will include Steven Shively, Associate Professor of English at Utah State University, and Jennifer Emery Davidson, Associate Professor of English and Director of the College of Southern Idaho Blaine County Center (Teaching the Works of Willa Cather) Shively serves on the board of the Willa Cather Foundation in Red Cloud, Nebraska, has published extensively on Cather, and is editor of the biannual journal Teaching Cather, and is co-editor of the anthology Teaching the Works of Willa Cather (GreenTower Press, 2009). A former high school teacher, he holds M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Idaho and is active in the Western American Literature Association, Davidson has written extensively on the themes of home and identity in Western American literature. She holds B.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the Idaho State College and the University of Utah respectively.

The application deadline is April 1, 2012. Interested teachers should visit www.idahohumanities.org or contact the Idaho Humanities Council at (208) 345-5346.

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Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Rick Bragg will be the speaker at the IHC’s 5th Annual Eastern Idaho Distinguished Humanities Lecture and Dinner on Thursday, April 5, 2012, at 7 p.m. at the Bannum Student Union at University Place in Idaho Falls.

Bragg is the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of three best-selling memoirs about his family and the working class people of the foothills of the Appalachians: All Over but the Shoutin’, Ava’s Man and The Prince of Frogtown.

In addition, he is the author of a collection of his newspaper stories, Somebody Told Me, and a biography of Iraq War veteran Jessica Lynch, The Way We Worked in Idaho Falls, April 5.

News & Opportunities

New books and CDs by Mary Clearman Blew, Chuck Guilford, Amil Quayle, Gary Eller

WordCurrent Press announces publication of Altogether Now: Essays on Poetry, Writing, and Teaching by Boise writer Chuck Guilford. Altogether Now features essays written over a 50-year period about teaching metaphysical poetry, the works of Ezra Pound, C.K. Williams, and Charles Wright, writing workshops, the new era of digital literature, and the relevance of the humanities in the 21st century. Guilford taught literature and writing for two decades at Boise State University, served on the board of the Idaho Humanities Council, and was a founding board member of Boise’s Log Cabin Literary Center. He’s the author of a novel, Spring Drive: A North Country Tale (also available from WordCurrent Press), and his essays and poetry have appeared in Poetry, Kansas Quarterly, Coyote’s Journal, College English, and many other magazines. All Together Now is available for $10 through www.wordcurrent.com.

University of Idaho novelist Mary Clearman Blew has published a new memoir entitled This Is Not the Ivy League, an account of what it was like to grow up on a remote Montana cattle ranch and choosing to pursue a career as a university scholar and writer at a time when a woman’s place in the world was supposed to be at home. Married in her teens and pressured by a husband and family to settle down and make a life as a ranch wife, Blew sought scholarships and a university education instead, and This Is Not the Ivy League is the candid and moving story about that tough struggle to break free as a woman in the 1950s and 60s. Blew is the author of the acclaimed essay collection All but the Waltz, the memoir Balsamroot, and the novel Jackalope Dreams. She teaches writing in the MFA program at the University of Idaho. The memoir is available for $24.95 from the University of Nebraska Press, www.nebraskapress.unl.edu.

St. Anthony writer Amil Quayle has penned an amazing little pamphlet-memoir of his time as a novice river guide on the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon in 1966. Upset in Upset is a story undoubtedly told many times around a campfire, but finally put to page about overturning a raft in the Grand Canyon and living to tell the tale when the river ran it a day and a half as it runs today. Losing all supplies but a can of tuna and responsible for getting a family of California vacationers to safety, Quayle’s tale is an adventure story anyone who has ever rafted whatever water will want to read. It belongs to that genre of river story about ignorance, hubris, and blind luck that rafters love to tell. Quayle is a poet of great presence in eastern Idaho, who worked as a teacher, writer, avid boater, and authors to Idaho Falls for the annual event. Previous speakers include presidential biographer Robert Dallek (2008), Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich (2009), Western American historian Elliott West (2010) and National Book Award winner Tim Egan in 2011.

Boise writer Alan Heathcock Stacks Up Awards

Boise writer Alan Heathcock, author of the award-winning collection of stories titled WoF, recently (See News, Page 12)
Pulitzer Prize-winning historian James McPherson gave the 8th Annual Distinguished Humanities Lecture in early October at the Coeur d’Alene Resort to an audience of nearly 300. McPherson spoke about “Why the Civil War Still Matters,” to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the start of the Civil War. McPherson has written several bestselling books including Battle Cry of Freedom, published in 1988, which won the Pulitzer Prize.

Earlier in the day, McPherson also spoke to several hundred Coeur d’Alene High School students. Prior to speaking at the Resort that evening, McPherson also greeted dozens of Benefactors at the beautiful home of Denny Davis and Kathy Canfield-Davis, sponsored in part by the Hagadone Corporation.

Enormous thanks goes to longtime supporter Marc Brinkmeyer and the Idaho Forest Group and to North Idaho Title for generously sponsoring the event. IHC thanks media sponsors Idaho Public Television and the Coeur d’Alene Press for promoting the event, and Barnes and Noble for facilitating book sales (with a portion of the sales going to support IHC programming).

The IHC is grateful to Benefactors for their added generosity, including the following firms and individuals that purchased Benefactor Tables: Idaho Forest Group, North Idaho Title, Hagadone Corporation, Intermax Networks, Coeur d’Alene Press, Coeur d’Alene Mines, Idaho Public Television, and the Margaret Reed Foundation.

Thank you also to Paul March, Chris Riggs, Mary Giannini and Art Harlow, Robert and Martha West, MaryBeth Runam, George and Juli Ives, Dean and Cindy Haagenson and Ginny Delong for the student scholarship donations.

We thank IHC’s northern Idaho board members, Kathy Aiken, Van Bahr, Mike Kennedy, and Jo Ann Nelson, and the planning committee: Virginia Johnson, Cindy Haagenson, Nancy Flagan, Fay Sweney, and Katie Sayler, whose dedication to the humanities in their community made this evening possible. Lastly tremendous thanks to Karen Yother for her instrumental assistance in helping to arrange, plan, and coordinate this event.

More than 600 attend dinner lecture by author, reporter and humorist Calvin Trillin in Boise

Calvin Trillin, author of numerous books, including his newly released collection Quite Enough of Calvin Trillin: Forty Years of Funny Stuff gave the 15th Annual Distinguished Humanities Lecture in early December in Boise to more than 600 people. Trillin’s talk focused on his writing experiences for the New Yorker and he recited some of his humorous poems.

 Earlier in the day Trillin was interviewed for Idaho Public Television’s Dialogue program and attended a Benefactors Reception at the beautiful Boise foothills home of George and Bev Harad.

The IHC thanks its underwriters for helping make a very successful evening. Thank you to the Offi ceMax Boise Community Fund and Futura Corporation for generously sponsoring the evening. In addition, IHC’s media sponsors Idaho Statesman, Boise State Public Radio and Idaho Public Television were invaluable partners.

Hotel 43 also generously donated a gorgeous suite for Mr. Trillin.

George and Bev Harad opened their lovely home to over 100 Benefactors for a pre-dinner reception. The reception was generously supported by the Boise Co-op and Jim Winer. An additional thank you goes to Barnes & Noble for facilitating book sales, with part of the proceeds going to support IHC programming.

The IHC also is grateful to the following firms and individuals that purchased Benefactor Tables: Steel Rivers, the Boise Heights group, the College of Idaho, Gallatin Public Affairs, Futura Corporation, Northwest Nazarame University, The Idaho Statesman, Idaho Public Television, and Steve and Carol Trillin.

Thank you to some very generous individuals and organizations who helped share the evening with area students through their donations to the student scholarship fund: William and Judith Collins, Gary and Janet Wyle, Sarah Churchill, Rey and Sist O’Connor, Chris Riggs, Charlene Curry, Chuck Guilford, Judy Bloom, Marc and Piper Field, Jenny Emery Davison and Tom and Alice Hennessey.

Finally, tremendous thanks to the event volunteers including Kate Riley, Doug Brown, Mark and Julie Bahr, Spice Holley, Phyllis Ward, and Mindi Pathlon.

1. Calvin Trillin speaks at the Idaho Statesman.
2. Calvin Trillin delivers his humor in deadpan style.
3. Guests enjoy the evening.
4. Trillin responds to questions from IHC Chair Kathy Aiken.
5. IHC Chair Kathy Aiken presents an Idaho Humanities souvenir to Trillin.
IHC Warmly Thanks Idaho Humanities Council Donors!

Contributions made between November 1, 2011 and January 26, 2012

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In memory of Harriet Badesheim
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In honor of Tom and Alice Hennessey
John & Karen Rosholt
In honor of Ron Hatzebuenheimer
Chapter AA PEO
In honor of Byron Johnson
Gayle Valentine & Keith Kiler
In honor of Jana Jones
Marilyn Howard
In honor of Lindy High
Marilyn Howard
In honor of Marybeth Flachbart
Marilyn Howard

In honor of Dixie Anderson
Brent & Carol Lloyd
In memory of Roberta DeLuce Hartnack
Brent & Carol Lloyd
In memory of Lorraine A. Clements
Roger & Bonnie Braizer
In memory of John and Warren Porter
Jerry & Julie Glenn

In Honor
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John & Karen Rosholt
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In honor of Byron Johnson
Gayle Valentine & Keith Kiler
In honor of Jana Jones
Marilyn Howard
In honor of Lindy High
Marilyn Howard
In honor of Marybeth Flachbart
Marilyn Howard

Thank you, Mary Inman

The IHC can use more friends like Mary Inman of Twin Falls. Mary was a long time member of the IHC’s Speakers Bureau and enjoyed talking in character as a 19th century pioneer about the struggles of migrating west and life on the Oregon Trail. Mary loved history and writing and was interested in nature and conservancy. Mary was active in the Twin Falls community, organized walking tours of the original Twin Falls Village and wrote the book Twin Falls Centurybook, 1904-2004. Mary also believed in the work of the IHC. We are deeply thankful to Mary for remembering the IHC in her will with a planned gift. She was humble, she did not want an obituary or a service, but she will be remembered for leaving a legacy of support to the IHC. Thank you for thinking of us, Mary.

Idaho Humanities 10
Idaho Writers and Readers Rendezvous slated for May 3-5 in Boise

The Idaho Writers Guild, in partnership with The Story Initiative at Boise State University, is pleased to revive the “Idaho Writers and Readers Rendezvous” a gathering of novelists, poets, publishers, agents, editors, and educators who will read their works, discuss the creative process, and explore the business of writing over the course of three days at Boise Centre on the Grove, May 3-5, 2012. The event is supported in part by the Idaho Humanities Council.

Patterned after regional and national conferences held across the country, the conference reprises the popular Idaho Writers & Readers Rendezvous that took place in McCall in the 1990s, a gathering that appealed as much to readers as to writers.

Headliners include award-winning Montana writers Tim Cahill, Idaho writers Mary Clearman Blew (“This Is Not the Ivy League”), Robert Wrigley (“A Beautiful Country”), Kim Barnes (A Country Called Home), Anthony Doerr (Memory Wall), and Clay Morgan (Santiago and the Drinking Parry), St. Martin’s Press editor Michelle Richter, Penguin Group editor Meghan Stevenson, and many others.

One belief held by all these authors is that a reader brings as much to the page as the writer brings, and that literature is a shared creative adventure. “The Writer as Reader” will be discussed at the conference, and readers of all interests are encouraged to attend.

Rendezvous highlights include a luncheon on Friday, May 4, featuring writer Laurie Notaro, and an awards dinner on Saturday, May 5, with a keynote address by Tim Cahill. These events are open to the public.

Notaro is a magazine writer and the author of nine books, including There’s a Slight Chance I Might Be Going to Hell and The Idiot-Girl’s Action Adventure Club.

Cahill has written for many magazines and is author of a number of books exploring humor and travel, including Lost in My Own Backyard: A Walk in Yellowstone Park, Road Fever: A High-Speed Travelogue, and many others.

Workshop topics include: “Publishing Today,” a panel discussion on the digitalization of the industry; “From Pitching to Publicity—How to Get Published and Make Your Editor Love You;” “How to Keep Your Readers Reading;” and “Creating A Marketing Plan For Your Book.”

Attendees also will have the opportunity to participate in one-on-one pitch sessions with agents and editors, as well as read from their work at open mic nights Thursday and Friday. Conference-affiliated contests for short story, screenplay and poetry, with cash prizes, are open to the public. Submissions are due March 10.

Information and registration are at www.idahowritersrenewzeous.com. For more information, contact organizer Doug Copsey at doug.copsey@gmail.com, 208-841-5634.

Prize-winning writer Anthony Doerr to speak in Coeur d’Alene, October 12

Prize-winning writer Anthony Doerr will be the speaker at the IHC’s 9th Annual Northern Idaho Distinguished Humanities Lecture and Dinner on Friday, October 12, 2012, at the Coeur d’Alene Resort. Tickets to the event are available now.


His latest collection of stories (and two novellas) is Memory Wall, which features stories set on four different continents, each primarily about the fragility of collective and personal memory. The book won the 2010 Story Prize, and the title story of the collection currently is being adapted as a feature film.

Doerr’s short fiction has won four O. Henry Prizes and has been anthologized in The Best American Short Stories, The Anchor Book of New American Short Stories, and The Scribner Anthology of Contemporary Fiction. He has won the Barnes & Noble Discover Prize, the Rome Prize, the New York Public Library’s Young Lions Fiction Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship, an NEA Fellowship, the National Magazine Award for Fiction, two Pushcart Prizes, the Pacific Northwest Book Award, three Oshioa Book Awards, the 2010 Story Prize, and the 2011 London Sunday Times EFG Short Story Award, which is considered the largest prize in the world for a single short story.

His books have twice been listed as New York Times “Notable Books” and made a number of other year-end “Best Of” lists. In 2007, the British literary magazine Granta placed Doerr on its list of 21 Best Young American novelists.

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, and educated at Bowdoin College in Maine, Doerr lives in Boise with his wife and two sons. He teaches now and then in the low-residency MFA program at Warren Wilson College in North Carolina, and his book reviews and travel essays appear in the New York Times. He also writes a regular column on science books for the Boston Globe.

Tickets are available now for purchase online at www.idahohumanities.org under “IHC Events,” or by calling the IHC toll free at 888-345-5346. General tickets are $45. Benefactor tickets are $100, offering an invitation to a pre-dinner reception with Doerr in a private home and preferred seating at the dinner and lecture. IHC always recommends reserving tickets early as the event often sells out.

NEWS (Continued from Page 8)


IHC Hires New Staff Member

If you call the IHC office you’ll be greeted by a new voice. Debra Schlechte joined the IHC staff as the new Administrative Assistant and Speakers Bureau Coordinator in the fall. Prior to joining the staff, she received her Dental Assistant Associates Degree from Carrington College and worked at Micron Technology. Debra enjoys reading, traveling and spending time with her husband, daughter, and dog in Meridian.

2013 Thomas Wolfe Society Conference to be Held in Boise

On May 24-25, 2013, the Thomas Wolfe Society will hold its annual conference in Boise, as it explores, among other topics, Thomas Wolfe’s connections to the American West. The Thomas Wolfe Society was established in 1979 to promote appreciation and study of the works of this famous American author. Members meet annually in May at locations in the U.S. or Europe visited by Wolfe. Recent and upcoming conference locations include Savannah, Georgia; Paris, France; Asheville, North Carolina; and St. Louis, Missouri.

Wolfe is best known for his debut novel, Look Homeward, Angel (1929), the story of Eugene Gant, a young writer coming of age in the midst of a dysfunctional family in Altamont, the fictional version of Wolfe’s hometown, Asheville, North Carolina. Wolfe’s well known posthumous novel You Can’t Go Home Again (1940), chronicles the 1929 economic collapse and the rise of Nazism. Critics have frequently noted in You Can’t Go Home Again evidence of an artistic turning point in Wolfe’s later career, one in which he grew away from the inward-looking modernist aesthetics of writers such as Joyce and Proust to a greater emphasis on social realism.

In addition to two days of scholarly papers devoted to Wolfe and the West and other areas related to the writer’s life and work, the Wolfe Conference will feature a dramatization of the correspondence between Thomas Wolfe and Idaho writer Vardis Fisher. The Society will also host its annual banquet at Leku Oma, featuring a keynote address by Dr. Tara Penny, Associate Professor of English at Boise State University and Acting Director of the Hemingway Western Studies Center. Other Conference activities will take place at the Grove Hotel in downtown Boise. Anyone interested in attending the conference or in learning more about Thomas Wolfe or the Wolfe Society can contact George Hovis, Society Vice President, at hovisgr@oneonta.edu.

What Are You Reading?

In each issue of Idaho Humanities, several readers tell us what they’ve been reading and what they recommend.

Reader: Karin Davis, Burley
Occupation: Circulation Supervisor, Burley Public Library
Book: A Patriot’s Handbook: Songs, Poems, Stories, and Speeches Celebrating the Land We Love by Caroline Kennedy

Caroline Kennedy’s selections for this book span time, cultures, and politics. She offers a tremendous scrapbook of literary Americana. I remembered many selections from school, but she introduced me to more selections than I had ever read. All prompted me to think about where America is, where we’ve been, and where we are going.

This is a magnificent land, and the book reflects that. Ronald Reagan’s speech to the students of Moscow University in Russia after the disintegration of the Soviet Union could have been spoken to our own students in Moscow, Idaho, and to students around the world. “I Like Americans,” written by Edna St. Vincent Millay, was brand new to me, and echoed my sentiments exactly. Page after page of Kennedy’s book was exhilarating and encouraging.

Reader: Julie Whitesell Westen, Hailey
Occupation: Writer, author of The Good Times Are All Gone Now: Life, Death and Rebirth in an Idaho Mining Town
Book: The Cat’s Table, a novel by Michael Ondaatje

Three boys traveling on a sea voyage without parents from Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) to England in the 1950’s wind up at the cat’s table—the farthest from the Captain’s table—along with a postman of guests not important enough for other tables. Mynah, one of the boys, tells the story of their adventures, ranging from wildly humorous to seriously dangerous. Their fierce bond of three weeks leads them between the decks and holds of the ship to lessons in jazz, literature, conspiracy, death and political brouhaha from their tablemates and others they encounter. Mynah’s relationship with a beautiful older cousin sparks the first stirrings of desire.

As Mynah reflects on these experiences in a montage of present and past, the reader finds that little as it appears on the surface. Through Ondaatje’s exquisitely detailed observations of character and evocative writing, Mynah and the reader learn that truth can be spun like a roulette wheel, that beauty can sting as well as glow, and that not all mysteries can be solved, nor need they be.

Reader: Adam Sowards
Occupation: Associate Professor of History at the University of Idaho, Moscow
Book: 11/22/63 by Stephen King

Around the holidays, I generally need a break from historical and philosophical treatises. So this year I turned to a very different direction for me—the master of horror, Stephen King, and his newest book, 11/22/63. On the way to light-weight “fluff,” though, I found a historical and philosophical novel. At least partially. 11/22/63 is the story of a man who goes back in time to stop the JFK assassination. Of course, time travel is tricky. As King writes numerous times, “The past is obdurate.” It doesn’t like to be changed. What better message for an historian?

I have enjoyed 11/22/63 for its story and King’s pretty accurate sense of the past. But it has been most interesting to contemplate alternate histories and the larger notions about the changeability (or not) of the past.