The Immigration and Ethnic History Newsletter

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And Digital Assistant Editor Bryan Zehngut-Willits (New York University)

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Greetings from the new editor!
As we look forward to the summer, I wanted to drop a short note to introduce myself. I am a professor of history at California State University, San Bernardino where I research the immigrant experience during the American Civil War. I am thrilled to join the IEHS as the newsletter editor, and look forward to continuing Alison Efford's excellent work on this publication.

I want to point to a new addition to the newsletter, the **Public History Spotlight** in which we plan to showcase ways in which public history projects are being used to highlight the diverse historical narrative, give voice to the past, and help to educate the general public. I would also like you to encourage you to submit any recent publications or exciting news so that we can celebrate your many achievements. Please feel free to contact me directly at rkeating@csusb.edu if you have any suggestions as to how I might improve this publication.

### NARA’s Chinese Heritage Citizen Archivist Mission

One of the newest citizen archivist missions of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is the Chinese Heritage Citizen Archivist Mission. [1] It grew out of a much smaller digitization effort started by Rosalind Sagara and the Save Our Chinatown Committee of Riverside, California (SOCC), in partnership with the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, and a small team of student researchers from California State University, San Bernardino, led by me and funded by a Community-Based Participatory Research Mini-Grant Award from California State University’s Office of Community Engagement. As the project grew, the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California added crucial funds and volunteers to the project. The results open up new opportunities for teaching and research on Chinese immigration and Chinese American history as well as an example of the benefits of publicly-engaged approaches to historical research.

The Chinese Heritage Citizen Archivist Mission draws on the expertise of descendants of Chinese immigrants to use their specialized knowledge to aid in the transcription and tagging process.

The focus of the Chinese Heritage Citizen Archivist Mission is the Chinese Exclusion Case Files from NARA Record Group 85 - Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. These files provide vital information pertaining to Chinese immigrants applying for approval to travel outside of the United States and return under the terms of the 1894 Gresham- Yang Treaty. The contents of these files include photographs, physical descriptions, and transcripts of interviews with applicants who sometimes discussed their place of birth, their date of immigration to the United States, cities of residence, occupation and previous residences since arrival. [Read More]
The Citizen Archivist program at NARA supports its efforts to digitize more of its records in order to make their holdings more accessible to a broader audience. Volunteers register for the program and are invited to transcribe and “tag” historical documents making more of NARA’s digitized collections searchable.

From the IEHS President

It has been a great honor for me to serve my first year as president of the Immigration and Ethnic History. Despite the hybrid format, our meetings at the OAH in April were invigorating, and it was great to see so many familiar faces (behind the masks) both in-person and online as we awarded our prizes, conducted our annual business, and planned for the year ahead.

As always, let me begin by

I offer my sincere thanks to Julie Greene, Anna Law, Maddalena Marinari (chair), Mark Steiner, and Omar Valerio-Jimenez, who agreed to serve on the first Professional Environment Committee to implement our policy.

Our other big project during the past year was to unveil the new IEHS website and enhance our online presence and communications infrastructure. This has been a great
expressing my gratitude. I would especially like to thank Maddalena Marinari, our VP/President Elect, for her work in all aspects of the Society since she assumed her current role in April 2021; our Secretary, Leigh Ann Wilson, has done a wonderful job after so many years of service by Tim Draper in that role; Alison Efford, who stepped down from the Newsletter this year after five innovative years as editor; and our new editor Ryan Keating. I also want to thank the outgoing members of the Executive Board who provided such valuable service to IEHS over the last three years: Debbie Kang, Julian Lim, and Sarah McNamara. Finally, I am deeply grateful to the chairs and members of the Program Committee, the Nominating Committee, the Saloutos Award Committee, the First Book Award Committees, the Outstanding Dissertation Committee, the George E. Pozzetta Committee, the Qualey Committee, and our various ad hoc committees. (For full details, see: https://iehs.org/about/people/.)

This is also the time for me to welcome the three Executive Board members elected this year: Alison Efford, Hana Murayama, and Uzma Quraishi. We are so glad you’re on board.

The most important project the Society undertook this past year was to revise and implement the IEHS Policy on Harassment and Sexual Misconduct. Our new policy, approved by the Board in September 2021, addresses a wide range of forms of harassment while retaining the central emphasis on sexual misconduct, and outlines a success. I salute the combined efforts of our Digital Humanities Officer Heather Lee, our Social Media Officer Sergio González, our Digital and Public Communications Coordinator Bryan Willits, and the other IEHS members who participated in the process. As president of the IEHS, my three-fold agenda for 2022-23, building on the accomplishments I have described here, is to:

- Implement and refine our Policy on Harassment and Sexual Misconduct as needed.
- Continue to improve our online presence and communications strategy.
- Boost and streamline IEHS membership, where we have a variety of opportunities to boost our visibility and retention, and to welcome more practitioners of our thriving field.

We are already looking forward to OAH 2023 in Los Angeles, in the hope that we will reconvene fully in person and resume the great tradition of our Annual Banquet.
policy that can realistically be implemented in line with our resources and in conjunction with the OAH and AHA.

News from the Programming Committee

The IEHS online book series continues! This summer, the event will feature Maria Quintana, who will speak about her book, Contracting Freedom: Race, Empire, and U.S. Guestworker Programs, and Moon-Ho Jung, who will discuss Menace to Empire: Anticolonial Solidarities and the Transpacific Origins of the U.S. Security State. Be on the lookout for an email from the society with more details about this event!

If you are a member of the Immigration and Ethnic History Society who recently published a book, and would like to be considered for future events in this series, please contact the programming committee at programmingcommittee@iehs.org

In Memoriam: Frederick C. Luebke, 1927-2021

By Walter D. Kamphoefner

Frederick C. Luebke passed away on November 27, 2021, in Eugene, Oregon. Retired since 1994, Fred Luebke’s rich body of scholarship was unified, as he put it, by a “point of view that seeks to transcend
was the Charles J. Mach Distinguished Professor Emeritus of History at University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Like many people in our field, Fred grew up in somewhat of an ethnocultural enclave, “self-contained” as he put it. But with all his success in mainstream academia, he never forgot where he came from. A fourth-generation German American, Fred was the grandson, nephew, grand-nephew, and cousin, of Missouri Synod Lutheran ministers. Born in 1927 in Reedsburg, Wisconsin, the son of a Lutheran parochial schoolteacher, Fred was trained as a teacher at one of the many Concordia Colleges, in River Forest, Illinois. It was there he met his future wife, Norma Wukasch, herself descended from two generations of Lutheran teachers.

Luebke’s remarkable teaching career spanned every level from grade school to grad school. Starting out as a Lutheran elementary teacher - first in East St. Louis and soon in California - he did graduate work on the side to earn his M.A. at Claremont Graduate School in 1958. Now teaching high school, he began work on a doctorate at the University of Southern California, until he was appointed to the history faculty of another Concordia, in Seward, Nebraska, in 1961. He completed his doctoral work at University of Nebraska in 1966, and two years later was appointed to replace his doctoral advisor in Lincoln. What followed was a career defined by remarkable scholarly productivity.

Luebke published an even dozen filiopietism [i.e. ancestor worship] and to find the place of German immigrants in the broad context of social history.” He followed Booker T. Washington’s advice to “Let down your bucket where you are at,” but if he researched the provinces, he was never provincial. He drew upon his unique insights and perspectives gained from his insider status, but always maintained a clear-eyed, objective viewpoint that resisted the temptation to romanticize German Americans or paint over their internal differences. Nor did he hesitate to criticize what he saw as naïve or misguided strategies on the part of ethnic leaders.

Fred always wore his erudition lightly, given at times to a bit of self-deprecation. He shares a surname with a former German Bundespresident known for putting his foot in his mouth, giving rise to all kinds of jokes. At one bilingual symposium in Germany we both attended, Fred apologized at the beginning of his talk for speaking in English, saying that if he spoke German, he feared that it would give rise to another whole round of Luebke jokes.

But his German was better than he let on. While on a guest professorship at the University of Hannover in 1992, he visited his ancestral homeland near Osnabrück that his great-great-grandparents left in 1835, and started a lifelong friendship with a local couple there.

In 2005, after some years of serious globetrotting, Luebke and his wife moved to Eugene, Oregon, where their son David is a professor at the
books, seven of them edited and five authored, several of which have become standard works, indeed classics, in the field of German American studies. His crowning achievement is undoubtedly Bonds of Loyalty: German Americans and World War I, published in 1974 and still unsurpassed in its field. His work, Germans in Brazil, also concentrating on the World War I experience, is one of the finest pieces of comparative history of any ethnic group. His early work, Immigrants and Politics: The Germans of Nebraska, 1880-1900 (which appeared in 1969), and particularly his edited collection Ethnic Voters and the Election of Lincoln, which followed two years later, stressed ethno-religious factors in German American political behavior.

Along the way, Luebke earned the highest teaching and research awards at the University of Nebraska, as well as a Fulbright to Germany and a Rockefeller Foundation Scholar-in-Residence appointment at Bellagio, Italy. A specialist not only on ethnicity, but also on Nebraska and the West, Luebke served as Director of the Center for Great Plains Studies and the founding editor of its journal, which now awards an annual article prize named after him.

University of Oregon, specializing in German history. When Luebke retired, he left academic pursuits behind, but he retained a vital interest in politics and current events, expressed by frequent Facebook posts reflecting his indignation during the previous administration.

Luebke is survived by his wife Norma, with whom he celebrated 70 years of marriage shortly before his death, along with their four children and three grandchildren.

In 2009, his alma mater, Concordia University Chicago, recognized him with an honorary doctorate, and in 2010 he was awarded the Distinguished Achievement Award of the Society for German American Studies. Among his many contributions to the IEHS, he served on the editorial board of the Journal of American Ethnic History from its founding in 1981 until 1997, beyond his retirement.

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IEHS 2021 Award Winners
Theodore Saloutos Book Award
Sarah Coleman, *The Walls Within: The Politics of Immigration in Modern America*

First Book Award
Jessica Ordaz, *The Shadow of El Centro: A History of Migrant Incarceration and Solidarity*

Outstanding Dissertation Award
Ivôn Padilla-Rodriguez, “Undocumented Youth: The Labor, Education, and Rights of Migrant Latinx Children in Twentieth-Century America” (Columbia)

George E. Pozzetta Dissertation Awards

Connie Thomas, Queen Mary University of London: “Regional Identity and the Foundations of US Migration Policy in the Early American Republic, 1776-1804.”

Carlton E. Qualey Memorial Article Award
Recent Member Publications


Jade Samara Piaia, Priscila Lena Farias, and Andris Straumanis. "Lihdumneeks: The Use of Antiqua Typefaces in a Pioneering Latvian Newspaper Printed in Brazil." *Baltistica* 56 no. 2 (2021), 321-354

Chinese Exclusion Act Case Files often feature interviews with additional Chinese residents, family members, and business associates about their business relations with one another, particularly offering corroborating testimony about financial assets Chinese laborers have accumulated through investments in other Chinese businesses. Since Chinese merchants were exempted from Chinese Exclusion Acts (1882 to 1943), these files also contain similar applications from merchants with variations based on their need to prove non-laborer status, which included testimony provided by “White Americans.” [2]

In 2013, the Save Our Chinatown Committee (SOCC) initiated a community-based research project to review the Chinese Exclusion Act Case files held at the National Archives at Riverside with the purpose of curating biographical information about early Chinese pioneers in Inland Southern California. SOCC intended to compare findings from the National Archives with previous place-based research conducted at other local archives to produce short biographies of Riverside’s Chinese pioneers to share with the public, and to learn more about the historical significance of Riverside’s archaeological site where the Chinatown once stood.

In 2015, SOCC partnered with me and some advanced undergraduate students of history and public history when I was professor of history at California State

This pilot project proved successful. The team digitized the files of approximately 250 individual Chinese immigrants, found in approximately ninety-two archival boxes, who lived and worked at some point in the area of San Bernardino and/or Riverside, two major destinations for Chinese immigrants in the inland region of Southern California.

From these records, the team produced ID cards (inspired by the ID card program at Manzanar) of unique individuals to share with SOCC for public education and outreach purposes. The pilot project also contributed to the citywide historic context statement for Chinese American history in Riverside. [3] This early effort demonstrated that this particular set of documents could have a widespread appeal to academic historians, historic preservationists, historical archaeologists, genealogists, descendants of Chinese immigrants, and community groups working to preserve Chinese immigrant historic and archaeological sites.

The file of Wong Yee [4] shows why these records were useful to the Save Our Chinatown Committee and to the historic context research for Chinese American history in Riverside. It also illustrates how networks of extended family and Chinese business networks tied immigrants together across what, in 1897, were distant geographies.
University, San Bernardino (I am now Director of the Honors College and Professor of History at Southern Oregon University). The purpose of this project was to digitize the Chinese Exclusion Case Files of individuals who lived and worked in the inland region of Southern California, with a special emphasis on Riverside.

Quon Quong

Quon Quong moved to the United States in 1894. He left behind a wife, two sons, and a daughter in China.

After moving to Riverside, Quon Quong lived in the boiler room and working as a chef at the Glenwood Hotel, where he earned $135 a month. He was able to save up enough money to buy lots 7 & 8 of block 3 at Prospect Place in Riverside at the price of $500 for each lot.

In 1906, Quon Quong applied for a permit to return to China and to bring his 18-year-old son with him to California to attend Stanford University.

NARA, RG 85, INS, District 16, Chinese Exclusion Act Case Files, Box 8, File #334.
Won Quen Luck was the adopted son of a native born U.S. citizen, Wong Shoon Jung. This status should have granted him U.S. citizenship. But after an 8-year battle, he was still only recognized legally as the “son of a native.” He attended school for two years, from 1916-1917 at Grant School in Riverside before working on his father’s farm. On September 13, 1918, he registered for the draft during World War I, but was never called to service. He filed for a certificate to leave and return to the U.S. on November 12 1915. Won was finally readmitted on May 3 1923 as a “son of a native,” having been forced to stay in China for several more years while awaiting approval for reentry. His case continued to be investigated as late as 1926.

NARA, RG 85, INS, District 16, Chinese Exclusion Act Case Files, Box 15, File #940 2/95.
All interviews are different, but any Ng Poon Chew wrote: “Chinese
“laborer” applying to leave and return to the U.S. had to provide details about their employment and work history, their investments, and also had to provide two witnesses who could corroborate their claims. These are extraordinary records that preserve photos and details about the lives of individuals who might not otherwise have left such detailed records in such a way that would today be accessible to the public. The stories contained in the Chinese Exclusion Case Files reveal that the lives of Chinese immigrants and their descendants were shaped by Chinese Exclusion laws and policies, but the laws did not align with the complexity and diversity of their lives. Ng Poon Chew wrote in 1908 that exclusion laws were unjust, and ignored the diverse occupations of those excluded as laborers, but who were not actually laborers in the generic sense. Why grant exemptions for narrowly defined populations, such as merchants, students, and diplomats, and define all others as “laborers”? traders, salesmen, clerks, buyers, bookkeepers, bankers, accountants, managers, storekeepers, agents, cashiers, interpreters, physicians, proprietors of restaurants and laundries, employers, actors, newspaper editors, and even preachers and missionaries of Christianity” all had been classified as laborers under the exclusion laws and were subject to exclusion, and if already in the United States and therefore protected by treaties between the United States and China, were scrutinized, excluded from the benefits afforded exempt classes, and suffered undue hardships under the law. [6] The membership of the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, as well as the broader community of Chinese Americans of Southern California, were deeply interested in this project. It has the potential of opening doors for families trying to connect their own histories in the United States with their ancestors’ lives in China.
This proved difficult due to the frequent use of paper sons and daughters to navigate against immigration restrictions, the frequent errors in the ways immigration officials and census workers transcribed Chinese names, and other impediments, including lack of access to genealogical records in The Chinese Heritage Citizen Archivist Mission launched officially on May 8, 2020 as an outgrowth of these early grassroots efforts. Despite the fact that archival facilities were closed to the public due to pandemic safety protocols, the project moved forward. NARA was inspired by the initial interest and
China, and at times, language barriers that made it difficult to make all of the names represented in archival records searchable - including those names written in Chinese characters that sometimes bore similarities to names recorded in Roman characters, but also sometimes hold the key to connecting immigrants' lives across national borders. [7] A donor to the CHSSC helped pay for additional interns who began digitizing the holdings at NARA in Riverside.

The work of digitizing the files proved slow-going for several reasons. Part of it had to do with using student interns for the digitization work. Students from two area universities - CSUSB and University of California, Riverside worked as paid interns for the project over the early years, but this came with significant challenges. Training students takes time, and even once trained, they were simply less productive than NARA trained personnel. They also had varied, inconsistent schedules due to being full-time students. The location of the archives is remote for students, adding to the challenges that from my experience seem to be inherent when working with students on any project.

So even though student workers learned valuable lessons in primary sources, preservation, digitization, and community-engaged research, relying on their labor, even when paid, was not going to be a long-term solution. Some volunteers from the community helped with the digitization process at first, but the pandemic closed the archives to the public. It became clear that better volunteer efforts of the public to launch a pilot version of this project, and was certain the records warranted broader public access due to the richness of the records. With new equipment provided through a generous donation, and the public ready to transcribe and tag documents as they became digitized, a partnership was born that was able to move forward despite pandemic-related restrictions. Gwen Granados invited other branches to join the effort, and immigration specialist Elizabeth Burnes expanded the search to include other digitized records that related to Chinese immigration and Chinese American history.

The project now includes continued digitization efforts focused on the Chinese Exclusion Case Files from RG 82 stored in Riverside, Boston, and Philadelphia, and New York, and already digitized records from other record groups, including the District Courts (RG 21), U.S. Customs Service (RG 36), Coast Guard (RG 26), Department of State (RG 59), and Department of Justice (RG 60). Included in the project currently are 1,664 records. To date, about 550 of those records remain to be transcribed. The 1,114 records that have been transcribed, contain 20,613 pages and have been transcribed by 574 unique contributors.

The Chinese Heritage Citizen Archivist Mission is a part of NARA’s citizen archivist project. NARA’s National Archives Catalog contains millions of digitized pages of records. Transcription is an important way for archivists to improve search results
equipment would make the job move along more quickly and would yield higher quality results. Furthermore, instead of community members doing the mechanical work (which they were no longer allowed to do anyway as long as the archives were closed to the public), they could be more useful doing what only they were most qualified to do - transcribing and tagging the digitized records. So another donor gave CHSSC $13,000 in funds to purchase an overhead scanner, speeding up the process of digitization for NARA staff, allowing citizen archivists to do what they did best - transcribe, translate, and tag historical documents digitally. and increase accessibility to historical records. Since many of the documents at the National Archives are handwritten records such as letters, memos, and reports, the words within those documents are not picked up by a search in NARA's Catalog. Typewritten records can be searched in some cases using OCR (Optical Character Recognition), but OCR-extracted text is seldom as accurate as manual transcription. When one transcribes (or types out) exactly what you see in the document, that text becomes searchable in the National Archives Catalog for all users. NARA likes to say that transcription helps to “unlock history!”

Cherstin Lyon is the director of the Honors College at Southern Oregon University. She is an expert in Asian American history, immigration, and law, and public and oral history. She has published numerous books and articles, most notably, Patriots and Prisons: Japanese American Wartime Citizenship, Civil Disobedience, and Historical Memory (Temple University Press, 2012).

Notes:
5. While I have not verified that the Wong Fong interviewed in NARA case file 726 is the same one Wong Yee referred to in his interview, Wong Fong owned interest in and worked at an impressive list of gardens in the area between San Bernardino and Riverside. See: Wong Fong, December 16, 1899, NARA RG 85, file 726, https://catalog.archives.gov/id/176234892.
Public History Spotlight
The Irish American Heritage Museum, Albany NY
Elizabeth Stack, PhD

I became the executive director of the Irish American Heritage Museum in April 2018, after being an Assistant Dean at the Institute of Irish Studies at Fordham University since 2010. I taught Irish American, Irish, and American history and administered the program which facilitated students studying in Ireland for a semester or studying Gaelic during the summer. I had been a high school teacher before that, both in Ireland and the United Arab Emirates, where I also taught teachers in a new pedagogy program that the UAE government established. So, the museum was a big change for me but one I looked forward to! Obviously, there is still a huge element of education in my role, albeit in a more public, less structured way. I often think it is the best parts of teaching – the sharing of ideas, creating content, and collaborating with other people – but none of the grading! In many ways, it is the best of both words, but it came with a steep learning curve, and many challenges.

The Irish American Heritage Museum explores the contributions, history, and culture of Irish people in America, and fosters dialogue and exchange between America and Ireland today. By sharing their stories, we strive to create connections and community between

The permanent galleries of the Museum include full-size reconstructions of an Irish cottage and a tenement apartment, the building of which I oversaw in 2020, and a scale model of a Great Hunger-era workhouse. We are also home to a library, with an extensive collection of books, archival materials, and records, and once a month a genealogist is on site to help visitors work on their family trees. The Museum hosts approximately eight to ten programs a month, including lectures, musical performances, cooking demonstrations, film screenings, plays, staged readings, and more. Most programs are available both in-person and virtually, which allows us to reach viewers across the entire United States and in Ireland.

When I was hired in 2018, the previous director had left seven months earlier, so there was no hand-over; even his laptop was broken beyond repair! The administrator resigned not long after I began – it turns out, she had also applied for my role. So, I was the only employee, and remain the only full-time employee, although I do have administrative help three days a week. There is a team of volunteers who act as docents in the museum itself, so I am rarely “front of house,” unless specifically asked...
all Americans, as we appreciate and study the universality of the immigrant story in American history. My own experience as an immigrant informs my view of the mission of the museum to preserve and share Irish heritage and culture. We strive to build on the relationship between the diaspora and home, by encouraging members to share the stories of their ancestors, and by helping preserve the culture to pass it on to their own descendants. As an entity that educates about immigration, the Museum strives to contextualize the story of Irish immigrants as part of the American story.

The Irish American Heritage Museum (IAHM) is a nonprofit organization based in Albany, New York. The only organization of its kind in the United States, the Museum is a resource for the 34 million Americans with Irish heritage to connect with the history and culture of their ancestors, and for all visitors to discover the history of the Irish in America. Through both a permanent collection and a series of changing exhibitions - usually free and all open to the public - the Museum displays artifacts, recounts first-person stories, and explores the history of a variety of Irish immigrants and individuals with Irish heritage, from U.S. presidents and cultural icons to nameless soldiers and factory workers. The collection includes artifacts belonging to Irish American organizations, historic costumes, devotional items, and music recordings. Inheriting a strategic plan that the board had put together, I steered the museum through the move from the small site we were then in, to a larger, City-owned property with much more space. I oversaw the building of a replica thatched cottage and tenement apartment, which was funded by a grant from the Irish government, as well as renovations to the office space, theater, and front gallery.

The years since the move, which happened to coincide with Covid, have been incredibly busy. I wrote the content for the new permanent exhibitions and contracted with the designers to have these printed and installed, which is happening this summer. Applying for grants and government support through programs like the American Rescue Plan and the Paycheck Protection Program were time consuming but successful, and we were very lucky to get both PPP loans, and a Shuttered Venue grant. The Shuttered Venue grant was initially established to save Broadway theaters, but museum associations successfully advocated to have museums included – there needed to be fixed seating in the space. So, we were very lucky that we qualified for that loan as many museums did not. We have also received a $50,000 grant from our local assembly members to get the exhibitions installed and to help improve our virtual content.
As part of my routine work, I write a daily “On This Day” post on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, a monthly member newsletter, and host (or deliver) our weekly talks. I write several other themed exhibitions for display in our front gallery, as well as present talks at other institutions and heritage partner sites. I have hosted two book clubs designed by Humanities New York, directed a play which was presented at the museum, and designed several lecture series including Immigrant Activism; First Responders: Then and Now; Communities in a Pandemic; Collars, Canals & Conflagrations: The Irish in the Capital Region, and the Centenary of the Irish War of Independence series. I have given several media presentations including on WAMC’s Vox Pop, where we discussed Irish food and immigrant traditions; WMHT’s A House for Arts; local news shows; and the Adrian Flannelly Irish Radio Network.

This has not been a problem when inviting speakers to present at the museum, or even in our social media posts, although I do monitor the more potentially controversial ones in case there are inappropriate comments. I have partnered with the Underground Railroad Education Center and Ten Broeck Mansion here in Albany, as well as the Irish Cultural Center in Canton, MA, and Black and Irish in Dublin, to widen the museum’s reach and diversify its community and audience. I have also specifically worked with the Refugee and Immigrant Support Services of Emmaus here in Albany, as well as LGBTQ+ campaigner Brendan Fay - the first time any Irish American organization exhibited his advocacy work for St. Patrick’s Day for All. We have also collaborated with Out! Boulder and Professor LeAnne Howe of the Choctaw Nation, on projects. This need for inclusivity is something I will have to navigate while remaining true to the stated mission of the museum.
We are fortunate that we often have interns from the University of Albany, Siena College, and Skidmore. These students help with the research for the Facebook posts, or even sometimes with the temporary exhibits. I also have a core group of about six volunteers who will docent at the museum or help decorate it for Christmas or St. Patrick’s Day, so while I do work long hours and am responsible for the more academic content, I have a lot of help too.

We recently completed another strategic planning session with the NY Council of Nonprofits, and part of that reflection involved writing a new mission statement. Sometimes I am concerned about the narrow focus of the museum – we are literally called the Irish American Heritage Museum - so I must balance celebrating or examining the contributions of the Irish to American society, which are important and date back to colonial times, with the push to be diverse and inclusive. We do not shy away from painful topics and cover the tension between Irish American workers or soldiers and other groups throughout American history, but I am always conscious of the reception my own members will give that, and of mission creep.

The last two years have been difficult, and I know that museums and other heritage sites continue to worry about the future as we still grapple with Covid 19 and its variants. We have learned that being "virtual" by holding our talks online will probably be with us for quite some time. While this can sometimes look messy, and it is a lot of work trying to cater to an online audience and a physical one, there are advantages. Not only are we now able to have speakers from further afield than ever, but we have members tuning in from across the country - indeed, from across the world. Despite our in-person visitors still being only at 33% of what they had been, we had an online audience of over 37,000 people this year! So, perhaps this hybrid version is the way of the future. As we finalize our new, permanent exhibitions, we intend to make some version of them available online too, so that we will truly be in the 21st century. Taking over a small museum has been a rewarding and stimulating challenge. Being thrown in at the deep end, and having a blank slate as such, was best for both myself and the museum, because there were no constraints of having to do things in a particular way, there were no expectations or traditions that I had to maintain. I just had to start work!
Elizabeth Stack holds an MA in Anglo-Irish Relations from University College Dublin and a PhD in History from Fordham University. Her work looks at the experiences of Irish and German immigrants in New York at the turn of the twentieth century, as they grappled with the immigration restriction movements of that time.

You can follow the Irish American Heritage Museum on Instagram @ irishamericamus or check out their webpage at www.irish-us.org

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Updates from the IEHS Online Book Series

Andy Urban

On April 20, I had the honor of moderating an IEHS Online Book talk with Amanda Demmer and Michael Jin, two wonderful scholars whose work is linked by a shared interest in historicizing how the governance of migration has been a feature of foreign relations between nation-states. Demmer’s After Saigon’s Fall: Refugees and US-Vietnamese Relations, 1975-2000 (Cambridge University Press, 2021), explores how the resettlement of more than one million Vietnamese refugees in the United States in the two decades following 1975, shaped political debates about the forms that “normalization” between the two countries might take.

Jin’s new book, Citizens, Immigrants, Demmer and Jin’s discussion of their work drew a global audience eager to attend this virtual forum. Demmer shared that a main intervention she sought to make was to reframe how normalization represented a process undertaken by governments in Washington and Hanoi rather than a moment, in which Vietnamese migrants, NGOs, and veterans were key actors. In this regard, “war and peace…were entangled rather than opposed.” Subjects such as family reunification, the status of American POW/MIAs, the release of detainees held in Vietnamese education camps, and the roles that American veterans like John McCain and John Kerry played in normalization debates, complicate our understanding of what the war’s end
and the Stateless: A Japanese American Diaspora in the Pacific (Stanford University Press, 2022), examines the more than 50,000 Nisei (the American-born children of Japanese immigrants) who returned to Japan prior to World War Two. These Japanese Americans, Jin argues, were members of a “highly mobile transpacific diaspora” who encountered not only systemic discrimination in the United States, where their rights of citizenship were denied or abridged, but scrutiny from the Japanese imperial state about the roles they might place as subjects of an expanding empire.

The “narrow conceptualization” of Japanese American loyalty, which Jin explains as a response to mass incarceration of World War Two, and the desire to highlight the unjust and illiberal history of the camps, has pushed aside more nuanced understandings of Japanese transnationalism. Offering numerous individual case studies, Jin’s book replaces stereotypes with human realities.

Jin argued that the migration of Nisei back to Japan needs to be situated in the context of their desire to use mobility to escape pervasive American racism, and to take advantage of Japan’s emergent status as a cosmopolitan empire with settler opportunities in places such as Korea and Manchukuo. “As transnational migrants,” Jin noted, Nisei migrants “traversed multiple national and colonial borders, from the Jim Crow American West to the Japanese colonial frontier in Northeast Asia,” and, in certain cases, from concentration camps set up in places like Arizona in 1942, to Hiroshima on the eve of the atomic bombing.

The IEHS will be making a video of this talk available on Youtube, and I encourage members to check it out. We should all be grateful to Torrie Hester and Hidetaka Hirota for organizing a series that has provided such a vibrant intellectual community in these pandemic times.
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