



photo: Emmanuel Joseph

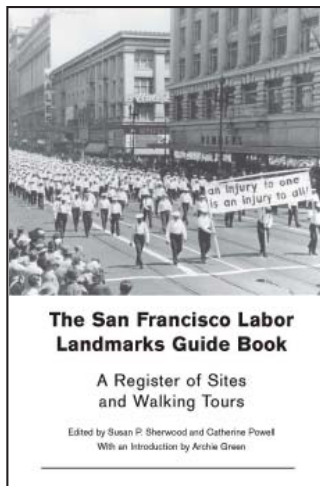
# LABOR ARCHIVES *and* RESEARCH CENTER

San Francisco State University Newsletter No. 22 ~ 2009

## Hot Off the Press

The Labor Archives is pleased to announce the release of our new publication - *The San Francisco Labor Landmarks Guidebook: A Register of Sites and Walking Tours*.

This worker's guide to San Francisco will take you on a tour of the city's labor past and present – working class neighborhoods, labor hangouts, monuments, murals, memorials, and buildings that reflect the history of the people who built the “City by the Bay.” Discover 88 different sites and five neighborhood walking tours covering an array of landmarks from the unique point of view of those who work in its stores, labor in its hotels and run its cable cars.



To order copies, call (415) 564-4010. The guidebook is also available at Modern Times, Green Apple, and Bird & Beckett bookstores.

## LaborFest



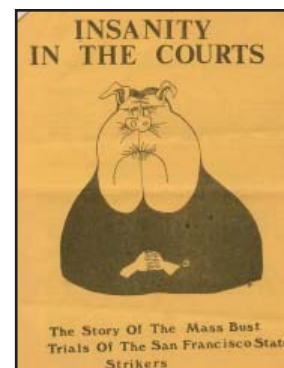
How did the arm & hammer end up on all those baking soda boxes? In her talk, **Evolution of an Emblem: The Arm & Hammer**, art historian Kim Munson will share her investigation of the origins of the arm & hammer from Greco-Roman myth and its role as an early union label to its current usage as the Socialist Labor Party emblem and as the baking soda trademark.

When: Sunday, July 19, 2009 at 1:00 p.m.  
Where: Labor Archives and Research Center  
480 Winston Drive, San Francisco

## San Francisco State Strike

San Francisco State honored a pivotal moment in its history this fall: the 40th anniversary of the 1968-1969 student and faculty strikes. This struggle led to the creation of the nation's first department of Ethnic Studies and helped shape the University's commitment to social justice.

The Labor Archives rich collections were utilized during the 40th anniversary celebration on several occasions. LARC put together a traveling exhibit, *Shut it Down: The 1968-1969 San Francisco State Strike*, featuring photographs, documents, and artifacts from the strike. The panels were on prominent display at the star-studded reception, viewed by attendees Danny Glover and Harry Belafonte and serving as the backdrop for television interviews featured on the evening news. The panels were also on view at the registration desk throughout a 4-day conference hosted by the College of Ethnic Studies.



LARC worked extensively with the University's Journalism Department on projects related to the strike. Two classes were devoted to documenting the struggle, one involving an online project to construct a

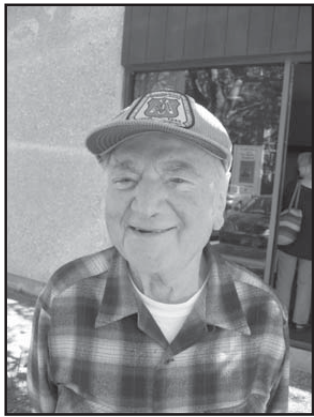


website with a timeline and links to video, photos, oral histories, and documents. The Archives provided dozens of photographs from the collection and audio of oral history interviews of faculty strike leaders. A La Raza journalism class also produced articles for a special

edition on the strike for the local Mission District newspaper, *El Tecolote*, which prominently featured LARC photos.

# San Francisco Labor Landmarks Guide Book

## Introduction by Archie Green



Renowned folklorist Archie Green passed away March 22, 2009. Archie was a proud union man and scholar, pioneering the field of 'laborlore' and successfully lobbying for the creation of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.

Archie was also a good friend to the Labor Archives, serving as an advisory board member from its founding in 1985 and spearheading the San Francisco Labor Landmarks Guide Book project. The following is an excerpt from his introduction to the Guide Book in which he explores the relationship between preservationists and labor.

Over several decades, the local preservation movement attracted a diverse group of supporters: historians, antiquarians, architects, civic leaders. As these professionals enlarged their vision beyond the "golden days" of padres and rancheros in Old California, they turned attention to Gold Rush remains, Victorian mansions, and commercial/industrial buildings that spoke to Yankee enterprise.

Preservation activists "discovered" specific economic sites (such as grist mills, wineries, or hotels) without any help by concerned unionists. Similarly, trade unionists groped towards preservation ends without calling upon "outside" help.

Two sites serve as examples of commercial/industrial landmarks; they also demonstrate the gradual meeting of separate sets of practitioners. Each place represents different choices within preservation groups. Each memorializes a place involving workers, but without any evidence that labor unions participated in their marking.

We recognize as San Francisco landmarks the original office of the *California Star*, our first local newspaper dating to 1847, and Glen Canyon, the initial location of the Giant Powder Works, the first manufacturer of Alfred Nobel's dynamite in the United States (1868). Both buildings have long since vanished; only their sites retain significance.

Sam Brannan's short-lived *California Star* preceded the city's first trade union by a few years. The San Francisco Typographical Society dates to 1850. This proud craft

union's descendant printers and journalists exist today in the Communication Workers of America (CWA).

However, factory hands in then-new plants such as Giant Powder were not usually organized into unions. Nevertheless, Giant was significant in labor history. Tightly organized miners in Grass Valley and Virginia City viewed dynamite's introduction as a threat to their traditional way of two-man hand-drilling, doublejacking. Despite a bitter strike, miners lost. Reluctantly, they accepted the advanced method, singlejacking, induced by the new product. Giant's owners left Glen Canyon to relocate in Berkeley, when an explosion killed two workers, severely injured seven others, and destroyed their frame buildings on November 26, 1869.

Historians have often referred to the pioneer *California Star*, citing it for source material. Hence, preservationists readily accepted its site as appropriate for an official plaque in 1933 (Number 85, California Historical Landmark). As scholars unearthed the newspaper's story, they learned that typos (printers) actually erected the original adobe building at 743 Washington Street, close to Portsmouth Square.

Long after traces of the *California Star* building had vanished, the area became the Chinese quarter. In 1909, the Pacific Telephone & Telegraph Company built a small triple-roofed hall in faux-Chinese style to house its bilingual telephone exchange.

In 1962, the Bank of Canton remodeled the exchange as a branch office, with a then-modern glass exterior, removing the *California Star* bronze plaque. It has never been replaced.



This guidebook cites the telephone site for employment of Chinese women in non-traditional jobs but does not mention prior newspaper workers at the same place. Fortunately, another type of landmark, a Rincon Annex mural now makes graphic *California Star* history. Anton Refregier, from 1946 to 1948, painted a series of panels in the lobby of the Rincon

Annex Post Office. Panel 9 depicts the *California Star* staff at work: the editor reads a paper just off the press; two typographers, one with a pistol at his side, set type at their case; a printer's devil (apprentice) bundles the finished newspapers.

Plaques, prints, murals, statues, or gravestones are complementary ways to memorialize the past. Ideally, present-day unionists printers, reporters, telephone employees, and bank clerks might join with the current *California Star* building's occupant (United Commercial Bank) in sponsoring a new artistic construct reflecting work continuity over time at this historic site.

In contrast to the *California Star* office adobe and subsequent exotic telephone exchange, the Giant Powder factory site at San Francisco's Glen Park had no ready constituency of local historians, architects, or industrial archeologists to lobby for its marking. Rather, belated recognition resulted from a campaign by a few Contra Costa County individuals who knew that Giant had moved to isolated Point Pinole at San Pablo Bay in 1892, following fatal explosions in the San Francisco and Berkeley factories.

Until 1960, the Pinole plant produced powder for hard-rock mining and major construction projects in the West. For decades its workers lived in Giant, a closed company town. In the late-1930s, one of America's then-radical CIO unions, the International Union of Mine, Mill & Smelter Workers, initiated a drive among powder-plant employees. The factory, town, and the UMM&SW drive are now but faded memories.

Some thirty years after its closing, local preservationists campaigned for a plaque (Number 1002-1, California Historical Landmark) marking Giant's production of dynamite in Contra Costa County. By association, San Francisco's Glen Canyon site benefited from this recognition.

These details above about printers, journalists, and powder-plant hands at their respective work places highlight a theme suggested throughout our guidebook: non-recognition by unionists of common concerns with preservationists.

In examining the beginnings of labor's attention to its past, we contrast formal studies by historians with informal enactments by union members. During the nineteenth century, San Francisco workers honored their dead with private services staged by family or union brothers and sisters. No public monument or hallowed-place marker reminds us of martyrs to the 1901 Waterfront Strike or the 1907 Streetcar Strike. However, when police killed two workers at Mission and Steuart Streets during the 1934 Maritime Strike, this event (and parallel murders elsewhere) called for remembrance beyond a funeral.

Within the year, July 1934 - July 1935, maritime workers tagged their memorial day "Bloody Thursday." This special day's origin, subsequent development, and current meaning need to be treated elsewhere; here, I focus only upon physical landmarks. In 1981, San Francisco unionists belatedly marked the event with a modest granite stone across the street from the historic Audiffred Building.

That stone held a bronze plaque naming Howard Sperry and Nick Bordoise "who gave their lives on Bloody Thursday." We compare this small memorial, noting a seminal labor occurrence, with the missing *California Star* plaque honoring a site without attention to workers, their struggles or achievements.

Another dignified plaque noting seven victims of the 1934 Strike rests in the Sailors' Union of the Pacific San Francisco hall. The Seattle branch commissioned this bronze marker in 1936. Upon selling the Seattle building in 2002, the SUP mounted the plaque in the lobby of its headquarters. A dramatic story lies hidden in the differences between the 1981 San Francisco and the 1936 Seattle memorials. Here, I note only the names inscribed on the SUP plaque and their places of death (San Pedro, San Francisco, Seattle, Hong Kong): N. Bordoise, S. Daffron, O. Helland, J. Knudsen, B. Lindberg, R. Parker, H. Sperry.



In 1985, an artists' collective painted three linked murals on large freestanding steel blades depicting labor events (named ILWU Mural-Sculptures). The International Longshore and Warehouse Union placed these a short distance west of the Bloody Thursday granite marker. In 2004, a crew erecting the Hotel Vitale at Mission Street and the Embarcadero removed both the traditional stone and the modern mixed-media art. Late in 2005, a second crew installed the 1985 sculpture/murals at the northeast corner of Steuart and Mission. Additionally, this crew placed the Bloody Thursday bronze plaque on the Hotel Vitale wall immediately left (north) of the murals. By viewing the Bloody Thursday stone, the SUP wall plaque, and the ILWU assemblage as representative, commemorative expressions we see that varied forms (esthetic, ideological) constitutes the labor landmarks' domain. ~

**New Collection**

**Rick Tejada-Flores UFW Photographs**



Rick Tejada-Flores, co-director of the powerful PBS documentary "Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworkers' Struggle," donated 1,600 of his photographs chronicling United

Farm Workers (UFW) campaigns in the early 1970s, including the historic Gallo boycott and march.

**Celebrate the Life and Work of Archie Green**

Musical Tribute by:  
Hazel Dickens, Mike Seeger,  
Elaine Purkey and Jody Stecher

Where: McKenna Theater, Creative Arts Building  
San Francisco State University  
1756 Holloway Avenue, San Francisco, CA

When: Sunday, June 21, 2009 ~ 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Please RSVP Derek Green at derekgreen@att.net

**Labor Archives and Research Center  
San Francisco State University  
480 Winston Drive  
San Francisco, CA 94132**

**Save the Date:  
June 21st ~  
Archie Green  
Memorial**

*Detach form along the dotted line*

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